The purpose of this study was to understand the impact of faculty-to-faculty mentoring programs on the experiences of both mentors and first-year instructor protégés in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs with an emphasis on practitioner-educators in nursing and in welding-fabrication. The study was undertaken for four reasons: (a) increases in retirement rates force extensive replacement of experienced community college CTE faculty, (b) teaching effectiveness is linked to student success and is often predicated on experience and the application of best andragogical practices, (c) mentoring constitutes effective preparation for new professionals, and (d) given the demands placed on community colleges to educate learners and provide for a robust workforce, faculty preparation constitutes a significant challenge for community college leaders well into the future.

The research design used an interpretive social science philosophical approach and the method of hermeneutic phenomenology. Ten faculty from three community colleges were interviewed in order to understand: (a) what they viewed as the key elements in a mentoring initiative, (b) how the elements of mentoring influence the experiences of first-year faculty, and (c) what common themes
emerged concerning mentoring experiences that participants self-describe as “successful.” Impressions and statements drawn from the interviews were examined to show how the participants viewed their experiences within the mentoring relationship and how such experiences played a part in their lives as practitioner-educators.

Aspects of mentoring experiences that participants identified as both present and high yield in nature included collaboration, reciprocity in relationships, a dedication to continuous improvement in both program and individual performance, access to experiences that constituted a source of renewal for programs and educators, and the existence of transformative experiences that lead to growth and satisfaction. Analysis of participant statements identified the needs of novice instructors coming to the community college learning environment for the first time and suggested experiences that may support them in their andragogical growth. Among the insights drawn from the study are the following:

- Providing authentic growth experiences that work may positively affect faculty retention and satisfaction.
- Institutional initiatives can be deemed successful only if they have a positive impact on students and the achievement of their outcomes.

Taking into consideration these insights, related recent literature on mentoring, and the lived experiences of practicing CTE instructors as shared through their interviews, this study offers implications for community college leaders responsible for shaping and nurturing the faculty in a time of competitive job opportunities, unprecedented retirements, and scarcity of resources in an increasingly-complex environment. The manner in which these parameters are addressed may likely affect institutional success and prestige, faculty retention and satisfaction, student success, and long-term program viability.
More than Colleagues: Tracing the Experiences of Career and Technical Education Instructors Engaged in Faculty-to-Faculty Mentoring Programs

by

Daniel E. Findley

A DISSERTATION

submitted to

Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of
the requirement for the
degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Presented June 17, 2011
Commencement June 2012

APPROVED:

______________________________________________
Major Professor, representing Education

______________________________________________
Dean of the College of Education

______________________________________________
Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

______________________________________________
Daniel E. Findley, Author
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study could not have been complete had it not been for the support and caring of many people. While I hope to make the application of my research in community colleges a living tribute to the many who have helped and supported me along the way, I would be remiss if I failed to mention some key individuals.

I wish to extend my sincerest appreciation to my major professor, Darlene Russ-Eft, whose calm presence and sharp eye kept me sane and my work accurate and focused. The members of my committee were wonderful as well, challenging me to do the best work possible and being incredibly supportive all the way through.

I would also like thank the many instructors under whom I had the good fortune and pleasure to study during this lengthy adventure. Each one of them made a significant mark on who I am as a leader and who I will become in the future. Likewise, the staff of the Oregon State University Community College Leadership Program (CCLP) did a great job of handling the sometimes-messy details so that we could focus on learning, and for this I will always be grateful.

A special thank you goes out to CCLP Cohort 15, also known as the “Beans.” Your wit, candor, and team spirit embody what is best about community. I hope we will always be colleagues, and I would be proud to work with or for any of you.

Thank you to George Copa for his encouragement, his sharp mind, and his even-sharper pencil. I am better writer, thinker, and person for having studied under George.

Finally, a huge debt of gratitude is owned to my wife and friend Nanette and the members of our extended family. You have all been incredibly supportive
and understanding through it all, and you are, without a doubt, my best cheerleaders...thanks.
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of three remarkable people.

My late parents, Thelma and Walter, who taught me to do my best, to never give up, and to always trust in the power of education, gave me my first lessons in driving change and believing in a better tomorrow. Thanks for a great start in life.

Dr. Joanne B. Engel, who saw an educator in me when I was still an undergraduate English major, and who gently encouraged my journey at a time when I didn’t know who I was or where I wanted to go. The fact that I am here now is due in no small part to her encouragement, vision, and enthusiasm. She was, and will remain, an important mentor in my life.
CHAPTER ONE: FOCUS AND SIGNIFICANCE

*Psychology is a science, and teaching is an art; and sciences never generate arts directly out of themselves. An intermediary inventive mind must make the application by using its originality.*

-William James

You’re back in school, and you never thought you’d be here. Because of an abiding interest in engines and heavy equipment, you have decided to enter the diesel service technology program at your local community college. High school was hard; math and writing were often your worst enemies. Neither subject ever made much sense to you, and the lessons provided by the teachers failed to address anything that was vaguely interesting. As a result, your reading, writing, and math scores made it difficult to start your journey, and some remedial work was needed to get ready. Now that’s all behind you, and you’re sitting in the first day of DS 102: Truck Power Train. Ready to be stimulated and challenged, you lean forward to take in your first lecture and look forward to the hands-on experiences in the shop later in the morning. It doesn’t take long for you to get worried about this class. It seems that the experienced instructor who taught the class the last year decided to retire. The new instructor, while highly skilled in diesel technology, has no teaching skills. He reads from the textbook in a deadly monotone, answers questions poorly (if at all), expresses his frustration by periodically swearing like a sailor on shore leave, and seems to lack an affinity for either the students or the curriculum. It’s evident that he hasn’t received any formal teacher training, and his only experience in instructing the next generation of diesel service specialists comes from his tenure as a shop foreman. You are immediately concerned that surviving this isn’t an option. You’ll try, but you understand that your chances are
worse because of the quality of instruction. For his part, the instructor concludes after the first week that this “just isn’t working,” and he ends up walking into the division office, drops his keys on the front counter, and disappears into the morning light. Next instructor please…your classroom is waiting.

As of 2004, the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) reported that there were approximately 354,497 full- and part-time faculty engaged in teaching in 2-year colleges in the United States. As shown in Table 1, this total was comprised of 111,538 full-time faculty and 242,959 part-time faculty (NCES, 2005-06). Of this total, approximately 186,465 were faculty teaching in career and technical education (CTE) areas. Many are members of the Baby Boomer generation, and as they age they must be replaced to support students who are in community colleges today and who will join the ranks of community college students in the near future. With a projected 80% retirement rate forecasted for this faculty, community college faculty will be replaced in unprecedented numbers over the next 15 years (Finkel, 2005). Of special concern is how new faculty will adjust to the rigors of community college teaching and develop the skills necessary to address student needs and maximize learning for an increasingly diverse and demanding student population.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Faculty</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Part-time</th>
<th>CTE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>354,497</td>
<td>111,538</td>
<td>242,959</td>
<td>186,465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needed for replacement</td>
<td>283,598</td>
<td>89,230</td>
<td>194,367</td>
<td>149,172</td>
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<tr>
<td>Remaining faculty</td>
<td>70,899</td>
<td>22,308</td>
<td>48,592</td>
<td>37,293</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Adapted from NCES, 2005-2006, Finkel, 2005 (Table P57)

CTE Faculty are Unique

As is illustrated in Table 1, CTE faculty make up a significant proportion of the current faculty pool, and the replacement of this resource will likely be neither smooth nor free of problems. The analysis in Table 2 provides a strong
contrast between lower-division transfer (LDT) and CTE faculty. The current population of CTE faculty tend to be about as likely to be male as female (52.8% vs. 47.6%), are disproportionately white (83.9%), and tend to be middle aged, with over 80% of the population being between 35 and 64 years with an average age of 49.2 years. Within the CTE category, there exists a sub-category of manufacturing, construction, repair, and transportation (MCRT). In this sub-category, NCES data indicated that faculty are overwhelmingly male (97.8% vs. 2.2%), white (85.2%). The average age (49.1 years) is approximately equal to that of the greater CTE instructor population. Educationally, CTE faculty displayed a greater proportion of the population with a Bachelor’s degree or less (42.1%) compared to the LDT faculty, of whom only 11.7% hold a Bachelor’s degree or less. By comparison, 85% of MCRT faculty held a Bachelor’s degree or less. In terms of experience in the classroom, 60.9% of MCRT faculty had less than 10 years’ teaching experience, compared with 56.7% for all CTE faculty and 47.3% for LDT faculty. As a group, CTE faculty who choose to teach full time can command higher salaries, because the community college must compete with other employment options. Winter, Petrosko, and Rodriguez (2007) noted that while

Table 2

| Selected Characteristics of Career and Technical Education Faculty |
|-------------------|----------------|----------------|
| All CTE           | MCRT           | LDT            |
| Primarily male    | 52.8%          | 97.8%          | 50.6%          |
| Bachelor's degree or less | 42.1%          | 85.0%          | 11.7%          |
| Teaching experience <10 years | 56.7%          | 60.9%          | 47.3%          |

Note. Compiled from NCES, 2005-2006, Finkel, 2005 (Tables P57 and P59)

“...there is marked scarcity of studies in the education sector addressing economic factors as recruitment tools” (Winter, et al., 2007, p. 30), it is erroneous to believe that community colleges cannot compete for faculty candidates based on economic incentives. Indeed, it is likely that community college recruiters and hiring managers will have to resort to monetary incentives to attract the best candidates from industry and keep them in the classroom. Research suggests that salary
incentives, together with health benefits, hold a “...high level of practical utility as a recruitment incentive” (p. 31). Given current economic conditions at the time of this writing, the question may be to what degree can community and technical colleges marshal the resources to attract and retain promising candidates.

**Turnover**

Turnover, or the unplanned loss of an otherwise desirable employee (Frank, Finnegan, & Taylor, 2004), is a significant cost to institutions, with both direct and indirect costs putting pressure on the institution. A significant indirect cost that affects both the institution and the students “…includes training or a drop in efficiency of new faculty members until they are acclimated. Excessive turnover could be seen as a barrier to quality education” (Pearch & Marutz, 2005, p. 32). From a fiscal standpoint, turnover is expensive for institutions. While some estimates place the average cost of replacing a faculty member at approximately $13,000, other estimates represent the true cost as being close to the cost of the faculty member’s annual salary, especially when lost productivity, lost institutional knowledge, and hiring costs are taken into consideration (O'Connell & Mei-Chuan, 2007).

**Acculturation Issues**

A strong faculty development and acculturation program is needed to orient new faculty to their new academic home and to prepare them to meet the needs of students. Faculty development in two-year colleges is widely regarded as tremendously important, but it is often under-staffed and under-funded (Grigoriu & Hopkins, 2005; Wallin & Smith, 2005). Significant retirements will exacerbate this situation (Finkel, 2005). The lack of developmental support is most pronounced at the level of first-year faculty, many of whom have no prior teaching experience. First-year faculty often use descriptors such as “tense,” “pressure,” “anxiety,” and “worry” to discuss their initial experiences in postsecondary teaching (Sorcinelli, 1994). There is evidence to support the assertion that robust
professional development programs help new faculty adapt to the challenges of life in two-year colleges. Most specifically, significant evidence exists in the literature to support the use of mentoring to guide faculty, improve praxis in the classroom, and improve retention rates among faculty. Kram (1988) and St. Clair (1994) cited the psycho-social and professional development aspects of mentoring. St. Clair identified the specific purposes of faculty-to-faculty mentoring as including socialization, career development, and the critical modeling of teaching excellence in an environment that likely differs substantially from the personal educational experience of the new faculty. Further, St. Clair cited theoretical support for mentoring based on social learning theory, stage theory, contextual-dialectical theory, and motivation theory (St. Clair, 1994). Theoretical bases for mentoring have significant implications for both the rationale of this study and the design of any mentoring programs that may be considered for implementation by community colleges. An exploration of this foundation material constitutes a significant part of the literature review.

**Research Purpose and Questions**

The purpose of this research study was to explore the central phenomenon of faculty-to-faculty mentoring through the lived experiences of first-year instructors and their more-experienced mentors teaching in community college-based career and technical education (CTE) programs. This study provided insight into the experiences of first-year faculty members who are involved in mentoring programs and examined to what degree these programs inform their practice and to what extent the social dynamics of the mentoring relationship enable the mentor and protégé to co-create meaning through their interactions over time. My intent in conducting this study with first-year faculty/protégés was to provide them with an opportunity to reflect on the mentoring experience, to discuss its meaning to them as individual practitioners, and to identify theoretical constructs that may be useful for other practitioners considering mentoring as a professional development
model, especially in the CTE area. With these outcomes in mind, the following three research questions formed the basis of this research:

1. What are the key elements within the mentoring experience? The rationale for this question was to allow faculty to reflect on their personal experiences as protégés.
2. How do the elements of mentoring influence the experiences of first-year faculty? This question provided participants with an opportunity to reflect on the impact of the mentoring experience on all aspects of their identities and professional practice as faculty.
3. What common themes emerge concerning mentoring experiences that participants self-describe as “successful”? The rationale for this question was to explore the constituent elements of programs that were of value to faculty participants. Understanding the efficacy of various programs can be helpful in isolating and understanding the tools that make mentoring work.

**Significance**

The purpose of this study was significant for the following reasons: (a) increases in retirement rates force extensive replacement of experienced community college CTE faculty, (b) teaching effectiveness is linked to student success and is often predicated on experience and the application of best andragogical practices, (c) mentoring constitutes effective preparation for new professionals, and (d) the research problem constitutes a significant challenge for community college leaders in a time of scarce resources and unprecedented retirements.

**Extensive Faculty Replacement Expected**

Between the years of 1970 and 1995, the ranks of faculty members at two-year institutions grew by 210%, compared with a 69% growth rate at four-year institutions (Pearch & Marutz, 2005). Much of this growth can be attributed to the increase in faculty ranks driven by the expansion of the US population and the
corresponding growth in student populations at both types of institutions. During the 1990s, however, it was predicted that one-half of the then-current college faculty would retire by the year 2000, and that at least 80% of this group would retire during the first 25 years of the 21st Century (Ambrosino, 2009; Flannigan, Jones, & Moore, 2004; Pearch & Marutz, 2005). This exodus will affect both full- and part-time instructor populations. Experienced full-time instructors with extensive classroom experience are being increasingly replaced by newer faculty who have little or no classroom teaching experience or andragogical training—factors that are critical to student retention and faculty success (Jacoby, 2006; Kelly, 1990; Larocco & Bruns, 2006; Pearch & Marutz, 2005). As experienced CTE faculty can be among the most difficult to replace (Finkel, 2005), those who move into the teaching ranks must either possess andragogical skills and practical classroom experience, or they must be prepared as quickly as possible to assume their duties.

Teaching Effectiveness and Student Success

Teaching ability encompasses the skills required to transmit knowledge, skills, and attitudes from the teacher to the student, including the ability to develop an atmosphere that encourages student learning...[f]actors related to teaching ability account for large percentages of the variance in teaching effectiveness and teaching evaluation (Allison-Jones & Hirt, 2004, p. 239).

Instructors with less teaching experience and a lack of andragogical training tend to use lecture exclusively rather than exploring a variety of instructional methods (e.g., distance learning, discussion formats, labs, service learning) that may engage students on a number of levels beyond the auditory in order to maximize learning (Lei, 2007). Failure to understand andragogy and variant learning styles may result in an erosion in student persistence and success rates.

From a practical standpoint, Langbein and Snider (1999) argued that “...positive academic experiences significantly increase retention” among students (p. 464), leading to my hypothesis that improving the preparation and support for
instructors will help students persist and succeed, and that successful students are good for the business of colleges. The persistence and success of students in CTE programs is as important as that of transfer students, but this is an area where little research has been conducted. According to Townsend and Twombly (2007) in their report on the current state of community college teaching and CTE instructors,

> We know almost nothing about this group of faculty, who serve a very important function in preparing a significant number of students for immediate employment. Yet because this group of faculty has heretofore not been seen as building a bridge for students to a four-year college or university, it has been ignored and devalued… (Townsend & Twombly, 2007, p. 136).

Because CTE degrees and certificates are often of shorter duration and may be terminal in their design, it is important that faculty be as effective as possible in order to successfully and quickly deliver instruction to students who will enter their chosen fields rapidly. Typically, instructors in CTE fields tend to be largely part-time faculty with a strong preference for part-time teaching (66.1% part time faculty [PTF] and 64% part-time preference [PTP]). In specific CTE disciplines, faculty are much more likely to teach in part-time positions and show a much higher preference to stay that way.

As Table 3 indicates, a significant percentage of faculty prefer to remain full-time in the given professional field. This is of great value to the students, as the instructors tend to be very current on developments in their respective

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<th>Table 3</th>
<th>Part-time Faculty Status: Propensities and Preferences</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Part-Time Status</td>
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<tr>
<td>All CTE</td>
<td>66.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCRT*</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>55.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protective Services</td>
<td>78.2%</td>
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*Manufacturing, Construction, Repair, and Transportation (NCES, 2005-2006, ref. table P62)
professions. However, it is less common that faculty enjoy an equally-strong base in andragogical practices that can help them more effectively facilitate the learning of their students. Not coincidentally, CTE faculty in fields such as nursing can turn over rapidly and be among the hardest to replace; this is due to the reality that they can typically earn much more in the field (Finkel, 2005).

**Mentoring and Instructor Preparation**

Grigoriu and Hopkins (2005) described the career benefits of mentoring in business and education settings but conceded that a great deal of the research pertinent to education focuses on K-12 programs and four-year colleges, but not on community colleges. Most of the work that exists focuses on positive results with private/for-profit concerns and the mentoring of those who wish to become college-level administrators (Grigoriu & Hopkins, 2005; Kram, 1988). By analogy, this would suggest that faculty-to-faculty mentoring would improve the overall effectiveness of CTE instruction in the community college by providing a more stable, supportive learning environment. While researchers have addressed instructor effectiveness (Hoerner, Clowes, & Impara, 1991; Pearch & Marutz, 2005) and the link between instructor effectiveness and student success (Jacoby, 2006; Langbein & Snider, 1999; St. Clair, 1994; Tinto, 1993, 1997), comparatively little work has been done on mentoring of CTE faculty as a specific strategy.

**Professional Leadership Challenges**

A significant factor driving this investigation is my own experience as both an instructor and a division dean. I have directly experienced the lack of support afforded to part-time instructors. Outside of learning the locations of the restroom, classroom, and copy machine (not necessarily in that order), part-timers are often cast adrift without direction or assistance. My previous training and experience as a K-12 and post-secondary instructor served me well; I could figure it out on my own when necessary. As a dean, I am constantly confronted with teaching
candidates who possess vast knowledge and tremendous enthusiasm for teaching but lack the andragogical foundation and practical experience that are so vital in producing good teaching and supporting effective learning. This is especially evident when working with CTE faculty. Without support, the consequence is that mediocre instructors do not improve, and people with great potential to help students get frustrated and leave because they do not know the “secret” to working effectively with an often-diverse, sometimes unmotivated, occasionally-challenged collection of individuals. Based on observations and reviews of the literature, I am convinced of the great potential of mentoring to save both instructors and students.

**Summary of Focus and Significance**

In summary, increases in faculty retirement constitute a threat to the quality of classroom instruction in community college programs. Because of the difficulty in locating and retaining CTE faculty based on compensation issues, their situation can be among the most problematic for community colleges. Mentoring is viewed by a number of experts as a means to quickly and effectively acculturate new faculty to life in the community college. Through mentoring, mentors can expose protégés to high-yield teaching practices so new faculty do not need to invest time and energy learning through trial and error. Because teaching effectiveness has been shown to have a direct impact on student retention and success, it is important that students be presented with the most capable faculty possible. The shorter duration of many CTE programs, coupled with the critical nature of what these completers do upon leaving the community college, makes it important to offer competent instruction from the point at which students enter programs.

Finally, my personal work with CTE faculty on an ongoing basis has caused me to be cautious of content area experts who have no teaching experience, or who have “taught” by supervising crews and shops. The documented success of peer-to-peer (faculty-to-faculty) mentoring offers the promise of equipping new CTE faculty with viable teaching tools in an efficient and cost-effective manner.
In order to examine these issues in sufficient detail, the purpose of this research study was to explore the central phenomenon of faculty-to-faculty mentoring through the lived experiences of first-year instructors teaching in community college-based CTE programs. With this purpose in mind, the study addressed the following research questions: (a) What are the key elements within the mentoring experience?; (b) How do the elements of mentoring influence the experiences of first-year faculty?; and (c) What common themes emerge concerning mentoring experiences that participants self-describe as “successful?”
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of the literature review was to gather and evaluate the significance of the most current academic research relevant to the topic of mentorship and first-year instructor success in career and technical content areas. As a form of professional development, mentorship can affect praxis in an ongoing manner, and it can significantly affect faculty perceptions about the nature of community college teaching. The following central question guided the literature review: What does the current literature indicate about the experiences of first-year community college faculty engaged in faculty-to-faculty mentoring programs? Further, a critical function of the literature review was to provide a rationale for the research purpose and questions and to position the study within the context of current scholarship on the subject.

Approach to the Literature Review

The Oregon State University Libraries Research Databases were used extensively in searching the literature for both qualitative and quantitative sources that discussed mentorship programs and community college instructors. Education Research Complete, Education Resources Information Center, and PsychInfo were utilized as search tools. As a primary search strategy, full-text articles from peer-reviewed journals were preferred. Although there was an attempt to emphasize peer-reviewed articles published in the past five years, it was discovered that a significant portion of the literature on mentorship in education, especially research related to community college instructors, was over five years old. Key words and phrases used included “mentoring,” “career development,” “community colleges,” “faculty-to-faculty mentoring,” “mentorship,” and “professional development.” Studies focusing on both four-year and secondary school mentorship applications were considered because of the similarities of the teaching mission across the groups and due to the shortage of studies in the literature that focus specifically on two-year colleges. However, differences in instructor preparation methods and
institutional mission made it difficult to generalize when comparing and contrasting practices in two- and four-year institutions. Relative to both community and four-year colleges, there was a considerable amount of literature regarding mentoring within the nurse-educator realm. Rather than specifically recognizing this literature as a separate subset of mentoring literature, I chose to integrate such references into the larger literature review and into appropriate sections of the study. This was for two reasons. First, I did not identify nurse education as the primary thrust of the study. Second, the dearth of literature related to faculty-to-faculty mentoring in other CTE areas, including Welding, made an emphasis on nurse education seem lopsided.

**Organization of the Literature Review**

The literature review was organized around major concepts related to the areas of significance outlined in Section 1. For clarity and ease of understanding, a visual organizer is provided in Figure 1. First, the background of mentoring was explored. The purpose of this discussion was to review the meanings of “mentoring” commonly used in various organizations and to establish a working definition that is applicable to the practice as it is used in community colleges. To deepen the understanding of mentoring as a professional development strategy, this section provided a summary of the historical background of mentoring. Following the historical background, the theoretical foundations of mentoring as they apply to CTE faculty were explored. Taken as a whole, this section provided a rich context in which the study was situated, and it also offered rationale for the exploration of mentoring in community college faculty development.

Second, literature exploring the phenomenon of faculty-to-faculty mentoring was addressed. This section focused on the practical applications of mentoring as a phenomenon being experienced by CTE faculty. The purpose of this section was to further establish the rationale for the study as this literature addressed not only the existence of such programs in community colleges but also
their design. This section provided an essential framework for understanding the concept and practice of faculty-to-faculty mentoring.

Third, the literature review explored the essential elements of mentoring as a successful experience, with specific attention being directed to career and student engagement, and how these two areas of engagement were related. Here, success was defined as an increase in job satisfaction, improvements in teaching effectiveness as reported through self-, peer-, and student evaluations, and even the revelation that teaching may not be an appropriate calling. This section served to further justify the study by showing significant gaps in the literature concerning the essential nature of mentoring and to otherwise explain the need for a significant study exploring faculty-to-faculty mentoring in CTE.

*Figure 1.* A visual organization of the literature review

**Mentoring: A Brief Background**

The purpose of this section of the literature review was to define mentoring and its role in personal and professional development. This was accomplished
through a review of critical definitions, a discussion of the history of mentoring as a development tool, and a review of the theoretical foundations of mentoring.

Critical Definitions

Mentoring relationships allow individuals to address concerns about self and career by providing growth and learning opportunities (Baker, 2010; Gazza, 2008; Kram, 1988; Thurston, Navarette, & Miller, 2009). The concept of a mentor came from Greek mythology and had its origins in The Odyssey (Homer, 1946). Mentoring “…implies a relationship between a young adult and an older, more experienced adult that helps the younger individual learn to navigate in the adult world and the world of work” (Kram, 1988, p. 2). While mentoring has been ordinarily thought of as advantageous primarily to the protégé, it is also viewed as beneficial for the mentor (Johnson & Ridley, 2004; Kram, 1988). Evidence suggests that mentoring comprises a significant developmental task at midlife, and that mentors achieve internal satisfaction, gain an appreciation of their capabilities as advisors, and enjoy an opportunity to review and reappraise past experiences and accomplishments by assisting more junior practitioners as they face the challenges of building their own careers (Kram, 1988). In community colleges, mentoring commonly involves “…senior faculty assigned to coach or consult regularly with newly employed full-time or part-time staff members, with the mentors given released time or additional pay for their services” (Cohen & Brawer, 2003) as workload is affected when mentors assume these additional tasks (Gazza, 2008).

For the purpose of this study, mentoring relationships are defined as those created between junior and senior faculty and that exist within the context of a college-sanctioned program designed for the career and psychosocial development\(^1\) of one or both parties through a formal or informal relationship. A formal relationship can be developed through institutional matching of mentors

\(^1\) Career functions include exposure, sponsorship, and coaching. Psychosocial functions typically include counseling, friendship, and role modeling (Kram, 1988).
and protégés, often in an effort to replicate the benefits of mentoring across an organization. By contrast, mentoring relationships may be developed informally “…in that both parties agreed to and were interested in establishing a relationship” (Gibson, 2004, p. 265). An informal mentoring system has also been described as one without a top-down, authoritative structure, a heightened sense of confidentiality, a lack of mandated activities, choice in mentor-protégé pairings, voluntary participation, and strong support from top administration (Gazza, 2008; Grigoriu & Hopkins, 2005; St. Clair, 1994). A critical part of any mentoring relationship is dialogue. This is supported through regular, sustained face-to-face meetings designed to explore problems, foster success, and discuss new ideas (Ambrosino, 2009); in the absence of regular meetings, mentoring does not work (Grigoriu & Hopkins, 2005; Miedzinski, Wong, & Morrison, 2009).

This section has provided a set of operational definitions that guided the selection of sites and participants for this study. The next section will consider the historical context of mentoring. To a degree, the traditional understandings of mentoring in the workplace, specifically as it applies to CTE faculty, can provide useful comparators to the themes and concepts uncovered by the present research. It is expected that the reader will draw upon these comparisons when attempting to apply the essence of the mentoring experience to other institutional settings.

**Historical Context**

While the concept of the mentor dates from Greek antiquity, its application in community colleges is relatively recent. Commonly, mentoring has been a part of the literature of business (Grigoriu & Hopkins, 2005; Kram, 1988; St. Clair, 1994), with later applications in education (Grigoriu & Hopkins, 2005; Long, 2009; St. Clair, 1994) and adult development (St. Clair, 1994). Much of the mentoring in academia, and the research that describes it, has focused on high school and four-year colleges, with little being done in the community college setting. Sanctioned programs date from the early 1990s (Hosey, 1990; Kelly, 1990; Luna & Cullen, 1995; Pearch & Marutz, 2005) and often involved relationships
with neighboring universities (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). As mentoring programs have become more prevalent in the community colleges, they have been tied to the mission of providing excellent teaching to enhance student retention and success. Correspondingly, specific goals of mentoring programs are to provide good models for teaching and to support socialization into the community college structure. The need for such programs is warranted, because most higher education faculty members have not traditionally been trained in andragogical practices (Ambrosino, 2009; Gazza, 2008; St. Clair, 1994). Faculty have typically learned to teach by emulating the faculty to whom they were exposed during their academic careers. This works if these new faculty enter teaching assignments that are essentially identical to those in which they were trained. For those going from a four-year or research university background to a community college, this may not work. It may be even more difficult for CTE faculty who may have extremely limited exposure to teaching models other than those they experienced while in the field or in their subject-specific training.

**Theoretical Foundations**

This section addresses key theories and concepts that support the mentoring of faculty. It provides a rationale for the use of faculty mentoring in CTE programs and further establishes the case for a phenomenological exploration of mentoring within such programs. Key thinkers and concepts are identified, and the implications of concepts and theories for the present study are discussed.

Kram (1988) described a conceptual model of mentoring that “…identifie[s] career and psychosocial development as primary functions of the mentoring relationship” (Gibson, 2004, p. 261). However, Gibson went further, suggesting that the inconsistent results observed when protégés report their experiences with both informal and formal mentoring situations are sufficient reason to allow the definition of mentoring to evolve as the needs and interests of the protégé dictate. This assertion has serious implications for a study involving the applicability of mentoring to CTE faculty. Essentially, the observations offered
by Gibson would suggest that the mentor-protégé experience is likely to be unique in each case. The experiences derived from mentoring by both the mentor and the protégé are likely to result in conclusions that are highly subjective in nature and closely tied to the quality of the relationship between the mentor and the protégé. With this in mind, the design of the present study included collecting information on the lived experiences of both the mentor and protégé in order to provide both a richer experience for the reader and a context within which to better understand the reflections of both.

As is depicted by Figure 2, mentoring is a “…complex, multidimensional activity” (Sands, Parson, & Duane, 1991, p. 189) that involves four kinds of mentors identified during the study. The **Friend, Career Guide, Information Source, and Intellectual Guide** fulfill the career and psychosocial roles described by Kram (1988). The roles are described below to establish a common vocabulary useful in discussing the phenomenon of mentoring.

**Friend.** Within the context of the mentoring phenomenon, friendship is characterized by informal social interactions that result in mutual liking and understanding. This descriptor was used by Sands et al. (1991) to reflect “…the socio-emotional, personal and interpersonal qualities” (p. 185) present within the mentoring relationship.

**Intellectual source.** The role of the intellectual source is to

…provide intellectual guidance, constructive criticism/feedback, promotion of an equal and collaborative relationship, and review of drafts of papers. The mentor who serves as an **Intellectual Guide** helps another faculty member develop by providing a relationship in which both collaboration and constructive feedback are incorporated” (Sands, et al., 1991, p. 185).

**Information source.** As an information source, the mentor provides vital support regarding how to navigate the academic system, find resources, and learn about rules, regulations, and customs.
Career guide. The function of the career guide is to assist the protégé with professional advancement and visibility within the institution.

As described above, mentoring provides both career and psychosocial benefits to participants. Table 4 is meant to clarify this relationship and list the concepts in each category.
Table 4

*Functions of Mentoring*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Functions</th>
<th>Psychosocial Functions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Sponsorship</td>
<td>• Role Modeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Exposure-and-Visibility</td>
<td>• Acceptance-and-Confirmation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Coaching</td>
<td>• Counseling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Protection</td>
<td>• Friendship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Challenging Assignments</td>
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The experience of the mentor in the organization makes the career function possible. Mentors can provide protégés sponsorship, coaching, and exposure-and-visibility by virtue of their organizational knowledge and prestige. The strength and quality of the interpersonal relationships forged between mentor and protégé make the psychosocial functions possible. Such tools as role modeling, acceptance-and-confirmation, counseling, and friendship work because of the mutual trust developed within the mentoring relationship (Kram, 1988).

Additional theoretical foundations for mentoring can be found in the literature of psychology, specifically in the areas of learning and motivation theories. Four theories provide foundational evidence for the likely success of mentoring programs (St. Clair, 1994). These theories are compiled and summarized in Table 5.

**Social learning theory.** Mentoring fits into Bandura’s theory (1977) because of the concept of reciprocal determinism, or the notion that the environment and a person’s behavior cause one another. This important concept of cognitive behaviorism is founded in observational learning and self regulation, two elements that are present in mentoring relationships. Bandura viewed individuals as active agents using cognitive processes such as memory and problem solving to reflect on their experiences within a given context and to plan and modify their behaviors accordingly based on environmental feedback (Bandura, 1977; Sheehy, 2004). Mentors expect protégés to derive meaning from experiences (e.g., classroom teaching, departmental interactions) through observations that will help
Table 5

Theoretical Bases for Mentoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Theorist/Concept</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Learning Theory</td>
<td>Bandura’s principles of modeling and identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage Theory</td>
<td>Importance of key relationships during different stages of development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextual-dialectical Theory</td>
<td>Reciprocal changes of self and context involving relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation Theory</td>
<td>Related to Maslow’s concepts concerning relationship-seeking and competence-seeking behavior</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


the protégé plan future behaviors in order to maximize efficacy and satisfaction within those environments.

**Stage theory.** There are implications that the impact of stage theory can be realized by both the mentor and the protégé. Protégés are most commonly individuals who are either new to a specific field or new to the world of work. In either case, the protégé benefits from the expertise, knowledge, and relationships possessed by the mentor, and, similarly, a review of the literature would indicate that mentors can benefit from these relationships through a renewal of purpose in mid career, the affective benefits of “giving back” to the next generation, and the avoidance of “burnout” that comes with variety and new challenges (Beyene, Anglin, Sanchez, & Ballou, 2002; Brightman, 2006; Kram, 1988).

**Contextual-dialectical theory.** Riegel (1976) asserted that humans travel through life confronting and continually resolving contradictions. People come to evaluate alternate views and truths about the world, and confront the inherent contradictions they encounter (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005). In the present study, the participants reported encountering contradictory experiences when
working with both learners and colleagues, and they discussed leveraging the collective knowledge of the mentoring relationship to successfully resolve them.

**Motivation theory.** Mentoring relationships are often elected by the protégé as a means of growth and development. As a critical part of his theory, Maslow (1954) differentiated between lower (‘deficiency’) and higher (‘being’ or ‘growth’) needs, and he argued that being needs are likely to become more important to the subjects (in the case of this study, the protégés) as they approach the realization of their growth goals (Maslow, 1954; Sheehy, 2004). The nature of the mentor-protégé relationship mirrors this initiative. This is especially relevant when viewed within the context of intrinsic motivation (Frank, et al., 2004; Maslow, 1954).

**Theoretical Foundations-in summary**

A review of the literature reveals a number of key theories and concepts that support mentoring. Foundational work by Kram explicated the essential career and psychosocial roles of the mentoring relationship and provided an initial context through which to understand the phenomenon. Work by Gibson and Sands, Parson, and Duane revealed further complexities of the mentor-protégé relationship by introducing the added dimensions of *Friend, Career Guide, Information Source*, and *Intellectual Guide*, aspects that further enrich the concept of mentoring and hint at its potential depth and intricacies. Finally, a host of learning and motivation theories—Social Learning Theory, Stage Theory, Contextual-dialectical Theory, and Motivation Theory—supported the value and applicability of mentoring in a teaching setting. Taken together, these theories and concepts provided a strong rationale for the use of mentoring as an acculturation tool for beginning CTE instructors.
Mentoring as Phenomenon

This section explores both specific examples of faculty-to-faculty mentoring drawn from the literature and conceptual examples concerning the potential for the applicability and efficacy of mentoring in faculty development situations. The analysis provided added rationale for the pursuit of a study regarding the experiences of mentors and protégés, and it helped to identify sites and programs at which interviews were conducted.

Practical Applications

This section begins with the description of mentoring programs that are currently in operation at community colleges in the United States. Where possible, an emphasis is placed on programs that operate to specifically support CTE programs.

Mentoring is but one of a variety of professional development options. Grant and Keim (2002) reviewed the literature and compiled a list that illustrates the range of options based on extant research. Table 6 presents a list of activities based on their analyses. The percentages listed indicate the number of institutions exhibiting a particular characteristic in the study identified.

A review of the literature indicated that mentoring relationships tend to be rich, complex experiences (Cunningham, 1999; Gazza, 2008; Gibson, 2004; Kram, 1988; Sands, et al., 1991; Thurston et al., 2009) typified by reciprocal learning experiences and robust communication (Ambrosino, 2009; White, Brannan & Wilson, 2010; Wilson, Brannan, & White, 2010). Gibson (2004) argued that the quality of the mentoring experience is largely determined by the way it is defined, and that researchers and staff developers should adopt a phenomenological approach to the development of mentorship experiences. Indeed, she asserted that researchers must learn more from those being mentored about the lived experience in order to better understand the essential attributes of mentoring (Gibson, 2004).

Mentoring programs can help diffuse innovative (“best” or “high yield”) practices throughout an institution and can also be invaluable when acculturating
Table 6

*Type and Frequency of Professional Development Activities by Study*

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<tr>
<td>Institution-wide practices</td>
<td>60-95%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty assessments</td>
<td>87-90%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media, tech, or course development</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops and seminars</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitations and faculty exchange</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td></td>
<td>88%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial support</td>
<td></td>
<td>93%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside authorities</td>
<td></td>
<td>88%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advising</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional mission</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiver or reimbursement</td>
<td></td>
<td>81%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Release time</td>
<td></td>
<td>65%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini-grants</td>
<td></td>
<td>55%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabbatical leave</td>
<td></td>
<td>44%</td>
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</table>

or orienting new faculty, such as those who may be hired in the wake of retirements (Baker, 2010; Gazza, 2008). The Faculty in Progress Program (FIPP) of the Maricopa Community Colleges was designed to do all this and more (Harper-Marinick & Solley, 2004). Beyond the core goals of defusing practice and supporting acculturation, the college also hoped to use the program to increase diversity in the faculty pools in an effort to better serve the shifting demographics of the Maricopa service areas. Barlow and Antoniou (2007) reflected on the continuing professional development (CPD) needs of new lecturers in higher education at the University of Brighton (UK). The aim of this qualitative study was to “…increase awareness of the experiences of new lecturers…, and to prompt improvements in the support available as they develop into their academic roles” (pp. 68-69). An avenue for professional development used in the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia is the Postgraduate Certificate (“PG Cert”) program, an approach which often involves a mentoring component. The viewpoint
articulated by Barlow and Antoniou is echoed elsewhere in the literature (e.g., Baker, 2010; Gazza & Shellenbarger, 2005; O’Neil & Marsick, 2009.; Supplee & Gardner, 2009; Thurston et al., 2009) with respect to the need to acculturate new faculty in order to assist them in optimizing their impact on learners. Thurston et al. (2009) observed that “[m]entoring is a highly efficient mechanism to induct people into professions and it benefits all groups in the environment” (p. 404).

**Faculty and Student Success**

The purpose of the present study was to explore the central phenomenon of faculty-to-faculty mentoring through the lived experiences of first-year instructors and their mentors, both of whom were teaching in community college-based CTE programs. A goal of any professional development activity at the community college, at least in part, is to increase the proficiency of instructors to enhance the likelihood that they will both persist in their positions and also contribute to student success through the effective application of andragogical and content area skills. This section presents a summary of pertinent research related to faculty and student retention and success.

**Faculty Retention and Success**

Concerning faculty retention and success, there is an acknowledged need for forms of professional development, including mentoring plans, to increase the performance and retention of faculty (Ambrosino, 2009; Baker, 2010; Barlow & Antoniou, 2007; Brightman, 2006; Cunningham, 1999; Gazza, 2008; Gazza & Shellenbarger, 2005; Pearch, Craig, & Willits, 2005; Sands, et al., 1991; Thurston et al., 2009; White et al., 2010; Wilson et al., 2010). Brightman (2006) posited that three factors were essential for the improvement of teaching in postsecondary education: (a) valid and reliable student evaluation instruments, (b) norming reports, and (c) a mentoring process. Brightman emphasized that mentoring can “…help retain junior-level faculty…[and] can help senior-level faculty avoid burnout” (p. 127). Barlow and Antoniou (2007) found that the importance of “…adequate institutional support, such as mentoring schemes for new lecturers”
The findings of White et al. (2010) and Wilson et al. (2010) in companion studies that looked at the experiences of protégés and mentors, respectively, emphasized the importance of collaboration, communication, and support in successful mentoring experiences. Pearch and Marutz (2005) discussed a number of factors that affect adjunct faculty persistence. Mentoring was described by the authors as an effort to “…support [adjunct] instructors and to assure the quality of instruction” (Pearch & Marutz, 2005, p. 40). Further, the authors cited work by Hosey (1990) that supported assertions that mentoring would improve both the coordination of instruction between full- and part-time faculty and the retention of students by improving the performance levels of part-time faculty (Pearch & Marutz, 2005). This would answer a major criticism of the management of part-time faculty leveled by several researchers. Jacoby (2006) concluded that there is a negative correlation between community college graduation rates and the increased utilization of part-time. His findings indicated that increases in the ratio of part-time faculty “…have a highly significant and negative impact on graduation rates” (p. 1093), primarily due to gaps in andragogical training and teaching experience; content area experience and depth did not appear to be factors for the study.

A group that tends to have little formal teacher training, little to no teaching experience, but a wealth of knowledge and experience in the content area is the CTE faculty. Hoerner, Clowes, and Impara (1991) observed that professional development of CTE faculty in two-year colleges is sorely needed but is often directly primarily at full-time instructors. Further, many types of professional development are often limited by time, financial constraints, “…contrary social norms, a non-collaborative work environment, or a communication vacuum” (Ambrosino, 2009, p. 32). Further, the authors posited that these constraints also result in “…dependence upon institution-based professional development programs and activities for maintaining currency in the teaching field, for professional renewal, and for technical and skill updating” (Hoerner, et al., 1991,
The specific thrust of my study was to understand the experiences of CTE faculty who are in mentoring relationships in the hope that discovering the essence of that experience will provide transferable knowledge and experiences that can be applied to other experiences at other institutions. This requirement had an impact on the design of the study in that the participants were drawn from the ranks of CTE faculty in order to focus the work.

In exploring how mentoring programs should be applied, Brightman (2006) contended that decisions concerning who may need mentoring and who may not can be made on the basis of evaluation outcomes. His protocol was to develop a pool comprised of individuals who elect to participate in the mentoring process. Instructors may have self-selected, or they may have been invited/encouraged to participate if they were having difficulty in the classroom. Mentors then selected individuals from the pool for the mentor-protégé relationship. Here, Brightman (2006) was careful to point out that “…the mentor should never select a faculty member who has been pressured into the pool” (p. 131), although he did not indicate how this could be avoided. The author went on to describe a well-ordered, methodical system for processing protégés, including a needs assessment, weekly meetings and “homework” assignments, and midterm reviews. This level of structure was supported by other research in the field of mentoring (e.g., Cunningham, 1999; Grigoriu & Hopkins, 2005; Kram, 1988; Sands, et al., 1991; St. Clair, 1994), and it was viewed as a means of improving praxis while building relationships that are valuable for professional achievement and consistent with validated models of mentoring discussed earlier (e.g., Baker, 2010; Cangelosi, Crocker, & Sorrell, 2009; Cunningham, 1999; Kram, 1988; Sands, et al., 1991), thus fulfilling both the career and psychosocial aspects of mentoring. Because the Brightman study focused on experiences among students and faculty in a school of accountancy in a four-year comprehensive university, it differed substantially from the populations that would likely be encountered in a typical community college. For this reason, it would be difficult to generalize Brightman’s findings to any but
comparable four-year institutions. However, this study can be a useful comparator for community college leaders seeking to evaluate and apply aspects of the current study to other institutions and learning situations.

As this section has shown, there is extensive interest in improving faculty performance as a means of increasing student retention and success. It is also evident from the literature that full-time and part-time faculty need to be considered with equal weight, and that, due to the increased dependence on part-time faculty at community colleges and the overwhelming need for part-time faculty in crucial CTE programs, mentoring programs can and should be a professional development option for these faculty. The purpose of the present study was to explore the central phenomenon of faculty-to-faculty mentoring through the lived experiences of first-year instructors teaching in community college-based CTE programs. In considering participants for the study, it was important that “faculty” be construed as including all who teach at the institution, regardless of employment status. Many faculty in their first year also happen to be part-time faculty. They are among the most vulnerable because of limited andragogical grounding and actual teaching experience. Significantly, they are frequently engaged to teach entry-level courses. Their success at accomplishing this task has a demonstrable impact of student persistence and success (Allison-Jones & Hirt, 2004; Jacoby, 2006; Langbein & Snider, 1999). As it turned out, all but one of the protégés who participated in the study were less-than-full-time in their work with their colleges. It is significant that they were included by their institutions in mentoring efforts, since professional development opportunities and advantages are not often extended to part-time faculty members.

**Student Retention and Success**

With reference to student success, enhanced support, perhaps including faculty-to-faculty mentoring programs, would increase the perceived satisfaction of faculty and, as suggested by Jacoby (2006), increase the probability of student persistence and success. Tinto (1975; 1993; 1997) demonstrated the degree to
which social integration positively influences student persistence. Jacoby (2006) built a case for a reduced level of successful integration of students into the college experience due to the relative unavailability of part-time faculty beyond the normal and customary class period. The author pointed out that the typical relationship between community colleges and part-time instructors discourages those faculty from staying any longer than required by contract—they come, teach, then leave (Jacoby, 2006; Kelly, 1990; Tinto, 1997). Far from indicting the preparedness of part-time faculty, Jacoby (2006) acknowledged that most faculty are probably adequately prepared, but he suggested that the “...ill effects are the consequence of multiple disincentives inherent in current part-time faculty contracting” (p. 1098), such as lack of preparation areas and office space, exclusion from professional development and campus activities, and the demands of working at multiple institutions in order to piece together a living. Kelly (1990) argued for a developmental approach in the management of part-time faculty. Based on the literature review, Kelly concluded that part-time faculty need a thorough orientation regarding “…the philosophies, policies, practices, and procedures of the college” (p. 3). The author further stated that colleges “…often assume that anyone with an M.A. or Ph.D. can teach, but this is often not the case. In addition, content experts who come from business usually have no prior teaching experience” (p. 3). In order to address these and other needs, Kelly observed that mentoring programs are often effective; a part-time faculty mentoring program at Vista College in California was presented as an example. Kelly assumed the developmental approach to the management of part-time faculty, i.e., suggesting that if part-time faculty were regarded by college leadership as valuable resources, they would “…probably be treated very differently” (p. 1). Because community college faculty essentially exist to teach and are not expected to conduct research or publish as part of the job description or as prerequisite conditions for tenure (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Levin, Cox, Cerven, & Haberler, 2010), their efficacy in teaching and instruction is of paramount importance in supporting student
persistence and success, and their ability to teach is taken as a given rather than an additional feature that they just happen to bring to the job.

**Chapter Summary**

In summary, this section of the literature review served as an overview of the foundational elements of mentoring in postsecondary education. It identified significant work by Grant and Keim, foundational work in workplace mentoring by Gibson and Kram, and conceptual approaches to evaluating the experiences of faculty through the work of Sands et al. Further, Kram and Sands et al. provided valuable insights into the nature of mentoring as a complex activity that goes beyond simply training the protégé in areas that are likely to ensure long-term success and retention. Kelly’s work involving a human resources development approach to part-time faculty was reviewed and found to offer some insights and even more opportunities for additional study, including references to various strategies (e.g., conferences, stand-alone courses). The result of this general overview is that several models have been isolated that have been used to define mentoring and to identify its presence in learning institutions. Unfortunately, none have focused on perceptions of the impact of mentoring on first-year experience in CTE programs outside of nursing, and few have focused on the lived experiences of instructors, either full-time or part-time, in community colleges. Given the significant turnover forecast for community college instructors, the crucial role of CTE faculty, and the impact of instructor quality and student interaction on learner persistence and success as described by Burgess and Samuels, Langbein and Snider, and Tinto, in addition to the potential for mentoring and other forms of professional development to support the success and retention of faculty as discussed by Ambrosino, Baker, Barlow and Antoniou, Pearch and Marutz, and Hoerner et al., there are significant scholarly opportunities in both of these areas.

The historical perspectives on mentoring provided by Hosey, Kelly, Luna and Cullen, and Pearch and Marutz provided valuable context within which to situate the study of mentoring in the community college setting. Significantly, an
historical view indicated the glaring lack of work that has been done relative to CTE programs in community college settings. An area that has traditionally seen much working around mentoring in an area often classified as CTE (but not necessarily confined to the community college level) is that of nursing. Allison-Jones and Hirt reflected on the relative teaching effectiveness of part-time and full-time faculty in nursing education programs. Other authorities (e.g., Ambrosino, Baker, Thurston et al., White et al., and Wilson et al.) described the applications of mentoring on acculturation process necessary to prepare new nurse-educators and nurse-preceptors for their roles in training new nurses. Beyond this example, subject-specific references regarding the use of mentoring as an acculturation process for new faculty were not seen.

The use of a phenomenological approach to research around mentoring was foreshadowed by Gibson, who emphasized the importance of understanding the experience from within the lived experience of the participants. Evidence of this approach in the literature provides both validation for the approach and justification for applying it where possible when learning about mentoring in CTE programs.
CHAPTER THREE: DESIGN OF STUDY

The purpose of the proposed study is to explore the central phenomenon of faculty-to-faculty mentoring through the lived experiences of first-year instructors teaching in community college-based career and technical education (CTE) programs. The following section presents the design of the study and the rationale for this approach. This includes discussions of the philosophical approach, the method, data requirements, a profile of participants, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, strategies to ensure soundness of the data, protection of human subjects, and an anticipated schedule for the study.

**Philosophical Approach**

The mentoring experience is a highly personal one, based on human interaction and heavily reliant on an understanding of events and context in order to reveal the essence of the phenomenon. The expression of these experiences is dependent primarily on the degree to which participants can adequately and accurately relate the events in an oral way. These expressions are based on individual actions within the relationship. Action is differentiated from behavior and is interpreted within the context of motives, intentions, or purposes. Hence, human actions cannot be observed in the same way as the behaviors of natural objects (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Because the proposed study seeks to understand the lived experiences of those engaged in mentoring relationships, interpretive social science (ISS) is the philosophical method of choice. The following section will describe the origins of ISS and the nature of truth as viewed through this paradigm.

**The Purpose and Origins of ISS**

The purpose of ISS finds its foundation in the study of meaningful social action. Action must have purpose and intent in order to be meaningful. Additionally, action must be studied within the social, historical, and psychological context that surrounds and contextualizes that action. To neglect this
context runs the risk of misinterpreting the nature of the action, as “...the social conventions defining and making [social actions] what they are in the society being studied must be taken into account” (Bredo & Feinberg, 1982, p. 117).

The origins of ISS can be traced to German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) and German philosopher Wilhem Dilthey (1833-1911). A central tenet of ISS as advanced by Dilthey (1988) is that of the empathic understanding, or *Verstehen*, of the everyday lived experiences of people in specific settings and circumstances. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) described this as an attempt to “...study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 3). The approach contrasts starkly from that of the positivist/post-positivist, where a typical approach would involve experimental or quasi-experimental means designed to measure behaviors objectively. The positivist would contend that there is a reality out there somewhere that can be studied, distilled, and understood, while the post-positivist would concede that only an approximation of reality is possible, and that there may be, in fact, a variety of realities (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Human action is subjective and not controlled or even explained by natural laws. The context (i.e., social, psychological, historical) of any action provides critical information that makes it possible to interpret that action. This context elucidates the substance of any action, but this is made meaningful only because two or more individuals verbally discuss their common experiences, select a common vocabulary to describe both the experience and their responses to it, and view the action as meaningful. Meaning is socially constructed, primarily through ongoing dialogical processes among those with common experiences (Dilthey, 1988; Gadamer, 1989; Neuman, 2003; Outhwaite, 1975).

Significantly,

[an individual is an element in the interactions of society, a point of intersection for different systems of these interactions, reacting to their impulses with deliberate direction of will and action; but the
individual is also the intelligence which sees and investigates all this (Dilthey, 1988, p. 98).

The dialogic processes involving individuals who are experiencing the same phenomenon take into account, to the degree possible, the meanings attributed to the events and objects by the participants.

The dialogic process had implications for the design of the present study, as it is within the mentor-protégé relationship that the meaning of the mentoring relationship is understood. By discovering this meaning, but not necessarily attempting to explain its place in a causal or correlative manner, ISS methods strive to make actions intelligible (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). This aim was consistent with the purpose of this study in that faculty need to share experiences grounded in praxis in order to encourage reflection that will improve that praxis. In this context, I followed Freire’s (2000) definition of praxis as meaning “…reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (p. 51). The purpose of this study was to explore the central phenomenon of faculty-to-faculty mentoring through the lived experiences of first-year instructors and their mentors teaching in community college-based career and technical education (CTE) programs. It is hoped that readers will use the content to provide insights into their individual situations and, by so doing, devise improvements in praxis (e.g., cognitive and affective approaches to teaching) in other circumstances and institutions.

The Nature of Truth

While the mentoring experience may exist as a socially-agreed upon construct, it is still necessary to explore what constitutes truth within the realm of ISS. According to Neuman (2003), the nature of social reality for those who embrace phenomenology is one of “fluid definitions” created by human interactions (e.g., dialogue, shared experiences), that which is true is the definition, concept, or idea that resonates with the group currently engaged in the dialogue. This differs significantly from the nature of truth as viewed by a member of the positivist/post-positivist camp. For adherents to positivist approaches, truth
involves facts discovered through a logical process which is deductive and involves an interconnected system of axioms, laws, and definitions that can be reliably depended upon to explain behavior (Neuman, 2003).

Within the context of my study, it is important to note that truth is subjective and largely defined within the relationship between the mentor and the protégé. The mentor-protégé relationship involves figuring out how the teaching experience is going for the protégé and what elements can be adjusted to improve performance and satisfaction. Each teaching situation is different, as is each instructor, so no one theory or approach will guarantee satisfactory results for all instructors and under all circumstances. Carr and Kemmis (1986) pointed out that “…practical deliberation is informed not only by ideas but also by the practical exigencies of situations” (p. 93). While the aim of the positivist would be to “social engineer” solutions that would be correct under a variety of situations, the aim of ISS is enlightenment “…in a critical, moral, and reflective sense” (p. 94).

Specific to the design of my study, the protégé and the mentor were asked to reflect on the experience of being in this relationship. I drew out experiences and impressions with open-ended questions, and I repeated this process with first one, then the other, and finally both members of each pair. The pairs interviews helped to identify common meaning through a dialogic process. Interviewing five pairs made it possible to identify what elements of the mentor-protégé relationship were common across a number of people who are engaged in the same vocation (in this case, instruction) and who faced similar circumstances (e.g., CTE programs and students) in similar systems (community and technical colleges). In my study, truth constituted those factors that are similar across the broader group based on how the participants view their world (e.g., the instructor experience). As the researcher, it was my responsibility to engage in substantive dialogue with the participants then reflect upon their experiences from within the historical, social, and psychological contexts in which these experiences evolved. Through a cyclical process known as the hermeneutic circle (Gadamer, 1989; Heidegger, 1993; Husserl, 2001; van
Manen, 1990), I returned to the participants with transcripts to ensure that my perceptions of their situation matched their individual realities. Verifying these truths statistically was beyond the scope of and inconsistent with the design of my study, but the factors or themes that emerge may provide the basis for a post-positivist follow-up study seeking to generalize these results over a broader population of instructors.

The Purpose of Interpretive Research

The purpose of interpretive research is to develop an understanding of social interaction and discover how participants construct meaning in everyday settings (Neuman, 2003). This approach differs significantly from the positivist approach which would emphasize causality, independent verifiability, and generalizability of findings to a broader population. While natural sciences tend to taxonomize phenomena or causally or probabilistically explain behaviors, ISS attempts to explicate the meaning of human phenomena and to achieve an understanding of the lived experiences of humans (van Manen, 1990).

In this study, I engaged participants directly concerning their involvement in mentoring programs. A key role in my part as an interviewer and storyteller was to report the statements and themes they shared regarding mentoring and to give voice to how their experiences have shaped their lives and successes as faculty. For the purposes of this research, to “give voice” was to provide both a textural description of what the participants experienced and a structural description intended to express the context in which the phenomenon was experienced (Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2007) described the textural description as an explication of “...‘what’ the participants in the study experienced with the phenomenon...include[ing] verbatim examples,” while the structural description focuses on “how” the experience happened relative to the participant (p. 159). The revelation of individual faculty experiences provided a basis for the development and refinement of praxis in both current and new faculty.
...by so providing individuals with the opportunity to reconsider the beliefs and attitudes inherent in their existing ways of thinking, that interpretive social theory can affect practice. Practices are changed by changing the ways in which they are understood (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 91).

**Strengths and Limitations**

The purpose of ISS is to discover how agents construct meaning in social situations (Neuman, 2003) and to establish a shared understanding where previous no such understanding existed (Dilthey, 1988; Gadamer, 1989; Neuman, 2003; Outhwaite, 1975). Research methods based on ISS allow participants to elucidate (“give voice to”) their experiences in their own words and from their own unique perspectives. In the case of instructors engaged in a mentor-protégé relationship, this requires open and honest dialog about the experiences, which is then interpreted by the researcher and returned to the participants to ensure that the account developed by the researcher makes sense to those living the experience of a mentoring relationship. By comparison, a positivistic approach “…focuses only on the relationship between the individual scientist and the ‘external’ reality” (Bredo & Feinberg, 1982, pp. 115-116). The interpretive approach affords the opportunity to more deeply penetrate the nature of social life and human affairs and to learn from the experiences of others and develop deeper thematic understandings of mentoring through the thick and rich descriptions collected during the dialogic process (Carr & Kemmis, 2003).

Limitations to the ISS approach fall into two general categories. The first category deals with the degree to which ISS fails to produce widely generalizable results or “objective standards for verifying or refuting theoretical accounts” (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 94). The second category of criticism emerges from the positivist assertion that the use of social context and the individual actor’s own definition of a situation and rationale for behavior constitute unnecessarily restrictive criteria. This criticism emerges from the differing goals of the two philosophical approaches, as ISS is directed towards understanding social
structures and behaviors, while positivism pursues the aim of natural science and attempt to explain behaviors based on causality and reduce it to theory (Carr & Kemmis, 2003). There exist a “plurality of meanings” (p. 95) within any given situation, and these meaning are influenced by the historical, social, and psychological context. Causality cannot be determined given these circumstances, the positivist would assert, because “…sometimes people act in a motivated way but are systematically unaware of their motives, and in fact think they are acting from other motives” (Bredo & Feinberg, 1982, p. 127). Positivists, presuming stable, unchanging realities that can be studied using empirical methods, observe that “…qualitative researchers write fiction, not science, and that these researchers have no way of verifying their truth statements” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 8).

**Personal Disclosure**

I have worked in education for over 20 years. During that time, I have had a number of informal mentors and several formal ones. Each one has made a significant contribution to my personal and career development in some crucial way. While a number of mentors have stepped aside as the years have rolled by, some are perennial advisors who find their way into my decision-making process on a cyclical pattern. As much as I have enjoyed the support of mentors, I have also mentored a number of students and colleagues on issues related to professional development, career planning, and personal effectiveness. Some are students from over 20 years ago, some are teaching colleagues, and one is an associate dean of student services who will enter the Oregon State University CCLP program soon. I have seen the benefit of mentorship many times over the years, and I have seen it fail for a variety of reasons. Through it all, I strongly believed in the power of such relationships.

It must also be mentioned that I have enjoyed a close involvement with CTE over the past eight years, first as an instructor and department chair in Education (classified by PCC as a CTE program because of the link to relatively immediate employment possibilities in a specific field and the limitations
concerning transfer options) and more recently as a dean supporting CTE faculty in such varied areas as Diesel Service Technology, Machine Manufacturing Technology, Welding, and Aviation Maintenance. Although my academic preparation (i.e., English Literature, Business and Marketing) are about as far from the technical fields and trades as one could imagine, I have grown to enjoy and appreciate the work these disciplines represent and the value they add to the lives of both practitioners and those who consume the goods and services they provide. It is because of my direct experience with the frustrations and challenges of hiring and acculturating new CTE faculty that I chose to deeply explore the phenomenon of mentoring in the CTE fields. Simply put, it is out of need for a solution that I embarked on this path.

The purpose of this section is to disclose personal biases and preferences that may have an impact on my objectivity when analyzing the data from my proposed study. Significantly, van Manen (1990) would suggest that such “bracketing” or “epoche” is vital to the validity of a study. It is his belief that identifying these biases makes it possible to avoid the impact they will have on objective thought. In contrast, Gadamer (1989) asserted that, since all human discourse happens within historical, social, and psychological contexts that permeate all parts of life, it is impossible to completely eliminate the effects of these parameters, and that all thought is subject to some bias. I tend to side with Gadamer in this controversy, and can offer that I will strive for the greatest degree of objectivity possible throughout the research process.

**Research Method**

This research used a hermeneutic phenomenological research method. This method was appropriate as I entered the world of participants through authentic interactions and textual analysis in an effort to learn how they experienced, lived, and displayed the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2007; van Manen, 1990). Related to this approach, van Manen (1990) regarded the application of phenomenology to an area of interest as “…investigating experience as we live it...”
rather than as we conceptualize it” (p. 30). Thus, the goal of hermeneutical phenomenology can be viewed as achieving an understanding of the nature or essence of a phenomenon to such a degree that others outside of the social interaction (the “lifeworld” or das Lebenswelt) can better understand how participants experience that phenomenon (van Manen, 1990).

In the context of this study, the phenomenon studied was the lived experience of first-year faculty and more-experienced mentors engaged in faculty-to-faculty mentoring programs in community college CTE programs. In the section that follows, I will rationalize the use of phenomenology as a research method then discuss in detail why the added refinement of hermeneutics increased the effectiveness of my study. Further, I will explain how hermeneutic phenomenology was used in the design of the study and the interpretation of the information derived through this study.

**Purpose of Phenomenological Research**

The purpose of phenomenological research is to “…reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence” (Creswell, 2007, p. 58). The philosophical assumptions of phenomenological research rest on some common grounds, such as the assumption that studies focus on the lived experiences of persons and that these experiences are conscious ones (van Manen, 1990). Relative to the this study, the key concepts of bracketing (epoche), essence, Verstehen, hermeneutics, and lifeworld will be discussed with special emphasis on their applicability in research. Figure 3 shows the interrelationship of the various concepts.

**Bracketing.** Also known as *epoche*, this is the first step in “phenomenological reduction.” The investigator sets aside personal experiences relative to the phenomenon being studied in order to take a fresh, transcendental perspective on that phenomenon. Because I have prior experience in CTE, community college teaching, mentoring, and community college leadership, it
will be necessary to set aside both *a posteriori* understandings and *a priori* assumptions about the mentoring experiences so as to let the participants and their stories “speak” to the readers.

**Essence.** This is a linguistic construction that subjects use to describe their experiences of a phenomenon in a reflexive way. It is also a brief description that reflects the experiences of all subjects in a study. “A universal or essence may only be intuited or grasped through a study of the particulars or instances as they are encountered in lived experience” (van Manen, 1990, p. 10) The essence is considered to be successfully captured if the “…description reawakens or shows us
the lived quality and significance of the experience in a fuller or deeper manner” (p. 10). In describing the essence (Essentia or Essenz), Husserl (2001) writes of possible gradients of fulfillment, explaining that as we “[proceed] along these, we come to know the object better and better, by way of a presentative content that resembles it ever more and more closely, and grasps it more and more vividly and fully” (p. 324).

In the current study, proceeding along the “gradients of fulfillment” took the form of extensive interviews with both the mentors and the protégés (separately and together), and the use of member checking to verify the accuracy and credibility of the findings and interpretations based on participants’ reading of the reports. Both the interviews and the verification phase were dialectical in nature and led to the elucidation of the experiences as we moved through this iterative process. It was especially telling that such essence could only be understood through language, e.g., written accounts and conversation. Human experience can occur without language, but it would be impossible to interact with others on the basis of or about such experience if there were no way to express it (van Manen, 1990); humans exist, think, and share experiences through texts that are socially constructed through the modality of language.

**Verstehen.** Dilthey (1988) described Verstehen as an empathetic understanding of the everyday lived experiences of people in specific contexts. This concept was at the heart of methodological debates among German-speaking historians and sociologists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Outhwaite, 1975). The concept of the “…interpretive verstehende method” (p. 11) was largely an attempt to counter the methods of causal explanation typically found in positivist thought common at the time in France and England and represented by the thought and works of philosophers such as Auguste Comte (Comte, 1975) and J.S. Mill (Mill & Bentham, 1987; Outhwaite, 1975). Rather than seek a causal explanation of human behavior, which would be tantamount to providing a natural science of human life, the phenomenologist attempts to
“...deepen, systematise (sic) and often qualify...an ‘understanding’ which is already present” (p. 17) in a form that has been interpreted into everyday language and must be interpreted (not defined) through the use of both empirical and conceptual investigation.

Commonly, observers “understand” the states of mind of others though the following: (a) visible signs, both involuntary and voluntary; (b) explicit statements; (c) knowledge of the facts of a given situation (Outhwaite, 1975). Signs can be ambiguous, explicit statements can be hard to come by, and knowledge of the facts is mediated by the observer’s understanding (*Verstehen*) of the social, historical, and psychological context of the situation.

In my present study, I collected texts from the participants through the interview, a process that both facilitated the gathering of experiential narrative material to serve as a foundation for richer and deeper understanding and helped establish a conversational relationship with the participants (van Manen, 1990). Textual analysis allowed me to extract the common themes needed to understand the phenomenon of mentoring as experienced by the mentor-protégé pairs. The conversational relationship achieved with the participants supported the hermeneutic circle as it was applied to both the interview process and the member checking phase of verifiability.

**Hermeneutics.** Originally devised as a means of reading meaning out of a text (e.g., exegesis), hermeneutics is the study of theories and methods of the interpretation of texts and systems of meaning (Neuman, 2003). Hermeneutics, for the purposes of this study, can be defined as an interpretive method which considers the interpretation of texts and social contexts in order to elucidate meaning.

The use of hermeneutics involves the necessity to question. Because the subjects of my investigation were humans and not inanimate objects, the questions regarding mentoring experiences were asked of them and *not about them*. This was because individual experiences must be understood within the context of the
social, historical, and psychological realities of that individual (Gadamer, 1989; Heidegger, 1993), all of which are critical to understand the ‘Being of beings’. Heidegger (1993) wrote that “…being is found in thatness and whatness, reality, the being at hand of things [Vorhandenheit], substance, validity, existence [Dasein], and in the ‘there is’ [es gibt] (Heidegger, 1993, p. 47). Of special importance here is the Dasein, which mirrors the essential nature of the individual experiencing a phenomenon and is different in the case of each individual because of the unique social, historical, and psychological context experienced by that individual. It is because of this complex context that interpretation is essential in understanding the nature of human experience. A common tool in hermeneutic investigation is the hermeneutic circle, which refers to the idea that one’s understanding of phenomena or texts relies on the relationship established between the parts of the experience to the whole experience and back again from the whole experience to the parts (Heidegger, 1993). To clarify, consider that a shared experience is made up of the individual experiences of each participant. The comments, observations, and personal reactions of each participant relative to a shared experience are certainly affected by the utterances of the other, but each individual also brings to the shared phenomena specific life experiences, a priori judgments, and responses. Engaging in this “conversation” results in an ever-deepening understanding of the phenomenon, often involving iterations of readings, reflective writing, and interpretations (Gadamer, 1989).

In the present study, I used the hermeneutic circle both in the interview phase of the study, where each interview was based upon a core set of questions and was expanded by way of follow-up questions inspired by the direction of the conversation, and also in the analysis phase, where text interpretations led to additional questions and clarification during the member checking portion of the study. Hence, there was a co-creation aspect to hermeneutic phenomenological work that requires dialog between the researcher and subjects in order to achieve meaning (Gadamer, 1989). My work as a researcher and much of the thinking
surrounding the experiences being studied was carried out through writing, a common method for exploring meaning of phenomena after the fact through a reflective process (Heidegger, 1993; van Manen, 1990). The cyclical process continued until I arrived at sensible meanings of the experiences that were fundamentally free from inconsistencies (Laverty, 2003). An essential element in making meaning is time [temporality, or Zeitlichkeit], not in the sense that the passage of time drives change based on causal factors, but rather by the reflexive nature of thought over time that changes perceptions and drives understanding as it constitutes the horizon of the understanding of Being (Heidegger, 1993). In my present study, the parts were typically represented by the experiences and reflections of mentors and protégés as they reflected on the shared experience of working and learning in the mentoring relationship. The experience itself as shared by the individuals involved constituted the whole, and the whole started out being rather flat and unremarkable until the “texts” of individual experience were interpreted through a series of conversational iterations. These iterations involved the participants and reflective writing sessions in which I engaged with the ‘texts’ in an effort to interpret the meaning of individual responses within the context of the lived experience. The key here was the use of language as a medium of meaning and the use of questioning to clarify the conditions under which understanding is possible (Gadamer, 1989).

Consistent with its relation with ISS, hermeneutics as it relates to the concept of Verstehen is subjective and contrasts starkly with the objective scientific method (Dilthey, 1988; Weber, 1968). In this study, the hermeneutic circle and related analyses were applied to help develop a thematic and conceptual understanding of how first-year faculty who are involved in faculty-to-faculty mentoring programs create meaning around their experiences. Specifically, the purpose of the study was to answer the question, What is the experience like?

Lifeworld. Defined as the natural world of lived experience; the lifeworld is a state in which the individual enjoys a reflexive apprehension of the lived
experience prior to critical or theoretical reflection. It is the natural attitude of
everyday life and represents the purest experience of phenomena in an “…original,
pre-reflective, [and] pre-theoretical…” way (van Manen, 1990, p. 7). It is a world
where we experience life without conceptualizing or categorizing it, or the
“…whole in which we live as historical creatures… [and] is always at the same
time a communal world that involves being with other people” (Gadamer, 1989, p.
239). Our relationship with others within the lifeworld dictates that the meaning
we construct about our common experiences is, by necessity, socially constructed.

The lifeworld in my study was the natural world of the community college
instructor. The mentor-protégé relationship was a vehicle for exploring the shared
lived experience within a human world. The intersubjective nature of the
relationship between researcher and subjects allowed for a dialogic relation with
the phenomenon and therefore its validation (van Manen, 1990). The value of this
method was its ability to help explicate “the meanings of human phenomena” and
to help understand the “lived structures of meaning” (van Manen, 1990, p. 4).

A review of the current literature indicated a number of research studies in
the positivist tradition that attempt to quantify the instances of mentoring programs
in community colleges. In comparison, it was my intent to use a hermeneutical
phenomenological approach in this study to deepen an understanding of how first-
year faculty find meaning in the phenomenon of the mentoring relationship and
how their reflections can help others better understand the value of the mentoring
experience.

**Major Steps in Phenomenological Research**

Table 7 presents the major steps in hermeneutical phenomenology. I
applied these steps throughout the process in an effort to gain the deepest
understanding of the lived experience of mentoring as shared by the participants.
Table 7

Major Steps in Applying Hermeneutical Phenomenology to a Research Subject

- Select of a phenomenon of serious interest.
- Investigate experiences as they are lived rather than as they are conceptualized.
- Reflect on essential themes which characterize the phenomenon.
- Explore and describe the phenomenon through extensive rewriting and reflection.
- Maintain a strong and oriented relation to the phenomenon.
- Balance the research context by considering parts and wholes.

Procedures

The data collection for this study focused on the personal experiences of faculty members. In order to isolate thoughts and impressions in as authentic a manner as possible, data were collected in a manner most likely to produce reflexive responses to the experiences. Techniques included the use of email, journal responses, and interviews involving both the mentor and the protégé. Each participant was asked to respond to the same base questions. During interviews, additional questions as inspired by participant responses were used to uncover additional pertinent information. Please see Table 8 for a summary of research questions, data collection methods, and the purpose of each question.

Participant and Site Selection

For this study, a purposive sample was selected comprised of five mentor-protégé pairs consisting of first-year faculty and more-experienced faculty in career and technical educational areas who are engaged in faculty-to-faculty mentoring activities. The rationale behind using pairs was to add to the thick, rich description by eliciting descriptions from both member of each pair. Because meaning is socially developed (Dilthey, 1988; Gadamer, 1989; Neuman, 2003; Outhwaite, 1975), hearing only half of the story would provide an incomplete context. Readers of this research can benefit from exposure to both sides of the
story. The faculty pairs represented three separate institutions involved in offering mentoring as a professional development choice, thus ensuring that all of the participants experienced a similar phenomenon. All three institutions were located in the Pacific Northwest region of the United States. Data collection took place remotely as described in the next section and by email. In several cases, interviews were conducted in person (face-to-face, i.e., F2F).

Data Needs and Data Collection Techniques

Because of the dialogic nature of hermeneutic phenomenology (Gadamer, 1989; Heidegger, 1993; Husserl, 2001), the number of questions was intentionally kept small. Further, because meaning is likely to evolve during the course of interviews, I used the open-ended questions as shown in Table 8 to encourage participant responses. Interview questions, journal entries, and email responses were intended to elicit responses reflexively in order to increase the likelihood of getting better information. The interview form was preferred, because it afforded opportunities to ask follow-up and probing questions as circumstances called for clarification and elaboration. It also allowed for a more natural flow of communication from the participant to the researcher, as writing can often constitute a barrier to effective, reflexive communication. This is true for two reasons. First, much writing becomes an exercise in reflection as individuals write and revise, drafting their responses as they continue to manipulate their writing into a form that they believe will describe the situation as they experienced it. Written communications must be understood within the social, historical, and psychological contexts faced by the individual (Gadamer, 1989; Heidegger, 1993). Verifying such information in writing is cumbersome because of time and distance issues between the subject and the researcher, and the initial report cannot be assumed to be exhaustive because all of the contexts mentioned may not be adequately or accurately represented in the account. Second, writing is an extremely sophisticated form of communication that can, in fact, preclude honest,
### Table 8

*Summary of Research Questions, Data Collection Methods, and Purpose*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
<th>Sample Questions</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the key elements within the mentoring experience?</td>
<td>• “Describe how the mentoring program was organized.”</td>
<td>• Interviews (Skype and F2F)</td>
<td>These questions will provide the participants with an opportunity to discuss their experiences in a reflexive manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “What did you do within the mentoring experience?”</td>
<td>• Email responses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Journal responses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do the elements of the mentoring affect the experiences of first-year faculty?</td>
<td>• “How did mentoring affect the way you approached teaching?”</td>
<td>• Interviews (Skype and F2F)</td>
<td>Participants will discuss the variety of ways in which the mentoring process affected praxis during the first year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “What did you take away from the mentoring activities that carried over into your teaching practice?”</td>
<td>• Email responses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Journal responses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What common themes emerge concerning mentoring experiences that participants self-describe as “successful”?</td>
<td>• “What was it about the mentoring experience that made teaching more successful for you?”</td>
<td>• Interviews (Skype and F2F)</td>
<td>This question will give participants an opportunity to focus on the elements of the mentoring experience that were perceived as successful and of high value to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Email responses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Journal responses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
effective communication for those who do not do it well, or who are faced with that for which they lack the means of adequate expression. According to Van Manen (1990), “We may have knowledge on one level and yet this knowledge is not available to our linguistic competency” (p. 113). Because of the nature of this questioning approach, the sample questions are not exhaustive and served as a guideline for the approach used during the study. Actual follow-up and probing questions were recorded in the electronic record and in the written transcripts.

The interviews themselves were largely conducted remotely using Skype 4.0 and the Pamela plug-in that allows users to record both video and audio during a virtual discussion. There were several cases in which the interviews were gathered either by phone or by F2F methods because of technological considerations. In all cases, I obtained the written understanding and consent of each subject through email exchanges prior to the interview, and then I reiterated this understanding at the beginning of the recorded interview. Files were converted to the Waveform Audio File Format (.wav) electronic file format for sound and video recordings. I personally transcribed these files into text documents in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) format for the working part of the analysis and writing; these documents will eventually be archived in Adobe Acrobat portable document format (.pdf) to facilitate long-term, platform–neutral retrieval and document security. The electronic audio, video, and document files were archived as encrypted files on a removable, external hard drive and a high-capacity USB flash drive, both of which were digitally locked to prevent unauthorized access. These disks were then stored in my personal safety deposit box, thus effectively maintaining confidentiality for the research subjects and security for the study materials. All paper copies of source documents will be destroyed after the dissertation is completed. The relevant electronic files on computer hard drives and mass storage devices will be erased after the completion of the project. The archived disks will be destroyed three years after the completion of the study.
Data Analysis

As Creswell (2007) stated, the data analysis process in qualitative research involves preparing and organizing the data (e.g., transcripts), reducing the data to themes and concepts through a process of coding, and finally representing (reporting) the data in a meaningful form, such as a table or a discussion. Table 9, summarizing key concepts from Creswell (2007, pp. 156-157) on data analysis, provides the critical data analysis steps for a phenomenological study. As part of the data management step, all interviews were transcribed in their entirety. Data collected through interviews, journaling, and email response were organized by clusters of meaning (e.g., themes and patterns) using the research questions as an organizational scheme. From the data collected and analyzed, structural and

Table 9

Critical Data Analysis Steps for a Phenomenological Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Analysis and Representation</th>
<th>Steps for a Phenomenological Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managing the data</td>
<td>• Create, organize files</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading, memoing</td>
<td>• Create margin notes, establish initial codes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describing</td>
<td>• Describe personal experiences through epoche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Describe the “essence”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classifying</td>
<td>• Develop a set of significant statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Group statements into appropriate units of meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreting</td>
<td>• Based on the texts, describe “what happened” relative to the phenomenon (textural description)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Describe “how” the phenomenon was experienced (structural description)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representing, visualizing</td>
<td>• Based on the textural and structural descriptions, develop the “essence” of the experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Present a narration of the “essence” of the experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
textural descriptions were written. To ensure accuracy and clarity, participants were invited to review the descriptions, data, and analysis (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Following satisfactory review by the participants concerning their contributions, a final report was written capturing and relating the essence of the mentoring experience in an intelligible and meaningful way.

**Strategies to Insure Soundness**

Carr and Kemmis (1986) asserted that “…an interpretive account must first of all be coherent; it must comprehend and coordinate insights and evidence within a consistent framework” (p. 91). Beyond this, this researcher used several other strategies, including triangulation, thick and rich descriptions, and member checking.

**Triangulation.** The use of multiple and different sources and methods provides corroborating evidence that is useful in elucidating themes and perspectives. Relative to the proposed study, the use of multiple participant pairs and current literature, especially studies involving faculty-to-faculty mentoring in a community college setting, helps to provide varied perspectives from the points of view of both the mentor and the protégé. Further, I conducted paired interviews in which the mentors and protégés were able to reflect on the same question together and share their thoughts. In order to make this technique especially productive, I interviewed the participant pairs using the same base questions that were used in the individual interviews. The intent was less to provide a vehicle for “fact checking” and more to provide an opportunity for thoughts and observations to trigger additional sharing. The use of email and journals also provided a means for getting at information in a manner which required additional reflection and processing because of the requirement to respond in writing.

**Thick and rich descriptions.** In this study, participants provided narrative descriptions of their lived experiences as members of mentor-protégé pairs. These descriptions, drawn from interviews, journal entries, and email responses to
writing prompts, provided a level of detail that will allow readers to evaluate the
transferability of participants’ experiences to other circumstances and settings.

**Member checking.** This crucial step involves returning to the participants
to elicit their responses concerning the accuracy and credibility of the findings and
interpretations. Based on approaches mentioned by Creswell (2007), I returned to
the participant pairs with preliminary analyses to give them an opportunity to
comment on the accuracy of the account.

As triangulation, thick and rich descriptions, and member checking are
relatively simple and cost-effective procedures, they constituted practical,
powerful choices for validating the proposed research. Reliability was achieved
through the use of digital voice recorders, and I transcribed the digital files by
taking at least five passes through the files (typically three before each transcript
was completed, and two afterwards to check for errors). Coding the physical
transcripts was an iterative process, with the coding being based on a preliminary
code book that was modified during the process as new concepts were uncovered.
Each transcript was read and coded three times. As multiple coders were not used,
I used member checking as both a validation tool and a standard of reliability.

**Strategies to Protect Human Subjects**

The Oregon State Human Subjects policy was followed and approval was
sought from the Institutional Review Board before the study began. The
investigator successfully completed the online tutorial for the Course in the
Protection of Human Research Subjects (CITI), and I thoroughly reviewed the
Human Research Handbook promulgated by Oregon State University. Informed
consent forms were completed and collected, and all subjects and institutions
involved in the study will remain anonymous through the use of pseudonyms.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND THEMES

The intent of this study is to share the lived experience of CTE instructors engaged in faculty-to-faculty mentoring programs in community colleges. The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate a number of themes that emerged from the research by presenting the significant statements made by participants and organizing them based on emerging themes inspired by those statements. This process gives “voice” to the experiences of the mentoring participants and leads to a deeper understanding of what it is like to live within a mentoring relationship.

Mentoring is one of many ways that faculty new to a college or an assignment are offered training and acculturation. The intent of this mentoring is to increase the likelihood of success of the faculty being mentored (commonly referred to as a “mentee” in the literature, but I will use the equally acceptable term “protégé”). Supporting faculty in this manner should accrue a number of benefits, including retention and success of the faculty and increased persistence and success of their students. The intent of this study is to understand the lived experience of faculty engaged in such relationships. I am particularly interested in the perceptions of the participants concerning their experience within the mentoring relationship and their lives in the learning environment.

This chapter is organized into three sections. The first section provides a brief overview of the research context, the nature of teaching in CTE disciplines in general and nursing and welding more specifically, and brief profiles of the institutions. The second section focuses on the interpretive process I used to arrive at relevant themes as well as an extensive discussion of findings linked to emerging themes. The third section summarizes the impressions and reflexive observations provided by the participants, and it prepares the groundwork for chapter five. Within the context of a phenomenological study, this section represents the textural description essential to understanding the lived experience of mentoring as encountered by the mentors and protégés.
Section One: Overview of Research Context

The purpose of this section is to provide a grounding in the context in which the research was conducted. I have provided a brief profile of the participant pool, the nature of credentialing as it applies uniquely to CTE degrees and certificates (and is largely absent from traditional lower-division transfer programs), and a recap of salient points of protocol that are important in understanding how and why participants’ quotes have been included here.

Profile of Participant Pool

A purposive sample of ten CTE faculty members representing three community colleges located throughout the Pacific Northwest states of Oregon and Washington participated in extensive interviews concerning their experiences with mentoring. While the majority were nurse-educators, a mentor-protégé pair from another CTE area—Welding—was included early in the study when it appeared that the study would have a broader base and include a variety of areas. As time went by, the group of participants skewed heavily in favor of nurse-educators. Also, it is important to note that although the initial design called for a protégé pool of “first-year faculty,” one protégé moved through most of the qualification process before it was revealed that she possessed approximately 10 years of teaching experience (although she was still engaged in a faculty-to-faculty mentoring relationship). To see how the phenomenon of mentoring was experienced across time and between profoundly dissimilar disciplines, I decided to both keep the “experienced” protégé and include the reflections of the welding instructors. Their comments, observations, and experiences were melded into the finding presented here without any conscious attempt to differentiate them from the nurse-educator participants.

In terms of characteristics, all institutions supported mentoring as a professional development choice, but none mandated it; these programs were not formal ones. Mentors were given the choice of taking a protégé. Mentoring was often a “local custom” or typical way of acculturating newer faculty. The average
age of mentors at the time of the study was 53.8, and the years invested in the field of practice and teaching were 29.6 and 18.4, respectively. On average, they taught at 1.4 institutions, and 100% of them reported being mentored during their introduction to teaching. By contrast, the typical protégé tended to be younger (43.25 years), possessed less industry experience (18.4 years), and had considerably less time in teaching (3.2 years) when compared to the mentors. All protégés held in common the fact that they had worked at only one teaching institution; protégés also universally wanted to mentor going forward. Table 10 summarizes pertinent characteristics of the participants.

Table 10

*Study Participants by Demographic Characteristics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name and Status (pt or ft faculty)</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Years in Field</th>
<th>Years in Teaching</th>
<th>Number of Institutions</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Brenda” (ft)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sally” (ft)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Mari” (ft)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Chuck” (ft)</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Welding</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Betty” (ft)</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Mary” (pt)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Protégé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Bill” (pt)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Welding</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Protégé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Annie” (pt)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Protégé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Janice” (pt)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Protégé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Karyn” (ft)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Protégé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentors (avg)</td>
<td>53.80</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>29.60</td>
<td>18.40</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proteges (avg)</td>
<td>43.25</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>18.40</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All (avg)</td>
<td>49.11</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>24.00</td>
<td>10.80</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*dnd = did not disclose*

The institutions were also assigned aliases in order to preserve anonymity and maintain confidentiality. Two colleges, Caldera Community College (CCC) and Serac Community College (SCC), are located in major metropolitan areas, and the third, Torreys Community College (TCC) is situated in a rural area. Table 11
presents statistics for the institutions. Enrollment and FTE number provided are for
2007-2008 except as noted.

Table 11

**Participant Colleges: Enrollment and FTE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Annual Enrollment</th>
<th>FTE-All Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TCC (2006-2007)</td>
<td>6,526</td>
<td>2,475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCC</td>
<td>14,567</td>
<td>5,584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCC</td>
<td>86,730</td>
<td>23,794</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As is shown elsewhere, the experiences of mentors and protégés were
remarkably similar despite obvious differences in institution size and location.
Descriptive data were drawn from publically-available data (i.e., college websites)
provided by the Institutional Research departments of each participant college; no
references were provided in order to honor the commitment to anonymity.

**Credentials and Certifications**

Each community college represented in the study offers training leading to
nursing certification, typically through an Associate of Applied Science (AAS)
degree. Students completing programs must take and pass the National Council of
State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN)-sanctioned examination. In the case of the
programs involved in the study, this examination is the National Council Licensure
Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN). It is the mission of instructors
to prepare students to successfully complete this exam that serves as a gating
factor used to determine certification, employability, and fitness for further study
in the nursing field. Similarly, the one college represented by the welding
instructors offers a one-year certificate in addition to an AAS degree. Both degree
and certificate are designed to prepare students to successfully complete
appropriate American Welding Society (AWS) certification tests attesting to each
completer’s ability to weld and fabricate a wide variety of metals in all positions
(e.g., horizontal, vertical) and using a variety of processes (e.g., Shielded Metal
Arc Welding [SMAW]). In much the same way that passage of the NCLEX affords entry into the nursing field, passing AWS certifications (“certs”) provides completers with the means to enter the job market and successfully compete by offering their well-honed skills for the consideration of employers. For both nursing and welding, the goal is similar: train students well in order to ensure professionalism and safety, and equip them with the skills necessary to satisfy industry demand for trained workers and meet or exceed performance expectations.

**Review of Protocol**

I captured the experiences of the participants using a variety of approaches, including Skype, face-to-face, and telephone interviews. Interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes on average, and all conversations were digitally recorded to enhance flexibility and support secure storage. Based on the original research design, I interviewed mentor-protégé pairs by speaking first with one, then the other, and finally both participants together in order to trigger reminiscences that dialog might reveal. Two faculty were unable to participate after initially agreeing to be part of the study; they were excused. I created transcripts based on the audio recordings and compared the written documents several times to the audio recordings for accuracy. After the transcripts were created and verified, I sent them to the participants to achieve member checking. Two participants responded with minor edits and clarifications. During the transcript process, I created pseudonyms for the individual participants and the institutions to ensure anonymity.

In order to add richness to the broader conversation around mentoring, the experiences gleaned through the interview process were supplemented with responses to journal and email prompts that I sent out weekly over a four-week period. Because virtually all faculty were busily engaged in teaching, participants emailed their responses as they were able to complete them. Most sent in
reflections each week, but some chose to cluster their responses and sent them in batches on an irregular basis.

Section One Summary

This section focuses on the nature of the participants in the study and the essential elements of the protocol that were designed to help “give voice” to their experiences as participants in a mentoring experience. The programs included in the study were nursing education and welding, and they were of special interest because, like most CTE programs, they must adhere to standards beyond those established by the departments or the individual colleges, and student outcomes and examination results are required for completers to be truly successful in finishing their programs.

Section Two: Establishing Themes

The purpose of this section is to discover themes that emerged through the consideration of participant comments. Mentoring partners provided strong statements about their experiences and the impact such experiences have on their practice and their perceptions of the work they do as CTE instructors. Because this was an interpretive study conducted within the framework of hermeneutic phenomenology, I chose to let the participants’ words “give voice” to their essential experience as mentors and protégés. The emphasis was on the letting the statements do the work. As an interpreter, I watched, learned, and shared.

How do educators experience a mentoring relationship in their daily personal and professional lives, and what do those experiences mean to them? To find out the answer to these questions, I reread the transcripts several times in order to develop overall impressions about the experiences shared by the mentors and protégés. Following this, I reviewed the transcripts again, this time looking for significant statements that revealed information about how participants experienced the phenomenon of mentoring. Reading the significant statements reflexively within the context of the complete interview text, I formulated
meanings designed to form the basis for the development of themes. Examples of significant statements and their corresponding themes are shown in Table 12.

Upon careful review, it became evident that the formulated meanings began to naturally cluster around common central ideas, or themes. These themes proved to be a useful way to look at the mentoring phenomenon as a series of commonly-articulated experiences across the participant group. A representative sample of theme clusters and their associated meanings is shown in Table 13.

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Statement</th>
<th>Formulated Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I want to give [my protégé] the freedom. I don’t want to have a rope holding him back, because I feel that if I have a rope on him or a leash, then I’m only allowing him to go out so far. And he’s not going to want to venture out at a later time.</td>
<td>Mentors want their protégés to succeed them AND journey beyond the state of the art.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And to me that's a success, is when you hear this delayed gratification 10 years out with, &quot;I finally get it. I never got it in there, but I get it now.&quot; To me, that's it, that's success.</td>
<td>Feedback is not always immediate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So she’ll try new things and when things present themselves that we haven’t done before, she’ll be like, “Let’s try it…if it helps the students learn, let’s try it. Let’s see what happens.”</td>
<td>Have the courage to innovate in order to drive student success.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thematically, mentor-protégé pairs experience the phenomenon of faculty-to-faculty mentoring in a variety of ways that showed surprising consistency across the group of participants. In returning to the texts repeatedly and reflexively interpreting what the participants had to say, patterns began to emerge that provided an intricate web of interrelated ideas. These ideas evolved into five
themes that appeared to be common across the institutions and the participants. The emerging themes are shown in Table 14 and discussed in the next section.

Table 13

Example of Theme Clusters With Their Associated Formulated Meanings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>An act of collaboration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chaos brings colleagues together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sincere engagement is necessary for the achievement of outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentors are available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear communication is very important.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A source of renewal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring facilitates the transformation of practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good mentoring supports succession in the profession.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous improvement in practice requires reflection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A passionate mentor is an inspiring mentor.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In summary, the significant statements supplied in the course of interviews provided a body of knowledge from which to draw an understanding of the mentoring experience. One reason I chose to investigate this phenomenon from an interpretive perspective is that is difficult if not impossible—even following post-positivist best practices in research—to anticipate every question, every variation, and every unique circumstance that partners may encounter in a mentoring experience. This is why harvesting and comparing significant statements from the participants is such a meaningful way to elucidate their experiences. Meaningful statements can then be distilled to formulated meanings. The clustered meanings made it possible to discern themes common across participants and their individual circumstances. Finally, the clustering of themes supported the development of theme statements which provided a framework for the interpretive process and ultimately supported the development of statements that crystallize the essential experience (“the essence”) of participating in a faculty-to-faculty mentoring relationship.
Section Three: Meanings Made Visible

The purpose of this section is to give voice to the manner in which participants experienced the phenomenon of mentoring through their day-to-day experiences. I have chosen to use the themes illustrated in Table 14 as a framework to both explore the phenomenon and organize the discussion. The subject of each theme-phrase is used as a subheading, while I have deconstructed the remainder of the theme-phrase to provide segments that, when explored individually, elucidated the overall theme.

The emerging themes set forth in Table 14 provide an excellent tool to present the experiences of the participants in their own words. I will now explore the phenomenon of faculty-to-faculty mentoring using the words and ideas of the participants to introduce and elucidate their experiences.

Table 14

Emerging Themes Associated With Faculty-to-Faculty Mentoring Experiences

- An act of collaboration that requires time, mutual engagement, and effective communication
- An authentic, reciprocal relationship that assumes passion, support, and a team orientation
- A process of continuous improvement that is based on outcomes and involves feedback and a commitment to ongoing learning and success for the pair, the profession, and the students
- A source of renewal of self that is designed to support the ongoing vitality of individuals and the profession
- A transformative experience that promotes both personal and professional growth and satisfaction

An Act of Collaboration

Within the context of the mentoring relationships I explored, collaboration involved faculty working together to achieve a mutually beneficial relationship for the pair. Unlike a direct instruction model, the learning traveled in both directions, and there was considerable esteem afforded to both partners. This was evident in many of the statements, as one protégé described when she said, “It’s very much an equal thing when it comes to our relationship… I appreciate being respected for
the knowledge that I have.” Pairs found that when they encountered a problem in the teaching environment, “…we definitely talked about it and shared our ideas.” The experiences reported by the participants were consistent with a recent review of the literature on faculty-to-faculty mentoring (Ambrosino, 2009; Baker, 2010; McLeod & Steinert, 2009; O’Neil & Marsick, 2009; Thurston et al., 2009).

Although participants in the relationship were often at different points in terms of andragogical training, there was often considerable training and experience on the part of both partners regarding the content area. In such cases, collaborations enriched the relationship, as is evident in the following comment from Janice, a nurse-protégé:

She was always looking to see how she could adopt things better. She was getting as much feedback from me as I was from her in about how I was doing. So it’s more like a collegial relationship rather than a teacher-student…She respected that I had experience in certain areas, and that I had this knowledge; I wasn’t just a new student and obviously I respected her for her teaching. So it’s worked out really well (Janice).

Another comment offered by a nurse-educator protégé reflects just how important a healthy collaboration can be in a mentoring relationship:

Well, it makes the job…it can make the job, make or break a job really, the people your work with and the collaborations that you have (Karyn).

Reflecting on the impact of her relationship with her mentor, Annie expressed appreciation for the approach used, and she was pleased that the learning honored her personal style. Speaking of her mentor, Annie pointed out that, “She really walked me through every aspect, and that was what I wanted before I felt competent to do that myself.” Like Annie, the rest of the participants indicated that no one can do all of the work alone, and there was an acknowledgement of the value found in this mutual work. A question for further study is whether this sort of collaboration increases both satisfaction and longevity in position. Certainly, participants seem to like the benefits they experience.
The experiences of the participants were rich with comments concerning the degree to which collaboration typified the ongoing interactions of mentoring partners. While it stands to reason that true mentoring cannot take place without a collaborative aspect, it was remarkable in that the interactive work done within the relationship results in not just learning for the protégé but also for the mentor. Because mentor-protégé pairs shared teaching and learning, working within a mentoring relationship provided a unique perspective which is different than what one adopts when encountering challenges alone. The acts of mentoring and modeling prompted reflexivity and drove continuous improvement. Participants indicated that the relationship required a different level of engagement compared with what one typically experiences in the usual teaching-learning environment. One mentor discusses her experiences.

Being a mentor can actually be more work than not mentoring because you have to be able and willing to explain why and what you are doing. This can add stressors especially if the mentee is not prepared or engaged in the learning process (Sally).

Teaching within the mentoring experience was described by participants as involving cooperative ventures, supervised teaching, and independent teaching experiences supplemented with post-session discussions with the mentor. Mentors and protégés often compared notes about students and collaboratively explored and solved problems when students are experiencing difficulties or are failing to meet expectations. In the best of circumstances, protégés saw members of a workgroup or of a department sharing new ideas, articles from the literature, and personal insights for the betterment of the entire group. Broader sharing is desirable as the mentor-protégé relationship can evolve into something isolated and cloistered…and mentors do realize this. Good mentoring practice provides opportunities for protégés to make connections within departments and throughout the institution that will benefit their growth as emerging educators. Such connections can also help with the continuous improvement of the entire department.
While protégés invested a great deal of time learning within their relationships, it is often they who possess highly-pertinent, valuable current knowledge about innovations in the industry; indeed, protégés in CTE fields are often more current in their content-area knowledge than their mentors because of recent or contemporaneous employment in the industry. Protégés commented during the interviews that they appreciate having their unique knowledge and experience recognized as valuable and worthy of inclusion in the departmental culture. Mentoring is a reciprocal relationship, because both the mentor and the protégé learn on an ongoing basis.

I like to think of mentoring as a two way street, every day I am hoping the mentee is learning and I also learn in the process. I have also found that having your work scrutinized by a new nurse can be tough at times, but to keep an open mind. (Sally)

Most mentors explicitly called out the recent "real-world experience" of protégés as a significant and valuable connection to the current practices within the industry. Overall, mentors and protégés alike appreciated having a relationship that is more collegial and is not based on the assumption that they (the mentors) are the final word on process- and content-related knowledge.

**Time.** Time is a finite commodity, and partners engaged in a mentor-protégé relationship must try to leverage time to their advantage in order to practice new learning and to find opportunities to interact around the events of the day. Time is often something to be grabbed when available and applied to greatest advantage. No standard format was followed across the participant group or any colleges. Mentoring programs were often described as “informal” in structure. Nurse-mentor Betty celebrated the time that she and her protégé had at their disposal.

*It was really great because we had sixteen hours a week clinical to be together and when things arose or whatever, we could always talk on the phone (Betty).*

While the desire to help colleagues was a recurring theme in mentoring relationships, there was also a realization that time constitutes a serious constraint
on the ability to offer that support. Pairs found opportunities to share information, plan, and problem solve. It was evident that the participants strove to find ways to render support in the face of time pressures and that they realized how critical finding the time really was. Betty sums it up in the following way:

Yeah, it's also a time factor. We don't ever have a lot of time. But I think that connection is really important. And it... when it's more informal and you kind of get to know the person a little bit, like what going on family-wise, what's going on work-wise, it actually... I think it's more supportive and you can kind of boost the person up and clear away some of those other anxieties and stressors. So, I don't know, I just think it's important to keep the connection (Betty).

Mentoring takes time. Participants made it clear that everyone is busy, but that success requires that mentors and protégés find the time. Some mentors worked with both students and faculty protégés. Sally describes the element of time and how working with faculty differed from working with students.

And with faculty, it is different in that faculty don't have objectives they have to meet. What they have is, they're struggling with an issue and we're going to talk about that issue. And I have mentored several faculty here, and I find that depending on the faculty depends on how often we meet. There are some faculty that I'll meet two or three times a week and some maybe once a month, if that (Sally).

A consequence of the compression of time and the scarcity of resources (i.e., mentors and their time) is that limited access to a small number of mentors does not allow for ready access to a diversity of views on topics such as andragogical theory and “classroom” management.

The one down side is that they are only getting my perspective and not a broader perspective on things- we all do things differently! And different is good!! We are working on doing more connection with the new faculty in a social setting, meet for a drink (soda etc.. ) after work and just hear how things are going for folks (Sally).
Such an approach builds the team while sharing valuable learning. This provides a fertile context in which the protégé experiences mentoring in an educative and supportive environment and sees the entire group participating.

Everything that happens in life is experienced within the context of linear time. Mentoring is not exempt from this constraint. Because of this, partners must fit certain aspects of mentoring into intervals outside of class or lab time. Class, clinical, and lab times are relatively fixed by mutual agreement (or at least acceptance...students do not have much say on the topic of class hours). This means that time available for mentoring conversations, class debrief sessions, and outside experiences such as symposia and visits to other classrooms can be severely compressed. Another mentor observed that, “The only thing that has its drawbacks is not having enough time in the day to work with [my protégé] to listen to how he answers the students’ questions…” (Chuck), adding that a busy welding shop environment means that he may not be able to verify that his protégé approached instruction in the manner preferred by the department or in a way that is most intelligible to the students. To address these issues, partners articulated a number of ways to find this time, including meeting outside of the normal college schedule, talking in the parking lot after class, and resorting to email and telephone when face-to-face communication is not practical.

Time compression is not always easy to handle within the context of a mentoring experience. Protégé Annie, a nurse-educator, explained how time compression affected her experience in a formal mentoring program tied to her initial nurse training.

Well, it was a formal orientation or mentorship. I think that there were only a couple of days--like maybe two days--that I didn't have my own assignment, my own clinical assignment. So it was very brief to see someone walk through the process of what they did in a day. There was less time to process it with the person. It was just very much while we were there at the hospital doing this. And then as I took on clinical assignments, I think it made it where that was my focus and I was much less able to get the amount of role modeling I needed. So I feel like...I felt much more lost as I took on
my role and responsibilities. I knew I could go ask, but I had so much to do, and she had so much to do that I didn't ask nearly what I would have ask if I could have spend the amount of weeks that I had (Annie).

Mentoring well can help educators essentially create time through increased efficiencies. The collaboration process allowed protégés to access information that eliminated the need “…to step all over the same hurdles” that their mentors and other more-experienced colleague may have encountered.

**Mutual engagement.** Both study participants and sources from the literature stress that mentoring works best when the parties involved are engaged in the process. Terms used in the interview process include “investedness,” “vested,” and “engaged.” Nurse-mentor Sally observed that in her experience in working with protégés has shown her that, “…if you vest your time in this, and they know that you care about them, then their success goes up.” The engagement and contact leads to reciprocal learning, new insights, and a more personal relationship that mentoring partners describe as “friendship” and “like family.” This is an atmosphere in which a great deal of learning can occur. Betty said of her protégé that, “She’s also really got a strong psycho-social background, so I learned a lot about how she handles those kinds of mental health issues.” Sally reflected on the positive impact of the engagement and the effect that mentoring experiences have had on her attention to detail when presenting concepts. She said that, “What makes it successful is that somebody is challenging me on why I do something…how I do it. And that I really have to think about it. Does it really add value?” Betty described how the reflexive thinking that emerges from a mentoring experience affects the way she approaches other aspects of her practice.

Well, I think in terms of we’re starting a new curriculum, I think it makes me aware of, like, it's good to use each other as sounding boards. And a lot of times, it just isn't set up in the academic environment for that. But it makes me more conscientious of the need that it really is helpful and it's really fun to talk to other people, and it gives you different and new ideas that actually would
be beneficial in promoting the student's success that maybe you haven't thought of (Betty).

Exposure to critical thinking within the mentoring experience combined with an evolving personal relationship between the partners encouraged deeper conversations. Chuck, a mentor-educator, observed that the relationship facilitates engagement and communication, and that the levels of trust helped learning to flow in both directions in the relationship.

And on a personal basis, it makes it easier for us to converse with one another, to be able to feel comfortable about making some type of...criticisms...Bill takes criticisms very well. I also open the floor for him to criticize me on how I’m doing, or what I’m doing that he thinks that we could do differently (Chuck).

Successful engagement within the mentoring relationship also increases the degree of comfort partners exhibit around discussing what they do not know. One nurse-educator reflected on the need for people to acknowledge “conscious incompetence” and work to eliminate it through experience and education. Nurse-mentor Betty talked of encouraging protégés and students alike to question fearlessly.

I just always encourage them, ‘Ask me anything you want. There’s no stupid question. If I don’t know the answer, we'll find it together,’ but no nurse knows everything. No doctor knows everything (Betty).

Protégé Janice craved the opportunity to engage with others to learn, and she offered a cautionary comment regarding anyone—especially an educator—who is “unconsciously incompetent.”

And if that helps me to be a better educator, then I'm all for listening to people. I don't know it all. I'll be the first one to say that. I think the teachers that think they do know it all, I think that's dangerous. I think that can really hurt a student (Janice).

Participants referred to their efforts in terms that definitely sound like they are describing a team engaging a commonly-held challenge. This mutual purpose and quest for high-yield practices and learning provided a strong foundation for both
relationships and the work that develops around them. The feelings of mutual support that come out of a mentoring environment afforded a positive work experience. One participant recalled how colleagues supported her, and how this, in turn, encouraged her to continue in her authentic participation in the mentoring relationship and in the life of the department.

**Effective communication.** Communication is a pivotal element of a collaborative relationship. Effective communication allows mentor-protégé pairs to share knowledge and clarify understanding. Patterns of communication exhibited by the mentoring partners were consistent with situations deemed successful in the literature (Ambrosino, 2009; Gazza, 2008; McLeod & Steinert, 2009; O'Neil & Marsick, 2009; Thurston, et al., 2009). This section focuses on the experiences of mentors and protégés with regard to communication.

Pairs communicated in a wide variety of ways and on different schedules that fit their demands, “sick kids,” and teaching responsibilities. Participants talked of meeting on a regular basis; mentors remarked that “every week is optimal,” and that if face-to-face meetings are not possible, “we could always talk on the phone.” Protégés spoke of meeting “probably twice a week,” or exchanging news and information with their mentors “as we pass in the hall.” Email was mentioned by at least two mentoring participants as a tool that helped them share information and solve problems. Janice, an educator-protégé, summed up the experience of communication in this description of a typical post-class debrief session.

> We would go back after class...the meeting after class was the time for me...which was useful because it was fresh. And she would sit me down and the first thing she would ask was, “How do you think it went?” So that would force me to look at it, reflect on how it went. What she did during the class was make notes and then she would bring those notes up. And she would always tell, you know, ‘This is what you did great. This is what I thought was good. And this was okay, but I think you can improve it. But it’s up to you to find you style.’ (Janice)

Face-to-face interactions during class, during post-session debrief discussions, and even in passing as participants move along the halls or across campus on their way
to other activities were all important because of the relationships built and the knowledge exchanged. Participants shared that face-to-face contact is preferred as a synchronous, real-time way to dialogically make meaning around the co-experienced phenomenon of mentoring. Telephone contact was an alternative that at least allowed verbal exchanges, but it clearly lacked the access to non-verbal cues that is possible in a face-to-face engagement. In fact, few participants mentioned using the telephone except in those situations where something absolutely needed to be discussed and there is no more-personal alternative.

Mentors and protégés did not confine their work-related communications to the work shift or the learning environment. These relationships were often described as “collegial,” “friendships,” and “like family.” Educator-protégé Bill comments on how communication happens within his experience.

We do meet outside of work, and part of our conversation revolves around work. I try to ask him a lot of questions where, well, what do you do in this type of situation. Just general things will pop up in my head when I’m on the way home or at home. Just when I’m away from work, a lot of questions or problems just kind of pop up in my head. I get a hold of him and I meet with him, and I kind of go over those outside of work (Bill).

Another element of the communication phenomenon centered on clarity. Discussing “what had worked, what hadn’t worked” and “what do you do in this type of situation?” provided the basis for tactical learning that addresses immediate problems and strategic learning that forms the foundation for long term development and the perpetuation of the profession. As mentoring partner Mari observed,

I also learned the importance of being absolutely clear, being very clear and concise in directions to other faculty as well as students. Just clear communication is very important (Mari).

The need for clarity and the realization that one’s comments actually shape practice and futures affected mentors’ perceptions of the impact of their work.

I mean, it makes me pay attention to doing my job well, I think. It’s like, ‘Oh cripes, I really have to look like I know what I’m doing,
because this person is going to ask me some questions and I better know the answers’ (Brenda).

These observations would indicate that the nature of learning is critical to achieving good outcomes for the mentoring pair and, later, for the protégé as she facilitates learning for students. Annie observed that having a good foundation is critical to readiness and a sense of security or comfort. Her second mentoring experience was informal, but the impact was far different, as she purposefully sought out a different approach that would support her learning and satisfaction.

In fact, that...the first experience influenced what I insisted I needed before I would take on a responsibility. Hugely. I did have an opportunity to teach before I had that mentoring program that I helped initiate, and having had the first experience, I said that I just did not feel ready. Because it was...it was a pretty horrible feeling to feel so incompetent (Annie).

Communication, care, and a collaborative atmosphere made a difference within a critical learning environment.

It was evident that communication not only took a variety of forms, but that it might also change over time in recognition to evolving needs.

Last year we were a little more formal. This year it's more telephone conversations or when we get together for meetings and stuff like that, so yeah, we'll talk about things, and then we'll...chit chat and then come back again. You know, that type of thing. She'll call me sometimes and say, ‘Okay, I've got this situation that our here... What should I be doing in terms of that?’ Things like that (Brenda).

Communication modes, patterns, and frequency varied depending upon needs, the absence or presence of crises, and work pressures. The participants in this study reported that regular interaction helps them solve problems and share valuable learning that makes work easier and more rewarding.

When mentoring works well, the mentor-protégé pairing evolves into a strong working relationship characterized by satisfying collaboration and open communication. One nurse-educator who participated in an ongoing mentoring relationship summed it up this way:
For me, my mentoring relationship has morphed into a strong working relationship. We each understand the other’s strengths and weaknesses. Considering our strengths when making task decisions, has made our collaboration very satisfying. Also, keeping open communication about tasks and frustrations helps in planning our work and validating feelings and concerns (Karyn).

Communicating well makes the entire mentoring experience more successful, as is indicated by the thoughts of this participant.

I just have to say that outcomes speak for the effectiveness of the mentoring process. Our faculty continues to work well together. We foster a caring relationship with each other and model leadership behaviors for our students…we continue to have discussions during difficult times … where we collaborate and assist in making the best decisions- and the right decisions- objectively…We also laugh together whenever we can (Mari).

This experience, which involved both informal mentoring and collegial collaboration, provided a comprehensive view of a group relationship that leverages communication and works effectively.

**An act of collaboration-in summary.** Collaboration requires time, mutual engagement, and appropriate levels of communication in order to be truly effective. Mentors and protégés spoke both of the importance of time and the ways they find more of it. Mentoring works best when both the mentor and the protégé engage authentically on all issues, including the difficult ones. It can be argued that effective communication increases the chances of success in most endeavors. The participants in this study indicated that mentoring does not work if the partners are not talking.

**An Authentic, Reciprocal Relationship**

This section explores the mentoring phenomenon from the perspective of reciprocal relationship. In large measure, the collaborative nature of the mentoring relationship exposed an essential interdependence that elucidated the reciprocal nature of what would appear to be a successful mentor-protégé experience.
Mentoring relationships feel like reciprocal experiences, because the participants tend to selflessly offer critical knowledge gleaned from both formal education and practical learning in the field of practice. While collaboration can be driven by circumstances and situations, and be more ad hoc in nature, the reciprocity shown by mentor-protégé pairs seems to be an ongoing experience. Pairs who fell into reciprocity in their mentoring described it through such phrases as, “We play off of each other’s talents very nicely,” and “She listens and validates, and then we try to problem solve,” “It’s vice-versa,” and “We learned some things together.”

Discussing the status of her mentoring relationship, one participant said the following:

The mentoring process, as you know from my interview, is at a point where it is a back and forth kind of thing. We use the information and methods that we’ve gained in the process for better student and program outcomes. We reflect those positive interactions onto the students, so that they can see what an effective team looks like and acts like, and that there are positive outcomes gained from it (Mari).

Participants in this study were not told how to mentor or what components should be included or emphasized in the experience. Assisting a colleague was often driven by a sincere desire to use existing knowledge and resources to help educate and socialize another, as well as to save the “newbie” from having to struggle with new and unfamiliar processes and conventions.

No, nobody said that I have to mentor or that there had to be a mentorship program. It was just again, very informal. I just noticed, I knew how I felt when I came on. I knew how lost I felt, and I know that I really appreciated help and guidance when I could get it, and the director has been great. She has been a wonderful resource, but…when we started we were starting from the ground up, so she was busy learning some things, too (Mari).

Brenda described it as “…it’s more instead of that therapeutic thing, like, ‘I am the teacher who is teaching you, and I am evaluating you.’ It's now that true mentorship where they...you kind of fall into each other, not the assignment.” In
some ways, participants saw the relationship as being both reciprocal and reflexive. The status quo represents a point of comparison that drives the participants to actively seek and assimilate new information from each other and within their interactions as partners. In many cases, the more-junior member of the pair can offer tremendous value because of the depth and currency of content-area learning. As one more-senior participant explained of her relationship with her protégé,

> It's like, ‘Okay, this is in her head. She's learning it.’ It was something that I had to learn kind of on the job, going from clinical practice into education where it's like, ‘Man, I've got a nurse educator!’ I can just sort of stick a pick in and just drain her dry of all her knowledge in her head (Brenda).

Participants seemed primed to operate in a constant learning mode…and they were prepared to learn from as many sources as they could find. While we ordinarily think of the mentoring relationship as one which involves the mentor and the protégé, observations from the participants would indicate that this thinking would be wrong. Protégés were often referred to other instructors to learn about variant approaches to instruction. Mentors, as we have seen, are eager to learn about the latest developments in the field in order to stay current. And because those involved in these relationships are ultimately trying to hone their craft as educators, they are open to hearing directly from the “customers” themselves:

> I've been a nurse for 27 years. Does that mean I know it all? No. And I have come to learn in practice over these last few weeks is that students can teach you as much as you can teach them (Janice).

Relationship development constitutes a significant part of context since the interpersonal dimension of mentoring assumes interaction between the participants. Enjoying a positive mentoring experience seems to require establishing and maintaining a favorable relationship, since so much of the learning process requires active, mutual engagement around problem solving and shared responsibility for student success. In addition, there is work that must be done to socialize the protégé relative to the norms of the department and the
criteria required by industry and regulatory organizations. Protégés do contribute to this important work, as this observation from a participant shows.

I feel I brought a fresh perspective and enthusiasm to our relationship and dept because I specifically studied nursing education theory for my MSN—thus the evidence based literature and theory I had learned about was the most current (Annie).

Although Annie described herself as a protégé and took every advantage of the benefits of her relationship with her mentor, she freely shared where she could for the “good of the cause.”

When asked to respond to a request for a journal post, this participant treated the communication and collaboration elements of the mentoring experience as simply typical of another day at the college.

Just continuing to support each other...having discussions about students at risk, clinical situations, etc. Nothing out of the ordinary, just giving encouragement, support, and input/advice with student issues (Mari).

This mentor couched her relationship in terms that conjure images of parenting. The phenomenon of communication is seen as being in a state of flux based on needs and realities.

Since my mentee is now on a break period between her teaching assignments, we do not have the face to face contact that we so enjoyed last year...I see this much like raising a child - they think you raise them for certain expectations and that they will disappoint you when they come to the place where they become independent in action and thought...I guess that is where I really am right now in our relationship - ready to give a good 'push out of the nest' - watch her flounder a bit in flight, but then swell with pride as her wings lift her off to places she will explore on her own! (Brenda)

Taken together, the two previous observations refer to an experience that is almost assumed to be a typical part of the lived experience of those engaging in faculty-to-faculty mentoring—so much so that there is question as to whether mentoring could exist without these elements and attitudes.
Passion. It became evident during the interview process that passion plays an important and recurring role in the evolution of the educator. While this quality can be associated with any of a number of themes, participants seemed to be passionate about supporting their colleagues, and they responded positively (in fact, they confessed to being inspired) when they saw passion in the way a colleague pursues the science and craft of education.

So, definitely, she’s having a positive effect by modeling what she believes in. Not just saying, ‘I think a certain thing.’ She does it, and I see it works, so I’ve done it. And I think modeling the behavior is key. Because you see the passion and it’s like, wow! That’s cool (Janice).

Cool enough, in fact, to drive others to higher levels of achievement and to inspire passion in them to do even better work.

And I don’t think she understands the way she practices teaching and the way she empowers her students actually affects people who watch her. And like I said, I don't know if I hadn't had her whether I'd be this passionate and emotional about it. Because she just doesn't talk it. She does it. We see it (Janice).

Mentors are excited when their protégés get excited. Often, they will discover the insight or innovation of a protégé through an authentic, unscripted moment in the learning environment, and they celebrate these moments as glowing achievements on the part of the protégé.

And it was very satisfying to me to hear that, ‘Wow, you were in that situation, and look what happened. Man, you came up with the right thing!’ (Brenda)

Pairs celebrated successes, achievements, and advancements, but it is apparent that they regard their relationship as being one that is based strongly on mutual trust and support. Mari, a nurse-educator and mentor, expressed it succinctly when she explained why the mentor-protégé relationship works so well for her and Karyn, a fellow nurse-educator and Mari’s protégé:
Because I’ll bend over backwards if I think it’ll make her experience better, and I believe that she’d do the same for me (Mari).

The individuals that comprised the participant group for this study were, admittedly, a purposive sample drawn of individuals who have engaged actively and willingly in a mentoring relationship. While it is not surprising that the participants have positive associations with mentoring and recall largely positive experiences, it is a bit surprising that virtually all cite a high level of energy and, yes, passion concerning their relationships and the impact they have on developing their practice. It seems evident that passion—or its absence—wields tremendous influence over the success of a mentoring relationship. One of the psychosocial dimensions of mentoring is that of role modeling. The enthusiasm with which the mentor approaches this function can provide either good or poor patterns for the protégé to emulate. This would affect the socialization information received by the protégé and potentially influence both the relationship between the pair and the outcomes for the protégé (Ambrosino, 2009; Baker, 2010; Kram, 1988). Experience from the literature indicates “mixed results, largely depending on how committed the…mentor was to the assigned role” (Baker, 2010, p. 414).

Support. Teaching is tough. Being cast into a learning environment without tools and a lifeline must certainly be tougher; instructors describe experiencing burnout, frustration, and job stress as a result of entering the academic environment as a new educator (Ambrosino, 2009; Baker, 2010; McLeod & Steinert, 2009; St. Clair, 1994). Without strong support and a regular schedule of interaction between the pair, the literature indicates that mentoring does not work (Grigoriu & Hopkins, 2005; Kram, 1988). Those who have chosen to be part of a mentoring pair recognize and fear these circumstances. This is largely why they work together to banish the darkness and usher in the light through their collaboration. Through their common labors, they develop an important support system that equips both members to succeed with students.
The support function of mentoring helps new instructors deal with paperwork, procedures, lesson planning, and students. Mentors provide an important “sounding board” for protégés dealing with students who may, from time to time, offer up considerable resistance and pose significant challenges to instructors at all points of the experience curve. Mary described struggling with difficult students and commented on the role of her mentor, Brenda, in helping her to put things into perspective:

She'll ask us to look at the positive side and how this thing can strengthen you, because you're going to deal also with students, maybe you have students who are like that in the whole class. So what are you going to do? You're going to go to your boss and say, you know, ‘The students are difficult. I'm going to resign?’ (Mary)

With the support of a mentor, Mary suggested that resigning would not be an immediate consideration. This is because the relationship provides access to much-needed information that makes a difficult job somewhat easier. Mari, a nurse-educator and mentor, repeatedly described her mentoring relationship with Karyn as an “informal process” in which she was able to help Karyn “…along with issues and processes.” Through mentoring, she would help where she could and “…tried to be of assistance to the best of my ability.” The following sentiment is typical of those expressed by mentors about protégés (and expressed by protégés about both subsequent hires and students):

And that’s how I sort of am with any newcomer is just kinda help them through those processes. Why watch them struggle when I can help them? (Mari)

Support becomes rather a way of doing business within departments where mentoring is used as a socialization tool. Some educators described situations where mentoring had become a local tradition with a long history, and they observed that anyone could go to practically anyone else to tap into the collective knowledge of the group. One nurse-educator summed up her approach and her rationale for sharing such knowledge:
I shared my challenges, I shared some of my mistakes so that they wouldn’t have to go through them themselves…and learn the hard way. So I think it’s very important to share that with anybody coming in new (Mari).

Consistent with the idea that mentoring is an authentic, reciprocal relationship in which all involved can contribute as well as benefit is the idea that mentors are guides actively involved in supporting the growth of those who need to develop existing skills or grow new ones. Sally shared her perspective on this through the following observation:

I think it is my philosophy of teaching is that...and my philosophy of teaching is really that I am a guide to learning, and that I am here and I expect open, honest, and trustworthy and good effort from students, whether it be a coworker or a student that I'm working with. And so I become vested in their success. And so when I become invested in their success, then I'm going to work really hard to give them the tools to be successful. Because that's what I would want...as a faculty member (Sally).

The experience of working closely with others in a high-stakes environment seemed to underscore the need to maintain good relations and a mutually-supportive working environment.

Like any job, there are always problems, frustrations, and disappointments, and it’s nice to have not only a colleague but a friend that you can share that stuff with and move through it (Karyn).

Indeed, support from colleagues (e.g., mentors, protégés) played a pivotal role in helping people working in the learning environment. It provided direction, minimizes mistakes, and contributed to a quality of life that enhances job satisfaction and, ostensibly, success.

**Team orientation.** At the end of the day, mentors and protégés engaged in teaching in career and technical education programs are dedicated to the same end: they want successful students who go on to gainful employment and a satisfying work experience. Generally, all that separates them is experience. As such, they constitute a team that may likely be a subset of a larger team, such as a department
or division. Everyone is bound together based on a collective mission/common goal. While we hope that the larger group displays the characteristics of a high-functioning team, the participants in this study indicated a high level of engagement, interdependence, and leadership so necessary to ensure quality work.

Curriculum is constantly evolving in CTE programs. Industry advisory groups, evolutions in practice, and the regulatory environment demand that community colleges operate as close to the leading edge as possible. It is the only way to provide relevant instruction that will ensure a workforce that will be up to the challenges of the workplace and ongoing industry innovation. Significantly, curriculum development and instructional practices must also equip students with the ability to think critically and essentially learn how to learn going forward. As good as any degree or certificate program may be, it is not possible to anticipate innovations and evolutions in practice over the long run. Students must be equipped to think their way through these changes, and good instruction can help establish a foundation that will make this possible.

Mentor-protégé relationships that are comprised of more experienced members with community college teaching experience and newer members with a great deal of current industry experience offer a significant advantage for both a program and its students. Chuck reflected on the “value-add” contributed by his protégé:

So that’s bringing in more situations that can create more curriculum. Bill has already expressed interest in developing a course for ‘real world’ welding (Chuck).

Commenting that he has now accumulated a number of years in the teaching field but has, to some degree, lost some connection with practice in the industrial setting, Chuck saw the current practices and experiences of his protégé as hugely valuable…and he is willing to learn from this for the benefit of the program and its students. Other participants echoed this appreciation for a team orientation and express appreciation for the value it adds.
Oh yeah, we have to have a team! There’s no way we could do it individually. We do work as teams. We team teach, we have teams in the clinical setting…that we work together with so, it’s very much a team effort (Mari).

Further reflecting the theme of the team is the reality that reciprocity becomes more of a characteristic of the mentoring relationship as time goes by and experience levels grow.

And then, now it has come to the point that we mentor each other, we help each other. Because Karyn’s been here a long time, she’s tenured now, and so we use each other for a resource. So it’s kind of a neat thing to see: the growth and the back and forth of the sharing (Mari).

Participants also pointed out that the nature of the mentoring relationship evolves to be not only more reciprocal but also more authentic. Brenda reflected on the progression in her relationship with Mary:

It's kind of like I'm no longer assigned to her. We choose to have that relationship together. So I think it's in that...what would you say? It's by choice that we stay together and have that relationship (Brenda).

Mentoring partners at this stage seem to become a united force dedicated to the attainment of a common goal rather than two individuals bound by a professional development agreement.

**An authentic, reciprocal relationship-in summary.** The nature of the mentoring relationship as reflected in the statements of the participants is typified by respect and an interest in mutual success. Based on the statements of my study participants, one can conclude that it is common for mentoring relationships to evolve into friendships. The team orientation is fueled by the passion that can be inspired by a stellar mentor, and participants express the opinion that the support dimension of mentoring makes a challenging but rewarding job somewhat easier to handle.
A Process of Continuous Improvement…

As I mentioned elsewhere, the very nature of career and technical fields necessitates that content area knowledge and practical expertise be updated on an ongoing basis in order to keep practitioners current with the latest innovations and industry standards. Consistent with this idea is the notion that mentoring relationships, by their very design, offer a continuous improvement environment for instructors and the programs in which they teach. Just as the mentor assists the protégé by offering up a conduit between the past and the present, the protégé can provide an important link to evolving knowledge and practice as well as a source of revitalization for the more-experienced, inservice mentor.

I feel that what Bill is bringing in reminds me that I need to continuously try to improve myself and the way I teach. I have a tendency of forgetting, and Bill is bringing in a lot of vitality like I had said earlier, and a lot of encouragement (Chuck).

It is especially informative to view the mentor-protégé relationship from within the context established by the pair and with a careful focus on their mentoring practices and conventions. This is helpful when thinking about the transfer of critical knowledge that often happens between partners. Several mentors felt that sharing information that was deemed critical suddenly accorded the dialogic process a much higher level of criticality. Participants focused on the need for accuracy and clarity, and they would often use words such as “overt” and “absolutely clear” to describe the way things should be described. Here is one example provided by a mentor:

It made me become much more overt with my students about things. Because I had somebody that I was trying to explain things to, and that person...that person would feel comfortable enough to ask me questions that probably the students would have asked, but because you've got that power differential, they're like, ‘Oh, we can't ask that question!’ Where it's like she asked the questions, and I thought, ‘Oh...I bet the student are wondering that, too. Okay, I need to make that just a little more clear.’ So I think that way, particularly, was helpful... (Brenda).
The overwhelming importance of the message raises its criticality for protégés and students alike. The message is that key concepts so necessary to the success of the profession must not simply be passed on, but must be passed on in such a way that there is no room for misinterpretation. Tying back into the idea of reciprocity, protégés share key facts and procedures, and they are welcomed as key parts of the continuous improvement process that contributes to the long-term success of the profession.

**Outcomes and success.** Programs thrive—or fail—based on the attainment of outcomes. It is one of the seemingly universal truths of educational programs, and it applies equally to instructors, degrees and certificates, and students. Participants in the study readily acknowledged that the degree to which outcomes are achieved determines how people feel about their work.

Success is having good outcomes, satisfied people, happy people, so happy faculty members who are satisfied with their job, satisfied with the work they put out. Not only satisfied, but just really proud of the work they put out (Mari).

Participants also pointed out that outcomes cannot necessarily be measured in the short term—that it may take some time to really realize if critical program outcomes have been achieved.

It's not that right here at this point, the grade that you give and somebody doing something, but it's that they're five, ten years out...is where I really measure my success (Brenda).

In a way, this is exciting and useful information, because it describes the impact of instruction far beyond the most recent assignment or the grades of the past several terms.

Achieving success relative to various personal and program outcomes makes some participants view the experience of teaching differently, and it also makes others cognizant of the importance of fostering the success of others. Janice reflected that success with the students and with the mentoring experience is transformational in important ways.
Also for me, it was huge. It's definitely changed the way I had planned to teach in the future and how I now will turn things around (Janice).

Janice mentioned during our discussion that the enthusiasm of her mentor and the authentic way in which she “walked her talk” made a significant and lasting impression…and led to the impact described in the previous quote. Even though she was fairly new to being a nurse-educator at the time of the study, she has gained valuable insights from the teaching she has done so far.

As far as my personal success in teaching is learning something new every time I teach. That has definitely happened to me in my short career in teaching! (Janice)

Another mentor reflected on the need to keep instruction fresh and relevant while supporting the introduction and proliferation of new ideas into the curriculum. Speaking of the earnest enthusiasm of his protégé, Chuck commented that an eye must always be kept on the future.

And I don’t want to hold him back, because he’s a young man, he has great ideas, and if we hold those ideas back, then we might be losing. We always want to improve our program (Chuck).

Chuck’s comments are striking. The focus is not solely on improving the practice of a single faculty member, but on the success of the program over the long term and the emphasis on continuous progress. His comments were similar to those offered by other mentors (and even protégés) who were concerned about the long-term health of programs that feed highly-skilled, competent completers into the workforce.

Together with concerns for the future of professions is the realization on the part of mentors that they need to play a significant role in helping to shape—or save—the future. Brenda admitted that the role of the mentor comes complete with a huge sense of responsibility because of the desire to help support the next generation of educators and practitioners in a critical field…there is little room for error.
I mean, it makes me pay attention to doing my job well, I think. It's like, ‘Oh, cripes, I really have to look like I know what I'm doing, because this person is going to ask me some questions and I better know the answers.’ (Brenda)

Her comments were shared by many others, and the level of concern is consistent with Mary’s remarks. As is clear from the previous comments, mentors interviewed for this study tended to take their roles very seriously. They realize that theirs is a task that carries tremendous responsibility, but they are also aware that the quality of their work and the care with which they mentor will have a significant and lasting impact on the quantity and quality of both practitioners and practitioner-educators. Betty reflected on the impact that teaching and mentoring have had on her protégés and students (mentors often offered little contrast between the two groups), and she commented on what it means to her within her practice.

And the last 10 years of my career, I have to say, have been the best, because it's like if you provide that atmosphere where people can learn and grow, and you support them, it's like watering a plant. If you have expectations, and you keep your expectations high, they will rise...they'll just rise if you give them the necessary support (Betty).

**Feedback and ongoing learning.** Another common element across the participant group is the degree to which they seek out and value feedback. Mentors offered it to protégés, but it seems as if they were as eager to receive feedback as were the protégés. Because they were engaged in relationships designed to foster success and improvement, the participants I interviewed did not seem to resist the idea of receiving constructive criticism. Protégés provided important insights to the mentors in terms of their thinking and processing,

Always be open to feedback. And I think that feedback is part of the process that helps us to move forward (Janice).

The approach used to facilitate these discussions is critical. All pairs met to some degree, but they used a variety of formats. One common element was that the discussions around the mentoring process and the work done within it were
essentially “safe zones” that afforded both the mentor and the protégé space to discuss concerns, triumphs, tragedies, and issues without the fear of retribution. As Janice said to Sally during their joint interview,

> The relationship we have really made it safe for me to ask these questions. You know, ‘What did I do wrong? What do I need to improve on?’ And your points were well taken. I think the way in which you approached it definitely helped (Janice).

This level of trust and comfort makes it possible for people to “fail successfully” and emerge from the experience reinforced with new knowledge and insights into themselves and the work they do. Mentors—and even colleagues—who provide this sort of environment encourage people to try things that are novel.

I think that I enjoy seeing people learn, whether it's at a student level or a mentor level. Now, it's really great also to see people be successful in their roles. That can also turn on you if you see people that are not able to implement some of the teaching techniques or to manage classrooms and it becomes actually quite painful for me to watch. But have to let people experience those things, because that's how we learn. So I sometimes do let things not be successful, as long as it's in a safe environment (Sally).

Lest anyone leave this section harboring the illusion that this sort of open, honest communication is the norm, not so fast! As we discussed the way that faculty sometimes do not get along, Sally observed that

> I see a lot of lateral violence—-and I don't mean as in were hitting each other, but we’re not allowing each other to be successful either. And I don't like that kind of approach to mentoring or management. So I think it comes down to a personal teaching philosophy or management philosophy [about] how you manage (Sally).

Cultivating an atmosphere that allows—even encourages—questions, answers, and the endless collaborative search to banish chaos and ignorance from the learning environment is a full-time job that ultimately makes the whole space safer from the kind of “lateral violence” that Sally mentioned. Mari supported the idea of tying success to a culture of feedback and ongoing learning, and she has both practiced it and has seen it work in the program she experiences with Karyn.
I think just the going back and forth on ideas, sharing experiences, making life easier by talking about the shortcuts. You know, why struggle through these? It develops relationships, it makes things flow a lot easier, people are more satisfied with their jobs when they don’t have to struggle. It’s just a social interaction and the sharing of information that makes it a success (Mari).

Protégés often spoke of the amount of vicarious learning that takes place in a mentoring experience. This is largely because many protégés affiliated with the study were fortunate enough to have mentors who are adventurous in their teaching practice. They tried things and attempted to “make the education better and more exciting to students based on the changes of the population and technology and everything” and fed the experience back into their practice, but they did it in such a way that it became visible to colleagues. In this way, the mentor’s feedback was shared, and new ideas were modeled. Protégé Mary explained how Brenda used her experiences to refine the methods within the teaching environment.

She would try to find the different way on how to change and do something better this way. Because what she does, she also told me that she would check to find out how she did with this and then she would find a way how she can do the next course. And for whole year she will compare on how the methods were effective in teaching comparing the student outcomes from this quarter to this quarter to this quarter. So, those are the things that I’ve learned that, I think, most of them I never knew about (Mary).

Karyn pointed out that one of the benefits of using feedback and engaging in a continuous improvement process around practice is that it both strengthens collaboration and increases its success. The success can then be freely shared and can help others take advantage of the ongoing learning, essentially inviting them to join in and take advantage of the parts that suit their needs.

Well, what I see is that it’s not hard for people to recognize when a collaboration is working well. They see things are organized, they see people interacting, they see positive kinds of body language, positive kinds of verbal exchanges (Karyn).
Benefitting from the experiences of others saves time and frustration. Mentoring participants frequently spoke of the value of vicarious learning, sharing, and modeling. Karyn summed it up effectively:

She kind of helped me delineate …what had worked for her and what hadn’t worked for her which kind of saved me a lot of…personal strife. So it was really more an exchange of ideas type of mentoring I would say. She had some time served before I got here. She shared that with me very willingly, very generously (Karyn).

**A process of continuous improvement-in summary.** The knowledge base and state of the art in most CTE fields change continuously. Faculty statements in this section seemed to reflect both their awareness of the need for change and their desire to continuously improve both their individual practice and their programs. It was evident that mentors’ esteem for their protégés and their respect for the profession encouraged a high level of involvement with less-experienced faculty in a manner that drove change. Similarly, protégés contributed where they could; they shared their current content area knowledge forged in the crucible of real-world practice to add critical information that was useful to not only other early-stage faculty, but also to the mentors.

**A Source of Renewal**

Teaching requires a great deal of energy and personal investment in order to support students on their mission to outcomes fulfillment. As practicing educators reach significant milestones (e.g., end of term, end of year, end of career) both their personal energy and the vitality of the profession must be renewed in order to move the profession forward and ensure that there will be educators (and, not coincidentally, successful students) to fill the void down the road (Ambrosino, 2009; Baker, 2010; Gazza, 2008; Kram, 1988; Suplee & Gardner, 2009). At this writing, the first members of the so-called “Baby Boom” generation are turning 65. While many are likely to work for some time to come, this milestone is nonetheless important and drives educators to think of succession
planning. As we discussed one of the reasons for mentoring, Brenda described the
danger of large numbers of faculty retiring in a field (nurse education) where there
are traditionally not enough individuals engaging in the vital work performed by
nurse-educators and preceptors. As she reflected tongue-in-cheek on her
considerable talents and experience, Brenda made the point that a shortage of
nurse-educators means a shortage of competent nurses:

   It's like, if I don't impart my bad habits on the next generation of
   nurse educators, and if I can't get [my protégé] excited about being
   a nurse educator, we don't have any more (Brenda).

The prospect of a shortage of instructors in a wide variety of CTE areas is a
daunting one. In talking with both welding and nursing faculty during this study, it
became clear to me that providing for the renewal of the profession and looking
after the personal and professional wellbeing of current instructors are major
concerns and top priorities. Any discussion about renewal and succession planning
provides a logical setting for a serious conversation about mentoring. As we
discuss how mentoring fits into her professional life, Betty reflected on her
experiences with Annie, her nurse-protégé. Betty describes the reflexive nature of
learning within a mentoring relationship.

   When I got my certification as a nurse educator through the
   National League of Nursing, the literature all points to when you're
   mentoring you're being mentored. It's like a dual relationship. And I
   think that's just really important. And I know I learned a lot of
   things from Annie (Betty).

Mentors identified mentoring as a reciprocal relationship. Certainly, the
connections between mentor and protégé afforded opportunities for learning and
mutual support that reinvigorated practice.

   Vitality of individuals. Mentoring partners pointed out that working
closely with another professional offers tremendous benefits in terms of tapping
into multiple minds and multiple lines of experience when solving problems or
innovating. As the partners became more attuned to each other and to their
environment, according to Mari, they found that they were
…working together so well. We’ve got the program figured out, we make revisions as needed, we feel very happy with our program outcomes and the successes we’ve had. It’s been hard work, but it’s paid off, and we’re in a happy place now! (Mari)

This experience supports the partners, provides good examples of successful collaborations for others to see, and introduces important reinforcement of innovative and high-yield practices. Occasionally, mentors may not think of their work as being especially noteworthy. Brenda reflected on the responses of her protégé to some work that she has done during their association:

Well I think that the other benefit to that is that when you do some things and your protégé comes back with, ‘Wow! That is really kind of a cool idea...I never thought doing that!’ Or, ‘I went and I told everybody about this particular thing that you did and they were all astounded!’ It just kind of beats you up and make you feel good. It's like, ‘I must be on the right track!’(Brenda)

As the title of this section indicates, this sort of reinforcement contributes to the overall vitality of the individuals engaged in these exchanges. It seems to be affirming to both participants in the relationship when interactions lead to tangible benefits. Often, as Mari shared, the knowledge or experience offered up is not necessarily wildly creative, but it is something that could help a colleague save time and frustration.

I felt like I could help her with things I wanted to know, that I would have wanted to know in the beginning of my career to help me through just the glitches and things like that, so it was very informal and I just kind of helped with challenges with students in the clinical setting (Mari).

Protégés bring useful insights and fresh perspectives to the partnership and to the teaching environment. The connections with new content knowledge and refined practices help to strengthen the mentoring relationship and inject vitality into the practice of both the protégé and the mentor. A veteran of many years’ teaching and field experience, Chuck was very much appreciative of the many ways that collaborating with his protégé adds value to their collective experience.
Okay, I look at Bill’s energy, I look at mine, and I’ve kind of put that into comparisons that he brings back and revitalizes what I’m here for. You know, after so many years of teaching, and not having too much time off (and I’m not complaining about that), and basically I love my job, I love seeing my students’ success, and Bill is a prime example of one of my success stories. I’m hoping that with Bill there he’s bringing some more new insight of what actually happens out in the field that, since I’ve been in teaching 16 years, I haven’t been quite as connected with the outside world as Bill has (Chuck).

Although Bill is very early in his career as a practitioner-educator, he described the impact of student success on his perceptions of the teaching experience. Realize that by teaching in the mode he has experienced as both a student and a protégé, Bill is, in fact, already engaging in mentoring and realizing the reciprocity of the experience. At a very early stage in his career as an educator, he nonetheless recognized what he is contributing to the professions of teaching and, in this case, welding.

That really means the world to me when they first start out and they can’t do it or they can but they’re not very good at it. You look at them three weeks or a month later and they’re improved dramatically. That makes the whole world to me. Makes me feel good that I’m doing something to give back. I love it (Bill).

Knowing that success tends to be contagious and will, if supported, lead to more success, Chuck expressed his desire to provide his protégé with not only support but latitude to innovate as he sees necessary.

I want to give Bill the freedom. I don’t want to have a rope holding him back, because I feel that if I have a rope on him or a leash, then I’m only allowing him to go out so far. And he’s not going to want to venture out at a later time (Chuck).

Having already established the theme that new faculty such as Bill comprise the future of the profession, Chuck indicated a high level of regard for his protégé and respect for both his evolving practice and the ways in which he may likely contribute to shaping the future of welding and fabrication education.
For some practitioner-educators, revitalization takes on a different form. Brenda spoke of the very notion of being watched by a protégé as something that tends to make her more cognizant of the ways in which she teaches content and process. For Betty, she believed that the act of mentoring makes her more deliberate, but in an unconscious way. Seemingly, intuitively knowing that something is important gives rise to an inclination to add emphasis where it is needed.

Sometimes it's not as conscious, or sometimes it makes me...it might make me accentuate something or do something that was working that I hadn't thought about it consciously to do it...that action...more often...yeah (Betty).

For others, teaching and mentoring can add energy taxed by other aspects of practice. Karyn, who both teaches students and mentors her mentor in their strong relationship, talked of the impact that being involved with education had on her. Speaking of teaching, Karyn said,

…I loved it…it fed the nurse in me! Nurses expend a lot of emotion, a lot of care, and a lot of energy and time on other people, and so you kind of have to develop means to get those emotions back and kind of enrich yourself…I felt like teaching those students and changing my community, which is a socio-economically depressed community, to teach people how they can support their families, that had a lot of good stuff in there for me in it (Karyn).

Participants recognize the important of developing strategies that contribute to the overall personal vitality of individual instructors. Personal vitality is of paramount importance in a profession that requires practitioners to both be able to do something well and to exercise a high degree of expertise in preparing others to do the same. Significantly, instructors are expected to maintain a high-level of engagement with a number of students within a given time period.

**Vitality of the profession.** Just as individuals benefit from fresh perspectives and innovation, whole professions can be made stronger by the evolution of practice and the introduction of new practitioners with fresh ideas. It is in this way that the mentor-protégé relationship is most starkly collaborative
(Baker, 2010; O'Neil & Marsick, 2009; Wilson, Brannan, & White, 2010). In this section, I will introduce the comments of mentoring partners as they describe the ways in which their experiences offer the promise of revitalizing not only individuals, but also the professions of which they are members.

Brenda came to the realization that, as a mentor, she represents an important conduit from the educators and mentors of the past to the practitioner-educators of the future. The sheer elegance of the practices and ideas that she has inherited…and to some degree has been entrusted to convey into the future…gave her pause.

Oh, wait, this was a person who made some fundamental discoveries that I just take for granted in practice…I walked and I talked and I touched that person…whoa! You almost feel like you're channeling...I'm channeling the word of this particular person! (Brenda)

Her revelation made me feel as if this progression of ideas and, yes, continuous progress in the development of the andragogy tied to her profession, had more to do with perpetuating the profession than it related to the singular success of any one practitioner. Yet, without the success of each individual in the succession of educators, the success of the profession is not necessarily guaranteed.

And their relationship is, ‘I need to find the next link in the tubing, because I need to pass that on.’ And I think at this point in time in my career, I feel comfortable with that, that it's like it's now time for me to pass it off. It's not time for me to carry the torch anymore. I need to find a good group to pass it off to (Brenda).

In referring to a new course in “real world welding” that his protégé is contemplating, mentor Chuck was pleased and optimistic as he described the possible impact of Bill’s ideas for the future of the program.

He’s shown me a few things, and he’s already brought up some ideas and some challenges that really could possibly improve the program not only as far our students but as far as our department goes (Chuck).
While it is highly likely that Chuck incorporated some of these ideas into his practice, and that Bill will certainly create new ways to introduce students to the profession in the future, both mentor and protégé made it clear that long-term viability of the program and profession is the key. Similarly, a sincere commitment to a team approach can add vitality to a pairing that can resonate throughout a workgroup and, potentially, beyond by way of the example of their effective collaboration. On a related topic, a nurse-educator summed up her views on teamwork and what it means.

We’re together as a team, we work as a team. That’s how life is, really. We all work together, and you have to learn how to work with people’s differences, and if you can do that in a respectful manner, then that just guides them in their profession as well (Karyn).

Overall, instructors in both nursing and welding are concerned about the vitality of both their teaching professions and the CTE fields that they represent. The participants who spoke in this section clearly worried about whether there will be sufficient numbers of educators to support tomorrow’s students, and they are honestly concerned about whether there will be ample practitioners in the future to care for and fabricate our world.

**A source of renewal-in summary.** Based on the accounts of the faculty, mentor-protégé relationships and the activities that surround those relationships provide a source of renewal for those participating in mentoring partnerships. Concerns about the vitality of the profession and those who work and teach in it are addressed through relationships between seasoned professionals and relative newcomers to the field.

**A Transformative Experience**

There may be some question as to whether a mentoring experience can be truly transformational in the manner suggested by thinkers such as Mezirow (1991; 1997; 2000). I would argue that, to the extent that a mentoring experience leads to an epistemological shift in the way a practitioner views the phenomenon of
education and the practice of andragogy, mentoring does indeed have the potential to lead to a transformation of some significant degree. Mezirow’s (1991) concept of phases of transformation seems to align with the experiences of most participants in the study. For the majority of educators, these phases involved a recognition of personal discontent with the present situation, an exploration of possible new actions, and the corresponding planning, knowledge acquisition, and trial that accompany a shift in praxis. These phases correspond to phases four through eight of Mezirow’s 10-phase model (1991, pp. 168-169). Based on this model, faculty participants achieved a Transformation of Consciousness (Taylor, 1989), stopping short of an Integration of Consciousness. Janice probably came as close as anyone in achieving a true transformation; recall that she started her academic journey in nursing under a much more restrictive system, but she then thoroughly embraced a different paradigm when she found herself learning in a mutually-supportive, highly-collaborative situation.

Achieving transformation in the praxis of the practitioner-educator can occur with regard to individuals with no other exposure to teaching than that which they themselves experienced as students earlier in life. It can also come to pass in situations where the instructional models are so different that the latter-day experience calls earlier experiences into question and results in a rejection of past practices and experiences in favor of a new epistemological stance on instruction that is truly “owned” by the protégé. As a general concept of transformation not restricted in function to teaching, Kram (1988) described “transformation” as a stage in the development of the mentoring relationships of female managers. In a mentoring application related to nursing education, Ambrosino (2009) described significant changes in nurse-educator protégés engaged in a program at California State University-Dominguez Hills (CSUDH). Concerning the outcomes of the programs, she wrote that,

First, mentoring contributed to improved quality of faculty life leading to positive changes in faculty recruitment, retention, and promotion. Second, faculty involvement in communities of scholars
and other professional opportunities also had a positive effect on the quality of faculty life (p. 33).

Considering the degree to which these were considered high-value outcomes, and the reality that retention is such a critical element in building and maintaining a healthy institution, the achievement of these outcomes could, in fact, be considered transformational from the standpoint of consciousness.

Yearning for a better way to do anything is often enough to send the curious on a search for answers. Sally described how her interest in active learning and the evolution of her practice came to pass.

I only started to become interested in active learning once I started to read some of the research and then I started to teach...and actually it wasn't the first year, but it was learning from somebody else who taught that way, and observing the strategies that they used, so observing other instructors and seeing the results that they got (Sally).

While Brenda described her perceptions of students and her concerns about their largely “reflection-free” approach to life and practice, she made the following observation:

We don't take the time to sit and reflect. And we need to do that; we need to get them to stop and to reflect, and then to go forward after that (Brenda).

Reflection, she argued, is necessary for building any thoughtful practice. After some further reflection during our conversation, Brenda commented on the impact of working with Mary, an eager and bright nurse-educator who has recently completed a graduate program in nurse-education and possessed the more current knowledge from academe. While this was admittedly more of an “informative” experience as compared to a “transformative” one, being open to that which is new and novel could just as easily lead to serious reflection about praxis.

If we were going to move ahead in nursing curriculum, who’s the one who’s learning it right now? ‘Oh, Mary [is]...’ So, ‘What do we need to know about this? What do we need to know about that?’ Because I’m still operating under the assumption that the person
who's in the educational arena has the most up-to-date information (Brenda).

What was especially refreshing about the descriptions provided by participants was that they were largely positive, and they often involved discussions of how mentoring has seemingly transformed those touched by it. Reflection was identified by some as a key component. It was as if the complexity of the act of teaching took it out of the realm of something that can be done in a reactionary manner and placed it squarely in the category of a willful act that demands careful, measured consideration of each step and reflective evaluation to drive continuous improvement.

**Personal and professional growth.** People engage in mentoring relationships because they are interested in substantive growth in professional competency. The combination of successful outcomes and strong collaborations provides a fertile ground in which individuals can grow in their practice. Mentoring provides important feedback on how things work, and it can be an impetus for continuous improvement as the process encourages review and revision through feedback and ongoing evaluation. One mentor observed,

> What mentoring has done for me this week. It has increased my work load, but also confirmed that I am doing some things well and I have areas for growth! (Sally)

In the sense of transformation, mentoring experiences exposed participants to learning opportunities and divergent practices that provided the protégé—and sometimes the mentor—with a sense of disequilibrium. Which practice is right? Is there one “right” way to teach? In the end, the learner, whether a student or a protégé, will take away from the experience a combination of impressions and ideas that can form the basis for an individualized approach to practice.

The modeling that mentors provided, or at least the manner in which mentors exposed protégés to novel approaches in the learning environment, afforded the mentoring partners with opportunities to see theory translated into
practice. As Janice recalled her exposure to new ideas, she reflected on the impact she felt as she learned.

I think it's funny because a lot of what is being taught as a theory in my classes I was kind of skeptical that I would see it out in the real live world, because sometimes it doesn't always work out like that. But I was surprised pleasantly because a lot of the stuff that I learned was reinforced by Sally. Sally was proactive in certain learning theories, adult learning, all the current educational topics that are out there, and I actually got to see what I was being taught, which was... (a) was great, but (b) it also really changed my mind about how I plan to teach in the future (Janice).

Janice did not say that she had been persuaded to teach in a certain way, but it was clear through our conversation that she was shown a new way of approaching things—and perhaps that was simply to approach the art and science of teaching with an open and reflective mind. It is important to add here that Janice was initially exposed to andragogy in the nursing field through a system that emphasized periods of work on the ward followed by intensive learning that was literally designed to “cram” knowledge into her head. She also mentioned that her early education consisted of being “taught at” rather than learning within a collaborative environment where the educator works as a facilitator of knowledge rather than a tool of the educational system. At the very least, Janice concluded that the original approach to instruction she had experienced was not the only way to teach.

I certainly think that you need to see people--different people--teaching, and then you will pick your own philosophy of teaching and learning, and what works best for you (Janice).

Instructors deal with frustrated students on a regular basis. This frustration may come from a variety of places, but it goes without saying that it must be addressed in order to “clear the air” in the learning environment so that progress can be realized. While it is perhaps logical to assume that resistance and an atmosphere of conflict may be something that is manifested by the students in the learning environment, protégé Mary described how working with mentor Brenda
helped her realize that there could be other origins of tension, and that there were constructive ways to address it.

Yeah, I think also because it helped me to learn also that conflict might be within you, that is why you'll be causing conflict outside. Because it's within you, and you have to be, like, positive, and things like that, and as much as you become positive and be happy and be joyful (Mary).

While this change in point of view may be more informative as compared to transformative, seeing the protégé shift her frame of reference to adopt a more circumspect view of conflict in the learning environment constitutes a genuine change that could pay huge dividends later in her practice.

During the early part of their careers, novice instructors frequently face the fear that they have no idea what they are doing. Managing the transition from content-area expert to novice educator can be an overwhelming experience. Mentors help facilitate the process, allay fears of the unknown, and provide an important personal contact.

Starting a job with the State, there is so much to learn about the systems that a person cannot possibly be able to integrate it into their brains. I still ask lots of questions about tasks I rarely have to perform. Having a mentor, gives you a direct line to information without feeling like you ‘should have known that.’ It's just a more personal approach (Karyn).

They face the difficulty of translating that which is so familiar to them as clinical practitioners to students who have no practical background in the discipline. Such a feat is daunting on a good day. Janice described her discomfort with such a situation.

Because it was the unknown…I’m teaching. You know, I can be most comfortable in a clinical setting where I don’t have any problems and I know my stuff, but do I know how to teach it to someone who’s never been a nurse before. That my greatest fear; can I get down to that level and explain what I do. Because I know what I do. I just don’t know that I can teach what I do. So she really helped me with that (Janice).
Janice shared that the degree to which Sally helped her prove to herself that she can, in fact, be effective in facilitating the learning of early-stage nursing students was very valuable NOT because Sally told her what to do, but because she helped Janice see that she could be successful in the role of an instructor. Similarly, Mary expressed appreciation for the guidance and support that she received.

I feel like I was not thrown there like some of the teachers I’ve had. They were just thrown there. And they have to figure out things on how to do for themselves. And I think mentoring helped me because I had an experienced educator (Mary).

She continued, explaining that working within a mentoring relationship allowed her to assume a broader view and assimilate more information that would have been the case without a guide.

I would have not done it on my own, because when I came as a student, I was just focused only on the objectives (Mary).

This response was not particularly surprising when you consider that which many protégés have identified; having to ingest and digest literally dozens of rules, regulations, local practices, and mores while simultaneously learning to teach difficult subjects. During their joint interview, Mary and Brenda discussed how the mentoring relationship provided a framework for viewing instruction.

I sorta feel like I have to be more overtly organized, because I'm not only teaching the material, or helping students learn the material, but I also have to help Mary learn the backside of it, kind of the teaching portion of it. So it's like, this is the material, but this is how I convey the material (Brenda).

This was, in effect, Brenda showing Mary what happens “behind the curtain” in a learning environment. When combined with the opportunities Mary enjoyed through visits to other faculty both in and out of the nursing program, Brenda structured an opportunity for Mary to witness a number of styles and approaches from which she would presumably draw to develop her own approach to instruction. Working within a mentoring relationship provides a unique perspective which is different than what one adopts when encountering challenges
alone. The acts of mentoring and modeling prompt reflexivity, encourage personal reflection, and drive continuous improvement.

I would not say that mentoring helped me cope with the experience it helped me to look at it differently. If I had not been mentoring I would have dealt with any quarterly issues as usual using my resources such as the associate dean or other faculty, not thinking much about the details as to the why or how. But because I had a mentor I had to think about the why and how and be able to articulate it to the mentee (Sally).

This protégé recalled the key role played by her mentor during this potentially challenging time.

The mentor was there to allay my anxiety. Being in a new place is stressful and having someone who gave me support and equipped me with the fundamental tools was very helpful. [The experience helped me learn] how to transfer the clinical experience and knowledge from my theory classes, put them together and implement them into teaching-learning environment (Mary).

Managing the population growth of the department and program involves dealing with the growth of the instructors as colleagues, educators, and members of the college community. Sally was a full-time leader and mentor, but she still actively learned. This modeled important behaviors for both her more-experienced colleagues and her protégé.

I am a team leader and I have a new clinical faculty and in working with her I find it essential that the group meet face to face so that the other seasoned clinical faculty can interface with the new instructor and share those tidbits that make life easier as a clinical instructor, maybe getting ideas on how to structure conversations with students that are struggling, forms that have been created to tract student progress, additional resources that they have found that help students understand the concepts being discussed better. I often benefit from these ideas and constructive feedback (Sally).

This practice allowed other experienced faculty to be the “stars” and make meaningful contributions to the team. Such an approach further developed and supported a learning culture, promoted personal and professional growth, and modeled respect.
**Satisfaction.** Satisfaction takes on a number of different forms in a mentoring relationship. Experiencing vicarious reinforcement because of a protégé’s exemplary performance, taking pleasure in watching the development of others, and appreciating the degree to which earnest, enthusiastic efforts have improved the overall performance of a department or program, all bring measures of satisfaction to those involved with mentoring.

A number of participants in the study expressed concern for the future health of their professions. For Betty, mentoring well meant equipping her protégés and students—who are essentially her successors—with the tools to be successful so that they will stay around and continue to succeed in the future.

Well, right now especially, looking at the aging nursing workforce, and hearing about the faculty shortage, it like, in order to leave a legacy you need to be able to support the younger teachers or the newer teachers coming in. Maybe if we help them, they’ll avoid some of the pitfalls that we fell into in the beginning, and also it will give them a more positive experience so they won’t be as likely to leave (Betty).

Betty derived satisfaction from both helping students succeed early in their experiences and in seeing them move to higher levels of performance. Still, there was a sense that helping students succeed may be the best approach to ensuring the long-term health of the profession. In providing some measure of security for the future, Betty secured an added measure of satisfaction from her work.

Participants spoke of the role of collaboration during the interview; I have described their esteem for the value of collaboration elsewhere. Both Brenda and the mentoring team of Karyn and Mari spoke freely of what they see as a tremendous value in working in collaborative ways, and that this approach contributed greatly to satisfaction in the relationship. Brenda liked the opportunity to learn in collaborative/cooperative way.

But I think that the opportunities that we got, we got to learn these things together, which was kinda cool to be able to do that. And I think that really helped our relationship (Brenda).
Partners and friends Karyn and Mari reflected on how the evolution and success of their mentoring relationship brought a high degree of satisfaction to their professional and personal lives. As they shared their impressions during the joint interview, they described how the challenges and the fun have combined to make their relationship successful and productive.

Yeah, well we have evolved from a working relationship to friendship. We laugh together, as you can tell, and we have a lot of fun together, getting through the ups and downs of the workplace forms a bond, and the mentorship informally helped that process (Karyn and Mari).

Finally, protégé Janice reflected on the degree to which the mentoring process has brought a sense of satisfaction through the passion she captured through her mentor’s support and the enthusiasm she wished to share for the nursing profession.

I really use that word a lot, but I’ve really been impassioned to teach now. I’ve always wanted to, I think we can’t get enough nurse-teachers. You know the way the nursing profession is going. But I really want to share my knowledge. I really want to be able to show these students what a great profession nursing is. And I’ve always wanted to do that, but she’s really brought it out. She’s really made it concrete (Janice).

Satisfaction may be a major reason why mentoring works for those who recommend it, and it could be viewed as an indicator of a healthy, functioning mentoring relationship. The participants told me that satisfaction takes a number of forms, ranging from an enjoyable and effective working relationship with colleagues to seeing students succeed with both program outcomes and professional advancement.

A transformative experience—in summary. Through the interviews that told so much about the lived experiences of mentors and protégés, instructors emphasized that mentoring matters and can change their praxis. Mentoring led to significant personal and professional growth, both of which contributed to satisfaction and a tendency to persist in the profession. Through mentoring, the
mentor and other colleagues shared passion for the discipline and for teaching in ways that influenced the growth of the protégé while simultaneously modeling high-yield practices. It seems likely that mentoring influenced a transformation of consciousness among the educator-practitioners involved in my study, and this transformation definitely involved critical reflection about praxis and its impact on learners. It is less clear that mentoring results in the type of critical self reflection necessary to trigger the most profound level of transformation.

**Is Mentoring Really That Great?**

In the preceding section, much was written about the positive experiences of the mentors and protégés involved in the present study. To a person, participants spoke highly of their experiences and reported that they both learned from and enjoyed the process. Does this mean that mentoring always works and consistently produces both stellar results and raving fans? Yes and no. Certainly, among those who are willing to engage in this process, and for those who find eager and compatible partners who are comfortable working in this sort of relationship, faculty-to-faculty mentoring can be a very positive and affirming learning adventure that leads to personal and professional growth, renewal, and deep levels of satisfaction. For individuals who are not interested in developing professionally within the parameters of this sort of system, or for those who cannot find partners who are open to the time and other requirements typically encountered in mentoring initiative, the process could be less than satisfying. This was a hermeneutic phenomenological study comprised of a purposive sample of individuals who wanted to talk about their mentoring experiences. The literature indicated that unsuccessful mentor-protégé pairings do occur. There are programs that do not produce good results, and there are participants who could report horrible experiences. Because of the design of this study and the nature of the participant pool, I did not find these people.

In the section on areas for further research, I discussed possible research designs that could involve larger, randomized samples and positivist/post-
positivist approaches that would be better positioned to uncover dissatisfied participants would tell a much different story. Rather than account for these possible outcomes here, I will leave it for future research—mine or that undertaken by my community college colleagues—to sort out the rest of the story.

Section Three Summary

The purpose of section three is to provide, in an organized fashion, a personal, unexpurgated view of the lived experiences of community college CTE instructors engaged in faculty-to-faculty mentoring activities. The themes from Table 14 are used as an organizational framework, and the statements made by participants are matched to elements from the theme-phrases in order to give voice to the individual elements that make up each theme. Finally, in each thematic section, the elements are essentially reassembled within the context of the experience shared in the interviews in order to give a clear picture of what participants found to be the common experiences of faculty-to-faculty mentoring relative to that theme.

The lived experiences of the participants as expressed during their interviews reveal mentoring as an act of collaboration that leads to mutual discovery and develops through effective communication, an authentic reciprocal relationship that effectively builds high-functioning teams, a process of continuous improvement that supports individual and professional growth, a source of renewal that contributes to the ongoing success of both individuals and the profession, and a transformative experience that changes lives. Stated succinctly, mentoring appears to be an inspired and inspiring way to provide structure, support, and guidance to new instructors while providing a way for seasoned instructors to both revitalize their professional lives and contribute to the future health of the profession they so passionately embrace.

Chapter Summary

The intent of this study is to share the lived experience of CTE instructors engaged in faculty-to-faculty mentoring programs in community colleges. This
chapter illustrates five themes that emerged from the research by presenting the significant statements made by participants and organizing them based on emerging themes inspired by those statements. These themes are shown in Table 12. Participants in the study responded to questions designed to elicit their reactions to the mentoring experience. These questions are contained in Table 8. What they told me during the interviews, and what emerged as the significant statements and formulated meanings were explored, indicated that mentoring is experienced as a collaborative relationship that drives continuous improvement, personal and professional renewal, and provides both informative and transformative experiences for those who take part in it. A significant part of the experience is that relationships are often reciprocal, meaning that each member can and does learn from the other. The participants who took part in this study were also passionately interested in experiences and practices that would sustain the profession and increase the likelihood of retaining new instructors in the field.

An act of collaboration. Collaboration was not only desirable—it was necessary because of the depth of knowledge and experience necessary to equip instructors to succeed. The participants pointed out that no one member of the team has a monopoly on key knowledge. Protégés often possessed valuable current knowledge in the content area, while mentors had the advantage in terms of understanding how a particular department or program runs and teaching can be approached most fruitfully. The collaboration allowed both members to grow, and it helped them work with the community formed in the department to share critical knowledge that can help everyone perform at a higher level.

An authentic, reciprocal relationship. The reciprocal relationship was typified by teamwork and the desire to do what is necessary for other members of the team, often including others in the department who are not part of the mentoring pair. It was within the reciprocal relationship that mutual support was expressed. A significant part of the mentoring experience was that relationships at critical points in any system were often reciprocal, meaning that each member
learned from the other, and that the work pairs did appear to make a significant difference in the capacity of the organization, whether it be a nursing program or a welding department, to adapt and thrive. The participants who took place in this study were passionately interested in strengthening the present in order to ensure the future. I never once heard participants talk about their individual destinies without weaving them inextricably with the fate of the program they loved.

**A process of continuous improvement.** Participants in the study indicated that they were always interested in improving their individual skills and the overall performance of the program in which they served. Content area knowledge was valued, but procedural elements seemed to be accorded equally high esteem. Knowing how to do things at the state of the art was also cited as key to better overall performance and a competitive advantage. The programs addressed in the present study must meet accreditation and certification standards that are imposed from outside of the department. As such, there was a realization that both nursing and welding must “improve or die” to remain relevant for the benefit of the departments, the students who complete the programs, and the industries.

**A source of renewal.** Both the professions and the individuals within them must find ways to revitalize and continue the work set before them. Mentors found working with protégés to be renewing because of the new knowledge and perspectives shared within the relationship. Significantly, mentors also identified the degree to which supporting protégés provides a revitalization of the profession, especially in a time of impending retirements and shortages of trained practitioners.

**A transformative experience.** Participants described the impact of the mentoring experience on their lives as individuals and professionals. In many cases, the transformation was described as learning that teaching can be done in completely different ways. Transformation could also be realized by discovering the satisfaction realized by helping someone do something completely novel, such as helping a student complete a course of study, or by supporting the future health
of the profession by infusing new ideas to maintain a competitive edge. Mentoring is transformative in degrees, and the depth of the transformation depends on the individual.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION & QUESTIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

This study examined the uses of faculty-to-faculty mentoring programs as they were applied to first-year CTE faculty, particularly those in nursing and in welding. Through the use of ISS, with special emphasis on hermeneutic phenomenology, the present study gave voice to the lived experiences of these faculty as they offered their personal insights into what it was like to participate in mentor-protégé relationships designed to prepare them for work in the community college setting. While the thoughts and experiences of this group of individuals cannot be effectively generalized across a broad population, it is my conclusion that these experiences constitute an authentic and effective summary of what it was like for these professionals to engage in a mentoring experience.

In this chapter, I will explore the insights that emerged from the analysis of interviews, email responses, and journal entries. Rather than constituting responses to survey items, these data are the result of opportunities afforded participants to describe, in their own words, the actual phenomenon of mentoring with the CTE context. The reasons for embarking on this research remain as valid at the time of this writing as they did when the preliminary work was undertaken: (a) increases in retirement rates force extensive replacement of experienced community college CTE faculty, (b) teaching effectiveness is linked to student success and is often predicated on experience and the application of best andragogical practices, (c) mentoring constitutes effective preparation for new professionals, and (d) the research problem constitutes a significant challenge for community college leaders. What follows are the insights drawn from the data analysis, together with pertinent references to the literature. Table 15 traces the relationships among research questions, related themes as suggested in Table 14, and emerging insights drawn from the experiences of the mentoring pairs. Each of the five insights will be explored in the following sections. These insights will be followed by questions for practice, limitations of the study, areas for further research, and personal reflection.
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<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Related Themes</th>
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| What are the key elements within the mentoring experience? | • An act of collaboration that requires time, mutual engagement, and effective communication.  
• An authentic, reciprocal relationship that assumes passion, support, and a team orientation.  
|                                                                 | • A collaboration model for first-year instructors in CTE programs may inform high-yield practices that improve overall performance throughout the college. |
| How do the elements of mentoring influence the experiences of first-year faculty? | • A process of continuous improvement that is based on outcomes and involves feedback and a commitment to ongoing learning and success for the pair, the profession, and the students.  
• A transformative experience that promotes both personal and professional growth and satisfaction.  
|                                                                 | • Just as providing a continuous improvement environment for protégés strengthens their performance, broader implementation of such a model may provide support for ongoing success across the institution.  
• Providing authentic growth experiences for faculty may positively influence both satisfaction and retention. |
| What common themes emerge concerning mentoring experiences that participants self-describe as “successful”? | • A source of renewal of self that is designed to support the ongoing vitality of individuals and the profession.  
• A commitment to ongoing learning and success for the pair, the profession, and the students.  
|                                                                 | • Appropriately supporting faculty in any discipline may result in higher levels of success among students.  
• Any initiative deemed successful in the institution ultimately must drive success for students. |
Collaboration and Relationships

A collaboration model for first-year instructors in CTE programs may inform high-yield practices that improve overall performance throughout the college. It is significant that no one elects to mentor in a vacuum. Indeed, the nature of the mentor-protégé relationship assumes the existence of at least two individuals. This is because collaboration requires mutual engagement and a sort of give-and-take relationship to work through the tough times and struggle productively with the problems that one inevitably finds in the teaching trade. As was described in Chapter Three, the participants talked of how their collaborations led to authentic solutions for the pair—and how these solutions often helped students learn as well. This is consistent with the literature (e.g., Ambrosino, 2009; Allison-Jones & Hirt, 2004; Jacoby, 2006; Pearch & Marutz, 2005) that better trained and experienced faculty tend to be more successful with students. The experiences of mentoring participants that suggest better results with students are consistent with existing research (e.g., Allison-Jones & Hirt, 2004; Tinto, 1975; 1994; 1997) that good teaching and student engagement tend to correlate positively with student success and retention.

But what about implications for this practice elsewhere in the community college? The literature contains a myriad of references that commented on the proliferation of mentoring in other areas of the community college enterprise (e.g., Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Hosey, 1990) in four-year institutions (e.g., Grigoriu & Hopkins, 2005) and in the for-profit sector (Grigoriu & Hopkins, 2005; Johnson & Ridley, 2004; Kram, 1988; Kram & Isabella, 1985). Yet a review of the literature did not lead to the conclusion that mentoring experiences are extensively or evenly distributed throughout institutions. While the purpose of this study was not to discover instances of mentoring across LDT and CTE disciplines throughout a given institution, it was designed to express the lived experiences of participants with an eye towards showing how mentoring can add value within the community college. The experiences of partners showed the practice to be valuable as a force
to build collegiality and teaching proficiency within the particular CTE disciplines profiled in this study. Co-development of content and collaborative problem solving among nurse-educators and welder-educators provided examples of this approach and is consistent with the literature (e.g., Baker, 2010) and the building of collegiality, reciprocity, and a sense of identification among colleagues (e.g., Ambrosino, 2009; White et al., 2010; Wilson et al., 2010).

As a productive practice, mentoring has promise for other disciplines across the institution. And while mentoring can certainly be used to build skills in other areas around the college for such purposes as succession planning and professional development to support administration (e.g., Grigoriu & Hopkins, 2005), it is in the area of teaching that it can have the greatest impact on arguably the most essential stakeholder group a community college can have—its students. Failing to deliver superior service in the forms of excellent teaching and student support threatens the core mission of the community college.

It is important at this point to review what the study was not designed to provide. The study was not designed to determine or establish guidelines and parameters regarding aptitudes or personality traits that would likely result in a successful mentoring experience. For the purposive sample involved in the present study, mentoring worked. Certainly, participants described their experiences within the relationship as helping to reduce anxiety and uncertainty associated with the novelty of working in an instructional environment when many protégés start their educational adventures with little or no formal training in topics such as pedagogy, classroom management, or instructional strategies for exceptional students. This is consistent with the literature (e.g., Ambrosino, 2009; Bell-Scriber & Morton, 2009; Blauvelt & Spath, 2008) as novice educators engaged in mentoring experiences tend to glean essential lessons from more-experienced educators, and these experiences provide crucial learning opportunities and coping strategies. Readers of this study should carefully evaluate the gains of the mentoring programs detailed here and any other mentoring programs reviewed for
indications of what can be achieved through the broader application of this sort of professional development.

**Continuous Improvement**

*Just as providing a continuous improvement environment for protégés strengthens their performance, broader implementation of such a model may provide support for ongoing success across the institution.*

The experiences of the mentoring partners made it clear that the learning process involved in mentoring experiences needs to be ongoing and deliberate in order to provide the greatest benefit. By their very nature, CTE programs are driven to continuous improvement. The regulatory environment (e.g., Hyslop, 2008; Carl B. Perkins Act of 2006) demands that programs maintain a high degree of currency, and this includes productive connections with industry partners (Levin et al., 2010). It is simply good business practice to make sure that program completers possess the most current knowledge and skills in order to be competitive in the employment marketplace. If you run a CTE program, it is important on many levels that your completers get and hold jobs!

The mentoring participants in the present study provided several crucial insights into their experiences that pointed out the importance of continuous improvement as an outcome for mentoring programs. First, there was strong identification with the idea that learning never ends. While this is true in most things, it is especially true in relation to CTE programs. Perhaps more so than in LDT disciplines, the nature of knowledge in disciplines such as nursing and welding changes frequently. Cangelosi et al. (2009) presented results acknowledging that “…a nurse who is proficient in clinical practice is not necessarily proficient in teaching clinical skills to others” (p. 370), a viewpoint that was articulated by several study participants. More significantly, the “churn” in faculty caused by retention challenges such as retirement and wage competition with the for-profit sector means that new faculty with significant deficits in teaching experience and andragogical knowledge need initial indoctrination into
the field followed by ongoing training to increase their teaching proficiency. Study participants reported feeling anxious about their roles as instructors, a reaction that is quite understandable when viewed within the context of the literature (e.g., Allison-Jones & Hirt, 2004; Baker 2010; Jacoby, 2006; Levin et al., 2010) reflecting a relationship between the lack of andragogical expertise and practical experience and a risk of lower student achievement. This view is also consistent with the common sense notion that we are uncomfortable doing that which we do not quite know how to do…especially in a public venue and in the presence of those relying on us for direction and support. Because of the value added through the mentoring process, study participants largely reported enjoying the opportunities afforded them to witness innovative, high-yield teaching practices as they worked with colleagues. It must be said that both mentors and protégés felt that they often found opportunities to grow.

Frequently, participants stated that the pivotal reason for engaging in the growth experiences focused on improving programs so that students would stand a higher likelihood of succeeding. Personal growth was viewed as a way of increasing collective knowledge within a program or discipline in order to better serve students and produce highly-competent completers. While there is virtually no recent literature linking welding and fabrication education at the community college level and mentoring, the literature on nursing education and mentoring at the community college level focuses on programs that are dedicated to develop teaching skills in novice nurse-educators so that they can effectively reach students, increase the likelihood of their success, and also increase the persistence, retention, and success of the relatively inexperienced educators. Readers of this study should recognize that mentoring participants tended to emphasize the value of their ongoing learning experiences within the context of what those experiences could do to help students succeed and programs to flourish, a typical outcome that was reflected in the literature (e.g., White et al., 2010). As articulated by the participants, the key metric seemed to be program success as measured by student
success, e.g., successful passage of the NCLEX-RN or AWS assessments together with placement and persistence in a job. This emphasis on teaching and student success is consistent with the mission of community colleges concerning access, student support, and career and technical education (e.g., Cohen & Brawer, 2003) and concerning the importance of effective student engagement as it relates to student achievement (e.g., Jacoby, 2006; Tinto, 1994, 1997). The crucial “take-away” is that continuously building skills and abilities within the corps of CTE faculty through mentoring, collaboration, and clear, consistent communication seems to produce positive results in the areas explored in this study according to the participants. Although findings from an ISS study should not be immediately assumed to be generalizable to the greater population, the positive experiences of the study participants should encourage community college leaders to experiment with faculty-to-faculty mentoring initiatives in other CTE areas beyond those discussed here and in LDT disciplines as well.

The Role of Promoting Growth

Providing authentic growth experiences for faculty may positively influence both satisfaction and retention. Promoting growth among faculty in areas traditionally associated with mentoring (e.g., Friend, Information Source, Intellectual Source, Career Guide) seems to enhance both performance and job satisfaction levels. The participants whose experiences are reflected in this study found that growth opportunities equipped them with key skills and offered support when they encountered difficulties with the work. They tended to feel positive about the work, their ability to do it, and the opportunities to grow in knowledge and skill over time because of their mentoring relationships. Because of the design of the study (i.e., a purposive sample) and the nature of the participant pool, there were no anecdotal accounts of mentoring participants who felt unsupported. However, examples from the literature discussing the impact of feelings of burnout (e.g., Baker, 2010; Brightman, 2006) and anxiety associated with a lack of support (e.g., Billings & Halstead, 2009) would support a conjecture that providing
resources to faculty, including mentoring initiatives, could have a beneficial effect on attitudes and retention. Sarmiento, Laschinger, and Iwasiw (2004) posited a relationship between high levels of burnout, low levels of empowerment, and heightened dissatisfaction that could be tied to lower retention of faculty. Participants expressed the belief that the growth they experienced through the mentoring phenomenon increased their process knowledge (e.g., andragogical skills) and their overall comfort level with teaching.

Retaining current CTE educators and attracting new ones was described by participants as important for the health and vitality of the disciplines and the professions they support. Significantly, practitioners from the field tend to have the most recent industry information, so it could be concluded that content area knowledge is necessary, but not sufficient, for success in an educational setting. This notion is supported by the literature (e.g., Jacoby, 2004) and by the anecdotal observations of study participants who felt comfortable with the content area but were practically mortified at times when faced with learning and implementing teaching strategies. Providing the tools (i.e., support, acculturation, andragogical training to grasp the process of teaching) will assist deans, directors, and chairs in training and retaining competent faculty; continuous improvement methods designed to support faculty will help with retention on a long-term basis. In this, readers of the study should note that professional development for faculty, especially novice faculty, should include both content and process knowledge in order to provide a solid base for success of both the faculty and the students who will be taught by them. Of the two areas, novice instructors are more likely to be deficient in process knowledge, primarily because their experience prior to entering the community college was in the content-rich world of practice. For an institution, this is actually good news, because the greatest source of process knowledge likely exists within a given community college in the guise of talented teaching colleagues from throughout that organization. Participants talked of visiting colleagues in unrelated disciplines and participating in workshops and
campus events to learn more about the craft and science of teaching, thereby engaging in vital professional growth extending beyond typical formal education (Cangelosi et al., 2009). This is an approach that could be replicated to increase instructor competency and satisfaction without the need for outside “experts” and costly conferences. Such an approach would likely drive growth not only within the existing cadre of educators in a given program, but, as suggested by the literature (e.g., Gazza & Shellenbarger, 2005; Thurston et al., 2009; Wilson et al., 2010), it may also help attract and retain new practitioner-educators to the institution. Baker (2010) reported retention of 91% of novice faculty after three years based on a faculty mentoring program launched at a large community college in California. During tough economic times for community colleges, recruiting effectively and mentoring well can help achieve bottom-line efficiencies if faculty are retained. O’Connell and Mei-Chuan (2007) estimated the average cost of faculty replacement ranges from approximately $13,000 to as much as one times the annual salary cost of a faculty. Hiring smart and retaining well through thoughtful, ongoing programs constitute astute business practices on the part of community college leaders. These are decisions that will lead to the growth of programs and the continuing professional development of the practitioner-educators who make them work.

Support

Appropriately supporting faculty in any discipline may result in higher levels of success among students. Participants in this study voiced a strong interest in helping students succeed. As much as educators may want to hone their skills and perfect their craft as teachers for personal development reasons, they want to make sure that students benefit from their innovations and efforts. This is perhaps a more immediate concern for CTE programs than for LDT departments, as the “tech” graduates are being prepared for a specific occupational outcome and will enter the professional workforce directly from community college and sooner than their transfer counterparts. Mentors talked of the dual benefit supporting protégés
and, in the process, clarifying content and developing techniques to help students learn and succeed as well. There was also a strong willingness to try techniques and approaches that might help students and to continuously evaluate how these could apply to supporting student learning and success.

Mentoring is acknowledged as a way to attract, acculturate, and retain nurse-educators (e.g., Baker, 2010; Gazza, 2008; Gazza & Shellenbarger, 2005). In the area of welding and fabrication education, participants attested to the existence and efficacy of mentoring as a development tool. As such, mentoring is designed, in part, to clarify the process aspects of teaching in order to improve the student experience. Participants spoke of learning to use a variety of approaches beyond simple lecture to communicate ideas and maximize learning (consistent with Lei, 2007), something that is absolutely essential in areas where technical skills are taught. As the mentors model techniques for the protégés, the protégés, in turn, can use the high-yield practices to which they are exposed to support student learning. This is, in effect, the use of both the content area and process skills, honed through interaction with the mentors and other sources, to support student learning through a rich relationship. The literature (e.g., Langbein & Snider, 1999; Levin et al., 2010; St. Clair, 1994; Tinto, 1994; 1997) showed the significance of productive relationships between skilled faculty and successful students. Readers should realize that providing support designed to improve instructional practices will likely increase the success and prestige of programs. This outcome could have an impact on institutional prestige, enrollment, and the tuition revenue that can be driven by both. Appropriate support for faculty can translate into better outcomes for students, which, in turn, reflects well on programs and the entire college.

**Successful Institutions and Successful Students**

Any initiative deemed successful in the institution ultimately must drive success for students. A recognized role of postsecondary education is to provide an environment where good teaching can happen (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Levin et al., 2010). While teaching shares the spotlight with research and publication at
typical four-year institutions, it continues to be the primary mission of the community college. For teaching to be truly successful, it must result in the achievement of learning outcomes as measured by institutional and, where appropriate, industry-standard assessments such as the NCLEX-RN and the AWS certification process. Participants in the present study stated a desire to improve their programs and increase the level of support for their students in an effort to improve persistence, retention, and success. The work done in mentoring relationships involves a deepening understanding of and facility with high-yield teaching practices and instructor-student relations. The goals, methods, and levels of involvement shown in the mentor-protégé experiences described in this study are consistent with the high-yield practices described by Levin et al. (2010), who explicated the following four characteristics (the “4 C’s”) that typify successful programs in the California community colleges studied:

- cohesion—the ability of program personnel to operate as a unit in which behaviors and actions mesh or are rationally consistent;
- cooperation—the degree to which program personnel work together toward common goals and form good working relationships with each other and with students;
- connection—the ability of program personnel to sustain interdependent relationships with internal and external entities, such as other departments within the college and industry representatives;
- consistency—the presence of a distinctive and stable pattern of program behaviors that promote program goals. (pp. 52-53)

Beyond these four dimensions, the study also recognized the “…central and critical role played by the faculty in assuring program success” (Levin et al., 2010, p. 53). Mentoring initiatives (e.g., Baker, 2010; Kram, 1988; White et al., 2010; Wilson et al., 2010), through an emphasis on collaboration, continuous improvement, growth, support, and success for both the institution and student, reflect the letter and the spirit of the “4 C’s” and also include the “central and critical role” of faculty in making it all work. Because of the anecdotal “testimony” of program participants and the tight alignment between the
experiences of mentors and protégés and the “4 C’s” as articulated above, instructional leaders should consider the role that thoughtful mentoring programs may play in supporting overall success within the institution.

Faculty-to-faculty mentoring is but one of a host of professional development choices available to community college educators who seek to improve praxis in the learning environment in the hope that such ideas will translate into better outcomes for learners. It seems to be the case that community college leaders and educators are willing to try whatever it takes to increase success for students, and that no one sees the job as complete unless students are doing well. Participants often described their personal definitions of success as being inextricably tied to student success, student outcomes attainment, ever-rising completions rates and pass rates on certifying examinations, and overall student happiness. All things considered, study participants would likely question any claims of institutional “success” if students were not achieving their goals.

Questions for Practice

I embarked on this study to inform practice—both mine and that of others who are engaged in leading community colleges in times of transition. My experience in leading CTE programs and divisions both raised my concern about sources for new faculty in the future and made me curious about how mentoring—a tool used throughout the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors to acculturate and prepare people to transition into new opportunities—might be a factor. After concluding this study regarding the lived experiences of faculty engaging in mentoring partnerships, I have identified the following questions for practice that community college leaders charged with the responsibility of securing their programs should consider:

What strategies best provide a means of leveraging the knowledge, experience, and energy of content-area specialists outside of the community college enterprise to support both existing faculty and students? Most prospective faculty who will teach in CTE programs possess industry experience and
content/process area knowledge in that area but no experience with teaching in the community college. It makes sense to introduce promising candidates to teaching with a system that establishes a relatively-high comfort level for the candidate and access to existing faculty who understand both the industry aspects and the intricacies of teaching. A mentoring program can do this. While most colleges offer mentoring of various sorts and degrees, peer mentoring offers the added advantage of placing the mentor and the protégé on common, familiar ground. Since they already speak the same “language” in terms of their shared content-area background, the mentor can more easily and confidently introduce concepts surrounding teaching and contextualize them, tying them to industry experiences.

*What are the real costs of professional development, and how do they compare with the downstream advantages accrued to faculty, students, and other college stakeholder groups?* Leaders should evaluate the mentoring process within the context of the costs of replacing faculty who attrite due to bad experiences as well as the impact on students and colleagues of instructors who persist in the faculty but do not necessarily help students achieve program outcomes or industry standards. The fixed and variable costs of faculty replacement are usually aggravated by lost momentum within the program, time and monetary costs of sourcing and training part-time or temporary faculty, and lost capacity when no ready replacement can be found. Also, poor faculty can make a program less attractive, resulting in under-enrollment, bad will within the community (e.g., taxpayers, industry groups), and difficulties with articulation partners such as high schools and four-year universities.

*How should mentors be chosen to increase the likelihood of positive outcomes for those involved, including the institution?* Mentors should be chosen as much for their passion and collaborative nature as for their longevity of service in the department. The observations of the participants reflect their recognition of the value of enthusiastic, committed mentors as driving forces behind continuous improvement and the maintenance of positive departmental climate. CTE
programs are social environments, and climate does matter in terms of job satisfaction and the degree to which instructors can model high-yield practices, exemplary behaviors, and positive relations to the students. After all, if the programs provide the support that students need to be successful, there is a possibility that some will want to return and fill the ranks of future instructors. The program is always on display.

_How much professional development is enough? Is there not an expectation that faculty should arrived fully-formed and ready to teach successfully?_ It is important to understand that the art and science of teaching cannot be imparted on an inexperienced instructor by way of an occasional seminar or workshop. Opportunities to attend conferences are likely to be appreciated, but there is no guarantee of quality control regarding what is on offer. Too, it is important to realize that novice instructors “don’t know what they don’t know.” Consequently, attending a conference may not address that which needs attention. A thoughtful mentoring system that incorporates specific, measurable, and realistic goals based on a thorough assessment of learner needs, regular contact between the mentor and protégé, and open, honest communication is much more likely to address whatever need presents itself. An instructor involved in such a system is much more likely to have training and acculturation requirements addressed in a realistic, relatively timely fashion.

_What is the relationship between professional development and success?_ Community college leaders should evaluate the degree to which a thoughtfully-designed mentoring initiative is likely to help the institution realize the caliber of academic program it wishes to have. Especially given the high levels of retirements that will sweep community colleges—and CTE programs—over the next 10 years, it is imperative that leaders have a comprehensive plan in place to make sure that there will be enough instructors with the right credentials and the proper andragogical training to effectively address the learning requirements of the students who will support us in the future.
Careful consideration of these five questions within the context of this study and the available literature on mentoring should help community college leaders intelligently evaluate the promise of faculty-to-faculty mentoring in CTE programs and map a course that makes sense for their institutions. Hoping that novice instructors “figure it out” as they go along is unrealistic for the instructors, unfair to students who are investing their tuition dollars in programs that they believe will help them, and unwise from a public policy standpoint; the consequences for the community college could be lost prestige within the various stakeholder communities who support the college, loss of programs that may no longer meet certification standards, and potential negative impact on accreditation for the institution as a whole.

**Limitations of the Study**

Part of the design of this dissertation includes a discussion of limitations. In Chapter Three, I pointed out common limitations that one would find in any study that uses an ISS approach. In addition to these common limitations, I would like to emphasize several additional areas. First, the focus was narrow because of the emphasis on CTE programs and the even more-restrictive lens imposed when I narrowed the emphasis to nursing and welding. The casual observer might wonder what the two have in common. References to the nature of the culture and the impact of the regulatory environment peculiar to each should address that question. The fact that both have instructor populations which are aging rapidly ties them together and, to some extent, makes them unique. While other programs within my experience have similar characteristics, they were not represented here. Neither was a traditional lower-division transfer area, a remedial program, ABE/GED, ESOL, or community education, continuing education, or customized workforce development program.

A further limitation is that there was no attempt to correlate success in the achievement of student outcomes to faculty-to-faculty mentoring, although anecdotal evidence from the literature would seem to suggest that quality of the
learner experience should improve with enhanced instructor preparation. Based on the work completed in this study, there is no way to know this without further research, likely a study employing a positivist/post-positivist approach or a longitudinal design to get at data that could lead to the measurement of correlations, comparisons, or tracking in a meaningful and verifiable way.

A final limitation to the study involves the method for capturing interviews. My original plan included using Skype/Pamela to capture video artifacts of the interviews. Unfortunately, video rarely worked reliably and participants struggled with the technology at their remote sites. Fortunately, I never failed to capture the audio track, so my research was never interrupted. My course in future projects—and my advice to other researchers interested in following my lead—would be to use digital video cameras on location to capture interviews if preserving images is vital to the study. As it turned out, the audio recordings and my anecdotal notes were sufficient to help me capture and recall the tone of conversations. There are better, more reliable technologies out there, but the simple fact is that less is often more.

Areas for Further Research

There are four primary areas that call for further study relative to the efficacy of faculty-to-faculty mentoring. The first echoes the comments that I made in the section on limitations. Based on the information gained through this study on the phenomenon, the logical next step would be to use the themes as the basis of a broad-based quantitative study to gauge the proliferation of mentoring practices in CTE programs. Separate studies could examine demonstrated efficacy of these practices on protégé’s teaching skills. Another focus would be to determine whether the mentoring experience led to increased longevity of the protégé in the teaching profession when compared to educators who did not experience the same treatment. Other studies might examine any correlation or comparison that faculty-to-faculty mentoring may demonstrably have to the
attainment of student satisfaction and success. Such work would clarify the place of mentoring in its various forms as a professional development tool.

Another area of research indicated by the outcomes of this study is to investigate whether positive learning experiences within a CTE program results in a greater propensity for student graduates to enter into community college teaching at some later point in life. Given the unprecedented level of retirement and the need for broad replacement of faculty across most CTE areas, such information would provide impetus for improved teaching beyond the obvious need to help students pass certifications and complete programs so that they can assume their roles in industry.

A third area for further research is to evaluate the applicability of mentoring to support instructors in traditional lower-division transfer programs. It is often said that transfer faculty in areas such as psychology and mathematics do not require the same degree of instructional support as do CTE faculty, primarily because transfer faculty are taught in the manner in which they will ostensibly be teaching when they start doing so. I have conducted numerous observations in classrooms, labs, and shops, and I am led to believe that there is considerable variability in the andragogical skill and affect of instructors in both CTE and transfer disciplines. Student evaluations, for example, show that math instructors in the same department vary widely in their levels of andragogical knowledge and their approaches to instruction. This can be the case even when faculty plan together, follow common course content guides, and utilize the same texts and supplementary materials. The mentoring experience of nursing and welding instructors indicates that we can do better.

Much of the literature around mentoring in a CTE setting, especially as regards its use in community colleges, focused on nursing education. A significant contribution could be made to the literature by isolating and exploring mentoring in a wider variety of CTE disciplines. Welding is an interesting example. I interviewed participants from this area and found the experiences of these
individuals to be strikingly similar to those of nurse-educators, yet there is virtually no literature discussing the extent, design, or success of mentoring programs in welding and fabrication.

In summary, there are a number of potentially fruitful areas of research yet to be explored concerning the nature and impact of mentoring in community colleges. Until such time as community colleges require a body of andragogical study as prerequisite to employment, there will be underprepared novice instructors who will try and fail in the classroom, shop, or lab. The consequences are severe and the price is high, as these well-meaning individuals will take hopeful students with them when things go awry. Research that helps identify, explicate, and validate promising professional development practices like mentoring will provide a tremendous service to community colleges and the students they serve.

**Personal Reflection**

In the process of conducting numerous interviews over the past year, I found myself continually amazed at the passion and enthusiasm shown by both mentors and protégés concerning their relationships with each other and the work that they do with students. Since the mission of the community college is to teach, I would certainly expect to encounter professionals who displayed a dedication to their subjects and a proclivity to teaching that might be absent in places where teaching is not a top priority. Still, I did not meet a single instructor who was not searching for a better way to reach students. These are, of course, the instructors you would expect to respond in this manner, but none of them indicated explicitly or by implication that they felt that others were not trying to do as well. There was some disappointment that not everyone had access to mentoring at all times, but there was a collegial enthusiasm that reflected a desire to help another instructor if it were possible.

Similarly, I was touched that many of the participants commented that this research was both needed and long overdue. While it is true that there are
numerous positivist/post-positivist studies focusing on the proliferation of mentoring, there is little work on CTE programs (with the exception of nursing) past the early-1990s, and the work that does exist does not necessarily “give voice” to the lived experience of instructors experiencing mentoring as a phenomenon. It was fascinating to hear the stories of those who live this every day, and the enthusiasm shown for their vocation came through clearly in a way that cannot be captured by a survey.

As a community college leader, I identified two major “takeaways” in the course of the research. First, the fact that most of the protégés in the participant pool were part-time faculty, and that most programs in both LDT and CTE draw heavily on part-time instructors to address the demand for teaching, emphasized the importance of providing significant, relevant professional development for all instructors at community and technical colleges. As resources become increasingly scarce, we will likely not have the luxury of hiring full-time faculty to address burgeoning demand for instruction. Trends over the past decade would suggest that we as community college leaders and faculty will be much more likely to present programs with significantly larger numbers of part-time faculty. Since faculty are the primary contact for most students and their classrooms are likely to be the only “community” experienced by many learners, it is to the benefit of all community college stakeholders to provide the best acculturated, most thoroughly equipped educators to address their needs. As the literature and the study participants suggest, instructors with the proper andragogical foundation and appropriate levels of support are more likely to provide students with effective instruction and appropriate levels of support, and they are more likely to experience a level of satisfaction that drives retention and success for both the students and the instructors themselves. Second, it occurs to me that leadership in the area of instruction is probably the most important thing that can be done to improve the experience of students in our community college programs. While there will doubtless be a profound need to develop new leaders to replace those
who will retire in the coming years, it is imperative that these leaders be equipped with the tools to intelligently select, develop, and support promising faculty, and that significant resources be directed towards instructor preparation—including mentoring initiatives—to help ensure the highest quality of instruction and support possible. I am eager to drive progress in this area.

In bringing this experience to a close, I look forward to doing further work in the support of faculty and instruction. Two theoretical bases for mentoring seem especially appropriate to review at this time. First, Bandura’s Social Learning Theory (1977) implies, in part, that learners derive meaning from experiences through observations that will help them plan future behaviors in order to maximize satisfaction and efficacy. The second theory that applies here is Stage Theory. Essentially, striking key relationships at strategic points in development can lead to revitalization and the discovery of new, potent directions and opportunities that arise from variety and new challenges (Beyene, et al., 2002; Brightman, 2006; Kram, 1988). Participants in this study allowed me to be an observer and to benefit in ways that will influence my thought and instructional leadership from this point forward. Similarly, exposure to key individuals during the research phase of my work has introduced variety and new challenges into my practice as a community college leader. It is my hope that the work now completed will serve other community college leaders as they strive to develop and continuously improve the learning environment that inspires and supports those who wish to follow their dreams and those who would help them do so.
References


