

ABSTRACT

SEEGER, FRIEDERIKE. Humanizing the Educational Experience: The Role of Faculty Mentoring Relationships in the College Experience of First-Generation, Low-Income Students (Under the direction of Dr. Susan Barcinas).

First-generation, low-income (FGLI) students, who make up a rising share of the undergraduate student population, face numerous barriers that negatively affect their success in college (Engle & Tinto, 2008) and graduate at significantly lower rates than their more advantaged peers (Pell Institute, 2016). Students from low socio-economic backgrounds who do not graduate from college are often worse off financially, having accumulated student loans without having the extra earning power that a degree would provide (Engle & Tinto, 2008), thus perpetuating the cycle of poverty. Interactions with institutional agents, particularly mentoring relationships with faculty, can play an important role in the success of FGLI students (Gallup-Purdue, 2014; Museus & Neville, 2012; Parks-Yancy, 2012; Schreiner et al., 2011). How do FGLI students engage with faculty and what do they value the most in their faculty mentors? The purpose of this descriptive qualitative study is to provide a detailed understanding of how FGLI students experience and make meaning of influential faculty mentoring relationships.

. Using Crisp et al.'s (2017) integrated framework of *Mentoring Undergraduate Students* as a conceptual framework, this interpretive design qualitative study explored the nuances of constructive and supportive mentoring relationships and investigated participants' perceptions of the specific characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of faculty mentors that positively contribute to their college experiences. Data was collected through in-person, in-depth interviews with twelve FGLI students from diverse backgrounds who recently graduated from a large public university in the southeastern United States.

The findings of this study indicate that FGLI students most often select and are positively influenced by mentors who exemplify the following: someone in whom they see themselves, someone who makes them feel like they matter and belong, someone who nurtures their "dream," and someone who they want to be like. Mentors were often perceived as role models as a result of their personal qualities and professional accomplishments, which was particularly evident in relationships between female minority students and female faculty mentors who shared their identity as women of color.

The FGLI students who participated in this study not only highly valued the mentoring relationships they built with their professors, but described the positive influences these relationships had on their academic, personal, and professional development. Although the study largely validates Crisp et al.'s (2017) conceptual framework, it illuminates the complexity of mentoring needs and experiences of FGLI students and identifies aspects of the framework that are particularly relevant to this student population. The findings of this study warrant an expansion of the framework in order to more closely reflect the mentoring needs and experiences of FGLI students. In addition to highlighting characteristics, experiences, competencies, and behaviors of faculty mentors that are conducive to supporting FGLI students in a meaningful way, the revised framework includes the role model function of mentoring. The study highlights the important role of institutions in encouraging, preparing, and rewarding faculty to holistically support FGLI students in an effort to decrease the achievement gap.

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Humanizing the Educational Experience: The Role of Faculty Mentoring Relationships in the
College Experience of First-Generation, Low-Income Students

by
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DEDICATION

In loving memory of my late husband, Darryl J. Gless (1945 - 2014) who was an inspiration to me and the countless students he mentored. You will always remain the most important role model in my life.

To our daughter, Elena Gless, who is the joy of my life and inspires me every day.

BIOGRAPHY

Friederike Seeger spent her childhood in the small town of Bergen in the East German state of Saxony. After graduating from high school in Hoyerswerda in Germany, she moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin to work as an Au Pair before starting her undergraduate studies. She attended the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee as an international student, where she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in economics. During her work at the university's Center for International Education, she found her passion for international education. This led her to pursue a Master of Arts in International Education at the School for International Training (now SIT Graduate Institute) in Brattleboro, Vermont. Following her graduate studies, Friederike moved to Chapel Hill, North Carolina to work as the Director of Burch Programs and Honors Study Abroad at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. During her ten-year tenure at UNC-Chapel Hill, she began her coursework for a Doctorate of Philosophy in Educational Research and Policy Analysis at North Carolina State University. Her work with both, first-generation, low-income students and faculty colleagues dedicated to supporting students inspired her to pursue this dissertation research.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This research study makes an important contribution to the mentoring literature by examining the nature of first-generation, low-income (FGLI) students' mentoring relationships with college faculty and to illustrate the influence of these interactions on students' development and overall college experience. By focusing on positive and constructive relationships, this interpretive qualitative study explores motivations for FGLI students' engagement with faculty and describes students' perceptions of specific characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of faculty mentors. It also identifies various types of support faculty members provide that positively contribute to their college experience. Using Crisp, Baker, Griffin, Lunsford, and Pifer's (2017) integrated conceptual model of *Mentoring Undergraduate Students*, the study highlights the voices of FGLI students who represent an increasing share of the undergraduate student population and whose success is vital to the competitiveness of our economy.

This chapter starts with an introduction to the topic of student-faculty interactions in general and mentoring relationships in particular with a special focus on FGLI students. The research problem that follows highlights the impetus for the study. The purpose statement outlines how the research question will address the problem. An overview of the theoretical framework that guides the study precedes a discussion of the significance of the study to the literature on the success of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and outlines practical applications of the findings to major stakeholders. The chapter concludes with an overview of the methodological approach followed by a discussion of the study's limitations and delimitations.

Background of the Study and Research Problem

This study examined the mentoring experiences of successful FGLI students at Southeastern Public University (SPU) who are part of the SPU Promise, a need-based financial aid program. The SPU Promise covers the full demonstrated financial need for students whose family income falls within 200% of the poverty line through a combination of scholarships, grants, and work-study. Many SPU Promise Scholars are minority students and first-generation college students who struggle, both academically and socially, in their transition to college. This study fills a gap in the literature on the role of mentoring in the persistence and success of FGLI students. Furthermore, it responds to the need of grounding empirical studies on mentoring in theory by employing an integrated theoretical framework specific to mentoring college students.

For the growing number of first-generation, low-income students in the United States, entering one of the many colleges and universities that are largely designed for students from middle-class families presents not only an academic challenge, but also often requires a significant cultural adjustment (Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, & Covarrubias, 2012). First-generation and low-income students are, together with students from racial and ethnic minority groups at Predominately White Institutions (PWI), considered high-risk students. Having already overcome significant challenges to gain access to higher education, high-risk students are more likely to drop out of college as a result of the many obstacles they encounter (Choy, 2002; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Schreiner et al., 2011). A lack of academic preparation, financial pressures, unfamiliarity with higher education, family and work obligations, lack of social engagement, and issues of cultural adaptation contribute to the increasing achievement gaps in higher education (Demetriou, 2014; Engle & Tinto, 2008).

Graduation rates for FGLI students significantly lag behind those of their more advantaged peers (Pell Institute, 2016; Schreiner et al., 2011; Soria & Stebleton, 2012). While 57% of continuing-generation students obtain a bachelor's degree within six years, only 21% of first-generation students whose parental income falls within 150% of the federal poverty line obtain an undergraduate degree in six years. This represents a staggering 36% gap in degree attainment between the two student cohorts (Pell Institute, 2016). Not having obtained a college degree not only results in lower earning potential (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2013), but often leaves students worse off financially having accumulated student loans without having the extra earning power that a degree would provide (Engle & Engle, 2008), thus perpetuating the cycle of poverty. Societal benefits of college-educated citizens include higher tax contributions, more civic engagement, and increased opportunities for their children (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2013). The current dismal rate of degree attainment for FGLI students poses a problem that must be urgently addressed because it not only adversely affects some of the most disadvantaged students, but society as a whole (Museus & Quaye, 2009; Museus, Yi, & Saelua, 2017; Schademan & Thompson, 2016).

Given these high stakes, what is being done to increase degree attainment for FGLI students? Federal TRIO Programs, including Upward Bound, Student Support Services, and the McNair Scholars Program constitute the largest public investment in supporting low-income, first-generation, and students with disabilities and have been proven to be extremely effective (Pell Institute, 2016). Mentoring is an integral and often a formalized part of TRIO programs and aims to "counteract the constraints on historically underrepresented students" (Wallace, Abel, & Ropers-Huilman, 2000, p. 89). However, the restricted federal funding of these programs allows them to only serve 4% of eligible students, (Pell Institute, 2016) leaving many students without

adequate support to succeed in college. As a result, colleges and universities are increasingly finding ways to expand and enhance existing support systems to create a coordinated culture of care that facilitates the success of all students (SPU Student Success Conference, 2017).

A Gallup-Purdue University study found that the types of experiences students have in college matter significantly more to their engagement at work and their general well-being than the type, size, or selectivity of the institution they attended (Gallup-Purdue, 2014). Having had a professor who made them feel excited about learning was the single most important factor (63%) for personal and professional success for the over 30,000 college graduates who participated in the study. Students who had "a professor who cared about them as a person, one who made them excited about learning, and had a mentor who encouraged them to pursue their dreams" were more than twice as likely to be engaged at work and experience a higher well-being (p. 5). The strong potential impact of faculty on students warrants a closer examination of how these relationships evolve and how students perceive faculty impact on their success in college and beyond.

Largely missing from the literature, however, is the role of faculty, who have the most frequent and consistent contact with students and thus can significantly impact students' experience and success (Bensimon, 2007; Stage & Hubbard, 2007). While the impact of K-12 teachers and school administrators on students' success is well documented, literature guiding the role of the higher education practitioner is largely absent (Bensimon, 2007). In her study of the life histories of ten successful low-income community college transfer students at elite universities, Bensimon (2007) points to a "lack of scholarly and practical attention toward understanding how the practitioner - her knowledge, beliefs, experiences, education, sense of

self-efficacy, etc. - affects how students experience their education" (p. 444). This study seeks to change that by focusing on the role faculty play in students' development and success in college.

The importance of faculty in students' success in college is widely accepted and supported in the higher education literature (Baker & Griffin, 2010; Bensimon, 2007; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Cole & Griffin, 2013; Crisp et al., 2017; Pascarella, 1980; Schreiner et al., 2011; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). However, while basic aspects of students' experiences with faculty inside and outside the classroom are well documented in national surveys such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), very few empirical studies have explored the nuances and meanings of these relationships for FGLI students' success in college (Levine & Nidiffer, 1996; Schreiner et al., 2011). Levine & Nidiffer's (1996) study of 24 successful FGLI students finds that for 22 of the students, mentors had a significant role in their success. This connection is supported by more recent qualitative studies that focus on the role of institutional agents on the persistence and success of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, which find that high-risk students often credit their success to a person who has been a mentor and significantly influenced their trajectory (Pak, Bensimon, Malcolm, Marquez, & Park, 2006, as cited in Bensimon, 2007; Schreiner et al., 2011). Faculty mentors not only advance students' intellectual development, but also help them gain the much-needed self-confidence to believe that success is indeed possible (Schreiner et al., 2011), which is especially important for FGLI students.

However, the positive impact of meaningful student-faculty interactions outside the classroom, may not reach the students who need the additional support. High-risk students, including FGLI students who are the focus of this study, are least likely to interact with faculty (Cole & Griffin, 2013; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2006; Schreiner et al., 2011;

Walpole, 2008) despite the fact that they are the most likely to benefit from interactions with faculty (Finley & MacNair, 2013; Kuh, 2008; Lundberg, 2003, as cited in Schreiner et al., 2011). While research on the underlying reasons for the low levels of student-faculty interactions outside the classroom is scarce, some studies found that many students may, "develop an understanding of the purpose and process of contacting faculty members outside of class" only later in their college career (Cox et al., 2010, p. 769, citing data from the National Survey of Student Engagement, 2008). Studies on first-generation students' interactions with faculty have found that their lower levels of self-confidence and self-efficacy may make them feel intimidated by and uncomfortable seeking interactions with faculty (Cole & Griffin, 2013; Cox et al., 2010; Padgett et al., 2012; Schademan & Thompson, 2016). Academic under-preparation and lower levels of social and cultural capital may contribute to preventing first-generation students from building supportive relationships with faculty that could be very beneficial to their success in college.

As colleges and universities focus their attention on increasing the retention and completion rates for FGLI and other high-risk students, it is critical to have a comprehensive understanding of how faculty and other institutional agents can help FGLI students overcome the multitude of well-documented barriers to college completion in order to reach their potential. While many studies have explored various aspects of students' interactions with faculty (Kuh & Hu, 2001), few focus on faculty impact on high-risk students (Braxton et al., 2004; Schreiner et al., 2011). The ones that do, however, primarily approach the subject from a "deficit model" focusing on the many challenges these students face, but provide little insight into what helps them succeed (Schreiner et al., 2011, p. 322). The few studies that have explored successful practices that foster the retention of FGLI and other high-risk students call for additional

empirical studies that explore how supportive relationships contribute to the persistence of high-risk students (Demetriou, 2014; Schademan & Thompson, 2016; Schreiner et al., 2011). This gap in literature is amplified by the fact that the voices of high-risk students are almost completely absent in the discourse on student success and retention.

Colleges and universities must intensify their efforts to increase degree attainment of their most vulnerable students by creating effective policies, structures, and practices that help them succeed in college. The literature is emphatic about the positive impact that out of classroom interactions, and particularly mentoring relationships, have on students' success (Cole & Griffin, 2013; Crisp et al., 2017; Kuh, 2009, 2016; Kuh et al., 2006; Pascarella, 1980; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). This impact increases for high-risk students, including first-generation, low-income, and minority students (Lundberg, 2003; Schreiner et al., 2011) who face significant obstacles to completing their college degrees and graduate at a much lower rate compared to their more advantaged peers (Pell Institute, 2016; Schreiner et al., 2011; Soria & Stebleton, 2012). Given the importance of these students to the competitiveness of our economy and the function of our society, higher education institutions have to find constructive ways to ease the barriers FGLI students face in both accessing and completing college degrees.

Mentoring provides a vehicle to help FGLI students navigate their often difficult journey through college. This suggests that facilitating faculty mentoring is one effective strategy institutions can employ to increase persistence. For the purpose of this study, mentoring refers to a "process by which persons of a superior rank, special achievements, and prestige instruct, counsel, guide, and facilitate the intellectual and/or career development of persons identified as protégés" (Blackwell, 1989, p. 9). However, these efforts will yield limited success without a more in-depth understanding of how FGLI students experience mentoring relationships and what

role they play in their success. Although exploring why students' substantive interactions with faculty outside of the classroom are so rare would provide valuable insight, understanding how successful FGLI students experience and benefit from mentoring relationships will provide institutions with critical information on how to better leverage the value of institutional agents to student success.

Purpose of the Study

FGLI students, who make up a rising share of the undergraduate student population, face numerous barriers that negatively affect their success in college (Engle & Tinto, 2008). While the literature on student success and student-faculty interactions consistently supports the value of academic and social integration (Cole & Griffin, 2013), including frequent and substantive interactions with faculty, surprisingly few studies have analyzed the experiences of one of the most vulnerable student populations, FGLI students, with mentoring and its impact on their success (Schademan & Thompson, 2016; Schreiner et al., 2011). Given the increasing importance of FGLI students as consumers of higher education and contributors to our nations' economy, higher education institutions must be able to develop and implement interventions that increase degree attainment for this vulnerable group of students based on research that illustrates the lived experience of these students.

The purpose of this study is to provide a detailed understanding of first-generation, low-income students' perceptions of mentoring relationships with faculty and to examine the influence of mentoring on students' development and overall college experience. The research is designed to uncover the nuances of constructive and supportive mentoring relationships and to explore student perceptions of the specific characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of faculty that positively contribute to the college experience of FGLI students. Understanding the nature and

role that a transformative mentoring experience plays in FGLI students' often challenging journey through college will not only help faculty and administrators recognize the value of investing time and energy in supporting underrepresented students. Such understanding will also help institutions recognize the value of mentoring in student retention and success and help shape institutional policy.

Research Question

In order to address the research problem and purpose, this study asks the following research question:

How do first-generation, low-income college students experience and make meaning of an influential faculty mentoring relationship?

In order to answer the research question, I explored the following supporting topics in alignment with Crisp et al.'s (2017) integrated framework on *Mentoring Undergraduate Students*:

- a. What motivated student protégés to engage in and sustain the mentoring relationship?
- b. Which forms of support were particularly important to the protégés and why?
- c. In what ways did certain characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of the faculty mentor contribute to the success of the mentoring relationship?
- d. How do students perceive the benefits they have received from the mentoring relationship?
- e. How, if at all, did the faculty mentor help their protégé overcome barriers they faced?

Overview of Theoretical Framework

A recent review of the mentoring literature by Crisp, Baker, Griffin, Lunsford, & Pifer

(2017) finds that "theory is inconsistently integrated into research on undergraduates' experiences and outcomes associated with mentoring" (p. 71) and most studies either lack the use of theory all together or are not guided by theoretical frameworks focused on mentoring. While theories on involvement and integration (Astin, 1984; Tinto, 1993), socialization (Bragg, 1977; Weidman, 1989), and social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) help explain specific aspects and outcomes of mentoring, none are specific to mentoring and "there are no frameworks that explain why mentorship is related to a broad range of career and psychosocial outcomes." (Crisp et al., 2017, p. 81). As a result of the lack of theoretical frameworks of mentoring, Crisp et al. (2017) developed an integrated framework of *Mentoring Undergraduate Students* (see Figure 1) based on the mentoring literature to date. Building on Hunt and Michael's (1983) work, this framework "integrates theories addressing functions of mentoring relationships, forms of support they provide, and the relationship between experiences and outcomes." (Crisp et al., 2017, p. 82).

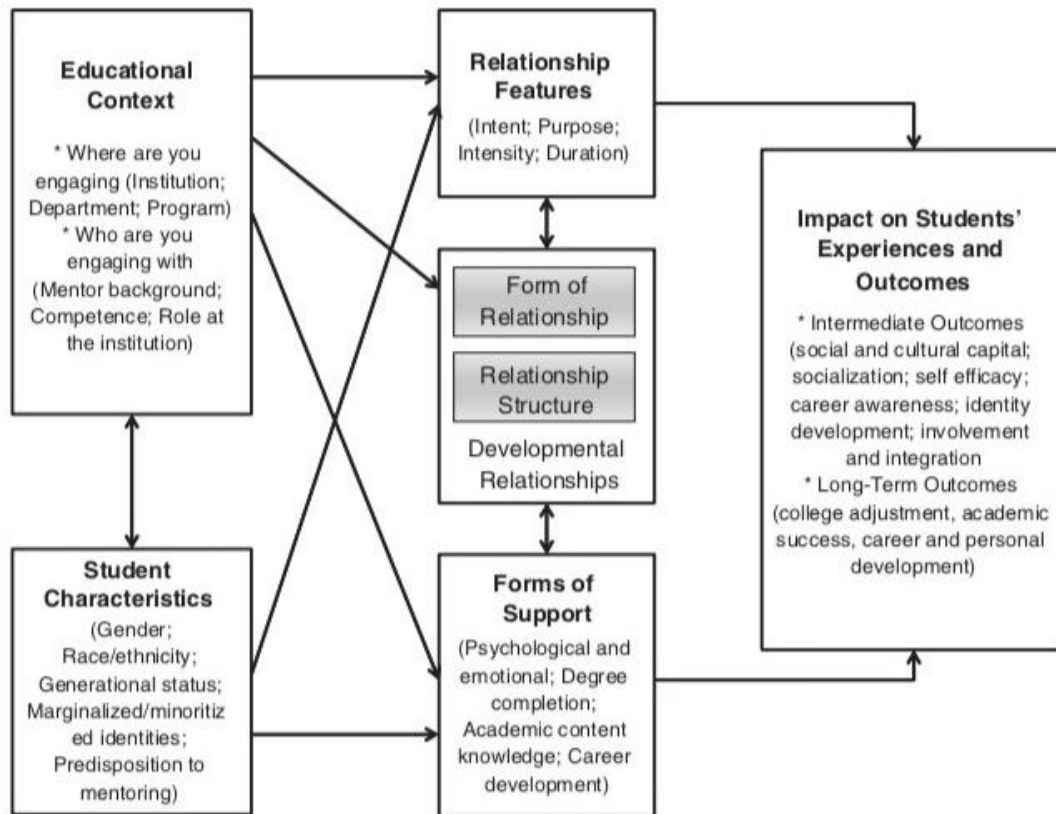


Figure 1. Crisp, Baker, Griffin, Lunsford, and Pifer's (2017) Integrated Conceptual Model of Mentoring Undergraduate Students.

The integrated and comprehensive nature of this framework emphasizes the influence that the students' background and the educational context in which the mentoring relationship takes place has on students' mentoring experiences and their potential outcomes. Since this study focuses on a diverse group of students whose experiences are underrepresented in the literature, this element is particularly relevant especially in light of previous studies that show variations in first-generation students' predispositions to mentoring (Crisp et al., 2017; Mekolichick & Gibbs, 2012). Equally important to the design of this study is the model's inclusion of the educational

context, which includes the background and competencies of the mentor. Understanding the characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of mentors that are particularly valuable to FGLI students is a central focus of this study.

Students' insight on the various forms of support they receive from their faculty mentor is critical for examining the role that mentoring relationships play in the success of FGLI students. Forms of support include psychosocial and emotional support, degree completion support, academic subject knowledge support, and career development support (Crisp et al., 2017). The value of these various types of support to FGLI students' success was particularly interesting to examine. The model captures the influence of these forms of supports while recognizing how the nature of the mentoring relationship impacts the students' experience and outcomes. Despite having been developed very recently and having not yet been tested, Crisp et al.'s (2017) framework of *Mentoring Undergraduate Students* was highly applicable and relevant to my study because it incorporates the most essential components of mentoring relationships. My study provided an opportunity to test the comprehensiveness of this model and offered suggestions on how to make it more relevant to the experience of FGLI students.

Significance of the Study

FGLI students often need considerable support on their path through college. Given the importance of faculty mentors and student engagement, understanding the lived experience of SPU Promise students with faculty mentors will provide valuable insight into how and why students interact with faculty and what aspects of their relationships are most beneficial to their success in college. The study not only makes a unique contribution to the mentoring literature by adding the experience and voice of FGLI students, but also aims to outline meaningful implications for students, faculty, administrators, and policy makers.

Theoretical Significance

Although the literature on student success, student-faculty interactions, and mentoring is vast and has grown in recent years, very little is known about the mentoring experiences of first-generation, low-income (FGLI) students outside of formal mentoring programs. The findings of this study reduce the gap in knowledge about how this group of students views the role of mentoring relationships and the qualities of their mentors in their journey through college. This study aimed to make a unique and important contribution to the literature by providing compelling stories of how faculty make a difference in the college success of FGLI students. By employing an integrated theoretical framework specific to mentoring college students, this study responded to the lack of studies on student-faculty interactions and mentoring that are grounded in theory.

Practical Significance

In addition to filling a significant gap in the literature, this study offers practical implications for students, faculty, administrators, and policy makers. One of the primary goals of this study was to help students, administrators, faculty mentors, and faculty who are not mentoring students to understand the value that mentoring relationships can have on FGLI students' success. Students, who often avoid engaging with faculty outside the classroom, need to understand and recognize the benefits of investing time to get to know and develop strong relationships with faculty. By highlighting the mentoring experiences of successful students in depth, this study helps faculty mentors understand how they are making a difference in the lives of high-risk students and recognize the many benefits of their investment of time and energy. In addition, the results of this study may encourage other faculty members to be more open to engaging with students outside the classroom despite the multitude of demands on their time.

Perhaps the most important contribution of this study may be to administrators at the university under examination as well as to higher education institutions in general. The study was designed with the objective that its findings will contribute to improving the existing mentoring program for low-income students at SPU and those who are part of the SPU Promise. On a broader level, the results of this study can help colleges and universities recognize the potential of mentoring on the level of degree attainment among high-risk students, ideally leading them to consider incentivizing mentoring by making it part of the formal reward system. Students' insights into the characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of mentors that were particularly impactful to their development and success may lead to the establishment or improvement of faculty training programs designed to increase mentor competence as well as consideration of adjusting hiring policies for new faculty to assess mentoring abilities and competencies (see Johnson, 2003). In addition to informing institutions of higher education and their agents, this study also has the potential to inform education policy. Although unlikely in the current political climate, the results of this study may validate the many benefits of federally funded TRIO programs, many of which include mentoring components, and the important contribution they could make to the retention of high-risk students if they are expanded to serve more students.

Overview of Methodological Approach

This qualitative study employed a basic interpretive qualitative design to examine how first-generation, low-income students experience and make meaning of their mentoring relationships with faculty. A basic qualitative design is appropriate for studies that focus on "1) how people interpret their experiences, 2) how they construct their worlds, and 3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Following a constructivist

worldview, this form of inquiry allowed me to not only examine how students experience substantive interactions with a faculty mentor, but also explain how they perceive and interpret the benefits of the mentoring relationship to their success in college. Qualitative methods are best suited to answer the questions this study poses, especially considering the prevalence of quantitative studies in the literature on mentoring and student-faculty interactions (Cox & Orehovec, 2007; Crisp et al., 2017), many of which rely on data from large national surveys such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The qualitative design of this study added the missing voices of first-generation, low-income students and thus provides a more nuanced and complete picture of the complex nature of mentoring relationships.

Given the study's focus on first-generation, low-income students, Southeastern Public University's *SPU Promise* provides an ideal context for this research. Created in 2003 as "SPU's promise to low-income students and families that a world-class education remains within reach" (SPU Promise website), the SPU Promise guarantees all admitted students whose parental income falls within 200% of Federal Poverty Guidelines to graduate without debt through a combination of grants, scholarships, and work-study (SPU Promise Review, 2010; SPU Working Paper, 2016). Just over half of SPU Promise Scholars are also first-generation college students and a similar number (55%) are from racial and ethnic minority groups (SPU Student Success Report, 2014), representing a significant pool from which I recruited participants for the study. SPU was selected as the site for the study using purposive sampling, because it "is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). I gained access to SPU Promise students with the assistance of SPU Promise administrators, with whom I worked in 2016.

In-depth interviews with twelve students who were part of SPU's SPU Promise and became the first in their families to graduate in May 2017 were conducted. In addition to interviews, which serve as the main form of data collection for this study, I also analyzed documents related to mentoring, wrote extensive field notes, and maintained a reflective journal as complementary data sources. Interview questions were aligned with the research questions and the theoretical framework. The data was analyzed using appropriate methods and levels of rigor, thus ensuring trustworthiness and credibility of the study.

Chapter Summary and Organization of the Study

This chapter provides an overview and rationale for the study, which examined how FGLI students experience mentoring relationships and the implications these relationships have in helping these students succeed in college. Given the many barriers FGLI students face to college completion, understanding what elements of support and qualities of mentors they view as particularly valuable provided important insights for institutional agents tasked with the retention of high-risk students. The following chapter discusses the scholarly literature on mentoring and student-faculty interactions framed within the integrated framework of *Mentoring Undergraduate Students* developed by Crisp et al. (2017). The third chapter of this study outlines in detail the study's methodological approach to address the research problem, including the research design, site and participant selection, data collection and analysis, trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and limitations to the study. Chapter four describes the study's findings that emerged from the data analysis primarily using the language of the participants. The concluding chapter 5 presents the key findings and discusses implications for policy, practice, theory and future research.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this qualitative interpretive study is to provide a detailed understanding of first-generation, low-income students' mentoring relationships with faculty and to examine the influence of mentoring on students' development and overall college experience. Using Crisp et al.'s (2017) integrated conceptual model of *Mentoring Undergraduate Students*, the study will highlight influential mentoring experiences of FGLI students who just became the first in their families to graduate and the perceived value of mentoring to their college experience. This chapter reviews the literature and theoretical frameworks relevant to the mentoring experiences of first-generation, low-income students enrolled at U.S. colleges and universities. The study responds to a gap in the literature that points to a lack of qualitative mentoring research that is grounded in theory and a need for studies that examine mentoring experiences for underrepresented students who make up a growing number of college students but graduate at much lower rates (Crisp et al., 2017).

The chapter is organized in four sections. The first part provides an overview of FGLI students and an analysis of the barriers they face to college success and completion. The second part discusses empirical research on the broader topic of student-faculty interactions, including the roles faculty play, different forms of interactions, and the impact of frequency and quality of faculty-student interactions on student success. The third part of this chapter focuses on the literature specific to mentoring relationships, which will be framed by Crisp et al.'s (2017) integrated framework of mentoring undergraduate students with an emphasis on the experiences of FGLI students. The fourth section examines the literature of FGLI students at Southeastern Public University, with an emphasis on SPU Promise students who will be the focus of this study. The chapter concludes with a summary of the literature relevant to this study highlighting

the gaps and intended contributions of this study.

First-Generation, Low-Income Students at U.S. Colleges and Universities

For students from low socioeconomic groups whose parents did not earn a bachelor's degree, the path through college is significantly more difficult than for their more advantaged peers (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Low-income, first generation college students are more likely to belong to racial and ethnic minority groups (Atherton, 2014; Choy, 2001; Hurtado, 2007; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella & Nora, 1996), more often have family or work obligations (Demetriou, 2014; Engle & Tinto, 2008), and are more likely to be non-native English speakers (Engle & Tinto, 2008). These characteristics likely make FGLI students feel less connected to and accepted by the campus culture. The resulting lack of campus engagement and social integration can negatively affect their college persistence and degree attainment (Atherton, 2014; Demetriou, 2014; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Stephens et al., 2012).

Students who are first in their families to attend college and those who come from low-income families have significantly lower graduation rates than students whose parents obtained college degrees (DeAngelo et al., 2011; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Pell Institute, 2016; Perna, 2015). The most recent completed longitudinal study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (BPS: 96/2001) found that of the 4.5 million FGLI students enrolled at four-year institutions, only 34% of those enrolled in public institutions had completed their degree after six years compared to 66% of peers from more advantaged backgrounds. The gap for those enrolled at private institutions is even larger with 43% of FGLI students completing their bachelor's degree in six years compared to 80% of other students (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Although only a quarter of FGLI students who go to college enroll at four-year institutions, they are more than

seven times more likely to obtain a bachelor's degree than those who start at a two-year institution (Engle & Tinto, 2008).

Low graduation rates are often the result of a myriad of barriers that first-generation college students from low-income families and students from other disadvantaged backgrounds continue to have to overcome once admitted to college (Engle & Tinto, 2008). The most prevalent obstacles FGLI students confront include financial constraints, lack of academic preparation, unfamiliarity with higher education, family and work obligations, lack of social engagement, and issues of cultural adaptation (Demetriou, 2014; Engle & Tinto, 2008). These barriers will be discussed in the following section to highlight important elements that influence the college experience of the students who will be the focus of this study.

Financial Constraints

While a significant financial constraint is only one of many barriers to college persistence for FGLI students, it is perhaps the most significant obstacle, which permeates into many aspects of students' lives that influence success in college. First-generation college students are disproportionately more likely to come from low-income families than their continuing-generation peers (Eagan et al., 2015; Engle & Tinto, 2008). According to data from the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California - Los Angeles, 56.3% of first-generation freshmen acknowledged having received Pell grants compared to 20.3% of students whose parents have college experience (Eagan et al., 2015). Funded by the federal government, the Pell Grant program is "the largest single source of need-based grant aid in the United States" (Engle & Tinto, 2008, p. 24). While 66.1% of Pell grant recipients come from families with an annual income of less than \$50,000, almost a third of Pell grant recipients report their parental income as less than \$25,000 (Eagan et al., 2015), which meets federal poverty level for a family

of four. Given the cost of higher education, Pell grants rarely cover the cost of attending college, requiring students to obtain additional financial aid or work while in college (Eagan et al., 2015).

Low-income families without college experience often have little knowledge of the cost of attending college (Choy, 2001) and are highly debt-averse (Engle & Tinto, 2008). As a result, many FGLI students enroll in less expensive community colleges regardless of their abilities and academic qualifications for more prestigious four-year institutions (Demetriou, 2014). Since studies have shown that high-risk students are more likely to persist at four-year institutions (Engle & Tinto, 2008), FGLI students are at risk of further increasing their financial disadvantages if the many obstacles they face keep them from earning a degree and leave them with loans without the extra earning power that a degree would provide (Engle & Tinto, 2008). A lack of financial resources combined with debt aversion also means that many FGLI students have to work at least part-time to be able to afford college, taking away time from academic and social engagement with negative impacts on persistence (Choy, 2001; Demetriou, 2014; Engle & Tinto, 2008). Stephens et al., 2012). While the SPU scholarship covered the financial need of the study participants and thus reduced the financial constraints that typically burden FGLI students, issues of poverty nevertheless affected the participants' families.

Lack of Academic Preparation

The financial disadvantages of FGLI students not only consist of their parents' inability to afford the cost of attending college, but their low socioeconomic status often results in a lack of access to high-quality secondary education. FGLI students are significantly more likely to attend lower quality high schools (Stephens et al., 2012; Engle & Tinto, 2008) which can result in varying degrees of academic under-preparation that have significant implications for students' college success and completion. High schools that serve low socio-economic groups often lack

financial resources, limiting the numbers of honors, AP, and IB classes offered (Demetriou, 2014) and tend to produce students who have lower GPAs and test scores (Atherton, 2014; Choy, 2001). First-generation college students who often lack parental support and guidance in their choice of a high school curriculum (Choy, 2001) would particularly benefit from their high school's investment in helping them develop academic and study skills in order to prepare them for college (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Enrolling in advanced mathematics courses is a particularly strong predictor of academic persistence in college (Choy, 2001; Engle & Tinto, 2008), but one that fewer FGLI students take advantage of than their more advantaged peers (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Being less likely to have access to a rigorous high school curriculum, limited access to academic support, and not having parents who can provide guidance and advocacy contributes to the disproportionate academic under-preparation of FGLI students. It not only makes their academic adjustment to college more challenging, but often leads them to doubt their academic abilities (Atherton, 2014; Engle & Tinto, 2008) which may account for the increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression they experience (Demetriou, 2014).

Limited College Knowledge and Lack of Support

Attending a high school that lacks resources and a rigorous curriculum also has implications for the support services that are available to students who are preparing for and applying to go to college. Although FGLI students would significantly benefit from more support with their college applications, they are no more likely to receive it than continuing-generation students (Choy, 2001). School counselors, whose influence in FGLI students' preparation for college can be significant (Perna, 2015), are often in short supply at under-resourced high schools. Not knowing when to take standardized tests can have serious implications for students who lack parental guidance and support for college preparation and applications (Choy, 2001;

Demetriou, 2008). Having lacked resources and academic preparation in high school can negatively impact students' awareness and knowledge of resources for academic and non-academic support in college (SPU Student Success Report, 2014), which, in turn, can be detrimental for college success and persistence.

Without the benefits of their parents' experiences navigating the higher education landscape, FGLI students not only have a more difficult time getting into college (Perna, 2015), but also face significant adjustment challenges once in college (Choy, 2001; Engle & Tinto, 2008; SPU Student Success Report, 2014; Stephens et al., 2012). For most first-generation and/or low-income college students who have not been exposed to the cultural capital necessary to successfully decode the many unwritten rules, norms, and expectations at higher education institutions (SPU Student Success Report, 2014; Stephens et al., 2012), their background constitutes a serious obstacle to their adjustment to institutions that were primarily designed for students from middle-class backgrounds (Stephens et al., 2012). The lack of information, knowledge and support that students need to navigate the higher education landscape makes many first-generation and/or low-income students unsure of how to act, question whether they belong at the university and thus miss out on some aspects of the full college experience (Housel & Harvey, 2009; Stephens et al., 2012).

Work and Family Obligations

Many FGLI students not only lack parents who can assist them with college applications or help them navigate through challenges once they are in college, but they also have considerably more family obligations than their more advantaged peers (Engle & Tinto, 2008; SPU Student Success Report, 2014). FGLI students tend to be older (Engle & Tinto, 2008) and are therefore more likely to have a family of their own that needs attention and perhaps requires

a heavier workload than is conducive to their studies. Significant debt aversion makes FGLI students more likely to work instead of taking out loans (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Working on or off-campus in order to finance their education and, in some cases, support their families, means less time spent on campus, which generally adversely affects social integration and persistence (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Although some studies have found that working up to 20 hours per week increases persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), many FGLI students work considerably more in order to pay for college (Engle & Tinto, 2008).

In addition to financial pressures that often result in a considerable number of hours spent earning money, many FGLI students have a deep sense of obligations to their families (SPU Student Success Report, 2014; Stephens et al., 2012). An analysis of academic appeal letters of SPU first-generation college students who were on academic probation revealed a myriad of obstacles related to difficult family circumstances (SPU Student Success Report, 2014). For African-American FGLI students in particular, grandparents often play a more prevalent role in their lives and sometimes take on the role of the parent (SPU Student Success Report, 2014). As a result, students feel indebted and responsible to provide care and financial support, which can significantly distract from their focus on academics. Students who are heavily involved in caregiving roles for family members tend to return home on weekends leaving less time spent on campus to allow for social integration (Engle & Tinto, 2008) and, depending on the severity of their family circumstances, possibly adding to feelings of guilt for leaving, stress, and anxiety (SPU Student Success Report, 2014).

Family obligations and the sometimes stark differences between their home lives and the campus culture they are trying to adjust to can leave FGLI students feel like they are living "simultaneously in two vastly different worlds while being fully accepted in neither" (Rendon,

1992, p. 56, as cited in Engle & Tinto, 2008, p. 21). Relationships with family and friends may become strained as students become more independent and adjust to their new environment (SPU Student Success Report, 2014). Such expected outcomes of intellectual and personal development can put additional stress on FGLI students for whom these differences are likely more pronounced. At the same time, the risk of failure is especially high for these students. Former Dean of SPU pointed out that many SPU Promise Scholars deal with the "Chosen One" syndrome" carrying the hope of their parents and community on their shoulders (SPU Promise Review, 2010). Not being able to admit to their families that "your future doctor just flunked introductory chemistry" (SPU Promise Review, 2010), these students try to persist in courses that are particularly difficult, often with adverse effects on their GPAs and self-confidence.

Social Integration and Cultural Adaptation

Theories on college student retention including Spady's (1970, 1971) theory on social integration and Tinto's (1975) integration theory show that both academic and social integration into campus life significantly impact retention (Cole & Griffin, 2013). Financial pressures and family obligations that demand significant hours of work and leave little time for engagement in social and pre-professional activities on campus can have negative effects for social integration and, consequently, persistence (Engle & Tinto, 2008). Since FGLI students are already less likely to interact with faculty than continuing-generation students (Kezar, Walpole, & Perna, 2014; Schreiner et al., 2011; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Walpole, 2008), reducing the time spent on campus has further adverse effects on interactions with faculty, counteracting the positive effects of those interactions on students' academic success (Baker & Griffin, 2010; Cole & Griffin, 2013; Pascarella, 1980). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, a five-stage model that depicts human needs in a pyramid form, may provide insights into low-income students' lack of engagement

(Kezar, Walpole, & Perna, 2014). Engaging on campus and with faculty, which can be considered a higher-order need on the road to "achieving one's potential", might elude low-income students who are often plagued with financial worries and "can only engage in this higher-level activity after the most basic, but essential needs are met" (Kezar, Walpole, & Perna, 2014, p. 241).

The cultural context at American universities primarily reflects middle-class values and norms emphasizing independence over interdependence (Stephens et al., 2012) making it more difficult for FG and FGLI students to feel welcome and included in the campus community. An empirical study by Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, and Covarrubias (2012) on the experiences of working-class students and campus culture finds that "the American university culture reflects the pervasive middle-class norms of independence that are foundational to American society" (p. 1193). Using four different studies, their research confirms the hypothesis that "first-generation students underperform because interdependent norms from their mostly working-class backgrounds constitute a mismatch with middle-class independent norms prevalent in universities" proposing a "cultural mismatch theory" (p. 1178). Their well-conceived study demonstrates cultural barriers for first-generation students from working class families and proposes evidence-based social-psychological interventions that help expand university culture and reduce the perpetuation of social inequalities (Stephens et al., 2012, p. 1195). Given the importance of faculty for low-income, minority, and first-generation students in "transmitting knowledge and resources that are particularly characteristic of the social networks and social ties of the middle and upper classes" (Stanton-Salazar, 2001, as cited in Bensimon, 2007, p. 443), understanding the role of faculty in students' success and development is critical.

The Nature of Student-Faculty Interactions

Before analyzing the literature on mentoring, the broader field of student-faculty interaction offers relevant insights into what sets mentoring apart from other types of interactions students have with their professors. Since few students are able to form mentoring relationships with faculty (Cox & Orehovec, 2007), other types of student-faculty interactions offer important insights into students' engagement with institutional agents that are relevant to this study.

Faculty Roles

Faculty members not only serve as instructors, but also take on a variety of additional supportive roles for students that go beyond academic learning. While Snow (1973) and Wilson (1974) identified six traditional faculty roles of instructor, educational advisor, career advisor, friend, counselor, and campus citizen (Cole & Griffin, 2013), Baker & Griffin (2010) condense faculty roles into three categories with increasing depth of interaction: advisors, mentors, and "developers" (p. 3). This categorization is reflective of recent studies that go beyond Snow's and Wilson's traditional faculty roles and "include measures like faculty helpfulness, faculty concerns for teaching, and faculty concerns for student development" (Cole and Griffin, 2013, p. 565). The nuances of faculty roles and the influence that the nature of the student-faculty relationship has on students' development are particularly relevant to this study.

Perhaps the most traditional role faculty members take on is the important role of academic advisor, assisting students with course selection, identification of appropriate majors, and the fulfillment of major and general requirements (Baker & Griffin, 2010). In addition to teaching, advising constitutes "expected role behavior" for faculty (DeAngelo, Mason & Winters, 2016, p. 322), which refers to a required part of a faculty member's work and generally involves formal interactions with students. This also includes faculty supervising undergraduate

research, which falls within the institutions' expectations of the faculty members (especially in STEM fields), but does not automatically assume that faculty "engage in meaningful and productive mentorship relationships" with their advisees (DeAngelo et al., 2016, p. 323).

Advising, while an important means to share critical information with students and help guide their studies, requires a comparatively low level of commitment and engagement with students compared to higher-order roles such as mentoring (Baker & Griffin, 2010).

Although the lines between different types of support faculty provide for students are often blurred, mentoring is generally considered the highest form of engagement (Cox & Orehovec, 2007; Jacobi, 1991). The concept of mentoring, however, lacks a unified definition (Crisp et al., 2017; Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Jacobi, 1991). For the purpose of this study, mentoring refers to a "process by which persons of a superior rank, special achievements, and prestige instruct, counsel, guide, and facilitate the intellectual and/or career development of persons identified as protégés" (Blackwell, 1989, p. 9). While many faculty members who serve as mentors do so through formal mentoring programs or as faculty advisors for undergraduate research projects (Crisp et al., 2017), this study will focus on mentoring relationships that have developed naturally. Literature on mentoring relationships and the role of the faculty mentor will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Forms of Interactions

Students' interactions with faculty can come in many forms. They can take place inside or outside of the classroom, be formal or informal in nature, focus on academics or personal matters, and include faculty criticism as well as faculty support (Cole & Griffin, 2013). Formal student-faculty interactions generally refer to course-related contact and primarily take place inside the classroom (Cole, 2007; Cox & Orehovec, 2007; Hroch, 2016). Such interactions

include questions about course material, assignments or research projects, skill development, or feedback on academic performance (Anaya & Cole, 2001; DeAngelo et al., 2016; Endo & Harpel, 1982; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004). These interactions fall within a faculty member's expected set of duties and constitute "expected role" behavior (DeAngelo et al., 2016). While they positively impact students' academic success, formal interactions do not require a prolonged and in-depth engagement with students.

In contrast, informal student-faculty interactions have a more significant impact on personal and academic development (Cole & Griffin, 2013; Endo & Harpel, 1982; Pascarella, 1980). Informal interactions primarily take place outside the classroom and include more personal interactions that are not limited to the student's academic and intellectual development (Anaya & Cole, 2001; Cole & Griffin, 2013). The differentiating element is a higher investment of time and a more student-centered approach that engages with "students' emotional and cognitive well-being" (Cole & Griffin, 2013, p. 564). The positive outcomes of this form of interaction on various aspects of student success have been studied mostly quantitatively using national surveys such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) or the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) (see Kuh & Hu, 2001; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Umbach & Wawryzinski, 2005).

While most recent studies of student-faculty interactions have focused on informal, non-classroom interactions, differentiating between various types of interactions and their potential impact on student outcomes can be a challenge. In their qualitative study of informal, non-classroom interactions between students and faculty at a residential college, Cox and Orehovec (2007) identified five types of student-faculty interactions outside the classroom (descending in frequency of occurrence): disengagement, incidental contact, functional interaction, personal

interaction, and mentoring (p. 350). These interactions generally do not happen separately, but rather "occur along a fluid, contextually influenced continuum" (p. 350). While the two lowest forms of contact, disengagement and incidental contact, occur most frequently, functional interaction is generally related to academic or institutional matters (p. 353). Functional interaction often serves as a gateway to more in-depth engagement if the student and faculty member connect on a personal level (Cox & Orehovec, 2007).

The two highest forms of interactions in their typology are personal interactions and mentoring, which both fall within the realm of informal interactions and occur less frequently than lower order types of interactions (Cox & Orehovec, 2007). Mentoring is considered the "highest end on a continuum of helping relationships" (Jacobi, 1991, p. 511) and will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. However, not all informal interactions can be considered mentoring relationships even if they generally assume a degree of personal caring and in-depth engagement (Baker & Griffin, 2010; DeAngelo et al., 2016). Crisp et al.'s (2017) review of the mentoring literature, which will be discussed in subsequent sections of this chapter, points out that many empirical studies do not differentiate mentoring from other forms of constructive student-faculty interactions (p. 32). This study will highlight these distinctions.

Student-faculty interactions involve faculty advice and criticism as well as faculty support (Cole & Griffin, 2013). Advice and criticism from faculty, including receiving positive or negative feedback on academic performance or assistance with study skills (Cole, 2007) is central part of the formal student-faculty relationship and integral to students' academic learning (Astin, 1993). A quantitative study by Cole (2007) found that advice and criticism from faculty had a negative impact on students' confidence in their abilities, serving as a reminder that not all interactions with faculty have a positive influence on students regardless of their presumed long-

term positive impact on academic learning. Support and encouragement from faculty, on the other hand, positively impacts student learning (Cole & Griffin, 2013). Faculty support and encouragement beyond the classroom includes psychosocial and emotional support and is an identifying element of a mentoring relationship (Crisp et al., 2017; Jacobi, 1991; Kram, 1988; Nora & Crisp, 2007) and will be discussed in detail in subsequent sections.

Frequency and Quality of Interactions

The frequency and quality of students' interactions with faculty outside of the classroom positively affect student outcomes (Anaya & Cole, 2001; Campbell & Campbell, 1997; Cox & Orehovec, 2007; Cox et al., 2010; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Pascarella, 1980). However, students tend to avoid engaging with faculty beyond formal interactions in the classroom and often have minimal contact (Cole & Griffin, 2013; Cox & Orehovec, 2007). Even more concerning is that first-generation students and students from lower social classes are even less likely than their more advantaged peers to have frequent and meaningful interactions with faculty (Kim & Sax, 2009; Pike & Kuh, 2005). Although Lundberg and Schreiner (2004) found that Native American and African American students interacted more frequently with faculty than other racial groups, they did not believe that racial differences contribute to our understanding of relationships between students and faculty.

Few studies have explored the reasons for low levels of student-faculty interactions outside the classroom across different types of institutions (Cox et al., 2010). Cole & Griffin (2013) identified studies that found that minority students at PWIs not only lack a sense of belonging, but also feel "alienated, intimidated, segregated, (and) isolated" (Cole & Griffin, 2013, p. 578). Such patterns of students' intimidation or discomfort in interacting with faculty are supported in Padgett et al.'s (2012) study on the impacts of the first year of college on first-

generation students, in which the authors find that students are "underprepared to interact with faculty upon entering college" (p. 261). This has a negative impact on their interactions with faculty as well as their academic learning (Cole & Griffin, 2013).

Faculty behaviors can also influence the frequency of student-faculty interactions (Cole & Griffin, 2013; Cox et al., 2010; Kim & Sax, 2009). Faculty members are more likely to initiate contact with high-achieving students, possibly at the expense of excluding first-generation and minority students who face barriers to academic success (Cole & Griffin, 2013). Students are likely to seek out faculty who provide cues that they are open to engaging with students outside of the classroom (Cole, 2007; Cox et al., 2010). These "accessibility cues" refer to teaching styles and in-class behaviors through which professors communicate that they are open to out of class interactions including "active learning strategies, problem-solving activities, not feeling bored in class, challenging a professor's idea in class, and working on a group project facilitated by the faculty" (Cole & Griffin, 2013, p. 579).

Testing Wilson et al.'s (1974) hypothesis of professors' in-class behaviors that signal a readiness to interact with students outside the classroom, Cox et al. (2010) find that they do not reliably predict the frequency of interactions. Their quantitative study of factors that influence the frequency, with which faculty members interact with students outside the classroom, finds that "faculty behaviors are *not* the biggest predictors of their likelihood to engage students outside of class", but that instead, students' predispositions to out-of-class interactions might be the driving force (Cox et al., 2010, p. 786). Students' predispositions to interactions with faculty are at least in part influenced by their backgrounds and characteristics, including gender, race, ethnicity and generational status (Crisp et al., 2017). Predispositions to mentoring are particularly important and will be discussed later in this chapter.

While the frequency of interactions with faculty is important, frequent interactions alone are not enough but must consist of high-quality interactions to positively contribute to student outcomes (Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004, p. 563). Different types of interactions are often indicative of the quality of the relationship. While all constructive interactions with faculty can hold value for students, mentoring relationships differ from interactions with an academic advisor. They are characterized by an emotional commitment and "are rooted in a mentor's long-term caring about a student's personal and professional development" (Baker & Griffin, 2010, p. 4). However, quality interactions are not solely limited to those relationships that involve a high level of time and personal commitment.

Lundberg & Schreiner's (2004) study on the influence of student-faculty interactions on student learning across seven racial and ethnic groups demonstrates the value of frequent and substantive interactions with faculty as "strong predictors of learning for every racial group" (p. 559) supporting previous studies (Kuh & Hu, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993). The study found only small differences in frequency and satisfaction of students' interactions with faculty across different racial groups and conclude that race does not play an important role in understanding relationships between students and faculty. While students' satisfaction with their relationships with faculty varied by ethnic group, the quality of these relationships was "the only variable that significantly predicted learning for all the racial/ethnic groups" and was particularly strong for non-White students (p. 555). These findings confirm the importance of high-quality interactions with faculty for students from disadvantaged backgrounds who may need additional support.

Frequent and substantive interactions with faculty members have a significant positive impact on student outcomes (Cole & Griffin, 2013; Crisp et al., 2017; Lundberg & Schreiner,

2004; Pascarella, 1980). Aside from the most frequent forms of student-faculty interactions, which focus on transmitting academic subject knowledge inside the classroom and academic advising, mentoring students is generally not an expected responsibility of faculty (DeAngelo, 2016). All student-faculty interactions that take place outside of the classroom and go beyond discussing course content and assignments are considered developmental relationships that fall along the "mentoring relationship continuum" (Johnson, 2016, p. 41).

Mentoring relationships, which are at the center of this study, are considered the highest form of student-faculty interactions outside the classroom (Jacobi, 1991), but are also the least frequent (Cox & Orehovec, 2007; DeAngelo et al., 2016). A student-faculty relationship that falls high on the mentoring relationship continuum entails "a stronger working alliance, higher levels of social support, and transformational collegiality" (Johnson, 2016, p. 41). The remainder of this literature review will analyze studies on this rare form of student-faculty interactions.

Mentoring Undergraduate Students

Although the lines between different types of support faculty provide for students are often blurred, mentoring is generally considered the highest form of engagement (Jacobi, 1991; Cox & Orehovec, 2007, DeAngelo et al., 2016). The concept of mentoring, however, lacks a unified definition (Crisp et al., 2017; Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Jacobi, 1991). For the purpose of this study, mentoring refers to a "process by which persons of a superior rank, special achievements, and prestige instruct, counsel, guide, and facilitate the intellectual and/or career development of persons identified as protégés" (Blackwell, 1989, p. 9). These relationships are "bonded, reciprocal, developmental relationships aimed at helping a student ... develop personally and professionally" (Johnson, 2016, p. 41). While these relationships are rare, they have a significant impact on student outcomes (Cox & Orehovec, 2010; Crisp et al., 2017, DeAngelo et al., 2016;

Jacobi, 1991).

The most recent review of the mentoring literature by Crisp et al. (2017) builds on earlier reviews by Jacobi (1991) and Crisp and Cruz (2009) and provides a comprehensive analysis of the multi-faceted concept of mentoring. While their work identifies an increasing number of studies that confirm the value of mentoring to student success, it also points to a lack of use of theory in mentoring research and a lack of theoretical frameworks that focus on mentoring. To fill this gap in the literature, the authors developed an integrated conceptual framework of mentoring undergraduate students (see Figure 1). The following section of this chapter discusses the literature on mentoring, which is the central focus of this study. The study applies Crisp et al.'s newly developed conceptual framework of mentoring undergraduate students as a framework to discuss important studies that collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of mentoring and its outcomes (see Appendix A for an alignment between the study and the original framework).

Student Characteristics

Since college students have an impact on their environments (and vice versa), the relationships they build with faculty cannot be assessed without taking their backgrounds into consideration (Crisp et al., 2017). Elements of their identity, including gender, race, and generational status, may influence their receptiveness and approach to engaging in meaningful relationships with faculty (Crisp et al., 2017).

Gender. Although gender is not the most influential characteristic when it comes to mentoring relationships or students' interactions with faculty in general, it does have an influence on students' relationships with faculty (Cole & Griffin, 2013; Crisp et al., 2017). Sax, Bryant, and Harper (2005) found that female students not only interact with faculty more frequently, but

also are more likely to "receive various forms of academic and psychosocial support from faculty and gain access to research opportunities" than their male counterparts (Cole & Griffin, 2013, p. 567). In addition, female students are more likely to receive mentoring in their senior year (Fuentes et al., 2014). While some researchers have suggested that pairing students with same-sex mentors is important, mentors and protégés do not have to share the same gender for the relationship to be effective (Crisp et al., 2017). However, in STEM fields and other male-dominant fields, female students may particularly benefit from having access to female mentors who can serve as role models (Crisp et al., 2017).

Race and ethnicity. Previous studies suggest that race and ethnicity can impact the way mentoring relationships develop and play out (Cole & Griffin, 2013; Fuentes, Ruiz Alvarado, Berdan, & DeAngelo, 2014). A student's cultural background may impact the way they prefer to interact with faculty (Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004). Wilson's (1997) study finds that Native American students found their interactions with faculty most effective if the professors were caring and genuine and shared aspects of their lives with the students (Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004). Fuentes et al.'s (2014) study of the relationship between students' early contact with faculty and mentoring in their senior year finds that African-American students have more frequent contact during their first year in college, but are not necessarily more likely to have mentors later in their academic career.

Consistent with the concept of homophily, in which "humans categorize one another based on social characteristics and then seek to interact with others that are in their own social categories", students from ethnic and racial minority groups are likely to seek out and interact with same-race mentors (Cole & Griffin, 2013, p. 568). Despite this tendency and partially due to the lack of non-white faculty members at PWIs, studies have found that cross-racial mentoring

relationships can be effective and successful (Cole & Griffin, 2013; Crisp et al., 2017). While Griffin's (2013) study of mentoring relationships between black professors and black students showed the mentor's mother-like investment in the student success, Crisp et al. (2017) identified studies on cross-racial mentoring relationships including American Indian students (Ward et al., 2014) and African-American students (Reddick & Pritchett, 2015) which were effective. While many studies have found that students tend to seek out same race mentors, race does not play an important role in understanding relationships between students and faculty (Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004).

Generational status. First-generation college students not only have fewer substantive interactions with faculty members than students whose parents have a college degree (Crisp et al., 2014; Kim & Sax, 2009), but also approach these relationships differently. Unlike their continuing-generation peers, first-generation college students are less integrated into the campus culture and often have lower levels of confidence due to their lack of social and cultural capital, and "may experience anxiety about approaching professors for help" (Mekolichick & Gibbs, 2012, p. 40). They tend to have lower expectations about developing mentoring relationship in college (Crisp et al., 2017) and are less likely to fully understand and articulate the type of support they need (Baker & Griffin, 2010).

Predisposition to mentoring. Although research on students' predispositions to mentoring is still limited, studies have shown that students' backgrounds and characteristics, including gender, race, ethnicity and generational status may influence their approach to mentoring and potentially effect outcomes (Crisp et al., 2017). In addition, academic markers and the timing of interactions also play a role in students' predisposition to mentoring. Fuentes et al. (2014) found that students who had frequent interactions with faculty in their first year were

more likely to have mentoring relationships by their senior year. In addition to various background characteristics that played a role, which are discussed below, students who had not yet decided on a major in their first year, and those with higher GPAs were more likely to interact with faculty (Fuentes et al., 2014). However, the study also found a negative association of not having declared a major at the end of first year and their level of mentoring at the end of their senior year, which reflects Weidman's (1989) theory that "students who are academically integrated are more likely to experience positive socialization outcomes" (Fuentes et al., 2014, p. 300).

Students from racial and ethnic minority groups have different needs and expectations of their relationships with college faculty. While Native American and African American students have frequent interactions with faculty compared to other racial groups (Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004), Asian and Asian-American students are least likely to interact with faculty (Fuentes et al., 2014; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004). Cultural differences not only affect the frequency of interactions, but also influence the types of support students look for in their interactions with faculty. Having faculty mentors who provide encouragement and support is especially important for Hispanic students (Hu & Ma, 2010) and Native American students (Ward et al., 2014). For African-American students, professors' high expectations combined with a belief in their academic abilities is most motivating (Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Steele, 1997).

First-generation students approach mentoring relationships from a more pragmatic perspective (Crisp et al., 2017; Lee, Sax, Kim, & Hagedorn, 2004; Mekolichick & Gibbs, 2012; Crisp et al., 2011;). In a quantitative study on the impact of generational status in mentoring relationships of students participating in undergraduate research experiences, Mekolichick and Gibbs (2012) found that first-generation students placed significant value on the faculty mentor's

expertise and the tangible educational and professional benefits that the mentoring relationship provides, including professional qualifications. In contrast, continuing-generation students expected their mentors' to be accessible and advocate on their behalf while placing higher value on the personal and professional development opportunities that result from a mentoring relationship (Mekolichick & Gibbs, 2012).

Educational Context

The educational context in which the mentoring relationship takes place, including the type of higher education institution and the department or program, matters as much as the background, competence, and status of the faculty mentors a student is engaging with (Crisp et al., 2017). Many mentoring relationships develop within structured mentoring programs including orientation, first-year experience and retention programs, undergraduate research experiences, or national programs designed to uplift underrepresented students such as the Ronald E. McNair Scholarship aimed at preparing first-generation students from ethnic minority groups for doctoral programs (Crisp et al., 2017). For students whose mentoring relationships with faculty have developed naturally outside organized programs that facilitate access to mentors, broader explicit and implicit institutional priorities will impact the climate in which mentoring takes place (Crisp et al., 2017; DeAngelo et al., 2016).

Institutional context. Although few studies consider the influence of institutions on mentoring experiences and their impact on student success and retention (Crisp et al., 2017), the institutional context in which mentoring relationships develop and thrive has a significant impact on the frequency and quality with which they occur. The type of institution and the value it places on student-faculty interaction and mentoring can vary greatly from Liberal Arts Colleges and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) that may place significant value on

frequent and substantive interactions between students and faculty (Crisp et al., 2017) to large public research universities where students that have the lowest levels of interactions with faculty (Pascarella, 1980). To students, regardless of the type of institution, faculty and staff are institutional agents whose support and concern are "indicative of the college or university's commitment to them" (Schreiner et al., 2011, p. 333)

Despite the well-documented benefits of mentoring to students and faculty, the institutional culture of most colleges and universities provides few incentives for faculty to devote time to mentoring (DeAngelo et al., 2016; O'Meara & Braskamp, 2005). Tenure and promotion reviews emphasize research productivity and teaching, leaving little time for many faculty members to engage in "extra-role behaviors" that, like mentoring undergraduate students, are not part of the expected workload for faculty (Davis & Jacobsen, 2014; DeAngelo et al., 2016). Despite lacking institutional support, DeAngelo et al.'s (2016) study of the role institutional environments play in engaging faculty in mentoring finds that faculty members' motivations to engage in mentoring are often driven by their personal background and experience. Especially faculty who were first in their family to go to college and faculty of color are often motivated to support students with similar backgrounds (DeAngelo et al., 2016), despite the additional strain it may put on them.

Johnson (2003)'s work on mentor competence, which will be addressed in more detail in the following section, points to the important role institutions play in ensuring that faculty members possess the virtues, abilities, and competencies to be effective mentors. This can be achieved by hiring professors who have a strong mentoring record, training faculty for mentoring roles, and conducting periodic assessments of faculty mentors (Johnson, 2003). If colleges and universities follow Purdue University's lead to explicitly value and reward mentoring

undergraduate students in tenure and promotion reviews (Jaschick, 2015), faculty members will be more motivated to engage with students in meaningful ways outside the classroom (DeAngelo et al., 2016). Making mentoring a valued and measurable part of the faculty workload not only increases student success and the quality of educational experience, but also has the potential to provide faculty with "a sense of intrinsic reward" contributing to job satisfaction (DeAngelo et al., 2016, p. 330).

The faculty mentor. Despite the importance of the institutional context in which the mentoring relationship takes place, it is the mentor herself who has the ultimate impact on the mentoring relationship. Mentoring relationships are reciprocal and "rooted in a mentor's long-term caring about a student's personal and professional development" (Baker & Griffin, 2010, p. 4). The experience and background of the mentor, including their race, gender, and generational status can determine how faculty members approach mentoring (Johnson, 2016). In addition to the faculty mentors' personal background, their skills, competencies and commitment to a prolonged supportive relationship with a student significantly impacts its effectiveness (Crisp et al., 2017; Johnson, 2003, 2016).

Numerous studies that have found that student-faculty interactions, including mentoring relationships, are often based on the principle of "homophily", meaning that faculty and students seek each other out based on shared characteristics, often of underrepresentation (Cole & Griffin, 2013; Crisp et al., 2017). Johnson (2016) points to the process of "cloning in academe", which occurs when "professors find themselves attracted to juniors who remind them of themselves in important ways and in whom they can create a mirror image of themselves" (p. 40). FGLI students and other under-represented students tend to face more challenges in college and, compared to their more advantaged peers, are less likely to resemble the present-day collective

predominant characteristics of faculty members. If faculty members gravitate towards students who are rising stars and resemble themselves instead of students who are most in need of support, FGLI students can find it difficult to build mentoring relationships that help them succeed. This aligns with Crisp et al.'s (2017) observation that students of color may have limited access to faculty mentors due to their own preference to form mentoring relationships with professors who share their own backgrounds.

Minority faculty and female faculty members share a disproportionate burden of mentoring minority students (Baker & Griffin, 2010; Griffin, 2013; Cole & Griffin, 2013; Umbach, 2006) since their representation in the professoriate has not kept up with the increasing diversity of the undergraduate student body (Baker & Griffin, 2010; Crisp et al., 2017).

Following the principle of homophily, faculty from racial minority groups at PWIs or those who may have been the first in their families to go to college may be more motivated to engage with and become invested in mentoring students who share their personal experience as it relates to their underrepresented characteristics (Baker & Griffin, 2010; Cole & Griffin, 2013; DeAngelo et al., 2016).

Griffin's (2013) study of Black professors' mentoring relationships with black students finds unique interactions due to their shared racial background. The twenty-eight professors who were interviewed for the study cited an unusually close connection and level of comfort with their protégés. As mentors became very invested in and committed to their protégé's success, their shared racial identity and challenges sometimes led to "mother-like" roles. The study also points to the significant time and energy that black professors spend mentoring black students, particularly first-generation students who may in be need of significant academic and personal support. Despite its rewards, the time-consuming nature of mentoring relationships, particularly

for students who are less academically prepared, may adversely affect professors' research productivity and can have negative consequences for their career (Griffin, 2013).

While same-race mentoring relationships can lead to closer bonds and heightened investment in students' success (Griffin, 2013), cross-race relationships also have positive outcomes. A qualitative study of cross-racial mentoring relationships by Redding and Pritchett (2015) found that white professors who mentored black students at a PWI became more aware of the many barriers that black students face (as cited in Crisp et al., 2017, p. 34). Similarly, a study of mentored research experiences of American Indian undergraduate students at a Tribal College by Ward et al. (2014) finds that non-native faculty mentors were effective if they were able to develop trust and collaboration despite lacking knowledge of the student's culture. (as cited in Crisp et al., 2017, p. 34). Although similarities in gender, ethnic backgrounds, or generational status can positively influence mentoring relationships (Cole & Griffin, 2013; Crisp et al., 2017; Griffin & Reddick, 2011), sharing these characteristics is not necessarily a prerequisite to an effective mentoring relationship and no more important than mutual respect, mutual interests, and a shared commitment to the relationship (Baker & Griffin, 2010).

Regardless of their personal background, effective mentors share certain characteristics and skills. Faculty members who develop "highly engaged relational mentorships" with students are "those who successfully blend approachability, empathy, and care as they support and promote their mentees" (Johnson, 2016, p. 59). Despite its focus on mentoring in academe, Johnson's extensive work on mentor competence (2003, 2016) informs this study in important ways. Johnson (2016) conceptualizes mentor competence through a triangular model, which consists of "foundational character virtues (integrity, caring, prudence), salient foundational abilities (cognitive, emotional, rational), and numerous skill-based competencies (e.g. providing

support, respecting autonomy, allowing increasing mutuality)" (p. 61). Within Crisp et al.'s (2017) framework, Johnson's model will guide the component of my study that focuses on the characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of faculty mentors that students find particularly helpful.

The importance of certain character virtues identified in Johnson's (2016) model are validated by other studies that analyze faculty characteristics. Student participants in Schreiner, Noel, Anderson, and Cantwell's (2011) qualitative study on attitudes and behaviors of faculty and staff that contribute to the persistence of high-risk students described the essential characteristics of their mentors as "(a) positive; (b) knowledgeable or intelligent; (c) passionate, energetic, outgoing, or enthusiastic; (d) humorous or fun; and (e) challenging with high expectations" (p. 329). The characteristics of faculty members are not only important in mentoring relationships but influence student-faculty interactions more generally. A quantitative study by Komarraju, Musulkin, and Bhattacharya (2010) showed that students who perceive faculty members as respectful, approachable, and signaling availability to interact outside the classroom, reported higher levels of motivation and more confidence in their academic abilities.

A faculty mentor's interpersonal skills are not only an important factor in students' decision to engage in a developmental relationship with a particular faculty member, but also often determine the effectiveness of the relationship (Johnson, 2016). The mentor's emotional and relational abilities that are important to successful mentoring relationships include "a fundamental orientation to helping others, generative concern for protégés, empathy, positive emotional effect, interpersonal warmth, congruence, humility, capacity for intimacy, personal health, and self-awareness" (Johnson, 2016, p. 71). While these abilities are certainly important, faculty who have developed all these skills to a high degree are likely rare, making them more of a wish list than a realistic set of abilities that can be expected of good faculty mentors.

The third component of Johnson's (2016) Triangular Model of Mentor Competence focuses on the practical competencies of mentors and identifies what mentors actually do. Great mentors possess a myriad of competencies that are developed over time. They "offer encouragement and support, directly teach and train ... challenge mentees to take risks, consistently affirm, provide exposure and visibility, model intentionally, ... and assist with socialization" (Johnson, 2016, p. 97). The importance of these functions to students is validated by Schreiner et al.'s (2011) study which found that behaviors that students most valued in mentors were: "(a) encouraging, supporting, and believing in them; (b) motivating them and wanting to see them learn; (c) taking time for them, expressing an interest in them, and communicating to them that they are important; (d) relating to them on their level; and (e) pushing them to excel while at the same time helping them to understand difficult concepts." (p. 328). Honoring these important competencies not only benefits students, but also benefits the mentors themselves (Baker et al., 2015, as cited in Crisp et al., 2017, p. 56).

The background, experience, characteristics and competencies of faculty mentors have a significant impact on the mentoring relationship and, as a result, on the students they serve (Crisp et al., 2017; Johnson, 2016; Schreiner et al., 2011). While Johnson's work on mentor competencies shows the multitude and depth of characteristics, abilities, and competencies that are necessary to become an excellent mentor, mentors do not have to be perfect in order to be effective. Although incentives for faculty to invest time in honing their mentoring skills are likely limited given their general low consideration in the hiring and promotion of new faculty (Johnson, 2016; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996, as cited in Crisp et al., 2017), most mentoring competencies are not innate and can be developed (Johnson, 2016). The ways in which certain

characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of the faculty mentor contribute to the success of the mentoring relationship will be highly relevant to this study.

Relationship Features

Crisp et al.'s (2017) framework considers the influence of student characteristics and the educational context on the "intent, purpose, intensity (breadth), and duration (length) of mentoring relationships" (p. 83). Mentoring relationships between undergraduate students and faculty vary not only in their goals, purposes, and duration, but the background and experiences that mentors and protégés bring to relationships also affect their intensity (Crisp et al., 2017). These relationship features are also influenced by the way in which mentoring relationships develop.

Intent. Mentoring is intentional and is defined by the mentor's commitment to the protégé's growth and success (Baker & Griffin, 2010; Crisp et al., 2017). Mentoring relationships can be either formally assigned through a university's formalized mentoring program or develop naturally based on shared interests. While formal mentoring relationships come with clear parameters about goals and intentions, mentoring relationships that develop organically are less likely to have specified goals (Johnson, 2016). However, regardless of how relationships form, faculty need to be intentional and deliberate about connecting with students (Johnson, 2016; Schreiner et al., 2011). Schreiner et al. (2011) found that faculty and staff who had an impact on the success of students were intentional about connecting with students and viewed mentoring as part of their responsibilities. Although the low rates of high-quality mentoring validate Johnson's (2016) view of mentoring as the "forgotten fourth leg of the academic stool" (p. 17), they are generally not because of a lack of interest in mentoring on the part of faculty, but often the result of a lack of institutional commitment to mentoring (Johnson, 2016).

Purpose. The most frequent forms of student-faculty engagement are functional interactions that usually involve a specific academic purpose (Cole & Griffin, 2013; Cox & Orehovec, 2007). Crisp et al. (2017) identify a growing body of research on formal mentoring programs, which are increasing at colleges and universities. Such programs are created for specific purposes and include "(a) orientation and first-year experience programs; (b) mentoring for social justice and equity; (c) peer mentoring programs; (d) and undergraduate research and honors programs that include a mentoring component" (Crisp et al., 2017, p. 45). Such formalized mentoring programs, the goals of which are often implied in their names, can have great value, especially for first-generation and minority students that they often target. However, the students who are at the center of this study will have had limited access to such programs and will likely have formed relationships with faculty outside formalized mentoring programs. Mentoring relationships that develop organically without institutional intervention or planning are often formed between students and faculty working on a common research interest (Mekolichick & Gibbs, 2012), which becomes the primary purpose of the relationship.

Intensity. The intensity or depth of a mentoring relationship varies depending on the needs of the protégé, the availability of the mentor, as well as his or her mentoring competencies. Although all developmental relationships on the mentoring continuum are substantive by definition, interactions increase in intensity if they include a high level of psychosocial, emotional, and career support (Baker & Griffin, 2010; Crisp et al., 2017). Mentors who become invested in their protégé's success contribute to creating mentoring relationships with high levels of depth and intensity. One example of this is the concept of "othermothering" (Griffin, 2013; Guiffrida, 2005), which occurs when mentors and students bond over shared experiences or characteristics, often of underrepresentation. Dating back to slavery, "othermothering" defines

"women who assist blood-mothers by sharing mothering responsibilities" especially in terms of education and socialization (Collins, 2000, p. 178). Griffin's (2013) study of black professors who mentor black students find that their unusually close relationships are "based on similar experiences in the academy, commitments to community uplift, and high expectations" (p. 169). Despite the significant benefits that faculty identified, such intense interactions also consume substantial amounts of time and energy (Griffin, 2013). While one might assume that mentoring relationships that are more intense in terms of time investment and level of commitment are more influential, it is important for faculty to establish professional boundaries around their time and resources (Johnson, 2016).

Duration. Similarly to the intent and purpose of a mentoring relationship, its duration is more likely to be clearly defined if the relationship occurs within the parameters of a formal mentoring program (Johnson, 2016). For organically formed mentoring relationships, the duration of the relationship depends on the students' needs and characteristics as well as the parameters of the specific purpose of the relationship (Johnson, 2016), such as the timeline for a research project. Mentoring relationships will likely vary significantly in length. Developmental relationships may not always start out as mentoring relationships, but develop over time (Crisp et al., 2017; Fuentes et al., 2014; Johnson, 2016). Fuentes et al.'s study finds that "early interaction with faculty serves as a socialization process ... that leads students to have more meaningful interactions with faculty later in college" (p. 288). Although the more meaningful interactions may not have involved the same professor with whom the early interaction occurred, each relationship follows four predictable phases, which include "initiation", "cultivation", "separation" and "redefinition" (Kram, 1983, as cited in Johnson, 2016, p.119). Each dyad will likely move through these phases at a different pace and some protégés will identify a faculty

mentor "in perpetuity" (Johnson, 2016, p. 11). Since my study's participants will have just graduated in May 2017, their mentoring relationship will be either in the "separation" or "redefinition" phase (Johnson, 2016, p.119). The interview questions will address students' perceptions of the level of influence their mentor had on their college experience, which will likely address how they see the relationship going forward.

Types of Developmental Relationships

The conceptual framework of mentoring undergraduate students (Crisp et al., 2017) acknowledges different types of relationships along the mentoring continuum and the structure of these relationships.

Form of relationship. As discussed earlier in this chapter, students' interactions with faculty take on many forms and not all interactions should be considered mentoring relationships (Baker & Griffin, 2010; Crisp et al., 2017; DeAngelo et al., 2016). The depth and intensity of developmental relationships along the mentoring continuum also vary and likely change over time (Baker & Griffin, 2010). At the beginning, developmental relationships between a student and a faculty member are mainly "transactional" serving a specific purpose and following a certain structure (Johnson, 2016, p. 29). Over time, successful mentoring relationships tend to become more engaged and "transformational" as "mentors work deliberately to inspire and transform their mentees through sincere and well-timed guidance, encouragement, modeling, and visioning" (Johnson, 2016, p. 30).

Relationship structure. While most mentoring relationships follow a traditional face-to-face approach and take place one-on-one, alternative structures such as group mentoring and e-mentoring can also be effective (Crisp et al., 2017; Johnson, 2016; Schunk & Mullen, 2013). Virtual, or e-mentoring is often used to supplement face-to-face interactions, particularly after

the relationship is established (Johnson, 2016). Ensher & Murphy (2007) define e-mentoring as "as a mutually beneficial relationship between a mentor and a protégé, which provides new learning as well as career and emotional support, primarily through e-mail and other electronic means" (p. 2). While e-mentoring can increase access to mentoring and reduces scheduling and meeting times (Johnson, 2016; Schunk & Mullen, 2013), it can lead to miscommunication and "an interpersonal sterility that may diminish the strength of the mentorship" (Johnson, 2016, p. 38).

Relationship structures are influenced by the educational context in which they take place. Increasingly, colleges and universities attempt to increase student-faculty interactions and student support through formal mentoring programs, such as orientation programs, first-year experiences, and undergraduate research projects, which are designed with a specific structure (Crisp et al., 2017). Especially in formalized programs, group (or team) mentoring can be an effective alternative to the typical mentor/protégé dyad. Group mentoring exposes protégés to team work (Kostovich & Thurn, 2013, as cited in Crisp et al., 2016, p. 39), eases the burden on faculty and is an effective way to offer advice on topics relevant to all protégés, such as study skills and preparation for graduate school (Johnson, 2016). SPU Promise Scholars are offered group mentoring during their first year on campus, but only about half select to participate in the program (SPU Promise Review, 2010). Group mentoring not only helps students gain access to faculty mentors who care about them and their unique challenges, but can also help students learn how to interact effectively with faculty and often serves as an entry point into one-on-one mentorships that can offer more comprehensive support (Johnson, 2016).

Forms of Support

The various forms of support that students need and receive from their faculty mentors are shaped by the students' background and characteristics, the educational context, as well as the form and structure of the developmental relationship (Crisp et al., 2017). Faculty mentors are not only invested in students' academic success, but are also committed to the student's personal and professional development and emotional well-being (Baker & Griffin, 2010; Crisp et al., 2017, Johnson, 2016). Based on Kram's (1988) influential theory of mentoring functions, Crisp et al. (2017) identify four prevalent types of support, including "(a) psychological and emotional support"; (b) "degree completion support"; (c) "academic subject knowledge support"; and (d) "career development support" (p. 84). Faculty provide a combination of these forms of support depending on students' needs at a given point in their intellectual and personal development. The model presumes that the four forms of support are influenced by the students' characteristics as well as the educational context and have an impact on students' experiences and outcomes (Crisp et al., 2017). The following section will explore the literature on the four types of support, which are highly relevant to this study.

Psychosocial and emotional support. Psychosocial and emotional support has been considered an important form of support in the mentoring literature by Kram (1988) and Jacobi (1991), as well as more recent comprehensive works on mentoring functions by Nora and Crisp (2007), Crisp and Cruz (2009), and Crisp et al. (2017). Psychosocial and emotional support provided by a faculty mentor entails "encouragement, understanding, and active empathetic listening within the relationship" (Crisp et al., 2017, p. 61). It also suggests a high level of care and commitment to the protégé's personal and professional development and emotional well-being (Baker & Griffin, 2010; Crisp et al., 2017). The "incredibly important and meaningful

benefits of an engaged and bonded relationship" (Johnson, 2016, p. 7), can be particularly important to first-generation, low-income, and minority students (Ishiyama, 2007).

The student's background clearly influences the importance of psychosocial and emotional support that mentors provide. A qualitative study by Ishiyama (2007) examined how first-generation, low-income students as well as African-American continuing-generation students who participated in the Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement Program perceived the relationship with their research mentor. The study found that regardless of their generational status, African-American students were more likely to place a higher value on psychosocial and emotional support than their White peers. While White students tended to value their mentors' academic expertise, African American students found the personal support that their mentors' provided particularly valuable (Ishiyama, 2007).

Although faculty mentors should not assume that all student need or want high levels of personal support (Baker & Griffin, 2010), having a mentor who cares about the student as an individual is highly motivating (Baker & Griffin, 2010; Crisp et al., 2017; Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Ishiyama, 2007; Johnson, 2016; Komarraju et al., 2010; Wallace et al., 2000). While the mentor's emotional and relational abilities impact their ability to provide psychosocial and emotional support, students can perceive less deliberate and intentional interactions with faculty as supportive. A study by Komarraju, Musulkin, & Bhattacharya (2010) found that when faculty members make themselves available to students, are approachable and respectful, and are interested in them, students were more engaged, motivated, and self-confident. Building a protégé's self-confidence is a particularly important aspect of psychosocial and emotional support (Crisp & Cruz, 2009) and particularly important for students who may be academically underprepared and lacking confidence in their abilities.

Degree completion. Degree completion support is most often provided by academic advisors who may or may not take on other supportive roles along the mentoring continuum (Baker & Griffin, 2010; Crisp et al., 2017). In addition to academic advising, degree completion support includes "providing feedback, and helping students navigate academic policy and degree requirements" (Crisp et al., 2017, p. 84). Degree completion is positively related to the ability of faculty to actively engage students inside and outside the classroom (Johnson, 2016).

Degree completion support is also a byproduct of mentoring relationships with faculty that go beyond teaching and advising. In order to increase the low graduation rates of FGLI students, colleges and universities are increasingly including formal mentoring components into their orientation programs, first-year experiences, and retention programs (Crisp et al., 2017; Gershenfield, 2014). Mentoring functions within these programs are often designed to help students integrate academically and socially into the campus environment and to increase academic performance (Gershenfield, 2014). Although the purposes of undergraduate mentoring programs vary, they are primarily designed to "strengthen student engagement and relationship building in order to improve academic performance and college retention" (Gershenfield, 2014, p. 365).

Whether the mentoring relationship occurs within an organized mentoring program or develops naturally, the mentor's emotional intelligence plays an important role in effective mentoring relationships (Johnson, 2016; Lillis, 2011). A study by Lillis (2011) found that mentor competencies, especially the emotional intelligence of the faculty mentor, positively impacts students' intentions to stay in college (Lillis, 2011). The mentor's emotional abilities are positively related to the quality of the relationship (Johnson, 2016), which may be particularly important for high-risk students, including FGLI students. A study by Wallace, Abel, and

Huilman (2000) found that FGLI students who received formal mentoring through a TRIO program were more likely to persist out of a sense of obligation to their mentors who were committed to their success, but also as a result of their care and the feelings of self-worth that the mentors instilled in them.

Academic content knowledge. Students' academic preparation, or lack thereof, influences the amount of academic support they need from faculty, particularly within an established mentoring relationship. Faculty mentoring positively affects students' GPA as well as their retention (Campbell & Campbell, 1997; Johnson, 2016). For first-generation college students, receiving academic support from a faculty mentor is particularly important due to their limited college knowledge (Baker & Griffin, 2010). Faculty mentors, who play a significant role when it comes to increasing academic content knowledge of their protégés, can enhance students' academic learning through classroom pedagogy and faculty-mentored undergraduate research.

Although much of a mentoring relationship takes place outside of the classroom, faculty who are able to engage students in active and collaborative learning inside the classroom, directly and indirectly, contribute to students' persistence (Braxton, Jones, Hirschy, & Hartley, 2008; Kuh et al., 2006). A recent study by Schademan and Thompson (2016) found that FGLI students felt more connected to professors who employed effective teaching strategies that fostered student learning and success, including using engaged learning techniques, constructive feedback, clear explanations, and providing encouragement. These professors "created a space in their classrooms that promoted a sense of connection and belonging to the larger campus community" (Schademan & Thompson, 2016, p. 211). Schademan and Thompson's (2016) qualitative study on the view of FGLI students and faculty on college readiness of FGLI students'

readiness also found that relational teaching was particularly effective, as were "appropriate pacing, attending to student needs, monitoring and communicating student progress, giving clear explanations, and providing positive feedback and encouragement" (p. 209). When faculty have high expectations and belief in their students' academic abilities, success becomes "a self-fulfilling prophecy" (Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004, p. 550).

Faculty who mentor students through joint undergraduate research projects significantly contribute to enhancing students' academic content knowledge. Working with a faculty member on a research project not only offers an opportunity to get to know a faculty member and work closely with them (DeAngelo et al., 2016), it is also critical for students' academic learning. Wisker (2012) argues that "research is a fundamental learning activity in which students develop problem-solving, decision-making, and analytical skills while engaging in knowledge creation and dissemination (Crisp et al., 2017, p. 24). Similarly, a qualitative study by Ishiyama (2007) that examined how FGLI students and African-American continuing-generation students who participated in the Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement Program perceived the relationship with their research mentor found that academic support provided by the faculty mentor consisted of helping students identify relevant literature, selecting a research topic, and teaching them research techniques.

Career development. Career development support includes helping students become aware of their strengths and weaknesses, develop career goals, and strategies to achieve them (Crisp et al., 2017; Nora & Crisp, 2007). Faculty mentors play an important role guiding students toward a career path and helping them develop professional skills and competencies (Johnson, 2016). Effective mentors provide frequent and continuing career support that includes engaging them in research, writing articles, attending conferences and facilitating networking opportunities

(Lunsford, 2011). A qualitative study by Lunsford (2011) links career certainty to the quality of the mentoring relationship. The study finds that students with high-quality mentoring relationships were more likely to be committed to a certain career path and often engaged in research with their mentor (Lunsford, 2011). Effective mentors also play an important role in preparing students for graduate school and supporting their candidacy (Crisp et al., 2017).

FGLI students highly benefit from mentoring that focuses on career development given their relative lack of social capital and their reluctance to interact with faculty who can provide important networking opportunities (Parks-Yancy, 2012). A qualitative study by Parks-Yancy (2012) explored the extent to which African-American FGLI students have access to social capital resources through faculty and how these interactions influenced their career plans and prospects. This group of students tends to be unaware of career options and receive little valuable input and resources from family members (Parks-Yancy, 2012). Mentoring relationships for African-American FGLI students not only increase social capital, but also motivate students to develop more informed and ambitious career goals (Parks-Yancy, 2012). Faculty can be particularly helpful in exposing students to important networks when they share their protégé's academic area of interest. However, there are differences in career development potential between formal and informal mentoring since students in a formal mentoring program may not be assigned a mentor who is in their chosen academic field (Wallace et al., 2000).

Summary. While some studies have analyzed different forms of support within mentoring relationships and student-faculty interactions, very few have looked at what types of support is particularly important for first-generation and low-income students. Given FGLI students' relative lack of social capital (Mekolichick & Gibbs, 2012; Parks-Yancy, 2012), combined with the numerous barriers to college success that these students face (Engle & Tinto,

2008), certain forms of support may be particularly valuable to this group of students. Since few studies have assessed the types of mentoring support that FGLI students need the most, this study will explore and analyze the different forms of mentoring support that were particularly helpful to the participants.

Impact on Students' Experiences and Outcomes

The literature on mentoring and student-faculty interactions strongly supports the important role that faculty play in student success in college (Baker & Griffin, 2010; Bensimon, 2007; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Cole & Griffin, 2013; Crisp et al., 2017; Pascarella, 1980; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Schreiner et al., 2011; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). Pascarella (1980) identified five outcomes of student-faculty interactions including a) career plans and educational aspirations, b) satisfaction, c) intellectual and personal development, d) academic achievement, and e) college persistence. Studies have found that college students who have access to mentoring experience a variety of benefits during their time in college. Crisp et al.'s (2017) review of the mentoring literature to date identified intermediate term outcomes, including social and cultural capital, socialization, self-efficacy, career awareness, identity development, and involvement and integration, as well as long-term outcomes like college adjustment, academic success, and career and personal development. The following sections will explore each of these outcomes in more detail.

Intermediate Outcomes

Social and cultural capital. Interactions with faculty provide students an opportunity to access both cultural and social capital (Walpole, 2003). This is especially important for FGLI students who enter college with lower levels of social and cultural capital and may accumulate less while in college given their lower levels of campus involvement (Martin, 2015; Walpole,

2003). As students move through higher education, their relationships with institutional agents become particularly important. Bourdieu (1986) defines the concept of social capital as:

The aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group—which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a credential which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. (p. 248–249)

Relationships with faculty mentors provide a valuable and important source of social capital as mentors provide student access into their academic and professional networks and through their advice, support, information, and influence (Johnson, 2016).

A number of studies on mentoring and student-faculty interactions have used social capital frameworks (Museus & Neville 2012; Parks-Yancy, 2012; Tovar, 2014; Rios-Aguilar & Diel-Amen, 2012). A qualitative study by Museus & Neville (2012) explores the characteristics of institutional agents who increase social capital for racial minority students. The study identifies institutional agents as those who provided students access through "cultivating trust and closure within their relationships with participants, providing participants with resources (i.e., information and support), and connecting participants with larger information and support networks across their campus" (Museus & Neville, 2012, p. 443). Being able to relate to students' backgrounds, providing holistic support, humanizing the educational experience, and being proactive about providing resources and support were all important characteristics of institutional agents who contributed to students' success (Museus & Neville, 2012).

The French sociologist Bourdieu (1977, 1994) used the concept of cultural capital and "habitus" "to explain how individual agency combines with socially structured opportunities and

aspirations to reproduce the existing social structure" (Walpole, 2003, p. 49). Cultural capital is particularly relevant to understanding the experiences of FGLI students because their low-income background can negatively impact their sense of belonging as middle-class values and cultural rules dominate US colleges and universities (Hinz, 2016; Stephens, 2012). In contrast to their more privileged continuing-generation peers, first-generation students may not only feel disconnected and alienated by the campus culture, but might also lack the confidence to make contact with professors outside of the classroom (Mekolichick & Gibbs, 2012). Faculty mentors can help students acquire cultural capital by helping them gain knowledge that facilitates their success (Crisp et al., 2017) such as deciphering unwritten rules, navigating the campus culture, and providing inside knowledge on graduate schools and the application process (Crisp et al., 2017; Walpole, 2003).

FGLI students rarely have access to career related resources and rely on obtaining these resources from institutional agents (Parks-Yancy, 2012). In a study on African-American FGLI students' ability to obtain social capital from institutional agents related to their career development, Parks-Yancy (2012) found that faculty mentors not only played an important role in increasing students' career awareness and ambition, but also can have a significant impact on students' career path. Although students who developed strong relationships with faculty and staff "received professional mentoring, career information and advice, information about different institutions at which to attend graduate school, and could probably obtain recommendation letters or other types of influence resources that would facilitate their post-college careers", only a few participants had cultivated such relationships mostly due to a lack of understanding of their potential benefits (Parks-Yancy, 2012, p. 520).

Socialization. In addition to peers, faculty members play an important role as the main

agent of socialization for college students (Chickering, 1969; DeAngelo et al., 2016; Pascarella, 1980; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Weidman, 2006). Based on the important work by Bragg (1976) and Weidman (2006), "socialization can be understood as the process of gaining the skills, knowledge, values, and habits associated with the society in which one is a member" (Crisp et al., 2007, p. 69). Weidman's (1989) model of socialization gives particular importance to students' socioeconomic background (Padgett et al., 2010).

Frequent and substantive interactions with faculty lead to higher levels of socialization for undergraduate students (Cole & Griffin, 2013; Crisp et al., 2017; Fuentes et al., 2014; Weidman, 1989). A quantitative study by Fuentes et al. (2014) with longitudinal data from three student surveys uses Weidman's model of undergraduate socialization to explore if students' interaction with faculty during their first year led to mentoring relationships later in their college career. The study confirms its hypothesis that early faculty contact leads to more meaningful mentoring relationships. This is particularly important for FGLI students who often do not know how and why to interact with faculty when they first enter college. Fuentes et al.'s (2014) study also finds that having identified a major by the end of the first year gives them access to "an academic discipline to facilitate their socialization into the institution and teach them the skills necessary to seek out faculty for mentoring relationships" (p. 300).

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (Bandura, 1994, p. 71). Self-efficacy is linked to the psychosocial functions of mentoring since it relates to students' perceptions of themselves and their abilities (Schunk & Mullen, 2013). Mentors who make students feel that they care about them and believe in their abilities contribute to students' self-esteem and sense of self-worth (Wallace et al., 2000). Participation in

undergraduate research can be particularly conducive to developing self-efficacy. Faculty who engage students in undergraduate research or other joint activities can significantly contribute to students' self-efficacy by becoming a role model, demystifying their own path to success, and socializing students into the profession (O'Donnell, Bothelo, Brown, González, & Head, 2015). A qualitative study by Kim and Sax (2009), which examined outcomes of research-related interactions and their variations across gender, race, generational status, and social class found that undergraduate research experiences not only have a positive impact on academic achievement, but also led to higher degree aspirations for all racial groups, suggesting an increase in self-efficacy.

Students from ethnic minority groups at PWIs and students from other marginalized groups often have a low sense of self-efficacy, which can stem from experiencing "stereotype threat" (Steele, 1997, p. 616). Steele (1997) defines stereotype threat as "the event of a negative stereotype about a group to which one belongs becoming self-relevant, usually as a plausible interpretation for something one is doing, for an experience one is having, or for a situation one is in, that has relevance to one's self-definition." (p. 616). Students from disadvantaged backgrounds, including FGLI and students from ethnic minority groups are particularly vulnerable to stereotype threat and its negative impact on self-efficacy. Professors and faculty mentors can reduce stereotype threat by using "wise schooling" strategies, including challenging students academically, affirming their belonging at the institution, building self-efficacy, being a role model, and valuing multiple perspectives (Cole & Griffin, 2013; Steele, 1997, p. 624). A positive outlook on the part of the professor or mentor is particularly important for African-American students for whom critical feedback was "strongly motivating when coupled with optimism about with intellectual potential" (Steele, 1997, p. 625). Mentors who succeed in

instilling in their protégés a growth mindset, or the belief that one's intelligence and personal qualities are not fixed, but can be expanded through continued effort and experience (Dweck, 2000, 2008), can significantly contribute to their protégé's sense of self-efficacy.

Career awareness. Informal interactions with faculty, including mentoring relationships, positively impact students' career plans and educational aspirations (Pascarella, 1980; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Faculty mentors not only help students identify their strengths and weaknesses but can also work with students on exploring interests and ideas, helping them develop their professional potential, encouraging students to set career goals, offering feedback, and holding them accountable to make progress and realize their goals (Nora & Crisp, 2007). Such interactions between students and faculty members foster students' sense of purpose leading to an increased certainty about career choice (Chickering, 1969; Pascarella, 1980). Mentoring relationships not only raise students' career awareness and ambition (Crisp et al., 2017; Parks-Yancy, 2012), but also provide students with social capital, which can help them identify a career path (Parks-Yancy, 2012).

Interactions with faculty also seem to have "a positive impact on the likelihood of students choosing careers in academic and scientific research" (Kuh et al., 2006, p. 86), which may be particularly true for students who participated in undergraduate research. Participation in undergraduate research has a positive impact on career aspirations for both, first-generation and continuing generation students (Kim & Sax, 2009), although their perceived benefits of the mentoring aspect can vary. Mekolochick and Gibbs' (2012) study based on a survey of 265 high-achieving students' undergraduate research mentoring experiences finds that while continuing-generation students particularly value the personal and professional dimension of their mentoring relationship, first-generation students place more emphasis on professional development. First-

generation students were more likely to report having gained new skills as well as "a shift in attitudes about taking on increasing responsibility, learning to work independently, and thus achieving greater gains in confidence and ownership of their projects" (p. 44), while their continuing generation peers were more likely to report personal and professional development outcomes. Consistent with Ishiyama's (2007) qualitative study with the same focus, Mekolochick and Gibbs conclude that first-generation students experience mentoring differently than their continuing-generation peers and have a more pragmatic approach it.

Identity development. Since identity development is central to college students' psychosocial development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993), it is closely linked to the psychosocial functions of mentoring. This focus might explain why underrepresented students, especially students from racial and ethnic minority groups tend to gravitate towards mentors who share their background characteristics (Cole & Griffin, 2013, Crisp et al., 2017). Although mentors and protégés do not have to share the same background for the relationship to have a positive impact on the student, Crisp et al. (2017) point to numerous studies that found that "students from underrepresented or underserved backgrounds often express an interest in forming mentoring relationships with mentors who share their identities, assuming they will be able to understand and affirm their sometimes-marginalizing experiences in the academy" (p. 87). However, as noted in earlier sections, it is unlikely that the majority of underrepresented students are able to connect with a mentor who shares their characteristics of underrepresentation since the study body has diversified much more quickly than the faculty.

Reddick and Pritchett's (2015) study of mentoring relationships between white faculty and Black students integrates identity with ally development models. In addition to advancing a new conceptual model of cross-racial ally mentorship, the authors find that effective faculty

mentors often draw from their own experiences to relate to and help their protégés overcome challenges. In promoting social justice through mentoring, it is critical "that mentors affirm students' identities, validate their experiences and perspectives, and acknowledge how identity may relate to student persistence and success" (Crisp et al., 2017, p. 87). It is the psychosocial functions of the mentoring relationship as well as the mentor's competencies that can be particularly beneficial to building students' identity and sense of self-worth, which is particularly important for FGLI students who often lack confidence in their abilities (Cole & Griffin, 2013).

Involvement and integration. Numerous studies, especially those based on student surveys, have linked students' success in college to their social and academic integration into the campus community (Bensimon, 2007; Kim & Sax, 2009; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004). Faculty in general, and faculty mentors in particular, are instrumental in facilitating students' social and academic integration (Cole & Griffin, 2013; Lundberg & Schreiner; Pascarella, 1980; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993). Two of the most widely used frameworks used in the mentoring literature are Astin's (1993) *Theory of Involvement* and Tinto's (1993) *Theory of Student Departure* (Crisp et al., 2017; Ozaki, 2016). Astin's (1993) *Theory of Involvement* argues that students who are academically and socially involved and invested in the campus community, will likely gain more from the college experience (Astin, 1984, 1993; Crisp et al., 2017; Ozaki, 2016). Tinto's (1993) *Theory of Student Departure* accounts for students' characteristics prior to entering college and suggests that students who do not fit and integrate well socially and academically into the institution are less likely to persist.

Although both models are still widely used in the student success and student retention literature, they are not without flaws, particularly when applied to underrepresented students (Demetriou, 2014). Guiffrida (2006) joins a number of scholars who argue that Tinto's *Theory of*

Student Departure fails to account for cultural variables that make it difficult to apply to minority students. The theory's call for students to separate from their past connections in order to become integrated, is particularly problematic for minority students (Guiffrida, 2006). While subsequent research has argued against this aspect of Tinto's theory and demonstrated the value of retaining cultural connections for minority students (Guiffrida, 2006), it must be noted that it is that cultural divide or mismatch that poses barriers to the integration and success of students from underrepresented groups (Stephens et al., 2012).

Despite their criticism, Astin's (1984, 1993) and Tinto's (1993) theories form the building blocks of the extensive body of literature on college impact and underline the value of student-faculty interactions outside the classroom in student success. Their work has framed research on academic and social-related student-faculty interactions outside the classroom (Cole & Griffin, 2013). The mentoring literature has frequently used Astin's (1993) *Theory of Involvement* to describe mentoring as a tool to increase student involvement and link it to students' academic success (Crisp et al., 2017). However, Crisp et al.'s (2017) review of the mentoring literature concludes that despite their validation of mentoring in promoting student success, "these frameworks do not provide insight into how mentoring is distinguished from other relationships, what happens within the context of mentoring relationships, or why and how mentoring relationships bring about specific academic, social, and career development outcomes" (p. 58).

More recently, research has "offered several concepts that deviate from the integration perspective to prompt more culturally conscious views of college success" (Museus, Yi, & Saelua, 2017). Such culturally sensitive theories include Rendón's (1994) work on *cultural validation*, Jun and Tierney's (1999) focus on *cultural integrity* as well as Museus' (2011) concept of *cultural integration*, which builds on Tinto's work (Museus, Yi, & Saelua, 2017).

Hurtado and Carter's (1997) quantitative study of Latino students' *sense of belonging* argues that cultural differences do not have to be suppressed in order to adopt the norms of the dominant campus culture for students to succeed. Mentoring programs that "focus on engagement in the academic community, academic and social skill enhancement, strategies to manage institutional expectations, and emotional intelligence and coping skills" can further enhance students' sense of belonging (Crisp et al., 2017, p. 57).

Faculty members play an important role in facilitating students' engagement and integration into the campus social and academic environment in a variety of ways. A recent study by Schademan and Thompson (2016) found that FGLI students felt more connected to professors who employed effective teaching strategies that fostered student learning and success including using engaged learning techniques as well as constructive feedback, clear explanations, and providing encouragement. These professors "created a space in their classrooms that promoted a sense of connection and belonging to the larger campus community" (p. 211). The use of active learning techniques is aligned with high-impact practices (HIPs) which refer to educational experiences that include first-year seminars, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, common intellectual experiences, service learning, diversity experiences, student– faculty research, study abroad, internships and other held placements, and senior capstone experiences (Kuh, 2009).

Participation in HIPs can be particularly beneficial for first-generation students (Jehangir 2010; Kuh 2008, as cited in Soria & Stebleton, 2012, p. 681) because it not only promotes students' academic and social engagement (Soria & Stebleton, 2012), but also often requires more frequent and in-depth interactions with faculty. One of only a few studies on the impact of HIPs on student outcomes conducted by Kilgo, Sheets, and Pascarella (2014) finds that while

several HIPs have a positive effect on learning outcomes, the two HIPs that are most effective are active and collaborative learning, and undergraduate research. Both require a high level of interaction with faculty.

Long-term Outcomes

College adjustment. Adjusting to the college environment is difficult for all students, but can be particularly challenging for FGLI students and students from racial minority groups at PWIs. A mixed-methods study by Brittain, Sy, and Stokes (2009) examined the impact of participation in a mentoring program on African American students' mental health and academic achievement. The study found that African American students and students of other minorities or underrepresented statuses often experience acculturative stress when transitioning to college (Brittain, Sy, & Stokes, 2009). Acculturative stress "stems from the belief that a person must assimilate to the majority culture, while abandoning the values and traditions of his or her own culture" and is linked to depression, a low sense of self-esteem, and lower academic achievement (p. 87-88). This finding is validated by Stephens et al.'s (2012) argument that institutions of higher education were primarily designed for students from middle-class backgrounds, making adjustment particularly challenging for FGLI and minority students. Faculty mentors become cultural agents who "validate students' cultural backgrounds and promote opportunities for them to meaningfully engage in the campus community" and promote their persistence by serving as important sources of support and creating bridges between students' home and institutional cultures" (Museus & Quaye, 2009, as cited in Cole & Griffin, 2013, p. 575).

Academic success. Frequent and substantive interactions with faculty are a strong predictor for student learning (Cole & Griffin, 2013; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004). For students from underrepresented groups, the impact of mentoring on academic success

can be particularly substantial. A rigorous quantitative study on mentoring by Campbell and Campbell (1997) found a positive correlation between mentoring and higher GPAs, credit hours, and retention among minority students in a mentoring program. This is substantiated by numerous subsequent studies that have pointed to the impact of mentoring on academic success by encouraging learning and increasing problem-solving skills and critical-thinking skills (Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004), positively affecting effort (Kuh & Hu, 2001), and increasing academic self-confidence (Kim & Sax, 2009; Komarraju et al., 2010). Cole's (2011) study of African-American students' intellectual self-concept also finds a positive impact of meaningful interactions with faculty, although gains during their college experience are relatively small. First-generation students may also experience a limited impact. Padgett et al. (2010) extends Weidman's theory of socialization to cognitive outcomes and find that "first-generation students who experience faculty socialization score lower on need for cognition," and therefore do not seem to benefit from socialization through faculty to the same extent as their continuing generation peers (p. 109).

Career and personal development. Mentoring relationships can have a particularly powerful impact on students' personal and career development. As noted in earlier sections, having a mentor exposes students to different academic and career tracks and builds awareness of potential careers. Students who are mentored are also more likely to have clarified career goals than those who are not mentored (Pascarella, 1980). Given the vast literature on student development, the impact of mentoring on college student development is an equally extensive field. In *How College Affects Students*, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) demonstrate the positive effect of high-quality student-faculty interaction not only on academic learning, but also on personal growth, attitudes and values, as well as career development.

Summary. While most mentoring studies do not distinguish mentoring from other types of student-faculty interactions, there is strong consensus among scholars that developmental relationships have a positive impact of student outcomes. Empirical research on the nature and outcomes of mentoring relationships has been growing in the past decade, but few studies are grounded in theory (Crisp et al., 2017). In addition, most empirical studies on mentoring are quantitative, making it difficult to truly understand and give voice to the student experience with mentoring and the impact students perceive it has on their success in college. Crisp et al.'s (2017) review of the literature on mentoring concludes that there is "little research to understand the specific strategies or behaviors mentors implement to fulfill these roles or functions" (p. 36).

This section of the literature review provided a comprehensive overview of the recent mentoring literature structured around Crisp et al.'s (2017) comprehensive mentoring framework. In addition to the lack of qualitative research on mentoring, their review points to the lack of research on "what is happening within the context of relationships, how interactions are structured, and the behaviors most connected to specific outcomes" (p. 72). This study's focus on the students' perspective of the relationship will illuminate the characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of faculty mentors that significantly contribute to making the relationship highly relevant to the students' success in college.

The following section takes a closer look at studies that increase our understanding about SPU Promise Scholars, who are the focus of this study.

FGLI Students at SPU and the SPU Promise

First-generation and low-income students, who account for 20% of the student population at SPU, face many of the same barriers to retention and degree completion that were outlined in the previous section and are twice as likely than their continuing-generation peers to discontinue

their studies after the first year (SPU Student Success Report, 2014). In order to boost retention and degree completion, SPU was one of 24 universities in the country to receive a 3 million dollar grant from the Department of Education's *First in the World* grant in October 2014 (SPU News Archives, 2014). The funding created a new program designed to support first-generation and other underserved students at the university toward degree completion through curricular innovations, intensive academic advising, academic and non-academic support, as well as professional development opportunities (SPU News Archives, 2014). The evidence-based approaches to promote students' success are designed to close the gap in graduation rates between continuing generation students and first-generation students who include large numbers of rural, minority, and low-income students.

In an effort to live up to its ideals as "The University of the People" and to increase diversity, Southeastern Public University created the SPU Promise in October 2003 and became the first public university to offer loan-free financial aid packages to low-income students (SPU Promise Review, 2010). The SPU Promise is "SPU's promise to low-income students and families that a world-class education remains within reach" (SPU Promise website). All students who have been admitted to SPU through the need-blind admission process but whose parents' income falls within 200% of Federal Poverty Guidelines receive a combination of grants, scholarships, and work-study, allowing students to graduate without the burden of debt (SPU Promise Review, 2010; SPU Working Paper, 2016). In addition to financial aid packages, the program contributes to the success of its students through comprehensive mentoring and support programs (SPU Promise website). The following sections will provide a more detailed description of SPU Promise students, including the very limited information that is available on their interactions with faculty.

Demographics and Characteristics

Of the approximately 3,000 first-generation college students at SPU, more than half (55%) are part of the SPU Promise (SPU Student Success Report, 2014) because their parents' low income makes them eligible to have their full unmet financial need covered. A recent study of the program from the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) found that the typical SPU Promise student comes from a family with an annual income of \$26,000, which provides a stark difference to the typical non-Promise eligible student whose family's average income is \$122,000 (NBER Working Paper, 2016) . The SPU Promise has no cap and supports all high-achieving students who were admitted and who qualify based on their FAFSA information (revise and find source in addition to website). As a result, the number of low-income students at SPU has grown considerably from 224 in the first cohort admitted in the Fall of 2004 (SPU Promise Review, 2010) to 680 students who were admitted in the Fall 2016 (SPU Promise Administrator, 2016). For 83% of the first two cohorts, the SPU Promise had an influence on their decision to enroll at SPU (SPU Promise Review, 2010). The program's strong growth suggests its significant impact on access for low-income students at SPU (SPU Working Paper, 2016) and contributes to a more diverse student body.

Financial Support

By covering students' total unmet financial need through a combination of grants and work-study awards (SPU Promise Review, 2010; NBER Working Paper, 2016; SPU Working Paper, 2016), the program's financial award is its most important feature for students for whom the financial burden would pose a barrier to enrolling at a prestigious four-year institution. During the 2007-2008 academic year, 87% of financial aid awards for Promise Scholars consisted of grants, while 7% of funding came in the form of loans (an option for students who

need additional funding), and 6% work-study awards (SPU Promise Review, 2010). For the same year, revenue streams for the SPU Promise funding included institutional and private sources (45%), federal funds including Pell grants (36%) and state funds (19%) (SPU Promise Review, 2010). Promise Scholars have to renew their funding for the coming academic year by providing documentation that they continue to meet the income requirement, are in good academic standing, and making progress toward their degrees for no more than nine semesters (NBER Working Paper, 2016).

Academic and Personal Support

Aware of the many obstacles that low-income students face in their transition to college, the creators of the program knew that offering students a generous financial aid package would not be enough to ensure students' success the university (SPU Promise Review, 2010).

Academic and personal support services were introduced starting with the second cohort in 2005 (SPU Working Paper, 2016). Academic support includes faculty and staff mentoring for first-year students, peer mentoring by older Promise Scholars for sophomores and junior transfer students, workshops on time-management, note taking, and study techniques for specific subjects (NBER Working Paper, 2016; SPU Promise Review, 2010). In addition to these services, the program provides monitoring of students' academic progress and, if necessary, connections to university-wide academic support services (SPU Working Paper, 2016). The most significant form of academic intervention is the program's funding of summer school courses for students who are at risk of losing academic eligibility (SPU Promise Review, 2010), which has been a lifeline for students who struggled to overcome challenges primarily during their first year, but also at later stages of their academic career.

The program's support structure goes beyond financial and academic support and attempts to mitigate additional obstacles for which low-income students might need support to overcome. In close cooperation with University Career Services, the SPU Promise offers a four-year career planning program starting with a career exploration workshop for freshmen that is followed by resume writing workshops, information on choosing a major, as well as information on finding internships, applying for jobs, public speaking, and transitioning to the job market (SPU Promise Review, 2010). The program also hosts an annual "etiquette dinner" to help students develop skills ranging from table manners to making small talk (SPU Promise Review, 2010).

In addition to academic challenges that Promise Scholars and other low-income and /or first-generation college students face, such as academic under-preparation and lack of college knowledge, many barriers relate to a lack of social integration and cultural adaptation. The program tries to build a community of scholars by hosting receptions and providing tickets to social events. Although not mentioned in the reports and assessments available on the SPU Promise, the program's dedicated staff helps students connect to and take full advantage of the resources on campus that are designed to help them succeed, including a variety of academic support services as well as counseling. SPU Promise students know that there is someone who truly cares about their welfare.

Interactions with Faculty and Mentoring

The creators of the SPU Promise recognized the importance of student-faculty interactions for student learning and success and implemented a robust faculty-mentoring program for first-year students (SPU Promise Review, 2010). Together with junior transfers, first-year students receive formal faculty mentoring from professors who are hired by the SPU

Promise to meet with groups of 15-17 students at least twice a semester (SPU Promise Review, 2010). A survey by the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment in 2006 found that although only about half of the eligible students took advantage of formal faculty mentoring, those who did found their mentors to be accessible, helpful, and caring (SPU Promise Review, 2010). While establishing relationships with faculty primarily helps SPU Promise students navigate and feel part of the university (SPU Promise Review, 2010), students who were paired with a faculty mentor who shared their academic or career interests found their interactions particularly beneficial and rewarding (SPU Promise Review, 2010).

Mentoring programs for SPU Promise students are by no means perfect. Largely for financial reasons, faculty mentoring is limited to freshmen and junior transfer students. However, established students have the opportunity to participate in a peer-mentoring program, which helps facilitate social integration and provides SPU Promise Scholars who are upperclassmen an opportunity to give back to the program (SPU Promise Review, 2010). While the authors of the NBER Working Paper (2016) found that it is the combination of financial aid and academic and social supports that contributes to the program's success, albeit without specifically mentioning the contribution of faculty or peer mentoring, the SPU Working Paper (2016) argues that guidance provided to SPU Promise Scholars is inadequate. Their survey of graduates and current students in the program shows that although relationships of SPU Promise Scholars and their peers as well as their relationships with faculty have improved over time, students would prefer a more proactive advising and outreach from administrators to become more engaged in the program and take more advantage of the opportunities it has to offer. Despite the existence of faculty and peer mentoring programs for SPU Promise Scholars, little research assesses why and how students utilize faculty mentoring and how it benefits them and their respective mentors.

Impact on College Completion and Performance

Perhaps the most important goal and achievement of the SPU Promise is its positive impact on persistence and graduation rates of low-income students (NBER Working Paper, 2016; SPU Promise Review, 2010; SPU Working Paper, 2016). Recent studies of Promise Scholars have analyzed retention and graduation rates as well as performance measures, including credit hours earned and GPA (NBER Working Paper, 2016; SPU Working Paper, 2016). Graduation rates for low-income and first-generation students at SPU including Promise Scholars, who often fall in both categories, remain lower than the most recent overall four-year SPU graduation of 82.2% for the 2012 entering cohort (SPU Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, 2016). Only 75.6 % of first-generation students and 77.1% of Pell Grant recipients were able to graduate in four years. The margin of graduation rates of FGLI students compared to their more advantaged peers narrows at the six-year mark with 86.2% of first-generation students and 86.6% of Pell Grant recipients graduating compared to 91.4% of the total 2010 entering cohort (SPU Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, 2016).

Using slightly varying statistics from the National Center for Education Statistics, the SPU Working Paper (2016) study shows that four-year graduation rates for low-income students have gradually improved since the implementation of the SPU Promise with 80.8% of low-income students (vs. 86.7% of total) in the 2003 entering cohort graduating after four years compared to 83.9% of the 2006 entering cohort (vs. 89.3% of total), the last cohort covered by the data in this study. However, this data is not specific to SPU Promise students, not up to date, and does not match the data collected by the University's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. In contrast, the NBER Working Paper's (2016) analysis of graduation rates for SPU Promise Scholars provides empirical evidence of the positive impact of the program on

graduation rates of low-income students. The study finds that SPU Promise students who entered SPU between 2007 and 2010 were more likely (by 7.8 percentage points) to graduate in four-years than students who were not eligible for the program. Since these cohorts benefitted from more substantial and well-developed academic and social support, this data suggests that it is the combination of financial and non-financial supports that can contribute significantly to the success of low-income students (NBER Working Paper, 2016). The NBER Working Paper (2016) confirms the SPU Promise Review's (2010), finding that the SPU Promise is fulfilling its objective of improving retention and graduation rates for low-income students.

While graduation rates are the ultimate measure of college success, GPA and credit hours also provide ways of measuring performance. Although SPU Promise Scholars earn fewer credits than their more advantaged counterparts in the first year, in the second half of their time at SPU, they are not only completing more credits than students who are not eligible for the program but are also performing better in these courses (NBER Working Paper, 2016). Barriers such as lack of academic preparedness that low-income and first-generation students have to overcome translate into lower GPAs for low-income students. The SPU Working Paper (2016) found a .24 GPA-point difference between low-income students and all groups for the 2003 and 2008 entering cohorts. In contrast, the NBER Working Paper (2016) of the performance of SPU Promise Scholars found that by the third year, the GPA's of Promise Scholars were actually .10 GPA-points higher than those of their ineligible counterparts. While academic struggles of FGLI students are to be expected, the academic performance of students who are part of the SPU Promise does not seem to be significantly lower than that of the overall student body.

Summary

This section of the literature synthesized recent studies on FGLI students at SPU who are part of the SPU Promise. While recognizing that FGLI students need more support to succeed in college than continuing-generation students, the literature discussed in this section demonstrates a lack of insight into the nature of interactions between FGLI students and faculty and the impact that these interactions can have on the success of FGLI students.

Chapter Summary

This literature review documents the importance of supporting first-generation, low-income students who often face significant challenges in their higher education journey. While a large body of research examined the frequency and quality of student-faculty interactions as well as outcomes of mentoring, these studies often rely on quantitative data from national student surveys. In addition to a general lack of qualitative inquiry into the nature of mentoring relationships and their meaning for students, few studies focus on the mentoring experiences and their perceived outcomes for FGLI students who make up a growing share of an increasingly diverse student population and who graduate at significantly lower rates than their more advantaged peers. This study addresses a serious gap in existing research that examines the role that faculty play in the success of underrepresented students, which is best summarized by Bensimon (2007) as a "lack of scholarly and practical attention toward understanding how the practitioner - her knowledge, beliefs, experiences, education, sense of self-efficacy, etc. - affects how students experience their education" (p. 444). This study seeks to change that by focusing on the role faculty play in students' development and success in college.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative interpretive study was to provide a detailed understanding of first-generation, low-income students' mentoring relationships with faculty and to examine the influence of mentoring on students' development and overall college experience. The study was designed to uncover the nuances of the nature of constructive and supportive mentoring relationships and to explore student perceptions of specific characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of faculty that positively contribute to the college experience of FGLI students.

Meaningful interactions with faculty positively influence the success and retention of high-risk students, including FGLI students (Lundberg, 2003; Schreiner et al., 2011), who often face significant obstacles to completing their college degrees (Engle & Tinto, 2008). According to the Pell Institute (2011), only 11% of FGLI undergraduate students obtain a bachelor's degree within 6 years. Few qualitative studies have explored the value of faculty mentoring to the college experience of FGLI students.

This chapter describes the study's research methodology. It begins by disclosing the researcher's paradigm, role, and subjectivity and provides a rationale for the qualitative research approach. Following a discussion of the research design, the chapter outlines the methodological choices made for selecting a research site and participants, as well as methods used for data collection methods and analysis. It concludes by addressing issues of rigor including trustworthiness and ethical considerations, and addresses limitations and delimitations to the study.

Researcher's Paradigm, Role, and Subjectivity

As the research instrument in this qualitative study (Mertens, 2010), it is important to recognize and reflect on how my personal background and experience informs how I designed

and conducted the study. Qualitative researchers shape not only the study's focus and design, but also its interpretations. Although my constructivist worldview readily acknowledges multiple realities and interpretations of an experience, being a human instrument has shortcomings and biases that need to be acknowledged (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2016). My ability to reflect on my role as well as my own subjectivity influenced the quality and credibility of this study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016).

There are many advantages to being a human instrument in collecting and interpreting qualitative data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2016). In addition to being able to respond and, if necessary, adapt immediately, the researcher is able to gain a deep understanding of the participants' experiences through verbal and non-verbal communication, process and analyze data immediately, clarify responses, and validate the accuracy of data with the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher's human flaws, however, can reduce the study's credibility if she is not aware of how her values, experiences, and biases may influence the design of the study and analysis of the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This section serves to address these influences.

Between 2005-2015, I designed and implemented faculty-led study abroad programs at Southeastern Public University (SPU) where the study took place. Although I decided to leave the position due to unexpected changes in my life, my experience working with students had a lasting impact, and I am still deeply invested in their success. It also gave me a chance to reassess what I enjoyed most about my work with students: helping them reach their potential. In the summer 2016, I worked as a part-time advisor at the SPU Promise with students who needed to take summer classes to increase their GPA to a level that kept them eligible to return in the fall semester. Hearing the life stories of these students, most of whom were first-generation college

students from ethnic minority or immigrant families, made me become deeply aware of the many obstacles low-income students face to succeed in college. Their persistence not only inspired me to change the focus of my dissertation, but also to dedicate my future professional life to finding tools and strategies to help them succeed in their journey through college.

More than half (55%) of SPU Promise students are first-generation students with a high percentage of racial minority backgrounds, compounding barriers to persistence (SPU Student Success Report, 2014). While I am deeply invested in their success and believe that many FGLI students benefit or would benefit from faculty mentoring, I am aware of my optimistic outlook on the role of mentoring in student success. Recent studies have shown how infrequent meaningful student-faculty relationships are, particularly for FGLI students (Cole & Griffin, 2013; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2006; Schreiner et al., 2011; Walpole, 2008), which serves as a check to my biases in this regard. While my goal was to examine successful mentoring relationships of SPU Promise FGLI students, I was aware that the scope and impact of students' mentoring experiences within and outside the program might vary widely. I embraced the participants' multiple realities. In order to diminish any biases, I used "thick description" to enhance the credibility and transferability of this study by providing a detailed description of the setting, the participants, and my findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2016).

Although I was not the first in my family to graduate from college, having been an international student and non-native English speaker allowed me to identify with most of the barriers FGLI students face, including limited college knowledge and lack of support, as well as a lack of social integration and difficulties with cultural adaptation. Despite my mother having completed an agricultural undergraduate degree in the former East Germany, neither of my parents spoke English nor had any familiarity with the higher education system in the US.

Having had strong academic preparation in high school, a high amount of cultural capital, and good mentors contributed to my own persistence and success in college. While I do not share the cultural, racial, and social class background of the majority of the students I interviewed, my experience working with SPU Promise students allowed me to establish an excellent rapport with them by listening to their stories empathetically and without judgment.

Research Design

This study examined the experience of FGLI students with faculty mentors by employing qualitative research methods. Qualitative research methods are most appropriate to understanding how FGLI students perceive and assign meaning to mentoring experiences and what value and meaning they assign to these developmental relationships. Qualitative research is aligned with the constructivist philosophical perspective in which "individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" (Creswell, 2013, p. 24). This approach to qualitative research assumes that reality is a social construct and allows for multiple realities and interpretations of a phenomenon or event (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As a qualitative researcher, I share this constructivist lens as I am "interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 6). My constructivist worldview and qualitative research approach aligned well with the study's purpose to examine how FGLI students experience mentoring relationships with faculty and how they perceive the value of these relationships to their success in college. Qualitative research methods not only provided more flexibility in the selection of a topic, but also allowed me to connect my study to a topic that I am passionate about on a personal and professional level (Yin, 2016).

Qualitative research methods differ significantly from quantitative methods and have developed as a common and valuable form of research methods in many disciplines (Yin, 2016).

Five distinguishing features characterize qualitative studies:

1. Studying the meaning of people's lives, in their real-world roles;
2. Representing the views and perspectives of the people ... in a study;
3. Explicitly attending to and accounting for real-world contextual conditions;
4. Contributing insights from existing or new concepts that may help *explain* social behavior and thinking; and
5. Acknowledging the potential relevance of multiple sources of evidence rather than relying on a single source alone. (Yin, 2016, p. 9).

All five accurately describe and apply to this study, which focused on the lived experiences of students with faculty mentoring and the meaning they attribute to these relationships.

The study's focus on the students' perspectives of their mentoring experiences not only aligned with Yin's (2016) characterization of qualitative research, but also addressed a gap in the mentoring literature that still lacks the perspective of underrepresented students (Bensimon, 2007; Schreiner et al., 2011). Crisp et al.'s (2017) review of the mentoring literature identified a prevalence of quantitative, non-experimental studies that primarily rely on survey data to "test the relationship between mentoring and a variety of student outcomes" (p. 33). The experiences of this marginalized student group cannot adequately be captured through large surveys or other quantitative research methods, which focus on "the testing of hypotheses to establish facts and to designate and distinguish relationships between variables" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 170). The qualitative design of this study focused on how students make meaning of their mentoring experiences and allowed me to attend to the rich context of the relationship (Yin, 2016). In

addition to accounting for the influence of the educational context in which the mentoring relationships takes place, the integrated theoretical framework that guided this study also considers the background and characteristics of the mentors and protégées (Crisp et al., 2016). Within the context of this study, issues of race, gender, and social class played a pivotal role in how mentoring relationships were formed, sustained, and valued. It is the in-depth nature of qualitative methodology that attracted me to doing research and made me excited about conducting this study.

The study was well suited for a basic qualitative study design, the most frequent qualitative research approach in education (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This approach incorporates all central characteristics of a qualitative study, such as collecting data through interviews, document analysis, or observations using the researcher as the instrument to interpret the meaning people make of their experiences, but without the additional dimensions that characterize phenomenology, narrative inquiry, grounded theory, and case studies (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The basic interpretive study design aligned well with my study's objectives as it allowed me to explore "(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 24). Following the constructivist worldview that I share, the goal of this type of study was to illuminate and interpret the meaning people derive from their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This was achieved by collecting and interpreting rich data through interviews and document analysis, which illustrate various aspects of the faculty mentoring relationships in alignment with the theoretical framework.

Research Question

The central question that guided this study was:

How do first-generation, low-income college students experience and make meaning of an influential faculty mentoring relationship?

In order to answer the research question, I explored the following supporting topics in alignment with Crisp et al.'s (2017) integrated framework on *Mentoring Undergraduate Students*:

- a. What motivated student protégés to engage in and sustain the mentoring relationship?
- b. Which forms of support were particularly important to the protégés and why?
- c. In what ways did certain characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of the faculty mentor contributed to the success of the mentoring relationship?
- d. How do students perceive the benefits they have received from the mentoring relationship?
- e. How, if at all, did the mentor help their protégé overcome barriers they faced?

Site Selection and Sampling Criteria

Site Selection

I selected Southeastern Public University's SPU Promise as the site for my study, because it fulfills a number of important criteria. My ability to gain access to SPU Promise FGLI students due to my previous work and professional connections was a factor in the choice of an appropriate research site. The most important factor in my site selection, however, was the program's close connection to the many students who fulfill the study's selection criteria and can provide information-rich cases (Patton, 2015) about influential mentoring relationships. The SPU Promise serves students who come from families whose income falls within 200% of the federal poverty line. It covers their total unmet financial need through a combination of grants and work-

study awards (NBER Working Paper, 2016; SPU Promise Review, 2010; SPU Working Paper, 2016). Of the approximately 3,000 first-generation college students at SPU, more than half (55%) are part of the SPU Promise (SPU Student Success Report, 2014) making it an ideal site to locate participants who meet the FGLI criteria.

In addition, the SPU Promise recognizes the importance of student-faculty interactions for student learning and success. It has a robust faculty-mentoring program in which first-year students and junior transfers receive formal faculty mentoring from professors who are hired by the SPU Promise to meet with groups of 15-17 students at least twice a semester (SPU Promise Review, 2010). Although only about half of the eligible students take advantage of the faculty mentoring program, those who did find their mentors to be accessible, helpful, and caring (SPU Promise Review, 2010). However, the majority of the study participants developed mentoring relationships outside the formal mentoring program offered during their first year. A study that found that students who have interactions with faculty early in their academic career are more likely to have "more meaningful interactions with faculty later in college" (Fuentes et al., 2014, p. 288). This suggests that having access to faculty mentors during their first year would allow many SPU Promise students to develop influential mentoring relationships by the end of their college careers.

Sample Selection

Since the goal of the study was to examine the nature and value of influential mentoring relationships for the success of FGLI college students, the participants for this study were selected using purposeful sampling strategies (Creswell, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2016). Purposeful sampling "is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most

can be learned" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 96). The criteria to select study participants included first-generation status, a low socio-economic background (defined as 200% or below the federal poverty line as evident by SPU Promise status), having had at least one substantive mentoring relationship with a faculty member, and having been academically successful by virtue of having completed their college degree in May 2017.

While only slightly more than half of SPU Promise students are first-generation college students, it was important to me to select first-generation students because of their unique barriers to success and generally limited engagement with faculty. Given my interest in the positive mentoring experiences of successful students, I recruited FGLI students who had meaningful mentoring relationships and who considered themselves as having been successful in college. I initially planned to conduct my interviews late in the Spring 2017 semester and considered recruiting participants who are current SPU SPU Promise students in their junior and senior year. However, I ultimately decided that FGLI students, who graduated in the Spring 2017, a few months prior to conducting the study, would potentially provide even more information-rich experiences. As recent graduates, they have not only been successful by having obtained their bachelor's degree, but have also had more time to develop and maintain mentoring relationships with their professors. In addition, the time between their graduation in May 2017 and the interviews in July through October 2017 provided some distance from their mentoring experiences, which may have contributed to the depth with which many participants reflected on their mentoring experiences.

While many FGLI students find mentors in administrators and staff, I decided to limit my study to mentoring relationships between students and their professors. The decision not to include student-staff mentoring relationships was due to the varying nature and context of these

relationships that result from the difference in structure of their appointments and responsibilities. Staff members who engage in mentoring likely do so because their engagement with students is part of their "expected-role behavior" while for faculty, mentoring students constitutes "extra-role behavior" (DeAngelo et al., 2016, p. 317). However, staff and administrators, as well as graduate students and peers play an important role in students' success (Crisp et al., 2017; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Their contributions to student success are generally undervalued and not well understood. Future studies should address the gap in the literature on the role of higher education staff and administrators in students' development and success.

Sampling Strategy

In order to recruit participants who can provide information rich accounts of their mentoring experiences, I used purposeful sampling to identify participants who were most suited for the study and representative of the SPU Promise student demographics. SPU Promise staff served as important gatekeepers through which I recruited participants. I composed a recruitment email outlining the purpose and parameters of the study and invited students who had positive faculty mentoring relationships to participate. This email was distributed by the Director of the SPU Promise with a personal endorsement via a listserv for the Class of 2017 SPU Promise students. Interested students were asked to click on a link in the email and complete a qualtrics survey (see Appendix B), which helped me determine their eligibility and access their demographics and contact information. Although participants were offered a \$50 gift certificate as a recruitment incentive and to compensate them for their time to participate in the study, this strategy turned out to yield fewer respondents than expected. The primary reason was that many

emails bounced back as students' university email accounts were no longer active after graduation and had not been updated with their personal emails.

The second, and highly effective, recruitment strategy was snowball sampling, which involved finding participants that met the selection criteria and then asking them to refer others who could provide rich information on the phenomenon of interest to this study cases (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). Since the recruitment emails did not yield a sufficient number of participants that matched the criteria for participation, I asked participants to identify peers who met the study criteria and would be willing to participate. Of the twenty-one students who completed the survey, twelve students participated in the study, which included eight who responded to the recruitment emails sent through the SPU Promise listserv and four who were encouraged to participate by other participants. Of the students who completed the survey, but didn't participate, seven did not meet one or more of the selection criteria and two did not reply to my request to be interviewed.

In summary, this study recruited participants who fulfilled the following criteria:

- First-generation college student status.
- Low socio-economic background (parental income of 200% or below poverty line).
- Self-identified as SPU Promise Scholar (which verifies low socio-economic background).
- Self-identifies as having been a protégé in a mentoring relationship with a faculty member.
- Recent graduates from SPU (graduated in May 2017, just a few months before the interviews were conducted)

Data Collection

For qualitative studies in education, the most common data source comes from interviews, which provide, "direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge" (Patton, 2015, p. 14, as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 105). In order to answer the research questions, the primary data source for this study were interviews with FGLI students who are the best sources of information when examining their experience with faculty mentors. Since multiple sources of data strengthen the validity of qualitative research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Yin, 2016), I also analyzed documents related to mentoring at SPU Promise, wrote extensive field notes, and kept a reflective journal as complimentary data sources. Since it was not possible to observe the participants' interactions with their mentors that have led to the development of a meaningful relationship, the vast majority of data was collected during the interviews.

Interviews

As Seidman (2006) explains, "at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (p. 7). Since understanding the experiences of FGLI students with mentoring was at the heart of this study, interviews constituted the most important data source. An interview is, "a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study" (DeMarrais, 2004, p. 55; as quoted in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 108). Collecting data from in-depth interviews allowed me to capture the experience from the participants' perspective (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Creswell, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2015), which provided invaluable information to answer the research questions. It also aligned

with my deep interest in hearing and understanding the stories and experiences of first-generation, low-income students whose voices are seldom heard.

I interviewed twelve SPU Promise students who graduated in May 2017 and became the firsts in their family to obtain a bachelor's degree. Although my initial goal was to recruit twelve to fifteen participants, the twelve interviews I conducted were highly reflective providing a sufficient amount of rich data to examine the phenomenon of interest to this study and represent a range of experiences. This led to saturation of the data, which served as a criterion for determining an adequate number of participants (Seidman, 2006). I attempted to select participants to reflect the experiences of both female and male participants, as well as students whose background is reflective of the racial and ethnic diversity among SPU Promise students. However, since my primary recruitment strategy of identifying participants through the SPU Promise listserv did not yield a sufficient number of participants who met all selection criteria, it became more important to ensure that interested respondents fit the overall criteria and identified as having had one or more influential mentoring relationships with faculty than to find participants who accurately reflected the demographics of the 2017 SPU Promise cohort.

The use of snowball sampling to recruit participants was particularly effective because it produced additional participants who offered deep reflection on the topic. However, it may have influenced the sample to include a high number of participants from racial and ethnic minority groups as students were likely to suggest peers who shared their background. Of the twelve participants, four identified as Black or African-American, two as Asian, four as Latina/o, one as mixed race, and two as White. Although the sample included a higher number of participants from racial and ethnic minority groups than is reflective of the SPU Promise class of 2017, the diverse background of the participants illuminated important aspects of mentoring relationships

such as the role that race and gender plays in selecting and connecting with faculty mentors. A detailed analysis of the background and experiences of the participants can be found at the beginning of chapter four.

Interviews were semi-structured and included a "mix of more or less structured questions" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 110). The interviews were guided by a list of questions, but I varied the order or wording of questions to help facilitate a conversation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2016). The interview questions were aligned with Crisp et al.'s (2017) conceptual framework that guides this study. This not only facilitated a conversational approach, but also allowed me to "respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview, and to new ideas on the topic" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 111). All interviews took place in person and lasted between 30 - 90 minutes, with all but two exceeding 70 minutes. I audio recorded each interview with a digital recorder for subsequent transcription and took notes during and immediately following each interview to add contextual insight. Recordings were labeled with pseudonyms and dates and kept in a password protected file separate from the list that identified participants by their name and pseudonym.

Prior to the conducting the actual interviews, I spoke to each participant via phone, to explain the purpose of the study, go over the informed consent form, address issues of confidentiality, outline the interview procedures and confirm the time and location of the interview. This interaction also served as a way of getting to know the participant and to establish a rapport. Participants were allowed to choose their own pseudonym to ensure confidentiality and were informed that they could choose not to answer certain questions or end the interview whenever they liked (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Participants also determined the location of the interview. While most interviews took place on the SPU or NCSU campus, I

traveled to other parts of the state for two interviews. Once the interviews were transcribed, participants were asked to review the interviews transcripts for accuracy and provide feedback, or "member checks" on the interpretation of the data to avoid misrepresentation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Prior to the interviews with the study participants, I conducted abbreviated pilot conversations with three former SPU students who were part of the SPU Promise and whom I knew from my time as a study abroad administrator. These conversations allowed me to test my research design, refine my interview protocol, and become aware of "interview techniques that support the objective of the study and to those that detract from those objectives" (Seidman, 2006, p. 39). In order to increase the effectiveness of my study, I made minor adjustments to the clarify wording, add definitions, and improve the flow of the interview questions before submitting the interview protocol to the IRB. The interview protocol is in Appendix C.

Document Analysis

I analyzed two types of documents that were relevant to the purpose of the study and complemented the data generated from the interviews: documents related to the SPU Promise first-year mentoring program and personal documents shared by the participants. These documents contextualized the mentoring experiences of SPU Promise students. The SPU Promise Office made available documents that served as a guide to faculty mentors. Examples of the nature of documents include email communication to the mentors, a mentoring handbook, as well as a document outlining strategies to connect with students. Although the study focused solely on the students' experience with faculty mentors, these documents provided useful insights into the faculty side of mentoring. While these documents contained information about SPU Promise's mentoring program and identified challenges that mentors encountered in their

efforts to connect to students, they did not contain significant insights into the students' mentoring experiences.

In addition, participants were asked to share any personal documents, which are a "good source of data concerning a person's attitudes, beliefs, and view of the world" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 166). Participants shared documents relevant to their mentoring experience, which primarily included photos of them with their mentors and email communication with their mentors. One of the participants shared an audio recording of a speech her mentor had given in her honor at a ceremony where the student received a departmental award for which her mentor had nominated her. I made sure to focus on documents that were relevant to the objective of the study and to ensure their authenticity and accuracy (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). These documents provided important insights into participants' relationship with a faculty mentor. While I carefully selected useful material from both participants and the SPU Promise, I also kept an open mind when selecting documents for analysis to allow for "serendipitous discoveries" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 175).

Field Notes and Self- Reflective Journal

Throughout the data collection and analysis phase, I took field notes and kept a self-reflective journal. The field notes I took during the data collection phase included extensive notes following each interview and notes written during the data analysis phases. I recorded my reactions and insights following each interview as well as first interpretations. The self-reflective journal allowed me to continuously reflect on my assumptions and biased viewpoints (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The journal was saved in a password-protected file and did not include the participants' names to maintain confidentiality.

Data Analysis

The primary source of data for this study came from interviews and was supplemented with documents that were relevant to the research questions. This generated vast amounts of data that needed to be processed, reduced, and interpreted, which was not an easy undertaking. When the "recursive and dynamic" process of collecting and analyzing data happens simultaneously, the data is likely to be more illuminating and less likely to be "unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In qualitative research, data analysis is inductive, turning raw data into abstract themes, and comparative (Creswell, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2016). The "recurring patterns or themes supported by the data from which they are derived" and the researcher's interpretations constituted the findings of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 25).

I began the analysis of the data generated by this study during the data collection. As soon as possible after each interview, I reflected on the conversation and wrote a detailed note about each interview capturing "tentative themes, hunches, ideas, and things to pursue" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 196). While the first four audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed by a graduate student, due to time constraints, I used a transcription service called Verbal Ink to transcribe the remaining eight interview recordings. Once all interviews were conducted and transcribed, I began analyzing the data generated by the interviews and documents using the constant comparative method of data analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I listened to and verified each interview transcript and compared it to the notes I took for the corresponding interview. This phase also included labeling, organizing, and storing all data that I collected in multiple locations, creating an inventory of my complete data set that was methodical and allowed for easy access to any piece of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Using

the computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) ATLAS.ti helped with organization and allowed more time to closely analyze the data (Seale, 2008, as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

In analyzing my data, I followed Yin's (2016) five-phase approach to analyzing qualitative data: "(1) compiling, (2) disassembling, (3) reassembling (and arraying), (4) interpreting, and (5) concluding" (p. 185). I compiled my data set, I disassembled the data by "breaking down the compiled data into smaller fragments or pieces" (p. 186). During this phase, categories or themes were constructed by assigning codes to individual pieces of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 206). The challenge of this phase was to "construct categories or themes that capture some recurring pattern that cuts across your data" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 207). These groupings reflected the reassembling stage, which included graphical depiction of the data (Yin, 2016).

While data was dissembled and reassembled, I was always mindful of the purpose of my study as well as my research questions and theoretical framework when creating codes and themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In order to be helpful in the following two phases of data analysis, *interpreting* and *concluding*, the categories that were constructed from the disassembled data not only had to answer the research questions, but also had to be "exhaustive" by creating sufficient categories that incorporate all important pieces of data, "mutually exclusive" so that a certain piece of data is covered by only one category, "as sensitive to the data as possible", and "conceptually congruent (all categories are at the same level of abstraction)" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 213). I began the coding process with open coding by making notes on the data about pieces of information that were relevant to my research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The reason I began with open coding was to be able to remain open to key concepts that did not

fall within my theoretical framework. The second layer of coding involved axial coding, during which I positioned relevant categories within the theoretical framework (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). I continuously reviewed and revised my initial codes and themes by collapsing them or creating new codes and categories.

The next phase, interpreting, entailed creating a "new narrative" from the reassembled data (Yin, 2016, p. 187). While I assigned meaning to the discoveries I made by analyzing the data, it was important to develop a "comprehensive interpretation" that was complete, fair, accurate, and credible, while also adding value to the literature (Yin, 2016, p. 221). I achieved this difficult and important task by using "thick description" which included quotes describing participants' perceptions of individual findings (Creswell, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2016). The final phase, *concluding*, allowed me to connect my findings to the study's contributions to the field and identify questions that remain unanswered and should be addressed in future research (Yin, 2016).

Issues of Rigor

Trustworthiness

The careful design and implementation of a qualitative study are essential to a rigorous study, which not only accurately represents the participants' perspectives, but also offers "insights and conclusions that ring true to readers, practitioners, and other researchers" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 238). Establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research involves attending to important constructs of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Throughout the research process, I adhered to practices that validated these constructs and resulted in high standards for rigor, including the use of pseudonyms and researcher reflexivity. In addition, I built trustworthiness about my study by making my

methodological choices explicit and disclosing how I dealt with challenges during the research process (Yin, 2016).

Credibility

Generating accurate and credible findings is a key objective for any research design (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Credibility, or internal validity, is concerned with the alignment of the study's findings with reality (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). However, complete accuracy in representing someone else's reality can never be fully achieved given the humanity of the research instrument (Yin, 2016). Although using data from interviews and documents did not allow me to achieve triangulation, a strategy for achieving internal validity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), I took deliberate steps to generate accurate findings. One important strategy was the use of "member checks" or "respondent validation" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 126), allowing participants to validate and provide feedback on my interpretations of the data to ensure accuracy (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2016). I also increased my study's credibility by following Maxwell's (2013) suggestions to use rich data to describe my findings and to identify and examine "discrepant data and negative cases" (Yin, 2016, p. 127).

Transferability

Also referred to as external validity, transferability refers to "the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 253). Although this study did not aim to generate findings that are generalizable, its findings are applicable to other contexts. To achieve this, I used "sufficient descriptive data" to allow others to make decisions about the transferability of my study's findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 254). The use of rich, thick descriptions of my findings in

combination with a detailed description of the study's setting and participants provides readers with the necessary information to determine the study's applicability to another context (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Maxwell, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Dependability

Dependability, or reliability, is concerned with the "extent to which research findings can be replicated" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 250), as well as with the consistency of the results with the data that was collected (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Strategies to increase the dependability of my study included peer examination and audit trail (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2016). I asked two peers who are familiar with my topic to review and provide feedback on my coding and interpretation of the data. I also left an audit trail by maintaining a detailed journal in which I recorded details of how I collected data, how codes and categories developed, and how I made decisions throughout the research process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Confirmability

Given my goal of highlighting the voices of underrepresented students, I was particularly mindful to ensure that my study's findings were shaped by their experiences instead of my own assumptions and motivations. The concept of confirmability is concerned with the objectivity of the researcher in the interpretation of the data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Similar to a dependability audit, confirmability can be demonstrated by making my decisions open to the public. Previously discussed strategies such as using thick description and an audit trail help readers judge the objectivity of my study by keeping a check on potential biases and assumptions in the interpretation of the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In addition to using thick description to ensure the students' experiences are described as much as possible in their own words, I also asked participants to review their interview transcripts as well as a summary of the study results.

While not all participants responded, those who did approved the original transcript and concurred with the study's findings.

Ethical Considerations

I recognize that ethical concerns arise when research is conducted with marginalized groups, which includes the participants in this study who are first-generation college graduates from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The protection of the participants is an important concern (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Although the study did not pose any direct ethical threats to its participants, I took appropriate measures to ensure their protection. I informed the participants of the purpose of the study and obtained their written consent to voluntarily participate in the study. The participant consent form outlined potential risks and benefits of their participation in the study and assured them that they could choose not to participate in the study or could stop at any point. Participants were asked to validate and provide additional information on their interview transcripts and by using "member checks" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 126) were asked to provide feedback on my interpretation of their reflection to ensure accurate representation of their experience (Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2016).

The participants' privacy is extremely important (Creswell, 2007; Mertens, 2010; Yin, 2016) and was ensured by using pseudonyms. In addition to using pseudonyms, participants' privacy was protected by ensuring that all data collected for this study was kept in a secure place that no one else has access to. The sizable number of first-generation SPU Promise students safeguarded against participants being able to be identified. I did not have access to any financial, academic, or other personal information except for a limited amount of background information that I asked participants to share voluntarily, such as gender, race, and generational

status. An ethical dilemma I encountered was finding balance between portraying the life stories and experiences of the participants and being mindful of their preserving the anonymity. Since many participants shared significant amounts of personal information that could identify them when combined with their background and professional aspirations, participant profiles were not utilized for the reporting of findings. However, they did serve as a part of the reflective journal and as a resource for integrated data analysis. As an alternative, I describe the participants as a collective group at the beginning of chapter 4 to ensure participant anonymity.

The researcher's relationship with the participant can have significant ethical implications that impact the validity of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My relationship with the participants, which is "determined by roles, status, and cultural norms" (Bloomberg & Volpe, p. 161), was not affected by significant power dynamics since I was no longer employed at the university where the study took place and the participants were no longer students at the university. However, I was aware that differences in race and social class and my general outsider status might have impacted what information participants chose to disclose. In addition of being aware of my own biases and assumptions, I took "a stance that is non-judgmental, sensitive, and respectful of the respondent" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 130) in order to gain the participants' trust. While there were no direct benefits to the participants, participants were asked to reflect on positive experiences that contributed to their success, which was unlikely to bring up negative feelings that could have been harmful to the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). However, many participants decided to voluntarily disclose a lot of details about their personal hardships to explain the significance of their mentoring relationships. In a few cases, this brought up difficult emotions during the interview, which I managed by showing empathy,

suggesting to take a break, and reminding them that they did not have to share anything they were not comfortable sharing.

In addition to the use of strategies that foster rigor, my own credibility and competence as a researcher affected the credibility of this study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). Patton states that, "rigor resides in, depends on, and is manifest in *rigorous* thinking" (p. 703). Given the importance of the researcher's values and ethics, being aware of my own assumptions and biases was as important as ensuring that I treated the participants as "whole people rather than just subjects from which to wrench a good story" (Tracy, 2013, p. 245, as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 261). I did not only take the utmost care in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data to adequately reflect the participants' experiences, but also carried out the research with the highest integrity and to the best of my ability.

Limitations and Delimitations

No research is perfectly designed (Patton, 2002) and this study is no exception. The study was subject to several limitations that arose from the theoretical framework as well as its design (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Although the theoretical framework on *Mentoring Undergraduate Students* by Crisp et al. (2017) was carefully chosen because of its inclusion of educational context and student characteristics of mentoring relationships in addition to different forms of support faculty provide which are central to my study, it posed several limitations.

First, while Crisp et al.'s (2017) framework helps us understand the various elements that influence a mentoring relationship, it leaves out other essential aspects of mentoring relationships that are central to understanding the mentoring experiences of FGLI students. Those include motivations and benefits of mentoring for students and faculty as well as the process of forming mentoring relationships. Since I aligned my research questions with Crisp et

al.'s (2017) theoretical framework, I had to make a decision about whether or not to exclude these elements from my research question. Despite its lack of a place in the framework, I decided to explore what motivated the study participants to engage in and sustain the mentoring relationship because the literature shows that FGLI students are less likely to engage with faculty than their more advantaged peers (Kezar, Walpole, & Perna, 2014; Schreiner et al., 2011; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Walpole, 2008). This provided important answers about why FGLI students engage with faculty that could benefit the SPU Promise program and might be transferable to similar contexts. It also provided an opportunity to suggest expanding the conceptual framework to make it even more inclusive.

The second limitation of the framework is its heavy emphasis on the impact of mentoring relationships on students' experiences and outcomes. While quantitative studies with "nonexperimental designs were most often used to test the relationship between mentoring and a variety of student outcomes" (Crisp et al., 2017, p. 33), it was beyond the scope of this qualitative study to attempt to infer a correlation between mentoring and specific student outcomes. Despite the importance of research that examined what aspects of mentoring affect certain student outcomes and how, this study placed less emphasis on making those connections. Instead, it analyzed what the relationships meant to the participants and participants' perceptions of the value of those relationships for their personal and professional development.

The second limitation of the study relates to its overall design. Although this study does not intend to generalize findings across institutions, it provides valuable information as well as a research framework that can be used by colleges and universities that are considering conducting a similar study. However, the relatively small sample of twelve participants at one public research university, limits its transferability to other, similar contexts. Additionally, the SPU

Promise program provides a unique context that might impact the study's transferability. By covering the full financial need of all SPU students whose parental income falls within 200% of the federal poverty line, it eliminates, at least in part, the financial burden that FGLI students face. This, in turn, may influence how SPU Promise students approach and engage with faculty. In order to mitigate this limitation, I used "thick description" (Denzin, 2001; Patton, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016) to provide a comprehensive picture of the participants' context and experience.

Perhaps the most significant delimitation of the study is that it does not address the important question of why so few FGLI students engage with faculty outside the classroom. I chose to document the experience of students for whom mentoring has contributed to their success in an effort to increase understanding of mentor qualities and highlight aspects of the mentoring relationship that were particularly beneficial to this group of students. This study's heavy reliance on students' perceptions of the nature and meaning of a complex and unstructured relationship posed another delimitation since it was subject to the participants' ability to reflect deeply and their ability to recall significant aspects of their experience at the time of the interview.

A second delimitation was the difficult decision to not include the faculty mentors that made a difference in the college experience of the study participants. Having their perspective on their mentoring role could provide important insight into the motivations and benefits of mentoring students for faculty, which might help administrators shape institutional policy. The decision to not interview the students' faculty mentors was in large part due to my primary interest in the students' experience, which would have to be scaled back to accommodate the

faculty perspective. In addition, my timeline to completion as well as financial constraints led to the decision to focus only on students' mentoring experiences.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a detailed description of the study's research methodology. Following an overview of the researcher's role and subjectivity, I discussed the rationale for using a basic qualitative research design to examine how first-generation, low-income students experience mentoring relationships with faculty and how they perceive the value of these relationships in their success. After describing my rationale for locating the study within a specific program at a large public research university, I explained the criteria I used to select the twelve participants. I then provided an overview of the different sources of data I used to answer the research questions and how they were analyzed. The chapter ended with a discussion of how issues of rigor, including trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were addressed, and provided an overview of the study's limitations.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Graduation rates for first-generation, low-income students significantly lag behind those of their more advantaged peers (Pell Institute, 2016; Schreiner et al., 2011; Soria & Stebleton, 2012). While 57% of continuing-generation students obtain a bachelor's degree within six years, only 21% of first-generation students whose parental income falls within 150% of the federal poverty line obtain an undergraduate degree in six years, representing a staggering 36% gap in degree attainment between the two student cohorts (Pell Institute, 2016). This gap can be in part explained by a lack of academic preparation, financial pressures, unfamiliarity with higher education, family and work obligations, as well as lack of social engagement and issues of cultural adaptation (Demetriou, 2014; Engle & Tinto, 2008).

This interpretive qualitative study examined the mentoring experiences of successful FGLI students at SPU who are part of the SPU Promise, a need-based financial aid program. The purpose of this qualitative, interpretive study was to provide a detailed understanding of first-generation, low-income students' mentoring relationships with faculty and to examine the influence of mentoring on students' development and overall college experience. The research was designed to uncover the nuances of constructive and supportive mentoring relationships and to explore student perceptions of the specific characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of faculty that positively contributed to the college experience of FGLI students.

Using Crisp et al.'s (2017) integrated framework of *Mentoring Undergraduate Students*, this study was guided by the following research question:

How do first-generation, low-income college students experience and make meaning of an influential faculty mentoring relationship?

The following supporting topics were addressed in alignment with Crisp et al.'s (2017) conceptual framework:

- a. What motivated student protégés to engage in and sustain the mentoring relationship?
- b. Which forms of support were particularly important to the protégés and why?
- c. In what ways did certain characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of the faculty mentor contribute to the success of the mentoring relationship?
- d. How do students perceive the benefits they have received from the mentoring relationship?
- e. How, if at all, did the faculty mentor help their protégé overcome barriers they faced?

To address the research question, I conducted in-depth interviews with twelve former students who were part of SPU's SPU Promise and had become the firsts in their families to graduate from college in May 2017. I present an overview of participants' characteristics and general college experiences in the first section of this chapter. In addition to the interviews, which served as the main form of data collection, I also analyzed documents related to mentoring from the SPU Promise Office. The interviews offered particularly salient insights into the meaning of influential mentoring relationships for first-generation, low-income students. The coding process, which involved open and axial coding, generated numerous codes and code groupings. Five main categories emerged from the data, which correspond to various parts of the study's theoretical framework. These categories and findings are presented after my discussion of participants.

Participant Characteristics

The twelve participants in this study are all first-generation, low-income students who graduated with a bachelor's degree from the SPU in May 2017. All participants were part of the SPU Promise program, a comprehensive financial aid program that guarantees all admitted students whose parental income falls within 200% of Federal Poverty Guidelines to graduate without debt through a combination of grants, scholarships, and work-study (SPU Promise Review, 2010; SPU Working Paper, 2016). The criteria for inclusion in this study stipulated that all participants must be recent SPU graduates who were part of the SPU Promise, the first in their families to obtain a bachelor's degree, and identified as having had at least one influential what during their undergraduate career. Participants were selected using an online survey, which asked potential participants to identify first-generation status, ethnicity, graduation dates, and answer a few questions about the depth and breadth of their relationships with faculty mentors (see Appendix B). Twelve students were selected to participate in the study.

Table 1 provides an overview of the participant's diverse backgrounds and career interests. Efforts were made to mimic the race and gender profile of the 2017 SPU Promise cohort. While the participants reflected the cohort's gender distribution (66.7% of study participants compared to 65% of cohort), they were significantly more likely to be from racial and ethnic minority groups (83.3% of participants compared to 58% of cohort). The high level of racial and ethnic diversity was unintended but influenced the findings of the study in a meaningful way by highlighting the role that race plays in mentoring relationships. Another interesting characteristic shared by the majority of the study participants is their status as first-generation Americans, which applied to all but three participants (75%) and likely influenced

students' predisposition to mentoring in unique ways. It may also have had an influence of the participants' chosen career fields, which are overwhelmingly in the health sciences.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Gender	Race	First-gen American	Career Field	No. of Mentors
Sasha	Female	Black	Yes	Dentistry	4
Xiomara	Female	Hispanic	Yes	Entertainment	3
Jade	Female	Asian	Yes	Global Health	1
Ellen	Female	White	No	Law	1
Braxton	Male	Black	No	Physical Therapy	4
Juan	Male	Hispanic	Yes	Medicine	2
Chicharito	Male	Hispanic	Yes	Physical Therapy	2
Dev	Male	Asian	Yes	Medicine	2
Keisha	Female	Black	No	Medicine	2
Katie	Female	White	Yes	Academia	1
Bree	Female	Mixed Race	Yes	Medicine or Academia	3
Dani	Female	Hispanic	Yes	Journalism	2

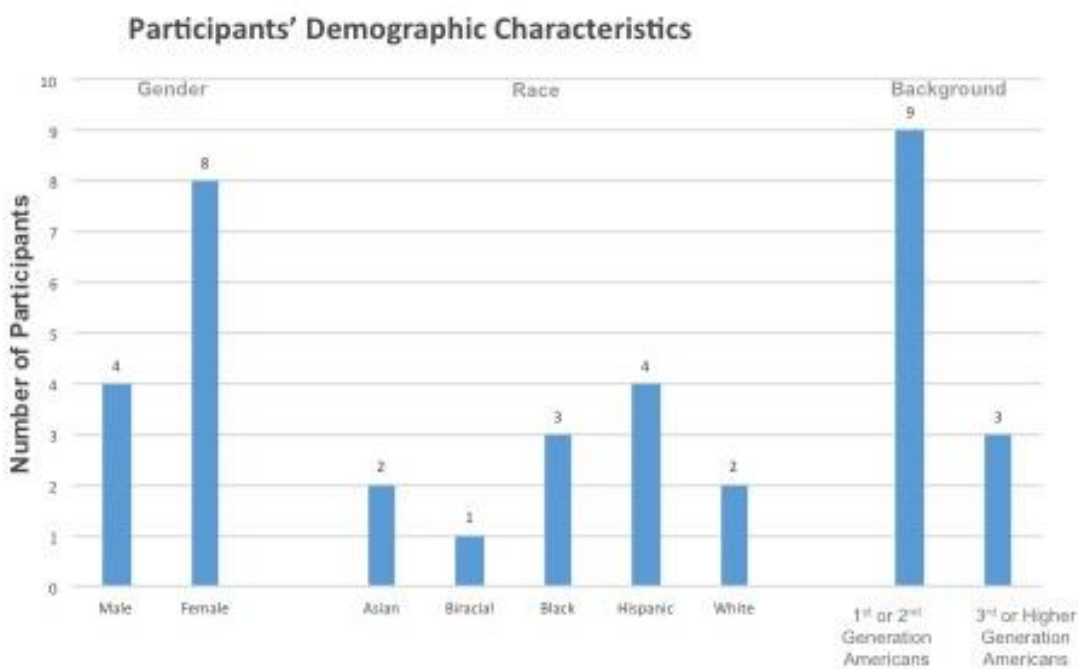


Figure 2. Participants' demographic characteristics.

Challenges and Barriers to Successes

First-

ration, low-income students face a myriad of challenges that affect their ability to succeed in college and impact the types of support that they need from faculty as well as administrators. Although graduation rates for SPU Promise scholars are significantly higher than for FGLI students in general, in part because the financial pressures are alleviated by the scholarship award, SPU Promise scholars face many of the same challenges and barriers to success. These include academic challenges, issues related to poverty, as well as challenges around social integration and cultural adaptation. Given the racial and cultural diversity of the participants, race, the lack of diversity, and cultural barriers added to the many challenges that the participants had to navigate during their time in college.

Although SPU Promise scholars receive a full scholarship that includes room and board, issues of poverty permeated their undergraduate experience. Many of the participants talked about how their families' financial hardships affected them. They spoke about not knowing how their single mother is going to manage on an annual salary of \$14,000, worrying about whether the siblings they left behind will have to go hungry, to having to live out of their car during a period of homelessness. Keisha's story illustrates a particularly difficult situation:

Because of me advancing a little bit with education, coming here and being a part of SPU Promise, she [my mom] felt that the money that I was receiving from them I could put towards stuff at home. So that was difficult for me because I couldn't really do it because I needed to survive here. . . . So with me being separate right now and trying to survive on my own, it was a big mess with that. She was deciding that she wasn't going to contribute to my – give me her information for my FAFSA since I wasn't going to help her.

While this is an unusually difficult situation, feeling pressure or simply responsibility to support your financial struggling family clearly places a heavy burden on those who experience it.

Almost everyone talked about their families and how they influenced their college experience except the two Asian students who didn't share details of their family life. Most of the participants' families placed high value on their children's education and were supportive and

proud of them going to college. Despite the family support that most participants experienced, their parents' lack of college experience meant that they had very little help navigating the challenges they faced in college. In addition, many of them came from close-knit families and were affected by issues facing their families. For three participants, significant family conflict or instabilities significantly affected their academic performance, while another three had to deal with serious health issues that affected their family. From mental health issues and domestic violence to death in the family, what happens at home had a significant negative impact on at least half of the participants.

While most participants faced at least some academic difficulties during their time in college, half of them encountered significant academic struggles. While this confirms the findings of previous studies that point to frequent academic challenges of FGLI students as a result of academic underpreparation (Demetriou, 2014; Engle & Tinto, 2008), it is also in part due to the fact that two thirds of the participants studied health sciences, which are known to be particularly demanding at SPU. Their low SES background meant that many of them went to under-performing and under-resourced high schools, which made the transition to university-level academic rigor particularly challenging. Sasha best expressed the academic adjustment challenges shared by most participants:

The transition from high school to college, where high school is super easy and you didn't really have to study; you just glance at it and you get all As. And then coming to college where you try really, really hard and sometimes it's still not good enough, especially with the hard sciences— so chemistry and all of that.

Many participants became acutely aware of the differences in their educational preparation compared to their more advantaged peers and often commented on having to acquire study skills and figuring out how to get help in order to be successful. Juan's statement, "I think I felt like I didn't belong because of the preparation," expresses how this impacted his sense of

belonging. Others shared Sasha's feeling of self doubt that maybe, "I'm not as smart as I thought I was," or Chicharito's concern that, "Maybe just SPU chose me on accident, you know, or for some other reason." Nearly every participant suffered from imposter syndrome. Chicharito added an interesting perspective on his academic struggles that other participants shared without necessarily being aware of it, explaining, "I think that was a mix of my study strategies and my mindset. I had a very closed mindset. I didn't have a growth mindset. I have a growth mindset now." Stanford psychology professor Carol Dweck's theory of growth mindset, which refers to the belief that one's intelligence and personal qualities are not fixed, but can be expanded through continued effort and experience (Dweck, 2000, 2008), points to a dilemma that many FGLI students experience. Academic under-preparation and a lack of study skills combined with a fixed mindset and low confidence in their academic abilities were barriers to success that almost all participants experienced.

While academic challenges made many participants question if they belonged at the university, several factors hindered their sense of belonging and social integration on campus. Regardless of the students' background, most of the female students commented on the difficulty of fitting in. Feeling homesick, misunderstood and insecure, Xiomara observed, "Everybody else that I saw here felt so entitled to be here and felt like they knew that they belonged here, and I felt like I was always falling short of that." The difficulty of fitting in with the campus culture was especially prevalent among female participants most of whom elaborated on their lack of finding their friend group during the first two years. Many participants did not see themselves reflected in the majority of their peers and pointed to the lack of diversity on campus.

Coming from low socioeconomic backgrounds posed another challenge that hindered their sense of belonging on campus. The contrast between their families' lack of material wealth

and the relative affluence of their peers was evident to quite a few of the participants. Sasha's experience with her roommate illustrates the socio-economic divide in a powerful way:

There's so many people here that never have to think about money. And I just remember, I had a roommate who was very wealthy and I heard her in the bathroom crying, complaining to her mom that one of their investments went bad and they would have to close off the east wing of their house. And she was like "I love the east wing." And I'm thinking, I never even knew. I didn't know houses had wings. I never had a wing to my house, and I slept in the same room as my siblings. I just got so frustrated to the point where I was crying. I was like, "Wow. This is so frustrating that these people are worried about wings, of houses." And you still have other wings left and this is the end of the world. There's just so much juxtapositioning of different lives, and it's so hard to relate to people that don't come from that same low socio-economic background.

Such experiences added to the emotional stress that their FGLI status and other characteristics of underrepresentation posed and explains why developing a sense of belonging on campus was delayed or altogether elusive for most of the participants. Cultural barriers like Sasha's experience support Stephens et al.'s (2012) theory of "cultural mismatch" which explains that "first-generation students underperform because interdependent norms from their mostly working-class backgrounds constitute a mismatch with middle-class independent norms prevalent in universities" (p. 1178).

Given the racial diversity among the participants, over 80% of whom belong to ethnic or racial minority groups, issues related to their racial and cultural identity had the largest negative impact on the overall college experience of half of the participants. Although none of the interview questions directly asked about their feelings about diversity on campus or challenges around their racial identities, students who mentioned their racial identity and its role in the challenges they faced were encouraged to elaborate. While the Hispanic male and Asian students did not comment on their experience being a minority, for Black students, Hispanic women and mixed race students, their minority status and experience of a lack of diversity played a

significant role. Their experiences around race shaped how they felt about themselves and the extent to which they integrated into the social fabric of the campus.

The lack of racial and cultural diversity was apparent to many participants. Bree found that the university "wasn't a good cultural fit" and felt "suffocated by whiteness." She described her frequent discomfort as a mixed race woman:

Sometimes I walk into a room and I'll be like, okay, am I the only Black person? Am I the only woman? And then sometimes it's not until later – it was a class later in the semester where I realized I'm the darkest person in this room or I'm not the darkest person in this room, and I've had classmates point that out before.

The micro-aggressions she encountered were shared by Sasha, a Black woman with an immigrant background, who described the emotional stress associated with "constantly being belittled because I'm a woman of color in a field dominated by white males." Although the two Latina students didn't share the same level of stress associated with their ethnicity, they struggled finding their social circles. Dani, who was born in the US, but spent part of her childhood abroad faced a unique challenge:

When I lived in the Dominican Republic, it was like I was the American girl there ... but here, I'm Latina. So, it was very shocking, and I didn't know how to deal with that. I think I never thought of race as a thing, or I never thought of me being different. And here, it was so obvious that I was a minority, I was a Latina girl.

Not fitting in with the Latina community on campus led her to try to "fit in with white people" and even briefly join a sorority where she was one of only a handful of students of color. Her identity struggles as related to her sense of belonging on campus mirror Bree's, whose "type of blackness necessarily didn't fit with the type of blackness that was Black SPU".

As Bree's and Sasha's experiences illustrate, Black students (with the exception of Keisha) were most likely to talk about how racial issues affected them. At least in part due to the social injustice toward Black males that repeatedly made the news in the past few years,

Braxton's college experience was shaped by his identity as a Black male. As one of only ninety-eight Black men in a cohort of just short of 4,000 students, he described the challenges that he and others who share his background face:

It's hard as hell being a Black student here. ... The most stereotypical thing I've had happen to me happened – actually, I had two, but the one that really hurt was this – I was in [a campus building] in an Under Armor shirt – it was long-sleeved too – and this Black guy came up, he was like, "Good game on Saturday," and I was like, "Huh?" He's like, "Good game on Saturday." I was like, "Appreciate it." ... Because one, you're looked at like you're not supposed to be here 'cause you don't play a sport. Two, another thing about it is there's no representation here really.

Being mistaken for an athlete (many of whom are not admitted based on academic merit) or noticing people switching their purses to the opposite side when walking toward him at twilight on campus (presumably out of a fear of being robbed) are examples of micro-aggressions that understandably impact a person's sense of belonging. They constitute a heavy burden that is difficult to imagine for those of us who are not affected by them.

Every participant was affected by some combination of academic challenges, family and financial issues, as well as issues surrounding social and cultural integration to varying degrees of severity. Based on participants' depth of reflection, racial issues had the most significant negative impact on the college experience of the six participants that were affected by them. Regardless of the kinds of challenges students faced, it is clear that their FGLI status combined with other characteristics of underrepresentation such as being part of a racial or ethnic minority group or, as was the case for the two white students, coming from a rural area, negatively affected their sense of belonging on campus and did not support their academic success. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, faculty mentors can play an important role in helping students navigate these challenges and thus contribute to their success.

Predisposition to Mentoring

First-generation, low-income students have a unique predisposition to mentoring, which impacts how they select and engage with faculty who eventually become mentors. In addition to class and generational status, elements of students' identity such as gender and race influence their receptiveness and approach to engaging in meaningful relationships with faculty (Crisp et al., 2017). Since two thirds of the study participants were women and more than eighty percent were students of color, their unique mixture of characteristics of underrepresentation may have significantly impacted the way they approached their interactions with faculty outside of the classroom. Connecting with professors did not come naturally to most participants, many of whom had to overcome initial reservations to approach faculty, impose on their time or ask for help. However, despite the study's focus on students who had influential mentoring relationships, the depth, context, and impact of these relationships on FGLI students is highly encouraging.

This may be partially explained by the diverse cultural background of the majority of the participants, two thirds of whom were either children of immigrant parents (first-generation Americans) or had themselves spent part of their lives in developing countries. With exception of the two Asian students, who had the lowest level of personal interaction with their mentors, all remaining first-generation American students had little trouble approaching faculty and forming close bonds. This is not the norm for FGLI and other high-risk students who are least likely to interact with faculty (Cole & Griffin, 2013; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2006; Schreiner et al., 2011; Walpole, 2008) and is at least in part due to the fact that this study selected participants who had particularly positive and influential mentoring relationships with faculty. However, it is also likely that students who cannot not rely on their immigrant parents to help them navigate the school system are more accustomed to relying on outside support prior to

coming to college, which may have reduced their apprehension to interact with adults who are in positions to provide much needed support.

Categories of Findings

The findings of this study are organized in five major categories: 1) FGLI students' engagement with their mentors; 2) mentor characteristics and competencies; 3) mentor abilities and actions; 4) forms of support; and 5) the value and meaning of mentoring. The following section will provide an overview of each category and analyze its main themes. Table 2 shows a summary of the five categories, their properties, and their connection to the theoretical framework. As I explore each theme, I will provide rich description of participants' experiences using direct quotes from their interview data. It is important to note that in some instances filler language such as "like," "um," and "you know" has been removed for clarity and readability, but the meanings of participants' quotes have not been altered.

Table 2

Descriptions and Properties of Mentoring Categories and How They Connect to the Research Question Supporting Topics and Theoretical Framework.

Category	Description	Properties	Connection
FGLI Students Engagement with their Mentors	How students engage with their mentors and experience the mentoring relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Students' motivations to engage with faculty ▪ How mentoring relationships develop ▪ The role of frequency and quality of interaction 	<p>Addresses RQ 1</p> <p><i>Framework connection:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relationship features (intent, purpose, intensity, duration) - Form and structure of relationship - Nature of the mentoring relationship
Mentor Characteristics and Competencies	How FGLI students perceive the characteristics and competencies of influential mentors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Helping Orientation ▪ Warmth ▪ Capacity for Intimacy ▪ Authenticity ▪ Empathy 	<p>Addresses RQ 3</p> <p><i>Framework connection:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educational context (who you are engaging with)
Mentor Abilities and Actions	How FGLI students perceive the abilities and actions of influential mentors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Being accessible ▪ Sharing life experiences and adversities ▪ Providing encouragement and support ▪ Affirming and nurturing the “dream” ▪ Challenging ▪ 	<p>Addresses RQ 3</p> <p><i>Framework connection:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educational context (who you are engaging with)
Forms of Support	The ways in which faculty mentors support FGLI students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Psychosocial and emotional support ▪ Career development support ▪ Academic content knowledge support ▪ Degree completion support 	<p>Addresses RQs 2</p> <p><i>Framework connection:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forms of support
The Value and Meaning of Mentoring	<p>How FGLI students perceive the value and meaning of their mentoring relationships</p> <p>When and how mentors become role models</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Academic and intellectual development ▪ Personal Development ▪ Professional Development Role Modeling 	<p>Addresses RQs 4 and 5</p> <p><i>Framework connection:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impact on students' experiences and outcomes

FGLI Students' Engagement with their Mentors

The way professors engage with students in the classroom influences if and how mentoring relationships develop. What is it about a professor that makes students want to interact with him or her outside of the classroom in the first place? How do these relationships develop and how are they sustained? The perceptions of FGLI students' experiences with mentoring relationships provided unique insights into these questions, which are highly relevant given the importance of frequent and substantive interactions with faculty members for student outcomes (Cole & Griffin, 2013; Crisp et al., 2017; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Pascarella, 1980). This section describes the participants' motivations for engaging with professors who would eventually become their mentors, how mentoring relationships develop, and what role the frequency and quality of interactions play in mentoring relationships.

Motivations to Engage with Faculty Mentors

Most mentoring relationships grow out of a student-teacher relationship, which was the case for all but one of the participants. But what is it about a professor that makes students want to interact with him or her in the first place and invest in deepening the relationship? Given that very few FGLI students report having good mentoring relationships (Cole & Griffin, 2013), understanding how and why students engage with professors beyond the classroom provides important insights into the role that mentoring relationships can play in increasing student success and improving the graduation rates for this vulnerable group of the college student population.

Mentor's accessibility cues. In order for FGLI students to feel comfortable interacting with professors outside of the classroom, they must feel that those interactions are welcomed. Professors' teaching styles and in-class behaviors provide "accessibility cues" through which

professors communicate their openness to engage with students outside of the classroom (Cole, 2007; Cole & Griffin, 2013; Cox et al., 2010). For participants, a professor's explicit invitation for interaction was one of the fundamental reasons for the development of their mentoring relationship. While some participants followed their professor's standard invitations to see them during office hours, others responded better to a more personalized approach. While Jade appreciated that her professor reached out to her to check in with her, Xiomara was grateful that her professor cared enough to email her to invite her to come and talk to her in her office. However, for Keisha, who had previously experienced professors who were less engaging and open to interactions, it took quite a bit of persistence on the part of her mentor to get her to open up and connect on a personal level.

Once students determined that the professor was accessible, approachable, and interested in interacting with them, they were most motivated to engage with professors with whom they connected on a personal level. In addition to explicit invitations to engage, professors also communicated their accessibility in a less deliberate or intentional way. Their in-class behaviors revealed personality traits such as positive affectivity, warmth, passion, and a caring nature to which students responded. Bree offered this explanation for what initially drew her to her mentor:

I think it was just her personality and presence in the class that was so opening and inviting and in some way she kind of reminded me of my mom in how she didn't pull punches and things like that, so it was something I was familiar with.

While for Katie, the mentor's personality and her enthusiasm for her work played an important role:

She's very excited when students are excited about the class, and she's excited when students are excited about things she's interested in, or research. And really excited to talk to students about graduate school or academic life. That wasn't an excitement that had really been expressed by other professors, but she does, I know she always mentions

this in all of her classes, "If anyone's really excited about grad school, come talk to me. I would love to talk to you about it." She was very open and welcoming to those kind of things. That made it easier, for sure.

Although female students seemed to have a particularly high need to connect with the mentor's personality, all participants were to some extent influenced by the in-class behaviors that the professors communicated. Needing to feel welcome and connected were essential motivators for students to invest in building a mentoring relationship with a professor.

Students were especially receptive to professors who took an interest in them as people and actively encouraged them to succeed. This was especially important to Dani who described her mentor this way:

If he saw something in you, he didn't want you to get off track. He wanted to help you. That's exactly when he decides to start a relationship or establish a relationship with a student, if he sees something in them. I felt special.

Feeling special matters, especially for students who feel lost and don't yet feel like they belong. Juan shared a similar experience when the professor who became his mentor asked him to become involved in an organization that ultimately became an important part of his social integration on campus. He explained that his mentor, "took the initiative to go out of his way to tell me about it, which was really cool." Feeling that a professor truly cared about them on a personal level was an important motivator for further interactions.

Beyond the mentor's encouragement, personality, and their intentional accessibility cues, students picked up on the subtler ways that made them feel connected and want to interact with their professor on a deeper level. The mentor's authenticity and his or her ability to show vulnerability and capacity for intimacy played an important role for some of the participants. Being truly seen and appreciated for who he is by his professor particularly mattered to Braxton:

Being—I was able to crack a joke in their class and they giggled. They showed that cracking the robot, that I'm more than just this machine that gives you papers and grades. That's what made me want to do it, and then I started looking at their accomplishments.

His professor's authenticity and his ability to make him feel like he could be his authentic self was a major motivator for Braxton to enter into a mentoring relationship.

The realization that professors are "just people" was equally important to Juan, who initially felt a large power distance between himself and his professors. He explains what made him want to engage with his mentor outside of the classroom:

Well, the biggest thing was when he told us his story ... His growing up was like mine. ... And not really having an end goal. Kind of like not knowing what you're doing, but ended up doing well, wanting to be a college professor and get a degree, stuff like his family had never done. And I had never met anyone like that back home. So it was so, I guess, comforting to know that there was someone else like that. And it was kind of encouraging, too, because I thought, "Okay. If he can do it, maybe I can, too."

The professor's ability and willingness to share his difficult life experiences and show his own vulnerability sent a powerful message to Juan. It communicated to Juan that he has been in Juan's place, that he understands, and that they are not all that different. Juan could not only see himself in this professor who would become his mentor, but also received an implied message that one can succeed despite personal struggles. Sharing personal experiences is an important ability in mentors and will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. A professor's authenticity and the capacity for intimacy signaled approachability and provided motivations for students to engage with them outside of the classroom.

Shared interests and homophily. Regardless of the mentor's conscious or unconscious accessibility cues and engaging personality, students need to feel connected to the professor in order to initiate and develop mentoring relationships. Such connections are made through shared academic, personal, and professional interests, shared background or personal characteristics, and shared life experiences. Without exception, the personal connections that the participants felt

with their professor were instrumental for the depth with which they engaged with their professors. Xiomara found that connection to her mentor in conversations about music and popular culture, while Chicharito, Braxton, and Keisha connected through their love for sports. Discovering shared academic interests was important for Katie, who explains how her mentoring relationship evolved:

When I realized that I liked not only her as a professor and a person, but also the things that she was studying and working on, and that we shared some similar interests, I took another course with her, I think, the very next semester.

While the connections around personal interests were important to quite a few students, it was the professor's shared personal background and characteristics that provided the strongest lasting connection and laid the foundation for a strong mentoring relationship.

The concept of homophily, which asserts that "humans categorize one another based on social characteristics and then seek to interact with others that are in their own social categories" (Cole & Griffin, 2013, p. 568), became an important aspect of this study. Characteristics of underrepresentation that influenced participants' identification with their eventual mentors included gender, race, class, and first-generation status. Having a mentor in whom participants saw themselves became an important theme of this study, which will be discussed in chapter 5. While a few students mentioned that their mentors shared first-generation status, gender, or a cultural background, the strongest expression of homophily was race, which played an important role for the majority of the women of color who participated in this study.

The role of race and gender. Race and gender played an important role in many of the mentoring relationships. Female students of color were highly likely to have primary mentors who matched not only their gender, but also their identity as women of color. With the exception of Jade, all non-white female participants had primary mentors who were women of color. While

Bree and Keisha both had primary mentors who were females of Asian descent, only Bree spoke about the importance of having a female mentor of color. Sasha, Xiomara, and Dani, who each had multiple influential mentors, started their interviews talking about their male mentors. However, as the interviews progressed and questions focused more on the mentors' specific characteristics and abilities, as well as the meaning of the relationships, their focus shifted to their female mentors of color who had become influential role models. While Sasha's mentor shared her race but not her cultural background, Xiomara, Bree, Keisha, and Dani's female mentors shared neither race nor culture. Their strong connection with their mentor was in part made through their shared identity as women of color.

For four of the six women of color, having a female mentor of color who served as a strong role model was a defining part of the success and influence of the mentoring relationship.

These notions are illustrated in the following statements:

- I googled her and, Wow. She done so much stuff and she's... she's like a boss. She's who I want to be. She's like a role model, not just a mentor. She's who I want to be. So she's a woman of color who's accomplished so much. (Sasha, Black)
- I looked up to her a lot because she is a woman of color. ... I love to see very strong, independent women, you know? [Laughter] So, it was nice. She's a tiny woman, but she's very fierce and very headstrong, so I really looked up to her. I really clung onto things she would say. (Xiomara, Hispanic)
- Professor [Overton], it was kind of like, wow, a minority woman has this position. She's a professor here, not tenured, but still it's something that I aspire to be, that I can teach my students from my experiences in the future. ... So, her being a minority woman and such an important figure ... Everyone knows her. And she has her PhD too, so it's just very inspiring. (Dani, Hispanic)
- And so looking at her, she looked like some of my cousins at first. I was like, is she black? And so then once I got to know her and know her background and all the moving that she did, I think we were able to connect better, especially being sometimes the only, only—so being the only woman in a space and then being the only woman of color in a space. (Bree, Mixed Race)

The students' admiration of their mentors and surprise in their mentors' accomplishments is noteworthy as it largely applied to female students' of color. The mentor's perseverance through adversities was another aspect that participants noted. Sasha offered this reflection on her mentors:

They're all very perseverant. They wouldn't have gotten to the place that they are ... being a first-generation college student, being a woman of color, if it weren't for persevering through all those adversities.

For the other half of the participants, which included two Asian students, two Hispanic students, and one Black student, race did not seem to be a conscious factor in choosing a mentor. This group of participants consisted of four male students and one female Asian student. Again, gender and race seemed to play a significant role here. For the Hispanic and Black male students, having a supportive male mentor with whom they could connect on a personal level seemed to matter the most, regardless of their race. Although I cannot generalize given the small number of Asian participants, both Asian students seemed to approach their mentoring relationships primarily from a utilitarian perspective. They placed a high emphasis on the mentor's competence in teaching, providing constructive feedback, and helping them reach their professional goals while placing less emphasis on a personal connection. However, both of their mentoring relationships lacked depth and longevity in comparison to the other participants who made a significant personal connection with their mentors.

These experiences stand in contrast to the relationships of the five women of color to whom the mentor's race and gender was essential to the success of the relationship. While almost all students connected with their mentors based on shared interests or characteristics, it was the mentor's characteristics of underrepresentation that created a particular draw, especially for female students of color. Being able to connect with a professor in whom they saw themselves

became a powerful element of the most influential mentoring relationships.

Recognizing the value of engaging with faculty. Given study's focus on substantive and meaningful mentoring relationships, most participants were well aware of the importance of getting to know their professors. Once they made a connection with a professor and found them to be accessible and relatable, they often initiated interactions outside of the classroom. For Xiomara, this was a conscious effort:

I decided that I was gonna get closer to my professors. So, I would go a lot to office hours. I would go to a lot of the, some of my professors would be guest speakers at certain things, I would go there to see a little bit more about what they do.

Braxton, who had four mentors in his major department, was also intentional about getting to know his professors. Since he was planning to pursue a graduate degree in the same department, "(getting) to know the people you'll be working with" was a way for him to gain access and advice to opportunities that would aid his career goals. Similarly, Katie "knew that in order to be successful, you had to do things outside of just turning in assignments. You had to try and get to know your professors." While no one revealed how they knew this was important, Katie, the only one to whom that question was posed directly, went on to explain how glad she was that she made the effort and found an influential mentor in the process.

Interacting with faculty doesn't come naturally for some students. While Bree's early college experience gave her the experience and confidence to approach and interact with her professors, Jade is the only participant who did not make a conscious effort to connect with professors. The professor she felt closest to and considered a mentor was a professor who was assigned to her as part of a professional mentoring program that she participated in during her sophomore year. She explained why she didn't continue the relationship after the program ended:

Probably it was my fault because I didn't really reach out. I am not really good at reaching out ... at connecting with professors afterwards. I don't really know how to do

that and how you're supposed to. 'Cause for med school talks I've been to they're like, "Oh, you should stay connected to the professors you want to write recommendations for you," but I never knew how to do that, and I tried googling it, but I can't really find and answer.

While Jade's example is not at all reflective of the experiences of other participants, it demonstrates that individual personalities, cultural differences, and language barriers may make it difficult for some students to initiate interactions at a deeper level.

For two of the participants, being aware of the benefits of interacting with faculty had more nuanced implications. Juan, who was initially quite intimidated by his mentor's status and accomplishments, realized that many of his peers were motivated to interact with their professors primarily to secure letters of recommendation. He explained this ethical dilemma:

I didn't bring any of that up with any of the teachers I met. I just wanted to get to know them, and then especially him. I never asked them at all for anything. I would just talk to them. He would take us to middle school and mentor us. And if I had a problem, talk to him. He was a good person to talk to. But I never asked him. And then finally my sophomore year, I was applying to stuff, I was telling him that. He was like, "Well, if you ever need a letter of recommendation, let me know and I'll write it."

Although he was truly interested in getting to know his professor without ulterior motives, asking for a letter of recommendation was something that his mentor expected and was more than willing to supply. Sasha's recognition of the need for student-faculty interactions to be mutually beneficial took on a different form. Her reflection illustrates how she approached mentoring relationships:

The big thing with all my mentorships and the big thing that eliminates the fear when approaching faculty, trying to find a mentor, is that I know it would be beneficial for both parts. So I'm not just gonna take, take, take, take, take, but also know that I'm gonna give, give, give as well. So I know that it wouldn't be a burdensome thing to have relationships with faculty because ... whether it's a professor or someone in a position, I know that even though, I'm gonna come to you for knowledge, I'm also gonna be the person connecting you to the pulse of the University, 'cause I have so many ties to the University that I'm constantly advertising, constantly sponsoring, constantly bring so many people... and bringing awareness to what is important to you, I like to make that important to other people. So I'm usually the liaison for all the people I encounter. So even though you're ...

I'm going to you for help and for information, also know that I'm going to be able to help you in return."

Although it didn't come naturally to but a few participants, most made a conscious effort to connect with their professors outside of the classroom. From seeking help with understanding course materials during office hours to investing time to develop a more personal relationship, the value of those interactions was clear to the majority of participants.

The Nature of the Mentoring Relationship

How do students experience their relationship with a mentor? Before analyzing who good mentors are, what good mentors do, and how they impact, it is important to understand how FGLI students engage with their mentors and how they experience their mentoring relationships. The following section will describe how mentoring relationships developed and analyze the frequency, quality, and content of those interactions.

Development of mentoring relationships. The majority of participants first met their mentor in a class setting, while a few of the students first encountered their mentor in an administrative context. The mentoring relationships that developed from those early interactions evolved and deepened with frequent and increasingly meaningful interactions. For some students, mentoring relationships developed through informal interactions without a formalized continued association with their professor. Others developed their mentoring relationships by engaging more deeply with their mentor in a more formal setting. For Katie, Bree, Dani, Ellen, and Dev, taking additional, usually smaller classes with their mentor was one way of deepening the relationship. While Bree took as many as four classes with her mentor, Dev described how being in a smaller class with the professor he connected with, and for whom he later served as her student teaching assistant, allowed him to work with his mentor even more closely. Finding

ways to continue the getting to know their professor in a class setting was a logical way to grow and deepen the mentoring relationship.

Students also identified ways to spend more one-on-one time with their mentor, which included taking independent studies, conducting research for an honors thesis, participating in professional development or engaging in student organizations under the guidance of their mentor. Ellen explained why she convinced her mentor to enroll in an independent study with her:

I knew I wanted to spend one more semester with her because it could be one-on-one time and ... she could help me in so many ways. ... I had to make the first step and say, "Would you mind, ... taking this on with me?" ... so that was kind of scary, but the worst thing she could say was "no."

The senior art project that Ellen completed under the guidance of her mentor deepened and solidified their mentoring relationship in new ways. The same was true for Braxton, Sasha, and Katie who engaged their mentor as their thesis advisor, which allowed for more frequent and meaningful interactions. Dev took two classes with one of his mentors before joining her on a seminar-sized study abroad program. This allowed him to spend important quality time with his mentor and enabled her to help him clarify his career goals after observing his strengths within the intimate setting of the program.

For those who didn't take additional classes with their mentor or interact with them in a more formal setting, making an effort to continue engaging with their mentor was essential.

Xiomara explains her approach:

I guess just making sure that I see them as much as I can. I know SPU stresses a lot about mental health and making sure that you're taken care of. And every time I felt discouraged or that I wasn't, you know, in the right state of mind, I would make sure, I'm like, "Hey, can I come see you? Can I talk about what's been on my mind or XYZ?" And so, I guess making that effort to look for them and then them maintaining that same effort, you know, to check back with me solidified that relationship.

Since most study participants had more than one influential mentor over the four years in college, the mentoring relationships they formed earlier on in their undergraduate career required intentional nurturing. Many students took the initiative to maintain those early relationships that no longer fell within a formal context through continued informal face-to-face interactions with their mentors.

The ways in which mentoring relationships occur can influence how students experience them. For the majority of participants, mentoring relationships developed organically outside of a formal mentoring program. For Jade, one of the three students who met their mentor through a formalized program, the mentoring relationship had a specific duration, as well as a goal and purpose related to her career development. She was one of the two students who only spoke about a single mentor and the relationship was primarily functional involving little interaction outside of the parameters set by the mentoring program. Braxton and Chicharito, who both had multiple influential mentors, met one of them as part of a formal mentoring program for first-year students offered through their scholarship. Braxton describes how his mentoring relationship evolved:

We started out in the group setting. She already knew who I was, though, and then from there going to lunches. She was delving more into my personal life, you know, well how's school been going or have you thought about this, this and that, and so we just developed a relationship. And then I was thinking about doing an honors thesis later in my career and ... I was talking to her over the phone over the summer about it.

While most students developed mentoring relationships organically based on shared interests or characteristics, those relationships that started within the boundaries of a formalized mentoring program were successful if they continued to develop outside of the program.

Mode of interaction. Students had a strong preference for face-to-face interactions with their mentors. Those interactions generally started more formally during office hours at the beginning of the relationship and moved to more informal settings. Bree describes that shift:

So it started off more formal and structured, me going just to her office hours to talk about class and then it became more informal with coffee dates, sending email articles to each other about anything we saw in the headlines and recommending TV shows and books to each other and chatting about those.

Once the mentoring relationship developed, the majority of participants interacted informally with their mentors over coffee or during lunches or dinners indicating the quality of the mentoring relationship. While students used and valued face-to-face interactions the most, all participants interacted with their mentors in a variety of ways. In addition to a combination of in-person interactions in formal and informal settings, less frequently used modes of interactions included emails, phone conversations, text messages, and, in a few cases, social media. Keisha's experience reflects that of most participants:

We mostly met in person. We did text a little bit because like I said had her number, but in terms of—basically if I have something on my mind that's not pertinent at that moment I'll probably just email it to you, . . . but if it was like hey, do you want to grab lunch or something then we would text because she gave her number out.

Informal in-person interactions became an indicator of the quality of the mentoring relationship, especially in the later phases of the relationship.

Frequency of interaction. In addition to the quality of student-faculty interactions, the frequency with which students interact with their professors outside of the classroom positively affects student outcomes (Anaya & Cole, 2001; Campbell & Campbell, 1997; Cox & Orehovec, 2007; Cox et al., 2010; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Pascarella, 1980). The FGLI students who participated in this study had frequent and meaningful interactions with the professors who became their mentors. While this contradicts the findings of previous studies on FGLI students'

interactions with professors, this study focused on students who had one or more strong mentoring relationships and selected participants accordingly. Almost all study participants had regular interactions with their mentors, ranging from weekly to bi-weekly or monthly. The frequency of interactions depended on the stage of the relationship as well as purpose of the interaction at a given time. Katie describes how the frequency and mode of her interactions with her mentor changed based on their purpose:

For that project, the research methods course, we had a weekly scheduled time on campus. We'd meet in her office. After that, though, when I was no longer in the independent study with her, I was working on a senior honors thesis and she was my official advisor for the project. So at that point, rather than the formal meetings, we would sometimes grab coffee at Barnes & Noble and talk about the project, where I'm at in the data collection, and how it's going.

During semesters when the relationship took on a formal purpose, such as honors thesis research or an art or media project a participant worked on with their professor, the frequency of interaction was naturally higher than during semesters when the relationship operated more informally. Dani describes working daily with one of her mentors on a professional project while still reaching out and making time to see another mentor whom she met earlier in her college career. Almost all students took the initiative to maintain and develop their mentoring relationships through regular informal interactions outside of periods defined by a formal purpose.

Quality of interaction. In mentoring relationships, the quality of the interaction is even more important than the frequency with which students and faculty interact. A mentoring relationship represents the highest form of student-faculty interactions and is defined as "a purposeful and intentional commitment on the part of the mentor to the growth, development, and success of the student" (Crisp et al., 2017). Students selected to participate in this study because they were willing to speak about one or more professors with whom they had

interactions that matched this definition. All relationships described by the participants involved caring and in-depth engagement, but the quality of the interactions with their mentors varied significantly. While subsequent sections of this chapter will describe FGLI student perceptions of who good mentors are and what they do in detail, the following paragraphs will provide insights into the depth of the participants' relationships with their mentors.

Although the typical participant's quality of interaction with their mentors was expected to include an average degree of deep engagement, the majority of students proudly and enthusiastically described their experiences of highly supportive, personal, and caring relationships with their mentors. Most of the mentoring relationships revealed a high degree of caring, mutual respect and admiration, and personal and meaningful conversations. Many participants had deep respect and admiration for their mentor. Xiomara, who felt especially close to her mentor who was a woman of color, described her as "incredibly awesome" and talked about how fun and relatable she found her second mentor who shared her love for music and whom she ran into at several local concerts. When Bree's mentor finally got in touch with her after a long period of silence, he explained to her that their most recent conversation, "was the last good memory he had of that week before his heart attack" and asked for a hug. Bree remembered he told her that he "really wanted to be a better ally for students of color" during their last conversation. Many participants appreciated and sought out these kinds of meaningful conversations with their mentors. Ellen explained how she created opportunities for those conversations to take place:

When we went on the field trips I would always volunteer to be in her car because I knew there was always something I could learn from her or take from her, or just the conversation was so interesting; she could teach us whatever. I always made sure to be in her car. That provided a lot of connection there ... it was just a happiness.

Xiomara also used her time with her mentor to learn from her. She was able to relate a lot of what she learned from her mentor in class to her own life experience and noted, “the fact that I got to speak with her about those things and create a dialogue and ... just dig deep into it was very good ... for me.”

The extraordinary degree of caring that many mentors displayed defined the quality of many of the mentoring relationships. Braxton described how it made him feel when his mentor told him that she worried and cared about him and, as a white woman, would never understand what it feels like to be a young black man:

I was like, you get it. That's all I need. You understand, and so we just talked about it and from that point on it was one of those personal relationships more than just academic. I cared about her and her well-being and I felt like she did the same for me.

Her comment showed a high level of empathy and caring that had a profound impact on him and the mentoring relationship. Chicharito's mentoring experience was similarly defined by his mentor's support, which was further validated by his reverence for his mentor's professional accomplishments. He describes how his mentor's encouragement mattered:

For somebody to tell you that you can do it, and especially coming from somebody like him—if you look at his résumé, [laughter] you see hundreds of publications and you see awards and you see years of experience. So, you know, when somebody is able to tell you, you can do it, that means a lot.

The mentors' encouragement and personal support played a major role for all participants and will be discussed in detail in later sections of this chapter.

While the experiences illustrated in the preceding paragraphs describe the typical depth of the quality of mentoring relationships, three students had experiences on opposite sides of the spectrum. Participants selected into this study because they could identify one or more professors with whom they made a meaningful connection. The level of depth of those experiences, however, still differed between participants. Jade and Dev primarily defined the quality of their

mentoring relationship by the value it had for their professional development. Jade talked about how helpful her mentor was, but also realized that she had been out of touch with her for over a year. For Dev, the primary purpose of his mentoring relationships was also related to career and professional development. He reflected on the level of personal support in mentoring relationships:

I can definitely see where professors could have that impact on other people. I just never had that sort of relationship with them. But I can definitely see, one of them were really receptive, so I could've talked about that with them. I never did. And it never came up between us.

Students who had a high degree of deeply meaningful and personal interactions with their mentors spoke particularly enthusiastically and proudly of these connections. This was the case for all but two of the twelve participants. However, the absence of a highly personal relationship with a mentor or lack of personal support for the protégé certainly does not diminish its effectiveness and impact if it meets the protégés' needs as was seemingly the case for Dev and Jade.

Mentor Characteristics and Competencies

Who are the faculty members who serve as mentors? What are the distinguishing characteristics and innate competencies of influential mentors? After an overview of the mentors' backgrounds and relationships to students, this section will focus on how the participants characterized their mentors in juxtaposition to the inherent competencies and characteristics of effective mentors based on Johnson's (2016) mentoring competencies.

Mentor Background and Roles

Participants met their mentors in a class setting, through a formalized mentoring program or by being connected with them through another professor. For the majority of students, taking one or more classes with a professor allowed them to time to get to know the faculty member and

build a relationship. Jade, who had one influential mentor, was the only one whose primary mentoring relationship evolved within a formalized mentoring program. While the majority of participants met their mentor in a traditional classroom setting, Sasha and Juan met their primary mentors within the context of a student organization to which that faculty member served as the faculty advisor. In addition, they both had mentors who introduced them to faculty members with whom they would also develop mentoring relationship.

The majority of mentors were tenured faculty who are highly respected in their fields and often served within the students' major department. Minoritized students were particularly likely to notice their mentors' status. Describing his casual interactions with a prominent scholar in his department, Braxton wondered, "why should I even be allowed in the same room with you and you've had all this, you know, accolades and all this accreditation". Chicharito, who deeply appreciated his mentor's encouragement, also shared his reverence for his mentor and noted its significance. As he explained, "especially coming from somebody like him—if you look at his résumé, [laughter] you see hundreds of publications and you see awards and you see years of experience."

In addition to their role as professors, the participants' mentors served as thesis advisors, PIs for collaborative research projects, career advisors, or faculty leads for study abroad programs and student organizations. Other mentoring relationships continued informally following more formal interaction, usually in a classroom setting.

Competencies and Characteristics of Effective Mentors

Effective mentors displayed a multitude of characteristics and competencies. Johnson (2003) asserts that "truly excellent mentoring in higher education requires the presence of foundational character virtues (integrity, caring, prudence), salient foundational abilities

(cognitive, emotional, relational) and numerous skill-based competencies" (p. 61). Although Johnson's work is written from the perspective of the mentor and intended as a guide for faculty who want to become effective mentors, the competencies he identifies align with those used by the study's participants to describe their mentors. The emotional and relational abilities of mentors identified by Johnson (2016) that students found particularly effective included helping orientation, warmth, capacity for intimacy, authenticity, and empathy. The following section describes how students experienced these competencies within their mentoring relationships.

Helping orientation. Participants portrayed their mentors in ways that closely align with Johnson's mentoring criteria of having "genuine concern and interest in the life experiences, professional development, and well-being of mentees" (p. 65). Students most often described their mentors as caring and supportive. All but one student repeatedly talked about how meaningful it was to feel cared about, encouraged and supported by their mentor. Sasha, Xiomara, and Dani describe how their mentors showed that they cared:

- "She genuinely cares about each student, and the last day of class she makes everyone give her a hug ... So she cares so much about her students and she's so thorough and she focuses more on learning, as opposed to regurgitating and performing on exams." (Sasha, Black)
- "She knew about my academic hardships [laughter] and, you know, personal hardships, and she would always check in with me. Sometimes she would just e-mail me like, 'Are you okay? How are you? You know, stop by my office, I haven't seen you in a while' type thing." (Xiomara, Hispanic)
- "Every time I came into his office hours, it was also a relief, if he noticed that I was stressed, he was like what's going on? He would just be like, 'What's going on? I can tell either in your writing or your face or you walking in late to class that there's something up.' And I was going through a lot during that time." (Dani, Hispanic)

The professors' efforts to reach out to students and support them, especially when they are struggling, was extremely important and characterized almost all mentoring relationships.

Keisha's mentor's support and caring nature made up for the family support she lacked due to her strained relationship with her parents. She explained what she valued most in her mentor:

If I had to pick one thing I would think that it probably would just be her actively trying to fill voids in my life. ... When I was having the off times with my parents and stuff, they weren't checking on me. ... So by her being there, even during those times, it was just really important, kind of like a motivator, I guess, to make you want to keep going. It's like someone actually cares.

Many participants seemed surprised by the extent to which their mentors cared about them. Throughout the interview, Juan expressed his amazement and gratitude for his mentor's support for him:

Talking to him, and him believing in me so much, and kind of trying to get me out into the research, and just pushing me constantly after that. I don't know what it was, but we just hit it off quick. And I don't know. I always ask myself, "Why does this person care about me so much?" But it's like I don't know. I just couldn't wrap myself around it.

Katie, who confided in her mentor about her difficult home life, had similar feelings:

She, at that point, offered, "Oh my gosh, I had no idea that things were so rough. I just want you to know that if you're ever in that kind of situation again, you're always welcome at my home." For her to say that was wow, you really care about me. Thank you. Like I said, it didn't really change anything, but it was an understanding, I guess.

While almost everyone shared examples of their mentor's deep level of care and support, two situations stand out in which students were particularly moved by their mentor's response to the challenges that they shared with them. Braxton explained:

[My mentor] I mean, ... is probably one of the nicest people I've ever met in a job setting ever. Always just the open-door policy, like what's bothering you, are you okay, and literally—I remember we did an exercise where we had to ... write down, some things that were bothering us inside, and it was anonymous, and I remember she started crying 'cause she cared that much about us.

Juan describes a situation when a friend of a friend had been sexually assaulted and he thought of his mentor when figuring out how to get her the help she needed:

I just kind of knew that he would have good advice for it. So I called him and asked him what we should do. He took it upon himself to meet with her and help her out through everything. And I was like, "Dang." He really cares about students.

This level of dedication and commitment to the welfare of students earned the mentors enormous amounts of respect and appreciation from the students and contributed significantly to the success and impact of the mentoring relationship.

Warmth. Influential mentoring relationships develop when mentors show "emotional warmth and caring" and convey "an attitude of friendliness, approachability and openness" (Johnson, 2016, p. 67). The participants in this study described their mentors as approachable, relatable, open, and having a warm or welcoming personality. A professor's warm and welcoming personality was particularly influential in the early stages of the relationship and was often the reason that students decided to engage with their professors outside of the classroom.

Xiomara describes one of her first impressions of her mentor:

I think the way [my mentor] is very friendly and open was really nice. He just let everybody inside, he's like, "Yo, this is me." He was a very untraditional professor. He was very slang-y, he was very hip, you know? So, ... I was like, "This is someone I could hang out with after class." [Laughter] Yeah. So, just him being personable, I think, was his best quality. It made everybody instantly comfortable with him.

The extent to which professors were able to relate to students seemed particularly important for minoritized students and those who experienced a high degree of power distance between themselves and their professors. Juan describes his first meeting with the professor who would become his mentor:

I was kind of intimidated because he was like, "Oh, you know, this dude's a professor." [Laughter] I had never been around a professor. But he was so open and he was so genuine, a real nice guy. I could just tell he was cool.

Dani also appreciated her mentor's welcoming and down-to-earth personality: "He's just a funny person, he's hilarious. And it was just ... and I could tell that he wasn't trying to make me feel like he was my superior. I didn't feel intimidated by him."

In addition to their mentor's ability to make them feel comfortable, many participants commented on their mentor's positive personality traits. Katie, who described her mentor as "really warm and bubbly, and happy, and nice," stated that her mentor is "one of the kindest and most genuine people that I know." The warmth and welcoming nature of the mentors encouraged students to open up about their struggles. Keisha described how her professor reacted to her seeking clarification on an assignment during office hours:

I went and talked to her about that and then basically she was just so warm and friendly we just started talking about other random things. Eventually I starting talking to her about what was doing on with me and my life and everything and she was extremely understanding and giving advice.

This experience stood in contrast to her earlier experiences with professors who didn't seem to encourage interactions outside of the classroom and conveyed little interest in getting to know her as a person. The mentors' open, friendly, approachable and relatable personalities drew students toward them and allowed traditional student-faculty relationships to grow into important developmental relationships.

Capacity for intimacy. A mentor's capacity for professional intimacy is defined as "the closeness, affection, trust, and commitment that allow and promote risk taking and self-disclosure" (Johnson, 2016, p. 69). In addition to the mentors' warm and caring nature, their ability to open up about their lives and let their protégés get to know them on a personal level was very meaningful to the participants. Rogers and Holloway identify five components of professional intimacy: mutual validation, reciprocity, relaxed relational atmosphere, trust, and collaborative flexibility (Rogers & Holloway, 1993 as cited in Johnson, 2016, p. 69).

Participants spoke about how they perceived their mentor's openness and ability to reveal themselves as the people they are. While a mentor's capacity for intimacy is closely linked to actions such as self-disclosing personal experiences, which will be discussed in subsequent sections of this chapter that analyze what good mentors do, it is also part of someone's inherent abilities or character traits. Ellen describes her mentor:

The conversations that we had as a class were just so candid and open. And she... she was a person, and not just a professor. She was both. So I liked it. ... I appreciated her candidness and, you know, just if ... when things bothered her about the world ... and she shared that with us and we just all kind of bonded, but I feel like I ... I sought her out.

Katie shared her appreciation for her mentor's openness and honesty, noting:

She talks a lot about herself, so I really feel like I got to know who she was as a person. It wasn't this professional wall. She talked a lot about her experiences and would draw on examples from her life when explaining things a lot.

A mentor's ability to open up about their personal life was particularly appreciated by protégés who had close relationships and shared their own struggles with their mentors. Braxton provides an example of this kind of reciprocity when explaining the content of his conversations with his mentor:

Another was about her, how she's doing, what she wants to do, 'cause so many people get caught up—like you're interviewing me, right, and so if this was a relationship where we talked all the time then it would only feel natural for me to go, "Okay, enough about me, what about you?" And so that's what I asked her about, you know, about retirement, what do you want to do, blah, blah, blah, blah, and that's how I ended up building that personal relationship with her and just wanting to know about her as a person, 'cause how do you get to become so amazing, you know? What led you here and where does this amazingness take you?

A mentor's ability to engage in these kinds of exchanges signifies their inherent capacity for intimacy, which often leads to actions and forms of support that significantly impacted the students and strengthened the bond between mentor and protégé.

Authenticity. Participants had a strong appreciation for their mentors' ability to show their authentic selves. Authenticity relates to Johnson's (2017) concept of congruence. A congruent mentor is someone who is "freely and easily himself or herself in relationships with students" and able to "accurately and authentically communicate his or her authentic experience to the mentee" (Johnson, 2017, p. 68). Almost all participants who had very strong relationships with their faculty mentors described their ability to be themselves, to allow students to get to know them as people. Many participants described their mentors as being genuine and authentic. Sasha, who had multiple mentors explained:

They're just so authentic and real and ... they speak for themselves, not the University..., "Oh, I should probably say this. This is a politically correct thing to say." But they speak for themselves. There's so much authenticity. And they also go out of their way to help you, so they're ... they're so available, even though they're so busy at the same time. ... They're just really good people.

Students appreciated when faculty let their personality show and let down their professional guard. For Dani, "the cool thing with [my mentor] is that she was so, really, the word is chill. She's so relaxed and she wants to be one of the students in a way." Similarly, Xiomara described her mentor as "hip" and "fun" while recalling her surprise and delight in running into him at a local concert dressed like a teenager. His genuine personality and their shared love for a particular style of music allowed her to relate to him on a personal level. Ellen also appreciated how her mentor displayed her unique personality. She stated:

I never met anyone like her before because, being an artist, she's just funky. I don't how to explain it but she just takes pictures of things and sees them in an art way that opens my eyes to see them in that way, too. So she sees beauty in things that a lot of people don't.

A mentor's authenticity was also revealed in the way they showed humor and humility. When a mentor displayed their humorous side, students not only tended to feel comfortable but also engaged on a more personal level. Braxton, Dani, Juan, and Chicharito particularly

appreciated being able to joke with their mentors and appreciated engaging with the humorous side of their personality. Dani, who commented on the lack of superiority of both of her mentors, describes her interactions with one of them: “He’s just a funny person, he’s hilarious. And it was just ... and I could tell that he wasn’t trying to make me feel like he was my superior. I didn’t feel intimidated by him.” The majority of participants appreciated the feeling of being treated as equal and quite a few talked about their mentor's capacity to disregard or actively downplay their status. Whether a character trait or a strategy to make students more comfortable, this ability was much appreciated by the protégés because it made the professors approachable and relatable. Xiomara, who describes her mentor as charismatic and passionate about his interests, explains that, "he didn't feel ... like someone who was ... who was above me. It kind of felt like a friendship, more than anything, and that’s something that felt really good." Juan, Sasha, and Braxton commented on the contrast between their mentor's extensive professional accomplishments and their ability to be authentic and relatable. Braxton recalls his thoughts about his interactions with one of his mentors:

Why should I even be allowed in the same room with you and you've had all this, you know, accolades and all this accreditation and we're just talking about cartoons, [laughs] we're talking about old cartoons and I'm just like—that's what made me really fall in love with that idea of, like, these are more than professors. These are people.

The humor and humility that many of the mentors showed allowed students to see them and appreciate them as their authentic selves, which made them relatable and thus strengthened the mentoring relationship.

Another aspect of a mentor's authenticity is their ability to be honest with their protégé, which may be an inherent character trait or ability or a deliberate approach to mentoring at-risk students. Students repeatedly mentioned the trust they were able to place in their mentor's opinion and advice. Katie explained:

I'm never worried that she's gonna tell me something that's untrue, or that she's just saying something to be nice, or she's just listening to me to be nice, that she has better things to do and she doesn't really want to be there. Because she would tell me. She's very open and honest.

In response to what qualities she values most in her mentor, Bree responded:

Honesty, being direct and to the point, giving constructive criticism. So that's something I was used to growing up. My mom never really sugarcoated things, which I think helped me navigate this world better as a black woman.

Braxton shared Bree's values of honesty and sincerity in a mentor. He explains what he valued most in his mentors:

Openness, honesty and being personable. Those are some of the biggest ones. Like I say, being open and being like I am—this is me as a professor, this is me, who I am and not showing me all of it, 'cause obviously you have to keep that line of professionalism, but just you're goofy, I can see you're goofy, you know? If you care about people I can see. Honesty to let me know this is what's really ahead; I'm not gonna paint you a fairytale.

The type of honesty and sincerity that Bree and Braxton valued in their mentors, which was shared by Chicharito and a few others, was primarily related to their conversations with their mentors around their professional goals. Chicharito notes:

I mean, if you really care about somebody, you're going to be honest, you know? And you will let them know what the real deal is. And so I really appreciate that about him, you know? I'd hate to be doing, you know, this graduate, post-Bac program thinking that I'm gonna get into Harvard, you know? [Laughter] His honesty and his expertise, I really value that, definitely.

A mentor's honest and realistic advice was particularly important to participants who were entering health-related fields and received mixed messages about whether their academic performance would allow them to achieve their professional goals.

The ability of faculty members to show their authentic selves helps students relate and connect with them on a personal level, which is important for the development of mentoring relationships. When students are able to experience their professors as real people who show a level of vulnerability and humility as well as a sincere care for the well-being of their protégés,

they tended to open up and develop a high level of trust and appreciation for the support they provided.

Empathy. When asked to describe their mentors, many participants commented on their ability to show empathy and compassion. Empathy is an other-oriented concern that reflects the mentor's ability and willingness "to understand the mentee's thoughts, feelings, and struggles from the mentee's point of view" (Johnson, 2017, p. 66). Mentors with a helping orientation generally display empathy by showing students that they truly care about them. Empathy is strongly linked to the psychosocial and emotional support that mentors provide their protégés, as empathic mentors "are generally more attuned to the mentee's emotional needs and personal development" (Johnson, 2017, p. 66). Although only half the participants discussed their mentor's ability to empathize, those who did highly valued this capacity.

The mentors' capacity for empathy was perhaps uniquely important given the many academic barriers to success that the participants faced due to their characteristics of underrepresentation. Participants who faced significant challenges due to poverty or family issues that interfered with their academic performance were most likely to comment on their mentor's ability to show empathy. Sasha, who was homeless for a few weeks, had multiple mentors who helped her through this difficult time. When asked about the qualities she appreciated most in her mentors, she noted:

I would say selflessness, because it's like their willingness to put sometimes your needs above their own or going out of their way to make things better for you. I would say ... very compassionate ... or even sympathy, they don't even have to have empathy because there are some things that they'll never be able to have empathy for. But it's that sympathy that they have for you.

While it could be difficult for most faculty members to truly understand and empathize with some of the challenges that the students faced, one professor's own experiences facilitated a rare

level of empathy. Juan's mentor, who also grew up in poverty, had a unique perspective that allowed him to offer counsel on the family problems that burdened Juan. He explained that his mentor "being able to relate about that was kind of nice."

Participants greatly valued when a mentor not only invited out of the classroom interactions and communicated warmth and genuine care for the student, but also listened emphatically. Keisha explains: "It's just really nice to open up to someone and talk to someone that is understanding. They're listening to what you're saying. They're validating what you're saying." Dani, Juan, Chicharito, Xiomara, and Katie also talked about their appreciation of their mentors' ability to truly listen. When asked about what advice she would give faculty to help more students like her succeed, Katie had this to say:

It's the advice that I'm trying to take now as a TA teaching students, is just always making ... yourself available to students. I know all professors do that, but I use [my mentor] as my ideal example of what I mean by that. Really making yourself available to listen to and address not only their concerns about the class, but listen to the things that they're going through and at the very least, just an expression that you heard them. Not necessarily trying to offer advice—I don't think I'm in any kind of place to do that for students yet—but being available as a professor to offer perspectives from my experience, and allowing students to talk to me about anything that might be affecting their performance in the class, even if it's not directly content related to the class.

Students described faculty mentors who had the ability to make them feel understood and cared about. Being able to listen attentively and validate the students' experiences and concerns not only positively affected the students, but also helped develop trust and mutual respect and thus strengthened the mentoring relationship.

Additional emotional and relational abilities. Other abilities of good mentors that were mentioned less frequently by the participants included positive affectivity as well as passion and enthusiasm. Positive affectivity describes mentors who tend to “be happy or experience positive emotional affect across most situations” (Johnson, p. 67). While participants didn't often

comment on their mentors' positive outlook and attitude, the positive affectivity that many mentors possessed became evident in the descriptions of their mentors' warmth, empathy, and care for them. Keisha, was one of the few students who explicitly talked about her mentor's positivity and explained how her mentor's attitude stood in contrast to her experience at home:

I had so much negativity in my life. Everything around me is a hot mess. So being around someone who has a whole lot of positivity surrounding them and everyone has really good stuff to say about her and her attitude. She's really calm and chill and easy to talk to and all that. ... I really admire that because in my household we don't really talk about how we feel about stuff.

The mentors' positivity was also revealed in the students' descriptions of their admiration for their passion and enthusiasm. They felt drawn to professors who were excited about their academic, professional, or personal interests, and appreciated if they openly and passionately shared their opinions. Katie described her mentor's infectious positivity:

She's very excited when students are excited about the class, and she's excited when students are excited about things she's interested in, or research. And really excited to talk to students about graduate school or academic life. That wasn't an excitement that had really been expressed by other professors, but she does, I know she always mentions this in all of her classes, "If anyone's really excited about grad school, come talk to me. I would love to talk to you about it." She was very open and welcoming to those kinds of things.

Positive affectivity and a passion for their academic and personal interests encouraged students to engage with their professors outside of the classroom. A mentor's positivity and passion were characteristics that many students felt drawn to, at least in part because of the personal and academic challenges that many of them faced.

This section analyzed the personal characteristics and inherent abilities of professors who positively influenced the college experience of the study's FGLI student participants. As participants explained, they sought out professors who were warm, accessible, open, positive, and empathetic. These personal characteristics and inherent abilities help professors connect to

FGLI students who are often reluctant to engage with faculty, and develop effective mentoring relationships that positively impacted their college experience.

Mentor Abilities and Actions

What do mentors do that matters most to their protégées? This section analyzes the kinds of behaviors that participants found particularly rewarding in their mentoring relationships. In addition to the salient interpersonal competencies discussed in the preceding section, these mentoring functions consist of "specific skills and deliberate techniques necessary for the execution of effective mentoring relationships" (Johnson (2017, p. 73). Despite Johnson's focus on mentoring competencies as a guide for faculty in mentoring roles, participants identified many of these behaviors when asked about their interactions with their mentors. They most often and emphatically spoke about the following abilities and actions of mentors: being accessible, sharing life experiences and adversities, providing encouragement and support, affirming and nurturing the "dream," and challenging. This section describes how participants experienced these salient mentor functions.

Being Accessible

Professors who are accessible, make themselves available to students outside of the classroom, and are generous with their time send important messages that they care about their students and are there to help. These accessibility cues are often the first step in the development of mentoring relationships as discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Once a mentoring relationship has been established, the mentors' accessibility continues to play an important role. Consistent with Johnson's (2016) findings, mentors engage protégés by seeking them out, checking in with them, expressing a real interest in their protégés as people, and sharing a bit of themselves.

Many participants appreciated that their mentor's made time for them. At the beginning of her relationship with her mentor, Jade followed her mentor's invitation to meet with her. She explained:

During the guided research phase, after every single class she's like, "You can email me and come see me. I'm always in my office if I'm not teaching my one class." And she did tell me that a lot of students just don't come talk to her. So I think ... I think a lot of professors here is very willing to work with students but students just don't reach out.

Xiomara also appreciated her mentor's accessibility. She noted:

I just went to go see her one day, and I was just like, "I wanna talk about this in class" and she was just really nice and very open. "Oh, yeah, you know—come in! Sit down! Let's talk! What do you wanna talk about?"

Being respectful of his mentor's time, Chicharito, made sure to plan ahead when he needed to speak to his mentor. He explained:

We try to get coffee monthly, at least. You know, he's a busy guy. He's doing research and he's a professor, so I understood, you know, "Yeah, you kinda have your time, booked," you know? So, we made space for it.

Juan's mentor made himself available in ways that go beyond the general expectations for the engagement of faculty members with students. Juan remembered:

He went from taking us, driving us in his minivan, taking us out for Mexican bread, after we volunteered a couple times—not always. But a couple times. And then to just being there and giving us his number. If we ever needed anything.

For Keisha, her mentor's willingness to spend time with her outside of the classroom was very important. She reflected:

She's going out of her way. For example, with the sporting events, that's completely after hours. She's going home and changing. She had children and all of that, so she's still coming back. Some of the times she would bring them with her. She would bring her family. Just things like that, it was going the extra mile, I guess, because when you come from backgrounds where it's every man for himself type of thing. It's not a lot of people that's going the extra mile because you're trying to take care of themselves and their own households and everything like that. So I definitely admire that about her.

Many participants felt special when their mentor invested time in them and took a real

interest in getting to know them as people. Xiomara had this to say about her mentor:

He cares about—he's very passionate about what he does, and you can see it in the way he speaks about, you know, his experiences in his job. He's always willing or is more interested in hearing what students have to say versus what he has to say.

Katie described a similar ability in her mentor:

She's very understanding, very non-judgmental. She could be talking to anybody and just be super interested in what they're saying, and learning about who they are as a person. Really invested in getting to know people, understanding where they're coming from, which is cool, when someone takes interest in you as a person. A lot of professors don't take the time to do that for undergraduate students 'cause they're really busy, I'm realizing.

Participants truly appreciated professors who were there for them. Sasha explained what she admires most in her mentors: “Selflessness, because it's their willingness to put sometimes your needs above their own or going out of their way to make things better for you.” The dedication of faculty mentors to the welfare of their protégés was reflected in the way they made themselves available to their protégés and the way in which they engaged with their protégés. Mentors who were accessible were also perceived as relatable and as having a high capacity for intimacy as discussed previously.

Sharing Life Experiences and Adversities

The mentors' ability to reveal details about their lives and share their own experiences and struggles deepened the relationship with their protégés. Such instances of self-disclosure allowed students a window into their mentor's experiences, successes, and failures, which required humility, but increased the protégés' self-confidence and mutuality between mentor and protégé (Johnson, 2016). Katie describes how she came to know her mentor as a person, not just a professor:

She talks a lot about herself, so I really feel like I got to know who she was as a person. It wasn't this professional wall. She talked a lot about her experiences and would draw on examples from her life when explaining things a lot.

Chicharito's interactions with his mentor were also personal in nature. He commented:

Over time, it got a little more intimate, in a good way—in a good student to faculty relationship. You know, he'd joke around with me, he's like, "Hey, how are you?" You know, give me a slap on the back and give me a hug, and I'm like, "Oh, gosh, this is heartwarming, you know?" It's good to see and good to hear. You know, he always had good wishes for me and my family and he would let me know how his life was and where he's living right now with his wife and let me know about his kids. You know, I'm just like—aww, man, this is so great, you know?

Ellen also appreciated getting to know her mentor on a personal level. As she explained, "We had lunch together; we talked about everything. She told me about her family life and all this kind of stuff. It was just ... I could talk to her."

While many students had mentors who shared their personal lives with them, those who spoke about their own struggles and adversities had a particularly powerful impact on their protégés. An instructor who became one of Xiomara's mentors shared a personal story that conveyed an important message. She related what happened in class:

I remember like the second week of class, he provided his [undergraduate institution] transcripts and—yeah, and he's just like, he gave a copy to everybody. And I saw his transcripts, and it was—mine were starting to mirror his, you know? So, I was just like, "Whoa." ... He didn't do well at all ... He barely passed, basically. But it was the fact that, just to see him in front of me, him being my instructor and seeing him? Yeah, it was something I needed, because he was like, "You know, I wasn't the greatest student. I didn't have"—you know, basically, everything that I had felt at the time where, you know, he's like, "I wasn't the greatest student. It was hard for me being away from home. I was struggling with this and that." He was like, "I barely graduated Vanderbilt," but he's like, "It didn't mean I was dumb. I never once thought I was dumb, it was just, it was more of a struggle for me than it was for other people, and I didn't let that dictate what I was gonna do for my future career plans."

Xiomara went on to interpret what his story meant for her own situation, as she explains, "You know, just to see that he was in front of me getting his doctoral degree at SPU, I was like, 'Okay, so this isn't the end for me.'" Her mentor's ability to make himself vulnerable by disclosing a significant adversity he faced resonated deeply with her and empowered her to believe in herself and her ability to succeed despite the obstacles she had faced.

In a similar way, Juan was profoundly impacted by his mentor's willingness to share his personal struggles. Talking about what made him feel particularly comfortable with and drawn to the professor who eventually became his mentor, Juan said:

The biggest thing was when he told us his story—I remember I went to one of his, it was [an award ceremony]. He had to talk. And he told his story. ... So this was because his story is just like, his growing up was like mine. His father, it was like that. There was a point where that my father did the same, but he came back. And it was just like, big family, poor. ... So it was so, I guess, comforting to know that there was someone else like that. And it was kind of encouraging, too, because I thought, "Okay. If he can do it, maybe I can, too." And that's kind of what kind of brought me, attracted me, to get to know him more.

A mentor's ability to share not only aspects of their personal life, but also disclose their own struggles and adversities communicated a high level of trust and often deepened the relationship. It also allowed the students to contextualize the challenges they faced and gave them confidence that their own challenges can be overcome. In addition, it gave the mentors more credibility when providing encouragement and support to their protégés.

Providing Encouragement and Support

Good mentors encourage and support their protégés' academic achievement, career plans, and personal development. Providing encouragement and support is "often one of the most meaningful functions offered by mentors" (Johnson, p. 77). This was the case for the study participants who spoke about the various ways in which their mentors encouraged and supported them, which included words of encouragement and advice related to overcoming challenges, validating and praising, providing constructive feedback, and being an ally.

When Katie first spoke about her mentor during the interview, the encouragement and support she received from her mentor was what she mentioned first. She explained:

There were definitely a couple faculty members that supported me, but there was one in particular who really gave me the support I needed, not only to be able to apply to grad

school and understand all of the stuff that I didn't understand at all, but just really encouraged me and kept me going throughout.

Ellen remembered her mentor's reaction to the art show she created: "She was just so encouraging and I could not have gotten, a better outcome from it. I've never had anyone encourage me like that. It kind of pushed me in that respect." Given the emotional energy she invested in this project, her mentor's praise was very meaningful. Repeated verbal encouragement was also important to Chicharito, who explained his mentor's support:

And he just had a lot of words of encouragement throughout my time in his course, and even outside of this course, and he even took a sabbatical the first, the spring of my senior year, but we were still in contact. You know, he'd send me e-mails—I think he was somewhere in Europe, it was snowing. [Laughter] And he would send me e-mails, check up on me.

A mentor's encouragement also meant validating a protégé's perspective. Sasha describes what she valued in her mentors:

The validation ... even though they might not understand everything, there's [sic] a lot of times when you go to people and they are invalidating your feelings and invalidating the place that you're coming from ... and even if ... I might think the sky is red, I might passionately think the sky is red. And you might think the sky is blue. But to validate that you understand where I'm coming from and why I think the sky is red is such an important thing 'cause that kind of fosters relationships: that we might not see eye to eye but you still value my opinion and my perspective and where I'm coming from. So getting that constant validation from them, throughout all my stress. 'Cause they might think, "Girl this is nothing to stress about. Like, why are you stressing about this?" But they understand the place I'm coming from. So that's really important.

Influential mentors were particularly supportive when their protégés faced challenges.

Juan described how his mentor supported him during a time when the worries about his family consumed him:

He said, "It's out of your control. You can't do nothing about it. But what you can do is call your brothers and make sure they're okay. That's all you can. And then just hope for the best. And just make sure you take time every day to see how they're doing. Because you don't want them strained."

Participants felt supported and encouraged when they received constructive feedback from their mentors, especially if that feedback was paired with words of encouragement. Katie explained how her mentor's support and feedback motivated her:

When she would make a suggestion on a reading, I would be sure to read it. I'd read all of her feedback, and I'd tell her, "I love your feedback. Thanks for giving me so many comments," and stuff 'cause she would always put a ton of comments. I guess just showing that, "Thank you for all of your support. I appreciate it."

Ellen also felt supported and encouraged by her mentor's honest feedback. She explained:

Especially since she was just so distinguished and I know ... I've seen her tear other people down in critiques ... in art critiques and stuff like that. She didn't do that. And she's like, "Courtney, I'm not telling you this just because I like you, like you know I'd be honest. This is great work." And also since I've never really thought of myself as an artist, she ... she kind of ... I was an artist at that point, and a successful one, in my own respect. So the show was two days, and it was my only grade for the class, and she was like, "This is A work. You're getting an A."

Feedback did not always need to be positive in order to be effective and perceived as supportive. For Jade, who compared to other participants in the study had perhaps the least personal interactions with the professor she considered to be her mentor, the critical, but constructive feedback she received was one of the most valuable parts of her mentoring relationship. Jade remembered:

She was very straight forward [laughter]. ... She was a lawyer, so she was very harsh on everything. So we had a presentation and she was ... she corrected me every single time she saw something wrong. I raised my voice too much ending sentences, and that just doesn't portray confidence in presentations. And I talked too fast, or I don't talk ... I would slouch or walk around too much and she would correct me on all of those. And I was applying ... I can't remember who I was applying to, but I was applying to a summer program and she was very helpful with just ... 'cause I was a sophomore back then. ... I went up to her to ask for a recommendation and she asked me what I wanted her to talk about and I didn't ... I really didn't know what to say, I was like, "I guess I'm a good match." And we ended up having a conversation about, why I might be a good match to the program and I didn't end up getting into the program, but it was ... she helped me connect the dots about what professionals want to hear and how my skills apply to that instead of ... 'cause my mindset back then was talking about how the program could help me, but she was helping me understand what I would bring to it. And she was like, "Of

course they want to help you, too. But at this point, they're also trying to have someone that's going to help them.”

Another way for mentors to provide encouragement and support was to protect and serve as an ally for the protégé when they faced difficult situations that required intervening. Sasha's account of her mentor's actions when she felt belittled by a faculty member on her honors thesis committee best illustrates this:

She was constantly being my ally and my advocate behind closed doors because when they meet I can't be there. And she was constantly the one vouching for me and being my advocate in situations like that, speaking for me and helping me out and helping when I couldn't help myself. So that was very ... that was awesome.

Bree felt supported by her mentor's offer to be an ally to her and other minority students.

I ran into him at the [art center], one of their art gallery openings, and so we were talking about the art and everything that was going on and he was saying, you know, he really wanted to be a better ally for students of color. ... He had a voice of power and position and so he wanted to use it better.

Although his statement only offered indirect support to her, his dedication to help students like her succeed was encouraging to her and further advanced their mentoring relationship.

A mentor's ability to provide encouragement and support was highly valued by the participants. It is closely linked to psychosocial and emotional support, one of the four forms of support that mentors provide, which will be discussed in subsequent sections of this chapter.

Affirming and Nurturing the “Dream”

Closely linked to providing encouragement and support is the mentors' ability to nurture their protégé's "dream." Mentors who take the time to get to know their protégé and his or her life and career aspirations repeatedly affirm that the protégé is capable of that dream (Johnson, 2016). This was an important aspect of the mentoring relationships for most of the study participants. Mentors affirmed their protégés life and career goals and nurtured their dream by believing in them, motivating them, and providing reflective power.

The mentors' belief in students' abilities was important to the majority of the participants. Braxton expressed what was true for many of his peers: "One thing that really helped me be successful besides my friend group ... was people that believed in students." Juan also appreciated that his mentor believed he could reach his goals to become a physician. As he stated, "He really helped me out a lot, even when my parents didn't even believe in me with stuff. So it was cool. He's like a father figure." Feelings of self-doubt and a lack of confidence, and the help from mentors in overcoming them, were something that many participants spoke about. Chicharito explains, I think the big thing that I got out of him was that he got me to believe into my own potential, into my ability to be successful. Because, up to that point, I didn't believe that." Xiomara also described her mentor's ability to alleviate her self-doubt:

She always, you know, always put affirmations in my heart, like, "You're doing what you're supposed to be doing. You're here for a reason." And so, just seeing that I looked up to her and her saying, she's like, "If I was to be everything my family wanted me to be, I wouldn't be here right now." Yeah, so just having those conversations with her.

Juan's mentor conveyed a similar message in a different way. Juan describes his mentor's actions in the context of the volunteer work they were both involved in:

He, for some reason you just feel like he kind of put a lot more responsibility on me to kind of—because he saw the way I worked with the kids was different than like them, I think. And then he would kind of—[Laughter] he was like indirectly made me the leader of the group. He would be like, "Okay, [Juan], you do this."

Dani's mentor similarly invested in nurturing her talents. She reflected:

It was my first year doing any of the newscasts, being in front of the camera; it was my first year. But she was so encouraging, she was like you have something in you, let's work, and she would work with me one on one.

In addition to instilling a sense of belief in their protégés, some participants felt motivated by their mentors in different aspects of their university experience. Ellen's mentor encouraged her intense and potentially controversial art exhibit. As she remembered, "All my insecurities

about it and my nervous ... you know ... she encouraged it all. She like, 'No. This needs to be done. You need to do it. It's powerful, it's amazing, it's great.'" Similarly, Xiomara relied on her mentor's motivation and encouragement to apply to a competitive travel scholarship:

I told him, I was like, "I'm not gonna apply for it, because I heard almost 100 people apply for it and only 8 get it." And he's just like, "Well, why can't one of them eight be you?" Yeah, he was always like, "Why can't one of them be you?" I was just like, "I don't know, the odds are that it won't be me." And he was just like ... "No, no, no, you're gonna apply for it ... Bring me the prompt, and we're gonna over it." ... So, I got—it was just a proposal, so you're supposed to propose something. I'm like, "I don't even know what I would propose." And he's like, "What's the one thing you love that you come here and talk to me all the time about?"

Xiomara would not have applied for the travel fellowship because she lacked the self-belief that she would be competitive. Because of her mentor's encouragement, belief in her, and support for her application, she received the scholarship and traveled to Europe. Chicharito's mentor nurtured his dream to make a positive contribution in the world by reminding him what is important:

When I talk to [my mentor] about the future, it's not about, you know, money. It's not about competing with somebody, it's about being happy with what you're doing, and doing something productive—something that's good for the world.

Some mentors nurtured their protégé's dreams by sharing their power to "nominate, endorse and promote" their protégés (Johnson, 2016, p. 80), most often to provide access to educational and professional opportunities. Dani described how her mentor nominated and helped her to obtain a fellowship:

She led the... their company, [which] has a partnership with the journalism school, so it's the ... diversity fellowship at [a local television station]. And she always encouraged me that I have to do it, I have to do it. And she was my ally in that, in me pursuing ... she always gave me advice.

Katie's mentor also extended her power as a faculty member to benefit her protégé. Katie reflected:

She's so great. Another thing I didn't mention, my senior year, she nominated me for a pretty prestigious award in our department. There are yearly awards given to notable students, and she nominated me as the undergraduate to receive the award for one of our tracks, interpersonal and organization communication. She gave this little speech about how working with me has changed her life.

In the speech, which Katie shared with me, her mentor talked about how they first met and got to know each other and highlighted her many accomplishments. She continued to describe Katie as "very intelligent, thoughtful, reflective, and excellent writer, kind [and] poised," and talked about her intellectual curiosity. She concluded the speech by saying that Katie "wants to make a difference in the world through her scholarship and activism" and expresses her certainty of that since "she has made a difference to my world". This speech was given at a departmental ceremony and is an excellent example of a mentor's use of reflective power.

Challenging

Mentors fostered participants' confidence and self-efficacy by placing high expectations on their protégés and pushing them to meet or exceed these expectations. In addition, they encouraged them to leave their comfort zone and "to do and experience things they otherwise might neglect or even actively avoid" (Johnson, p. 83).

When mentors had high expectations, participants were eager to meet them. One of Juan's mentors and lab supervisor pushed him to meet the goals and expectations he set out for him.

Juan explained:

He challenged me, I think, professionally. I don't know. It was different. It kind of made me uncomfortable because he expected professionalism at all times and sets really, really, really high standards. We you would go into the lab and he made sure he was teaching us life skills that we would use in the end. So if we said we were going to do something—we gotta follow through or he would call us out.

While Juan gained valuable skills, his experience working in a lab was challenging for him. Juan remembers confiding in his primary mentor, who got him this challenging position. Juan explained how he pushed him in a different way:

I didn't want to let him down, too. That was a big thing. Because I remember I called him one day. I was like ... "I don't know if I can do this. It's a lot." But he was like, "Just stick it out. Trust me. He's gonna lighten up."

Similarly, Dani didn't want to disappoint her mentors and was motivated by their high expectations for her, as she explains, "I don't want to disappoint anyone. So, once I developed that close relationship, it was like if I disappointed them, at the same time it would hurt me and I would feel bad."

Participants who struggled with self-efficacy benefitted from mentors who challenged and gently pushed them. Katie, who struggled with depression, credits her mentor with helping her get admitted to graduate school:

I'm not completely sure that I would have even applied to grad school if I hadn't been in conversation with her 'cause things were really bad my senior year, as I mentioned. I wasn't actively really looking to the future for anything. I was just trying to get through day to day, finishing my classes, finishing school. I wasn't aware of graduate school deadlines and, to be honest, I wasn't really even considering them, outside of my meetings with [my mentor]. We would set goals and she'd be like, "So, why don't you have a list of schools that you're interested in by our next meeting?"

Bree remembered how her mentor encouraged her to showcase her work, explaining, "I wrote my own [paper on] Black Lives Matters and the ratio of black women, and so he encouraged me to submit that for [publication]."

Other mentors pushed their protégés to leave their comfort zones and encouraged them explore other interest. Bree explained what she particularly valued in her mentor, saying, "I think her encouragement to try things outside of my comfort zone helped a lot. She encouraged me to go to different networking events." Similarly, Juan was reluctant to go on a fully paid trip to

Africa because he expected a potential conflict with another important commitment that may have conflicted. However, the professional development opportunities it offered were incredible and he remembers his mentor's response:

He was pushing hard for me and I kept saying, "Maybe not." But finally he convinced me. He's like—I don't even know what he said, but I was like, "Yeah. I'm gonna go. I'm gonna take the risk if worst-case –scenario."

Dev's mentor encouraged his passions that were unrelated to preparing for medical school. He explained:

I was also on a dance team at SPU. And I talked about that a lot with her, 'cause she was really interested in how that was influencing me. And she was just really encouraging of that, too. I was unsure if I wanted to do, if I wanted to continue that, 'cause it was taking up a lot of time. And she was like, "If it's something that you're passionate about, you can definitely use those skills that you're learning from there in almost any other environment."

When mentors challenged and gently pushed protégés outside of their comfort zones, participants often felt motivated to rise to the challenge and not disappoint their mentors, who were confident in their ability to succeed.

Influential mentors exhibited a wide variety of abilities and behaviors that positively influenced their protégés. What was most important to the participants in this study was their mentors' accessibility, their ability to share their lives and the adversities they faced, the encouragement and support they provided, their affirmations and support for their dreams and goals, and their ability to challenge and bring out the best in them. These behaviors are closely linked to the different forms of support that mentors provide, which include: academic subject knowledge support, degree completion support, psychosocial and emotional support, and career development support. Subsequent sections will show the connections between mentor behaviors and the types of support they provide.

Forms of Support

In what ways do mentors support first-generation, low-income students? The interviews conducted for this study provided valuable insight into the types of support that FGLI students received from their mentors. The mentoring support that participants received aligned with the four forms of support identified by Crisp et al. (2017). They include psychosocial and emotional support, degree completion support, academic subject knowledge support, and career development support. This section delineates how students experienced these different forms of support in their mentoring relationships and how they intersect with various mentor competencies and behaviors.

The participants in this study benefitted from all four forms of support to varying degrees. As the theoretical model that guided this study suggests, the forms of support that protégés received were influenced by the educational context, including where and with whom they engaged, as well as the students' characteristics and needs (Crisp et al., 2017). Often, different mentors supported their protégés in different ways depending on their own strengths and the protégés' needs. Xiomara described the support she received from her two primary mentors:

I feel like I've had all those types of supports with my different mentors. Like I said, [my one mentor] is very much career based, type of interest based ... He's helped me see that it's possible to be who I wanna be. Versus [my other mentor], who was, she was very psychological support, as well as class [academic subject knowledge support]. Because everything that I felt very emotional about and strongly about, her class kinda opened up that whole ... Pandora's box.

Braxton also experienced different types of support with different mentors. He explained:

So being with him [my one mentor], it was content knowledge and then that sort of led over to the psychosocial aspect. And then with [my other mentor] it was a lot more of degree completion ... and then the psychosocial. And ... definitely the psychosocial and degree completion for [another mentor].

When asked about career development support, Braxton responded that "all three of them were very integral in me figuring out I want to do in life." Bree explained how the mentoring support she received shifted during her undergraduate career:

I think in the beginning, psychosocial, and then towards the end when I felt like, okay, I have—I found my niche at SPU, my place, more career development and degree completion of these are the classes that may interest you, these are the events that you should go to, these are the people that you should talk to.

Most participants received more academic support earlier in their undergraduate career.

Psychosocial and Emotional Support

While participants discussed all four forms of support, they most strongly reflected on the psychosocial and emotional support they received from their mentors. All participants spoke about the various ways in which they received psychosocial and emotional support. Their reflections on this type of support are largely consistent with the findings of the conceptual framework, which asserts that mentor behaviors include, "interacting in an authentic and caring manner, encouraging, motivating students, relating to their worldview, affirming, and befriending" (Crisp et al., 2017, p. 84).

Students' personalities determined when they felt comfortable asking for and receiving psychosocial and emotional support. For Keisha, it took a certain degree of trust and her mentor's initiative for her to open up. She explains:

I feel like [my mentor] noticed that it would be nice if you open up a little bit. Let some people in and try to trust people so you would have more friends. Probably not a lot of friends, but you need to just give people a chance.

She later explains how her mentor supported her given her difficult family situation:

She checks in on me to see how things are going. Have things progressed a little bit in my family life and what was going on there. ... I think she tried to be there since it didn't really seem like I had a whole lot of stability of someone always being there.

Xiomara's personality, in contrast, allowed her to readily identify and bond with mentors who were prepared to fulfill her strong need for psychosocial and emotional support. She explains:

The last four years have been super emotional, so all my mentors have probably seen me cry a million times. [Laughter] I'm just very open about the way I feel about things, and it's something that I just wear on my face. If I feel some way, you know I feel some way about it.

Psychosocial and emotional support is closely linked with certain mentor behaviors such as providing encouragement and support and affirming and believing in protégés. Having a mentor who sincerely cared about them, listened emphatically, and offered help really mattered to students, especially in times of need. Dani's feeling that "[it] was always very encouraging that someone cared" was shared and appreciated by many participants. Keisha describes her mentor's caring and supportive approach:

If you need to talk to me, I'm here. That's how she was. She was like I want you to come to me and talk to me. So she was honestly a little more of a counselor than just a professor.

Juan talked about how his mentor's willingness to listen emphatically and offer advice helped him deal with his worries about his family:

And then junior year hits and I was like, "I don't think I can do this. This is starting to—" I had a lot of science classes that first semester, and it was just getting even worse and worse and worse with them at home. Not me with them but their relationship. And then so I'd talk to him about that. And then he kind of just helped me, put me at ease, and really kind of worked things out with that.

Braxton similarly struggled between his family responsibilities and his focus on his academic work:

They also helped me to just I guess psychosocially focus and I understand that I had to come to a realization that, while I can't do everything that I want to do—like I can't go home, I can't be there for these people and do well in school—being able to just focus my energy and efforts into doing the very best I can here just sort of takes some of the pressure or even provide a sense of relief back home. That was the best I could do for right now.

Some mentors served as advocates for students during particularly challenging situations.

Sasha explains her mentors' support while she was homeless:

With the whole homeless situation, those are the people that helped me ... that gave me ideas of stuff to do, put me in contact with people ... just gave me advice on ... helped cope with stress. They helped with that, and then ... It takes a village, that's what I say.

Another important aspect of psychosocial support was the mentors' ability to provide encouragement and help their protégés build confidence. Many participants struggled with self-doubt, which was often the result of personal and academic struggles related to their characteristics of underrepresentation. Mentors mitigated those doubts and helped instill a self-belief into their protégés. Chicharito describes how his mentor accomplished this:

The relationship was, I'd say, very appropriate for what I was going through, and he knew what to say and what to suggest. I told him my story, you know? I'm like, "I didn't do too well, and I've been going through these problems." And he's like, "Look." He's like, "You don't have to follow this general route, okay, like all these other students, okay? You're different. You have different qualities, you're a different human being. It's okay. You're going to get there. It's not that you're not gonna get there, it's not if, it's when, okay? So, you are going to get there." ... He just had a lot of words of encouragement.

Katie struggled significantly with self-doubt and imposter syndrome despite her significant academic accomplishments. She had this to say about her mentor's support:

But she was really encouraging in a lot of our meetings. She would spend a good deal of time assuring me that I am smart enough to learn the material, to get into grad school. That I'm capable of it. Constant reassurance of those things, I think really helped a lot. Mentors also counteracted students' reluctance to take risks as a result of their lack of confidence. Xiomara was not going to apply for a travel fellowship because it was too competitive. When she told her mentor that only eight students are selected each year, he responded: "well, why can't one of those eight be you?" He pushed her to take a risk, worked with her on her application and built up her confidence by believing in her. She was one of the eight students selected for the fellowship. Simple words of encouragement after setbacks also made a significant difference.

Bree explained: “When I didn't get accepted into my study abroad program she was very encouraging, just giving me words of encouragement of, no, it's not a reflection of you as a student.” Although psychosocial support was not as important to her, Jade also appreciated receiving encouragement from her mentor after a number of failed job searches. As she noted, “He knows I applied to so many, and then every time he asked me I'd be like, ‘No, they never got back to me.’ And he ... he always had something motivational to say.”

While many students experienced their mentors' encouragement and personal support, some situations required significant advocacy and advice on the mentor's part. Sasha described a time when she consulted her mentor about the micro aggressions she experienced from a faculty member on her thesis committee:

When I was talking to her about the racial thing ... she talked about, you know, “you're not the first and you won't be the last and you can't sweat small things like this when there's are bigger things to come or like”, stuff like that has really helped a lot because I can't sweat someone's ignorance and I can't let that stop me from what I'm meant to accomplish.

Her mentor, who shared her racial background, understood her experiences in a unique way and was able to help Sasha navigate this difficult situation.

With the exception of Dev and Jade, participants benefitted from significant psychosocial and emotional support. While Jade did not mention receiving psychosocial and emotional support, Dev acknowledged that his friends fulfilled his need for personal support.

Career Development Support

All participants received significant career development support from their mentors. This type of support involves helping protégés set career goals, network, and gain access to professional development opportunities, all of which align with the study's conceptual framework by Crisp et al. (2017). In addition, mentors provided valuable perspectives and advice

to protégés who benefitted from exposure to different career options or were unsure about their career paths.

Almost all students discussed their career plans with their mentors. Braxton describes these conversations with his mentors:

They talked to me about where my head was at about what I want to do, what I was struggling with, how they could help me. I talked to them about their process, what help them—what made them tick so far as in like how did you come to be where you're at and then how would you go about it, you know, if this was you?

Jade talked about her mentor's role in identifying areas that would fit her interests:

She helped me a lot, 'cause I think if it wasn't [sic] for her and my first research project with her, I would have just hated my life and done research in the tech, lab tech for four years. But she made me realize that, "Look, this is also still health care. And this is another approach to health care that you can also use your science background, but that's also advancing the health field. But you don't have to be a lab tech and be miserable."

Ellen's mentor showed her support for her goal of attending law school:

So then she knew that I was trying to go to law school and was like, "Oh, yeah that was my ... that was my plan when I was ... when I was your age. I really thought about law school, but then I went the art route." So she's like, "I would like to maybe even get back into it." She's like, "That's awesome. Go for it." She was really encouraging.

Some mentors were able to diffuse some of the pressure that protégés felt to make a career decision as they approached graduation. Ellen's mentor tried to be simultaneously supportive of her desire to go to law school and her talent as an artist. As Ellen described, "She was just like, you know, 'You don't have to go to law school. It's okay to take a year off. It's okay to want to go to art school.'" Similarly, Dev shared his mentor's advice about his uncertain career plans:

[My mentor] was always like - 'cause I was still confused towards my senior year as to what I wanted to do - and she was always just like, you know, there's—you don't ever have to really decide. You can always get more experience in something and see. You don't have to decide at the end of college, right?

His second mentor provided a different type of career development support by helping him recognize his strengths. Dev reflected:

She was really encouraging. I think she saw how well I worked in a team, in terms of ... we had group projects that we had to do in Costa Rica with our genetics class. And she was really encouraging of you should do something pretty team-related.

A few mentors tried to direct their protégé's career goals in new directions. Juan described his mentors' failed attempts to introduce him to an alternative to pursuing medical school.

I had talked about why I wanted to be a doctor. He was like, "You know, PhD is cool. And every professor wants other kids to get their PhDs." You know? And I could see it's a very attractive field to go into, and definitely a lot of work. But I think once he kind of heard that—he was always supportive of everything I wanted to do. But he was kind of—every teacher was like that. Even my Spanish teacher pushed for PhD in Spanish or something.

The mentors' guidance in clarifying career goals, introducing protégés to different career options and being supportive of their decisions became important aspects of career development support.

Many mentors took an active role in encouraging their protégés to network, facilitate networking opportunities, and connect their protégés to other faculty members who shared their interests. Dani's approach to networking was proactive. She recalled:

I approached her about maybe who I should talk to, or which direction I should go to pursue the field upon graduation. And she would say, okay, I can give you some names, I can introduce you to some people, let's do this, this, and that. So, she was a very helpful network; she had a network and she was willing to share that network.

Katie's mentor was similarly helpful when it came to networking. Katie explained:

She just talked to me about the conference and offered that if I went, she would take me around to the graduate student fair that they have at the conference and introduce me to some of her colleagues at schools that I was interested in. That was a really cool offer, and I ended up going to that conference. She did introduce me and helped me meet some other scholars. That was exciting.

Some mentors not only helped their protégés to network, but also connected them to professional development opportunities. As Braxton recalled, "[My mentor] and especially [my

other mentor] are always flooding your emails with opportunities they get. You know, like a job just opened up here and I'm just forwarding it to y'all, send in your resume.”

Quite a few of the mentors took on a more individualized approach. Juan's mentor recognized his need for experience working in a lab and connected him with a colleague who was able to teach him valuable skills:

Freshman year he helped me. He recommended me to talk to get in the lab with another faculty mentor ... And I got a lot done with him working in biochemistry research. And then I think that helped me for his class a lot.

The same mentor also hand-picked him for another important professional development opportunity. Juan recalled:

I get a call from [my mentor] at like 8:30 in the morning. I was like what does he want right this early? I'm on the bus, but I was thinking he was in class. And he's like, "Do you want to go to Africa?" [Laughter] I was like, "What?" And then it was like, "What are you talking about?" And then he said that he just got done talking to a guy in the school medicine that they wanted to take a SPU Promise student to Malawi.

Juan was able to take advantage of this "eye-opening" opportunity during which he "shadowed burn surgeons." Braxton also spoke about one of his mentors' roles in helping him secure an internship which helped him narrow his career choice and gain exposure and concrete skills in his field. He reflected:

He helped me get an internship with strength and conditioning for men's basketball and that allowed me to really sort of spearhead where I wanted to go 'cause if could do strength and condition I could do therapy, you know?

He later emphasized that "without that internship I would not know that I want to do oncology rehabilitation." One of Sasha's mentors was similarly instrumental in defining her career choice by directly exposing her to his work. She explained: “And so I shadowed him; he's the one who got me into dentistry. I was originally pre-med. And he was the one who was trying to coax me

into switching and it worked.” Bree described her mentor's role in her selection of graduate school programs, explaining specifically how her mentor was involved:

In terms of graduate school and thinking about where I might want to be geographically and what resources come with each graduate program ... different grants that may be available and different conference opportunities that happened on campus, and again, thinking about an alumni network and who you wanted to be connected with and university you want to be affiliated with.

Many participants highly valued their mentors' advice and insider perspective on their chosen career paths. Katie described her mentor's offer to share insider information:

Recognizing that I wanted to be a professor, she opened that up to, "I'll tell you all about being a professor. Any questions you have about being a professor, you can come to me and I'll tell you about my experience." She'll be like, "It's gonna be different for you, but yeah, let me know if you ... I love it when people are interested in academics." Just that always open invitation was nice.

She later reflected on the impact that those conversations have had now that she is in graduate school pursuing her goal of becoming a professor:

I have a pretty great understanding of what is needed and expected of me as a graduate student now, and what to prepare for as I'm going on the job market, even. Those are conversations we've had already, and I know that we'll continue having.

Chicharito also actively sought his mentor's expert advice as he prepared to pursue his career plans after graduation. He explained:

I had some burning questions for physical therapy and this program that I'm in right now, the post-Bac program, I'm like, “I need your insight, you know, as somebody who’s worked in the sciences, somebody who’s worked in PT schools, you know, and somebody with this knowledge. You know, I want your honest opinion on what I'm doing right now.”

Keisha’s and Bree's mentors provided a different kind of insider information. Keisha explained:

I don’t know if it was because she was a woman of color how she knew about the diversity in pharmacy, because she did know about that, that helped out because obviously I was putting those types of things on my resume and adding that to my pharmacy application.

Meanwhile, Bree's mentor helped prepare her for the challenges she would face as a minority

And then again, getting in the mind that I will likely be one of the only few black people, only few women, only few black women in a room and how that goes into my interactions and my career and my educational experiences and emotional tolls that may come with that, and if I do decide to pursue a PhD how sometimes some students and even some faculty may default to you for being the voice of the only—and all the emotional labor that will come with that.

In almost all mentoring relationships that were discussed in this study, mentors took an active role in helping participants clarify their career goals, connecting them with resources and opportunities that advanced their career development, encouraging and supporting them in their career decisions, and providing them with insider perspectives and advice. Braxton's reflection on his mentors' instrumental role in his career development captures the many nuances of this type of support. As he explained, “Without the mentorship where would I be so far as being able to understand, okay, if you want to do this type of field work you need to do this or these opportunities are here.” Without exception, participants highly valued and appreciated the career development support they received from their mentors.

Academic Subject Knowledge Support

Some participants talked about the academic support they received from their mentors. Within Crisp et al.'s (2017) framework, academic subject knowledge support involves "teaching, sharing information, involving students in research, and creating awareness of resources" (p. 84). However, study participants spoke more generally about how their mentors supported their academic work. They reflected on how their mentors worked with them to learn course material, helped them acquire general study skills, and encouraged and supported them during their academic struggles.

For most participants, their interactions with their mentors started in the classroom and were focused primarily on academic learning. Xiomara shared how she reached out for help when she struggled academically:

I had a hard time, and it took two whole years to just say, “Whatever you're doing is not working.” But just reaching out to—you know, my mentors. . . . I'll always, always write my professors in the beginning of the class let me know if I can, how I can be a better student, X, Y, and Z. . . . But I mostly looked to [Professor Johnson] for things like that. I don't know how to study for this, you know? She would always give me some tips . . . I could read a whole paragraph and read it three times and I'm like, “I don't know what's going on.” So, you know, she'd say, “Read the first sentence, read the last sentence of the paragraph. That's gonna be your indications of what you're gonna find in that whole, entire paragraph,” and I feel like that really helped me.

Juan faced similar struggles and found support in his mentor. He explained:

I was kind of struggling with academics, with that he kind of helped me study better and just kind of develop kind of more of a routine. I've never studied in the library, and then once I talked to him, I was like, okay, maybe I should be doing it.

Asking for help was more difficult for some participants. Chicharito reflected:

I think that was necessary for my growth, was to recognize that—yeah, I didn't know everything. So, I was gonna need to get help, you know? And when I got the help, it was what I did with the help that I got that was going to help me eventually on these exams, on these midterms, on these papers.

He later added how he learned to trust and accept help from his mentor:

He's there to help me, he's not there to judge me. So, I grew comfortable with myself and with him to talk about those topics, you know? “Oh, well, I got this grade and I want to do better—what should I do?” You know, so stuff like that.

Dev and Ellen expressed their appreciation for their mentors' approaches to teaching. As Dev explained, what he admired most about his mentors was, “their commitment to their students.

Both of them were really committed to getting the material across and making sure each student understood it and was successful in learning the material, and their dedication to that.” Like Dev,

Ellen faced fewer academic struggles than other participants, but commented on her mentor's approach of engaged learning and the resources she introduced to the students. Ellen

remembered:

No one was as hands-on as her. And she's been doing it for such a long time; she's been in the department for 20 years. She's been doing it for such a long time that she knows, you know, what to do. She knows how to access the class and sees the class needs and

take it from there. And we were all interested in ... in race-related things, so we went to a lot of exhibits and exhibitions, art shows, anything that had anything to do with that. She had the resources to connect us to things that I've never been connected to before.

The academic subject knowledge support that mentors provided also included a deeper learning as well as an ability to connect and apply that what you learned. Dev conveyed his experience:

I never really struggled in their classes, but I guess they helped me understand the material deeper. In terms of I feel like they made me care about the material more, rather than just doing it for the test. I was doing it to learn the material, as in I think a lot, as students, a lot of the thing that matters is getting an A in a class.

Xiomara's conversations with her mentor about the class content allowed her to make connections to the world outside academia. She explained:

And so, that was really cool, just to talk about—we talked a lot about popular culture. It was a popular culture type class, so it was Gender Studies, but in reference to everything that's happening in our world now.

Having grown up in a conservative rural community, Ellen reflected on how her mentor's class and personal views influenced and expanded her own view of the world:

[My mentor] was a very hardcore feminist and she gave us readings that could back that up. And, again, it kind of opened my mind like, “What have I been missing out on? What have I been doing?” And it makes me sad for people back home that never get the opportunity to leave or learn about these things. So it was ... I was thankful for that.

Although only half of the participants spoke explicitly about the ways in which their mentors provided academic and academic subject knowledge support, almost all mentoring relationships started in the classroom and often involved interactions around academic learning. However, the participants' reflections on their mentors' academic support focused more generally on overcoming academic struggles and acquiring adequate study skills.

Degree Completion Support

Similar to academic subject knowledge support, only about half of the participants spoke about their mentors' role in helping them complete their degrees. Consistent with the conceptual framework, the degree completion support participants received included "advising, providing feedback, and helping students navigate academic policy and degree requirements" (Crisp et al., 2017, p. 84).

Mentors played an important role in guiding students in their class choices and sequence, and helped them understand their degree requirements. Braxton described his mentor's role in this aspect:

I remember the first time I felt like she mentored me and got me level-headed, I was scared to death about PT school. I was like I gotta get all this work done on time, I have to graduate, undergrad, I have—all this I have to do, 'cause like I said, I felt I had to do not just for me but for my family and things of that nature. ... She was like, "Whoa. You know, these are the courses you're gonna take. People normally sequence it this way, but if you don't do it that way life's okay" and just having somebody there to talk to me about it.

Dani's mentor took on a similar role:

[My mentor] always made sure that I knew what classes to take, who to take them with, especially even before ... 'cause it was the last semester that I had that fellowship. But that semester before, I would approach her and ask her what I should do and I approached her about the fellowship.

Chicharito's mentor provided advice on how to handle a challenging course load. He explained:

I'm like, "I'm gonna be balancing three, four science classes. What do I do?" And he's like, "Okay, you've never been in this scenario before, but this is what you should do." And so literally, I have an e-mail full of advice of what I should do.

Being made aware of policies such as being able to withdraw from a class and working out alternative ways to meet degree requirements was important to Bree. She explained how her mentor helped with that:

Mainly pointing me in the right direction for what resources to use and, well one, the class issue, not knowing I could withdraw, so having someone tell me I could go do that. Suggesting—I did summer classes one semester, so using that as a suggestion so I could finish my degree up in four years when I was doing the double major and premed and all that at that time.

A few students spoke about their mentors' roles in helping them navigate degree requirements in order to graduate on time. Sasha explained how her mentors' actions and advocacy allowed her to meet all of her degree requirements and ultimately save her spot in dental school. She recalled:

I was texting [my mentor] and [my other mentor] who's in the Department and I was saying, "I don't know if I'm going to be able to graduate. In order to graduate I have to overload, and I have to get into all these classes that are so hard to get into." ... And [my other mentor] was the one that contacted every professor in our department and said "Hey, this is a student that needs to get into these classes at these times," ... And so I was able to take every class ... and graduate on time. I needed to take biochem 'cause SPU was the only school that wouldn't honor biochem I did for this program at SPU over the summer. And so [my mentor] ... I'm not an honors student at all, but he got me into his honors class, ... so that I could graduate.

Ellen's mentor was a similarly powerful advocate. She illustrated her mentor's role in helping her graduate on time:

During the independent study I got an email, "You're not gonna graduate in May because you're missing a credit: an elective credit in your art major. And you're gonna have to come back and do summer classes and you're not gonna graduate." Whoa. That freaked me out ... [My mentor] had my back. ... she's like, "Here's what you need to do. Email these people. Calm down. You are not the only one who has had this problem. Talk to this person. If this person gives you any problems tell them to talk to me. Use my name; use my name to back you up. That was important. And it all turned out fine.

For others, mentors played a crucial role in ensuring that the many challenges FGLI participants faced did not cause them to transfer or drop out all together. Juan describes his mentor's interventions when things at home became really difficult for him:

I was thinking about transferring to go to [another university] to be with my little brother, just because I feel like they were being neglected—not neglected, but maybe not—they didn't have the people that, they didn't have their parents like there they should ... Talked

to people around. They said, "Talk to [my mentor]." He said, "Don't do that. You deserve to be here finishing out here. Your brothers will be fine."

Keisha also remembers a time when her family problems made her question staying in school. She explains how her mentor's presence and support encouraged her to complete her degree:

I never was officially like I'm quitting this all together, but it was nice to have her as a motivator. ... I had gotten to a point where I was like you know what? I'm done with this. I'm not much of a person to give up on anything, but I was just getting very overwhelmed just in general with being in the classes and all of that. So I feel like it just helped, even if I wasn't going to necessarily leave SPU altogether, but it still—her being there helped.

For Katie, her mentor's presence served as a similarly powerful motivator to complete her degree during difficult times. She explained:

I think that having that relationship with [my mentor] ... helped me stay focused on the end goal, or just keep me from losing sight of that end goal as everything else started to surround me, like the passing of my cousin, this friendship drama, family drama.

While quite a few students were fortunate to have mentors who served as strong advocates to help them navigate degree requirements to complete their degrees in time, others merely needed their mentor's presence and encouragement when they felt like giving up. Knowing that someone was there who cared and would advocate for them made a difference.

Although participants most often reflected on receiving career development support and psychosocial and emotional support from their mentors, all forms of support were important to the participants. The types of supports mentors provided depended on their own strengths and competencies as well as the students' needs at a particular point in their undergraduate career. For example, mentors tended to provide academic subject knowledge support early on in the mentoring relationship and generally more often during the first years as protégés' were adjusting to the academic standards at the university. In contrast, career development support tended to play an important role during the last two years when students were more focused on preparing

for their careers and identifying post-graduation plans. Psychosocial and emotional support and, to a lesser degree, degree completion support, played an important role throughout the participants' undergraduate career.

The Value and Meaning of Mentoring Relationships

How do students perceive the value and meaning of their mentoring relationships? How did having a mentor help them overcome barriers to success? Almost all participants spoke about how their mentoring relationships influenced their college experience. Having a mentor influenced the participants in four ways: academic and intellectual development, personal development, career development, and role modeling. The following section will highlight what the mentoring relationships meant to the participants and illustrate their perceptions on how these relationships influenced their development in college in the four different aspects mentioned above.

For many of the participants, the relationships with their faculty mentors had profound meaning and value. Katie explained how she felt about her mentoring relationship:

It meant a lot. I don't know, like I said, if I would have even pushed myself to apply to graduate school and maybe even if I would have pursued, in the long run, being a professor, if at least one professor hadn't taken the time to explain what that means to me even, you know? I valued it a lot.

Ellen, who received significant psychosocial and emotional support as well as career development support from her mentor, expressed her appreciation for the connection she made with her mentor:

This was a different type of support. I can't really wrap my head around it. She was there every step of the way for the struggles I went through that whole year. Like I said, I would not be the person I am right now if it were not for meeting her.

Sasha illustrated how she felt about her mentor's support:

She's been so amazing. I remember there was this time where I had to deal with racial stuff ... whenever I had to deal with stuff like that: constantly being belittled because I'm a woman of color in a field dominated by white males ... she was someone I always went to. ... And she would always just give me perspective and say "You know... this won't be the last time, you won't be the first to experience it and you won't be the last." And she would tell me about her experiences. So she would always ground me and give me perspective.

Many participants felt particularly encouraged and supported when their mentors communicated that they believed in their potential and nurtured their dreams. As Chicharito explained, "For somebody to tell me that I have the potential, that was really powerful—I think one of the most uplifting moments in my academic career as an undergrad." Ellen describes her feelings after her mentor's reaction to her art show for her senior project:

When she walked in it was all set up— she cried. And she's like, "Ellen, this is the best show I've ever seen from an undergraduate." And of course I was crying because that's awesome coming from her. It was amazing hearing those words come out of her mouth!

Dani also highly valued her mentors' encouragement and belief in her. She illustrated the effect this had on her:

Well, having someone who has their crap together is just very encouraging. And someone that sees something in you, someone who has already achieved what they want to do in life seeing something in you and encouraging you to continue that path, so motivating, so meaningful. It just means a lot 'cause sometimes, there were days where I just feel completely like I'm giving up, it's over, I'm not meant for this career, I'm never gonna be a reporter, I'm never gonna be a Spanish professor. I'm not talented enough to remember every single poem or every single, for example, in the Spanish department, Spanish prose. But it's just so motivating that they would see something in me and want to me continue pursuing it.

Bree explained how she showed her gratitude for her mentor's support:

I was a senior marshal and when I made—we have to make a donation to the class, and so when I made my donation to the class I did it in honor of her and wrote a note about how she was my mentor and who was such a big help during my SPU career, and so that was my little thank you to her that would be lasting at SPU.

These statements from the participants illustrate the high value that many of them placed on their mentoring relationships and the level of appreciation they had for their mentors. The support and

encouragement that mentors provided combined with their unwavering belief in their protégés had significant and lasting impact on many participants.

Academic Achievement and Intellectual Development

Participants valued their mentors' influence on their academic achievements and intellectual development. They spoke about their mentors' role in motivating them and instilling a passion for learning, expanding their worldview, and helping them persevere and persist in completing their degrees.

Mentors contributed to the participants' academic achievement and outlook on learning. Katie explained how her mentor motivated her to her best academic performance: "I definitely tried really hard for her class in particular, and tried to impress her. I guess just that extra effort." Dani had a similar response about her mentors' impact on her academic success, explaining, "Academically, they both played a role because I was motivated. Like I said before, they challenged me and I felt like I was motivated to continue in academia." Xiomara's academic motivation came from the passion for music that she shared with her mentor. She reflected on her excitement about the Hip Hop class she took with him:

It was nice to have someone to talk to about something I'm super interested in and for—music, I'm very passionate about music. And so, I would love to go to his office hours just to talk about it. And I would—it's something that makes you get up from the day, you know? I'm gonna go to class, but then afterwards, [my mentor] has office hours, I'm gonna go see him and I'm gonna tell him about the music festival I went to this week.

He nurtured her passion for music, which not only increased her academic performance in his class, but also helped her clarify her career goals. Ellen's mentor, on the other hand, was able to spark her passion for learning about topics that had been completely foreign to her given her upbringing in a conservative, rural community. She explained how her mentor's class and personal views influenced and expanded her own view of the world:

[My mentor] was a very hardcore feminist and she gave us readings that could back that up. And, again, it kind of opened my mind like, "What have I been missing out on? What have I been doing?" And it makes me sad for people back home that never get the opportunity to leave or learn about these things. So it was ... I was thankful for that.

The mentors' encouragement and support translated into increased academic achievement for some participants. Bree explained:

So having that encouragement from my mentors and kind of having them say, "Hey, look at this, look at that," I think that's when I saw more success and less B and B plusses and more A minuses and A's coming in.

Xiomara was similarly motivated by her mentor, as she described, "[My mentor] helped me a lot academically just become more involved in my studies and shaped me into being a better student." Dev, who was a high achieving student, spoke about how his mentors helped him to truly appreciate learning for learning's sake instead of solely focusing on good grades:

I think a lot, as students, a lot of the thing that matters is getting an A in a class. It doesn't matter ... how you get there or how much you retain at the end. But I think both [of my mentors] were both—they both instilled in me like that's not why you're here in college. You're here to learn. You're not here to get some sort of number that represents you. And I think that's something that I really valued about my experiences with both of them.

The way students felt accepted also mattered. Braxton offered this reflection on a class he took with one of his mentors: "I was learning but I was able to incorporate myself into the learning.

That's what allowed me to be successful. I didn't have to change who I was really." The

knowledge Katie gained from her mentor was particularly impactful for her intellectual development. She illustrated:

[My mentor] gave me much more and so much support in terms of knowledge. Course content when I was in her courses, conferences, graduate school. Any questions I had. I think that was it. I could come to her with any questions I had about school or even just life, and she would talk to me about them. That open conversation, I guess. So, there was a lot of content-specific and guidance there, but then that always came with (...) she's got such a warm personality and she's so nice, telling you, "Oh, this is how I did it and you can do it, too." Gives a lot of personal stories about her life and her background as she speaks, too. She's very relatable, or tries to relate to you, too.

Given her intended career as a professor in her mentor's field, the intellectual development Katie experienced as a result of her mentoring relationship was particularly significant and meaningful for her.

Mentors not only affected their protégé's academic growth, but also influenced their persistence. Katie identified her mentor as the most important person on campus who helped her get to the finish line. As Katie explained, “She helped me keep sight of okay, this is what I'm here for. I can do it. I think more than that was her constant reassurance that I can do it because there were a lot of times where I felt like I couldn't do it.” Similarly, Keisha's mentor played a role in helping her persevere through difficult times. She reflected:

So by having her there to kind of give me the extra push towards the end it was very important. And then knowing my brother (...) he dropped out right at senior year. So even though I was going to senior year, it still in the back of my mind, then I don't want to do what he did, but if it gets too hard will I do it? So just having her there coaching and applauding me as I went through and praising.

Since more than half of the participants faced difficulties transitioning to the academic demands of their college classes, mentoring relationships provided important support for their academic achievement and intellectual development. Having a mentor who helped them identify strategies for academic success and motivating them to reach their academic potential was important to some of the participants.

Personal Development

For many of the study participants, faculty mentors had a significant influence on their personal development. Aspects of personal development that were influenced by their mentoring relationships included self-efficacy, developing a sense of belonging, and identity formation.

While most of the interactions that fostered students' personal development took place outside of

the classroom, Xiomara's experience illustrates the connections between students' academic work and their personal development. She explained her mentor's impact on her:

I don't know if she realizes the extent that she's helped me, but it's definitely—a lot of the things that we talked about in class were kind of demons in my own closet. [Laughter] So, the fact that I got to speak with her about those things and create a dialogue and just dig deep into it was very good, was very good for me.

Self-efficacy. For almost all participants, mentoring relationships contributed significantly to their self-efficacy, which refers to "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (Bandura, 1994, p. 71). Improvement in self-efficacy is strongly linked to the psychosocial and emotional support that participants received from their mentors.

Self-efficacy grows when mentors communicate that they care about and believe in their protégés. Many participants spoke about experiencing imposter syndrome and credited their mentors with instilling a sense of self-belief in them. Chicharito described his mentor's most significant impact on him: "it was definitely him empowering me or pretty much believing in me [and] for myself to believe in my own potential. That's definitely one of the biggest things."

Katie also experienced significant imposter syndrome, which her mentor actively tried to diffuse through constant affirmations. She explained:

She never doubted my ability. She never even made it seem like I should doubt my ability. She questioned, why are you even doubting your ability? I guess just having someone who believed in me to that degree made me believe in myself enough to be able to push myself to do it. Even after I was accepted to SPU's program, graduate program, I confessed to her. I was like, "I got this really nice acceptance letter about how excited everyone is, but I don't feel like I deserve this."

Juan's mentor also tried to boost his protégé's self-belief. When asked to identify the most important source of support during his journey through college, Juan replied, "I think the biggest

one was probably [my mentor]. He always, always believed in me. And he sent me texts just saying like, ‘Don't forget you can do this. You did SPU and you did that.’”

Mentors also played a role in helping their protégés develop strategies for success.

Chicharito reflected on the academic challenges he faced early in his undergraduate career and credited his mentor with helping him overcome imposter syndrome and develop a growth mindset:

For the longest time, I thought that maybe just SPU chose me on accident, you know, or for some other reason. And so, that hurt for a while, you know? Like—what? Why can't I get good grades? Why is everybody else getting As? Why am I always in the 70s when exams come around? This isn't fair. I'm tired of being at the bottom. ... I think that was a mix of my study strategies and my mindset. I had a very closed mindset. I didn't have a growth mindset. I have a growth mindset now. ... My growth mindset was definitely triggered by him. ... Just, everything that was negative was turned into a positive, you know? These bad things or not so good things that had happened before were turned into a learning experience.

Xiomara, whose instructor shared his undergraduate transcript that mirrored her own academic struggles, drew courage from his experience, explaining that it was valuable “just to see that he was in front of me getting his Doctoral degree at SPU, I was like, ‘Okay, so this isn't the end for me.’” Her mentor's courageous self-disclosure had a positive impact on her academic self-concept and possibly her persistence.

Integration and sense of belonging. Social integration and the development of a sense of belonging is an important aspect of college students' personal development. Most participants talked about their initial struggles developing a sense of belonging and finding their "niche" on campus. However, while participants were asked directly about whether or not their mentors played a role in helping them integrate into the campus community, only about half said that their mentors contributed to their integration into the campus community. The two most prevalent ways in which mentors helped students integrate on campus were through fostering a

sense of belonging in their major department and by connecting them to student organizations in their fields of interest.

Dani describes her challenges to feel like she belonged:

I was one of maybe five minorities. So, it was just interesting. I think I navigated a lot of different social groups and a lot of different people and a lot of different experiences within the four years. But I think, ultimately, it was the journalism school that became kind of my niche, very diverse group of people.

When asked about whether or not her mentor played a role in helping her develop a sense of belonging, Dani responded:

Oh, absolutely. Well, I think that it's a given when you're a student and if you have a good connection with a professor, the lower class students notice that you have that relationship, and it makes the other students feel like, wow, they look up to you then. And then you get the sense of belonging that, wow, okay, I belong, this is part of my group. I belong in this department. This is the environment that I want to be in. So, it was divided for me. It wasn't a campus-wide thing, it was the Spanish department and the journalism department, belonging there.

Chicharito also spoke about his mentor's role in making him feel more connected in his department:

I think, most importantly was getting to know the faculty a little better, because that's my area of study. You know, I can know a bunch of people, but the faculty are the people I'm interacting with every day. So, he encouraged me—"get to know these professors!" He's like, you know, there's a professor who's been there 30 years, I believe, almost 30 years. He said, "Go talk to [mentor's name]" and [...] so I took his advice and we have lunch every so often, and I got to know my [department's] professors a lot better.

For Sasha, her mentors' interests introduced her to different opportunities on campus. She explained:

Yeah, so a lot of my mentors aren't just one thing; they're involved in a lot of things, and so by being so involved they kind of brought awareness about, like, other opportunities and organizations that I didn't really know about. ... For example, like [my mentor], right? He does oral and maxillofacial and he talked about [an organization dedicated to providing medical care to underserved populations]. And that was someone that he knew who was founding it at SPU. And so he put me in contact with that student and I ended up like ... he's at a dental school now, but he ended up being a mentor to me as a student,

and I ended up joining the organization, like being a part of the exec board and we were the number one chapter in the world.

Similarly, Katie credited her mentor with becoming involved in a national organization in her field of study. She remembered:

We worked together to launch [a chapter of a national organization] at SPU, get some students inducted into the organization. I wouldn't say that I really developed any friendships out of that, but it definitely helped me build my resume. It gave me another project to work on, which I like to keep busy.

Identity formation. Some mentors played a role in their protégé's identity formation.

Quite a few participants spoke about the difficulties reconciling the cultural divide between their upbringing and the new experiences in college. As a white female student from a conservative, but diverse rural community, Ellen initially struggled significantly to fit in with the campus community. She explained how her identity was formed through her college experience:

I love SPU as the institution. I love campus, I loved the classes, my professors were amazing. I was learning. I was learning a lot. That's another thing: so I grew up in the middle of nowhere: in the country. Very, very staunch right-wing republican people. And because that's what I always knew, that's what I was going in. I thought that was the right thing. I knew and I was very steadfast in what I knew. But then going to SPU, it's a very liberal university, my mind was ... was opened more, and I learned so much about so many different things that people from back home don't understand or don't grasp or don't have the ability to know; don't have the opportunity to learn. So the ideological-political shift was a big part of what changed, what SPU changed in me, and I'm very thankful for that.

She later explained how her own thinking evolved, which was in part influenced by her mentoring relationship:

My mentor in high school was the most far-right wing, crazy— not crazy, but pretty far out there— man. And I was like, “yes.” Hang onto every word he said. So it was ... I could tell the change in me and the growth in me. She is almost a socialist, basically. Which is self-proclaimed. She says this: she's like, “I'm a socialist this...” Completely flipped. Completely opposite from anything I've ever grown up with.

Xiomara's mentor also played a role in helping her develop her own identity. After explaining her family story, she illustrated her mentor's role in helping her through

the difficulties returning home and wanting to break free of the role that her male dominated Latino family expected her to fulfill:

[My mentor] was just finding my voice within my family. Finding a way to stand up to them without me putting them down, type thing—she definitely helped me through that. Because, going back home—it's so weird. They just think, "Oh"—they think because you go to college you're this and that. I don't feel like that at all, you know? ... I feel like I've changed, and I feel like, going back home, everybody is exactly the way I left them, and it's like, I don't want that for me. That's not me anymore. If I would've stayed there four years ago, I probably would've been like, "Yeah, there's nothing wrong with this." But now that I've seen the outside world and I've gone through so many challenges here at SPU, I feel different about a lot of things. And just having a professor like [my mentor] just help me through that. Because she would always share her personal stories, too, about her family.

Breaking free from the burdens of his home life and focus on himself was challenging for

Juan who benefitted from his mentor's advice. He reflected:

I think definitely during that time when, with the stuff with my parents, he just kind of helped me just put it out of my mind, helped me realize I can't do nothing. But helped me also realize I can do something for the little brothers. And just the other thing was out of my control, but I gotta do what I can do what's in my control. So it was nice because I just felt like I could do, I should be able to do everything, but I know I couldn't. So it was good having a person like that.

For almost all participants, mentors had a significant impact on their protégé's personal development. Most importantly, mentoring relationships positively influenced the participants' self-efficacy by instilling in them a sense of self-belief, which helped them better navigate the challenges they faced. Although most mentoring relationships did not play a role in the participants' ability to develop a sense of belonging on campus, mentors helped connect their protégés to their departments and raised awareness of opportunities that may be of interest to their protégés. For the majority of participants, their interactions with trusted mentors helped them grow as individuals and navigate and reflect on their college experiences.

Professional Development

For many participants, mentoring relationships contributed positively to their professional development, including career awareness and professional socialization. This section analyzes how participants perceived the influence of the career development support they received from their mentors.

Katie, who, immediately after graduating with her bachelors, started a PhD program in her undergraduate major with the goal of becoming a professor in her field, described the powerful impact that her mentor's advice and guidance had on her:

Even now, in my graduate program, we're in a pedagogy class, my entire cohort. I'm realizing now how many of these conversations that I thought were just "I'm gonna go talk with [my mentor]" were amazing advice that has stuck with me. That's just a part of my knowledge of how graduate school works now because I've been in conversation with her about this, but things that I wouldn't have known. It's hard to think of specific examples, but it's just the recognition that whereas before, this was an entirely obscure world that I was just trying to get through in order to become a professor. I have a pretty great understanding of what is needed and expected of me as a graduate student now, and what to prepare for as I'm going on the job market, even.

For others, mentors played an important role introducing protégés to various career paths and helping them clarify their career goals. Jade explained:

I think that both the professors that I would consider a mentor helped me a lot on the professional level. ... They all helped me see that what I'm doing right now, how it could translate into something that I want to do; that I'm actually excited about doing after college.

Braxton benefitted from exposure to different career paths with the help of his mentors. When asked about what his mentors did or said that was particularly important to him, Braxton offered this reflection:

[My mentor] allowing me to have the opportunity to get into a strengthening and conditioning internship. I told him I was looking into it, like is there any way I could go

around just look—you a place where I could go and just look around and maybe come in for a few days and shadow? And he actually allowed—provided me the opportunity for that internship. Without that I'd still be trying to figure it out.

He credits another mentor with introducing him to his chosen career field, rehabilitation for cancer patients. He recalled, “[My mentor] really helped with showing me there's a career in what you want to do if you really want it. It's not—it might not be glamorous but there's job security, you know?” Xiomara's mentor instilled in her an excitement for a career that did not meet her family's expectations. She explained:

Whatever I do, I'm gonna—it's gonna be with music. I was afraid to want that dream, to follow that dream. Like I said, I came in being a Bio major. My family wanted me to be a doctor. [Laughter] ... That's not what I wanna be. And just having [my mentor] support me and have my back on that.

Having made a career out of his passion, her mentor became a role model to her. She described the impact he had on her: “Just having him there to see a future career path I can take, it just meant the world to me, really.”

Witnessing his mentor's passion for and dedication to his work inspired Chicharito to search for a career that would be meaningful to him. He reflected:

So, what I've come to understand is, I need to find, in terms of the future, what I would be most happy doing and how that would leave my mark on the world. So, sure, I could be a PT, but I could maybe focus on something or—you know, work with kids, I don't know, maybe work with adults, make something revolutionary, I don't know. But as long as it's something that I am happy with and something that's meaningful ... That's definitely something that I grabbed from him.

Sasha's exposure to her mentor's work also served as an inspiration. Not only did he provide her with an opportunity to experience an alternative career, but his mentorship altogether changed her career trajectory. As she explained, “And so I shadowed him; he's the one who got me into dentistry. I was originally pre-med. And he was the one who was trying to coax me into switching and it worked.” Ellen's mentor, who was supportive of both her passion and talent for

art and her interest in becoming a civil rights lawyer, had a more indirect influence on her career decision. Ellen described how her mentor's feedback impacted her career choice:

Because she was so invested in my personal statements and all these kinds of things she just ... the word she used to describe me and my work, “powerful,” is a powerful word. That's what I want. That's one of the reasons why I'm going to law school. Not to be powerful, but to be seen as a powerful woman is very strong.

Jade, who took a more utilitarian approach to her mentoring relationship, valued her mentor's practical guidance that helped her develop skills and understand professional etiquette.

She described her mentor's contribution:

She really helped me—the professor that was leading the whole thing—she really helped me build my professional brand a little bit ... so that definitely helped me a lot 'cause science major, they don't cover any of that really.

She later provided another example of how her mentor helped her hone her professional skills.

She illustrated:

She was a pretty good example how to dress professionally. And, instead of just seeing it on a mannequin or some Pinterest board, you see it in person. And we would have events where professionals would come in ... she would bring professionals in and you can practice.

Mentors not only played an important role in guiding and confirming participants' career decision, but also facilitated networking and connected their protégés with opportunities to gain relevant skills and experiences. The mentors' accomplishments and dedication to their career was inspiring and motivating to some participants.

Role Modeling

The interviews revealed that many participants viewed their mentors as role models. Although the literature that provided the basis for the study's conceptual model by Crisp et al. (2017) included role modeling as a form of support in mentoring relationships (see Crisp et al., 2017; Jacobi, 1991; Nora & Crisp, 2007 etc.), the presence of a role model falls outside of the

four forms of support identified in the theoretical framework. The participants' perceptions of their mentors as role models could be seen as a type of support or considered a mentor behavior, regardless of whether or not it was intentional. Since the study did not take the perspectives of mentors into consideration, which might have determined whether or not they role modeled intentionally, it relies on the participants' perceptions of their mentor's presence as a role model.

The frequency and intensity with which some participants spoke about their mentors as role models suggests that they placed an exceptionally high value on their mentoring relationships. Participants who saw their mentors as role models admired their personal characteristics and qualities as well as their professional accomplishments.

The strongest role models, however, were mentors whom participants wanted to be like and in whom they saw themselves.

Seeing themselves in mentors. Many participants spoke about the ways in which they saw themselves in their mentors and aspired to be like them. Ellen explained her connection to her mentor:

I think one of the reasons we connected so well was because, like I said, I see myself in her. And she's what I want to be (thank you so much). One part of me that I want to be like her art and advocacy that she does and the way she cares about people. It's just ... that's what I want to be.

Juan spoke about what he appreciated in his mentor:

I guess he's casual chill person, definitely. He's real easy to talk to. He continues to just show so much support for what I want to do. He believes in me. And I guess just having that older figure to look up to. Because he's a guy I kind of want to be like. Maybe in a different field, obviously, but just the way he carries himself.

Similarly, Katie described how she saw her mentor as someone she wanted to emulate:

I think I might have joked with my boyfriend earlier on in our mentorship relationship that I was like, "I want to be her. When I grow up, I want to be her." 'Cause she's awesome. She has a passion for all of the courses that she's teaching and the things that she's doing. She shares that passion with her students.

The role of race and gender. Especially for female students of color, the mentors' race and gender played a significant role in why participants considered them a role model. Dani explained how she saw her mentor:

[My mentor], it was like, wow, a minority woman has this position. She's a professor here, not tenured, but still it's something that I aspire to be, that I can teach my students from my experiences in the future. So, her being a minority woman and such an important figure in the broadcasting area, everyone knows her in the broadcast path. Everyone knows her. And she has her PhD too, so it's just very inspiring.

Sasha illustrated the role her mentor's shared identity as a Black woman played:

I could see myself in her. ... With the other faculty members I could take attributes, like, "Oh, I like this aspect of you" and "Oh, I like the profession.", ... but with her I could see myself following in her footsteps. And representation matters so much.

Xiomara, whose mentor was also a woman of color, described her admiration for her mentor at different stages during the interview:

- With [my mentor], it was like we shared personal experiences. Which was really nice. I love to see very strong, independent women, you know? [Laughter] So, it was nice. She's a tiny woman, but she's very fierce and very headstrong, so I really looked up to her. I really clung onto things she would say, so yeah.
- I looked up to her a lot because she is a woman of color.
- And I saw a lot of myself in her, which—that was really nice and refreshing. I'm like, "Wow, I totally agree with you on that—I would've done the same thing, even though that situation wouldn't have happened in my life."

While female participants of color found role models in female mentors of color, whether or not their mentor's ethnic or cultural background matched their own did not seem to be of importance.

While Sasha's mentor shared her race, but not her cultural background, Dani and Xiomara's mentors shared neither their racial nor cultural backgrounds. What seemed to matter the most is their identification with their mentor's shared characteristic of underrepresentation as women of color.

Admiration of professional accomplishments. Participants often spoke about what they admired about their mentors' professional accomplishments. Dani explained what she respected the most in her female mentor:

Because she's so successful and she also handles so much, like that program for example. Beyond just the classes she teaches, she really tries to give back to students that she knows. She just wants minorities to succeed, and she helps us, she focuses on us, so it's just really inspiring, it is absolutely inspiring.

Braxton described how he thought about his mentors:

It's funny 'cause I see these people and I ... in my mind I'm like these people are amazing and I want to tell them that but [...] try to keep it somewhat professional, I'll look at these people and I'm like you don't understand how many people probably really look up to you.

Ellen illustrated what inspired her about her mentor:

She was a constant presence I would say because I had to check up with her and ... I had to be there with her and also even if I just got on my phone and scrolled on Instagram I'd see her pictures. So it was kind of a motivation. Her being successful, her just being there really pushed me more. And now ... I want to succeed in law school anyways. ... But since she had played a role in me getting in I want to make her proud. And I know I do. And I know I am. ... And it's important to me to see through what I said I was gonna do. So her just being there really... really helped.

Having had the advantage of a mentor who has the exact career she aspires to was not only a great inspiration for Katie, but also held her accountable for reaching her goals. She explained:

I think also having her as a role model and pushing myself to reach the goals that I set with her. We would set goals together for me for applying to graduate school, or the goals that I wanted to reach. I think that setting those goals with her helped me keep myself accountable in reaching them.

Unlike Katie, Jade did not share a close personal relationship with her mentor, but nevertheless considered her a role model. She described her mentor:

She was very confident, and that was something I was lacking at the time. So I just really enjoyed talking to her and just seeing how she reacts to different questions and how she reacts to different situations ... and learn that.

Admiration of personal qualities. Many participants shared their admiration for their mentor's personal qualities. Ellen spoke about one of the many things she admired about her mentor:

And her teaching style ... I wouldn't really say it was teaching because we were all seniors and it was just kind of an open dialogue. But from the get-go her organization and the way that she was on top of things, I saw myself in her. So I was like, "Wow, I really like her." [laughter].

Dev admired his mentor's interaction with students inside and outside the classroom. He explained:

It was just absolutely great working with her. And she—it kind of inspired me to teach, in a way? Just 'cause she—he way she would explain things, and how much she cared about her students, and the fact that she wanted everyone to be successful in whatever she did. It was just, it was really inspiring.

Braxton also spoke about his admiration of his mentors' dedication and accomplishments:

It's amazing to see what [my one mentor] has done with research. It's amazing to see how his—he's almost like an octopus. His hands are everywhere. ... And you have people like [my other mentor] who's just—they're teachers but they understand what it's like to be a student, and that's very hard to come by. And I was seeing him the other day and it was like a short exchange, but ... I just wanted to give him a hug and be like, thank you.

Sasha found role models in mentors who had overcome adversities. She explained:

I guess an overlying theme is that they're all very perseverant. They wouldn't have gotten to the place that they are ... being a first-generation college student, being a woman of color, if it weren't for persevering through all those adversities.

Lack of external role models. For some participants, their admiration of their mentors' professional accomplishments and personal qualities was not the only reason why they viewed their mentors as role models. Katie's lack of role models in her family and community was an important reason why she came to see her mentor as a role model. She explained:

I guess not speaking to my mom and having such family issues made me look to Katie more than I guess other students would typically look to a mentor. My telling my boyfriend that I want to be her, I actually do like you as a role model more than my family. I want to get to you know as a person.

The contrast between her upbringing and her experience on campus also contributed why Ellen saw her mentor as a role model. She reflected:

Her being completely different from anyone I'd ever met before showed me that it was okay to actually be that way. ... So, it's okay to show interest in the things I'm interested in, okay to pursue the things that I really want to. Because now my political thought is different from my parents'. That's another big thing. But [my mentor] showed me that I can still be successful if I think like her. I'm definitely gonna be successful. And where my background and everything that I've been through, adversity is important and its really just shaped me. And she's just like, "I feel like it speaks to ... it makes you. It's who you are. It's important."

Similarly, Juan's mentor became a role model due to their similar childhood experiences, which his mentor had shared with him. Juan remembered:

Well, the biggest thing was when he told us his story ... His growing up was like mine. ... And not really having an end goal. Kind of like not knowing what you're doing, but ended up doing well, wanting to be a college professor and get a degree, stuff like his family had never done. And I had never met anyone like that back home. So it was so comforting to know that there was someone else like that. And it was encouraging, too, because I thought, "Okay. If he can do it, maybe I can, too."

With the exception of Chicharito and Bree, all participants spoke about the ways in which one or more of their mentors served as a role model.

Chapter Summary

The study's data, which was primarily based on interviews with twelve FGLI students, offered valuable insights into their unique experiences with effective faculty mentors. I organized the presentation of findings in this chapter into five major categories: 1) FGLI students' engagement with their mentors; 2) mentor characteristics and competencies; 3) mentor abilities and actions; 4) forms of support; and 5) the value and meaning of mentoring. What emerged from the findings reported in this chapter is a comprehensive overview of how FGLI students engage with mentors, how mentors supported them and helped them overcome barriers to success, what they value most in their mentors, and how they experienced and benefitted from

their mentoring relationships. The following final chapter will synthesize the findings of this study to draw meaningful conclusions, relate the findings to the existing literature, and conclude with implications for policy and practice, theory, and future research.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to provide a detailed understanding of first-generation, low-income students' perceptions of mentoring relationships with faculty and to examine the influence of mentoring on students' development and overall college experience. The study delineated the nuances of constructive and supportive mentoring relationships and explored participants' perceptions of the specific characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of faculty mentors that positively contribute to their college experiences. The research question that guided this study was "How do first-generation, low income (FGLI) students experience and make meaning of an influential faculty mentoring relationship?" This chapter addresses this question in a discussion of the themes that emerged from the interviews with the participants, which I presented in detail in chapter 4. The primary objectives of this chapter are to make meaning of the major findings, to contextualize them in relation to existing literature, and to provide suggestions for the ways in which they may inform policy, practice, theory, and future research.

This chapter begins with a detailed presentation of the study's key findings. Following the discussion of these findings in relation to relevant literature, I will present conclusions and implications for policy, practice, and theory. The chapter ends with a summary of unanswered and related questions raised by this study, which offer recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

Mentoring relationships can play an important role in the success of FGLI students (Gallup-Purdue, 2014; Parks-Yancy, 2012) whose graduation rates significantly lag behind those of their more advantaged peers (Pell Institute, 2016). This interpretive qualitative study focuses on positive and highly constructive mentoring relationships describes various elements of these relationships that were particularly meaningful to FGLI students and contributed positively to

their college experience. While previous studies primarily pointed to the low retention rates of FGLI students, barriers to success, and their lack of interactions with faculty (Choy, 2002; Engle & Tinto, 2008; Schreiner et al., 2011), the goal of this study was to illustrate the lived experience of FGLI students with faculty mentors and the ways in which it influenced their success in college. By adding the voice of one of the most marginalized undergraduate student populations to illuminate the value of faculty mentoring relationships to the college experiences of FGLI students, this study makes an important contribution to the mentoring literature, which lacks the perspective of underrepresented students (Bensimon, 2007; Schreiner et al., 2011).

Key Findings

While the themes in chapter 4 fit within the constructs of Crisp et al.'s (2017) integrated framework of *Mentoring Undergraduate Students*, which guided this study, the four primary findings that emerged from my analysis of these themes integrate various components of the conceptual framework and elevate its applicability to include unique aspects of the mentoring experiences of FGLI students. The FGLI students who participated in this study highly valued the mentoring relationships they built with their professors. The major findings of this study can be distilled into four salient ways in which FGLI students experience their mentors. They most often select and are positively influenced by mentors who exemplify the following: someone in whom they see themselves, someone who makes them feel like they matter and belong, someone who nurtures their "dream," and someone who they want to be like. These findings reveal what matters most to FGLI students in mentoring relationships and illuminate how mentoring relationships influence the college experience of FGLI students. The following sections address each of the four major findings in detail.

A Mentor in Whom They See Themselves

[My mentor described himself as] not knowing what you're doing, but ended up doing well, wanting to be a college professor and get a degree, stuff like his family had never done. And I had never met anyone like that back home. So it was, I guess, comforting to know that there was someone else like that. And it was kind of encouraging, too, because I thought, "Okay. If he can do it, maybe I can, too." (Juan, Hispanic)

For the participants in this study, mentoring relationships were first and foremost about the personal connection they made with their mentors and the extent to which they identified with them. Some of the most constructive and influential mentoring relationships were formed with mentors in whom FGLI students saw themselves. Juan's statement speaks to the various dimensions of this phenomenon in a powerful way. He deeply admired his mentor's perseverance through a difficult upbringing marked by issues related to poverty which paralleled his own. Seeing him as an accomplished professor despite the adversity he faced gave Juan the belief that he could do the same. It was his mentor's ability and willingness to show his vulnerability and share his difficult experiences that allowed Juan to develop a trusting developmental relationship with his mentor who became an important role model.

Commonalities. FGLI student participants were drawn to mentors with whom they shared commonalities, such as similar interests, experiences, and upbringings, personality traits and values, as well as characteristics such as gender, race, and cultural background. The concept of homophily, which refers to people's tendency to "categorize one another based on social characteristics and then seek to interact with others that are in their own social categories" (Cole & Griffin, 2013, p. 568), plays an important role in mentoring relationships. Students spoke extensively and proudly of the personal connections they made with their faculty mentors. All participants described connecting with their mentors based on academic and/or professional interests as well as personal interests (such as Xiomara's interest in hip hop music which she

shared with her mentors). The importance of similarities, either in personal experiences, characteristics, or interests, supports previous research that points to the importance of homophily in mentoring relationships (Cole & Griffin, 2013).

The role of race and gender. While the attraction to those who are similar to us encompasses similarities such as the difficult childhood experiences Juan shared with his mentor, numerous studies have analyzed the role of race and gender in mentoring relationships (Kim & Sax, 2009; Lockwood, 2006; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Sax et al., 2005)). A review of these studies by Cole & Griffin (2013) points to research that suggests that students of color are likely to seek out and interact with mentors who share their race or ethnicity. The racial and ethnic diversity of the students who participated in this study made the role of race and gender an important consideration in the quality of mentoring relationships. However, the approach of FGLI students from racial and ethnic minority groups to identifying and connecting with faculty mentors is more nuanced than previous studies suggest.

The students' reflections on the quality of their mentoring relationships revealed that mentors who had a strong positive influence on their mentees and became role models were very much people in whom they saw themselves. In addition to shared interests, personality traits, and values, shared characteristics of underrepresentation such as race and gender served as an important aspect of how FGLI students, especially female students, identified with their mentors. In response to whether her mentor's shared identity as a Black woman played a role in their relationship, Sasha confirmed:

Yeah, for sure, because I could see myself in her. ... With the other faculty members I could take attributes, like, "Oh, I like this aspect of you" and "Oh, I like the profession," ... but with her I could like see myself following in her footsteps. And representation matters so much.

The concept of representation applied primarily to female students of color, many of whom commented on their mentor's shared background and experiences. This supports Museus and Neville's (2012) study of characteristics of institutional agents that facilitate the college success of racial minority students which points to the importance of connecting with faculty and staff "with whom they shared common ground, such as a racial background or similar educational experiences" allowing them to more easily develop trust (p. 443).

Female students of color described some of the strongest and most impactful mentoring relationships. With the exception of Jade, all female students of color had primary mentors who were female professors of color. However, Sasha was the only student whose mentor shared her race. More than needing a same-race mentor, it was their shared identity as a minority woman that was important to them, as it implied an understanding of the barriers that women of color face at PWIs. Bree described how her mentor's identity as a woman of color mattered to her:

And so looking at her, she looked like some of my cousins at first. I was like, is she black? And so then once I got to know her and know her background and all the moving that she did, I think we were able to connect better, especially being sometimes the only, only – so being the only woman in a space and then being the only woman of color in a space.

While none of the participants actively searched for female mentors who shared their racial and ethnic background, most were drawn to faculty members who shared their characteristic of under-representation as women of color. The mentor's sensitivities and degree of awareness and empathy associated with that identity were more important than a shared racial and cultural background.

The findings of this study add an interesting perspective to studies that show the tendency of students of color to engage in homophilous relationships, particularly with same-race mentors (Cole & Griffin, 2013). Interviews with FGLI students suggest that while female students of

color are often drawn to female faculty of color, the mentors' racial identity is less important than certain mentor characteristics and behaviors that facilitate the development of mentoring relationships. All participants, except the two white students who had white mentors, had cross-racial mentoring relationships that were highly effective and rewarding. This supports the findings of existing studies that point to the success of cross-racial mentoring relationships (Cole & Griffin, 2013; Crisp et al., 2017; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Reddick and Pritchett, 2015; Ward et al., 2014).

However, this study also shows that when mentors and protégés share characteristics of underrepresentation, including race, gender, backgrounds and life experiences, the relationships that form can be particularly strong and influential to the students' success in college. One important outcome of these mentoring relationships is the evolution of a mentor into a role model during the course of the mentoring relationship, which I will discuss in detail in a later section of this chapter. When students see themselves in a mentor, they are more likely to see them as a role model (Lockwood, 2010; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990; Steele, 1997). This, however, also works in the reverse since it is often the professor who invites interactions outside of the classroom to which the students respond. Although this study did not analyze the faculty perspective on mentoring relationships, its findings support previous research suggesting that when faculty see themselves in their students, they are particularly encouraging and supportive (Cole & Griffin, 2011*).

Faculty mentors showed a strong commitment to the success of protégés who faced similar adversities due to their underrepresentation. Juan's mentor was intentional about sharing his difficult childhood experiences, which mirrored those that adversely affected Juan's college

experience. Similarly, Dani felt singled out by her mentor based on her background and experiences. She explained why she appreciated her mentor:

Because she's so successful and she also handles so much, like that program for example. Beyond just the classes she teaches, she really tries to give back to students that she knows. She just wants minorities to succeed, and she helps us, she focuses on us, so it's just really inspiring, it is absolutely inspiring.

This concurs with the mother-like investment in the success of their protégés that Griffin's (2013) study of mentoring relationships between black professors and black students identified, although it not only occurred within same race mentoring relationships, but spanned gender, racial minority, and first-generation statuses as well as shared adversities. While it is difficult to speculate about the mentors' motivations to support their protégés given the absence of their side of the mentoring experience in this study, these observations from participants support previous studies that suggest a particular motivation of faculty to mentor students with whom they share characteristics of underrepresentation such as race or generational status (Baker & Griffin, 2010; Cole & Griffin, 2013; DeAngelo et al., 2016).

In addition to the mentors' race, gender also played an important role in the dynamics of mentoring relationships. For Ellen and Katie, the two white female participants, gender played an important role. Both had very influential white female mentors who became role models. While they did not discuss their mentor's racial identity in their interviews, both credited the depth of their relationship in part to the background characteristics they shared with their mentors. Katie described her mentor as a "young female professor," adding that "maybe that's part of the reason that I was able to connect with her really well." Ellen not only admired her mentor's accomplishments as an artist, but identified with her feminism and her ability to openly express her opinion noting, "that's important to me because that's how I am." She later described her mentor's teaching style and organizational skills, adding, "I saw myself in her." These findings

are highly congruent with previous research that points to the benefits of gender matching in mentoring relationships, particularly for female students (Lockwood, 2010; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990).

Race and gender played a less dominant role in the mentoring relationships of the four male students, all of whom have a minoritized background. Dev, whose mentors were both white female professors, took a more utilitarian approach to his mentoring relationships. While he admired and learned from his mentors, he did not identify with them on a personal level and stated having no need for psychosocial and emotional support. Chicharito and Juan each had white male mentors who provided significant psychosocial and emotional support. For both, their mentors' race did not seem to play a role, but their perseverance through adversities was an inspiration and was linked to a high level of empathy and encouragement. Braxton had three male mentors and one white female mentor. Although there seemed to be some diversity among his male mentors, none of them shared his identity as a Black male. While the lack of a shared racial or cultural identity had no negative impact on the high quality of Braxton's mentoring relationships, he did however point to not having had a Black male professor during his four years in college, which led him to reflect on the lack of diversity on campus.

Mentor competencies and behaviors. In addition to shared characteristics, experiences, and interests, the initial connections students make with their future mentors are primarily based on the way they perceive their professor's characteristics, competencies, and behaviors and the way in which these offer cues about their willingness to interact outside the classroom. Students' observations and perceptions of their professor's in-class verbal and non-verbal behaviors determine the beginning stages of mentoring relationships. This requires an ability and willingness by the professors to openly share their background and experiences as it relates to the

college experience of diverse students. The following section explores how students' perceptions of their mentors' competencies and behaviors influence how they see and identify with their mentors and the extent to which these perceptions shape the nature of students' interactions within the mentoring relationship.

Mentor characteristics. Students felt drawn to professors who eventually became their mentors because they were drawn to specific characteristics, competencies, and behaviors that they observed. Characteristics that students appreciated most about their mentors included a helping orientation, warmth, capacity for intimacy, authenticity, and empathy. The majority of participants attributed the success of their mentoring relationships in large part to the personal connections that they made with their mentors, which led to mentoring relationships that exemplified "a purposeful and intentional commitment on the part of the mentor to the growth, development, and success of the student (Baker & Griffin, 2010; Crisp et al., 2017). These connections were often reflected in the mentor's ability to relate to students.

Characteristics that were particularly conducive to developing the highly personal mentoring relationships that many of the students enthusiastically recalled included the mentors' authenticity (Johnson, 2016; Schademan & Thompson, 2016; Schreiner et al, 2011) and a capacity for intimacy (Johnson, 2016). Students were drawn to mentors in whom they saw themselves because they openly shared their personal interests, passions, backgrounds, or characteristics of underrepresentation. The commonalities that helped bond mentor and protégé came to light because of the mentors' ability to be open and be their authentic selves. These characteristics often first came to light in a class-setting, as Ellen's experience demonstrates:

The conversations that we had as a class were just so candid and open. ... She was a person, and not just a professor. She was both. So I liked it. ... I appreciated her candidness ... when things bothered her about the world ... and she shared that with us and we just all kind of bonded, but I feel like I ... I sought her out.

The mentors' ability to relate to their protégés by being genuine, open, and their authentic self was central to the mentoring relationships of most participants. The students' descriptions of their mentors strongly support Schreiner et al.'s (2011) findings that authenticity is one of the most desirable and effective qualities in faculty mentors. Participants frequently commented on their mentors' ability to relate to them and to treat them as equals. When professors let their students see who they are as people and encouraged them to be their authentic selves, FGLI students felt drawn to them. Students mentioned repeatedly how they identified with mentors who were their true selves and genuinely interested in them. A capacity for intimacy suggests an openness that many students commented on and admired in their mentors.

Mentor behaviors. In addition to mentors' interpersonal competencies, students connected particularly well with professors whose behaviors facilitated effective mentoring. Among the mentor actions and abilities that FGLI students appreciated the most were being accessible, sharing life experiences and adversities, providing encouragement and support, affirming and nurturing the "dream," and challenging protégés. Given FGLI students' general reluctance to interact with faculty outside of the classroom, the actions of mentors that made students feel welcome and cared about especially mattered. For the participants who connected with their mentors because they identified with them on a personal level, the mentors' ability to share their life experiences and adversities became a particularly meaningful part of their relationships.

When mentors decide to open up to their mentees about their own experiences and struggles, students are able to see them as real people and see themselves in their mentors. These findings strongly echo Johnson's (2016) assertions that well timed and judiciously used self-disclosure by mentors can boost protégés' self-confidence, offset imposter syndrome, and deepen

the mentoring relationship by increasing mutuality. Juan's experience with his mentor at the beginning of this section demonstrates the power of faculty who are able to strategically self-disclose their own experiences. To him it was "comforting to know that there was someone else like him," which gave him the courage to think, "Okay. If he can do it, maybe I can, too." This mirrored the experience of many other participants who were equally as inspired by their mentors' experiences overcoming adversities similar to their own.

Self-disclosure of adversities and failures requires the courage to show a level of vulnerability and humility that may make some faculty members uncomfortable. However, beyond the effects of such self-disclosure on students' self-confidence, this mentor behavior sent another subtle, yet powerful message to protégés, as Johnson (2016) describes as, "I care enough about you and trust you enough to share something more personal with you" (p. 94). Students expressed a mixture of appreciation, gratitude, disbelief, and pride in the fact that so many of their mentors were willing to share their personal lives with them. Their pride in having established personal relationships was present in their statements about the personal content of their conversations and general interactions. Most impactful, however, were instances where mentors disclosed significant failures and instances of having overcome adversities. For example, Xiomara's mentor, who shared his undergraduate transcript that showed failing grades which mirrored her own, had a significant impact on her. She saw herself in him and his transcript. His ability to share his failures with his students made him human and empowered his students to believe that they, too, can become successful and overcome their obstacles.

Mentors who share their academic and professional failures and personal struggles with their protégés humanize the educational experience, which was important to FGLI students who personally identified with their mentors. This closely matched Museus and Neville's findings that

in addition to shared background characteristics, shared experiences can strengthen developmental relationships for minority students. Mentors' readiness to disclose these shared experiences made it possible for students to learn from these failures and recognize that their own struggles were not defining of their future achievements. More importantly, it "humanized the educational experience" for FGLI students. Museus and Neville's study identifies two ways in which institutional agents humanized the educational experience of minority students, including seeing their mentors as "authentic human beings" and seeing them as someone who truly cared about their success. A mentor's ability to self-disclose adversities and failures could be considered a third dimension of humanizing the educational experience of underrepresented students.

FGLI students who personally identified with their mentors and developed effective developmental relationships were highly motivated by their mentors. A number of students described experiences that demonstrated their mentors' use of one of Steele's (1997) "wise schooling" strategies, which argues that "giving challenging work to students conveys respect for their potential and thus shows them that they are not regarded through the lens of an ability-demeaning stereotype" (p. 625). Many participants offered examples of how their mentors challenged them or pushed them outside of their comfort zones. These included Juan's mentors' insistence that he take advantage of a fully-funded opportunity to work in a hospital in Malawi; Katie's mentor working with her on setting goals and keeping her accountable for planning her graduate school applications while she struggled with depression; and Bree's mentor encouraging her to submit a paper for publication in a journal. When mentors challenged their mentees in ways that brought out the best in them it communicated to the students that their mentor not only

deeply cared about their success, but also believed in their ability to successfully master the challenges they set out for them.

Outcomes. Mentors fostered participants' confidence and self-efficacy by placing high expectations on their mentees and pushing them to meet or exceed these expectations. FGLI students who saw themselves in their mentors tended to be particularly motivated to rise to the challenge and not disappoint their mentors. This had important implications for their academic, personal, and professional development. Students reported working particularly hard for the classes they took with their mentors or on joint research projects, developing a love of learning, and finding purpose in their college careers. They also discussed a significant growth in self-efficacy because someone they trusted and respected believed in them.

FGLI students who had highly personal relationships with their mentors received more holistic support from their mentors including psychosocial and emotional support, which requires a deeper personal connection. They tended to be more open with their mentors about their challenges, dreams, and professional aspirations, which led to highly influential mentoring relationships. This supports the findings of previous studies that point to the power of mentors who are genuinely interested in getting to know their protégés and demonstrate a strong belief and investment in their success (Luedke, 2017; Museus & Neville, 2012; Schademan & Thompson, 2016).

This study adds important value to the question about how FGLI students gain access to mentoring relationships. Previous studies have discussed the value of formal mentoring programs, but few studies have assessed faculty mentoring relationships that develop organically (Crisp et al., 2017). Although the SPU Promise has a formal mentoring program which pairs each incoming freshman with a faculty mentor, only two students spoke about mentoring

relationships that developed through this program. All other mentoring relationships developed organically and were based on common interests and shared background characteristics. The value that FGLI students placed on the personal and holistic nature of the support they received from their mentors suggests that the formation of mentoring dyads is worth considering. While highly effective mentoring relationships can develop through formal mentoring programs, they may more often develop organically for FGLI students based on mutual interest and shared characteristics and experiences. This adds an important perspective to Crisp et al.'s (2017) review of the mentoring literature published between 2008 and 2015, which found that the majority of studies focused on formal mentoring programs.

Participants who saw themselves in their faculty mentor were more likely to benefit from the mentoring relationship because they were able to gain three major insights. First, by having a mentor who shared aspects of their background or experiences and was willing to disclose his or her own adversities and failures, they came to understand that they can be successful despite the barriers they face as FGLI and/or minority students. Second, they were highly motivated to meet the challenges their mentors set for themselves because they did not want to disappoint the person who believed in them. And third, highly mutual mentoring relationships were particularly successful in fostering self-efficacy in FGLI students.

A Mentor Who Makes Them Feel Like They Matter and Belong

But she always put affirmations in my heart, like, “You're doing what you're supposed to be doing. You're here for a reason.” (Xiomara, Hispanic)

One of the strongest findings of this study is the value that FGLI students placed on the personal aspects and social-related experiences within their mentoring relationships, which far outweighed their discussion of academic-related experiences. The majority of students proudly and enthusiastically described their mentoring relationships as highly supportive, personal, and

caring. It was the human connection based on mutual respect and admiration as well as the mentors' sincere investment in their protégé's success that constituted the most powerful impact of faculty mentors on their FGLI student protégés. Their experiences epitomize Baker and Griffin's (2010) description of mentoring relationships as "rooted in a mentor's long-term caring about a student's personal and professional development" (p. 4). Furthermore, they emphasize the importance of the psychosocial functions of mentoring relationships, which "reflect relationship quality and include the existence of counseling, friendship, and positive feedback, which are all connected to building mentee identity and a sense of self-worth" (Cole & Griffin, 2013, p.568).

Xiomara's statement opening this section captures the experience of the vast majority of participants who questioned whether they belonged on campus. They recognized that they were not as academically prepared as their peers and realized that their life experiences as FGLI students from minoritized or rural backgrounds didn't represent that of the majority of their peers. Their disadvantage became obvious when they viewed themselves in relation to their peers, which led to a lack of confidence, low levels of social integration, and doubt in their abilities to succeed. For Xiomara and most other participants, their mentors' ability to make them feel cared about and instill in them a sense of belonging on campus by actively counteracting widespread imposter syndrome was one of the most valued aspects of their mentoring relationships. This section analyzes how students perceived their mentors' ability to communicate a culture of care and instill in them a sense of belonging while contextualizing it within the existing literature.

Feeling like you matter and belong, both academically and socially, is an important need for college students (Hurtado & Carter, 2009; Mayhew et al., 2016; Tinto, 1993). The vital role

mentors play to instill a sense of belonging into their protégés and help them develop self-efficacy through investment in their success relates to multiple elements of Crisp et al.'s (2017) mentoring framework. It speaks not only to the importance of providing psychosocial and emotional support, but is also linked to specific mentor characteristics, competencies, and behaviors that are conducive to instilling this important belief in FGLI students. Furthermore, it correlates to the meaning and value that FGLI students place on their mentoring relationships and the role that these play in students' ability to overcome barrier to success and in their overall college experience.

Mentor behaviors. The findings of this study strongly support Johnson's (2016) finding that providing encouragement and support is "often one of the most meaningful functions offered by mentors" (p. 77). Almost all students shared examples of how their mentors' encouragement and support helped them overcome various barriers to their success. They spoke of their mentors' words of encouragement and advice related to overcoming challenges, validation of their own perspectives, constructive feedback, and praise. Their reports are highly consistent with Crisp et al.'s (2017) identification of desirable mentor behaviors, which include "interacting in an authentic and caring manner, encouraging, motivating students, relating to their worldview, affirming, and befriending" (p. 84). As Crisp et al. suggest, these behaviors emphasized for students that mentors are willing to provide support that is more personal and holistic.

Faculty who became mentors communicated that they cared about their students by being approachable, accessible, and truly interested in getting to know students as individuals. Participants' accounts of what made them want to interact with their professors outside of the classroom highlighted characteristics and behaviors such as authenticity, approachability and warmth. Students intentionally engaged and built mentoring relationships with professors who

communicated that they genuinely cared about them and were invested in their success. While this supports Cox et al.'s (2010) assertion that students are the main drivers of student-faculty interactions, it counteracts their findings that the in-class behaviors and pedagogical practices of faculty do not predict the frequency of out-of-class interactions. Instead, the behaviors that students most valued in mentors closely mirrored those identified in Schreiner et al.'s (2011) study: "(a) encouraging, supporting, and believing in them; (b) motivating them and wanting to see them learn; (c) taking time for them, expressing an interest in them, and communicating to them that they are important; (d) relating to them on their level; and (e) pushing them to excel while at the same time helping them to understand difficult concepts" (p. 328). These behaviors are also evidence of the mentors' use of "wise schooling" strategies, which serve to reduce stereotype threat that many minority students experience (Steele, 1997).

FGLI students preferred face-to-face interactions and were extremely grateful for their mentors' investment of time in them. Similar to Schreiner et al.'s (2011) findings, this became especially apparent because it stood in contrast to their average experience with professors, many of whom were not interested in getting to know them beyond their academic performance. Many participants discussed how their mentors made them feel special and cared about. For example, Dani's mentor sought her out because he recognized her potential, Sasha's mentors offered assistance and shelter during her struggle with homelessness, and Braxton's mentor recognized the challenges he faced as a Black man. Dani's feeling that "[it] was always very encouraging that someone cared" reflected the feelings of most other participants. Through these behaviors, protégés saw their mentors as authentic human beings who genuinely cared about their well-being and success. This strongly aligns with Museus and Neville's (2012) description of how

faculty "humanize the educational experience" (p. 445) and thus positively impact the college experience of minority students.

The dedication of the mentors as described by the students was truly remarkable. For at least half the participants, the mentoring relationships they discussed showed elements of "othermothering" (Collins, 2000; Guiffrida, 2005; Griffin, 2013), a concept dating back to slavery which defines "women who assist blood-mothers by sharing mothering responsibilities" especially in terms of education and socialization (Collins, 2000, p. 178). Griffin's (2013) study of Black professors who mentor Black students found that their unusually close relationships are "based on similar experiences in the academy, commitments to community uplift, and high expectations" (p. 169). Similarly, close relationships were present for six female (Sasha, Xiomara, Keisha, Ellen, Katie, and Dani) and one male (Juan) study participants who spoke about "mother-like" qualities and behaviors in their mentors. While these relationships often crossed race, they never crossed gender and primarily involved female faculty and students. This substantiates previous research asserting that minority faculty and female faculty members share a disproportionate burden of mentoring minority students (Baker & Griffin, 2010; Cole & Griffin, 2013; Griffin, 2013; Umbach, 2006).

Mentoring needs. The diversity of participants' cultural backgrounds in this study partially accounts for why their mentors' ability to make them feel like they matter and belong was one of the most important aspects of their mentoring experience. Previous studies suggest that students' racial and ethnic backgrounds impact their mentoring needs, experiences, and outcomes (Cox, Yang, & Dicke-Bohmann, 2014; Fuentes et al., 2014; Henry, Bruland, & Sano-Franchini, 2011; Hu & Ma, 2010; Ishiyama, 2007; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Steele, 1997; Ward et al., 2014). This study's findings showing a high need of psychosocial and emotional

support for all but Asian-American students and especially for women of color further support Cox et al.'s (2014) suggestion that students' cultural orientation influences their mentoring needs and the value they place on various mentoring functions.

The findings of this study contribute to our understanding of the mentoring needs FGLI students from diverse backgrounds. With the exception of the two Asian-American students, all participants highly valued the psychosocial and emotional support they received from their mentors. This contrasts with Mekolichick and Gibbs' (2012) findings that first-generation students tend to approach mentoring in a more utilitarian way, focusing on benefits related to professional development. Their study compared the mentoring needs of first-generation college students with continuing-generation college students using survey results of predominantly white students. In contrast, the findings of this study point to the importance of the personal aspects of mentoring experiences for FGLI students from diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, the SPU Promise scholarship alleviated the participants' financial burden of paying for college and encouraged students to engage with faculty mentors. This likely affected their approach to mentoring relationships and may have impacted their ability to seek more holistic support that went beyond career development.

Lundberg and Schreiner's (2004) finding that Asian-American students are least likely to interact with faculty is in part validated by my study's findings that Asian-American FGLI participants had the least frequent and least personal interactions with their mentors. Instead, they had a more utilitarian approach to their mentoring relationships and were the only participants who did not place importance on their mentors' background or experiences as long as mentors were able to fulfill their high need for academic and career development support. Further, Ishiyama (2007) found that African-American students, regardless of generational

status, place a higher value on psychosocial and emotional support than their White peers who were more likely to value their mentors' academic expertise. In contrast, my study suggests that while the White participants received and highly valued the psychosocial and emotional support they received from their mentors as much as their African-American FGLI peers, they were somewhat more likely to reflect on the academic benefits of their mentoring relationships.

While the students' cultural background seemed to have a strong influence on their mentor selection and the types of support they needed, gender also played a role in mentoring relationships. While some researchers have suggested that pairing students with same-sex mentors is important, mentors and protégés do not have to share the same gender for the relationship to be effective (Crisp et al., 2017). Sax, Bryant, and Harper (2005) found that female students not only interact with faculty more frequently, but also are more likely to receive emotional support. This study supported these findings. Female participants were more likely to describe highly-engaged and influential mentoring relationships that featured high levels of psychosocial and emotional support than male participants. In all cases, these mentoring relationships involved same-gender mentors and featured a high level of familiarity and vulnerability that is not often shared across gender, age, and power differences. However, almost all participants had multiple mentoring relationships, which included highly effective cross-gender mentorships. This suggests a complexity in some mentor relationships involving factors beyond gender dynamics such as those I identify throughout my findings.

Outcomes. Regardless of the students' cultural background, all but one student spoke repeatedly about how meaningful it was to feel cared about, encouraged, and supported by their mentor. This had a positive impact on their college experience and particularly influenced their self-efficacy and sense of belonging. The participants' FGLI status combined with the cultural

and ethnic minority background of most participants contributed to the low sense of self-efficacy with which many of them they entered their mentoring relationships, validating previous research that found lower levels of self-confidence and self-efficacy in first-generation students' interactions with faculty (Cole & Griffin, 2013; Cox et al., 2010; Padgett et al., 2012; Schademan & Thompson, 2016). However, the mentors' ability to make them feel like they matter and belong had a significantly positive impact on their self-confidence and self-efficacy. While this study did not aim to tie the students' perceptions of their mentoring experience to educational outcomes, the impact on the students' personal development was significant.

Self-efficacy. Almost all participants spoke about arriving at the university with a lack of self-confidence and self-efficacy, which refers to "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (Bandura, 1994, p. 71). This was mainly the result of their perceived academic underpreparation and lack of a sense of belonging on campus due to their various characteristics of underrepresentation. Faculty mentors played a significant role in counteracting the imposter syndrome that many students experienced. Participants who described experiencing imposter syndrome, a term first used by Clance and Imes (1978) to "designate an internal experience of intellectual phonies" (p. 1), were more likely to feel inadequate and experience significant pressure to succeed (Petee, Montgomery, & Weekes, 2015; Ross et al., 2001). The experiences of African-American and other minority study participants are reflective of the findings of Bernard, Hoggard, & Neblett Jr. (2018) whose study of African-American college students found that racial discrimination experiences contributed to imposter syndrome.

The mentors' contributions to combating their protégés' feelings of imposter syndrome and increasing their self-efficacy were, perhaps, the most important outcomes of the participants'

mentoring relationships. Whether consciously or intuitively, many mentors seemed to employ Steele's (1997) "wise schooling" strategies which include challenging students academically, affirming their belonging at the institution, building self-efficacy, being a role model, and valuing multiple perspectives (Cole & Griffin, 2013; Steele, 1997). The mentors' constant affirmations and their steadfast belief in their protégés' academic potential and ability to succeed resulted in what Lundberg and Schreiner (2004) called a "a self-fulfilling prophecy" (p. 550). These findings add to the literature that highlights the value of holistic support for minority and other underrepresented students (Museus & Neville, 2012; Schreiner et al., 2011).

Fostering a sense of belonging. The role of faculty in facilitating students' academic and social integration on campus is well documented in the literature (Cole & Griffin, 2013; Lundberg & Schreiner; Pascarella, 1980; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Schademan & Thompson, 2016; Tinto, 1993). Faculty mentors played an important role in fostering their protégés' sense of belonging, which "refers to students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g., campus community) or others on campus (e.g., faculty, peers)" (Strayhorn, 2012, p. 3). Many participants, particularly female students and minority students talked at length about their difficulties "fitting in" on campus and illustrated how their FGLI status or other characteristics of underrepresentation hindered their sense of belonging on campus.

The experiences of these FGLI students validated Stephens et al.'s (2012) assertion that their background constitutes a serious obstacle to their adjustment to an institution that was primarily designed for students from middle-class backgrounds. The findings of the current study largely confirm Guiffrida's (2006) critique of Tinto's *Theory of Student Departure* (1975, 1987,

1993) which calls for students to separate from their past connections in order to become integrated. The majority of students in this study commented on their lack of belonging on campus during the first two years. Their mentoring relationships contributed to making them feel like they matter and belong, thus allowing them to find their "niche" on campus, as many students described it. The self-efficacy they gained through their interactions with their mentors who validated and affirmed their sense of belonging and ability to succeed.

Although the students in this study did not intentionally sever their past connections to better integrate on campus, quite a few commented on the difficulties living between the two different worlds of college and home and not fully fitting into either. For example, Ellen's difficulties returning to her conservative hometown whose views her expanded worldview no longer supported and Xiomara's resistance to conform to traditional gender roles in her home community demonstrate that divide. While their campus experience expanded their worldview in ways that may have conflicted with their upbringing and cultural expectations, the psychosocial support of their mentors helped them feel accepted for who they are.

Integration and validation. While FGLI students most often credited peers with their social integration in the campus community, mentors played an indirect role in making them feel like they belong by validating their ability and potential. Faculty mentors fostered their academic integration by combating imposter syndrome and thus increasing their self-efficacy. The relationship between validation by institutional agents and academic integration is well documented in the literature and thought to contribute to persistence (Barnett, 2011; Luedke, 2017; Rendón, 1994). Barnett (2011) identified four constructs of faculty validation, including "students known and valued, caring instruction, appreciation for diversity, and mentoring" (p. 212). Students in the current study experienced all these forms of validation from their mentors.

Although only one participant seriously considered dropping out of college (for reasons unrelated to a lack of integration), validation and integration into the campus community had a positive impact on student outcomes and retention.

A Mentor Who "Nurtures Their Dream"

She was really encouraging in a lot of our meetings. She would spend a good deal of time assuring me that I am smart enough to learn the material, to get into grad school. That I'm capable of it. Constant reassurance of those things, I think really helped a lot.

(Katie, White)

A mentor's affirmations are not only relevant to students' abilities to develop self-efficacy and a sense of belonging, but are essential in the mentor's role in helping protégés identify their strengths and find their passion. Johnson's (2016) work leans on Levinson et al. (1978) who call this "the dream," which "often has the quality of a vision or an imagined possibility that generates excitement and vitality in the mentee" (p. 84). Aligned with Johnson's (2016) findings, the mentors described by the study participants were dedicated to getting to know their protégés well enough to identify their interests and strength. At the same time, mentors communicated their confidence in their protégés' abilities, and challenged protégés to make that dream become a reality. The important role of mentors to affirm and nurture their protégés dream brings together multiple elements of Crisp et al.'s (2017) framework. It focuses not only on the academic and career development support that mentors provide and the outcomes associated with it, but also highlights mentors' competencies and behaviors that are associated with nurturing "the dream."

Katie's statement opening this section reflects the experience of many participants whose mentors played a pivotal role in helping them identify their passions and actively worked with their protégés to reach their professional and life goals. Her mentoring relationship was very much about affirming and nurturing "the dream." Katie's mentor's passion for her field led Katie

to change majors and pursue a PhD in her mentor's department. Having found a mentor whose personal qualities and professional accomplishments inspired her greatly, and whose very career path she aspired to emulate, made her mentor highly influential in Katie's academic, career, and personal development. Despite being an excellent student, like many of her peers Katie suffered from severe imposter syndrome. Her mentor's constant affirmation of her academic ability to achieve her dream of becoming a professor reflects Johnson's (2016) findings that "the most effective affirmation is consistent and unconditional" (p. 85).

Nurturing the mentee's dream was a highly valued skill that influential mentors applied when they provided their protégés with academic support as well as career development support. Most participants received more academic support earlier in their undergraduate career when, for many of them, lack of academic preparation and adjustment or personal challenges negatively affected their academic performance. All but three participants arrived on campus wanting to become doctors. They were outstanding students in their high schools and were often expected to be successful by their families or communities. For about half of them, however, achieving this dream was becoming out of reach due to the academic rigor of the required science classes. Effective mentors not only provided academic support and connected them to resources, but also showed them different ways to work toward their career goals or carefully guided them through the process of adjusting their goals.

Participants often credited their mentors with introducing them to their chosen career field (i.e. Katie, Xiomara, Braxton, and Sasha), clarifying their career goals (i.e. Chicharito and Bree), or helping them develop relevant professional skills (i.e. Jade and Dani). Mentors challenged and pushed their protégés, but most importantly, always supported and carefully guided their protégés' academic and professional development. This was especially important for

students like Xiomara who discovered passions that didn't align with their parents' expectations.

Xiomara described the importance of her mentor's support of her "dream":

Whatever I do ... it's gonna be with music. I was afraid to want that dream, you know, follow that dream. Like I said, I came in being a Bio major. My family wanted me to be a doctor. ... That's not what I wanna be. And just having [my mentor] support me and have my back on that [was really important].

In addition to psychosocial and emotional support, career development support was the mentoring function that participants most often spoke about and highly valued. All FGLI students in this study sought out and took advantage of the career support that their mentors provided. They described mentors who validated their career goals, affirmed their ability to achieve those goals, introduced them to alternative career paths and facilitated professional socialization. In agreement with Johnson's (2016) findings, the highly-relational nature of most of the mentoring relationships described in this study meant that students felt very comfortable in their interactions with their mentors and were able to be their authentic selves, allowing them to open up about their career aspirations and share their dreams. As a result, mentors were able to better tailor the guidance, resources, and networking opportunities that helped protégés achieve their career goals.

Social capital. Mentoring relationships play a pivotal role in the career development of FGLI students who experience a relative lack of social capital compared to their more advantaged peers. Faculty in general and faculty mentors in particular are important sources of social capital for FGLI and minority students (Museus, 2010; Museus & Neville, 2012; Parks-Yancy, 2012; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Social capital refers to "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu, 1986, p, 248). FGLI students in this study gained significant amounts of social capital because their mentors not

only shared relevant information, but also connected them to their own networks and shared opportunities. Although the majority of mentors were faculty members within the students' major departments, other effective and sustained mentoring relationships were formed outside of students' academic disciplines, most often earlier in their undergraduate career. These findings build on previous studies suggesting that informal mentoring relationships are most beneficial when they occur within the student's major discipline (Anderson, 1995; Endo & Harpel, 1982). This study shows that in addition to a shared academic background or professional focus that allows access to relevant networks, mentoring competencies and a personal connection between mentors and protégés are also important.

Although focused specifically on the experience of African-American FGLI students, Parks-Yancy (2012) explored the extent to which faculty provide social capital resources and influenced students' career plans. My study affirms Parks-Yancy's (2012) findings that mentoring relationships increase social capital and motivate students to develop more informed and ambitious career goals. Unlike Parks-Yancy's study respondents, the participants in this study took full advantage of the career development support that their professors provided. However, this is unlikely the case for the majority of FGLI students, especially those from minoritized backgrounds. As a result, this study reiterates the findings of previous studies that mentoring relationships are essential to the success of FGLI students in college and beyond.

Most mentors were highly invested in their protégés' professional development and actively helped nurture their dream. In addition to providing academic and career guidance, effective mentors often encouraged and facilitated secondary mentoring relationships with colleagues who had expertise or connections that would benefit their protégés. These mentors created so called "mentoring constellations" (Johnson, 2016; Kram, 1983). Many participants

described multiple mentors who fulfilled different mentoring functions to meet their academic, emotional, and career development needs. This supports Higgins and Kram's (2001) concept of developmental networks, which are "the set of people a protégé names as taking an active interest in and action to advance the protégé's career by providing developmental assistance." Their assertion that no one person can fulfill all mentoring needs and resources was validated by the participants who benefitted from mentoring networks and sought out additional mentors who could fulfill their professional development. For example, Juan's mentor helped him secure a position as a lab assistant with a colleague whose research interests aligned with Juan's career interest, which not only facilitated his career development but also led to additional mentorship.

The mentors' investment in opening doors for their protégés was remarkable and went beyond creating mentoring constellations. Students proudly described instances when mentors used their reflective power to "nominate, endorse, and promote" their protégés (Johnson, 2016, p. 80) to provide access to educational and professional opportunities. These include Dani's mentor nominating and helping her to obtain a prestigious professional development fellowship, Bree's mentor suggesting she publish her paper in a journal, and Katie's mentor praising her in a speech for the departmental award she nominated her for. When mentors use their power to champion their protégés, they send an implied message that they believe in them and their ability to achieve their dream. Most of the mentors described by participants met Baker and Griffin's (2010) description of "developers." The third and highest form of faculty roles after advisers and mentors, developers not only provide psychosocial and career development support, but also "[engage] in knowledge development, information sharing, and support as students set and achieve goals" (Baker & Griffin, 2010, p. 5). A mentor's role as developer was a critical and highly valued aspect of the mentoring relationship for many participants.

A Mentor Who They Want to Be (A Role Model)

I googled her and, Wow. She's done so much stuff and ... she's like a boss." She's who I want to be. She's like a role model, not just a mentor. She's who I want to be. So she's a woman of color who's accomplished so much. (Sasha, Black)

Although the conceptual framework does not include role modeling as a mentoring function, role modeling was an important aspect of mentoring relationships for FGLI students. For many participants in this study, their mentors were people whom they deeply admired and whom they wanted to emulate. Sasha's statement reflects her strong admiration for her mentor's personal qualities and professional accomplishments. It also speaks to the importance of having mentors in whom FGLI students see themselves. For Sasha, having a strong woman of color as her mentor was an integral part of why she viewed her as a role model. Role modeling became an important aspect of the majority of the mentoring relationships described in this study and was at least in part due to students' lack of access to role models who share their characteristics of underrepresentation and the life experiences associated with it (Crisp et al., 2017).

Nora and Crisp (2007) identified four latent variables that comprise mentoring: "1) psychological or emotional support, 2) goal setting and career paths, 3) academic subject knowledge support, and 4) the existence of a role model" (p. 337). Role modeling, as Nora and Crisp explain,

Concentrates on the ability of the mentee to learn from the mentor's present and past actions and achievements/ failures. In this dimension, the emphasis is on sharing, or self-disclosing, life experiences and feelings by the mentor to personalize and enrich the relationship between himself/herself and the mentee (or student) (p. 343).

Participants' descriptions of mentors as role models were highly consistent with Crisp's (2009) measurement of the existence of a role model which included "the student having someone whom they admire and look up to regarding college issues, someone who sets a good example, and someone who shares personal examples of difficulties they have overcome to accomplish

their academic goals" (p. 181). Xiomara's response to her mentor's role in helping her prepare for life after college demonstrates the lasting influence of mentors who are seen as role models:

I think just giving me some motivational words of encouragement, just watching them and how they live through their own careers and lives and experiences and seeing that they've gone through—you know, you don't really know this, but based off of who you see, who your professor is, you see what they do and they're in front of the class, they're teaching you, you don't think that they went through a lot to get here, you know? So, having that relationship with them and then hearing their stories and seeing—it's motivating me. Not necessarily something they've said or done to help me, you know, after college, but just being who they are.

Although role modeling is closely linked to the psychosocial function of mentoring, it differs somewhat from the other three mentoring constructs, which represent different forms of support that mentors provide. The role modeling function of mentoring can be seen either as an intentional act on the part of faculty mentor who role models certain behaviors and values, or it can describe the students' perception of their mentor as a role model. Although most role modeling is not a passive activity and may at least in part reflect intentional behavior of the mentors, this study focused on the students' perceptions of the whether or not they saw their mentors as role models. Regardless of the mentors' intentionality to become role models, this study supports Johnson's (2017) assertion that "mentors serve as role models committed to a transformation in the mentee's identity, and they provide a safe space for self-exploration and tailor their mentoring behaviors to the unique developmental needs of the mentee" (p. 105-106).

Katie described how her mentor's authenticity and interest in her made her look at her mentor as a role model:

I think I might have joked with my boyfriend earlier on in our mentorship relationship that I was like, "I want to be her. When I grow up, I want to be her." 'Cause she's awesome. She has a passion for all of the courses that she's teaching and the things that she's doing. She shares that passion with her students. She, like I said, gets to know you as a person.

In addition to getting to know the student, mentors like Katie's became role models because they opened up about their own lives and led by example. The importance that students placed on authenticity in mentors in general, and particularly in mentors who became role models, supports previous research that points to the importance of supporting students holistically and authentically (Luedke, 2017; Museus & Neville, 2012; Schreiner et al., 2011).

Students perceived effective mentors and role models as being authentic human beings who not only cared about them beyond their identity as a student, but also valued and validated their background and experiences. Braxton's mentor showed him how much she cared about him as a person by telling him that, as a white woman, she would never understand the prejudice and injustice that he faces as a black male. For Braxton and others, being accepted and valued for who they are was important. The findings of previous research of the importance of validation in the college experience of underrepresented students (Barnett, 2010; Rendón, 1994) was reflected in the students' mentoring experience in which they felt valued not in spite of but because of their identity and life experiences. The mentoring experiences of FGLI students with minority backgrounds suggest that making an effort to understand the protégé's background and experiences helped faculty mentors be more aware and sensitive to the potential challenges that FGLI students face. These findings support and build on previous studies that point to the importance of promoting social justice through mentoring (Benishek et al., 2004; Crisp et al., 2017; Reddick & Pritchett, 2015).

The ability to validate students' diverse experiences and backgrounds not only shows empathy, but often points to the faculty mentor's own experiences with adversity. Students highly valued their mentors' ability to share their own lives and the challenges they had to overcome. This quality had a positive influence on the quality of the mentoring relationships and

was often an indicator for role modeling. This supports previous studies that identified the importance of the mentors' willingness to share their own struggles (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Eller, Lev & Feurer, 2014; Johnson, 2016; Reddick & Pritchett, 2015). Students connected particularly well with mentors who shared having faced similar adversities. For students who strongly identified with their mentor on a personal level, seeing someone who shares some of their characteristics and is nevertheless successful was often inspiring and allowed them to believe that this is possible for them, too (Lockwood, 2006).

While gender matching was somewhat important in the mentoring relationships of FGLI students, role modeling was particularly strong in same-gender mentoring dyads, especially among women of color. The role modeling function of the mentoring relationships can be seen as an extension of the first major finding of this study, which asserts that it is important for FGLI students to develop relationships with faculty mentors in whom they see themselves. Having a mentor who shared one or more characteristics of underrepresentation was powerful predictor for role modeling. Female FGLI students of color were particularly likely to describe their mentors as role models if they shared their identity as a woman of color and the life experiences associated with that identity. As Xiomara revealed, "I looked up to her a lot because she is a woman of color." She went on to explain why she particularly looked up to the mentor who shared her identity:

[With one mentor], it was more about, we shared an interest. With [my female mentor of color], we shared personal experiences. Which was really nice. You know, I love to see very strong, independent women, you know? So, it was nice. She's a tiny woman, but she's very fierce and very headstrong, so I really looked up to her. I really clung onto things she would say.

Xiomara's feeling is shared by other female students of color who felt inspired by mentors who were successful in spite of the barriers they faced and thus viewed them as role models.

Congruent with existing literature on mentoring, having access to successful role models in whom they saw themselves and who have overcome challenges similar to their own served as a powerful motivator (Lockwood, 2010; Palmer & Gasman, 2008). Sasha explained the differences between some of her faculty mentors, most of whom were white males, and the Black female professor in her department:

With the other faculty members I could take attributes, like, “Oh, I like this aspect of you” and “Oh, I like the profession.” ... But with her I could see myself following in her footsteps. And representation matters so much.

In addition to seeing themselves in their mentor, their mentors' own perseverance through adversity, whether being a first-generation college student or a woman of color, was one of the main reasons that FGLI students viewed their mentors as role models. While Black, Hispanic, and Mixed-race participants strongly identified role models who shared their minority background, Asian-American students viewed their white mentors as role models and placed less emphasis on their mentor's racial and cultural background. These findings are congruent with studies identified by Cole and Griffin (2011), which found that African-American students were significantly more likely to have role models who shared their race. However, this study adds a new perspective by illustrating that role models did not need to share their protégé's race as long as they shared their identity as women of color.

Similar to race and ethnicity, gender plays an amplified role when it comes to the role modeling function of mentoring relationships. While many participants had successful cross-gender mentoring relationships, they were significantly more likely to identify same-gender mentors as role models. In fact, all participants described at least one of their mentors as role models, and in only one case did that mentor not match the student's gender. These findings are congruent with previous research that found that students with mentors who shared their gender

reported higher levels of role modeling (Lockwood, 2006; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). Gender matching was especially important to female students who needed and received high levels psychosocial and emotional support from their mentors and felt more comfortable with same-sex mentors. The experiences of the participants' strongly supported Lockwood's (2010) findings that same-sex female mentors who were successful in their protégé's intended career were particularly strong role models for minority women. For the male students in this study, all but one of whom had male role models, gender matching within the role modeling function of mentoring seemed less intentional than for the female students and was more likely due to the overrepresentation of male faculty in their departments.

Considering the Faculty Perspective

This study focused solely on the students' perspective of mentoring relationships with faculty in order to allow for a more in-depth analysis of how mentoring relationships shape the college experience of FGLI students. As such, the study did not generate findings related to the faculty mentors' perspectives on the mentoring relationships discussed in this study. However, the meaning and value of mentoring relationships to the students have implications for faculty that are important to consider.

A Gallop-Purdue study, which identified a correlation between students' college experiences and their engagement at work and general well-being. The study found that students who had "a professor who cared about them as a person, one who made them excited about learning, and had a mentor who encouraged them to pursue their dreams" were more than twice as likely to be engaged at work and experience a higher well-being (p. 5). Although the participants of this study had graduated only recently, and this research did not assess implications of their mentoring relationships on their work and well-being, study participants

placed high value on the same aspects as the Gallop-Purdue study participants, which may suggest similar implications for their work and personal life.

Although this study focused solely on the students' perspective of faculty mentoring relationships, the meaning and value that students placed on these relationships to the students suggests implications for faculty that are important to consider. While the students' positive experiences with their faculty mentors are highly encouraging, such influential mentoring relationships are extremely rare and often serendipitous. Understanding the positive impact of these relationships is important especially in light of the many studies that show how little FGLI students generally interact with their professors (Cox & Orehovec, 2007). However, it raises the questions of whether faculty can and should be expected to fulfill mentoring roles for FGLI students at a higher rate. Future research should further explore the faculty perspective, costs, and impacts of quality mentoring relationships, particularly those that involve FGLI students.

Summary of Findings

While this study did not seek to assess the direct effects of mentoring relationships on educational outcomes and retention of FGLI students, the findings of this study strongly support and build on previous research that has pointed to the important contributions of mentoring relationships for the success of FGLI students (Levine & Nidiffer, 1996; Lundberg, 2003; Schreiner et al., 2011). Despite previous research suggesting that mentoring relationships are rare, especially for FGLI students, the experiences of participants in this study showcase how highly successful and influential mentoring relationships develop and influence the college experience of FGLI students.

The findings of this study offer important practical implications for educational practices and policies that focus on the success of FGLI students as well as related policy issues.

Following a discussion of implications for policy and practice, this section provides suggestions for how existing theoretical frameworks could expand to better reflect the mentoring experiences of FGLI students. The final part of this section is dedicated to the questions that this study raised, which provide opportunities for future research.

Implications for Policy and Practice

While universities are increasingly investing in creating opportunities for students from underprivileged backgrounds instead of reproducing privilege, much remains to be done. In addition, institutions of higher education are finding ways to create a campus culture that is reflective of and welcoming towards their increasingly diverse student body, mitigating beliefs that colleges and universities were primarily designed for students from middle-class backgrounds (Stephens et al., 2012). Faculty and other institutional agents play an important role in creating an environment and holistic support system that allows FGLI students to thrive and, ultimately, succeed in college. The findings of this study, which focused on understanding successful developmental relationships between FGLI students and faculty mentors offer important implications for institutional policy and practice. This study identified four ways in which institutional policy and practice can improve to facilitate influential mentoring relationships for FGLI students: encourage and reward faculty who mentor undergraduate students; change hiring practices; prepare faculty to become effective mentors; and rethink mentoring programs.

Encourage and Reward Faculty Who Mentor

Mentoring is the "forgotten fourth leg of the academic stool" (Johnson, 2016, p. 17). The results of this study strongly support previous arguments that this should change (Johnson, 2016; Museus & Neville, 2012; Schreiner et al., 2012) by pointing to the significant value in rewarding

and incentivizing faculty members to take on mentoring roles. This can be achieved through a variety of low-cost, but high-reward changes in institutional policy and practice, including raising awareness among faculty about the benefits of mentoring FGLI and other underrepresented students, as well as demonstrating institutional commitment to mentoring by including mentoring roles in tenure and promotion policies.

Developing faculty awareness that mentoring makes an impact. Although this study did not include the voices of the faculty mentors, previous studies (Levine & Nidiffer, 1996; Schreiner et al., 2012), as well as my personal experience working with faculty who mentor students, suggest that most faculty members who mentor undergraduate FGLI students are oblivious to the strong positive impact that they can have on their protégés. One way to change this would be for department chairs, heads of mentoring programs, undergraduate research programs, or other administrators who facilitate substantive student-faculty interactions to collect and share stories about how faculty make a difference in the lives of students. This may include a

Students who participated in this study were eager to share their positive experiences with mentors and showed a high degree of appreciation and gratitude for their investment of time and energy. Making faculty mentors more aware of the impact they have on their mentees may motivate them to continue to provide holistic support for students. However, the incentives provided by student accounts need to be underscored with more intentional policy changes in order to be effective.

Include mentoring in tenure and promotion policies. Colleges and universities who strive to better serve FGLI students must incentivize faculty to contribute to creating a culture of care by providing more holistic support to its most vulnerable students. One way to demonstrate institutional commitment to the success of their students is by including mentoring roles of their

faculty members in tenure and promotion policies. Given the increasing demands on the time of faculty and the lack of recognition of mentoring undergraduate students in tenure and promotion policies, many faculty members lack the motivation to engage with students outside the classroom (Crisp et al., 2017; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). While institutions like SPU recognize the importance of mentoring junior faculty and graduate students (SPU Task Force Report, 2009), very little attention has been paid to rewarding faculty for mentoring undergraduate students.

Including mentoring roles in tenure and promotion policies is particularly important for faculty who are sought out by FGLI students because they share their characteristics of underrepresentation, such as race, generational status, or social class. Female FGLI students of color who participated in this study were particularly drawn to faculty mentors who were also women of color and often provided time-consuming psychosocial and emotional support. These findings support previous research that found that minority faculty and female faculty members share a disproportionate burden of mentoring minority students (Baker & Griffin, 2010; Griffin, 2013; Griffin & Cole, 2013; Umbach, 2006). Although faculty who were first in their family to go to college and faculty of color are often motivated to mentor students with similar backgrounds (DeAngelo et al., 2016) despite the additional strain it may put on them, this places an unfair burden on them, which may negatively affect their other responsibilities such as research productivity.

The intrinsic motivation of many faculty mentors who engage in mentoring because of their personal background and experience needs to be rewarded. Mentoring is currently treated as an "extra-role" behavior and not part of the expected workload for faculty (Davis & Jacobsen, 2014; DeAngelo et al., 2016). The mentoring roles of faculty need to move from the "forgotten

fourth leg of the academic stool" (Johnson, 2016, p. 17) to being included in what DeAngelo et al. (2012) call "expected-role" behaviors of faculty. Including mentoring in tenure and promotion policies would not only reward professors who want to provide more holistic support to students but also encourage other faculty members to invest time in mentoring students

Acknowledging the importance of mentoring undergraduate students, especially those from FGLI and other disadvantaged backgrounds can also be achieved by officially recognizing faculty for their contributions to students' success through exemplary mentoring through mentoring awards. Very few of the professors who mentored study participants received financial or other extrinsic benefits from devoting their time to the academic, personal, and professional development of their mentees. Those who become mentors through organized mentoring programs receive a small stipend, which provides an incentive, but does not offset their time investment. However, the majority of mentoring relationships described in this study developed organically outside of institutionally mandated programs, making it even more likely that the mentor's contributions are not recognized. Institutions can provide incentives for faculty to take on mentoring roles by recognizing the contributions of faculty mentors to the success of all undergraduate students, and to FGLI students in particular, through mentoring awards.

Institutional recognition for mentoring through the inclusion of mentoring in tenure and promotion policies as well as mentoring rewards will likely incentivize faculty to engage in mentoring by decreasing barriers that exists to mentoring undergraduate students. This is essential because for students, the support of faculty and staff is "indicative of the college or university's commitment to them" (Schreiner et al., 2011, p. 333). Given the extraordinary benefits of mentoring for FGLI students, hiring and promotion policies should reward professors who invest their time in the success of the university's most vulnerable students. Purdue

University's practice of explicitly valuing and rewarding mentoring undergraduate students in tenure and promotion reviews (Jaschick, 2015) is encouraging and should be adopted by other institutions.

Faculty Selection

In addition to rewarding current faculty who take on mentoring roles, colleges and universities need to adjust their hiring policies to attract and select faculty who are dedicated to supporting students through mentoring. This includes identifying and hiring faculty who have the intention and competencies to mentor students and are aware of their potential impact. In addition to hiring faculty who are prepared to provide holistic support, colleges and universities must also make an effort to hire more faculty of color in order to more closely reflect the increasing diversity of the student body.

Hiring faculty who support students holistically is key to facilitating influential mentoring relationships. This study strongly supports Schreiner et al.'s (2011) call for faculty search committees to "explore the ability and desire of candidates to connect authentically with students" (p. 335). Participants placed a high value on the personal connections they made with their mentors. Many alluded to the contrast between their highly supportive mentoring relationships and their average interactions with other faculty. This suggests that hiring faculty who are not solely focused on their research agenda, but truly care about the success of their students, should be a priority for colleges and universities who have the luxury of choice in a saturated market for faculty jobs.

The extraordinary benefits of successful mentoring relationships highlighted in this study are first and foremost a result of certain characteristics, attitudes and behaviors of faculty mentors. This study identified a number of characteristics and behaviors that are conducive to the

academic and personal development of FGLI students and can be adopted in the selection criteria. They include characteristics and competencies such warmth, a helping orientation, authenticity, empathy, and a capacity for intimacy. This study's interviews also highlighted abilities and behaviors of influential mentors who had a strong positive impact on FGLI students, including being accessible, sharing life experiences and adversities, providing encouragement and support, affirming and nurturing the “dream”, and challenging their mentees. These characteristics, competencies, and behaviors could help guide the selection of future faculty members. In addition, selection committees should consider feedback from student evaluations and ask prospective new faculty members interview questions that are specific to their interactions with students. This practice can assess faculty members’ attitudes toward engaging with students outside of the classroom and determine whether they possess characteristics and competencies associated with good mentors. Since new faculty may have limited experience teaching and mentoring undergraduate students, asking applicants to reflect on their experience with faculty mentors and how they see themselves extending that experience to their students would also provide important insights into their mentoring competencies.

In addition to hiring faculty who are invested in the success of their students and willing to engage with them outside of the classroom, institutions of higher education need to recruit faculty who are more representative of the demographics of the student population on their campus. The representation of faculty of color in the professoriate has not kept up with the increasing diversity of the undergraduate student body (Baker & Griffin, 2010; Crisp et al., 2017). This study joins previous research in the call for hiring more faculty of color (Johnson, 2016; Museus & Neville, 2012). Despite the students' accounts of highly effective cross-racial mentoring relationships, some of the most engaged and influential mentoring relationships

occurred for female students with mentors who shared their gender as well as their race or minority background. However, it must be considered that high-involvement mentoring relationships are time consuming and potentially taxing on faculty mentors. As a result, efforts to hire more diverse faculty need to be combined with including and rewarding mentoring in tenure and promotion policies. This will reduce the likelihood that faculty who participate in highly engaged mentoring relationships with at-risk students are disadvantaged in their own career advancement. In addition to hiring faculty from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, faculty who were first-generation college students or come from working-class backgrounds would contribute to the diversity of the faculty and may be able to relate particularly well to FGLI students. A diversified faculty will increase the availability of influential role models for FGLI students from diverse backgrounds in whom they see themselves and may facilitate their development of a sense of belonging on campus.

Prepare Faculty to Become Effective Mentors

Most professors are not trained in mentoring undergraduate students nor tuned-in to the specific support needs of at-risk students. As a result, institutions play an important role in ensuring that faculty members possess the character virtues, abilities, and competencies to be effective mentors (Johnson, 2003). One way to accomplish this would be to work with faculty development offices to create a guide for faculty that outlines best practices for mentoring FGLI students. Illustrated with examples provided by the participants, such a document could serve as an important tool to help faculty understand the potential impact that they have on FGLI students. An example would be to encourage faculty mentors to make an effort to relate to students and be willing to share their life experiences and adversities. Sasha's example of her professor sharing his undergraduate transcript with her class, which mirrored her own struggling

performance at the beginning of her college experience, emphasizes the power of such exercises in vulnerability and self-reflection that don't always come naturally to faculty. Her description of the hope and confidence his admission of failure gave her illustrates its impact and effectiveness. Similarly effective could be creating a training module on mentoring at-risk students that includes a discussion with FGLI and other underrepresented students who share specific examples of what their mentors said and did that was particularly valuable and meaningful. Hearing directly from the students who benefit from effective mentoring would likely be a powerful motivator for faculty to make a difference in college experiences of students who face significant barriers to success.

In addition to acquiring skills and strategies for mentoring, faculty members need to be aware of the unique needs of FGLI students. Beyond providing resources for faculty mentors, institutions should identify ways to raise more awareness among faculty of the students' varying backgrounds, different levels of academic preparation, common barriers to success, and predispositions to interacting with faculty. Creating a document for faculty that outlines common barriers to success for FGLI students and their predispositions to mentoring could help raise awareness among faculty of the different needs of FGLI students. These include financial constraints and issues related to poverty, potential lack of academic preparation, lack of family support and limited knowledge of how to navigate the university, work and family obligations, and difficulties developing a sense of belonging and integrating into the campus culture. Faculty also need to be made aware that FGLI students are often even less likely to initiate interactions with faculty outside the classroom than their more advantaged peers and may be reluctant to ask for help. Many of the mentoring relationships that study participants described developed because their mentors sought them out and initiated interactions. Faculty should therefore be

encouraged to initiate interactions with students, especially those who show signs of academic difficulties or other challenges, and offer support. Deans, department chairs, and other senior administrators play an essential role in creating a culture that supports mentoring.

Rethink Formal Mentoring Programs

Investment in mentoring programs has been high because institutions recognize the role that faculty mentors play in students' socialization process and their ability to navigate the many unwritten rules of the university (Fuentes et al., 2014). However, substantive and meaningful mentoring relationships are less likely to develop within formalized mentoring programs. Successful mentoring dyads with participants in this study almost always formed through shared academic, professional, and personal interests or other commonalities such as shared background characteristics. Only one of the study participants met her primary mentor through a formal mentoring program. Career development support was most important to her in a mentoring relationship and, unlike other participants, she did not place high value on making a personal connection with her mentor. For two additional participants, their assigned mentor through the SPU Promise's mentoring program for first-year students became one of multiple mentors.

While the findings of this study show that formal mentoring programs have a limited role in creating highly effective mentoring relationships, they have tremendous potential to positively influence the success of FGLI students. First, they are essential in providing FGLI students and students of color with access to mentors. Second, they play an important role in socializing FGLI students to interacting with professors outside of the classroom and prepare them to develop effective mentoring relationships later in their academic careers (Fuentes et al., 2014). Although my study didn't assess the participants' early interactions with faculty, the fact that most of them had multiple mentoring relationships and knew how to make a conscious effort to connect with

professors shows that "teaching" FGLI students how to interact with faculty is highly beneficial. When FGLI students are able to "practice" their interactions with faculty in the safe environment of a mentoring program they can gain the necessary confidence to invest in building mentoring relationships with faculty in the future. Given their low interactions with faculty (Kim & Sax, 2009; Pike & Kuh, 2005) and the significant benefits of mentoring relationships, this can play an important role in increasing the success of FGLI students.

The findings of this study support a few recommendations for formal mentoring programs. First, formal mentoring programs should limit their goals and expectations of creating successful mentoring relationships, and place more emphasis on coaching FGLI students to interact with their professors outside the classroom. If existing formal mentoring programs for FGLI students, such as the SPU Promise first-year mentoring program, utilize the mentors they assigned to "pods" of students to actively coach and socialize their mentees to interacting with faculty, they can reduce existing barriers FGLI and other at-risk students face to interacting with faculty. This would prepare FGLI students to make meaningful connections with professors who share their interests and may become influential mentors later in their undergraduate career.

Secondly, formal mentoring programs can amplify the impact of the highly motivated faculty mentors they intend to attract. Some of the participants' mentors, including those they met through formal mentoring programs, served as super-connectors who helped their protégés tap into the existing expertise of their colleagues for the benefit of their protégés. If mentoring programs can identify and recruit faculty mentors who are highly dedicated to providing holistic support to FGLI students and are prepared to connect their protégés to resources and colleagues who share their interests, mentoring programs can serve as a catalyst for creating highly effective mentoring relationships that increase the success of FGLI students. However, since mentoring

FGLI students involves a significant time investment, faculty mentors need to be properly incentivized through institutional recognition and, if used effectively, financial incentives.

One important role of mentoring programs could be to introduce students to the value and benefits of connecting with faculty and coach them how to interact with faculty. Students tend to avoid engaging with faculty beyond formal interactions in the classroom and often have minimal contact (Cole & Griffin, 2013; Cox & Orehovec, 2007). First-generation students and students from lower social classes are even less likely than their more advantaged peers to have frequent and meaningful interactions with faculty (Kim & Sax, 2009; Pike & Kuh, 2005). Many study participants spoke about being initially intimidated and reluctant to engage with their professors, but appreciated when professors initiated interactions outside the classroom and made themselves available. Communicating the value of interacting with faculty is especially important for programs that work with FGLI students whose relative lack of social and cultural capital compared to their more advantaged peers puts them at a disadvantage. FGLI students are often unaware of the many benefits that frequent and substantive interactions with their professors can have. Although the study participants all had meaningful mentoring relationships with faculty, the challenges recruiting participants for this study may suggest that these experiences are rare and might be outliers.

Peer mentoring relationships can also be highly effective, especially for FGLI students. Although this study focused on the experiences of FGLI students with faculty mentors, a few participants mentioned the influence of peer mentors that they were assigned through the SPU Promise program. Given the importance of homophily in the development of mentoring relationships, being assigned a peer mentor during the first two years in college who shares their

FGLI status and other characteristics or interests can prove highly beneficial in helping students "figure out the system" and coach them how to interact with faculty.

Implications for Theory

Previous research on mentoring and theoretical frameworks of mentoring grounded this study. The conceptual framework of *Mentoring Undergraduate Students* developed by Crisp et al. (2017) guided the interview protocol for this study and served as an effective tool to explore the research questions. The theoretical work by Hunt and Michaels (1983) and, to a lesser extent, Kram (1985, 1988), Jacobi (1991), and Nora and Crisp (2007) served as the theoretical foundations for Crisp et al.'s (2017) framework and, by extension, the current study. In addition, Johnson's (2003, 2016) work informed the components of my study that focus on the characteristics, competencies, and behaviors of effective faculty mentors. This study extends the current body of knowledge of mentoring undergraduate students by adding the perspective of first-generation, low-income students, one of the most vulnerable populations who face significant barriers to success and low rates of degree attainment. This section analyzes how Crisp et al.'s (2017) framework informed this study and extends their work by introducing an expanded framework that captures the mentoring needs and experiences of FGLI students.

Crisp et al.'s (2017) integrated framework of *Mentoring Undergraduate Students* (see Figure 1) is based on the mentoring literature to date and was developed to address the lack of theoretical frameworks of mentoring. Their framework was based on Hunt and Michael's (1983) research framework which identified five interconnected mentoring constructs: "(a) the context of the relationship, (b) mentor characteristics, (c) protégé characteristics, (d) stages of the relationship, and (e) outcomes of the relationship for the mentor, protégé, and organization." (Crisp et al., 2017; p. 70-71). In addition, Kram's (1988) foundational work on mentoring

frameworks, which has often been applied to the higher education context, influenced Crisp et al.'s integrated framework. Kram identified two primary mentoring functions: career and psychosocial functions. Crisp et al. (2017) used more recent frameworks that extended Kram's work and identified additional forms of support (Crisp, 2009, 2010; Crisp & Cruz, 2009, 2010; Nora & Crisp, 2007), to distinguish between four forms of support: psychosocial and emotional support, degree completion support, academic content knowledge support, and career development support. These different forms of support provided in mentoring relationships are central to the mentoring experiences.

However, while Kram (1988) categorized role modeling as a form of psychosocial support, other studies identified the existence of a role model as a distinct mentoring function (Jacobi, 1991; Nora & Crisp, 2007; Scandura & Pellegrini, 2008). In an effort to assess Nora & Crisp's (2007) four latent variables of mentoring, which include psychological and emotional support, degree and career support, academic subject knowledge support, and the presence of a role model, Crisp (2010) used the following six items to assess the presence of a role model:

The student having someone whom he or she admires and looks up to regarding college issues, someone who sets a good example, and someone who shares personal examples of difficulties he or she has overcome to accomplish their academic goals. (p. 46)

These aspects played an important role in the experiences of the study participants.

However, Crisp et al.'s (2017) framework did not include role modeling as a separate mentoring function and instead considered role modeling as an aspect of career development support. Given the study participants' strong identification of their mentors as role models, this omission proved to be a weakness of the conceptual model and one of the arguments for the need for an expanded theoretical model that more fully represents the mentoring experiences of FGLI students from diverse backgrounds.

Although the participants described almost all aspects of Crisp et al.'s (2017) conceptual framework of *Mentoring Undergraduate Students*, some parts of the framework proved to be more relevant and significant to their experience than others. The framework components that were not relevant to the participants were "relationship features," which included intent, purpose, intensity, and duration of the mentoring relationship; as well as the form and structure of the relationship. Students did not discuss the parameters that defined their mentoring relationships either because the relationship lacked a clearly defined structure, intent and purpose or because these parameters did not seem important or relevant to the students' perspective on the mentoring relationship. This may be because almost all of the mentoring relationships described in this study formed naturally, outside of formalized programs. While Crisp et al.'s conceptual framework reflects the literature on both formal mentoring programs and informal mentoring relationships, the relationship features, form and structure may be more relevant for formalized relationships rather than those that developed naturally and were carefully cultivated.

The findings of this study point to four aspects that were particularly important to the mentoring experiences of FGLI students: who they were engaging with (the mentor), how the faculty mentor reflected and acknowledged the students' unique background and experiences, the level of depth and engagement that happens within the relationship as a result of the compatibility between the student and the mentor, and the meaning and value FGLI students attribute to these relationships. Within the conceptual framework, the mentor's background, competence, and role at the institution represent only one of several elements of the educational context. For the mentoring relationships in this study, the importance of who the mentor is was of significant importance in contrast to other features of the educational context such as the

institution, department, or program in which they are engaging. Again, this may be a manifestation of the different emphases between formal and informal mentoring relationships.

The "student characteristics" aspect of the conceptual framework played an equally important role as it reflected the participants' background characteristics and predisposition to mentoring. These were particularly significant due to the racial and ethnic diversity of the participants. Students' characteristics, background, and life experiences determined how they selected their mentors and what they needed from the mentoring relationship. The different forms of support that mentors provided also played an important role. Although students spoke more frequently and enthusiastically about the career development support and psychosocial and emotional support they received from their mentors, everyone benefitted from all forms of support. While the interview questions did not ask participants to reflect on specific mentoring outcomes, they instead generated a more general reflection on the influence and value of the mentoring relationships. Participants spoke substantively about the value and meaning they placed on their mentoring relationships. They provided specific examples how their mentoring relationships influenced their academic, personal, and professional development.

Expanded Framework on the Mentoring Needs and Experiences of FGLI Students

By employing Crisp et al.'s (2017) integrated theoretical framework specific to mentoring college students, this study responds to the lack of studies on mentoring that are grounded in theory. While Crisp et al.'s (2017) framework captures important elements of mentoring relationships and provides a useful lens through which to analyze the findings of this study, the findings of this study suggest that the mentoring needs and experiences of FGLI students are more complex given their unique background. In order to better reflect the mentoring experiences of FGLI students, this study proposes an expansion of Crisp et al.'s (2017)

conceptual framework. Figure 3 illustrates the proposed expanded framework (with Figure 1, Crisp et al.'s original framework, reprinted here for comparison).

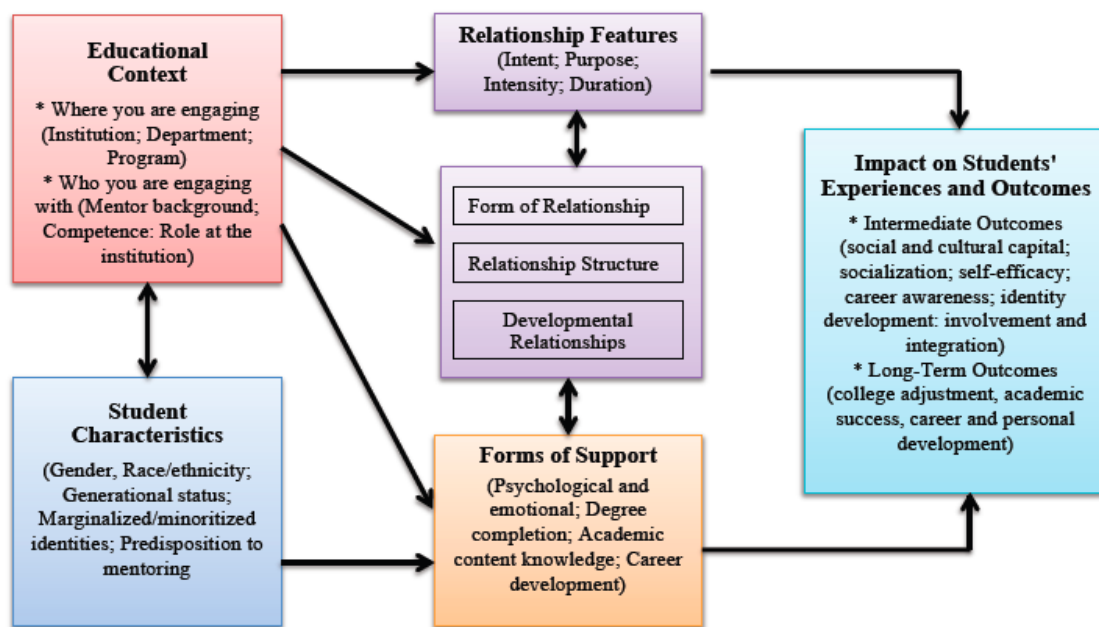


Figure 1. Crisp, Baker, Griffin, Lunsford, and Pifer's (2017) Integrated Conceptual Model of Mentoring Undergraduate Students

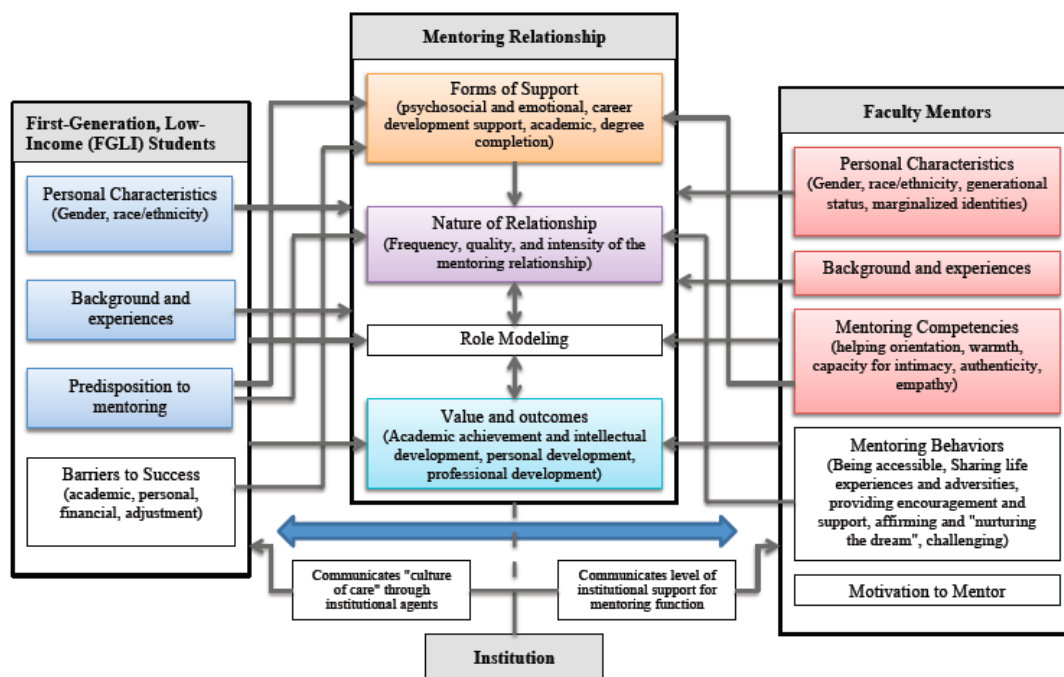


Figure 3. Proposed conceptual model of mentoring needs and experiences of FGLI students.

Figure 3 illustrates a proposed conceptual model that represents the mentoring needs and experiences of FGLI students. The new framework delineates the important connection between the unique background and experiences of the FGLI student protégés and the mentors' characteristics, background and experiences, mentoring competencies and behaviors as well as their motivation to mentor. The compatibility and connection between the two sides of the mentoring dyad influence all aspects of the developmental relationship. The proposed framework expands on Crisp et al.'s (2017) model by amplifying the role of the faculty mentor by considering mentoring competencies, behaviors associated with effective mentoring, as well as motivations to mentor. The color codes identify identical or somewhat modified aspects of Crisp's framework. The following section describes each section of the revised framework and explains how they are linked to other parts of the framework.

FGLI students. In order to better understand the mentoring experiences of FGLI students, it is necessary to fully understand the student protégés whose unique characteristics significantly influence how they select their faculty mentors, how they engage with them, which forms of support are particularly important to them, and how they value the mentoring relationship and its outcomes. Similar to within Crisp et al.'s (2017) framework, the students' characteristics, such as gender, race and ethnicity, and generational status, play a role in how students approach their relationships with faculty. However, this study showed that students' family background as well as the barriers they face to success also play a role. Most of the study participants possessed multiple characteristics of underrepresentation, such as being an FGLI student of color from a rural area. They often spoke about not fitting in or seeing themselves represented on campus. This influenced how they selected their mentors and what forms of

support they needed from the mentoring relationship. For example, students who reported not fitting in benefitted significantly from psychosocial and emotional support.

This study found that in addition to the students' FGLI status, their diverse racial and cultural backgrounds influence their mentoring needs. This confirms and builds on Cox et al.'s (2014) findings that point to the relationship between students' cultural orientation and the value they place on certain mentoring functions. Another important factor that influences the student protégés' approach to engaging in mentoring relationships with faculty are the challenges that FGLI students from diverse backgrounds face in college. The students in this study discussed significant barriers to success including academic challenges and issues related to poverty, as well as challenges around social integration and cultural adaptation. They described lacking confidence, not feeling accepted or understood, the difficulties being confronted with white privilege and the relative wealth of their peers, as well as the lack of support from their families and the negative impact of family problems that were often related to poverty. These challenges influenced how they approached their interactions with faculty and the support that they sought from these relationships.

Institutions. While Crisp et al.'s (2017) framework highlights the importance of the institution, department or program within which mentoring relationships take place, students' individual faculty mentors' qualities and characteristics were more salient. Although almost all mentoring relationships discussed in this study took place outside of formal programs, the institution played an indirect role in mentoring relationships. The institutional environment in itself has important implications for student outcomes and developmental relationships with faculty are considered one of many institutional support structures that foster students' sense of belonging at the institution (Museus et al., 2017). As institutional agents, faculty members'

motivation to invest time and energy into mentoring undergraduate students is at least in part driven by how the institution values this type of engagement. Although SPU currently does not include mentoring roles of faculty members in their tenure and promotion policies, it does place emphasis on creating a "coordinated culture of care" through which all institutional agents support the success of its students. If institutions communicate to faculty members that they not only support but encourage holistic support of students outside of the classroom, more students who need this support will have access to mentors. This, in turn, will support the institution's goal to communicate a "culture of care" to all, but particularly its most vulnerable students.

Faculty mentors. Crisp et al.'s (2017) conceptual framework considers the mentor's background, competences and role at the institution as part of the larger educational context, which also considers where students are engaging with their mentors (i.e. the program or department). For the students in this study, however, the context within which they engaged with their faculty mentor seemed significantly less relevant than the various qualities of who they were engaging with. This was expected since the study primarily described mentoring relationships that developed naturally and was designed to highlight the FGLI students' perspective on characteristics and behaviors of effective mentors. The participants' experiences identified multiple aspects of their mentors that contributed to the positive and influential nature of their mentoring relationship. These included the faculty mentors' personal characteristics, their background and experiences, mentoring competencies and behaviors, as well as their motivations to mentor.

The personal characteristics of faculty members, such as race, gender, generational status played a role in the students' selection of mentors. As outlined in previous sections, FGLI students of color were particularly drawn to professors who shared one or more of their

characteristics of underrepresentation. Although cross-racial mentoring relationships were highly effective, students who had some of the most rewarding mentoring relationships were with mentors in whom they saw themselves. This was especially true for mentoring relationships between female minority students and mentors who shared their identity as women of color. Another important quality of effective mentors was their ability to disclose aspects of their background and experiences, particularly if they were relevant to the student's own experience and struggles. Regardless of the similarities of their personal experiences, students highly valued when their mentors shared aspects of their personal lives which increased mutuality and deepened the mentoring relationship. However, a mentor's ability to share aspects of their personal life not only depends on their capacity for intimacy, but also the institutional culture and context.

The design of this study increased our understanding of the role that the faculty mentors' competences and behaviors played in mentoring relationships. Since FGLI students are even less likely to interact with faculty than their more advantaged peers (Cole & Griffin, 2013; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2006; Schreiner et al., 2011; Walpole, 2008), identifying competencies and behaviors that characterize highly effective and influential mentoring relationships is an important step to increase the frequency and quality of such interactions. The students' descriptions of characteristics, competencies, and behaviors of influential mentors were highly consistent with the emotional and relational abilities of mentors identified by Johnson (2016). Students frequently and substantively described their mentors as possessing a helping orientation, warmth, capacity for intimacy, authenticity, empathy, and positive affectivity. Furthermore, students illustrated behaviors of mentors that made them feel supported in a holistic

way. Influential mentors were accessible, shared their own life experiences and adversities, provided encouragement and support, nurtured their protégés' "dream," and challenged them.

The interplay of the unique combination of characteristics, needs, and competencies of mentors and student protégés influences how mentoring relationships form and develop. Strong mentoring dyads operate beyond the transmission of information from mentor to protégé and characterize unique connections that are often mutually beneficial and promote holistic support to the student. The qualities that faculty mentors possess influence various aspects of the mentoring relationship. For example, mentors who provided significant psychosocial and emotional support tended to possess most, if not all, emotional and relational abilities that participants identified as being important in effective mentoring relationships, such as warmth, a helping orientation, capacity for intimacy, authenticity, empathy, and positive affectivity. Mentor behaviors influence the quality and depth of the mentoring relationship and determine whether or not mentors are perceived as role models. Lastly, the faculty member's motivation to mentor determines how much time and energy they are willing to spend mentoring students, which has an impact on the frequency and quality of their interaction.

Mentoring relationship. The interplay of the unique combination of characteristics, needs, and competencies influenced how mentoring relationships formed and developed. The forms of support that mentors provide, psychosocial and emotional support, degree completion support, academic content knowledge support, and career development support, are largely consistent with Crisp et al.'s (2017) framework. The forms of support that mentors provide to their protégés are a function of the student's mentoring needs, which included their personal and cultural predisposition to mentoring as well as the barriers to success they face and the mentor's mentoring competencies and motivation to mentor. The forms of support students

received within mentoring relationships influenced the nature of the mentoring relationship. For instance, the holistic support that many FGLI students in this study received often included high levels of psychosocial and emotional support, which made the relationship more personal and increased the depth of the interaction.

Although role modeling was not part of Crisp et al.'s (2017) framework, this study's findings showed strong evidence of the role model function of mentoring. As a result, the proposed expanded framework reintroduces the presence of a role model as an important aspect of mentoring relationships. There is no agreement in the literature to date on how to consider role modeling within mentoring relationship. While Kram (1985) considered role modeling as a form of psychosocial and emotional support, others identified role modeling as a distinct mentoring function (Jacobi, 1991; Nora & Crisp, 2007; Scandura & Pellegrini, 2008). Although related to the psychosocial function of mentoring, the findings of this study suggest that role modeling should be treated as a separate function. Instead of being perceived as an intentional act on the part of the mentor, FGLI students perceived some of their mentors as role models. This was often the result of a combination of admiration for the mentor's professional accomplishments and personal qualities, shared values, as well as the students' ability to see themselves in their mentor.

Perceiving their mentor as a role model had a positive effect on the quality of the mentoring relationship as well as the value and meaning FGLI students assigned to it. Although this study did not assess the correlation between role modeling and educational outcomes, participants highly valued the relationships they developed with their mentors. FGLI students spoke about their mentors' role in their academic and intellectual development, including motivating them and instilling a passion for learning, expanding their worldview, and

helping them persevere and persist in completing their degrees. The mentors' impact on their personal development was especially meaningful to students and included increasing self-efficacy, developing a sense of belonging, and supporting identity formation. Lastly, participants described their mentors' role in their professional development which included career awareness, professional socialization, and feeling inspired by their mentors' professional accomplishments. While not a focus of this study, future studies should continue to analyze the relationship between mentoring and educational outcomes for FGLI and other underrepresented students.

This study not only responds to the need of grounding empirical studies on mentoring in theory by employing Crisp et al.'s (2017) framework, but also addresses the lack of theoretical frameworks on mentoring (Crisp et al., 2017). The proposed expanded framework on the mentoring needs and experiences of FGLI students fills this gap in the mentoring literature by specifically addressing the unique experiences of this underrepresented student population. The revised framework explains aspects of the human connection between faculty mentors and FGLI student protégés that are particularly significant in the development of effective and influential mentoring relationships.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study not only provided significant insight into the mentoring experiences of FGLI students, but its findings and limitations raise a number of additional questions. I approached this study with the goal to give voice to one of the most underrepresented student groups, FGLI students. The results of this study identify several areas for future research opportunities. In order to enhance this study's contributions to understanding the lived experience of FGLI students with regards to mentoring, future research should focus on five domains related to mentoring FGLI students: the perspective of faculty mentors; the mentoring needs of FGLI students; the role of

race and gender in FGLI students' mentoring relationships; the role model function of mentoring; and the role of other institutional agents in mentoring FGLI students. The following section describes each of these recommendations in detail.

The Faculty Perspective

I made the decision to limit the scope of this dissertation to the FGLI student perspective on mentoring relationships because I wanted to highlight the missing voices and perspectives of FGLI students in the literature on mentoring FGLI and other underrepresented students. The highly engaged and influential mentoring relationships described in this study raised a significant number of questions regarding the faculty mentors' roles in these developmental relationships. While the results of this study allowed for inferences about the faculty side of the mentoring equation, it identified two primary aspects of the mentor's role that would be particularly useful in facilitating our understanding of the faculty perspective in mentoring relationships in the success of FGLI students. These include faculty motivations and benefits to mentoring FGLI students and the faculty costs of mentoring FGLI students.

Faculty motivations and benefits to mentoring FGLI students. The majority of the faculty mentors described by the FGLI student participants were highly invested in their protégés' success. Many clearly took on roles that fell outside of the "expected role behavior" of faculty (DeAngelo et al., 2015, p. 27). Given the significant investment on the parts of most mentors described in this study, assessing the motivations of faculty to become mentors is essential. Why and how do professors choose to become mentors? What benefits do they derive from mentoring undergraduate students, and FGLI students in particular, and what value do they attribute to their work with students? Are their motivations to mentor primarily intrinsic or do they have external incentives to dedicate time to mentoring students? How does the way in

which institutions value mentoring and communicate this to faculty influence faculty's willingness to dedicate their time to mentoring? Future research should also contribute to understanding how effective faculty mentors develop competencies and behaviors that make them effective as mentors and allow them to generate positive outcomes for FGLI students (i.e. sense of belonging and self-efficacy). Addressing these questions would help inform institutions how well faculty were prepared for often highly engaged mentoring roles and what can be done to support them.

Furthermore, students in this study were often extremely grateful to their mentors for their dedication to their success. Future studies that explore both sides of the mentoring relationship should include an investigation of whether influential faculty mentors are aware of the potential impact that they have on their mentees and explore how awareness of their impact affects their job satisfaction and predisposition to mentor. Additionally, future studies should explore the benefits of mentoring FGLI students to faculty. Mentoring FGLI and minority students may provide benefits for faculty mentors, such as increasing their awareness of the challenges facing these students that may inform other aspects of their academic work.

Faculty costs to mentoring FGLI students. The time and energy faculty mentors invested in supporting their FGLI student protégés in a holistic way must come at an expense. Faculty have limited time and energy, which means they can only enter highly-engaged mentoring relationships with a limited number of students at a given time. Which students did they choose to support and how did they make these decisions? While the students' descriptions of the relationships suggested that most mentoring relationships experienced a high level of mutuality, it was unclear whether the faculty members experienced the relationships in a similarly positive way. The students' accounts of their interactions with their mentors were

exclusively positive, despite a specific interview question about negative interactions. Was the same true for the faculty side of the relationship?

Crisp et al. (2017) point out that very little is known about the specific strategies mentors use to implement various mentoring functions. The students' high level of satisfaction with their mentoring relationships and perceived impact on their personal and professional development invites questions about how mentors are prepared for the various mentoring functions. Given the high need for psychosocial and emotional support among FGLI students identified in this and other studies, future research should explore how willing and prepared faculty are in order to fulfill all mentoring functions and provide holistic support. Counseling students without becoming a counselor requires the ability to set boundaries, which Johnson (2016) identified as an important skill of effective mentors. Future studies should assess if and how are mentors are able to establish boundaries while still meeting the mentoring needs of some of the most vulnerable students. There are a myriad of questions related to the faculty mentor side of mentoring relationships that would further illuminate the role of faculty in the college experience of FGLI students.

The Mentoring Needs of FGLI Students

In order to improve retention and graduation rates among FGLI students, future studies need to continue to assess what makes mentoring relationships effective for FGLI students and how they impact students' success and retention. Understanding the mentoring needs of diverse students, including FGLI students and students from minority backgrounds, is essential in this endeavor. The results of this study join existing research in identifying the influence of students' background and characteristics on their predisposition to mentoring (Cox et al., 2014; Lunsford, 2011). Although the current study relied on data from interviews with only twelve students, the

racial diversity among participants allowed insight into very different mentoring needs depending on the students' background and experiences. The students' ethnic and cultural background seems to be related to the types of mentoring support students need to succeed and persist in college. Future research could include a comparative study of mentoring experiences across racial and ethnic identities in order to more fully illuminate the mentoring needs and experiences of students from different backgrounds. Another important aspect is access to mentoring, which can be particularly low for FGLI and minority students (Cole & Griffin, 2013). Subsequent studies should assess how FGLI students perceive their access to mentoring relationships with faculty and identify barriers FGLI students face in developing meaningful developmental relationships with their professors

The Role of Race and Gender in Mentoring Relationships

The findings of this study show that race and gender played a significant role in the ways in which FGLI students experienced their mentoring relationships. The differences were particularly strong for female FGLI students of color who gravitated toward female faculty mentors of color who shared some of their background characteristics and related experiences. Future studies should explore how much of a role the professors' race and ethnicity plays in the selection of mentors using a larger sample of a diverse group of FGLI students. How did race and ethnicity impact the nature and outcomes of mentoring relationships? Similarly, this study found differences in mentoring relationships based on gender. Female FGLI students had some of the strongest and most influential mentoring relationships with female professors. They also exhibited a higher need for psychosocial and emotional support than their male counterparts and placed more importance on engaging with same-gender mentors. Subsequent studies should

analyze the different needs in mentoring support based on the students' gender, gendered areas of diversity, and age.

The Role Model Function of Mentoring

The role model function of mentoring relationships was particularly pronounced when FGLI students were able to see themselves in their mentors. Although a shared minority background was a high predictor of how strongly students identified seeing their mentors as a role model, future studies should explore this dimension with larger participant samples from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. For the students in this study, mentors who had to overcome adversities similar to their own and become successful served as important role models for this highly vulnerable group of students. Subsequent research should explore how FGLI students identify role models and analyze the outcomes associated with having powerful role models. Additionally, future research should address the faculty side of role modeling and explore if and how faculty mentors role model intentionally.

The Role of Other Institutional Agents in Mentoring FGLI Students

Administrators, staff, and graduate students may also play an important role in mentoring FGLI students, which warrants investigation. I decided to focus this study on mentoring relationships between students and faculty because mentoring relationships differ depending on the role of the institutional agent. While staff and administrators who take on mentoring roles are often tasked with various aspects of student support, their contributions to student success are generally undervalued and need to be better understood. Quite a few students alluded to additional mentoring relationships with administrators, staff, graduate students, and peer mentors. Given the importance of having access to mentors who share their race and gender for some minority students and the continued underrepresentation of minority faculty at PWI,

exploring the mentoring capacities of other institutional agents is important. Future studies should address the gap in the literature on the role of higher education staff and administrators in students' development and success. The findings of this study demonstrate high levels of career development support as well as psychosocial and emotional support, but lower levels of academic and degree completion support. This may suggest that there are differences between faculty and staff or administrators in the types of mentoring support they provide. Subsequent studies should explore the differences in mentoring support and its impact on FGLI student outcomes across institutional agents.

Chapter Summary

This descriptive qualitative study provided a detailed understanding of how first-generation, low-income students experience and make meaning of influential faculty mentoring relationships. This study contributes new understandings of the role and impact of faculty mentoring on the college experience of FGLI students by adding the voice of one of the most marginalized undergraduate student populations. The major findings of this study revealed that FGLI students are most drawn to and influenced by faculty mentors who exemplify someone in whom they see themselves; someone who makes them feel like they matter and belong; someone who nurtures their "dream"; and someone who they want to be like. These findings highlight the role faculty mentors play in humanizing the educational experience for FGLI students from diverse backgrounds, many of whom struggle to see themselves represented at PWIs. Consistent with previous studies (e.g. Museus & Neville, 2011; Schreiner et al., 2011), the authenticity and genuine care that mentors showed their protégés were some of the most important and most highly valued qualities of effective mentors.

Although the study largely validates the conceptual framework on which it was based, Crisp et al.'s (2017) integrated framework on *Mentoring Undergraduate Students*, it illuminates the complexity of mentoring needs and experiences of FGLI students and identifies aspects of the framework that are particularly relevant to this student population. These include aspects related to the students' unique backgrounds and experiences and particularly emphasize how characteristics and qualities of the faculty mentors influence the mentoring relationship and the impact it has on FGLI students. The participants' descriptions of influential faculty mentors reveal a strong correlation with Johnson's (2016) mentor competencies and abilities that delineate who good mentors are and what they do.

Faculty mentors played an important role in mitigating the significant challenges and barriers to success that most of the FGLI students in this study experienced, including academic challenges, issues related to poverty, as well as challenges around social integration and cultural adaptation. Faculty mentors who made a significant difference in the college experience of FGLI students were those to whom students were able to relate because they shared aspects of their identity or life experiences and communicated that they truly cared about students and believed in their ability to succeed. They constantly affirmed that their protégés belonged at the university. Influential mentors actively supported and nurtured them, challenged them academically, and supported and guided their career aspirations. The mentors' dedication to their protégés' success combined with their ability to show up as their authentic selves and engage with and see their protégés as people, and not just students, was particularly meaningful to FGLI students.

The study builds on Crisp et al.'s (2017) work by proposing an expanded framework that more closely reflects the mentoring needs and experiences of FGLI students. In addition to

highlighting characteristics, experiences, competencies, and behaviors of faculty mentors that are conducive to supporting FGLI students in a meaningful way, the revised model includes the role model function of mentoring. While Kram (1985) considered role modeling as a form of psychosocial and emotional support, this study differentiates role modeling from an intentional act on the part of the mentors and instead focuses on the student's perception of their mentor as a role model. FGLI students described how they admired and were inspired by their mentors' personal qualities and professional accomplishments. The role model function of mentoring was particularly pronounced in relationships between female minority students who had female faculty mentors who shared their identity as women of color. Although female minority FGLI students were particularly drawn to, and perceived as role models, faculty mentors who shared their characteristics of underrepresentation, including race, gender, backgrounds and life experiences, all minority students had influential mentoring relationships with faculty who did not match their minority identity. The personal connection with faculty mentors who are authentic, caring, and invested in their success positively impacted the college experience of FGLI students because it humanized the educational experience.

While this study focused specifically on FGLI students' positive relationships with faculty mentors, it is highly encouraging that a group of FGLI students from diverse backgrounds placed such high value on these connections to faculty. The students' accounts not only reveal the significant benefits of mentoring relationships for their personal, academic, and professional development, they also suggest that such high-involvement relationships are unique and potentially rare. While my findings substantiate and build on the current literature on mentoring college students, more research is needed to understand the mentoring needs and experiences of FGLI, minority, and other student populations that are underrepresented at PWIs

in order to identify ways in which they can be better supported. The motivations, benefits, and costs of mentoring underrepresented students to faculty must also be better understood. High-involvement relationships with students are not only time consuming, but can be personally taxing especially when they involve a high degree of psychosocial and emotional support like those described in this study. Institutions of higher education must recognize the value of mentoring in helping FGLI students succeed in college. Creating an institutional culture of care in which high-risk students are holistically supported by faculty who are prepared, encouraged, and rewarded for mentoring students will be an important step toward the national goal of increasing graduation rates of high-risk students who will contribute to society and our economy in important ways.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Framework Alignment

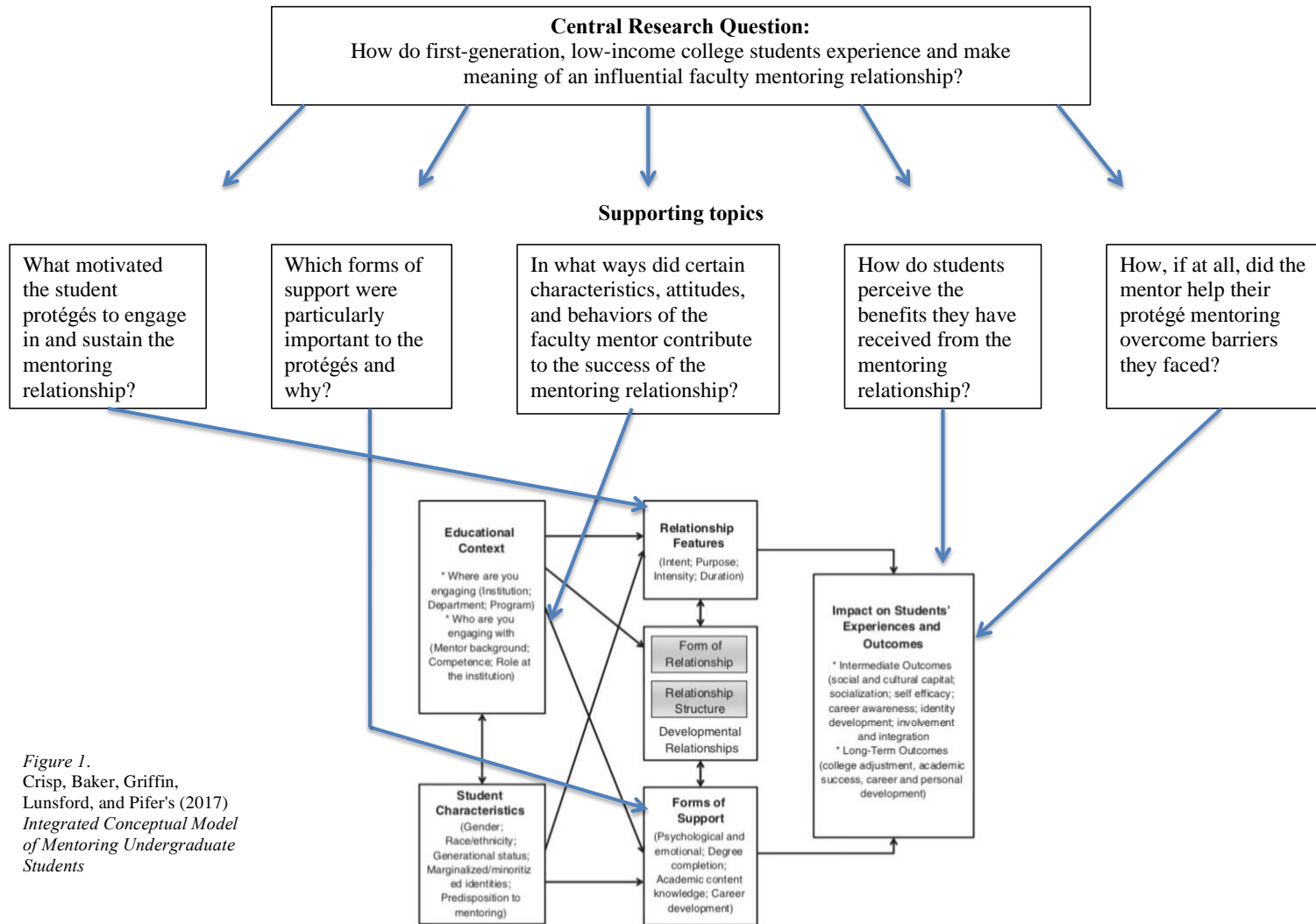


Figure 1.
Crisp, Baker, Griffin,
Lunsford, and Pifer's (2017)
*Integrated Conceptual Model
of Mentoring Undergraduate
Students*

Appendix B – Participant Questionnaire

Full Name: _____

When did you graduate from SPU? _____

Were you a SPU Promise Scholar? Yes / No

Which groups would you say you are a member of? (Circle all that apply)

- Male
- Female

- Black
- White
- Hispanic
- Asian
- Other: _____

Are you the first person in your immediate family to complete a bachelor's degree?

Yes / No

During your time at SPU, did you have at least one professor with whom you had a mentoring relationship? (A mentoring relationship is defined as "a purposeful and intentional commitment on the part of the mentor to the growth, development, and success of the student, which is rooted in long-term caring").

- Yes, more than one professor
- Yes, one professor
- Not sure
- No

In what context did you interact with your mentor (check all that apply)?

- Joint research project
- Experiential learning activities (i.e. service-learning course, study abroad, first-year seminars, internship, senior honors thesis)
- Shared academic interests
- Shared professional interests
- As part of a formal mentoring program
- Other: _____

How often did you interact with (outside of the classroom) the most influential professor you had during your time at SPU?

- Rarely (1-4 times during your time on campus)
- Intermittently (a few times over multiple semesters)
- Frequently (often over the course of multiple semesters)
- Very frequently (very often over the course of multiple semesters)

How meaningful were those interactions for you?

- Not meaningful at all
- Somewhat meaningful
- Very meaningful

What types of support did your mentor provide (select all that apply):

- Academic support (i.e. academic content knowledge)
- Psychosocial and emotional support (i.e. support and encouragement beyond classroom interactions)
- Degree completion support (support that specifically helped you transition or stay in college)
- Career development

How important were those interactions with you faculty mentor to your undergraduate experience at SPU?

- Not important at all
- Somewhat important
- Very Important
- Absolutely essential

What would be the location of your choice for the interview? OR Where will you be this summer (mid-June - late July)? _____

Appendix C – Interview Protocol

Date	
Time	
Location	
Interviewer name	
Interviewer pseudonym	
Interviewer email	
Interviewer phone	

Introduction:

Thank you for taking time to meet with me today. My name is Friederike Seeger and I am a graduate student at North Carolina State University. I worked with the SPU Promise last summer and worked at SPU for ten years before overseeing study abroad programs through Honors SPU before deciding to work on my dissertation full-time. As part of my PhD degree, I am studying first-generation students from low-income families and their experience with faculty mentors. Our conversation will last about an hour, but should last no longer than 90 minutes. During this conversation, I will ask you to reflect on various aspects of your mentoring relationship. There is no right or wrong answer, just a sincere interest on my part in understanding your experience with faculty mentoring and how it impacted you. Everything that you tell me will remain confidential. This means that your responses will only be shared with the research team. I will ensure that any information I include in the report does not identify you. We do not have to discuss anything that you do not want to and you may end the interview at any time. You can ask questions at any time during the interview. Do you have any questions before we start? Are you willing to participate in the interview?

Part 1: Introduction / College Transition

- Congratulations on getting your bachelor's degree. Tell me a bit about yourself and how you decided to come to SPU.
- How does it make you feel to become the first person in your family to graduate from college?
- When you first arrived at SPU, what was particularly challenging for you?
- During your time at SPU, did you ever question your decision to enroll there? What has encouraged you to stay?
- How did you figure out how to be successful in college?

Part 2: Mentoring Relationships

- I am interested in hearing about a professor who has had a positive impact on your experience at SPU and you self-identified as having had an influential mentor. Who was that professor for you and how would you describe him/her? (ST1, 2,3)
Probing questions:

- Characteristics (gender, race, class taught etc.)
- How did you meet your faculty mentor, Professor X? (ST 1)
Probing question: Did you meet him/her through a formal mentoring program or on your own?
- Interacting with faculty can be intimidating and uncomfortable for some students. What was it about your faculty mentor that made you want to interact with him/her outside of class? (ST 1, 3)
- Can you describe your mentoring relationship with your faculty mentor and how it evolved over time? (STs 1, 3)
Probing questions:
 - What kinds of mentorship experiences did you engage in? (STs 2, 5)
 - What kinds of things did you talk about with your mentor? (STs 2, 5)
 - How, if at all, did technology play a role in how you interacted with your mentor?
- What was about him or her that has impacted you (characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors)? Can you give me a few examples of things your mentor said or did that were particularly helpful or important to you? (STs 2, 3, 4, 5)
- What qualities do you value the most in your mentor?
Probing question:
 - What three words would you use to describe him/her? (ST 3)
- Was there anything that you didn't like in your interactions with professor X, anything that upset you? (STs 3, 4)
- What kinds of things did you do that contributed to the success of the relationship? (ST 1)

Part 3: Perceptions on Impact of Mentoring

Now, I would like to shift gears a bit and ask you to reflect on what has contributed to your success in college.

- Everyone relies on some combination of support from friends, family, peers, faculty, staff, or other people in their lives. What has been the most important source of support for you in your journey through college? (ST 5)
- Where would you place your mentoring relationship with professor X, in terms of its importance to your success in college? (STs 2,4,5)
- What was about him or her that has impacted you?
Probing question:
 - Can you give me a few examples of things your mentor said or did that were particularly helpful or important to you? (STs 2, 3, 4, 5)
- Research has shown that mentors provide different forms of support to their student mentees, including academic support, including support related to academic content knowledge, degree completion, career development, and psychosocial and emotional support. What are your thoughts on that? What, if any, has been your experience with these types of support?

- How, if at all, has your faculty mentor helped you overcome some of the challenges you faced during your time at SPU? (ST 5)
- How, if at all, did your mentor help you engage with/integrate in the campus community or develop a sense of belonging at SPU?
- What role, if any, did your mentor play in your engagement with and integration into the campus community?
- In what ways, if at all, did your interactions with your faculty mentor help you think about or prepare you for life after college? (ST 4)

Part 4: Closing

- Now that you have graduated, how what is the status of your relationship with Professor X? Do you think you will keep in touch?
- If you could offer advice to faculty at SPU for what they could do that would help more students like you succeed, what would you say?
- If you could offer advice to incoming SPU Promise Scholars who will be the firsts in their families to graduate, what advice would you give them about interacting with faculty?
- As a SPU Promise Scholar, what could the SPU Promise Office have done better that would have improved your experience at SPU?

Probing questions:

- Were you aware of the first-year mentoring program offered through the SPU Promise? If so, how useful was it?
- What types of support/activities did you take advantage of and what would you like to see them offer in the future?
- Is there anything you would like to add that I didn't ask about that you want me to understand about your mentoring experience?

Please note that participation in this study requires 1.5 - 2 hours of your time during the face-to-face interview. You will be compensated for your time with a \$50 gift certificate.