TEACHERS’ PERCEPTIONS OF INTERPERSONAL MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS IN ONE EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTORING PROGRAM

By

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To Bonesy
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The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain a greater understanding of the interpersonal relationships between mentors and mentees in one early childhood, teacher-initiated, mentoring program. The mentoring program was designed to facilitate the induction process of newly-employed teachers into the university-based early childhood center. Mentoring for professional development in education, specifically in early childhood, has been portrayed as a cure-all for a wide variety of instructive and logistical ills. Research has established, however, that the effectiveness of mentoring for professional development in any educational setting is contingent upon the quality of the interpersonal relationship between the mentor and mentee. This study explored the interpersonal mentoring relationships of six early childhood teachers through the use of qualitative research methods. These methods provided an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of how the quality of mentoring relationships influenced the mentees’ induction process at the center. Data from participants’ interviews were collected and analyzed using grounded theory techniques. Findings illustrated how four aspects of the early childhood environment influenced interpersonal mentoring relationships. The four environments identified through data analysis of the participants’ interviews were: the
physical environment, the professional environment, the social environment, and the emotional environment. An auxiliary category, personal characters, also emerged as being influential to mentoring relationships. However, looking through the lens of environmental influences made it possible to explore mentoring relationships in the context of the multifaceted and complex setting of early childhood education.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Background

My journey to understand the complexities of mentoring relationships among early childhood teachers began five years ago when I was a research assistant on a study designed to prevent challenging behavior in young children. The university-based study consisted of an early childhood behavior-prevention strategy based on the Positive Behavioral Supports model for classroom management (see Lewis & Sugai, 1999) and was developed, by a professor and three doctoral students in North Central Florida. My duties, as a special education graduate student, included observing the behavior of 2-3-year-olds, collecting data on the frequency of their “challenging” behaviors (disruption, aggression, and non-compliance), and training Early Head Start (EHS) teachers on the use of the intervention. As a result of my work in the teacher-training component of the study, I was initiated into the world of in-class mentoring for professional development. Moreover, during my 18 months at the EHS center two pivotal occurrences sparked my desire to understand the interpersonal aspects of mentoring relationships and, in particular, mentoring relationships in early childhood.

First, during the data collection phase of the study, I saw very few challenging behaviors in the young children I was observing. There was an occasional tantrum but for the most part, these so-called “at risk” toddlers (Kaiser, Cai, Hancock, & Foster, 2002) seemed like typically developing 2- and 3-year-olds to me. This process caused me to question the validity of a study where young children are identified as “at risk” based on socioeconomic status and have data collected on them with respect to frequency of certain behaviors. The behaviors in question were carefully delineated by
the designers of the study, yet, subject to the perceptions of the data collectors. This process also caused me to question my personal ethics about objectifying children and reducing them to data points on a graph. I saw children singled-out for having challenging behaviors who didn’t appear to be different than their age peers who weren’t singled-out. Once they were labeled as having challenging behaviors, the occurrence and frequency of the identified behaviors became data points on a graph which was then used as evidence for implementing the intervention. As much as I believed in the philosophy of the concepts in the project and the behavioral supports model for prevention of challenging behavior in young children, I didn’t feel comfortable with the methods used to collect and analyze data.

The second occurrence is what would subsequently inform my desire to study mentoring relationships: I wasn’t welcomed in the EHS classroom. Even though the research team (myself included) had presented in-service trainings for the teachers, introduced them to the ideas of the study, carefully explained the intervention for the children, and had permission from the director and the teachers at EHS to begin implementation of the study, I was not welcomed as a teacher-trainer in the classroom. When I showed up, ready to observe children and collect data, the teachers did not want me there. I said “hello” and tried to make conversation but they avoided making eye-contact with me and ignored me. When I tried to talk to them about the particulars of the study, I received even more resistance. I discussed this dilemma with one of my colleagues from the project who was working in an adjacent classroom. She was having a similar experience; she wasn’t seeing any problem behaviors and the teachers weren’t welcoming. It seemed as if it was impossible to bridge this gap between
ourselves and the teachers. As we reflected on our roles as researchers in the EHS classroom and shared our feelings about the work we were doing, we tried to understand how and why our presence in the classroom was creating tension.

We speculated that we weren’t welcomed in our respective classrooms for two primary reasons: First of all, we perceived that we were unwelcomed due to of the nature of the early childhood classroom environment: young children had immediate needs; teachers were overwhelmed with the physical care of the children as well as their teaching responsibilities; teachers were often absent, leaving the responsibility of caring for their children to the teachers who were present; teachers were expected to do chores and tasks at the center that were not directly related to their work with children, thus devaluing their professional status as teachers; the teacher turnover rate was high; and often their requests to the administration for supplies and toys were either ignored or denied. Consequently, we perceived that our presence in the classroom must have seemed like another obligation for which the teachers didn’t have time, especially since we had positioned ourselves as detached researchers. We decided that we needed to be more involved in the classroom by helping the teachers with the immediate needs of the children and any other support we could offer. Secondly, we speculated that the teachers were unwilling to work with us because, even though we had classroom strategies to offer them, as researchers and data collectors we were detached from what was actually happening in the classroom: the care and education of young children.

During this time I read a study by Diane Zigo (2001) which suggested that researchers could negotiate reciprocity with classroom teachers by offering
“collaborative labor” (p.353). Not only did the concept of reciprocity seem intuitive to me in terms of developing relationships with the teachers at EHS, I also agreed with Zigo's idea of trying to neutralize the power differential between university researchers and classroom teachers by offering to assist teachers in the classroom while collecting data. I understood that ultimately, if my work at EHS was assisting teachers and helping children, then I would need to be immersed in the classroom by working with teachers and children.

My colleague and I decided to create reciprocity and bridge the gap between ourselves and the teachers by becoming more actively involved in the workings of the classroom. The next time I went to EHS I got on the floor and played with the children; I helped the teachers prepare and serve meals; I continued to pursue dialogues with the teachers; I went to the playground and helped when children fell down or got hurt. I became part of the classroom. My interactions with the children became a daily occurrence. I stopped collecting formal data and continued helping the teachers. I believe this shift in perspective and commitment to work in the classroom helped me develop rapport with the teachers and I noticed their attitudes slowly beginning to change.

Meanwhile, the behavioral intervention study was progressing and it was time to introduce the first module of the classroom management strategies. By this time, I felt I had developed some credibility with the teachers and we collaborated on the implementation of the first intervention. As the teachers and I worked together, and became familiar with each other, we began to share our experiences and knowledge with respect to the children and the classroom. Since I was new to the EHS classroom
and culture, the main teacher I worked with began to mentor me on the policies and procedures of the center. Furthermore, because she was African American and most of the children at the center were African American, she began to mentor me on the cultural aspects of working with the families of the children. In turn, I mentored her on the specifics of the university-designed study and what I knew about early childhood behavior, development, and classroom management. Together we developed what we perceived to be a reciprocal mentoring relationship.

Our mentoring relationship was not like the mythological mentoring relationship described in Homer’s Odyssey where a “wise and kindly elder, a surrogate parent,” protects and provides support for a younger protégé (Colley, 2002, p. 260). What we were experiencing was a mentoring relationship which provided us with an exchange of information from our various funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992), as well as emotional and personal support, and as a result, we also became friends.

Having emotional and personal support was particularly helpful to us because of the continuous demands of working with young children: general, daily care of the children; extra assistance necessary to work with toddlers who had special needs; duties and tasks that needed to be performed to keep the classroom running smoothly; coverage for teachers who were absent; and negotiating with the administration for supplies and toys for the children. After having such a profound experience with mentoring at EHS, I was convinced that in-class mentoring was an excellent method of professional development for early childhood teachers as well as a way to assuage some of the challenges of the early childhood setting such as (a) support for new teachers, (b) on-going support for veteran teachers, (c) professional development
related to children with special needs, (d) basic classroom management strategies, and (e) the retention of dedicated, over-worked teachers,

I began to look for academic literature that focused on in-class mentoring as professional development for early childhood teachers. I found two empirical studies (Heung-Ling, 2003 and Pavia, Nissen, Hawkins, Monroe, & Filimon-Demyen, 2003), and many theoretical articles that purported the value of mentoring for teachers in early childhood settings (Baptiste & Sheerer, 1997; Espinosa, 2002; Howes, James, & Ritchie, 2003; Katz, 1977; Ryan, Hornbeck & Frede, 2004; Saluja, Early & Clifford, 2002; VanderVen, 1994). I also found a multitude of literature on the different ways mentoring has been and is currently being used for professional development in education. Following is a definition of mentoring and a brief review of the various ways mentoring is used in educational settings.

**Definition of Mentoring**

Traditionally mentoring referred to a relationship between a father-type figure who guided a younger person, or protégé, through the learning process of some meaningful skill or trade (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004). This mentoring relationship usually occurred organically when an older, wiser person, aware of the struggles of a younger person, offered to share his guidance and expertise on the matter. Mentoring has played a significant role in the educational process of humankind from the earliest recorded Greek philosophers to the most modern day mentor teachers (Colley, 2002). Mentoring continues to occur in educational settings formally when veteran teachers are assigned to novice teachers to help with the induction process. Informal mentoring also occurs when experienced teachers and novice teachers serendipitously find each other and work together (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent).
Mentoring for Professional Development

The introduction of formal mentoring programs in education began as a result of affirmative action legislation in the 1980s (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004). At that time it was believed that mentoring was an efficacious way to promote women and individuals from non-Caucasian backgrounds in professional settings such as higher education (Abell, Dillon, Hopkins, McInerney, & O’Brien, 1995; Dedrick & Watson, 2002; Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent). Formal mentoring programs were designed to achieve the goal of professional development but many were unsuccessful due to the complex nature of the mentor/mentee relationship (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent; Hawkey, 1997). Issues of incompatibility occurred when mentors and mentees were mismatched with respect to personality, age, class, race, gender, and knowledge base (Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004; Pavia, et al., 2003). Most importantly, perhaps, it was discovered that the quality of the interpersonal mentoring relationship affected the learning process: mentees learned more in relationships when they felt comfortable with their mentors. As a result, concerns were raised about the need for further research to understand the nature of the mentoring relationship (Bullough & Draper, 2004; Ford, Higgins & Fisher, 1999; Stanulis & Russell, 2000; Young, Alvermann, Kaste, Henderson, & Many, 2004; Young, Bullough, Draper, Smith, & Erickson, 2005). The mentoring relationship is described here as the roles, activities, and conditions necessary to create an opportunity where mentees can successfully learn from their mentors (Hawkey, 1997). To date, however, very few empirical studies have been conducted that examined the interpersonal mentoring relationship in education (Bullough & Draper; Glazer & Hannafin, 2006; Kochan & Trimble, 2000), and
even fewer have been done within the context of early childhood education (Heung-Ling, 2003; Pavia, et al.).

**Mentoring: The Interpersonal Relationship**

Empirical studies on the effectiveness of mentoring for professional development, at all levels of education, have emphasized the importance of the personal interactions between the mentor and mentee, in other words, the mentoring relationship (Hawkey, 1997 & 2006; Heung –Ling, 2003; Pavia, et al., 2003; Stanulis & Russell, 2000; Tauer, 1998; Young, et al., 2005). The quality of the relationship between the mentor and the mentee is essential to the development of the competent teacher (Hawkey; 1997; Heung –Ling; Stanulis & Russell; Tauer). “The essence of mentoring lies in the relationship” (Heung-Ling, p.34). A successful mentoring relationship is defined as a relationship where “sustained positive interactions” occur between mentor and mentee (Tauer, p. 206). If mentors and mentees find a common ground on which to build communication, trust, and respect, they perceive that their relationships are successful (Stanulis & Russell). Conversely, if mentors and mentees struggle to establish communication, trust, and respect, they are less likely to find mentoring beneficial as a learning experience for professional development (Hawkey, 1997; Heung –Ling).

Challenges to the development of successful mentoring relationships can also be a result of a mismatch of individuals with respect to personality, age, class, race, gender, and knowledge base (Dedrick & Watson, 2002; Ehrich, Hansford, & Tennent, 2004). Other issues that can create problems in the mentoring relationship are differences in experience and skill levels, time and space limitations, and, in early childhood settings, the presences of young children (Abell, et al., 1995; Pavia, et al.,
Additionally, Lucas (2001) explained that the element of expectation can significantly affect the mentoring relationship:

Mentoring has historically been subjected to retrospective analysis whose positive conclusions might result in heightened expectations for those individuals who are currently in the mentoring process. It is important to note that the day-to-day process of building a relationship between a mentor and mentee is based upon complex issues whose results are often not immediately identifiable nor easily predictable in terms of overall success. (p. 23)

Because these conditions can influence the interpersonal relationships of mentors and mentees, and ultimately the goal of effective mentoring, some educators have suggested the implementation of mentor-training programs (Evertson & Smithey, 2000). On the other hand, some educators express concerns that since mentoring relationships are idiosyncratic, based on the individuals in the relationship, mentor-training programs would be ineffectual (Hawkey, 1997). Regardless of these opposing views, researchers agree that it is important to gain a greater understanding of interpersonal mentoring relationships (Hawkey; Heung-Ling, 2003; Stanulis & Russell, 2000). It has been suggested that through gathering descriptive data on mentoring relationships, it is possible to understand the dynamics of these relationships. To date, although a great deal of literature promotes, praises, and prescribes mentoring for professional development in teacher-education, very few studies have been done that actually focus on the interpersonal relationships between mentors and mentees (Abell et al.; Hawkey; Heung-Ling; Pavia et al.; Stanulis & Russell). As mentioned previously, there are only two empirical studies that examine mentoring relationships in the early childhood setting (Heung-Ling; Pavia et al.). The current study was designed to address this lack of empirical research and understanding of the interpersonal mentoring relationships with early childhood teachers.
Mentoring in Educational Settings

Despite the difficulties associated with the mentor/mentee relationship, and the limited amount of research available on interpersonal mentoring relationships, mentoring continues to be an essential part of teacher preparation programs and professional development at universities and in other educational institutions (Head Start Information and Publication Center (HSIPC), 2001; National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) 2005; Sundli, 2007; White & Mason, 2003). Mentoring is “portrayed as an unqualified good, a solution to a wide range of human problems . . .” (Bullough & Draper, 2004, p.407). Mentoring is credited with lowering the attrition rate of beginning teachers in general education, teachers working in early childhood settings, teachers working with culturally and linguistically diverse populations, and teachers who work with children with special needs (Billingsley, Carlson, & Klein, 2004; Early & Winton, 2001; Evertson & Smithey, 2000; Horm, 2003; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). It is also considered by some as a more effective delivery system for professional development of experienced teachers than the traditional one-day, workshop or in-service trainings typically used in education (Fullan, 2001). Consequently, mentoring has been used formally and informally in a variety of educational settings since the 1980s. The examination of every application of mentoring in education for professional development is beyond the scope of this study; however it is important to note at least three significant ways in which mentoring is used for professional development in education related to the topics being addressed in this study.
Mentoring in Early Childhood

The importance of mentoring early childhood teachers in professional development has been a topic of scholarly discussion for more than three decades (Katz, 1977; VanderVen, 1994). According to Katz, beginning teachers, especially those in early childhood settings, experience high levels of anxiety and need the ongoing encouragement of veteran teachers. Early childhood educational and care centers (ECECC) by definition offer unique challenges to teachers. Lack of professional recognition and respect for early childhood teachers has justified the payment of low wages which in turn has created high attrition, high absenteeism, and low morale among the early childhood workforce (Goodfellow, 2003). Furthermore, the care and education of young children can be physically demanding as well as emotionally, psychologically, and intellectually challenging. McGrath and Huntington (2007) explain that working in an ECECC is physically demanding due to repeated handling of young children and can put teachers at risk for developing musculoskeletal injuries. Furthermore, teachers who work in ECECC usually have responsibilities or chores that require “bending, stooping, squatting, reaching, and carrying of loads,” (McGrath & Huntington, p. 33). Added to these physical challenges is the fact that close contact with children puts early childhood teachers at a greater risk for contracting a variety of infectious diseases (Bradley, 2003).

Due to the nature of the work required from teachers in early childhood, VanderVen (1994) explains that preschool teachers experience different stages of classroom competence, and in the first year, during the “survival stage” they may struggle with anxiety about whether or not they are capable of meeting the educational needs of their young students (p. 85). It is also important to note that Spodek and
Saracho (1990) reported that early childhood teachers have greater influence on their young students than teachers at any other level of education; but as a group, early childhood educators are “less well-educated and less well-prepared for their teaching tasks” than teachers at any other level (Spodek & Saracho, p. viii).

Although the observations by Spodek and Saracho (1990) were done almost 20 years ago, according to Horm (2003) there is an even greater gap today between the needs of children in ECECC and the level of teachers’ preparedness particularly with respect to the diverse populations now found in early childhood centers. This diversity includes young children who are typically developing, young children with disabilities; young children who are living in poverty, and young children whose cultural and linguistic backgrounds are not Caucasian and/or English-speaking (Horm; Leiber, Horn, Palmer, & Fleming, 2008; Mogharreban & Bruns, 2009). Added to the lack of properly trained early childhood teachers is their high attrition rate. It is reported that between 50% and 80% of all professionally trained and educated early childhood teachers leave the classroom within the first two years of teaching, and the percentages are higher for teachers with less professional preparation (Horm; Jalongo, & Heider, 2006; Nobel & Macfarlane, 2005).

Howes, James, and Ritchie (2003) also report, that early childhood teachers are growing increasingly unprepared to meet the needs of young children due to unsatisfactory wages, culturally diverse trends in the teacher population, and lack of professional development due to the rising cost of higher education. Consequently, they suggest in-class mentoring for professional development of early childhood teachers as a way plausible to assuage these problems. In-class mentoring programs (i.e. where
veteran teachers mentor novice or unskilled teachers) can provide an efficacious way
for teachers to gain knowledge and even become certified in early childhood
development.

In 2002, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for
Children & Families published, *Putting the PRO in Protégé: A Guide to Mentoring in
Head Start and Early Head Start*. This publication advocates mentoring as one way to
fulfill the Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSIPC, 2001). Head Start
encourages the implementation of mentoring programs designed to meet the specific
needs of each Head Start center. The National Head Start Association (NHSA)
suggests that each center become familiar with mentoring programs that fit its
community’s personality. The Head Start guide on mentoring is a comprehensive
publication that offers everything from the history of mentoring, in-class mentoring
strategies, and a dictionary of terms, to identification, selection, and matching of
mentors with mentees (Merrill, 2002). Other early childhood researchers have also
suggested that in-class mentoring may be the most expedient, effective, and fiscally
responsible way of meeting the challenges that teachers face in the classroom
(Espinosa, 2002; Ryan, Hornbeck & Frede, 2004; Saluja, Early & Clifford, 2002).

**Mentoring in Special Education**

Mentoring has become an important part of professional development for novice
and veteran special education teachers as well as general education teachers (Babione
This is particularly relevant now with the social-political trend to educate students with
special needs in general education classrooms (York & Tundidor, 1995). Well-designed
mentoring programs can lower attrition rates for beginning special education teachers,
and improve retention rates for veteran general education teachers, by offering support, feedback, and advice on working with students with special needs (Babione & Shea; Kueker & Haensly; Lane & Canosa; Whitaker, 2000). Furthermore, teachers certified in special education can coach and mentor general education teachers on the concepts of differentiated instruction, strategies for classroom behavior management, and ideas for working appropriately with children who have special needs (Babione & Shea; Billingsley, Carlson, & Klein, 2004; Kueker & Haensly; Lane & Canosa).

White and Mason (2003) reported that in-class mentoring for special education is beneficial for general education teachers who have had little or no training or exposure to students with special needs. With general education teacher attrition rates at approximately 30% nationwide (Dove, 2004) and special education teachers’ attrition as high as 50%, mentoring has been touted as a strategy to lower attrition (Babione & Shea, 2005; Whitaker, 2000). More importantly, mentoring can provide responsive support systems for special education teachers to raise the quality of education being delivered to students with special needs (Babione & Shea; Kueker & Haensly, 1991; Lane & Canosa, 1995; White & Mason). As the trend of inclusion of students with special needs in general education classroom continues the necessity for professional development in special education practices for general education teachers increases as well. This trend of inclusion also pertains to early childhood settings.

**Mentoring in Early Childhood Special Education**

As stipulated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) preschools receiving government funding are mandated to include children with special needs, ages birth to six, in care and education centers with their typically developing peers (DeVore & Russell, 2007). Community-based childcare and preschool
settings such as Head Start and Early Head Start have been providing inclusion opportunities for children with disabilities for more than a decade (DeVore & Bowers, 2006). The inclusion of young children with disabilities in early childhood classrooms requires that teachers feel competent and comfortable working with children with special needs in order to provide appropriate educational strategies (Knoche, Peterson, Edwards, & Jeon, 2006; Vakil, Welton, O’Connor, & Kline, 2009). It has been recommended that in-class mentoring can provide this kind of support for early childhood teachers (HSIPC, 2001; Howes, James, & Ritchie, 2003). The setting for the current study is a university-based, ECECC that offers priority enrollment to children with special needs.

Rationale for this Study

Currently, 75% of all 3- and 4-year-olds in the United States attend some kind of ECECC, ranging from government-funded daycare programs to family daycare centers (Childstats, 2006). Research in early childhood education has shown that high-quality early childhood programs have significant, beneficial effects on the social, emotional, and academic development of young children, especially those from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Barnett, 1998; Gomby, Larner, Stevenson, Lewitt, & Behrman, 1995). Additionally, some researchers reported that early childhood teachers trained in age-appropriate curriculum and adult-child interactions can actually prevent problem behaviors in young children (Fullerton, 2006; Howes, James, & Ritchie, 2003; Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2003). Gomby et al. reported that “the best childcare programs can set children on a path that leads to long-term benefits, including greater productivity as adults” (p 5). With the number of Universal Pre-K programs growing, and the enrollment of young children in preschools at an all-time high, the need for
knowledgeable early childhood teachers has become critical (Espinosa, 2002; NAEYC, 2005; NIEER, 2003). However, in a recent nation-wide study done by Gilliam and Marchesseault (2005), less than 50% of early childhood teachers report having a bachelor’s degree (in any discipline) and less than 30% report having a Child Development Associate (CDA); the minimum amount of training required for early childhood teachers by government-funded programs.

Howes, James, and Ritchie (2003) found that many untrained individuals are hired as classroom teachers in preschools, with the guarantee that they will be given the opportunity to receive their CDA within a required period of time. Unfortunately, due to cutbacks in educational funding, lack of time for professional development, and high teacher turnover rates, many promising teachers in early childhood never become certified. As noted previously, mentoring may be the most expedient, inexpensive, and effective means of raising the educational and skill level of early childhood educators who are not currently prepared to administer high-quality preschool curriculum (Espinosa, 2002; Howes, James, & Ritchie; Ryan, Hornbeck & Frede, 2004; Saluja, Early & Clifford, 2002).

For teachers who come to early childhood settings with CDAs, BAs, and MAs, there are different challenges to overcome. As mentioned previously, beginning teachers, especially those in early childhood settings, experience high levels of anxiety and need the ongoing support of veteran teachers during their first few years (Katz, 1977). VanderVen (1994) explains that preschool teachers experience different stages of classroom competence. In the first year, or survival stage, even preschool teachers who have been educated and trained to work with young children question whether or
not they are capable of meeting the care and educational needs of their students (Baptiste & Sheerer, 1997). Additionally, Baptiste and Sheerer reported that due to the nature of the early child environment (e.g., the immediacy of the needs of young children and working with parents) it was necessary to respond quickly to preschool teachers who were struggling through the survival stages. In-class mentoring can offer that immediate support.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to gain a greater understanding of the interpersonal mentoring relationships between mentors and mentees in an early childhood mentoring program, by analyzing the perceptions of the teachers who participated in the program. The site for this study was a university based child development and research center in the southeast. The center provides a mentoring program to help with the induction process of new teachers. The concept for the mentoring program was developed jointly by the teachers and administration of the center to address the professional, logistical, and practical challenges facing newly-hired teachers.

**Research Questions**

The guiding questions for this study were formulated based on my experience as a mentor in EHS as well as information gathered from a review of the literature related to mentoring relationships. Since the purpose of this study was to gain a greater understanding of the interpersonal mentoring relationships between the mentors and mentees, the main research question for the study was:

What are teachers’ perceptions of their mentoring relationships in an early childhood mentoring program?
Supporting research questions were:

(a) How do teachers describe their experiences in an early childhood mentoring program?

(b) How do mentors perceive their mentoring relationships in an early childhood classroom?

(c) How do mentees perceive their mentoring relationships in an early childhood classroom?

Summary of Chapter 1

As a result of my rewarding experiences with mentoring in EHS, my acknowledgement of the complexities of mentoring in early childhood settings, and the limited amount of extant literature on the interpersonal aspects of mentoring relationships, I wanted to design study that would generate an understanding of these issues by exploring teachers’ perceptions and experiences in mentoring relationships. In this chapter I have included a description of the personal experience that informed my desire to do this study. Following that, I provided a working definition of mentoring in education, an explanation of the importance of interpersonal mentoring relationships, and an overview of three relevant applications of mentoring for professional development in education as a foundation for understanding the context of this study. These included mentoring teachers for support and strategies when working with children in grades K-12 with special needs, mentoring teachers in early childhood settings, and mentoring teachers in early childhood settings that include children with special needs. I also provided a contextual background of the current state of early childhood, with respect to the percentages of children enrolled; teachers’ preparedness for the diversity of students in their classrooms; the importance of high-quality early childhood education; and mentoring as a way to assuage the challenges teachers
confront in the early childhood environment, as additional rationale for this study. I included an explanation of the importance of the interpersonal mentoring relationship with respect to the creation of an optimal learning experience for mentors and mentees. Finally, I provided a purpose statement and proposed research questions for the study.

In the chapters that follow, I will illustrate how methods of qualitative research were used with three mentor/mentee dyads from an early childhood mentoring program to gain a greater understanding of mentoring relationships. In Chapter 2, I present a literature review of research findings related to the importance of interpersonal mentoring relationships in education.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a literature review of research-based studies that contain information related to the interpersonal aspects of mentoring relationships in education, specifically early childhood education. To identify pertinent literature for this review, a comprehensive search was conducted. The following seven electronic databases were searched from the dates 1990 to the present: Articles First, EBSCOhost, ERIC, FirstSearch, PsychInfo, WebLUIS, and WilsonWeb. The key words, mentoring, education, mentoring in early childhood, mentor-mentee relationships, mentor qualities, mentor characteristics, mentoring teachers for professional development, were used in several combinations. An archival hand search of relevant journals was also completed. The search focused on articles that met the following criteria: (a) qualitative or quantitative studies that included a research question, methodology, findings and discussion, (b) studies including only adult participants, and (c) studies that reported findings related to characteristics, qualities, influences, and dynamics of the mentor/mentee relationship. Thirteen studies were identified that met these criteria. Only two studies were found that investigated mentoring relationships in early childhood (one in kindergarten and one in preschool); however, all the studies included in this review contained information about the interpersonal aspects of mentoring relationships. These studies are listed in Table 2.1. A detailed review of the articles, including implications for practice and future research follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Participants/Setting</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Findings/influences</th>
<th>Suggested research</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Abell, Dillon, Hopkins, McInerney, &amp; O’Brien, 1995</td>
<td>29 mentor/mentee dyads located at elementary, middle, &amp; high school</td>
<td>To examine mentors’ and mentees' perceptions of their roles in a state-mandated, beginning teacher internship program</td>
<td>Qualitative study using phenomenological theoretical perspective</td>
<td>Mentors have responsibility to work with mentees; Mentors were helpers not evaluators; communication, respect &amp; trust crucial to successful relationships</td>
<td>Future studies conducted on site and over time that focus more directly on the development and evolution of the mentor/mentee relationship</td>
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<td>2. Achinstein &amp; Barrett, 2004</td>
<td>15 mentor/mentee dyads</td>
<td>Examine how mentors influence (reframe) the way mentees view challenges in the classroom with respect to diversity &amp; classroom management</td>
<td>Qualitative study using conversational analysis; interviews, observations</td>
<td>Mentors as helpers, supporters rather than critics help mentees develop multiple ways of viewing students; successful mentors were non-confrontational; rapport development abilities</td>
<td>Suggest research into theories of reframing and mentoring relationships; study of framing processes in mentoring</td>
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Table 2-1 Continued.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentoring Study</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
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<tr>
<td>Babione &amp; Shea, 2005</td>
<td>7 mentors/5 mentees sped</td>
<td>Qualitative techniques using constant comparison</td>
<td>Mentors who are congenial, friendly less likely to threaten autonomy of classroom; informal check-ins more beneficial than formal</td>
<td>No suggestions for further research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billingsley, Carlson, &amp; Klein, 2004</td>
<td>1,153 beginning sped teachers</td>
<td>Quantitative survey study</td>
<td>Emphasis on colleague support; emotional support; open communication; caring</td>
<td>Descriptive research is needed to expand on the qualities reported necessary for successful mentoring; need observations, interviews, extended engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evertson &amp; Smithey, 2000</td>
<td>46 mentor/mentee dyads</td>
<td>Quantitative study based on observations – comparison between treatment group and control group</td>
<td>Successful mentors offer academic &amp; emotional support; have knowledge, skills.</td>
<td>Further research that replicates this study to see if results can be generalized across settings</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Study Title</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Heung-Ling, 2003</td>
<td>4 mentor/mentee dyads</td>
<td>Examine the dimensions of mentoring relationships Qualitative study using case studies &amp; cross-case analysis; interviews; journals</td>
<td>The essence of mentoring lies in the relationship; comfort; respect; openness; communication; support, commitment</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Kueker &amp; Haensly, 1991</td>
<td>8 mentor/mentee dyads sped</td>
<td>Compare subjects perceptions of specific mentor qualities; importance of mentoring; develop mentor-training program; Quantitative study using Likert-type survey; means &amp; SD of the importance of mentor characteristics reported</td>
<td>Qualities most desired: confident, committed, competent, trusting, encouraging, moral support, helpful, resourceful, communication</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>O’Brien &amp; Christie, 2005</td>
<td>44 mentees</td>
<td>Examine what aspects of a new teacher training program were most effective Qualitative study using case studies</td>
<td>Part of the program included mentoring. Students reported that successful mentors had interpersonal skills, commitment, warmth, flexibility &amp; self-giving</td>
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| **9.** | Pavia, Nissen, Hawkins, Monroe, & Filimon-Demyen, 2003 | 6 mentor/mentee dyads in early childhood settings | To examine the mentor/mentee relationship in early childhood settings through the voices of the participants | Qualitative study based on individual interviews and small-group meetings. Open-ended questions | Bene \-

tfits: professional unity, reflective opportunities, professional collaboration; self-confidence, personal growth Difficulties: lack of confidence with roles, lack of time, lack of trust & communication, personal & professional mismatch |

| **10.** | Rippon & Martin, 2006 | 1136 mentees – pre-survey; 271 post-survey | To examine what professional & personal qualities mentees in their first year of teaching deem important in mentors | Quantitative questionnaires used to collect data; SPSS used to collate data | Professional qualities: knowledge of local school culture, formal feedback, informal support; personal qualities: approachability, professional knowledge, teaching credibility |

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<tr>
<td>11. Stanulis &amp; Russell, 2000</td>
<td>2 mentor/mentee dyads</td>
<td>Extend understanding of how mentors and mentees make sense of their roles</td>
<td>Qualitative study based on conversation analysis; use of classroom observations, small &amp; whole group reflection sessions; dialogue journals</td>
<td>Trust emerged as the most important component for the development of a successful mentoring relationship; “jumping in” used to indicate whether or not trust existed in the relationship</td>
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<td>12. Strong &amp; Baron, 2004</td>
<td>16 veteran &amp; beginning teachers</td>
<td>Examine the way mentors make pedagogical suggestions to mentees</td>
<td>Qualitative study based on conversation analysis; interactional sociolinguistics;</td>
<td>Mentors tend to avoid giving direct advice; tend to make indirect suggestions; mentees tend to respond more favorably to indirect suggestions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Whitaker, 2000</td>
<td>200 first-year sped teachers</td>
<td>Examine the components of effective mentoring program for beginning sped teachers</td>
<td>Quantitative study using questionnaire and statistical methods to analyze data</td>
<td>Important characteristics for mentoring: knowledge of sped procedures, teaching, approachable communication skills, trustworthy, supportive, patient</td>
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</table>
Influences on Mentoring Relationships

Although the settings and participants in the following studies varied considerably, with only two studies set in early childhood, all the studies reviewed contained findings that emphasized the importance of the personal interactions between mentors and mentees for the effectiveness of mentoring for professional development. As stated previously, the essence of mentoring lies in the quality of the relationship between the mentors and the mentees. It is noted again that a successful mentoring relationship is one where mentors and mentees have sustained positive interactions. Following is a review of these studies:

Abell, Dillon, Hopkins, McInerney, & O’Brien (1995) found that mentors’ personal attitudes greatly influenced their abilities to develop effective mentoring relationships with their mentees. This study emerged from the work Abell et al. did for the state of Indiana. The researchers had been hired to assess the fiscal benefits of a state mandated mentoring program. This work prompted them to conduct a phenomenological study on the interpersonal mentoring relationships of the 29 mentor/mentee dyads who participated in Indiana’s Beginning Teacher Intern Program (BTIP). They designed an interview guide to elicit participants’ feelings, thoughts, and perceptions about the experience of being in a mentoring relationship. Using qualitative research methods, data were analyzed with an emphasis on “the language and voice” of the participants’ responses (p. 175). In their findings veteran-teacher mentors reported feeling responsible for the professional development of beginning teachers. Mentors felt responsible to their schools and the teaching profession, to assist mentees in getting a good start in the classroom by helping them feel comfortable in their new positions. The attitude of mentor as helper was greatly appreciated by the mentees who
felt supported and encouraged by their mentors, which in turn, created an opportunity for positive learning interactions to occur between mentors and mentees.

The mentors in the study also reported that their relationships with their mentees were reciprocal when as mentors they gained new energy, ideas, and enthusiasm by working with beginning teachers. Likewise, the mentees in this study reported they benefited from the mentoring experience and gained “confidence, ideas, materials, advice, insight into students . . . school, parents . . . community . . . techniques . . . management and control skills” (p.184).

The mentors and mentees also reported that pairing played a role in the development of successful relationships. When mentors and mentees with similar personalities and ideologies worked together, they described their relationships as successful, thus helping mentees move beyond the survival stage of first-year teaching. One mentor reflected, “Fortunately our personalities are very close” and that made their relationship comfortable (Abell et al., 1995, p. 180). Mentors explained that it would be difficult to mentor someone whom they didn't like or respect.

Babione and Shea (2005) found mentors’ experiences as well their attitudes had significant influences on the development of interpersonal mentoring relationships. This qualitative study examined how seven general education teachers, trained as mentors, provided support and assistance to five beginning teachers in special education classrooms in a rural elementary school. In addressing the fragile nature of mentoring relationships and working within the environment of the school system, the researchers found that even the cycles of the school year could have an impact on relationship development; experienced mentors who understood this were able to work more
successfully with mentees. Furthermore, veteran-teacher mentors who understood the autonomous nature of the classroom, could develop effective mentoring relationships with mentees by casually “dropping in at the end of the day” to see how beginning teachers were doing (p. 24).

Informal mentoring was found to be more effective and less threatening than direct mentoring. Mentors who understood this were able to strike a balance between giving too much advice or not enough assistance. If mentors’ attitudes toward mentees were too formal they risked rejection by mentees; which in turn could threaten the development of rapport in the mentoring relationships. Likewise, mentees appreciated the congenial attitude of informal mentors, especially if they were reluctant to request help from their mentors.

Mentors’ experience and practical knowledge was also essential to the development of successful mentoring relationships for these beginning special education teachers (Babione & Shea, 2005) Mentees reported benefiting from their mentors’ abilities to help them navigate the contextual issues of working in a school environment. The mentors in this study were not special education teachers so their support for their mentees was the practical knowledge they possessed related to school environment, culture, routines, scheduling, paperwork, supplies, and unwritten rules.

The mentors in Babione and Shea (2005) experienced reciprocity in the mentoring relationship in a similar way to those interviewed by Abell et al (1995). Mentors reported benefiting from the mentoring experience because as they taught their mentees, they became more reflective about their own teaching practices. Additionally, since the mentors were general educators and their mentees were special educators, the mentors
learned about the complexities of special education. They acknowledge that beginning
special educators had more challenges than general educators due to the nature of
their work with children with special needs: “teaching special education complicated
beginning teaching with an additional layer of contextual knowledge about youth with
special needs and their families” (p.24). Since six of the seven mentors had no previous
experience in special education pedagogy, they perceived their mentoring relationships
as collaborations because they benefited from their mentees’ expertise.

Mentors’ attitudes and understanding of informal mentoring were also found to be
an important influence on the effectiveness of relationships between mentor/mentee
dyads in special education (Billingsley, Carlson, and Klein, 2004). In this study, 1,153
beginning special educators were surveyed about their career plans, working
conditions, and the induction supports they received. The purpose of this study was to
identify the problems and issues encountered by special education teachers in order to
develop policies and programs to prevent high attrition rates. Mentoring was included in
the induction supports along with teacher orientations, beginning teacher meetings,
written materials, observations, and professional development activities, in an effort to
reduce attrition. They reported that informal mentoring “caring relationships, open
communication, and taking an interest in the individual's work . . .” (p. 344) was highly
valued by beginning teachers. Additionally, findings indicated that informal mentoring
can be tailored to address the specific needs of the mentees.

In a pilot study that examined eight mentees’ perceptions of mentor
characteristics, Kueker and Haensly (1991) found mentors’ level of interest in mentoring
highly desirable. This study also compared eight mentees’ perceptions of specific
mentor characteristic in a special education teacher training program over a period of two years in order to evaluate the program and make recommendations for further mentor training. Mentees were given a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire and asked to rate the importance of observed and desirable mentor characteristics while they were pre-service teachers and during their induction year of teaching. During the two-year study, five mentor characteristics were rated more desirable by mentees in their induction year than during their pre-service year. All eight mentees rated the mentor attitudes of “interest in being a mentor” and “encouraging” as the two most important characteristics (Kueker & Haensly, 1991, p. 259).

Mentors’ attitudes with mentees were also influential in the findings of a study done by Heung-Ling (2003). In this study, one of the two early childhood studies found on mentoring, four beginning kindergarten teachers were being mentored by their school principals and were interviewed about their perceptions as mentees. Qualitative data were also collected from the mentees’ journals and researchers’ observations. Believing that the quality of the relationship between the mentor and mentee is fundamental for the professional development of both individuals, this study examined the influences that fostered or hindered the mentor/mentee relationship. Findings showed that six influences on the development of interpersonal mentoring relationships were all related to mentors’ attitudes and understanding of mentees needs. These influences were identified as comfort, respect, openness, communication, support, and commitment. For example, mentor support allowed one beginning teacher to develop confidence in the classroom as well as resolve her feelings of guilt about her anger toward challenging children. The mentor encouraged the mentee to guide the children
rather than get angry with them as well as assist them in the classroom. Conversely, when not supported, another mentee expressed her frustration, “There were no words of encouragement . . .” (p. 39). Since findings indicated that interpersonal mentoring relationships were built on a foundation of personal interaction, the ability of the mentors to provide the six elements of comfort, respect, openness, communication, support, and commitment for their mentees were essential to the success of the relationships.

Another example from Heung-Ling (2003) illustrated how on-going or frequent communication affected the development of rapport between mentor and mentee in the mentoring relationship. When communication was frequent, it was usually an indication that the mentoring relationship was developing in a positive direction; that both mentor and mentee felt the relationship was successful. Two of the four dyads in this study had frequent contact with mentors who offered on-going feedback about mentees’ classroom practices. In one of the successful dyads, the mentee felt comfortable seeking the help of her mentor and they developed a close, professional relationship. In the other two dyads, communication was infrequent and sometimes perceived as harsh or aloof.

The importance of communication, specifically how mentors made suggestions to their mentees, was found to be beneficial to the development of mentoring relationships in a study done by Strong and Baron (2004). In this qualitative study, mentors were trained to use the Cognitive Coaching model (Costa & Garmston, 1994). This model focuses on training mentors to become thoughtful and reflective practitioners and to coach their mentees to do the same. This is achieved through the use of non-judgmental language when working with mentees in order to promote self reflection and
facilitate the development of trust in the mentoring relationship. The conversations of 16 mentor/mentee dyads were examined to see how mentors made pedagogical suggestions to mentees and how mentees responded. Through the use of conversation analysis methods, data showed that mentees were less likely to feel criticized and more likely to incorporate the mentors’ suggestions into their teaching practices when mentors made indirect suggestions using words such as “perhaps, maybe, might, could, and I wonder,” (p. 50). It was also found that the style of communication, that is the way suggestions were phrased and words were used, was important to creating a safe atmosphere where beginning teachers would feel comfortable enough to reflect and self-evaluate. They discovered that effective mentors used non-judgmental and non-confrontational phrases such as “I wonder if . . . ?” and “I was thinking” to introduce new ideas, and make pedagogical suggestions to mentees (pp. 50-51). Additionally, when mentors communicated in openly positive ways with mentees through praise statements such as “that sounds perfect” and “Yeah, that’s what I was thinking” (p. 52), they developed more positive relationships with their mentees.

Determining what desirable qualities are needed for successful mentoring relationships was the focus of a study done by O’Brien and Christie (2005), which was part of a larger research project that examined the Teacher Induction Scheme (TIS) in Scotland (for details see Christie, Draper, & O’Brien, 2003 and Draper, O’Brien, & Christie, 2004). Fifty-nine beginning teachers and 31 veteran teachers (from the TIS) were interviewed by O’Brien and Christie to determine what they considered desirable qualities in a mentor. Interviews were done individually and in groups and tape recorded and transcribed. The analyzing and coding were done using NUD*IST software.
Findings showed that mentors’ approachability, calmness, fairness, honesty, and patience were considered essential qualities by beginning teachers. These characteristics were also identified by the mentors as being essential to good mentoring; emphasizing a willingness to give mentees “TLC’ when required” (p. 194). Mentees agreed that mentors must be committed, enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and genuinely interested in their mentees in order to be truly effective. Additionally, it was reported that knowledge and emotional support were also essential characteristics of successful mentors. Mentees in the study expressed their expectations that mentors be knowledgeable in all areas of education in order to provide emotional support, encouragement, providing constructive criticism, and actively providing on-going guidance and training.

The Teacher Induction Scheme also provided opportunities for other researchers with respect to successful mentoring and the induction of student teachers. Rippon and Martin (2006) interviewed mentees from the TIS to further understand their perceptions of the qualities necessary for a good induction supporter (mentor). The first cohort of students from the TIS was asked the following question: “What kind of support do new teachers want from their induction supporters?” (p. 84). In this mixed methods study, a sample population of 1,136 students in their final year of a teacher education program was given a pre-placement questionnaire with both open and closed questions to gather data on demographics, perspectives on support, opinions of the assessment process, and views on continuing professional development (CPD). A post-placement questionnaire was given to students following their first year placement, before beginning their induction year of teaching in the classroom. A total of 271 (24%)
responded to both the pre-and post-placement questionnaires and the responses became the representative data used for the study. The quantitative data collected from the Likert-scale-type questions were analyzed for statistical significance using computer software. The answers from the open-ended questions were organized into groups of common themes and used as prompts for a focus group of eight participant mentees.

Mentors’ personal traits such as attitudes of approachability and empathy were valued above professional traits such as years of teaching and teaching credibility according to the findings from the questionnaires (Rippon & Martin, 2006). Data collected from the focus group showed that mentees valued being treated equitably by those within the school environment first and foremost and desired respect as equals regardless of their experience. Additional findings showed that other qualities associated with good mentoring included availability, communication skills such as active listening, and willingness to give constructive criticism. Mentees also expressed the need for frequent formal and informal feedback sessions.

Qualitative researchers, Stanulis and Russell (2000), investigated the ways that veteran-teacher mentors and student-teacher mentees “made sense of their roles” in the mentoring relationship during a one-year field placement (p. 68). Data was gathered from whole-group discussions, classroom observations, and reading dialogue journals over a period of six months. Using conversation analysis with data collected from two mentor/mentee dyads, Stanulis and Russell found that similarity of personalities and ideologies were keys to the development of successful mentoring relationships. In this in-depth study, one of the two dyads studied was considered
successful because the mentor and mentee were able to develop communication, trust, and respect due to their similar temperaments and beliefs.

Evertson and Smithey's (2000) mentees reported that the most desired characteristic for a good mentor was knowledge; their presence in the classroom alone was not enough. This study investigated the effectiveness of a mentor-training program by observing the similarities and differences of 23 formally trained mentors compared to 23 control group mentors. Findings showed that mentees of formally trained mentors felt more efficacy in the classroom and as a result of their relationship with their mentors they had “increased evidence of . . . more workable classroom routines, managed instruction . . . gained student cooperation in academic tasks more effectively” (p. 302). Communication was also a key to the mentoring relationship. Mentors who attended mentor training programs tended to communicate with their mentees in ways that effectively supported them in the classroom, compared to untrained mentors. Furthermore, the formally trained mentors were more likely to offer suggestions on developing effective lesson plans, classroom management, and how to balance the multiple demands of teaching more successfully, than their untrained counterparts.

In a quantitative study that explored the impact of mentoring on attrition rates for beginning special education teachers, Whitaker (2000) found that first-year teachers valued emotional support and knowledge in their mentors. Data were collected by the use of a questionnaire that asked special education teachers what they perceived to be the most desirable characteristics in mentors, as well as other issues related to teachers’ retention rate. Analyzed responses from 200 first-year special education teachers explored the components of effective mentoring programs for beginning
teachers. In the findings, it was reported that the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship was maximized when mentors' were aware of the importance of their roles as emotional supporters. Second only to mentor knowledge of special education pedagogy, laws, and procedures, mentees valued the emotional support provided by their mentors. Similarly to one of the findings of Abell, et al. (1995), this study also reported that when mentee were paired with mentors who had similar values, personalities, and ideas about education, they were more likely to develop effective, interpersonal, mentoring relationships.

Achinstein and Barrett (2004) studied 15 mentors who were trained to help their mentees understand the complexities of the classroom by reframing their challenging experiences in a positive way. The skill of reframing requires mentors to use non-confrontational communication strategies such as indirect suggestions to develop rapport with mentees and help them see different perspectives. The purpose of the study was to examine how the mentoring strategy of reframing impacted beginning teachers' (mentees) beliefs about their work in the classroom. Due to the sometimes-tenuous nature of the mentor/mentee relationship, mentors had to develop expertise in their use of language to communicate in ways that would nurture the relationship and not offend their mentees: “mentors sought to maintain rapport with beginnings while extending novices’ thinking . . .” (p. 740). The mentors also offered support to mentees by modeling different ways of perceiving the needs of challenging or diverse students as well as alternative ways of handling difficult classroom situations (Achinstein & Barrett, 2004).
In the only other study besides Heung-Ling (2003) on mentoring that was situated in an early childhood setting, Pavia, et al. (2003) designed a qualitative research project specifically to study the reciprocal nature of mentoring relationships. In this study, six veteran teachers and six beginning teachers were paired on similarity of age groups of children in their care. The participants' were located in a mixture of private and public early childhood care and education settings. Data collection and analysis focused on understanding the benefits and difficulties of developing successful mentoring relationships for both mentors and mentees. Researchers wanted to know what factors affected the development of the relationship and how the relationship evolved over time to enhance the professional development of both the beginning and the experienced teacher. All participants in this study reported that they received benefits as well as challenges throughout the mentoring program. The benefits reported by both mentors and mentees included professional development, confidence building, and professional pride.

As mentioned before, the mentors and mentees in the Pavia, et al., study were paired with respect to similarity of age groups of children in their care. Additionally, both mentors and mentees had either an associate or bachelor's degree in early childhood and at least one year of working as a lead teacher in an early childhood classroom. Because of these criteria, some of the mentees had as much professional experience as their mentors. Findings showed that mentors who were cognizant of their mentees’ experience and knowledge consciously avoided creating a hierarchical relationship with their mentees. Conversely, mentees (referred to as protégés) were disconcerted about
the perceived hierarchy of the terminology “mentoring/protégé” and preferred to think of mentoring as an equal sharing of knowledge between mentors and mentees (p. 256).

Findings also showed that certain aspects of the early childhood environment kept teachers from being able to have effective communication which in turn caused them to perceive their relationships as less than satisfying. The occurrence of time limitations, proximity of mentors to mentees, availability of mentors, and discrepancies in knowledge and experience between mentors and mentees detracted from the development of satisfying relationships and kept mentors and mentees from feeling like their mentoring experience had been beneficial (Pavia et al., 2003). However, mentors and mentees who had similar personal philosophies and temperaments reported feelings of satisfaction and compatibility in the mentoring relationship.

**Summary of Literature Review**

In summary, the 13 studies reviewed in this chapter contained findings related to the influences that contributed to or detracted from the development of the interpersonal aspects of mentoring relationships. The influences identified were mentor and mentee attitudes, the importance of communication, reciprocity, mentor as knowledgeable supporter, and paring of like-minded individuals. Although these influences were examined as separate influences on the development of effective mentoring relationships, it is illustrated throughout the studies that these components are intertwined and inseparable. Traits associated with mentor attitude fostered good communication and emotional support. Pairing of like-minded individuals created opportunities for reciprocal sharing of knowledge. Knowledge and experience of mentors created trust and respect in mentees. In order for effective, positive mentoring relationships to occur many of the influences listed worked in concert with each other.
between mentor and mentee. However, the research on the interpersonal aspects of mentoring relationships is still limited to a small number of studies, with only two studies that investigated mentoring relationships in early childhood; an environment that is replete with challenges for beginning as well as veteran teachers (Heung-Ling, 2003; Pavia et al., 2003). The limited findings offered by the research reviewed here indicated the need for more descriptive data on the influences that contribute to or detract from the interpersonal relationship between mentor and mentee, specifically in the early childhood setting.

**Conclusion**

Suggestions for further research by the authors, whose works are reviewed here, indicate the need for more research that specifically examines the perceptions and experience of mentors and mentees in their interpersonal mentoring relationships. The current study was designed based on the suggestions of the researchers presented in this chapter, with a focus on early childhood environments. In the following chapter, the methodological design of the current research study will be discussed.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand the interpersonal mentoring relationships between mentors and mentees in an early childhood teachers mentoring program. This was achieved by analyzing their perceptions of their experiences as participants in the program. Qualitative research methods were used to gather data that would illustrate how the participants constructed their perceptions of what influenced their mentoring relationships. In this chapter, I discuss qualitative inquiry as a research approach and why it was chosen for this study. Next I discuss the use of the theoretical framework of constructivism as a way of understanding the descriptions provided by the participants. Following that I discussed the research design of the study which includes the setting, context of the mentoring program, and the participants. Next a discussion of data collection methods and data analysis methods of grounded theory was presented. Finally an explanation of the validity of the findings of this study is offered. (See Appendix B for research timeline).

Qualitative Inquiry

Qualitative inquiry is used by researchers to understand how individuals make meaning of their experiences by analyzing data from interviews, observations, memos, and archival information (Crotty, 1998). Qualitative researchers seek to understand the complexity of social contexts by exploring individuals’ beliefs and perceptions within those contexts (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Additionally, as explained by Bogdan and Biklen, qualitative researchers, unlike quantitative researchers, are not concerned with the collection of facts in order to prove or disprove hypotheses, but rather, they aspire to
see beyond the facts into the complexities of human behavior. Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in that it does not employ the use of assessments, surveys, or checklists; data collection methods commonly used in quantitative research (Hatch, 2002). Qualitative researchers emphasize the importance of collecting data from various sources depending on the topic under investigation in order to gain insight and understanding (Glaser, 1978; Morse & Richards, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

According to Morse (2006) it is important to collect data that will be theoretically rich in order to, “become immersed in our data, have good-quality data, well-scoped data, and seek saturation,” (p.3).

In order to understand their participants experiences qualitative researchers use some of the following strategies: (a) “natural settings,” (b) “extended firsthand engagement,” (c) “wholeness and complexity,” (d) “emergent design,” and (e) the “researcher as the data gathering instrument,” (Hatch, 2002, pp. 6-11). These techniques are designed to encourage participants to share how they make meaning of their experiences in the following ways:

The use of natural settings allows data collection to take place in non-clinical settings for the comfort of the participants. For example, participants in a qualitative study are given the opportunity to choose the time and place for their interviews to assure that they will feel comfortable being interviewed and comfortable answering questions. The use of extended firsthand engagement and researcher as data gathering instrument, allows researchers to develop rapport with their participants. Unlike quantitative studies, where researchers avoid personal contact to prevent influencing data collection, qualitative researchers seek to get to know their participants and
develop rapport with them in order to understand how they make meaning of their experiences. Because qualitative researchers use themselves as the data gathering instrument, they are able to, “make sense of the actions, intentions, and understandings of those being studied,” (Hatch, 2002, p. 7). The concept of wholeness and complexity in qualitative research acknowledges that individuals and social contexts are dynamic, unlike quantitative research where individuals and behaviors are placed into static categories for measurement purposes. The characteristic of emergent design in qualitative inquiry makes provisions for the changing nature of data collection and theory development. As participants tell their stories, multiple realities emerge and qualitative researchers have the option of altering their questions and methods as their studies unfold. These characteristics as delineated by Hatch (2002) demonstrate the uniqueness of the strategies employed by qualitative researchers explore topics of inquiry through the experiences of their participants; an understanding that cannot be measured with quantitative methods.

**Theoretical Framework: Constructivism**

Unlike a positivist theoretical framework that makes claim to the possibility of discovering an objective reality, the constructivist viewpoint claims that all realities are created by individuals as they engage in and make meaning of their experiences in the world (Crotty, 1998). The theoretical perspective of constructivism, according to Crotty, is grounded in the epistemological belief of constructionism that states:

> All knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context. (p. 42)
Constructivism, therefore, differs from constructionism as refers to the construction of knowledge by individuals’ processes of making meaning or constructing knowledge whereas constructionism refers to the construction of knowledge by social practices and institutions (Crotty).

The constructivist theoretical lens emphasizes the uniqueness of each individual’s experiences and perceptions, noting that they are all “worthy of respect,” (Crotty, 1998, p. 58). As Gergen (2001) points out, because of aspects such as gender or culture, different individuals can construct completely different meanings about the same phenomenon. Furthermore, from the point of view of a critical constructivist, such as Kincheloe (2005), individuals can only perceive the phenomenon around them based on their “existing cognitive structures allow” thus illustrating how meaning making by individuals “creates rather than reflects” the phenomenon under study (p. 42). Finally, what we are left with is meaning making that is always under construction and unending (Crotty). With this in mind, the lens of constructivist research allows and even welcomes the perspectives of all participants and does not value one over another.

Furthermore constructivism emphasizes the subjective relationship between the researcher and her participants, and the idea that together they can co-construct the meaning of the topic under study (Hayes & Oppenheim, 1997). In this way the researchers’ “humanness,” also becomes part of the research (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006, p. 2) through her development and focus of study, her development and focus of interview questions, and her analysis and interpretation of the data collected. Because of this approach, the researcher must acknowledge her subjectivity in the co-creation process and offer that as part of the outcome of the study (Appleton, 1997; Guba &
Lincoln, 1989). Constructivists also acknowledge that a single explanation may not accurately represent a complex phenomenon under study, especially when it involves the exploration of it from the perspectives of multiple subjects, and consequently must offer alternative interpretations of data collected (Appleton, 1997). This multiple construction of knowledge also requires that the researcher is willing to “accept that others may hold beliefs that are very different from the researcher’s own,” (Appleton, 1997, p. 15).

The value of using constructivism to understand mentoring relationships has been delineated by Lucas (2001). She explained that the development of mentoring relationships is not only constructed by the participants in the relationship but also subjected to the boundaries of the settings in which mentoring take place. Mentors and mentees are developing their relationships within the social and physical context of their meeting places which can influence whether or not their relationships grow (Lucas, 2001). She further explains the complexity of exploring mentoring relationships:

One person does not control the parameters of her role, but engages a partner in the social construction of both of their roles through shared experiences in a planned mentoring program. You can only aspire to be referred to as someone’s mentor, years later, when you are probably not there to hear it. (p. 46)

Using the theoretical lens of constructivism, I was able to explore how the individuals in this study constructed their perceptions of mentoring relationships. The use of constructivism was well suited to this study since the goal was to understand how teachers experienced their relationships in the mentoring program. Acknowledging the multiple realities of the individuals in the study allowed me to generate data from the
interviews in which the participants described, in their own words, their experiences in
the mentoring program.

Research Design

Research Setting: The Center

The setting for this study was a university based child development and research
center in the southeast. The term, “the center” will be used through this study to refer to
the location of the study. This setting was chosen as a research site because of its
teacher-initiated and implemented mentoring program, which will be explained further in
the next section of this paper. The center is described on its website as offering high
quality care to children ages six weeks to five years. It is notable that this early
childhood center gives priority to young children with special needs. Because it is an
inclusive early childhood center, the need for mentoring of new teachers, especially
those who are not familiar with working with children with disabilities, is even more
significant. Teachers and staff work cooperatively with special education personnel,
therapists and medical personnel to assure each child's special needs and individual
learning goals are addressed. The center has been accredited by the National
Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) since 1993. All teachers have
completed state-mandated education and training.

The philosophy of the center promotes curriculum to encourage children to
“experience” the world around them. The center focuses on addressing the social,
behavioral, cognitive, and physical skills and early literacy skills necessary for the
healthy development of young children. Because of its affiliation with the university,
children who are enrolled at the center have at least one parent or guardian associated
with the university as a student, faculty member, or staff member. Consequently, the
The center serves a diverse population of children from around the world and employs a bilingual staff for the 25 to 30% of children who speak English as their second language. During the regular school year, the maximum enrollment of children is 127.

The center is divided into five age groups: (1) the infant class for children ages six weeks to 10 months with a teacher/child ratio of 1:3; (2) the young toddler class for children ages 11 to 18 months with a teacher/child ratio of 1:4; (3) the older toddler class for children ages 18 to 36 months with a teacher/child ratio of 1:5; (4) the 3- to 4-year-olds class with a teacher/child ratio of 1:9; and (5) the pre-kindergarten class with a teacher/child ratio of 1:9. Classes are staffed by teaching teams. At the time of this study, the center employed 22 teachers. The director of the center had been the center's director for 5 years and is a clinical associate professor at the university. The director is assisted by an administrative staff consisting of an assistant director, office manager, and business manager.

**Context: The Mentoring Program**

As explained by director of the center, the following circumstances led to the creation of a teacher-initiated mentoring program in 2006: One newly hired teacher expressed frustration that she had been working at the center for a few months but still felt like a stranger; she didn't know most of her co-workers or the policies and procedures of the center. She asked the director if she could be assigned to a veteran teacher who could mentor her by familiarizing her with the people and procedures of the childcare center. The director found a teacher who agreed to mentor the new teacher. During the next annual in-service meeting at the center, the teachers, director, and staff members decided to establish a mentoring program. At the meeting, some of the
veteran teachers volunteered to be mentors. The following list of mentoring activities was developed, as well as form letters for mentors and mentees:

- A tour of the buildings
- Introductions to all staff, including all classroom teachers, office staff, and the cook
- Discuss the employee handbook and answer questions
- Review accident/incident report procedures
- Invite him/her to “shadow” you for a few hours (even if she is not going to be teaching in your class to introduce her to the center’s teaching strategies
- Review the parent handbook and answer questions
- Discuss the center’s philosophy, mission, and vision statements
- Set up regularly scheduled meetings with him/her perhaps once a week for her first month and then as needed
- Make yourself available for questions and concerns that might arise while the new teacher is getting settled into his/her new position here
- Make the new employee feel welcomed and valued

Now, when a new teacher is hired, she is assigned to a mentor (Appendix E), the mentor is informed that she has a new mentee (Appendix E), and the mentor is responsible for scheduling the first mentoring session. In mentoring meetings, mentors are responsible for reviewing the employee handbook with mentees, introducing mentees to other employees, and orienting mentees to the written and unwritten rules of the center. Some mentor/mentee dyads meet on a regular basis; some meet once depending on the needs of the individuals. Mentors can also act as advocates and/or advisors if mentees are faced with challenges in the classroom, with children, or other teachers. The mentoring program is particularly effective for helping beginning teachers
understand the implicit aspects of the center (Center director, personal communication, June 21, 2007).

**Participants: The Teachers**

Six teachers from the center’s mentoring program volunteered to participate in the current study and signed informed consent documents approved by the IRB. The participants consisted of three mentor-mentee dyads. Table 3.1 contains demographic information about the participants. All the participants had a Child Development Associate National Credential (CDA) or were CDA exempt due to alternative certification and/or in-service and other forms of professional development in early childhood. Three of the participants had associate degrees in either general education or elementary education. Two of the participants had bachelor’s degrees; one in early childhood education and the other in sociology. The participants’ experience in early childhood environments ranged from 3 to 27 years. Following is an in-depth description of the teachers who participated in the study:

**The Mentors**

Mentor One, a Caucasian woman, was 44-years-old at the time of her interviews. She had been mentoring in the program at the center for slightly more than a year, and had two years total of mentoring experience. She was born and raised in the United States. Mentor One had been in teaching for more than 14 years with most of her teaching experience in early childhood. Mentor One had an associate’s degree in general education, with 21 credits in early childhood development, and had completed 40-hours of state regulated training (equivalent to a CDA) in early childhood education. During the time of her interviews, Mentor One had been at the center for almost four years and was working with children aged 10-18 months in the *young toddlers’ room*
adjacent to the room in which her mentee worked. This proximal location between Mentor One and her mentee, proved to be an important item related to the findings of the study.

Mentor Two, a Caucasian woman, was 49 at the time of her interviews. She had been a mentor in the center’s program for almost a year and was mentoring a woman who was working in the same room with her. Mentor Two was also born and raised in the United States. She had a bachelor’s degree in independent studies, which included a concentration in early childhood education. She also had an associate of science degree in child development and an associate of art degree in music. Mentor Two had been teaching young children for 27 years and had been at the center for eight years. During the time of her interview, she was teaching 4- and 5-year-olds. She was also employed part-time in a job unrelated to her work at the center.

Mentor Three, 51, was a visiting early childhood teacher from India. She had been living in the United States for three years and had acquired a CDA and CDS during her time here. She had just recently become a mentor as part of the center’s mentoring program. Mentor Three had been at the center for nine months at the time of her interviews. She had three years of experience in teaching early childhood and was currently working with 4-to-5-year-olds, alongside her mentee.

The Mentees

Born and raised in the United States, Mentee One, a Caucasian woman, was 24-years-old at the time of her interviews and eight months pregnant. She had been mentored by Mentor One for more than a year and had also been a mentor, herself, to a new teacher who had been employed briefly at the center. She worked in an adjacent classroom to her mentor, with children ages 18 to 30 months. She had a bachelor’s
degree in sociology, with a minor in education. Similar to her mentor, she had completed the 40-hour state training program in early childhood education required in Florida. Mentee One had five years of teaching experience in early childhood education but had been working with children since she was 12-years-old, as a babysitter.

Mentee Two, an African American woman, born and raised in the United States, was 41 at the time of her interviews. She had been at the center only two months at the time of her first interview and was newly introduced to the mentoring program. She had 20 years of teaching experience – mostly with young children and 15 years of mentoring experience in her previous work as a teacher in the Early Head Start program. Mentee Two had a CDA, various certifications in early childhood education, and had attended a local community college for general education requirements. Mentee Two was working in the same room as her mentor with 4-to 5-year-old children. Mentee Two was very enthusiastic about being a participant in this research study. She mentioned a number of times how she felt research in early childhood was important. She believed that through research a greater understanding of the early childhood teachers’ experience could bring about needed changes.

Mentee Three, 31, was born in Puerto Rico and raised in the United States. She had just begun being mentored by Mentor Three at the time of her interviews. She had received an associate of art degree in elementary education, Volunteer Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) training, and had 14 years of experience as a teacher’s aide in public school. Mentee Three also had five years of mentoring experience. She had been at the center for almost two months and worked with 4-to 5-year-olds in the same room as her mentor.
## Table 3-1. Demographics of study participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentors/ Mentees</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Years teaching</th>
<th>Early childhood training/ education</th>
<th>Years early childhood</th>
<th>Years at this early childhood center</th>
<th>Ages of children worked with</th>
<th>Ages of children currently working with</th>
<th>Years mentoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentor 1</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>CDA exempt/ AA Gen Ed</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3 ½</td>
<td>Infant to 18 years</td>
<td>10-18 months</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentee 1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>CDA/BA sociology</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1 ½</td>
<td>Infant to 10 years</td>
<td>18-30 months</td>
<td>3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor 2</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>CDA/BA Early Childhood</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2 – 10 years</td>
<td>4-5 years</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentee 2</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>CDA/ AA Gen Ed</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>Infant to 18 years</td>
<td>4-5 years</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor 3</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>CDA/ CDS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4-5 years</td>
<td>4-5 years</td>
<td>3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentee 3</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>CDA/ AA Elem. Ed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>3-18 years</td>
<td>4-5 years</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection

The use of qualitative inquiry methods allowed me to design a research study in which I could seek an understanding of how the early childhood teachers in my study made meaning of their experiences in a mentoring program with respect to the relationships that developed between mentors and mentees. Consequently this study presents findings that illustrate how the participants described their experiences as mentors and mentees in the mentoring program. The guiding questions for this study were formulated to elicit an understanding of the elements that influenced the interpersonal mentoring relationship. Additionally, using the theoretical framework of constructivism, I was able to recognize the perceptions of the mentors and mentees' knowledge of mentoring, their mentoring experiences, and their mentoring relationships as individually and socially constructed within the mentoring program, and by extension, early childhood center environment. The interactions between the participants and the elements contained in the socially constructed environment of the program and the center informed how the mentors’ and mentees’ constructed their knowledge and perceptions of their mentoring relationships.

The primary data sources for this study were the participant interviews. Supplementary data sources were researcher-generated memos written during transcription to assist in the development of second and third interview guides from participants’ responses. (Memos were also used during the coding process and data analysis). Contextual data sources included two documents which served as archival data related to the mentoring program (Appendix E). These documents were not analyzed or used to generate data, but rather provided background information about the mentoring program and were later used in the discussion chapter. Other data
collected from member checks were used to provide validity to the findings. By using multiple data sources I was able to gain insight into the way my participants constructed their perceptions about their relationships in the mentoring program. The interviews gave me a direct connection to my participants through the descriptions of their experiences and this allowed me to see how they made meaning of their mentoring relationships. Through the use of memoing after each interview and during transcription, I was able to reflect on and gain insight into what my participants had said. The process of memoing allowed me to designed follow-up interview questions and helped me construct how mentors and mentees perceived their relationships.

After receiving IRB approval in November 2007 (Appendix A), I obtained a list of potential participants, teachers at the center who were part of the mentoring program, from the director of the center. In my doctoral committee proposal, it was decided that I would use criterion sampling of participants for my study. Criterion sampling is purposive and involves the selection of participants based on a set of pre-determined criteria in order to elicit rich data relevant to the topic under study (Patton, 2002). In this study the sampling criteria for participants were: (1) One mentor/mentee dyad who had been working together for at least a year; (2) One mentor/mentee dyad who had been working together for at least 3-4 months; and (3) One mentor/mentee dyad that had left the program. When I began to recruit participants, however, I was unable to recruit teachers who fit the exact criteria from the original proposal. Since participation in the study was voluntary I was limited to a population of participants who volunteered to be part of the study and I was unable to find a dyad that had left the program. I had to revise my criteria to fit the participants that volunteered and I wanted to interview at
least three mentor/mentee dyads, so my participants included: one dyad that had been working together for a more than a year, one dyad that had been together for almost three months, and a third dyad that had been working together for six weeks. Since the purpose of the mentoring program was to induct new teachers into the center’s environment; theoretically the newly paired dyads would have had time to develop some perceptions of their relationships.

Table 3-2. Data Collection Methods and Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data collection period</th>
<th>Mentors/Mentee interviews (Primary data)</th>
<th>Memoing (Supplementary data)</th>
<th>Documents (contextual data)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 10, 24, &amp; Feb. 12, 2008</td>
<td>Mentor One 1st, 2nd, &amp; 3rd interviews</td>
<td>Memoing done during transcription following each interview to concurrently analyze data and generate second and third interview guides</td>
<td>Received documents from administrators at the center before interviews were conducted: (a) Mentor letter, (b) Mentee letters, and (c) Mentor’s responsibilities checklist. Documents provided contextual data about the program; also used in discussion of findings to contrast and compare perceptions of program expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 11, Feb. 7, &amp; Feb. 12, 2008</td>
<td>Mentee One 1st, 2nd, &amp; 3rd interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 15 &amp; 20, 2008</td>
<td>Mentor Two 1st &amp; 2nd interviews</td>
<td>Memoing was done during transcription following each interview to concurrently analyze data and generate second interview guides</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 8 &amp; 21, 2008</td>
<td>Mentee Two 1st &amp; 2nd interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 14 &amp; 17, 2008</td>
<td>Mentor Three 1st &amp; 2nd interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 14 &amp; 17, 2008</td>
<td>Mentee Three 1st &amp; 2nd interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All mentor and mentee teachers were contacted by email (Appendix C) and six participants, three mentor/mentee dyads, volunteered to be part of the study. The participants were assigned the pseudonyms of Mentor One, Two, and Three, and Mentee One, Two, and Three. Participants were provided with documents explaining, in detail, the purpose of the study, my personal background and interests in the study, the procedures that would be followed during the interviews and subsequent member checks, the interview guides, and copies of the IRB informed consent forms (see Appendices C, F & H).

**Interviews with Participants**

Since the main source of data for my study came from my participant interviews, I conducted, audiotaped, and did complete transcriptions of a total of 14 semi-structured interviews. For the first two participants, Mentor and Mentee One, (Dyad 1), I conducted three interviews each; for Mentors and Mentees Two and Three, (Dyads 2 & 3), I conducted two interviews each. During the third interviews with each member of the Mentor One Dyad, the teachers seemed reluctant to continue their interviews. I felt like I had exhausted the possibility of questions I could ask them. Because they had been so forthcoming with information about their relationship and the mentoring program, there seemed to be very little else to ask them.

During the third interview with Mentor One, I began to feel some reluctance on her part to continue to answer my questions. Her answers got shorter and she seemed distracted. Feeling this discomfort and not wanting to cause her any discomfort, I asked her if she could elaborate more on the idea of “mentor as lifesaver.” I said, “Could you just tell a little story about that?” Mentor One responded with, “I don’t know that I have a
little story but, um, I mean basically when you have a new job, it’s kind of like float or sink,” (Mentor 1 #3). Then she looked at me with an expression that I interpreted as she was “done” talking about mentoring. When I interviewed Mentee Three for the third time, I asked her to tell me how her relationship with her mentor had changed over time. She responded with, “I guess making it as short as possible . . .” which was a cue to me that she also, like her mentor, was done. Consequently, I consulted with the methodologist on my doctoral committee and decided to conduct only two interviews with the remaining four participants (Dyads 2 & 3).

Open-ended interview questions were used to elicit data about the mentoring program and mentoring relationships for the initial interviews. In order to alleviate any anxiety or misunderstanding, by my participants, about the interview process, I provided each participant with an interview guide a week before their interviews. A sample of the interview guide can be found in Appendix F. The length of each interview varied according to the personality and availability of the participants. The longest interview was 60 minutes in duration and the shortest interview was 15 minutes long. The variation in length of interviews was related to two reasons: (a) the 15-minute interview was the third the series with Mentor One (explained previously) and (b) the 60-minute interview was conducted with Mentee Two, a woman who felt very passionately about her participation in the study and wanted to contribute as much as possible to her interview. Mentee Two believed that research and study in the early childhood environment would be a catalyst for positive change and talked enthusiastically about her ideas related to the mentoring program, but also many other ideas related to her work in early childhood.
Mentor Interviews

**Mentor One:** For our first interview, Mentor One and I agreed to meet at the center, in the teacher’s computer room, away from the children. There were only two interruptions during the interview by teachers who came in to use the computer, but they didn’t affect the momentum of our interview. Initially, Mentor One seemed nervous about answering the questions; as if she perceived there was a right or wrong answer to any of the questions. Like all of the participants in the study, she had been provided with the interview guide a week before her interview, but since she didn’t have it with her, she asked to use my copy of the interview during the interview. I handed it to her and it seemed to alleviate some of the anxiety she had about answering the questions. Mentor One was particularly congenial and warm. We seemed to be in agreement about a number of things related to working in early childhood. Once relaxed, she talked quite freely about her feelings of responsibility toward her mentee and other co-workers at the center. For our second interview, we met again in the computer room. This time her mentee entered and started to use the computer. Mentor One said she didn’t feel comfortable being interviewed in the presence of her mentee, so we went to another room away from the children. During the second interview, Mentor One seemed even more comfortable and confident about answering the interview questions and asking questions of me as well. By the third interview, I felt like we had a developed rapport and she was even more forthcoming with information, albeit a reiteration of what she had said in the first two interviews. I was particularly impressed by Mentor One’s determination to create a comfortable atmosphere for her mentee. Comfort and making people feel comfortable seemed to be the theme of her work as a teacher and a mentor.
**Mentor Two:** Unlike the other participants in the study, Mentor Two chose to be interviewed in her classroom at the center, while working, during the children’s naptime. This created a bit of a logistical problem since our interviews were continually interrupted by the children who weren’t napping. Furthermore, although Mentor Two willingly signed the IRB informed consent form and volunteered to participate in the study, she demonstrated some resistance to being interviewed and answering questions. Because she chose to be interviewed while she was working it was difficult for her to focus completely on the interview questions and the needs of the children at the same time (see example of transcript in Appendix I). As a result it was also difficult to develop rapport during her interview sessions. It wasn’t until she saw the preliminary findings, while doing her member check, that she seemed genuinely engaged in the study.

**Mentor Three:** Mentor Three chose to hold our interviews during her lunch break. We went outside, away from the children where we could talk without interruption. Mentor Three was very cordial during the interviews and willing to offer her opinions and suggestions about her experience in the mentoring program. She seemed keen on establishing rapport with me and was very interested in the study and knowing more about mentoring. Unfortunately, due to her limited conversational English, it was difficult to gather substantial information from her. During our first interview, she informed me that she did not know that she was a mentor. But as we began to converse, it seemed that her declaration was actually a miscommunication. She *did* know that she had a mentee and talked about her work with her in a very positive
manner. Because we had our interview outside, during her lunch break, there were no interruptions during our time together.

**Mentee Interviews**

**Mentee One.** At the time of her interviews, Mentee One, who was eight months pregnant, had been working at the center for almost two years. (Shortly after giving birth, she left the center). Mentee One was a very vibrant and out-going person. She enthusiastically answered all the questions on the interview guide and was very forthcoming with information. She also asked a lot of questions and challenged me a few times about the nature of my study. She was concerned that the data I gathered might not be representative of the mentoring program as a whole since the only people who were in the study were volunteers. She described herself as a “people person” and enjoyed being part of the mentoring program because it gave her an opportunity to meet all her co-workers. We also met for our interviews after she was finished with work and we met outside, away from the center to talk.

**Mentee Two.** Mentee Two was very enthusiastic and forthcoming with her answers during the interviews. We had worked together previously in another early childhood center and already had rapport. Mentee Two had strong opinions about what kinds of changes needed to take place in order for a mentoring program to be successful in an early childhood environment. Mentee Two and I met at a local coffee shop, before her work day began, to hold our interviews. This atmosphere created a friendly and cordial interview process; like two friends talking. Due to her assertive personality and hardworking nature, Mentee Two had a lot of opinions about my topic of study and she was very excited to share her ideas and perceptions with me.
**Mentee Three.** Mentee Three, having previously worked public school with older children, was experiencing discomfort in the less structured environment of the early childhood center and expressed this during our interviews. Like her mentor, Mentee Three chose to meet during her lunch breaks and we talk outside of the center, away from the children and other teachers. Mentee Three had strong opinions about what needed to take place in order for a mentoring program to be considered successful and was willing to openly share her ideas. Because of her enthusiasm for the topic of my study, we seemed to develop rapport quickly within the first interview. Unfortunately, Mentee Three displayed an attitude of frustration, defeat, and resignation related to the mentoring program and in general her work at the center. She was overwhelmed by the early childhood environment and she wasn’t sure if she would stay. Within a month after our last interview, she quit working at the center.

Overall, the interviews with the six participants produced valuable descriptive data about their experiences in the mentoring program. The times and places for the interviews were arranged at the convenience of the participants. This arrangement along with being provided the interview questions ahead of time gave them the opportunity to share in the knowledge creation process of this research.

**Memoing**

Writing memos during data collection and analysis is not only a critical part of grounded theory methodology, it was essential for me as a researcher to keep track of my ideas and impressions during the data collection process as well as the data analysis process. While transcribing the initial interviews, memo writing was a helpful way to record my ideas related to the interview process. Memo writing also assisted me in the development of my second and third set of questions for subsequent interviews.
Later, during data coding and analysis, my memos became a way for me to organize, record, and substantiate the decisions I made related to the analysis of my data. Memos were also an important way for me to keep track of the external validity I received via my colleagues in the form of critiques and suggestions made during our qualitative support group meetings. For example, when I felt that I had completed my coding process and I was ready to move to theory development, I presented my data to the qualitative support group for feedback. Following is a short except from the memo I made after the meeting:

September 15, 2008: E questioned why I put certain statements into certain focused codes like the following: why did I put the following open code from Mentor One’s second interview: ‘relationship development influences mentee’s first impression of the center’ into the focused code of ‘Beliefs and Expectations’ and why didn’t I put Mentor Two’s second interview transcript ‘classroom set up so mentoring happens on the fly’ into the environment selective code? (it was in the beliefs and expectations code).

Additionally, memo writing was essential for me as I developed and refined my codes and provided a way for me to write explanations and rationalizations for each code and why certain data fit into certain codes. This process became even more important when I began theory development as it helped me organize my ideas about how the theory was developing from the codes.

**Subjectivity Statement**

The subjectivity statement or “researcher reflexivity” is the qualitative researcher’s “self-disclosure” of her “assumptions, beliefs, and biases” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127) and it is included in the study for two main reasons. First of all, this disclosure allows the readers of the study to be aware of the underlying preconceptions of the researcher. Secondly, it offers the researcher the opportunity to look at her own
biases and then attempt to suspend those beliefs in order to present findings that are based on discovery and not preconceptions (Nealon & Grouix, 2003).

My experiences of mentoring and being mentored in an early childhood center provided the impetus for this study. I had worked in Early Head Start (EHS) mentoring and being mentored. I had experienced the challenges and the benefits of the process of developing rapport, respect, and reciprocity in a mentoring relationship. I also knew that many of the teachers in the classroom hadn’t had the opportunity to complete certification to teach in early childhood. I felt that mentoring in the classroom could be an efficacious way to offer on-the-job training to EHS teachers specifically and early childhood teachers in general. I knew from my experiences and research that at least half of all early childhood teachers have no formal training or education in childhood development. Because mentoring had been so beneficial for me, I believed it might be beneficial for others. It was with this attitude of hope that I approached this research study. I wanted to study mentoring relationships, particularly how and why they worked; the interpersonal dynamics of the relationship. I knew from my experience at EHS that developing a relationship in the classroom was a challenge. But I also knew with patience, kindness, respect, trust, and reciprocity, it was possible to develop meaningful relationships.

My experience at EHS, and my reading of scholarly literature on mentoring, initially influenced the way I approached the topic of my study. It also informed the way I initially perceived the data from my participants. After my first transcription and analysis of the interviews, I saw themes in my data that that were similar to findings from some of the literature I had reviewed and some of the experiences I had had as a mentor in
an early childhood center. For example, in the first review of my interview with Mentor 1, I noted that the personal characteristics of caring, nurturing, and communicating were important to her as a mentor. These were personal characteristics that I felt were important, from my experience at EHS, and were also found in the literature to be important for the mentoring relationships (for example see Abell, et al., 1995 and Pavia, et al., 2003). For all the participants, I took their comments about personal characteristics and used them to develop follow-up questions for Mentor One. However, the follow-up interviews did not necessarily validate or support my first impressions of the transcriptions. Doing line-by-line coding and data analysis actually allowed me to see that something different was emerging from my study; a theory that I hadn’t considered; something that was much more insightful than my limited perception of personality characteristics and traits of mentors and mentees in early childhood.

Beyond this initial disclosure of my subjectivity, I should note that I did an 18-month practicum at the center in which the study took place. This practicum was completed two years before I began my study. As mentioned previously, coincidentally, one of the participants in the study was a teacher I worked with at EHS. I had completed my work with her three years before my research began. As a result of my connection to the center and this former co-worker, it would be accurate to state that my subjectivity toward the setting and subjects was favorable before I began my research.

When I began to look at educational literature, I found numerous theoretical articles that espoused the benefits of mentoring for professional development in early childhood. Most advocates of early childhood educational practices promoted the idea of in-class mentoring for early childhood teachers (See HSIPC, 2001; NAYCE, 2005;
and NIEER, 2003). However, as mentioned previously, very few empirical studies have been done that have findings to validate these suggestions. This lack of empirical information about mentoring in early childhood was a great motivator for me to design a study that explored the subject of the relationships between mentors and mentees in an early childhood setting. My ultimate goal of this study was to understand the dynamics of mentoring relationships and whether or not in-class mentoring was a realistic and practical means of professional development in the early childhood setting.

**Data Analysis Methods: Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory is a qualitative research methodology that has its foundations in symbolic interactionism (Crotty, 1998) and pragmatism (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), and as such it contains the principles of change and the rejection of determinism and nondeterminism. According to Charmaz (2005), grounded theory combined with a constructivist theoretical framework reinforces the belief that individuals create meaningful experiences in their lives through the dialectical process of “conferring meaning on their realities and acting within them,” (p. 521). In this way, constructivist grounded theory does not seek to find a universal truth, but rather the “real” experience of participants (Charmaz, 2005). Furthermore, grounded theory purports that data collected will generate new ideas, concepts, and theories (Denscombe, 1998); that the theories developed will be “grounded” in the data. Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggested that to achieve this theory development from the data, researchers must have flexible and general guiding research questions that allow them to ask the questions: “what is occurring;” “what is happening;” “what can be discovered?” These grounded theory principles encourage research participants to become interactive with the choices they
make, their perceptions of their own changing conditions, and the dynamic nature of their circumstances (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

**Grounded Theory: Theories Grounded in the Data**

The strength of grounded theory in qualitative research lies in its strategies of rigorous analytical processes and the “self-correcting” nature of the data collection and coding processes (Charmaz, 2005, p. 522). It is through these processes that grounded theorists carefully and methodically allow the data to offer up a theory, rather than superimposing a preconceived theory on the data (Charmaz, 2005). When using a combination of constructivist theory and grounded theory methods, researchers’ dedication to detail and prolonged data analysis can sensitize them to the multiple realities of their participants since there is no intention of capturing any single reality (Charmaz, 2005). In other words, the perceptions and realities of the participants take precedent over any preconceived ideas of the researcher. Additionally, the coding process associated with constructivist grounded theory provides a means for addressing the potential influence of a researcher’s prior experiences during the research process. The initial coding process outlined by Charmaz (2006) provides a means for a researcher to withhold from imposing his or her own beliefs by utilizing sensitizing concepts to code data. Sensitizing concepts require a researcher to conduct initial coding using many of the participants’ own words, which are then rephrased into action statements. Engaging in this process helps to assure that participants’ realities, not the researcher’s, are represented.

**Memo Writing in Grounded Theory**

Memo writing is considered a pivotal step between data collection and data analysis (Charmaz, 2006). During memo writing the researcher reflects on the interview
experience, the transcript and begins the analysis process of the data early in the research process. Memo writing is a way to study the transcripts and identify emerging ideas and patterns from the interview. According to Charmaz (2006) while writing memos the researcher can study the data, make notes about ideas, identify what is happening in the interview, and use reflections to design further questions for further data collection. Additionally, Charmaz (2006) explains that memo writing helps the researcher stop and think about her data, develop a writer’s voice and rhythm, stimulate new ideas about the data, prevents the researcher from forcing data into preconceived theories, and helps with the labeling of codes, categories, and ultimately the development of theories.

**The Coding Process in Grounded Theory**

The coding process in grounded theory involves three main stages of analytically looking at the transcripts of the participant interview for data and other sources of information such as researchers’ memos and archival texts. First, the process involves “open coding” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 12) or “initial coding” (Charmaz, 2006, p.47), breaking the written transcript into small meaning units which could be comprise of anything from a few words to a few sentences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). During this process, each meaning unit is studied, analyzed, and subsequently given a label to summarize its meaning (Charmaz, 2006). The purpose of this first stage of coding is to give the researcher an alternative way of looking at the transcript; not as the story that it may initially appear as but in a way that offers new insights into what is happening in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

The second stage of coding in grounded theory is “axial” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 13) or “focused” coding (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57). In this stage of coding the most
frequent open or initial codes are grouped together as categories and analyzed in relationship to each other (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Also at this stage of coding, the researcher starts to make decisions about the significance of certain data and their relationship each other and analyzing what is occurring in the data (Charmaz, 2006). In this way the researcher is actively involved with her data; concentrating on meanings, concentrating on relationships, concentrating on words and word play for the creation of labels for this level of coding that retain the original meaning of the transcript but moves the data toward the process of further analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Throughout the coding process, new perspectives and ideas are constantly emerging from the data. This experience is consistent with the logic of grounded theory: “coding is an emergent process; unexpected ideas emerge,” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 59).

Finally, during the third stage of coding, “selective” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 14) or “theoretical” coding (Charmaz, 2006, p. 63), the data, which have been taken apart and scrutinized are now put back together and organized around a core category for possible theoretical development. The process of constantly revisiting the data codes and meanings continues but at this stage, a theory that will represent the topic under study begins to emerge. Eventually, when the theory has completely emerged, it will have explanatory power through the illustration of how each level of coding was developed and the logical progression among the levels of codes (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

**Theoretical Sampling in Grounded Theory**

Due to the time limitations of writing a doctoral dissertation, I did not use theoretical sampling in this study; however, it is important to note here how it is used generally in grounded theory methods. Theoretical sampling as originally envisioned by
Glaser (1978) was a feature of grounded theory methods related to the sampling of informants. According to Glaser (1978) sampling of participants should be determined by the emerging theory developed from the data. Initially the researcher would interview participants related to the phenomenon understudy and then depending on the findings of those interviews, seek out further participants to substantiate the findings of the original participants (Goulding, 1999). However, Charmaz (2006) has created a constructivist spin on theoretical sampling to counter Glaser’s (1978) positivist approach, by suggesting that grounded theory researchers revisit their existing, pertinent data in order to refine the codes and categories already developed and then go back to the original participants to fill in gaps, answer unresolved questions, and pose deeper questions. In this way, Charmaz (2006) makes theoretical sampling in constructivist grounded theory more conceptual and less positivist in nature; furthering the understanding of the participants’ experience with the phenomenon under study.

Constant comparison is another hallmark of grounded theory research (Goulding, 1999). When using constant comparison, a researcher compares data “like with like” to identify themes and patterns (Goulding, 1999, p. 9). Goulding (1999) adds that the use of constant comparison helps the researcher explore differences and similarities across participants, incidents, and within the data to provide a focus for collecting further data. This process of constant comparison is the foundation for the logical progression of the development of the data from meaning units to codes to the development of categories, and subcategories, and eventually the concept of theory construction (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).
Theory Building in Grounded Theory

Theory building in grounded theory is based on the idea that theories are discovered from the data analyzed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The significance of this idea is that researchers doing grounded theory studies set aside preconceived ideas during their theory building processes and look only to the data from their studies for an emerging theory. Clearly, researchers must have a general understanding of the topic under study, but Glaser and Strauss caution researchers to avoid being swayed by previously developed theories on the topic under investigation. Once preconceived ideas are put aside, it is possible for researchers to examine their data for compelling categories, properties, and dimensions of their data (Dey, 1999). Additionally, theory building relies on the researcher’s determination to avoid focusing on any one single theoretical perspective and remain open to the ideas being generated from the newly analyzed data.

Through the use of the methods mentioned above, it is possible for a qualitative researcher to build a theory that explains the experience of the participants and their understanding of the phenomenon under study. By carefully coding and analyzing data, writing memos to document the analysis process, and revisiting the data over and over again, it is possible to see the emerging themes in the data and thus begin to build a theory that can be argued as valid.

Data Analysis Process in This Study

As a grounded theory researcher this was my task: to capture the complexity of how the mentors and mentees constructed and made meaning of their experiences, in the mentoring program, through data collection and analysis in order to understand the interpersonal mentoring relationships. This seemingly undisciplined, unstructured
method of doing research can be perceived as disturbing and even unwelcomed in today’s academic atmosphere of “evidence-based” practices and “scientifically-based research.” In actuality, the use of constructivist grounded theory methods allowed me as the researcher to understand how the teachers in my study made meaning of their experiences in mentoring relationships in a way that would have been impossible with the use of quantitative methods. This goal of understanding which has great value in the field of education could not be achieved by quantitative methods; how teachers make meaning of their experiences is not measurable by numbers; how mentors and mentees perceive their experience in an early childhood mentoring program cannot be reduced to data points on a graph. However, with the use of qualitative methodology such as constructivist grounded theory strategies it is possible to expand research knowledge beyond the boundaries set by numbers. Understanding can be achieved through the rigorous processes of simultaneous collection and analysis of data, data coding processes, memo writing, and other strategies used in grounded theory data analysis.

The process of preparation for data analysis involved (a) listening to the tape recordings of the participants’ interviews, (b) transcribing the tapes, (c) memo writing during listening and transcription of the tapes, to reflect on the experiences and perceptions of the participants, (d) developing subsequent interview guides based on prior interviews, (e) reading through the transcripts, and (f) finally breaking the transcript into meaning units that were then analyzed and coded. The data analysis process began with listening to the interviews that I had recorded; reflecting on my questions and the participants’ responses to the questions. Within 24 hours of each interview, I completed full transcriptions of the audiotapes. I also wrote memos about my
impressions of the participants, the interviews, the appropriateness of the questions, and specific ideas and perceptions that the participants shared with me. I made notes to myself of the subtle and not so subtle observations I had about the participants while they were answering questions, and my impressions of their responses. For example, I interviewed Mentee Two before I interviewed Mentor Two. Mentee Two mentioned a number of times that she desired to have formal mentoring meetings and direct instruction from her mentor. When I interview Mentor Two, without any prompting from me, she explained that she preferred to do mentoring very casually and that she believed that formal mentoring could be overwhelming to new teachers. I made a memo of this because it indicated a difference of opinion about mentoring styles between Mentor Two and Mentee Two.

After preliminary data from the interviews were collected and analyzed it was possible to develop second and third interview guides. A sample of a follow-up interview guide can be found in Appendix G. The follow-up interview guides focused on the ideas that emerged from the initial interviews. I followed this same procedure for all the participants. As mentioned previously, with the first two participants, Mentor One and Mentee One, I conducted three interviews and with the four remaining participants, I conducted two interviews each. Interviewing and transcribing for the study took place over a period of three months. During that time I continued writing memos related to my impressions of the data from the transcript.

Once all the interviews were completed and transcribed the process of reading through the transcriptions began. For the current study the use of constant comparison became part of the analyzing process with respect to coding data. While comparing
data from the 14 interview transcripts I was able to see the similarities and differences in perceptions of the mentors and mentees with respect to their relationships. This process enable me to begin initial coding and continue to my final stage of coding, theory construction. I used grounded theory data analysis to help me make meaning of the data I gathered during my study. In my study, I added an extra stage of coding, distinguishing between initial coding and open coding which helped me understand my data better, provided me with more ways to look at my data, and allowed me to ask myself the questions: “What is going on here?” “What is happening here?” and “What does this mean to the mentor/mentee relationship?”

The process of grounded theory data coding and analysis is exhaustive, particularly when it is done line-by-line with the data eventually becoming fractured. My experience with this fracturing the data has been profound as it allowed me to see the data from a relatively neutral point of view. The neutralizing process occurred each time I re-read the interviews; broke the transcripts in to meaning units, line-by-line, and was able to see beyond my first impressions of what the transcripts contained. Furthermore by using a constructivist theoretical framework with grounded theory data collection and analysis methods, I was able to develop a theory that explained the ways in which my participants made meaning of their experiences in the mentoring program; how they constructed and perceived their mentoring relationships; and what influences contributed or detracted from their interpersonal mentoring relationships.

**Creating Open Codes: Capturing/Labeling**

After completing the transcription of the interviews, and my informal initial coding, I began the official coding process of my data. In the first round of coding, or open coding, I read through the transcripts to examine and explore my data for any
theoretical possibilities that might be occurring. For example, I looked at how the concept of “time” appeared in the data and how it was related to the other data with mentoring relationships. I also compared the ways time appeared in the data to see if there were relationships between different participants’ points of view related to time and its relationship to mentoring. During this round of coding, I looked at the transcripts word by word and line by line to find meaning units throughout the transcript and developing codes such as “finding time to meet,” and “having no time to sit and talk.”

Additionally, while reviewing the transcripts during the open coding step of analysis, I also clarified the participants’ responses by adding italicized words in parenthesis. When some of the meaning units of the transcript were taken out of context, they could not stand on their own as capturing the bigger meaning of the excerpt (This is due to the fact my half of the interview transcript was not coded according to grounded theory methods). For example, the statement, “we just sort of did it (mentoring); worked as it happened,” is an important piece of data, but without the clarification of parenthetical qualifiers, it didn’t make sense.

**Creating Focused Codes: Conceptualization**

In the next round of coding, I began to look at the open codes in terms of frequency and connectedness conceptually. For example, using the open codes related to time, I put those two transcript excerpts into a focused code of “time” which eventually became, “time limitations.” Also during this focused coding process I began to eliminate some open codes that appeared to be superfluous to the rest of the data. For example, one participant had several open codes related to culture: “Likes cultural diversity,” and “likes the cultural diversity at the university.” Although these were interesting excerpts from the transcript, they were not relevant to the topic under study.
Another example of an open code that was eliminated was in the open code of “I’m not seeing best practices when food is being served” and “I’m used to seeing best practices.” Best Practices are based on a set of pedagogical strategies used by early childhood teachers developed from research findings of (a) how children’s brains develop and learn best and (b) strategies that teachers can use to facilitate children’s learning. Once again, although these excerpts from the transcript were interesting, they were not directly related to the subject of mentoring relationships, and thus were eliminated during the focused coding step of the process.

Creating Selective Codes: Categories

After sorting through the transcript data, reviewing my memos, and looking at the focused codes I had developed, certain properties of the focused codes appeared to fall into tentative categories. Continuing on with the example of the focused codes of time limitations, I began to see that all of my focused codes were representative of bigger categories that could be described as environments: there was the concrete environment of the physical environment and on the other end of the spectrum there was the experiential environment of the personal environment. The analyzed and coded data seemed to indicate that the environmental aspects of the early childhood center had the strongest influence on the mentoring relationships of all the participants.

Thus the selective codes or categories of the environmental influences began to answer the questions of the “who” “when” “where” “why,” and “how” with the “what” of the study. They were also a way to answer the bigger research question of how early childhood teachers experience and perceive their participation in a mentoring program and the supporting questions of how they describe their experience and relationships in the mentoring program. Throughout the coding process, as I became more familiar with
my transcripts, I would reflect on my coding process and ask the following questions: (a) What is happening in this data? (b) What is the basic socio-psychological problem? (c) What accounts for it? And (d) What patterns are occurring here? And as I proceeded this way with my analysis, the influences of the different environments began to emerge as a theory of how the participants experience their relationships in the mentoring program.

Memos were coded less formally than the interview transcripts as they were coded according to types of memos. By the time I had finished data analysis and theory development, I had three types of memos: (1) memos written during transcription, (2) memos written during coding, and (3) memos related to feedback received from external audits. The last category included feedback from the qualitative support group mentioned previously, individual peer collaborators, and feedback from my doctoral committee methodologist (see Memo Example in Appendix H).

Constant comparison methods were used to compare text segments and codes from different sources such as the interviews and the memos that referred to a common element found in the data. The comparison of text segments was conducted in order to continue and then finally build a theory that evolved from the analysis of the data. In the theory building process, I was able to connect advanced codes to organize data into a network of categories that suggested the idea of the emerging theory (See Chapter 4 for findings).

The Development of a Theory

Once I completed the processes of coding and labeling the analyzed data from the transcripts, I continued to comb through the data looking for overarching meanings;
what was happening with these mentors and mentees with respect to their perceptions of their relationships and the mentoring program? As I read and re-read my codes with their accompanying labels, it occurred to me that the data were describing things related to the environment of the early childhood center. I began to see that the elements of the early childhood environment were what the mentors and mentees were referring to when they talked about their experiences in the mentoring program and in their mentoring relationships.

Furthermore, I was able to see how these elements were related to what they perceived as either opportunities or limitations in their relationships. Once I had this insight, I went back and looked through my codes to see if they were, in fact, descriptive of environmental aspects of the center. In the case of the focused code “time schedules,” for example, it was possible to see how this element could either contribute to or detract from the interpersonal mentoring relationship; and this was clearly in a category that would be considered environmental. If mentors and mentees had time to meet regularly and hold mentoring sessions, it was likely that they would develop relationships. I continued this process with all the focused codes and selective codes, which led to the development of the theory of the environmental influences on mentoring relationships.

**Validity**

Unlike quantitative research where validity can be demonstrated by the generalizability and reliability of findings across multiple subjects or settings, the goal of validity in qualitative research is to demonstrate rigorous methods and credible findings. This is done by determining the degree to which a researcher’s claim about her findings and the knowledge constructed from them corresponds to her participants’
representation of the topic under study (Eisner and Peshkin, 1990). Validity in qualitative research is established by using a combination of the following methods as explained by Creswell and Miller (2000): (1) Triangulation, (2) Negative Case evidence, (3) Member checking, (4) Audit trail, and (5) peer debriefing.

Morse and Richards (2002) explain the process of triangulation as an event where two or more studies on the same topic “encounter” each other in order to clarify, illuminate, and verify findings; or in other words to come to the same conclusion (p. 76). Triangulation can appear as the convergence of multiple sources of data that substantiate research findings such as multiple interviews and journal entries. Due to the time and space limitations of a doctoral dissertation, triangulation was done by the convergence of the findings from the perspective of the researcher, the perspective of the participants, and the perspectives of reviewers external to the study.

Negative case evidence, the process wherein researchers comb through their data to find consistencies and inconsistencies as a way to confirm or disconfirm their theories is another way to establish validity in a qualitative research study. Negative case examples also make use of the constant comparison method proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) by comparing the theoretical findings with examples that are contradictory. In this way negative case examples can substantiate the validity of findings. In the context of the current study, a number of negative case examples were presented in the findings that contradicted the core findings.

Considered the most important technique for establishing validity in a constructivist qualitative study, member checking is the process in which the researcher offers participants the opportunity to look at the transcripts of their interviews and the
researcher’s interpretations of them, including the theory developed from the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Wolcott (1990) also suggests that member checking is essential for validity in qualitative research because it encourages critique and feedback from the participants when they are presented with the interpretation of their transcripts from the researcher.

An audit trail is established when the researcher documents her process throughout the study with memoing, developing a data collection chronology (Table 3-2), and recording and reporting data analysis procedures thoroughly (Creswell & Miller, 2000). A coding trail is also offered in Appendix L as a way to document the process of coding data as a way to establish validity.

Finally, peer debriefing is a process where in the researcher collaborates with peers who are familiar with her research to review the findings (Creswell, 1998). With the use of peer debriefing, peers can validate findings, play devil’s advocate to help the researcher clarify her points, and continually support the researcher by asking questions about appropriateness of methods and interpretations of the findings.

In order to achieve confidence with the validity of the findings of this study it was necessary to employ the strategies mentioned above. For the process of triangulation, I compared my perceptions of my findings to that of my participants when I did my member check to check the accuracy of my perceptions. Additionally, I took my findings to the university’s qualitative support group on a regular basis for feedback from my colleagues and the methodologist who facilitated the group. I also had the group give me feedback on my coding and analyzing processes.
Using negative case evidence allowed me to substantiate some of my findings by showing that certain data had both positive and negative examples of the same events or experiences. Examples of negative case evidence are represented in the findings chapters. Once I had my preliminary findings, I arranged meetings with three of my original six participants in order to do member checks. From these member checks it was possible for me to evaluate whether or not I had demonstrated any insights with my findings and if the participants’ descriptions and perceptions had been accurately represented. The results of the member check will follow this section. Finally, I had the on-going support of my colleague Vivian Wu to do my peer debriefing. She read my writing and helped me with my coding process and methodology.

Member Checks

Following data collection and analysis, I conducted member checks with three of the original six participants: Mentor One, Mentor Two, and Mentee Two. Two of the participants, Mentee One and Mentee Three, were no longer employed at the center and I was unable to schedule a member check interview with the sixth participant, Mentor Three. I contacted the participants first by email and secondly by visiting them in person at the center. I provided each participant with a copy of my preliminary findings as well a copy of my interpretation of their individual transcripts. I also provided them with a copy of the questions I would be asking them during the member check (See Appendix K for Member Checking example). Results from the member check interviews are included in Chapter 5.

The data I received from two of the member checks, Mentor Two and Mentee Two, supported my findings with the participants validating the accuracy of the transcriptions of their interviews with statements such as “they seemed very accurate;”
“I feel like it was very relevant;” and “The overall findings (were) just awesome!” One of the participants, Mentor One, was less convinced with the transcript and the findings. When asked if she felt like she had been represented accurately in the transcription of her interview she said:

Honestly, it’s hard to say ‘cause, you know, you look at how you talk, and it sounds so broken up, oh my gosh, I don’t talk that great, do I? Honestly, it’s hard for me to tell you. (Member Check with Mentor One, 11-07-08).

When asked how she felt about the conceptualization of the findings (See Chapter 4 for details) she said, “It seems fine to me; it’s not necessarily how I would break it down in my mind, but it seems fine; you’re writing a paper, so…” (Member Check with Mentor One, 11-07-08)

**Limitations of the Study**

Although this study involved significant, rigorous, and conscientious data collection, coding, and analysis for a period of 18 months, there were five main limitations that the reader must take into consideration when reviewing the findings. First, because the participants were volunteers, by definition they were likely to have strong opinions about the mentoring program and/or have positive things to say about mentoring. Mentee One pointed out this trend in our second interview when she explained that, “everybody that emailed back [participants in the study] probably would be the people that would go and volunteer to be a mentor,” (Mentee 1 # 2).

A second limitation, inherent in a dissertation study such as this one, was time allotted for data collection and analysis. Ideally in a qualitative research study, the researcher spends “prolonged engagement” with her participants (Creswell, 1998) and prolonged engagement with her data (Charmaz, 2006). However, one of the constraints of doing data collection and grounded theory data analysis for a doctoral dissertation is
time. Ideally, as a grounded theory researcher, I would have spent weeks with my first interview; listening to the audio tape numerous times, transcribing it and analyzing the data from many different points of view before going on to the next interview. This would have insured total data saturation and theoretical sampling as suggested by Charmaz (2006). In retrospect, I understand that my second and third interviews with my participant may have yielded more rich data if I had had the time to “live” more with my data before moving on to the next interviews. But logistically this was impossible for two reasons. First of all, I had time constraints as a doctoral student. Secondly, in the case of my first interviewee, Mentee One, I had to transcribe her interview and conduct her subsequent interviews within a relatively short period of time because she was due to have a baby within three weeks of our first interview.

Thirdly, there were limitations related to data collection from interviews for this study based on the willingness and candidness of the participants. As noted by Kvale (1996, 2006), the qualitative interview is meant to be a dialogical opportunity for researchers to engage with participants in the construction of knowledge through the sharing of experiences. Being sensitive to the inherent hierarchical nature of researcher/participant interviews, I tried to minimize this dynamic by (a) providing participants the freedom to arrange all their interviews at times and places for their convenience; (b) explaining the research process in depth, along with my subjectivities and beliefs, and clarifying any questions that participants had in order to reduce anxiety about the interviews; and (3) providing the participants with as many opportunities as possible to express their ideas, feelings, and apprehensions about my study. With that being said, I also know that the hegemony of university research can be intimidating to
many people. Some of my participants were more comfortable with the interview process than others, and as a result were probably more candid with their answers. For example, as previously mentioned, Mentor Two choose not to leave her classroom during our interviews and that choice was reflected in the quality of our interviews. However, I believe that all the participants answered my questions as candidly as possible, and to that extent I believe the findings to be valid.

Fourthly, it should be noted that the finding of this study come from one mentoring program in one early childhood setting. It would be difficult to generalize the findings of this study to all early childhood settings, especially since this is a university-based childcare center. Moreover, the teachers in this study designed their mentoring program to solve the problem of inducting beginning teachers into the center, therefore making replication of the study difficult unless one could find a similar setting.

Finally, due to teacher turnover, the loss of participants for member checking created a limitation to the study. By the time I had finished my data analysis and theory development and was prepared to do member checks, two of my participants, Mentee One and Mentee Three, were no longer employed at the center. This limited my ability to conduct complete member checks of all the participants. Of the six participants, it was possible to do member checks with Mentor One, Mentor Two, and Mentee Two.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the use of constructivist grounded theory methods has facilitated my understanding of the transcripts and subsequent data analysis of my study, thus offering me a way to organize my data to see the emergent themes and develop a theory about mentoring relationships in one early childhood center. Using the constructivist theoretical framework for my study made it possible for me to understand
how my participants made meaning of their experiences – constructed their realities - in their natural settings as mentors and mentees in a mentoring program in early childhood. My use of grounded theory methods for data collection and analysis provided me with a rigorous way to gather, transcribe, and make meaning of my interview data. Grounded theory methodology also provided a structure for me to develop an understanding and ultimately a theory about mentoring relationships.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

Introduction

Findings from this study show how four environmental dimensions of an early childhood center influenced teachers’ interpersonal mentoring relationships: the physical, the professional, the social, and the emotional environments. The theory of how the four environments influenced the mentoring relationship was developed from analyzing the transcripts of the participants’ descriptions of their experiences in the mentoring program. The selective codes related to the four environments, are presented here, from the most contextual or concrete: the physical, to the most experiential or least concrete: the emotional. Although these environments are presented as four separate dimensions, they are intertwined throughout the participants’ transcripts. For example, in the physical environment, time schedules determined whether or not mentors could work with mentees formally.

The lack of formal mentoring detracted from a new teacher's ability to feel comfortable in the social environment. Furthermore, the comfort level of the new teacher determined if she developed a friendship with her mentor, one of the elements of the emotional environment. Finally, the previously mentioned environments influenced the attitudes and personal characteristics of the teachers the mentoring relationship. Excerpts from the interview transcripts illustrated ways in which the participants perceived their experiences in the mentoring program and ways in which these environments influenced their perceptions of their mentoring relationships. Notation of the excerpts will be as follows: a quote from Mentee One’s first interview is
represented by the notation (Mentee 1 # 1); a quote from Mentee Two’s second
interview is represented by the notation (Mentee 2 # 2) and so forth.

**Core Category: The Environment**

The core category or theory that emerged from the data was “The Environment,”
the “big E” environment, which represented the most powerful influence on the
relationships between mentors and mentees. The use of the words environment or
environments in this study will be conceptual rather than actual. The theory of the
environmental influences on the mentoring relationships does not refer to early
childhood environments that can be measured by standardized test such as the Early
Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) or the Infant/Toddler Environment
Rating Scale (ITERS) (Perlman, Zellman, & Le, 2004). As one of the mentees
explained, “a lot of what I’m finding [is] that everybody is experiencing the same feelings
about stuff and it’s not so much about a mentor/mentoring relationship, [it is more]
because of the environment; that really is dictating what happens to people right now,”
(Mentee 3 # 2). The “big E” environment of the early childhood center was comprised of
the four “little e” environments, which are represented by the selective codes: (1)
physical environment, (2) professional environment, (3) social environment, and (4)
emotional environment. An auxiliary selective code, personal characteristics, was
developed to include personality traits and characteristics that were separate from, but
interacted with the four environments. As illustrated in the theory diagram Figure 4.1,
these environments are represented as separate environments, but they interacted with
each other as they influenced the mentoring relationships.
Figure 4-1. Conceptual model of teachers’ perceptions of influences on mentoring relationships
Selective Codes: The Little “e” Environments

Each of the “little e” environments were comprised of focused codes, ranging in number from two to six, depending on the environment. The selective codes with their accompanying focused codes are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4-1. Selective codes with accompanying focused codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selective codes</th>
<th>Physical Environment</th>
<th>Professional Environment</th>
<th>Social Environment</th>
<th>Emotional Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focused codes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Time schedules</td>
<td>4. Mentor training program</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Reciprocal professional relationships</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Teacher turnover</td>
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</table>

Physical Environment

The physical environment, in this study, was defined by the data from the transcripts of the mentors and mentees. The four aspects of the physical environment identified as influencing mentoring relationships were: (1) classroom structure, (2) the presence and immediate needs of young children, (3) proximity of mentors to mentees, and (4) time schedules. Classroom structure included participants’ perceptions of
classroom arrangement and organization, as well as the structural elements of the buildings such as acoustics and physical space. The physical presence and immediate needs of young children in the classroom were part of the physical environment because they were the focus of the center and their presence was perceived as being an influence on mentoring relationships. The proximity of mentors to mentees was also part of the physical environment since proximity was determined by the arrangement of teachers in the classrooms. Finally, time schedules, the fixed aspect of the teachers’ schedules and responsibilities, was considered a way the physical environment influenced mentoring relationships.

**Classroom Structure**

The physical arrangement of the classroom for Mentors Two and Three and Mentees Two and Three was a large cooperative area that had five teachers working with 46, four-to five-year-old children with a teacher/child ratio of 1/9. In this cooperative area, each teacher was required to create a space for herself and her nine students where instruction of the five individual groups of children was delivered simultaneously. The classroom arrangement for Mentor and Mentee One was quite different; they were in another building, in adjacent classrooms with fewer and younger children - infants to young toddlers. The teacher/child ratio for Mentor and Mentee One was 1/3 and 1/4 respectively. As there were differences in the physical arrangements of the classrooms for the participants, the influence of classroom structure on mentoring relationships varied across participants.

**Mentors’ Perspectives:** Mentor One did not perceive the physical structure of the classroom or the early childhood environment as problematic for mentoring. She did note, however, that, “I would think as far as an environment it probably needs it
[mentoring] the most [more than other classroom environments].” (Mentor 1 # 2). She worked in a classroom adjacent to that of her mentee and scheduled all their mentoring meetings away from work so they would not be directly influenced by the physical environment of the early childhood center.

Unlike Mentor One, Mentor Two did not schedule formal mentoring meetings with her mentee away from the classroom; consequently, she reported that the physical structure of the classroom detracted from her ability to mentor. She explained, “Rarely are we ever in a quiet environment that is conducive to mentoring.” Mentor Two worked with her mentee in the large cooperative area. She reported being distracted by the poor acoustics of the building, “the large room over there is concrete block walls so the sound echoes everywhere; it’s hard to even hear the children who are [sitting] at your table” (Mentor 2 # 2). Additionally, Mentor Two felt as if the physical arrangement (five teachers and 46 children) of the large cooperative room made formal mentoring problematic, “the classroom is set up so that mentoring has to happen on the fly” (Mentor 2 # 1).

Mentor Three also worked in the large cooperative area with her mentee. Her perception of the shared classroom was positive. Mentor Three perceive that working in the shared room with her mentee was beneficial: “we both work in this big room… so I’ll go to her and ask her what she needs; so that we will be staying all the time together” (Mentor 3 # 1). Because Mentor Three perceived that she could mentor her mentee while they worked together in the cooperative room, she did not schedule formal meetings with her mentee.
As illustrated by the data in this focused code, the mentors’ perceptions of the influence of the classroom structure on their mentoring relationships were mixed. Mentor One demonstrated an understanding of the complexities of the early childhood environment; the classroom structure, and its potential to influence her relationship with her mentee, so she scheduled mentoring meetings away from the classroom. Consequently classroom structure did not have a negative influence on their mentoring relationship. Mentee Two on the other hand, did not schedule mentoring meetings away from the classroom and perceived that mentoring had to “happen on the fly.” In this case, the classroom structure eclipsed the development of her interpersonal relationship with her mentee. Finally, Mentor Three perceived that the structure of the large cooperative classroom was beneficial because she could work side-by-side with her mentee, help her, and get to know her.

**Mentees’ Perspective:** Mentee One, like her mentor did not perceive that the physical structure of the classroom prevented her from developing a close relationship with her mentor; instead, she and her mentor had regularly scheduled meetings away from their classrooms. Unlike the other two mentees, Mentee One worked in a different building. She and her mentor worked in adjacent classrooms and were able to chat informally if they desired. Additionally, Mentor and Mentee One worked with younger children than the other participants; consequently, there were fewer children in their classrooms and a higher teacher/child ratio than the large cooperative room in which the other participants worked.

Mentee Two’s perception of the problematic nature of the classroom structure was not only related to the challenges of working in the large, shared area (as
mentioned by Mentor Two) but she reported that the center was "lacking structure, order, and organization" in the arrangement of the physical environment (Mentee 2 # 1). Mentee Two perceived that the lack of organization detracted from the mentoring experience she desired, “maybe that’s why she [Mentor Two] can’t tell me where everything is ‘cause they don’t really know where everything is” (Mentee 2 # 1).

Mentee Three stated that working in the large cooperative classroom reduced her “desire” to be mentored; the physical environment was “too hectic to talk” with her mentor when it was necessary (Mentee 3 # 1). Mentee Three also said that the cooperative space “kept mentoring from happening.” She perceived that she had to fight to “carve out a space for herself and her children” and sometimes she was competing with her mentor for the same space in the large classroom (Mentee 3 # 1). As a result of the classroom structure, “tension” existed at the center” and it negatively influenced her relationship with Mentor Three (Mentee 3 # 2). She also echoed Mentee Two’s perception that the center was disorganized when she stated, “Yeah, I feel like [there is no] organization, and that’s been hard” (Mentee 3 # 1).

The mentees’ perceptions of the influence of the classroom structure on their mentoring relationships were similarly varied to that of the mentors. For Mentee One, classroom structure was insignificant to her relationship with her mentor. They had regularly scheduled meetings which served as the foundation for their interpersonal relationship. Conversely, Mentee Two perceived that the lack of organization in the large cooperative area kept her from receiving the kind of mentoring she needed. Likewise, Mentee Three perceived that the classroom structure of the large cooperative
area kept her from getting the mentoring she needed, and by extension, developing a satisfying relationship with Mentor Three.

**Mentoring Relationships**

As exemplified in the focused code classroom structure, the physical environment could be perceived as both beneficial and detrimental to mentoring relationships. On the one hand, the mentor/mentee dyads who worked in the large cooperative classroom perceived the structure of the classroom as distracting from their relationships due to the numbers of children, teachers, and disorganization in the limited space. On the other hand, the classroom structure had a positive influence on the relationship between Mentor and Mentee One. The fact that they worked in the same building in adjacent classrooms contributed to their developing friendship because they could chat informally about events that they had both observed during the day. However, it should be also noted that meeting on a regular basis for formal mentoring sessions contributed to the fact that their professional relationship developed into a friendship (see Professional Environment).

Conversely, for Mentors Two and Three and their mentees the large cooperative classroom was problematic and negatively influenced their relationships. In this cooperative area, where each teacher was required to create a space for herself and her students, Mentors Two and Three and Mentees Two and Three were competing for space in the common area. Clearly, this arrangement did not promote camaraderie amongst the mentors and mentees; rather, it created competition for classroom space, and prevented mentoring from occurring. Mentor Three perceived that the cooperative area offered her an opportunity to work with her mentor but Mentee Three reported, this physical arrangement reduced her desire to be mentored and caused, "bitterness
between teachers” (Mentee 3 # 2), which seemed to have a negative influence on their mentoring relationship.

Mentor Two reported it was difficult to develop a relationship with her mentee because of the structural conditions of the room, such as poor acoustics, which made it difficult for her and her mentee to talk. Additionally, the large numbers of teachers and children in the cooperative area made it difficult for Mentor Two to work with her mentee. Mentee Two, on the other hand, was concerned with what she perceived as lack of organization in the classroom, which made her feel as if she was not getting the mentoring she needed.

**Presence and Immediate Needs of Young Children**

The presence and needs of young children created a challenge to the development of relationships between the mentors and mentees. Meeting the needs and caring for young children was the focus of the teachers’ work at the center; therefore, they perceived the needs of the children as the priority. As a result, this aspect of the physical environment, the presence of young children could prevent mentors and mentees from developing interpersonal mentoring relationships. Mentors and mentees both described the problematic nature of developing mentoring relationships while working with young children. In order for mentoring relationships to develop, ideally the mentors and mentees needed to meet without the presence of children.

**Mentors’ Perspective:** Mentor One explained that it was impossible to “work with a mentee while attending to the needs of children;” consequently, she scheduled meetings with her mentee away from the children (Mentor 1 # 2). She added that because of the level of care needed by young children, there wasn’t sufficient time to
get to know co-workers; mentoring gave her and her mentee the opportunity to “focus
on each other,” (Mentor 1 # 2). For Mentor One, being in the presence of young
children and working to meet their needs motivated her to develop a meaningful
relationship with her mentee because as she explained, “mentoring brings more
intellectual stimulation,” to her job than she would normally get while working with small
children.

Mentor Two perceived that she could be a more effective mentor if “we [her and
her mentee] had more time together where we didn’t have children under foot at every
moment of the day” (Mentor 2 #2). She added that she and her mentee tried to do some
formal mentoring while the children were napping but that didn’t work because, “the
children don’t always sleep” (Mentor 2 # 2). As a result, Mentor Two perceived that the
presence and needs of children negatively influenced the mentoring relationship
between herself and her mentee because they were unable to develop a relationship in
the presence of children.

Mentor Three explained that the only time she had to meet with her mentee was
between the hours of 1 and 3 p.m. while the children were napping. As she explained,
“that can be difficult because the children don’t always sleep;” furthermore, “sometimes
what happens [is] these children won’t allow us to talk,” (Mentor 3 # 2). In this way, the
presence and needs of children influenced Mentor Three’s ability to spend quality time
with her mentee.

The mentors in this study all perceived that working in the presence of young
children had the potential to eclipse their abilities to develop meaningful relationships
with their mentees; however, they had different perceptions about how to handle this
challenge. Mentor One recognized her own need to have more intellectual stimulation and that motivated her to meet formally with her mentee on a regular basis. These meetings contributed to the development of their interpersonal mentoring relationship. Mentor Two, on the other hand, was unable to schedule meetings with her mentee, tried to mentor during the children’s naptime, and found it difficult to connect with her mentee under these circumstances. Mentor Three had similar perceptions as those of Mentor Two, perhaps because they were both in the large cooperative area. She tried to meet with her mentee during naptime, but was unable to connect with her under those circumstances.

**Mentees’ Perspectives:** Mentee One perceived that working with young children underfoot all the time was an opportunity to develop an even closer relationship with her mentor. When Mentee One felt overwhelmed by the demands of working with young children, she went to her mentor for help. She felt comforted by her mentor which she perceived helped her to be a better teacher, “you want the children to feel comfortable and they kind of reflect off the people that work together . . . if we’re not comfortable with each other they feel the tension” (Mentee 1 # 2). Mentee One explained that her mentor preferred to work with infants and toddlers “just because that’s her personality; she’s very nurturing,” (Mentee 1 # 3) and she perceived that she benefited from her mentor’s nurturing personality. In the case of Mentee One, the presence of children contributed to her relationship with Mentor One by creating an opportunity for comforting the mentee.

Mentee Two had similar perceptions as her mentor about the limitations of mentoring while caring for young children, “[at the] top of your responsibilities[are] the
children; [under these circumstances] how could she really mentor me even if she has good potential, and she really wants to do these things? " (Mentee 2 # 2)

Likewise, Mentee Three reported that, in some cases the teachers never had the opportunity to meet for mentoring. “Of course, the children are the priority [but] the presence of children keeps mentoring from happening” (Mentee 3 # 2). Like her mentor, Mentee Three reported that they tried to meet while the children were napping, “which is difficult; I am used to planning time; no children around; you get an hour or an hour and a half,” (Mentee 3 # 1).

As illustrated by the data in the focused code of presence and immediate needs of young children, mentees had varied experiences with this element of the physical environment. Mentee One was more inspired to spend time with her mentor as a result of her work with young children. When she felt overwhelmed with young children, she perceived that she could get support from her mentor. Mentee Two was more neutral about the way the presence and immediate needs of young children influenced her mentoring relationships. Because she was a veteran early childhood teacher and her mentor was also a veteran early childhood teacher, Mentee Two was able to take the presence of children in stride and understand the difficulty of mentoring while working with young children. Her understanding of the needs of young children, however, did not lessen her desire to want to have a meaningful relationship with her mentor; she wanted formal mentoring sessions. Mentee Three and her mentor also tried to meet for mentoring during the children’s nap time which was ineffectual for Mentee Three. She perceived that the early childhood environment was not conducive to developing mentoring relationships.
Mentoring Relationships

The presence and immediate needs of young children in an early childhood center takes precedent over any other event that occurs in that environment. Because the purpose of the center is to care for and educate children, teachers also need to have meaningful, professional relationships. It is very difficult, however, for professional relationships to develop while children are present. Mentor One understood the limitations of trying to mentor in the early childhood environment and scheduled meetings to train her mentee. These meetings also gave both her and her mentee an opportunity to get to know each other and support each other. The presence and needs of children became a catalyst for Mentor and Mentee One to develop a professional as well as personal relationship.

In the case of Mentors Two and Three and their mentees, the presence of children eclipsed their abilities to develop mentoring relationships. Mentors Two and Three were unable to arrange meetings with their mentees away from the classrooms. Consequently, the presence of the children in their care prevented mentoring from occurring informally in the classroom; which in turn influenced whether or not they could develop interpersonal relationships.

Proximity of Mentors to Mentees

At this early childhood center, specifically in the context of the mentoring program, the proximity of mentors to mentees was defined by the participants as working closely, together in the same classroom or working in the same building. Proximity for mentoring relationships was a double-edged sword. Some participants felt proximity was beneficial to mentoring, whereas others perceived proximity was detrimental to their mentoring relationships.
**Mentors’ Perspectives:** According to Mentor One, who had mentored teachers in close proximity and teachers in other buildings, “mentoring relationships are not the same for people in different buildings” (Mentor 1 # 2). Although, she and her mentee set aside time to meet on a regular basis, she reported that “successful mentoring needs mentor and mentee to be in close proximity” (Mentor 1 # 2). As mentioned previously, Mentor One worked in a classroom adjacent to her mentee.

Mentor Two was adamant that mentoring could not occur unless she and her mentee were in the same classroom, “mentoring doesn't work unless mentor and mentee are in the same room” (Mentor 2 # 1). Mentor Two had previously been assigned to mentor a teacher in another building. She said that by the time she was able to get to her mentee, other teachers had informally mentored her. Aside from the inconvenience of trying to mentor a teacher in another building, Mentor Two said that she preferred to work with a teacher who was working with the same age group of children as herself, “I would be absolutely useless to someone who was in the little [children’s] room because I’ve never worked with infants” (Mentor 2 # 2). As such, Mentor Two perceived proximity was important for two reasons: (a) the convenience of working with her mentee in the same classroom and (b) her knowledge and ability to help a new teacher.

Mentor Three explained that being in the same classroom as her mentee gave her an opportunity to work with her, even if they couldn’t meet formally for mentoring sessions. Mentor Three added that working in close proximity with her mentee created an opportunity to get to know her mentee because she could see her working and, “also
[know] how she’s feeling, how’s she’s doing, if she needs [my] help or not” (Mentor 3 # 1).

The influence of proximity of mentors to mentees on the mentoring relationship was an element of the physical environment of which all mentors agreed. Mentor One said it was hard for mentoring relationships to flourish if mentors and mentees were not in close proximity. Mentor Two was adamant about the fact that mentoring relationships could not happen unless mentors and mentees were in close proximity. Mentor Three saw proximity as an opportunity to connect with her mentee on a daily basis.

**Mentees’ Perspectives:** Mentee One perceived that working in close proximity with her mentor allowed them to develop good mentoring relationship as well as friendship, “She [Mentor One] was right there . . . I could just holler across the room” (Mentee 1 # 2). Because of their proximity, Mentee One explained, “we’d have the same experiences throughout the day . . . We had something in common to talk about even if we had nothing in common,” (Mentee 1 # 1). In the case of Mentee One, physical proximity to her mentor contributed to their relationship because it created commonalities between them in which none had previously existed.

Because Mentee Two worked in close proximity with her mentor, she expected to get more “direct” mentoring. Even though they worked in the same classroom, Mentee Two perceived that she did not get the mentoring she expected, “I would like for you [my mentor] to walk me through the processes of the center” (Mentee 2 #1). She perceived she could perform her job better if she knew what was expected of her as a new employee. She added, however, that the main focus of their work together was to, first, care for the children, and second, “get their chores done” (Mentee 2 # 1).
Mentee Three’ perception of proximity was not the same as her mentor’s. Mentee Three perceived that close proximity did not create a better opportunity for communicating with her mentor. She explained that even though she worked in the same room as her mentor, they usually worked on parallel activities with their respective groups of children, which did not allow for any formal mentoring to occur. Consequently, Mentee Three’s proximity to her mentor did not contribute to their mentoring relationship or a personal relationship. Mentee Three reported that “she works with her children, while I work with mine,” (Mentee 3 # 1) and they had very few opportunities to meet for mentoring and discuss the policies and procedures of the center.

The perceptions of the mentees with respect to proximity were mixed compared to that of their mentors. Mentee One enjoyed being in close proximity with her mentor and perceived that it helped her develop a personal relationship with her. Mentor Two, on the other hand found being in close proximity disappointing because she expected to get more direction from her mentor. Her disappointment influenced the kind of relationship she had with her mentor because she perceived that even though she was in close proximity with her mentor, she was not close professionally or personally. Mentee Three’s perceptions about the influence of proximity on her relationship with her mentor were similar to those of Mentee Two. Mentee Three worked in the large cooperative area with her mentor, but proximity in and of itself did not create a close mentoring relationship for them.

**Mentoring Relationships**

Proximity of mentors to mentees can be a double-edge sword as seen in the data from the six participants’ transcripts. Whether or not proximity was beneficial for mentoring relationships in this program was influenced by other conditions in the
environment such as the arrangement of the cooperative classroom space or how proximal the mentors were to their mentees. Working in the cooperative area was an impediment to developing congenial mentoring relationships even if mentors were close to their mentees. As Mentees Two and Three described, they felt as if they had to compete with their mentors for space to work with the children in their care. Whereas proximity may be beneficial for informal mentoring; teachers working in the same classroom can collaborate, this was not the case with the teachers in the cooperative space. Conversely, Mentor and Mentee One found that working in close proximity contributed to the fact that their professional relationship turned into a friendship.

**Time Schedules**

Time schedules were identified as part of the physical environment because teachers’ schedules and responsibilities limited the amount of time they had to devote to mentoring and thus significantly influenced mentoring relationships. Time schedules appeared in the data in three main ways related to mentoring relationships. First, the participants acknowledged that it “took time” to develop rapport and establish relationships of any kind; in particular mentoring relationships. Therefore, the duration of time that mentors and mentees had together influenced their mentoring relationships. Secondly, mentors and mentees had to “find time” to schedule and participate in mentoring meetings. Finally, the time-consuming demands of the job - teaching, caregiving, tasks, and chores - made it difficult for mentors and mentees to meet for regular mentoring sessions during the work day. Thus, these aspects of the early childhood environment created a limited amount of time for mentors and mentees to be involved in mentoring relationships. Given the demands of the work in early childhood, in order for mentors and mentees to meet for mentoring sessions, they would have to schedule
meetings during a time that was convenient for both members of the dyad; a time when both teachers could find classroom coverage for their children.

**Mentors’ Perspectives:** Mentor One explained that taking the time to understand, “where somebody’s coming from and what’s going on with them can make a big difference,” in the development of a mentoring relationship (Mentor 1 # 1). Mentor one also understood the limitations of time in the classroom, “we really don’t have an opportunity to get to know others, I’m with the kids all the time,” so she arranged formal meetings with her mentee away from the classroom.

Mentor Two reported that finding time for mentoring was an ongoing problem in the early childhood classroom. She said she thought the idea of having a mentoring program was beneficial to new employees; however, “it takes time that we don’t necessarily have” (Mentor 2 # 1). She also added that the development of a relationship takes time; duration of time, and she had only been working with Mentee Two for a couple of months at the time of her interviews for this study. Additionally, Mentor Two had other employment outside her work at the center and that contributed to her lack of availability for mentoring meetings.

Mentor Three also reported that there was very little time for mentoring, although she tried to make herself available to her mentee as much as possible given the time constraints of working with young children. She added that she had just recently started working with her mentee at the time of her interview for this study, and she explained that it would take time to get to know her mentee and develop a professional and personal relationship, “I’m not getting much time to talk to her [now] because she is
busy; when she settles in, I’ll come right near to her [and get to know her better] (Mentor 3 # 1).

The mentors’ perceptions of time varied from the duration of time it took to develop a mentoring relationship to the limited amount of time they had to meet with their mentees during their scheduled work week. Mentor One acknowledged that it took time to get to know a new teacher and develop a meaningful relationship. She also acknowledged that due to the nature of the early childhood environment, there was very little time for mentoring during work; consequently she scheduled meetings with her mentee either before or after work. Mentor Two also acknowledged that it took time to develop a relationship with a mentee and she perceived that there was no time in an early childhood setting to develop a mentoring relationship. Mentor Three also experienced time limits and constraints with respect to mentoring and developing a relationship with her mentee. She was confident, however, that in time, they would be able to become closer and have an interpersonal mentoring relationship.

Mentees’ Perspectives: Mentee One explained that any relationship, especially a mentoring relationship takes time to develop. She said in the beginning she and her mentor met formally and “scheduled [meetings] when it was convenient for us” (Mentee 1 #1). Once she felt comfortable with the basic workings of the center, she and her mentor continued to meet informally. At the time of her interviews, Mentee One had been at the center for 18 months, “So we’ve had that time to get to know each other more,” (Mentee 1 #2). The importance of time for the development of relationships was further emphasized by Mentee One when she described her experience as a mentor for a new teacher: her mentee left the center after only a few months and she was unable
to develop a relationship with her. The new teacher was hired during the summer semester and Mentee One explained, “she pretty much left right at the beginning [of the fall semester] because she got another teaching job, so we didn’t have as much time to develop a personal relationship” (Mentee 1 # 2). Because Mentee One and her mentor had an extended amount of time to develop a relationship, and because they created the opportunity to meet for mentoring sessions, their experience was a positive example of a successful mentoring relationship. Even though they had the same time constraints as the other two dyads, those constraints did not keep them from developing what they both considered a positive mentoring relationship.

Mentee Two echoed Mentee One’s belief that it took time for a personal mentoring relationship to develop. However, she perceived that she and her mentor did not have any “quality time . . . there was no personal time to get to know each other” (Mentee 2 # 2). She perceived that time scheduling kept her from fostering a relationship with her mentor. During her first interview, Mentee Two reported that she and her mentor were planning to attend an educational conference together and she perceived that traveling together would help them develop a personal relationship. Mentee Two also felt that if she had the time to get to know her mentor on a personal level, it would contribute to their mentoring relationship, “we can get to know each other on a personal level and we can talk about things other than just work,” (Mentee 2 # 2).

Mentee Three agreed that finding time for mentoring was a challenge. Mentee Three said of her experience in the mentoring program, developing a relationship was a “struggle on a daily basis” (Mentee 3 # 2). She explained that because teachers’ time was focused on the children in their care, “I haven’t really had the opportunity to talk to
her [Mentor Three], but I have learned, and she has taught me whatever she’s been able to (Mentee 3 # 2). Mentee Three added “we have a very good relationship considering the time [limitations] (Mentee 3 # 1). So, although time scheduling kept Mentee Three from feeling like she hadn’t been properly mentored, or had the opportunity to develop a personal relationship with her mentor, she perceived that she had learned from her mentor.

Additionally, Mentees Two and Three expressed concerns about time scheduling and the limited amount of time they had in general because of the chores and tasks they were expected to do as part of their work at the center. As Mentee Two explained, “It [the job description] never said you had to do the dishes; it never said you have to run out every day and meet somebody at the bus stop” (Mentee 2 # 2). Mentee Three’s perception of the time schedule limitations related to her job as early childhood teacher was similar to that of Mentee Two, “we’re kind of doing stuff [chores and tasks] that I never in my life thought I would be doing. We’re having to do the dishes; there is just too much to do, and no time for mentoring” (Mentee 3 # 2). Creating opportunities for mentoring was perceived as luxury for the mentees because of their work responsibilities.

The mentees had similar perceptions as those of their mentors with respect to time duration and their mentoring relationships. Mentee One acknowledged the fact that it takes time to develop a relationship. She and her mentor held a series of formal mentoring meetings initially when she began working at the center, but they also continued to meet informally to support each other. At the time of her interviews, Mentee One had known her mentor almost two years and described their relationship
as a friendship. Mentee Two echoed Mentee One’s perception of how it takes time to develop a relationship. She was proactive about taking opportunities to get to know her mentor as illustrated by her desire to ride with her to a conference and finding time to meet away from work. Mentee Two also talked about the time scheduling limitations imposed on teachers at the center, above and beyond the care of children. She explained that this distracted from her ability to develop a relationship with her mentor. Mentee Three perceived that time scheduling limitations had influenced her relationship with her mentor. Furthermore, she agreed with Mentee Two that the time spent doing chores and tasks unrelated to caring for the children took away from the time she and her mentor could be developing a relationship.

**Mentoring Relationships**

Time scheduling as a component of the physical environment, influenced all three of the mentoring relationships in this study. Mentor One perceived that due to the time constraints of the physical environment it was necessary to hold regularly scheduled mentoring meetings with her mentee. She also continued to spend time with her mentee, after formal mentoring was completed, with the desire of developing a relationship with Mentee One. Unlike, Mentor One, it was Mentor Two’s perception that there wasn’t enough time to schedule mentoring meetings and her perception influenced the relationship she had with Mentee Two. Mentee Two agreed with her mentor that the time constraints of the early childhood environment kept them from fostering a mentoring relationship, as well as a personal relationship. Mentor Three also perceived that there was limited time for scheduling mentoring meetings. However, she made herself available to her mentee as much as possible. For Mentee Three, however, her mentor’s availability was not enough to encourage her to develop a relationship with
her; she was overwhelmed by the demands of the physical environment of the early childhood center. These data illustrated how mentors’ and mentees’ availability to develop interpersonal mentoring relationships were eclipsed by what they perceived as lack of time for personal and professional interactions.

**Summary of the Physical Environment**

The physical environment of the center was the foundation for everything that occurred at the center, from the fulfillment of the needs of young children to the quality of the professional and personal relationships among the teachers. The physical arrangement of the classroom played a significant role in the way in which teachers related to the children in their care and each other. The presence and needs of young children were immediate and unquestionably the priority of early childhood teachers. As such, the presence of young children detracted from the teachers’ abilities to develop mentoring relationships. Proximity of mentors to mentees could be beneficial or detrimental to the mentoring relationship depending on the perceptions of the individuals. Time schedules had the greatest influence on the mentoring relationships. Most teachers perceived they did even have enough time to do their teaching jobs due to the nature of their schedules and that developing mentoring relationships was a luxury. Furthermore, all the participants agreed that it takes time to develop relationships, professional as well as personal, and the high turnover rate of new teachers hindered the duration of time teachers had to get to know each other and develop mentoring relationships. Furthermore, time scheduling limitations related to the number of chores and tasks that teachers were expected to do, along with the care of children, and development of lesson plans, provided little time for mentoring relationships to develop.
Professional Environment

The professional environment was defined by the following elements: (1) formal mentoring, (2) informal mentoring, (3) mentor experience, (4) mentor training program, (5) professional reciprocal relationships, and (6) teacher turnover. These elements were based on the participants’ perceptions of their experiences in the mentoring program and their work at the center. The professional environment encompassed the formal aspects of the mentoring program related to the induction of new teachers. These were the introduction of new teachers to coworkers, the use of the mentor’s checklist, and other administrative suggestions for mentoring new teachers. The professional environment also included informal aspects of mentoring such as casual conversations between mentors and mentees or mentoring while working. The idea of a mentor training program was considered part of the professional environment because some participants perceived certain mentoring skills were lacking and needed to be part of professional development training for mentors. The professional environment also included the concept that mentoring relationships could be reciprocal: beneficial to both mentors and mentees. Finally, teacher turnover, or teacher attrition, was considered part of the professional environment because its occurrence significantly influenced the professional and personal development of mentoring relationships.

Formal Mentoring

Participants described their perceptions of how the logistics of the mentoring program were implemented at the center and the formal interactions of mentors and mentees. Each participant’s experiences, expectations, and perceptions of the program constructed the ways in which they described the formalities of the program and in turn, influenced how their mentoring relationships developed. The formal aspects of the
mentoring program were delineated for new mentors and mentees by the center’s administration when they were asked to be part of the program (Appendices G & H).

**Mentors’ Perspectives:** Mentor One described the essentials of the formal mentoring program, “Well, basically, we’re [the mentors] given a sheet of things to go over [with our mentees] . . . you show them [mentees] around to all the buildings; tell them about the age groups; introduce them to all the people that work here . . .” (Mentor 1 # 1). Mentor One added that mentors were also responsible for going over the employee handbook with mentees, instructing mentees on the policies and procedures of the center, helping mentees feel comfortable, and serving as a “welcoming committee,” (Mentor 1 # 1). Mentor One’s approach to mentoring was very structured and direct. She described how she arranged to meet with her mentee on a weekly basis; she systematically went over all the tasks on the Mentor’s Checklist; and she explained the workings of the center explicitly to her mentee.

Unlike Mentor One, Mentor Two preferred what she called, “the more natural approach” to mentoring (Mentor 2 # 1). She explained, “We didn’t have to sit down and go through the handbook and go through a list of rules and policies and all; we just sort of did it; worked as it happened” (Mentor 2 # 1). During Mentor Two’s first interview, she explained that there had been some miscommunication at the center about the mentoring program and she was initially unaware of its existence. Once she became aware that she was a mentor, she began to take her mentee “under her wing” and oriented her to the environment of the center (Mentor 2 # 1). She said that the responsibility of a mentor was to say to the mentees, “Welcome aboard” and help them feel comfortable at the center (Mentor 2 # 1). Mentor Two’s approach to formal
mentoring was very different than Mentor One in that she perceived giving new teachers “too much abstract information may be overwhelming” so she preferred to let her mentee, come to her “with any questions and she would help her with anything” (Mentor 2 # 2).

Mentor Three described that the formal mentoring process involved discussing the employee handbook with her mentee and found it “useful for [teaching mentees] policies and procedures” (Mentor 3 # 2). She added that she had just begun to mentor Mentee Three and that as a mentor it was her desire to “help her mentee with anything related to the center” (Mentor 3 # 1).

In general, the three mentors in the study had similar descriptions of how the mentoring program worked. However, the way they carried out their mentoring responsibilities varied. Mentor One used the mentor checklist to guide her mentee through the induction process. She also informed Mentee One of the policies and procedures of the center and introduced her to the employees at the center. Mentor Two, on the other hand, chose not to follow the mentor responsibility checklist, perceiving that giving new teachers too much abstract information may be overwhelming. Mentor Three chose to use the checklist and the employee handbook to guide her mentee through the formal mentoring process.

Mentees' Perspectives: Because Mentor One followed the formal mentoring procedures, Mentee One was able to describe in great detail the workings of the mentoring program and how being mentored formally made her feel comfortable as a new employee. She said that her mentor came to her within the first few days she was at the center, introduced herself, and reviewed the policies and procedures of the center
with her. Mentee One added that since the paring of mentors and mentees was random she felt very fortunate to be placed with Mentor One. Mentee One’s perception of her experience with formal mentoring was very positive; she believed it was the foundation of what became a close relationship between her and her mentor.

Mentee One also perceived that she had been successfully mentored, as she explained: “A successful mentoring relationship would be where the mentor comes almost within days, if not the first day, of you being employed . . . and introduces herself to you” (Mentee 1# 1). The transcript from Mentee One had more descriptive data about the specifics of the mentoring program than the other two mentees; indicating that she had received more formal mentoring. She perceived that the initial, formal aspects of the mentoring process contributed to her relationship with her mentor. She felt that she was effectively taught the policies of the center within her first few meetings with Mentor One. To Mentee One, this was important because knowing how the center policies work and what was expected of her as a new employee contributed to her comfort as a new teacher (Mentee 1 # 1).

Mentee Two had the expectation that she would be formally mentored. However, as mentioned in Mentor Two’s data, she did not perceive the benefits of formal mentoring. Consequently, Mentee Two’s perception was that because she had not been formally mentored, she had not been properly mentored. Initially, Mentee Two was excited about the idea of a mentoring program and she had high expectations regarding how the program would work. “I had just expected so much more . . . to learn the actual process and procedures to the daily operations of how the center is run” (Mentee 2 # 1). Mentee Two had worked in early childhood education and care centers for 20 years and
her initial enthusiasm about the mentoring program was based on her experience as a mentor in Early Head Start: “I just feel like it [new teacher induction] should be presented in a more professional way . . . because in my previous job I would involve them [new teachers]; I always expected them to come in and to participate . . . but if you don’t prepare them . . . they’ll stand with their hands in their pockets” (Mentee 2 # 1).

Mentee Two reported that although she felt confident working with young children and their families, each early childhood center had its own rules and regulations. Since regulations can vary across centers, she perceived that a mentoring program would be an effective way to induct new employees into the center, even if they were veteran teachers. Mentee Two, however, did not get the formal mentoring she expected, and she perceived that her experience as a teacher had worked against her, “Don’t expect because they [new teachers] got experience working with the children that they know everything” (Mentor 2 # 2). She added, that although she did not receive the formal mentoring she had expected, she did admire her mentor because “she does model best practices, but it’s just like [I haven’t gotten] the little tactile things; showing me how it’s done and that way I feel like I can perform even better when I really know what is expected of me” (Mentee 2 # 1).

Mentee Three also perceive that she had not received any formal mentoring. In this way the lack of formal mentoring detracted from her relationship with her mentor. Furthermore, Mentee Three had been at the center for more than two weeks before receiving any mentoring. Unlike Mentee One’s experience, where her mentor came within the first few days of her employment, Mentee Three said that due to some “transitions” at the center, she did not know who her mentor was during the first few
weeks of her employment. “I originally was told that my mentor was going to be somebody, but then she left . . . then I was told [Mentor Three] would be my mentor” (Mentee 3 # 1). She added that because the center had been understaffed for a while, she had not been able to meet formally with her mentor or learn about the policies and procedures of the center. Mentee Three explained that since she did not receive “formal” mentoring, “It was pretty much hands on learning” (Mentee 3 #2). Mentee Three also explained that she learned the procedures of the center by “trial and error” because she did not have a mentor to help her adjust to her new position. This lack of formal mentoring caused her a level of discomfort that would prevent her from connecting personally and professionally with her mentor and other coworkers at the center.

Data from the findings illustrated the various ways mentees perceived the elements of formal mentoring with respect to their relationships with their mentors. Mentee One felt fortunate to have such an enthusiastic mentor who met with her formally, walked her through the procedures of the center, and helped her settle into the environment of the center. Consequently, she developed an appreciation and respect for her mentor that eventually grew into a satisfying interpersonal mentoring relationship. Conversely, Mentee Two and Mentee Three did not receive the formal mentoring they were expecting and that influenced their feelings toward their mentors and subsequently the kind of relationships they did or did not develop with them. They expressed respect for their mentors, but disappointment that they were not able to feel comfortable interpersonally with them.
Mentoring Relationships

The element of formal mentoring, in the professional environment, gave mentors and mentees the opportunity to develop mentoring relationships when mentees were new at the center. The ways in which mentors delivered formal mentoring to mentees influenced whether or not mentees felt their mentoring and personal relationships were satisfactory. Mentor One followed the procedures of the center’s mentoring program by going over the checklist, introducing her mentee to the other teachers, and making sure her mentee knew the policies and procedures of the center. As a result, her mentee was the only mentee who expressed satisfaction with the formal mentoring process and described how it contributed to the development of their interpersonal mentoring relationship. As reported by Mentee One, her mentor used the mentor responsibilities check list and formally showed Mentee One around the center; introducing her to the other teachers and staff members. Mentee One also reported that having regular meetings with Mentor One made her feel comfortable to approach her with any questions she had.

Mentor Two perceived that the formality of the mentoring program, which she referred to as “abstract rules and regulations,” would be overwhelming to new teachers and preferred to mentor in what she considered a more natural and organic way. This created conflict for Mentee Two, who desired more direct mentoring; she wanted the facts, the policies, and procedures. She perceived that she needed to know the daily operations of the center in order to excel at her new job. This conflict negatively influenced Mentee Two’s ability to develop a satisfying relationship with her mentor because she felt like her mentor wasn’t preparing her to do her job successfully.
Mentor Three was new at mentoring and followed the procedures designated by the checklist. However, Mentee Three did not perceive that she had received formal mentoring from Mentor Three, and this perception prevented her from developing an interpersonal relationship with her.

As mentioned previously, the mentors’ ability to work formally with their mentees was often eclipsed by the immediate needs and demands of working with young children and other chores related to their work. The ways in which each mentor negotiated these limitations can be seen in the strategies they used to assist their mentees and the choices they made as mentors. Furthermore, the mentors’ ability to successfully offer formal mentoring can be seen in the ways their relationships did or did not develop with their mentees.

**Informal Mentoring**

Informal mentoring occurred in the data as (a) mentoring that was not done in the context of a formally arranged meeting (as describe in the focused code formal mentoring), and (b) mentoring that occurred casually when mentors checked-in with their mentees to see if they needed anything. In the first case, informal mentoring was done instead of formal mentoring; in the second case, informal mentoring was done as a supplement to formal mentoring.

**Mentors’ Perspectives:** Mentor One perceived that the informal part of mentoring was a way to make mentees feel “comfortable with their surroundings . . . touch base with them occasionally to see if they need anything” (Mentor 1 # 1). Mentor One also did informal “mentoring in passing” while working with her mentee. Mentor One’s mentoring in passing was different than Mentor Two’s “mentoring while working
together,” in that Mentor One had also formally met with her mentee and formally
inducted her into the center, whereas Mentor Two did not do any formal mentoring.

Mentor Two’s “mentoring in passing” was her informal means of mentoring. Mentor
Two described informal mentoring as “modeling” for her mentee, and “answering her
questions as they work together” (Mentor 2 #1). In fact, Mentor Two reported that most
of her mentoring was informal. She explained that because she and her mentee were
always busy tending to the needs of the children and the tasks they were required to do,
most of her mentoring “happens on the playground or in passing” (Mentor 2 # 1). She
further explained that “nothing is [more] valuable than experience to help someone learn
a new job” (Mentor 2 # 1).

Mentor Three reported that she also informally mentored her mentee by making
herself available for her mentee, “For anything she needs” (Mentor 3 # 1). Like Mentors
One and Two, Mentor Three also worked alongside her mentee and “shared ideas with
her” (Mentor 3 # 2).

Mentors reported having a variety of experiences with informal mentoring. For
Mentor One, informal mentoring supplemented the formal mentoring she was offering to
her mentee. Additionally, for Mentor One, informal mentoring was a way for her to check
in with Mentee One and make sure she was surviving the challenges of working at the
center. This kind of informal mentoring contributed to the personal and professional
relationship they were developing. Mentor Two, on the other hand, used informal
mentoring – “mentoring in passing” – as her primary means of mentoring. Informal
mentoring was her preferred way to mentor new teachers. Mentor Two seemed less
concerned with the development of interpersonal mentoring relationships than she did
with her perception that mentoring took time away from her work in the classroom. Mentor Three used informal mentoring as a way to supplement the formal mentoring she perceived she had done with her mentee and she desired to create a personal and professional relationship with Mentee Three.

**Mentees’ Perspective:** Informal mentoring for Mentee One was perceived as being in close contact with her mentor so they could “chat in passing . . . and be able just to say, ‘hey how are you doing today?’” (Mentee 1 # 3). Mentee One also reported that her mentor assisted her with information unrelated to the policies and procedures of the center, and took a personal interest in her. “She knows my boyfriend’s name; we know each other’s personal problems that might be going on outside [work] which also makes it more comfortable to come to her with work stuff,” (Mentee 1 # 2). Mentee One also, jokingly said that she trusted her mentor to keep her “out of trouble.” She appreciated the informal, casual, and personal relationship she was developing with Mentor One because she felt comfortable going to her under any circumstances.

Mentee Two explained that she appreciated the opportunity to work with Mentor Two and even if they did not have time to meet and have formal mentoring sessions, she learned by watching her mentor do a number of center-related activities. On the other hand, Mentee Two was very clear about her preference to have direct, formal mentoring, but she still admired her mentor’s skills and strategies. “I really admire the way she speaks to the children and [her] classroom management skills . . . I’ve made notations on some of her teaching styles cause she a very positive person,” (Mentee 2 # 1). Mentee Two added that as they worked together, she and Mentor Two collaborated
on lesson plans and presentations and in this way, informal mentoring contributed to their relationship.

Mentee Three’s experience of informal mentoring was based on very minimal contact with her mentor and consequently influenced the lack of development in their relationship, “I haven’t really had the opportunity to really talk to [Mentor Three], you know, but I have learned and she has taught me, whatever she’s been able to” (Mentee 3 # 1). Mentee Three learned informally from her mentor as it was her perception that she had not received any direct mentoring from her mentor, “its [mentoring] kinda been like hands on as we’re doing things” (Mentee 3 # 1).

Similarly to the mentors’ data about informal mentoring, the mentees data showed mixed descriptions of how informal mentoring influenced their mentoring relationships. Mentee One perceived that the informal mentoring she received created a closer bond between her and her mentor. Mentee Two perceived that she learned a lot from her mentor’s style of informal mentoring but it did not contribute to the development of an interpersonal relationship. Mentee Three perceived that the informal mentoring she received was beneficial; however she did not perceive that it helped significantly in the development of a relationship with her mentor.

**Mentoring Relationships**

Informal mentoring influenced mentoring relationships in a number of ways. For Mentor and Mentee One, informal mentoring was supplemental to their formal mentoring sessions. It was also a way they developed an interpersonal relationship. For Mentor and Mentee Two, their perceptions of informal mentoring were contradictory. Mentor Two perceived that informal mentoring could take the place of formal mentoring; Mentee Two perceived that she wasn’t being mentored if the mentoring was not formal.
This conflict in mentoring styles eclipsed the development of the interpersonal relationship between Mentor and Mentee Two. Although Mentor Three perceived that she was informally mentoring her mentee by making herself available to her for all her needs, Mentee Three did not perceive that she had received enough formal or informal mentoring. Her perception was that she was on her own and that negatively influenced her relationship with Mentor Three.

Mentor Experience

Mentor experience was reported in two types of data. First of all, mentor experience could refer to specific mentors’ experiences as classroom teachers. Secondly, mentor experience could refer to teachers’ experience mentoring. Findings from this study showed that mentors’ experience played a profound role in the perceptions of mentees with respect to their relationships with their mentors. First of all, the data from the mentors were related to whether or not they had previously mentored, how long they had been mentors, and how long they had been teaching. The data from the mentees were related to how mentees perceived their mentors’ experience with respect to mentoring and teaching.

Mentors’ Perspectives: Mentor One explained that “Mentors are teachers who have been at the job longer than mentees” (Mentor 1 # 1). She said that she felt very comfortable mentoring because “I enjoy it [mentoring] a lot and I’ve been a teacher long enough where I’m just, I’m kind of comfortable “(Mentor 1 # 1). Mentor Two perceived mentors’ who had experience teaching at the center as valuable because they could “understand the personalities and dynamics” of the teachers and help new teachers coming into the environment (Mentor 2 # 2). Mentor Three’s experience with mentoring
had been as a mentee and a mentor at the center for three years at the time of her interviews for this study.

The mentors in this study spoke humbly about their experience as mentors, since they had been mentoring for relatively short periods of time. However, they did explain that their experiences of working at the center, and being familiar with the policies and procedures, as well as the interpersonal dynamics of the teachers at the center, could be beneficial to their mentees. The data from the mentors in this focused code was very limited. The mentees had more data with respect to mentors' experience.

Mentees' Perspectives: Mentee One expressed her gratitude for her mentor and respect for her mentor's experience as a teacher and a mentor. She appreciated the opportunity to “have somebody, a teacher, that had been here a few years ahead of myself so that way I could feel comfortable [to go to] if I had any questions” (Mentee 1 # 1). Additionally, Mentee One said she was aware of different mentoring styles and levels of experience with teachers at the center and how these influenced mentoring relationships. For example, her mentor had been available and helpful, so Mentee One felt comfortable at her new job; but she knew of mentees who didn’t “even know they had a mentor!” (Mentee 1#1). Additionally, for Mentee One, her positive experience as a mentee also shaped her future role as a mentor when she was later paired with a new teacher at the center. Because of Mentor One's example of responsive mentoring, Mentee One said, “As the mentor, I was more ready to jump in there and say 'hey what do you need?' ‘Let me know,’” (Mentee 1 #1).

Mentee Two expressed appreciation for her mentor's experience as an early childhood teacher, “I'm liking the person who I work with 'cause [she's] very
knowledgeable in her field and what she does” (Mentee 2 # 1). Mentee Two added that because she was also a veteran early childhood teacher, her mentor acknowledged her skills and training. Mentor Two and Mentee Two had 27 and 20 years of experience, respectively, in early childhood education. Additionally, Mentee Two had experience as a mentor from her work as an Early Head Start lead teacher. Mentee Three’s transcript did not contain any references to mentor experience.

The mentees’ perceptions of their mentors’ experience was quite different than that reported by the mentors. For example, Mentee One appreciated working with a mentor who had a lot more teaching experience than herself. She was also very aware of the attentive mentoring style of Mentor One. For Mentee One, mentor experience influenced her interpersonal mentoring relationship in a positive way. Mentee Two was also very respectful of her mentor’s 27-plus years of experience in the early childhood environment, and felt like she could learn a lot of teaching strategies from her mentor. Their interpersonal mentoring relationship, however, was not necessarily influenced by Mentor Two’s teaching experience as Mentee Two did not perceive she was being properly mentored.

**Mentoring Relationships**

Mentor One was confident of her experience as a teacher and mentor and as a result she instilled confidence in her mentee. Mentor One perceived through her mentoring experiences the importance of working closely with her mentee and creating the most comfortable environment for new employees. Mentee One acknowledged and appreciated her Mentor’s skills as a teacher and mentor. This mutual respect positively influenced the interpersonal mentoring relationship between Mentor and Mentee One. Mentor Two was a veteran teacher and her experience in the early childhood classroom
was respected by her mentee, who was also a veteran teacher. With respect to mentor experience, Mentor and Mentee Two were able to find common ground in their years of teaching and mentoring and this influenced their interpersonal mentoring relationship positively. Mentor Three had some experience as a mentor but this did not positively influence her relationship with her mentee. Mentee Three made no comment about her Mentor with respect to mentor experience. Whether or not the participants of the study perceived that mentors’ experience was influential to mentoring relationships was expressed in the next focused code of the professional environment: mentor training program.

**Mentor Training Program**

The idea of having a mentor training program appeared in both the mentor and mentee data. A mentor training program, as described by the participants, would train teachers at the center on the specifics of mentoring to assure a uniformed experience for all mentors and mentees. Additionally, as expressed in the data from the transcripts, some mentees perceived that it was imperative to have a mentor training program in order to train teachers communication skills, appropriate behavior, and a standardized way of distributing information about policies and procedures to new teachers.

**Mentors’ Perspective:** Mentor One believed that it was necessary for teachers to participate in a mentor training program to prepare them for a successful mentoring relationship, “There are important elements to being a mentor that some people might not know about unless they are trained,” (Mentor 1 # 2). She said she had witnessed some mentors who offered minimal help to their mentees by showing them “the office, the copier” and she added “I would think for it [mentoring relationship] to truly be successful; instead of just handing out pamphlets . . . you most likely have to have a
training [program] for mentors or at least time where you sat down and say we’re gonna go over what it is to be a mentor,” (Mentor 1 # 2). Mentor One was the only mentor who had data in her transcript related to mentor training programs.

Mentees’ Perspective: Mentees Two and Three were in agreement with Mentor One that a mentor training program was necessary to prepare teachers to mentor new employees. Both Mentees Two and Three were not satisfied with the level of mentoring they had received. Both mentees felt that teachers should be trained formally in the skills necessary to be effective mentors.

In her transcripts, Mentee Two frequently expressed her desire for a standardized mentor training program to teach mentors how to distribute knowledge to new teachers. She felt this could be best accomplished if mentors were trained, “I think they should go through some training . . . and [have the administrators] tell them what they expect” (Mentee 2 # 1). Describing her expectation for a mentor training program, Mentee Two said it should provide mentors with the skills to “delineate the policies and procedures of the center,” as well as guidelines for mentoring new teachers with formal procedures for mentors (Mentee 2 # 1). Mentee Two struggled with being mentored because she perceived that there weren’t any formal procedure for mentors to distribute information to mentees. She said that if there was a mentor training program, there could be a formalized way to mentor new teachers; a standardized way of distributing information about policies and procedures. Mentee Two explained, “I think they [mentors] should go through some training to even be a mentor and tell them what it is they [administrators] expect, and this how they want it [the mentoring program] to pan out” (Mentee 2 # 1)
Mentee Three also perceived that a structured mentor training program was necessary in order for mentoring to be successful and effective. However, Mentee Three believed ideally a mentor training program would require both mentors and mentees to go through training, “if it was going to have any influence on the mentoring relationship” (Mentee 3 # 2). She also specified that a mentor training program would include, “how to mentor, communication skills, respecting others, appropriate behavior, vocabulary, [and] personal space” and other qualities that would help improve the interpersonal aspects of the mentoring relationship (Mentee 3 # 2). Mentee One did not have any data in the focused code of mentor training program.

The mentee data on the necessity of a mentor training program was illustrative of the need for a more effective mentoring experience. Both Mentee Two and Mentee Three felt like mentoring new teachers needed more organization and structure and that mentors needed training on what was expected of them as mentors. Mentee Two suggested that a mentor training program would train teachers in mentoring skills that they might not naturally possess; such as the distribution of information to help new teachers adjust to the environment at the center. She also perceived that a mentor training program would permit the administration of the center to delineate exactly what they expected of their mentors. Mentee Three’s suggestions for a mentor training program would include teaching communication skills, appropriate and unified vocabulary to use with children, respect, and personal space. Mentees suggested mentor training program elements that they felt were missing in their mentoring experiences.
Mentoring Relationships

As noted by Mentor One and Mentees Two and Three, a mentor training program could increase the effectiveness of mentoring and by extension, the quality of the mentoring relationship. As illustrated in the data, a mentoring program could guarantee that a certain amount of formal mentoring took place and that in turn could affect the kind of relationships mentors and mentees developed. In the case of Mentor One, formal training was not necessary for the development of her relationships with her mentee because she was personally committed to successfully induct her mentee into the center. However, in the case of Mentor Two, who was not convinced that formal mentoring was necessary, a mentor training program could have guided her to give her mentee the kind of formalized mentoring she expected and needed. Mentee Three had reservations about developing a relationship with her mentor and she was very adamant about the necessity for a mentor training program.

Reciprocal Professional Relationships

In this element of the professional environment, mentors and mentees described how mentoring relationships were reciprocal. All three mentors perceived that mentoring was as beneficial for them as it was for their mentees. They perceived that such mentoring relationships had not only provided intellectual stimulation for them but for some, it transformed their professional relationship into a personal relationship. Mentoring relationships were also a way for mentors and mentees to share knowledge and, in some cases, even have cross-cultural communication.

Mentors’ Perspectives: Mentor One explained the idea of reciprocity and mentoring most clearly when she said, “Mentoring is teamwork” (Mentor 1 # 1). Mentor One reported that one of the benefits she received from mentoring was the opportunity
to work more closely with her co-workers and interact with adults, “It [mentoring] kind of brings more intellectual stimulation [to the job] than a lot of times I get with small children, (Mentor 1 # 2). Mentor One also experienced reciprocity in a more personal way, “what I get out of it [mentoring] is I have created a connection with another person that works here, I mean it’s a two-way road, (Mentor 1 #1)

Mentor Two perceived the mentoring relationship as reciprocal because it gave her the opportunity to be reflective about her teaching, “I think I just do a lot of things instinctively now so to actually have to verbalized it for somebody else helps to remind me of the reasons I do what I do,” (Mentor 2 # 1). Mentor Two also liked the “sharing of knowledge” aspect of mentoring since her mentee, like herself, had many years of experience in early childhood teaching (Mentor 2 # 1).

Mentor Three was particularly appreciative of the reciprocal aspect of mentoring as she was a visiting teacher from India and wanted to learn about early childhood educational practices in the United States. Being in a mentoring relationship gave her the opportunity “to learn from other teachers” (Mentor 3 # 2). She stated that she did her best to learn from all the teachers in the cooperative room, but that she particularly enjoyed mentoring as a way to learn. She explained she enjoyed mentoring because it was a “good experience to learning something more about [education in the U.S.] also . . . so like that [as mentor and mentee] we help each other . . . because I’m from a different country [my mentee] knows everything about the American educations . . . so um, I like to learn from them” (Mentor 3 # 1).

The mentors in this study perceived that their relationships with their mentees were reciprocal; but for very different reasons. Mentor One explained that she benefited
from the intellectual stimulation of working with a mentee, after a long day of being isolated with young children. Mentor Two perceived that she was more self-reflective about her teaching when she was forced to explain the strategies she used to her mentee. Mentor Three was appreciative of the reciprocal aspects of mentoring since she was from another country; learning about the early childhood system in the U.S.

**Mentees’ Perspectives:** Mentee One commented on the reciprocal nature of the mentoring relationship in her dual experiences as a mentee and as a mentor. As a mentee, she learned a tremendous amount about the center, its programs, and mentoring from her mentor. As a mentor, she learned other areas of knowledge from her mentee who was an education major. Mentee One was able to learn from her mentee “some more techniques of, you know, working with kids and different ways of lesson planning or even organizational skills (Mentee 1 # 1). Thus, Mentee One’s relationship with her mentee was reciprocal because they exchanged professional knowledge and learned from each other.

Mentee Two agreed with her mentor about sharing knowledge and the opportunity mentoring relationships created for reciprocity in teaching. She had been in mentoring relationships in her previous teaching jobs and mentored new teachers while working for Early Head Start. She explained, “if I learned something new today, this is the way I feel about it, I don’t mind giving it away; I always like to train and release,” (Mentee 2 # 2). Mentee Two, however, did not perceive that her relationship with her mentor was reciprocal or that her mentor was sharing knowledge with her, “there’s some things that you [Mentor Two] may have knowledge of that I don’t have . . . would you be willing to share some of your tips, you know, don’t hold back,” (Mentee 2# 2).
Mentee Three, the newest teacher in the group, said she would continue being part of the mentoring program, and become a mentor because of the reciprocal aspect of mentoring. She explained that her relationship with Mentor Three had been reciprocal because she learned the policies and procedures of the center from her mentor while she taught her mentor about the workings of an early childhood center in the U.S. “It’s definitely reciprocal . . . She comes from a completely different background; another country; I come from a completely different background” (Mentee 3 # 1). Similarly to Mentor Two, Mentee Three added that mentoring relationships were reciprocal because they provided the opportunity to self reflect on teaching, “it makes you realize, ‘oh, well this is the reason, [I do that]” (Mentee 3 # 1).

The mentees, like their mentors, agreed that mentoring relationships could be reciprocal. Mentee One was a mentee, and subsequently a mentor and she found both roles rewarding. As a mentee she learned the workings of the center from her mentor; as a mentor she learned from her mentee who was an education major. Mentee Two perceived her relationship with her mentor had the potential to be reciprocal but it wasn’t because she felt that her mentor was unwilling to share knowledge with her. Mentee Three perceived that her mentoring relationship was reciprocal because she was able to help her mentor learn about the educational system in the U.S.

**Mentoring Relationships**

The reciprocal nature of mentoring was perceived by all the participants as having a positive influence on their relationships. Data from both mentors and mentees suggest that reciprocity was present in all three dyads, at some level, and it demonstrated one element of a successful personal mentoring relationship.
Teacher Turnover

Findings from this study showed that the high rate of teacher turnover at the center had a detrimental influence on mentoring relationships. During the year this study took place, six teachers left the classroom known as the cooperative area. For the mentors, teacher turnover affected their abilities to connect with their new mentees. For the mentees, they felt their mentoring experiences were compromised by the turnover of new teachers.

**Mentors’ Perspectives:** When addressing the issue of high teacher turnover, Mentor One perceived that ironically but ideally, a strong mentoring program would reduce the high attrition rate, “I think having that camaraderie [of a mentoring relationship] and that comfort, makes people wanna keep coming back; it makes people wanna keep helping, which is the goal basically [of mentoring]” (Mentor 1 # 2). She explained that as a mentor, she encouraged new teachers and connected with them because, “those things make it where people feel like I cared about [them as] humans and they feel like being part of where they’re at, which makes us comfortable and makes us want to come back” (Mentor 1 # 2). She added that having a connection with other teachers at the center can be “the difference between wanting to be somewhere and not wanting to be somewhere” (Mentor 1# 2).

Mentor Two spoke explicitly about the problems of trying to mentor new teachers and the high rate of teacher turnover at the center:

I feel like we never get from the beginning to the end of something. Teachers may come and go throughout the school year and sometimes it gets a little discouraging to say, “Okay, now we have to start all over with a new person” and get used to them; they get used to us and how we do things. We start off from the beginning and say this is the first step and this is the second step. I feel like we’ve had such a turnover in this classroom that um we’ve never reached our full potential as a team because there
hasn’t been a group so far where we do something one year and it’s successful and then the next year we say okay well let’s build on that (Mentor 2 # 2)

The high rate of teacher turnover at the center clearly had a discouraging effect on Mentor Two and influenced her ability to enthusiastically collaborate more with her mentee.

Mentor Three had no comment on the subject of teacher turnover, except to state that there had been a lot of turnover in the large cooperative classroom; however she didn’t think it had influenced her ability to mentor.

For the most part, mentors perceived their ability to mentor was adversely affected by the high rate of teacher turnover at the center. Mentor One perceived that if effective mentoring was available at the center, new teachers would be more willing to stay at the center and “be willing to come back” to the center. Mentor Two reported that the high rate of teacher turnover was discouraging; turnover made it difficult for her to connect with new teachers and she felt like she could never complete projects she had started with new teachers. Mentor Three, on the other hand, did not feel like the teacher turnover rate in the large cooperative area had influenced her relationship with her mentee.

Mentees’ Perspectives: Mentee Two was unsure whether or not her mentoring experience had been influenced by the high rate of teacher turnover at the center, but she suspected that it had. “I had hoped to get more [direct mentoring] . . . and I don’t know if it’s because of all the turnovers they’ve had in the past . . .” (Mentee 2 # 1). However, she believed that a supportive mentoring relationship could lower the teacher turnover rate. “I think [teacher support] is the purpose of a mentoring program…and I think they would have less turnovers; they would have less stress,” if there was a more
mentoring program to assure the success of the new teachers (Mentee 2 # 1).

Mentee Three perceived that the high teacher turnover rate in the large cooperative classroom was a source of discouragement for the teachers in general, particularly for the mentors. It was her perception that the mentors were tired of new teachers coming and going and she felt like she had been treated “like I’m probably one more person that’s gonna leave and they’re not gonna waste their energy and their time teaching me” (Mentee 3 # 2). Because of teacher turnover, Mentee Three felt she did not receive mentoring that met her needs. She also reported that the high teacher turnover rate had impacted the quality of all the teachers’ relationships, not just those of the mentors and mentees.

As mentioned previously in the formal mentoring category, Mentee Three’s first mentor left the center before she had the opportunity to be her mentor. As a result, Mentee Three was without a mentor for the first three weeks of her job at the center. The delay in mentoring for caused Mentee Three discomfort. By the time she was paired with Mentor Three, she was discouraged and frustrated about her mentoring experience, “So I’ve been asking ‘well, how do I do this? How do I do that?’ And it’s a little overwhelming because you’re trying to do so many things so that you can catch up [without the help of a mentor]” (Mentee 3 # 2).

Mentee One did not comment on teacher turnover, perhaps because she was in another building and classroom where the teacher turnover that year was lower than that in the large cooperative classroom.
Mentees Two and Three perceived that the high rate of teacher turnover in the large cooperative area had influence their mentoring relationships negatively. Mentor Two suspected that she did not get the kind of mentoring she desired and did not develop the kind of relationship she had expected because of teacher turnover. Mentee Three had been directly impacted by the teacher turnover in the large cooperative area because the first mentor assigned to her resigned before she could mentor. By the time she was paired with Mentor Three, Mentee Three was discouraged and that influenced her ability to bond with Mentor Three.

**Mentoring Relationships**

Findings of this study showed that the high rate of teacher turnover at the center prevented mentor and mentees from fostering mentoring relationships. The Mentor/Mentee Two dyad was influenced by teacher turnover. Mentor Two perceived that the constant turnover of teachers in her room curbed her enthusiasm to mentor and Mentee Two perceived that she was receiving less direct mentoring as a result of teacher turnover; this attitude influenced their relationship. For Mentee Three, her mentoring relationship was directly and indirectly compromised by the high rate of teacher turnover at the center. It was directly compromised because the mentor with whom she was initially assigned resigned from the center. Additionally, Mentee Three perceived that because of the high turnover rate, as a new teacher she was not taken seriously and consequently not mentored thoroughly. These perceptions kept Mentee Three from bonding with her mentor and prohibited her from having an interpersonal relationship with her mentor. Ironically, although turnover diminished the quality of mentoring in the large cooperative area, fostering mentoring relationships could reduce turnover, as explained by Mentor One. She acknowledged that when new teachers
made connections and felt comfortable at the center, they were less likely to leave. As a result of her attitude, she worked diligently to make sure that she and her mentee had a strong connection.

**Summary of Professional Environment**

The professional environment encompassed elements related to the mentoring program and the teachers’ work at the center: formal mentoring, informal mentoring, mentor experience, mentor training program, reciprocal relationships, and teacher turnover. Each one of these elements or focused codes was related to the perceptions of the participants in the mentoring program. In the focused code of formal mentoring, mentors and mentees talked about the basics of the mentoring program as well as styles of mentoring and whether or not formal mentoring contributed to the development of interpersonal mentoring relationships. Informal mentoring was also important in the professional environment. Informal mentoring was one mentor’s primary mentoring style. For the other two mentors, informal mentoring was used to supplement their formal mentoring skills. Mentor experience was also an important part of the professional environment. Mentor experience influenced the way mentees perceived their mentors with respect to their work in the classroom. All three mentees perceived that they benefited from their mentors’ experience. The reciprocal nature of mentoring influenced the perceptions of both the mentors and mentees with respect to the benefits they received from their mentoring relationships. Finally, teacher turnover negatively influenced the mentoring relationships, both directly and indirectly.

The following two “little e” environments, social and emotional as illustrated through the data from the transcripts, are less concrete and contextual than the previous two “little e” environments. These two environments differ in their structure in
that they are more fluid experiential environments with their respective focused codes overlapping and sometimes being very similar to each other. It should be noted here that the experiential environments contained more data from the transcripts of the mentees than the mentors. In some of the experiential environments, Mentor One was the only mentor who had data that contributed to those environments.

Social Environment

Although less concrete and contextual than the physical and professional environments the social environment, an experiential environment, emerged as a powerful influence on mentoring relationships. This environment was defined by the elements or focused codes: (1) communication, (2) connecting with others, and (3) friendship opportunity. The social environment referred to social interactions that took place at the center that could influence the participants’ perceptions of their mentoring relationships. It is also notable that in this experiential environment data were more intertwined and connected than those in the contextual environments. For example, if a mentor and mentee had clear, on-going communication, it was more likely their mentoring relationship would become a friendship opportunity, as illustrated in the following quote from Mentee One:

I think part of the reason it happened [friendship] is I like people that are really upfront and very blunt and honest straightforward in their communication; I just recognized that in her [Mentor One]; I think it just helped that she’s like that (Mentee 1 # 2).

In this quote, Mentee One explained that because of their similar styles of communication, their mentoring relationship became an opportunity for friendship. Another example of how focused codes in this environment overlapped, in connecting with others, Mentees One and Two perceived that their mentoring relationships helped
them connect with co-workers, which in turn, helped them develop friendships with their mentors and others in the social environment of the center. Furthermore, connecting with others can lead to friendship opportunities. Additionally, in some of the experiential environments Mentor One and Mentor Three were the only mentors who had transcript excerpts illustrating the focused codes.

**Communication**

Mentor One offered an explanation of the importance of communication in mentoring relationships and the work place in general:

> I mean communicating with anybody, you know, what happens in that [communication] affects all your other communications. I mean all of that is basically why we’re on the planet; it’s communicating with others and the energy that flows back and forth; so everything does affect everything else (Mentor 1 # 1).

**Mentors’ Perspectives:** Mentor One’s perception that clear, on-going communication was essential in a mentoring relationship was expressed in her statement that communication “affects everything that people do,” and that “most conflicts with people are usually a result of misunderstanding and miscommunication” (Mentor 1 # 2). Additionally, she expressed the importance of communication in the social environment, “it [communication] is important for a good work environment” (Mentor 1 # 2).

Mentor Three perceived that on-going communication with her mentee was important for creating a good working environment as well as helping create a meaningful mentoring relationship. However, according to Mentor Three she and her mentee had a very limited amount of time together, “we don’t have much communication with either [each other] except at this time, 1 to 3 [p.m.], so I’m taking my whole time to get to know her” (Mentor 3 # 2). Mentor Three also perceived that
through open communication she and her mentee were able to discover that they had similar beliefs about teaching and working with young children, “I had the same idea as she had so we contributed [collaborated] with each other. Sometimes [when she is working on] her lesson plan, she comes and tells me also and we [discover we] are doing the same thing” (Mentor 3 # 2).

Mentor Three also expressed concern because English was not her first language, which created a challenge for communicating with her mentee; she was not always able to understand the social interactions of the other teachers at the center. As she explained in the following except, this caused her some discomfort:

I won’t be knowing what they [the other teachers] are talking [about] and then I have to ask personally ‘what you was talking?’ and then they’ll explain [it to] me that ‘we were talking about this’ because I don’t know sometimes it happens that I won’t be understanding very clearly” (Mentor 3 # 2).

Although this data also appears in the selective code of personal characteristics, Mentor Three felt like an outsider in the social environment of the center:

If I feel that I have to go and ask them [to clarify something], I go and ask them, [but] I feel like I am wrong and then I apologize for it and I am asking, ‘please clarify this, that I won’t have to do that.’ I’m like that [type of] person I don’t like to make them sad or coming in between them [interrupt them]” (Mentor 3 # 2).

The mentors’ perceptions of communication, its role in the social environment, and its influence on mentoring relationships were varied. Mentor One felt strongly that communication was important for the mentoring relationship and by extension for the social atmosphere of the center. The transcripts from Mentor Two did not contain any data that referred to communication. Mentor Three, on the other hand, had a very different perspective on communication because (a) she had spent a limited amount of time with her mentee and (b) she was not a native English speaker. Mentor Three
perceived the importance of on-going communication with her mentee but found it difficult due to time limitations, her limited English, and cultural differences.

**Mentees’ Perspectives:** When asked initially about communication with their mentors, the mentees reported that they had good communication. When pressed to give more details about their relationships with their mentors, lack of clear communication or miscommunication began to emerge in their descriptions. Mentees One and Two both reported that they had clear communication with their mentors. As stated before, Mentee One liked her mentor’s clear, direct way of communicating and describe their on-going communication in the statement, “sometimes I just yell across the room and say ‘hey what do you know about this?’” (Mentee 1#1). Mentee One also reported that she and her mentor were able to “vent” after work with each other and “bounce things off each other” and this led to a closer relationship. (This transcript excerpt illustrates both communication and informal mentoring).

Mentee Two reported initially, “I feel like as far as communication we can talk.” She also expressed the desire to have open dialogue and feedback from her mentor “if you communicate with someone it [the relationship] gets better. There may be little rough spots but they can get smoothed out [with communication] (Mentee 2 # 1). However, Mentee Two also offered a negative case example of communication when she stated that she had not received the direct style of mentoring she wanted, even after her numerous requests for it, “I do [ask for what I need], and sometimes she [Mentor Two] kinda like blows me off” (Mentee 2 # 1).

Mentee Three described how lack of clear communication detracted from her relationship with her mentor and created tension in the social environment. She
reported that in the large cooperative room, teachers needed to “have clear communication,” (Mentee 3 # 2), otherwise, tensions and miscommunications negatively influenced the social environment which in turn negatively influenced the mentoring relationship. “I don’t know if the mentor/mentee relationship, because of that feeling [tension] is ever really gonna happen the way it should (Mentee 3 # 2). Mentee Three felt that lack of communication among the teachers created a competitive social environment and, as a result, she felt that “competition [among teachers] makes developing a mentoring relationship a luxury.” (Mentee 3 # 2).

The data from the mentees’ transcripts illustrated how communication either contributed to or detracted from their interpersonal mentoring relationships. For Mentee One, communication between her and her mentor was open, informal, and personable, and this created a close relationship. Mentee Two offered a negative case example of how lack of clear communication detracted from the development of an interpersonal mentoring relationship with her mentor. Mentee Three also offered a negative case example of how lack of communication not only detracted from her mentoring relationship, but also contributed negativity to the social environment.

Mentoring Relationship

As noted by the participants, communication was essential for the development of any kind of relationship, especially in a mentoring program in an early childhood center. Clearly, the mentors and mentees who had open and on-going communication were able to develop more satisfying relationships. Mentor and Mentee One offered an example of how open communication contributed to the development of a successful mentoring and personal relationship. The element of clear, open communication had a direct influence on the social environment; when it was present it contributed to a
welcoming feeling at the center; when it was missing, as Mentee Three described, tension existed in the building.

**Connecting with Others**

Connecting with others was included in the social environment because the mentoring relationship was seen by some mentees as a bridge between themselves as new teachers and their new co-workers. One of the purposes of the mentoring program was to connect new employees with current employees for a united social environment. Some participants reported that feeling connected to the other teachers in the early childhood environment was crucial to their comfort levels as new teachers. As reported in the professional environment, teachers who had been properly mentored felt comfortable at the center and were more likely to stay employed than those who had not been properly mentored. Consequently, the focused code connecting with others contained information related to the mentoring relationship and teacher retention within the context of the social environment.

**Mentors’ Perspectives:** Mentor One was the only mentor who had data applicable to the focused code of connecting with others in the social environment. Mentor One perceived the social importance of mentoring, particularly its function of connecting new teachers with others at the center “It [mentoring] is a way to get to know other teachers; it is a good way to get to know your co-workers” (Mentor 1 # 1). She added that the social environment was important in the early childhood setting because, “how well adults work together influences the children in their care” (Mentor 1 # 2).

The lack of data from the mentors’ transcripts describing the experiential environments – social and emotional - is evidenced here by lack of data from Mentors Two and Three. Mentor One was uniquely concerned with the well-being of her mentor
as well as the other teachers at the center. Consequently, the data from her transcripts illustrated how she understood the importance of connecting new teachers with others at the center.

**Mentees’ Perspectives:** In the most direct example of how connecting with others was important to the social environment with respect to the mentoring relationship, Mentee One explained, “so it [mentoring] automatically opened up doors for me to just meet people” (Mentee 1 # 1). This contributed to Mentee One’s comfort because she was able to meet her coworkers quickly, “you get to know everybody within a few weeks” (Mentee 1 # 1). Knowing her co-workers was important to Mentee One because as she explained she was very social but also “a little shy” in a new environment.

Mentee Two also perceived that she felt comfortable in her new teaching environment because her mentor took time to introduce her to her coworkers and connect her with others at the center. She explained that by being introduced to all the teachers and employees at the center, she felt welcomed, “She introduced me to the kids, she talked about how we’re all different but we’re all to be respected; you know, I feel good there” (Mentee 2 # 2). Mentee Two, similarly to Mentee One, was a very gregarious person and liked contributing to the social environment of the center. As a result of working for many years in early childhood centers, she understood the importance of having a positive social environment, “I’ve always been a strong person in the work place; a positive person . . . once I lay a foundation with the parents and co-teachers, the environment, it flows better” (Mentee 2 # 1).

Mentee Two’s attitude of professionalism, responsibility, and leadership contributed to her feelings of connectedness with her coworkers and in turn influenced
the social environment in a positive way. Furthermore, she understood the importance of mentoring relationships and their relationship to the social environment. Mentee Two had been a mentor teacher in a local Early Head Start program before her employment at the center. When talking about her experience as a mentor she said that she like to train new teachers and help them feel connected to their new environment as quickly as possible. “I like to see ‘em perform and it just make me feel like, ‘Hey I played a part’ you know in helping those people get established and get that foundation” (Mentee 2 # 2). Additionally, Mentee Two perceived that some of the challenges in the social environment at the center, such as conflicts between teachers, difficulties with communication, and sporadic distribution of information, had caused tension between teachers. She heard new teachers complain but rather than complain, it was her conviction that she would work to make the changes necessary to create a positive social environment. “We can always find something negative to say, but my thing is “let’s make change!” (Mentee 2 # 1).

By contrast, Mentee Three did not perceive the value of connecting with others in the social environment and, as a result, she intentionally chose not to socialize with her mentor or her coworkers. She said after a difficult day of working in the center, she chose to disconnect from her coworkers. “I know that there’s other working environments where you can actually enjoy lunch [with coworkers] but this isn’t it because this [early childhood] is like being a parent except that you disconnect at the end of the day” (Mentee 3 # 2). Mentee Three also explained that due to personality differences between herself and her mentor, she chose not to socialize with her mentor, “at first it [being mentored] was a little challenging; and the tone of voice [use by her
Mentor] was harsh; I got used to it; she says nice things but her tone of voice is different” (Mentee 3 #1). This experience influenced Mentee Three’s decision not to be engaged socially with her mentor and co-workers.

For the mentees, unlike the mentors, feeling connected quickly with their coworkers was an important part of their induction into the center and by extension the social environment. Mentees One and Two were in agreement about the importance of connecting with others in the social environment. Mentee One explained that because her mentor introduced her to her coworkers, she was able to feel comfortable quickly in her new job. Likewise, Mentee Two felt comfortable quickly in her new teaching position because her mentor introduced her to her coworkers. Mentee Three, on the other hand, experience difficulty connecting to her coworkers and chose to disconnect as often as possible. This was partly due to her lack of connection to her mentor that resulted from her perception of communication difficulties.

Mentoring Relationships

Overall, Mentor and Mentee One agreed that feeling connected with others was important to new teachers. When mentors introduced new teachers to their coworkers they served as the bridge to connect their mentees to their new environment and this in turn contributed to positive outcomes in the social environment. These perceptions added to the developing mentoring and personal relationship between Mentor One and Mentee One. Although Mentor Two did not make any direct references to helping her mentee connect with others in the social environment of the center, Mentee Two felt that her mentor had helped her connect with her coworkers and adjust to her new working environment. Mentee Three, on the other hand, did not feel connected to her coworkers and stated that she intentionally disconnected from them. It is important to
note that Mentee Three felt the least connected to her mentor of the three mentees. From the data, it can be seen that mentors and mentees had various experiences with connecting with coworkers in the social environment.

**Friendship Opportunity**

The social environment of the early childhood center provided the opportunity for various kinds of relationships to develop among the teachers. In addition, the mentoring program offered another kind of relationship, friendship, because of the nature of the mentoring process. In the focused code, friendship opportunity, mentors and mentees talked about the possibilities of developing friendships with each other, which they agreed would add to the quality of their professional relationships. Many friendship opportunities occurred in the social environment as a result of the mentoring program. The friendship opportunity was described as a way that mentoring relationships developed into friendships. The data illustrated the ways in which mentoring relationships either did or did not turn into friendships. When mentoring relationships transformed into friendships, they created more beneficial learning opportunities for mentees.

**Mentors’ Perspectives:** Mentor One explained that mentoring relationships created an opportunity to develop a relationship, “the kind one hopes for with friends” (Mentor 1 # 3), and this was the case with her and her mentee. She also perceived that two very different people could become friends, “as a result of mentoring” (Mentor 1 # 3). She added, “With time the mentoring relationship became more comfortable like a friendship,” (Mentor 1 # 3).

Mentor Three perceived that her relationship with Mentee Three could become more comfortable and turn into a friendship. She also desired to have friendships with
her other coworkers, “Because my nature is like that [that I make friendships with the people that I work with] that if I build up [develop a] the friendship with someone it will be the last long [long lasting] friendship.”

Two of the three mentors saw their mentoring relationships as opportunities for friendships. Mentor One perceived that a good, solid mentoring relationship is like “the kind of friendship one hopes for,” (Mentor 1 #1). Mentor Three did not feel completely confident that her relationship with her mentee could become a friendship, but she perceived that it was her nature to develop a friendship as well as professional relationships with her coworkers.

**Mentees’ Perspectives:** Mentee One perceived that her relationship with her mentor evolved from a professional relationship to a friendship. She explained that because her mentor approached her and introduced herself to her, she developed a closer bond with her than with any other coworkers. “Just because she was the first person I met,” (Mentee 1#1). Furthermore, she trusted Mentor One because she gave her all the information she needed as a new teacher to feel properly inducted into her new job. She also trusted her as a friend, “we definitely have a good friendship as well as a working relationship,” (Mentee 1 # 1). Mentee One talked affectionately about her mentor; it was apparent through the data from the transcripts of both Mentor and Mentee one that they had mutual respect, trust, and enjoyed working together. It was also apparent that Mentee One considered her mentor her friend, “I just knew I could rely on her,” (Mentee 1# 2). She added that since the mentor/mentee paring was random, she felt appreciative to be paired with Mentor One.
Unlike Mentee One, Mentee Two, at the time of her interviews, had not yet developed a friendship with her mentor, but she believed if they could develop a friendship, it would strengthen their professional relationship. She perceived that once a friendship was developed outside of the workplace it could establish a bond that would contribute to their relationship in the workplace. She perceived a friendship with her mentor would strengthen their mentoring relationship, and “make it more meaningful,” (Mentee 2 # 2). Mentee Two explained that had tried to find ways to socialize outside of work; to get to know each other on a personal level, but due to different schedules and time constraints, they had not been able to do so. Mentee Two remained hopeful, “I think we’re well on the way [to becoming friends],” (Mentee 2 # 2).

As noted previously in the element of “connecting with others,” Mentee Three, made a conscious decision to disconnect from her work at the center and, as a result, she did not perceive her relationship with her mentor or her relationships with coworkers as friendship opportunities. When asked whether or not she saw herself socializing with her mentor she stated, “when I have time I kinda disconnect from work, I have to be honest . . . I don’t see that [a friendship] happening” (Mentee 3 # 1). Unlike the other two mentees, Mentee Three did not perceive the mentoring relationship as an opportunity to create a new friendship.

The mentees data illustrated how the possibility of developing friendships existed as a result of their mentoring relationships. Mentee One explained how her professional relationship with her mentor evolved into a personal friendship over time. Mentee Two believed that if she and her mentor had the time, they could develop a friendship from their professional relationship. She also perceived that a friendship could strengthen
their professional relationship. Unlike Mentees One and Two, Mentee Three did not perceive that her mentoring relationship would become a friendship.

**Mentoring Relationship**

Some mentors and mentees agreed that the mentoring relationship offered an opportunity to develop friendships. Mentor and Mentee One were able to experience their mentoring relationship evolve into a friendship; they saw it as an opportunity to grow together personally as well as professionally. For Mentor and Mentee Two, there was a desire to develop a personal relationship on the part of Mentee Two, but due to time scheduling differences and limitations, they were unable to find the opportunity to develop a relationship on a personal level. In the case of Mentor and Mentee Three there was desire on the part of Mentor Three to become closer professionally as well as personally with her mentee, but her sentiments were not shared by Mentee Three. So although, mentoring relationships offered the opportunity for teachers in the social environment to become friends, it wasn’t always possible for individuals to attain friendships.

**Summary of Social Environment**

As explained previously, the social environment was more experiential and less contextual than the physical and professional environments. As illustrated in the data, the social environment had a powerful influence on mentoring relationships. The social environment encompassed the elements of communication, connecting with others, and friendship opportunities. These three elements influenced the participants’ perceptions of their mentoring relationships. Furthermore, it will become apparent in the next experiential environment, similarly to the focused codes in the social environment, how the elements of these environments are intertwined and connected.
The Emotional Environment

The emotional environment for the mentors and mentees in this early childhood setting was defined by the ways in which they perceived their relationships as the elements of comfortable relationships, helping relationships, and supportive relationships. Once again, Mentor One’s transcript contained most of the mentor data in this environment, but there were few contributions by Mentors Two and Three. The emotional environment differed from the social environment in that the emotional environment was more directly related to whether or not the new teachers got their emotional needs met from their mentoring relationships. For example, when mentees felt comfortable with their mentors and had what they perceived as a comfortable relationship with their mentors, they were more likely to feel relaxed and confident in their new teaching positions. This was especially true if mentees perceived their mentors as willing to do everything possible to prepare them for their new positions at the center. Additionally, when mentees perceived they had supportive relationships with their mentors, they felt like they were treated as equals; respectfully by their mentors. All these experiences influenced the quality of the interpersonal mentoring relationships.

Comfortable Relationships

Feeling comfortable was illustrated by whether or not mentors helped mentees feel comfortable in their new positions and whether or not mentees felt comfortable going to their mentors for help. Comfortable relationships also indicated that mentees, in general, felt comfortable in their new environment at the center with coworkers other than their mentors.

Mentors’ Perspectives: Mentor One expressed many times during her interviews the importance of making new teachers feel comfortable and it was her
determination to create a comfortable relationship with her mentee. As she explained, “it’s [mentoring] very formal at first ‘cause you’re doing a check list, but you want it to be very comfortable and you want it to be more like, ‘I’m here for you if you need somebody” (Mentor 1 # 1). She further stated, “That’s a basic; for the person to feel comfortable and feel like they know what’s going on, and don’t feel dropped on their head[s],” (Mentor 1 # 1).

Mentor Two also believed it was important for mentees to feel comfortable in their new positions at the center, “If a new person came in and they actually had somebody [like a mentor] to show them the ropes, it would help them feel more comfortable,” (Mentor 2 # 1). She explained that there was always a certain level of discomfort in any new job but mentoring to help new teachers feel comfortable was necessary “especially in a program like ours which is so different from anywhere I've ever taught; just in the wide open spaces and the large numbers of children; it's very easy to feel overwhelmed,” (Mentor 2 # 1).

Mentor Three, also, wanted to help her mentee feel comfortable. Mentee Three explained, “I'll go to her and ask her [or] she can come [to me] and she can tell me what she needs; so like that we will be staying all the time together,” (Mentor 3 #1). She explained that she had been mentored when she first came to the center, three years prior, and her mentor was very concerned about her comfort. Consequently, she was concerned about the comfort of her mentee and tried to do whatever she could to make Mentee Three feel comfortable.

All three mentors agreed that having comfortable relationships and feeling comfortable at the center was important for the emotional well-being of their mentees.
They also acknowledged that there was a certain amount of discomfort in starting a new job but creating a comfortable relationship with a mentor minimized that discomfort. Mentor One was the most out-spoken about the need to create comfortable relationships and situations for new teachers. But Mentors Two and Three also perceived it was important for new teachers to feel comfortable, and mentoring relationships were a place where that comfort could begin.

**Mentees’ Perspectives:** Mentee One explained the value of having a comfortable relationship with a mentor: “with a mentor, you have somebody to go to; a familiar face; you don’t have to go to the administrators asking questions,” (Mentee 1 # 1). Feeling comfortable with her mentor was important for Mentee One because it allowed her to ask questions, know what was expected of her as a new employee, and settle into her new teaching positions with relative ease. Mentee One perceived herself as being very fortunate to have Mentor One as her mentor, “it was really nice to just be able to get to know somebody right off the bat,” (Mentee 1#1).

Mentee One further described her relationship with her mentor as comfortable because she perceived that Mentor One was not afraid to be vulnerable. One of the responsibilities of the mentor was to introduce the mentee to all the teachers at the center. Mentee One said there were so many people at the center that Mentor One made a “cheat sheet” with the employees’ pictures and names so that she could remember everybody. Mentee One appreciated this gesture by her mentor, who also told her, “Hey, I don’t know everything, I don’t expect you to know everything right away, either,” (Mentee 1#2). Mentee One also felt that her relationship with Mentor One was comfortable because “there wasn’t anything false about her [Mentor One].” As she
observed Mentor One in a number of situations, circumstances, and interactions with coworkers at the center, she was impressed by how Mentor One was consistent in her “presentation of herself . . . she wasn’t one way in front of me and another way in front of somebody else,” (Mentee 1#2). For Mentee One, her mentor’s consistent presentation of self created trust which in turn created comfort for her in her relationship with Mentor One.

Mentee Two perceived that she had a comfortable relationship with her mentor but for very different reasons. First of all, Mentee Two and her mentor each had 20-plus years of experience working in early childhood education. Mentee Two felt comfortable developing a relationship with her mentor because they had mutual respect for each other’s experience. Mentee Two had been a mentor herself and said of Mentor Two “she is very knowledgeable in her field and she uses best practices,” (Mentee 2 # 2).

Unlike Mentees One and Two, Mentee Three did not have what she perceived as a comfortable relationship with her mentor and reported, “When I don’t know something, I definitely go to someone not [my mentor] . . . like I said her tone of voice at first was very shocking to me and I always felt like I was being reprimanded,” (Mentee 3 # 1). This statement is illustrative of how Mentee Three did not have a comfortable relationship with her mentor and how this discomfort influenced her emotionally with respect to her work at the center.

Mentees perceived their relationships with their mentors as comfortable when their mentors were “approachable” and made themselves “available.” This comfort eased the emotional stress of starting a new job. Mentees also expressed the importance of feeling comfortable with mentors because they preferred to go to a mentor rather than a
member of the administration to ask questions. Mentee One perceived her comfort level with her mentor came as a result of her mentor being willing to make herself vulnerable. Mentee Two felt comfortable with her mentor because they both had 20-plus years of experience in early childhood education. Mentee Three’s perception of her relationship with her mentor was a negative case example of comfort. She didn’t feel comfortable with her mentor and preferred to go to other teachers, rather than her mentor, for help and advice.

**Mentoring Relationships**

Feeling comfortable in their relationships was an important part of a successful mentoring relationship. Mentor and Mentee One developed a very comfortable relationship and consequently had a satisfying interpersonal mentoring relationship. Mentee One felt like she could talk to her mentor about everything from the logistics of the center to her personal life. Mentee Two, a veteran teacher, had the self-confidence to feel comfortable with her mentor, and even the desire to develop a personal relationship with her, even though she wasn’t receiving the kind of mentoring she expected. Mentee Three, conversely, felt uncomfortable with her mentor and preferred to go to other teachers at the center for help and support. This lack of comfort negatively influenced the development of an interpersonal relationship between Mentor and Mentee Three.

**Helping Relationships**

Mentoring relationships were considered helping relationships when mentees perceived their mentors were willing to take charge and help them with whatever they needed. Helping relationships could be formal or informal, but were indicative of
mentors who were actively involved in helping mentees get settled into their new jobs at the center.

**Mentors’ Perspectives:** Mentor One explained that it was a mentor’s job to be like a lifesaver to mentees, “a mentor kind of acts as a little lifesaver [that’s] been thrown in where you [as a mentee] can kind of go [to your mentor] and ask her, ‘this person said this to me, do you think they meant anything, or what do you think?’” (Mentor 1 # 2). In this way Mentor One described the importance of being helpful to her mentee.

Mentor Two perceived that she could create a helpful relationship with her mentee by working closely with her and “I guess I try to model more than anything else; more than just [tell her] this is the way we do things; or this is how I do things,” (Mentor 2 # 1). Mentor Two was also adamant that to be helpful to her mentee, she would have to be mentoring somebody who was working with the same age children as her, “since we’re [she and her mentee] working with the same age children I could help her to know what I do,” (Mentor 2 # 1). Mentee Two had previously worked with younger children in Early Head Start, so Mentor One was able to help her create lesson plans and other developmentally appropriate practices for working with older children.

Mentor Three perceived herself as being very dedicated to creating a helping relationship with her mentee, “I am always watching her and helping [when] she is needing [me]” (Mentor 3 # 2). She explained, “I’ll go to her and ask her [or] she can come [to me] and she can tell me what she needs; so like that we will be staying all the time together,” (Mentor 3 #1). She went on to explain that she told her mentee if she needed anything, she could come to her; “I told her that ‘if you need my help or some help or if you want me anytime I can come and help you, in any way like organizing the
class or helping her out; doing the lesson plan or whatever she needs she wants. So she told [me] ‘okay’ and then I started helping her as a mentor,” (Mentor 3 # 2).

All three mentors in this study perceived the importance of their roles as helpers. Mentor One explained that mentoring was a life saver to a new teacher. Mentor Two perceived the best way to help her mentee was to model best practices for her. Mentor Three perceived the best way to mentor was to help her mentee with anything she needed.

Mentees’ Perspectives: Mentee One agreed that her mentor was a “lifesaver” and very helpful to her, “She’s got quite a bit more experience than I do . . . so it’s definitely helpful to just be able to [go to her] otherwise I would just Google it [a question],” (Mentee 1#1).

Mentee Two described her relationship with her mentor as helping and compared it to a marriage where both people have to work and grow together to help each other, “I think it will evolve into something beautiful with time but it doesn’t just happen overnight, you know, you grow together,” (Mentee 2 # 2). Mentee Two added that similar to a marriage, she as the mentee had to be willing to help her mentor, “When I see they [she] need[s] help I say, ‘oh, I can do that,’ and sometime I just take the lead, take initiative, and just take the assignment,” (Mentee 2 # 2).

Mentee Three described her helping relationship with her mentor as being mutual, “We help each other out; she’s very helpful; she’s the type that if she sees that I’m busy, she’ll go and you [I] don’t really have to ask ‘can you help me with this?’ she kind of just sees it and does it” (Mentee 3 # 1).
The mentees all perceived, like their mentors that their relationships with their mentors had been helping relationships. Mentee One appreciated the fact that her mentor had so much experience that she could help her with anything she needed as a new teacher. Mentor Two compared her relationship with her mentor as a helping relationship in the same way that people help each other in a marriage. Mentee Three also described her relationship with her mentor as being mutually helpful.

**Mentoring Relationships**

For the most part, all three Mentor/Mentee dyads perceived that they had helping relationships. Furthermore, all six participants perceived that helping relationships were mutual. The importance of helping relationships offers another level of comfort to new teachers. It also added another dimension to the reciprocal aspect of mentoring relationships. When mentors and mentees described their relationships as helping, they were describing mutually beneficial relationships. These kinds of relationships, if nurtured, were more likely to turn into satisfying interpersonal mentoring relationships.

**Supportive Relationships**

Supportive relationships were similar to helping relationships but differed slightly in that (a) mentees described them as relationships where they felt supported professionally, (b) supported emotionally, and (c) treated as equals by their mentors.

**Mentors’ Perspectives:** Mentor One described her role as supporter to her mentee, “as a new employee, you know, you feel spinney in a new job; feel uncertain; feel upset,” (Mentor 1 # 1). As a mentor, she ameliorated those feelings by offering support professionally and emotionally to her mentee, as she explained, “so for them not to feel that way and if they feel uncertain, they have somewhere to go,” (Mentor 1# 1).
Mentor Three acknowledged the importance of doing whatever she could to support her mentee, especially because she had felt supported by her mentor when she was a new teacher at the center, “my mentor used to come to me all the time and ask me questions regarding ‘how do you like the job here and how are you feeling’” (Mentor 3 # 1). She desired to replicate the experience she had as a mentee with Mentee Three, “I ask her every time, if you need me anytime, if you want my help at anytime, I can help you (Mentor 3 # 1). She also indicated her dedication and support for her mentee when she said, “[even] if she wants any time, my help outside of the [center] I can help her like that,” (Mentor 3 # 1).

Mentor One and Mentor Three acknowledged the need to offer support to their mentees. Mentor One wanted to create a relationship with her mentee so she didn’t feel so “spinney” in her new job. Mentor Three, having been supported by her mentor, wanted to create a supportive relationship with Mentee Three.

**Mentees Perspectives:** Mentee One said that she felt supported by her mentor because her mentor was willing to work with her to help her become a better teacher, “It was kind of like a partner project, you know, ‘let’s see how we can work together’ so that I can be a better employee or even be a good employee here,” (Mentee 1 # 1). Additionally, Mentee One perceived that her mentor treated her as an equal and served as a guide through the process of being inducted into a new early childhood center, “I know you know the policies, keep me out of trouble!” (Mentee 1# 1). Mentee One also felt supported emotionally by her mentor and consequently, closer to her than any of her other coworkers. She explained that it was nice to have somebody, like her mentor, to go to after a hard day, “I could just say, ‘Hey can we go chat’ or whatever; so it’s just
kind of a stress relief to know that I knew somebody that I could confide in,” (Mentee 1#1).

Unlike Mentee One, Mentee Two did not feel supported by her mentor. As a former mentor herself, she explained the importance of having a supportive mentoring relationship, especially in an early childhood setting. “When you get to a certain point you won’t be so willing to quit ‘cause you have the courage to go on, ‘cause I [you] have support, ” (Mentee 2# 1). As mentioned before, Mentee Two had more than 20 years of experience in early childhood so she understood the benefits of a supportive mentoring relationship. She did not, however, feel supported by her mentor, “I don’t like feeling that way [unsupported] because I am a very confident person and I like to be well trained so that I can perform and enhance the environment,” (Mentee 2 #1). However, Mentee Two perceived that because she wasn’t formally mentored on the policies and procedures of the center that she didn’t have the support of her mentor.

The mentees all acknowledged the importance of feeling supported by their mentors. Mentee One felt supported by her mentor and considered her a confidant. She also perceived that she could depend on Mentor One to keep her “out of trouble.” Mentee Two offered a negative case example of how she did not feel supported by her mentor. Because she was a veteran teacher, Mentee Two could do her job even if she didn’t feel supported by her mentor, however she did say that mentees who don’t feel supported are more likely to quit their jobs.

**Mentoring Relationships**

Data from the transcripts of Mentor and Mentee One illustrated the ways in which a mentoring relationship can be supportive. Mentor One was sensitive to the needs of new teachers and worked to make her mentee feel comfortable. Mentee One
acknowledged than she felt supported by her mentor professionally and personally. In the case of Mentor and Mentee Two, the transcript from Mentor Two contained no information related to offering support to her mentee. The transcript from Mentee Two was illustrative of how she did not feel supported by her mentor. In the case of the Mentor/Mentee dyad Three, although Mentor Three recognized the need to offer her mentee support, the transcript from Mentee Three’s interview did not contain any data related to feeling supported.

**Summary of Emotional Environment**

In the emotional environment of this early childhood center, for the most part, mentors and mentees perceived their relationships were comfortable, helping, and, supportive. The emotional environment differed slightly from the social environment with respect to whether or not the mentees perceived they got their emotional needs met in their mentoring relationships. When mentees felt comfortable with their mentors they were more likely to feel relaxed in their new teaching positions at the center. If they perceived that they had helping relationships with their mentors they were likely to feel confident in their new jobs. Finally, when mentees perceived they had supportive relationships with their mentors, they felt understood and respected by their mentors, and again, more at ease in their new jobs. The experiences mentees had with their mentors with respect to comfort, help, and support, determined whether or not they perceived their mentoring relationships as successful.

**Personal Characteristics and the Four Environments**

A significant amount of data from the transcripts of the interviews did not fit into the selective codes of the four environments. These data were representative of the personal characteristics and traits of the mentors and mentees as they perceived
themselves and others. Although these data did were not directly representative of the four environments, they were significant findings of this study because they were indicative of how the influence of the four environments could eclipse the personal determinations, and intentions of the teachers as mentors and mentees. These data were divided into two focused codes of individual attitudes and personality traits. These data described the participants and their perceptions rather than the external circumstances as in the other contextual and experiential environments. For example, in the personal environment, Mentee One said that she cared about her mentor “away from work,” (Mentee 1 # 1) illustrating the personality trait of caring that Mentee One possessed.

Another example of how these personal data differed from the data in the experiential environments came from the transcript of Mentee Two, who had a number of expectations about how a mentor “should” act and how a mentoring program “should” function. These expectations were illustrated in the focused code “individual attitudes.” These suggestions were not applicable to the professional environment because they were the perceptions of Mentee Two; knowledge she had constructed from her past experiences of mentoring. For example, Mentee Two’s expectation of how a mentor should act was illustrated in her statement, “Mentors need to be humble and joyful when they see their mentees succeed,” (Mentor 2 # 2). By examining the data in the focused codes of personality traits and individual attitudes it is possible to observe how participants’ personalities and attitudes influenced their experiences in their mentoring relationships and by extension the mentoring program. It is important to note that the principal volume of data from the transcripts illustrated how the four environments had
the strongest influence on mentoring relationships; eclipsing the influence of the personal characteristics of the mentors and mentees when it came to developing interpersonal mentoring relationships.

**Individual Attitudes**

Individual attitudes were as various as the number of participants in the study and were indicative of noteworthy attitudes that mentors and mentees had about themselves and mentoring relationships. Individual attitudes were also indicative of things less directly connected to mentoring or relationships. Generally, individual attitudes were either positive or negative about the mentoring program and the development of interpersonal mentoring relationships.

**Mentors’ Perspectives:** The transcript data from Mentor One was comprised of many examples of how her attitude about mentoring and the mentoring program created the interpersonal relationship she had with her mentee. Mentor One stated a number of times that she liked mentoring because, “I like being a welcoming committee” (Mentor 1 # 1). Mentor One also expressed her professional attitude toward mentoring when she said, “I feel responsible to help my mentee do well,” (Mentor 1 # 2). Mentor One’s attitude was illustrative of how she created a meaningful relationship with her mentee which contributed to the professional success of her mentee.

Mentor Two expressed a different type of attitude toward mentoring than Mentor One. Mentor Two, as stated previously, perceived the mentoring program as a good idea, albeit unrealistic time-wise in the context of early childhood education. Consequently, she was conflicted about how to manage her responsibilities as a teacher and include time for mentoring. As the most veteran teacher at the center, she was recruited to be a mentor but did so reluctantly, so she focused on developing ways
to ease her own discomfort in the role of a mentor. For example, she perceived that
working with a mentee who was teaching the same age children as herself, would
enable her to do her teaching responsibilities and be a mentor “I think that [with a
mentee who] teaches the same grade level as I do makes a big difference because I
know what’s going on. I don’t know how things work in other classrooms; I wouldn’t be
of much help to someone in another room,” (Mentor 2 # 2).

Mentor Two was also adamant about being in close proximity with her mentee
because her first mentee was in another building and as she explained, “I don’t even get
to take a break [during the day] so for me it was just impossible to get together [with the
mentee] and by the time I got around to being able to introduce her to other staff
members, she already knew them all,” (Mentor 2 # 1). This situation caused Mentor Two
a tremendous amount of discomfort and feelings of inadequacy and she often
expressed mentoring in terms of what her “preferences” were as opposed to the other
two mentors who seemed more focused on the needs of their mentees.

Mentor Three had a very positive attitude toward mentoring. She had been
mentored prior to being a mentor and had enjoyed the mentoring relationship she had
with her mentor. She was very enthusiastic about creating the same kind of relationship
with her mentee; although she was uncertain and tentative about her ability to do so:

Working together like that [as her mentor], I have to ask her if we both goes
together [if I am helpful to her] because some people, you know, that their
ideas will be different and other ideas will be different and then we won’t be
getting together [getting along] (Mentor 3 # 1).

The mentors’ attitudes toward their mentoring relationships were as varied as their
personalities. Mentor One unabashedly, yet humbly, enjoyed mentoring and her most
prominent attitude toward her mentee was feeling responsible for her comfort, which
she believed would assure her success. Mentor Two’s attitude toward mentoring was based on her preferences related to her experience and comfort levels in and out of the classroom. She preferred to mentor someone who worked in her classroom and seemed less concerned with the specific needs of her mentor than she did her own comfort. Mentor Three on the other hand had a very positive attitude toward mentoring and her mentee and, similarly to Mentor One, wanted very much to do whatever her mentee needed to feel comfortable in her new job.

**Mentees’ Perspectives:** Mentor One’s positive attitude about mentoring was mirrored in Mentee One’s comments about how much she liked being in the mentoring program and how she benefited from it:

> I think it makes me feel better about myself, um, being able to help somebody else along; somebody brand new ‘cause I have empathy. I can feel, you know, I was there once; I know what you’re feeling; I know what you might be going through (Mentee 2 # 2).

Mentee One modeled herself after her mentor when she was assigned to work with a new teacher. Like Mentor One, Mentee One had the attitude that her mentee’s comfort was her first and foremost concern.

The data from Mentee Two showed that she had a positive but critical attitude toward the mentoring program at the center, and her relationship with her mentor. Having been a mentor in other early childhood settings, she had beliefs and expectations which had not been met in this center. She explained:

> I think a successful mentor must first be a role model; they must have good character; they must have good character; they must be self-directed; they must feel good about who they are and they must not be envious and they must be courageous; they must have a lot of courage to stand up in the face of opposition; even in difficult times; they have to be willing to be that mentor and I feel like in order for it [mentoring relationship] to be a success they gonna have to be committed to be willing to share knowledge, (Mentee 2 # 1).
Mentee Two’s strong attitude of what she perceived as proper mentoring influenced the way she perceived her relationships with her mentor; because of her expectations she found her mentoring relationship disappointing. As noted previously, she expected and wanted a formal, structured mentoring experience and her general attitude about her experience was disappointment.

Mentee Three’s data revealed an attitude of defeat, “Um, but because it is so busy, understaffed and [we are] overworked here, it has been really difficult to actually have time to sit one-on-one,” (Mentee 3 #1). After only two weeks at the center, Mentee Three considered quitting:

I’ve only been here a month, I haven’t really felt like a teacher . . . I haven’t received that much [support] from the faculty . . . [or] the administration; it’s the truth, I’ve been kind of shocked to be honest, there was the first two weeks where I was just like I didn’t know if I was gonna make it (Mentee 3 #2).

The mentees’ attitudes, similarly to those of the mentors, varied according to their personalities. Mentee One loved being a mentee and a mentor. She was proud to be part of the mentoring program, her experience as a mentee was positive, mentoring gave her a sense of self-confidence, and she was determined to be an excellent mentor, like Mentor One. Mentee Two had a strong attitude about being part of the mentoring program as well, although hers was based more on her expectations of what a mentoring program should be like. Mentee Two had been part of a mentoring program at Early Head Start and the program at the center didn’t live up to her expectations. Additionally, she had expectations of what qualities a mentor should possess that influenced her attitude toward her mentoring experience. Mentee Three had an attitude of defeat when it came to her feelings about her relationship with her mentor and the center in general. She said at the time of her interviews she had considered quitting
after her first two weeks at the center. Shortly after her interviews for this study were completed, she quit her job at the center.

**Mentoring Relationships**

The attitudes of the mentors and mentees had both positive and negative influences on the kind of interpersonal mentoring relationships they were able to develop. However, it is important to note that Dyad One was the only mentor/mentee dyad who had consistently positive interactions about mentoring and working at the center. The development of their relationship was perceived by both to be very advantageous. Mentor One was committed to making her mentee feel comfortable and confident being inducted into her new job. That attitude positively influenced the interpersonal relationship between Mentor and Mentee One and they eventually became friends. Although Dyad One did not have the same environmental challenges as the other two dyads, their mentoring relationship was also subject to the influences of the four environments; however they were able to develop a friendship in spite of these challenges. Their ability to develop a friendship from their mentoring relationship could be attributed to their generally positive attitudes and the compatibility of their personalities.

Mentor and Mentee Two were less successful at developing an interpersonal relationship and that seemed to be due to their disparate attitudes about mentoring and the mentoring program as well as the overwhelming influences of the four environments. They worked together respectfully as veteran teachers, but were unable to develop rapport specifically because of time schedule differences, problems communicating with respect to formal mentoring procedures, and teacher turnover, as indicated in their transcript data from the four environments. Mentor and Mentee Two
also had very different attitudes toward mentoring in general; Mentor Two stated that she didn’t think there was enough time in an early childhood setting for mentoring and Mentee Two was very enthusiastic about the use of mentoring for professional development in early childhood.

Mentor and Mentee Three had very different attitudes about the mentoring program and the possibility that mentoring relationships could be personal relationships. Mentor Three had a very positive attitude about mentoring and wanted her mentee to feel close to her. She also felt that it was very possible that as a mentor/mentee dyad they could become friends. Mentee Three’s defeated attitude toward the center in general and the mentoring program by extension prevented her from wanting to develop any kind of relationship with her mentor. Again, it should be noted that much of Mentee Three’s defeated attitude was related to what she perceived as negative experiences in the four environments. She stated that the classroom environment wasn’t conducive to mentoring and she also felt that mentors and mentees should be trained in order for a center to have a successful mentoring program.

**Personality Traits**

Personality traits were the individual ways that the participants described themselves and their interactions in their mentoring relationships.

**Mentors’ Perspectives:** Mentor One was a very modest person, so her characterizations of herself and her success as a mentor were expressed in her statements of how much she wanted to create harmony in her relationship with her mentee and at the center in general. She was committed to clear communication, creating a comfortable environment for her mentee, and doing whatever she could as a mentor to make the environment of the center warm and welcoming. As Mentor One
explained, “I enjoy making people feel comfortable,” (Mentor 1 # 1). As mentioned before she said she liked being a welcoming committee for new teachers and telling them, “I’m here for you,” (Mentor 1 # 1).

Mentor Two’s characterizations of herself were based on what she perceived she needed to feel comfortable as a mentor. At the time of her interviews for this study, she had been a teacher in early childhood for 27 years. She explained that she had developed her own style of teaching and collaborating with others and being a mentor was challenging for her. She stated that she perceived mentoring to be a positive thing for new teachers, but she didn’t think there was time in the early childhood center for a mentoring program. As she explained:

I mean maybe in another situation it would be different; where the teachers actually have a designated break; where they could go and speak to each other away from the classroom. But when I work with [my mentee] its kinda like I’m doing what I am doing now: [attending to the children]. I have to stop and put a fire out over here and then get back to you and then there is something else going on over here,” (Mentor 2 # 1).

It should be noted here for the context of this quote, “its kinda like I’m doing what I am doing now,” that Mentor Two chose to be interviewed for this study in the classroom, during the children’s nap time.

Mentor Three describe herself as somebody who was a very loyal co-worker and friend:

My nature is like that [I make friendships with people I work with]. If I build up [develop a] the friendship with someone it will be the last long [a long-lasting friendship]. I won’t cut it [off] it’s not me, [to not have friendly relationships with co-workers] . . . so I like to have relationships [friendships], still I work with her [Mentee Three] as long as I am here, (Mentor 3 # 2).
She emphasized that it was not in her nature to be insincere and that if she developed a relationship with her mentee she would do whatever she could to maintain it, “So, my relationship with whomever, I’ll be keeping it; [it] will be last long. I’m not like that [superficial with co-workers]; I make talking with her [conversation] and no it’s not in my nature [to have casual relationships],” (Mentor 3 # 2). Consequently, she perceived herself as a person who not only wanted to create a meaningful mentoring relationship with her mentee, but also a friendship.

The mentors’ personalities were expressed in the way they described themselves, particularly with respect to their mentees and mentoring. Mentor One perceived the most important part of being a mentor was communication, dedication, and creating harmony in her environment; with her mentee and the bigger social community of the center. She like being a “welcoming committee” as a mentor and she like creating a comfortable atmosphere for her and coworkers. Mentor Two perceived herself as a dedicated teacher first and a mentor second. She felt that mentoring was important but she did not believe that there was time in the early childhood setting for mentoring. Mentor Three described herself as a very loyal coworker and friend. She said that once she made friends with people she maintained those friendships. As a result she perceived herself as a very dedicated mentor and desired to create an effective mentoring relationship as well as a friendship with Mentee Three.

**Mentees’ Perspectives:** Mentee One described herself as “a people” person and perceived that having the opportunity to be a mentor (as well as a mentee) gave her the experience of stepping into a leadership role; to be more involved in her job as a teacher and employee at the center. Taking on a leadership role also satisfied the
congenial side of her personality: her desire to help other teachers and get to know all
the employees at the center. “Being a mentor, I felt like, that gave me an opportunity to
step into a leadership role . . . take everybody around and introduce them . . . that way
you get to know everybody within a few weeks,” (Mentee 1 # 2). Mentee One declared,
“I like to know everybody and everybody’s name; anyway it’s just me . . . I like being
around a whole bunch of different people,” (Mentee 1 # 2). She also described herself
as “bossy” and being in a leadership role gave her an outlet that satisfied her bossiness
without offending anyone.

Mentee Two perceived herself as a collaborative person. She acknowledged that
her mentor had a lot of experience in the early childhood setting and Mentee Two
desired to collaborate with her and share ideas, “there’s some things that you [Mentor
Two] may have; knowledge of that I don’t have or you can show me your way of doing
things,” (Mentee 2 # 2). Mentee Two also perceived herself as a very dedicated worker.
She explained the difficulty of coming into a new environment and the challenges she
encountered, but she said, “If I feel uncomfortable in any way, you know, I adjust,
quickly,” (Mentee 2 # 2). She added that when she encountered difficulties in her new
position at the center, she didn’t become discouraged, “I am not a quitter; I will stay at a
job until I see change occur,” (Mentee 2 # 2). However, she also felt that she wasn’t
receiving the support and professional development from her mentor that she wanted.

Mentee Two, exemplified her dedication to her job when she said that she
“contributes whatever she can to her work,” “does what is expected of her,” “mentors
others who come into the classroom,” “takes the lead in the classroom,” and
emphasized “I think your heart have to be in it [working in early childhood] ‘cause some
people once they come to work, that’s it, but I even take it home . . . I’m constantly, thinking about the children even when I’m out shopping for my own,” (Mentee 2 # 1 & 2). Mentee Two’s experience as a mentor-teacher also added to her perceptions of herself as a mentor. She explained how she enjoyed working and training new teachers, “I like to train people and release them and I like to see ‘em perform and it just make me feel like, ‘Hey I played a part’ you know in helping those people get established,” (Mentee 2 # 2).

Mentee Three described herself as being “a little OCD; that’s the kind of person [I am] sometimes it’s not good though” (Mentee 3 # 1). As a result of her perception, she was often disheartened with the way things were run at the center and experienced a significant level of discouragement as a new teacher. As mentioned previously, due to a series of unfortunate events, Mentee Three did not get her mentor until she had been employed at the center for almost a month. As she explained, “I was very excited [at first] but then unfortunately things happened; I didn’t even really know who my mentor was; people were leaving; I was in shock; then she [Mentor Three] got ill and she was gone . . . and then I got ill and I was gone . . . it has been really difficult,” (Mentee 3 # 1). Another challenge for Mentee Three came as a result of what she considered an unreasonable workload, “I don’t see how they have us doing dishes . . . I couldn’t believe it! I’m like, wow this is incredible; our job here is about the children; but I feel like because we’re doing so many other things we’ve lost the focus,” (Mentee 3#2).

Finally, with respect to her relationship with Mentor Three, as mentioned previously, she perceived that her mentor’s tone of voice was harsh and that “I always felt like I was being reprimanded” (Mentee 3 # 1). Mentee Three was sensitive to the challenges of
working at the center and her sensitivity influenced the way she perceived her relationship with her mentor; she felt it was hard for her to develop rapport with her.

The mentees described themselves with respect to their personalities and how they influenced their mentoring relationships. Mentee One perceived herself as “bossy” which she channeled into positive energy as a mentor. She perceived that mentoring gave her an outlet for her strong personality and she enjoyed being part of the program. And although she considered herself bossy, she also described herself as a “people person,” and flourished as a mentee and a mentor. Mentee Two described herself as a collaborative and dedicated employee. Although she was disappointed with her mentoring experience, she was also determined to make the most of it; she was dedicated to change and committed to seeing the mentoring program evolve in a way that would successfully induct new teachers. Mentee Three, in contrast, perceived herself as being inflexible and less able to cope with the challenges of working at the center. She also did not envision herself developing a relationship with a mentor with whom she didn’t feel comfortable.

**Mentoring Relationships**

As illustrated in the data from this focused code personality traits played a significant role in the relationships between the mentors and mentees, but again, many of the transcript excerpts related back to the influence of the four environments. Mentor One’s ability to put the needs of her mentee and others first created an opportunity for her to develop a positive relationship with her mentee. Likewise, Mentee One’s personality was out-going and congenial and contributed to her ability to have a meaningful relationship with her mentor. Conversely, Dyad Two was composed of two very different but not uncomplimentary personalities. However, this combination
resulted in a frustrating mentoring experience for Mentee Two who had explicit expectations of mentoring and a mentor who had perceptions of mentoring that were contradictory to hers. For example, Mentee Two wanted more professional development and support from her mentor (formal mentoring), and it was Mentor Two’s preference to do informal mentoring.

Finally, although Mentor Three desired to have a meaningful and congenial relationship with her mentee, and was a self-described loyal personality, she and her mentee were unable to develop a meaningful mentoring relationship. Mentee Three was discouraged and disillusioned and unwilling to find fulfillment in her relationship with Mentor Three, and in general, her teaching her job at the center.

**Summary of Personal Characteristics and the Four Environments**

The data from the transcripts included in the selective code of personal characteristics illustrated how even well-intentioned teachers in an early childhood center were unable to develop interpersonal mentoring relationships because of the influence of the four environments identified through data analysis. The personal characteristics as expressed by each participant’s self-described, individual attitudes and personality traits reflected their determination as well as their frustration to develop mentoring relationships within the context of an early childhood setting. By exploring the personal characteristic data it was possible to observe how participants’ personalities and attitudes influenced their experiences in their mentoring relationships and by extension the mentoring program.

**Summary of Chapter 4**

The data presented in this chapter illustrated the theory of how the environmental influences in one early childhood center’s mentoring program either detracted from or
contributed to the interpersonal mentoring relationships of the teachers in the center. The over-arching theme of the big “E” environment contained the four little “e” environments: the physical, the professional, the social, and the emotional environments. The data from the transcripts related to the four environments, were presented here to illustrate the influences from the perspectives of the mentors and mentees, and how they influenced the mentoring relationships. These environments were explored from the most concrete: the physical, to the most experiential: the emotional. The ways in which the data explained these four environments and their influence on the mentoring relationships of the six participants was illustrated throughout this chapter with transcript excerpts and analyses. Additionally, the self-described attitudes and personal characteristics of the six participants were explored; particularly with respect to how they were influenced by the four environments.

Although these environments were presented as four separate dimensions, they were intertwined throughout the participants’ transcripts. Many of the excerpts from the transcripts made references to multiple environments. In other words, many aspects of the physical environment were influenced by events that occurred in the professional environment. Likewise, elements in the social environment influenced and were influenced by the emotional environment. Additionally it was illustrated how the four environments influenced the way mentors and mentees perceived themselves and each other in the data presented in the personal characteristic selective code. Excerpts from the interview transcripts illustrated mentors’ and mentees’ attitudes toward their mentoring relationships and the mentoring program as a whole. Further data illustrated
mentors’ and mentees’ personality traits and how they perceived themselves and their experiences in the mentoring program.

In the following chapter, a discussion of the findings and how they relate to the literature on mentoring relationships is offered.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the interpersonal relationships of six teachers who took part in a mentoring program in one early childhood center. My desire to pursue this field of study was based on a combination of my personal experiences mentoring in early childhood and the need for more research that explores interpersonal mentoring relationships. Research on mentoring as professional development for teachers has reported that mentees learned more from their mentors, and navigated the induction process more smoothly when interpersonal mentoring relationships were friendly and congenial (see Abell, et. al., 1995 and others cited in Chapter 2). This study extends the literature on mentoring relationships by offering evidence to support the findings of the previous research as well as offering additional insights relevant to mentoring relationships specifically in early childhood settings. The perceptions of the early childhood teachers in this study illustrated the ways in which congenial interpersonal mentoring relationships could induct teachers into their new positions at the center. More importantly, they illustrated how the dominant influence of the early childhood environment in some cases prohibited the development of interpersonal mentoring relationships.

The Four Environments and Mentoring Relationships

This study offers an alternative perspective with which to view interpersonal mentoring relationships through the lens of the early childhood environment. Mentors and mentees in this study perceived aspects of the early childhood environment, the big “E” environment, as influential to their mentoring relationships. These environmental
dynamics, identified as the four little “e” environments, influenced mentors’ and mentees’ abilities to develop meaningful, professional, and personal relationships. These findings are significant, specifically to the pre-K, early childhood setting. Previous literature on the importance of interpersonal mentoring relationships has focused mostly on the personality characteristics and traits of mentors; with most research done in elementary and high school classrooms with pre-service teachers, novice teachers, and special education teachers. The findings of this study show how the environmental elements of the early childhood classroom can eclipse the personal characteristics and traits of the teachers, thus preventing the development of interpersonal mentoring relationships.

The theory of the little “e” environments demonstrates how certain elements in the environment are more powerful than specific personal characteristics when working in early childhood classrooms. Since Pavia, et al., (2003) was the only study situated in a pre-school settings, it was the one piece of literature that could be more directly connected to the theory of environmental influences and mentoring relationships. Findings from other studies about mentoring relationships, as reviewed in Chapter 2, were focused on personality traits, characteristics of mentors, and mentor experience or training. However, it is significant to note, that aspects of the four environments identified in the current study substantiated many of the previous research findings with respect to elements important for interpersonal mentoring relationships. Regardless of the differences among the settings of the mentoring studies, this discussion will present findings that support some of the previous findings from studies reviewed in the literature with respect to interpersonal mentoring relationships.
Elements of the Physical Environment

**Time Schedules:** The elements identified as being related to the physical environment in the current study supported many of the findings in Pavia, et al. (2003). For example, elements in the physical environment such as time schedules and proximity were reported by Pavia et al. as what they called, “factors impinging on the mentor-protégé relationship,” (p. 254). They reported that mentors and mentees had difficulty scheduling meetings due to proximity and time constraints. In the current study, Mentor Two reported having difficulty scheduling time to meet with her mentee, especially when she and her mentee were in different classrooms. The way in which time schedules created issues for mentoring relationships was also illustrated by Mentor Two's statement that mentoring new teachers was a good idea but time consuming. This supported findings by Pavia, et al. (2003) that participants perceived mentoring to be “just another stressful obligation to fulfill,” (p. 253). Additional findings from the current study supported findings from Pavia et al. that mentors and mentees had difficulty meeting because of time constraints, “conflicting schedules, or outside activities,” (p. 254).

Mentor Two had a second job that limited her ability to meet formally with her mentee outside of the classroom. The members of Dyad Three also reported having conflicting schedules that prohibited them from meeting for mentoring sessions. As a result Dyad Three tried to meet for mentoring during the children’s naptime. This arrangement compromised their ability to develop a close relationship because as Mentor Three reported, “these children won’t allow us to talk.” Likewise, Mentee Three explained that in her previous employment as an educational aide for public school, time was scheduled specifically for teachers to do lesson plans and attend meetings.
Mentee Three perceived that time scheduled for mentoring was unavailable at the center and this eclipsed her ability to develop a relationship with her mentor.

**Proximity of Mentors to Mentees:** Another finding from the current study, proximity, supported findings by Pavia et al. (2003) that mentors and mentees struggled more in relationships if they weren’t in close proximity. Unlike the current study, where mentors and mentees worked in the same building and sometimes the same classroom, in the study by Pavia et al., some of the mentors were at different centers than their mentees and in the study by Heung-Ling (2003), mentors were not classroom teachers, but rather school principals. These respective arrangements caused the mentors and mentees to perceive that their daily experiences were so different it was hard to relate to each other (Pavia, et al.; Heung-Ling). In the current study, Mentor Two described her experience in a similar arrangement when she and her first mentee worked in different buildings, “for me it was just impossible to get together [with her] and by the time I got around to being able to introduce her to other staff members, she already knew them all,” (Mentor 2 # 1). As a result of this experience, Mentor Two was adamant about being in close proximity with her mentee if she was to have any kind of interpersonal mentoring relationship.

On the other hand, when mentors and mentees worked in close proximity, as findings in the current study illustrated, mentoring relationships had the opportunity to flourish. Mentee One reported that since she and her mentor were in the same building, they were close enough to witness the same events throughout the day. This arrangement influenced their relationship in a positive way as Mentor One explained, “it gave us something in common even if we didn’t have anything in common” (Mentor
This arrangement provided an opportunity for both Mentor and Mentee One to grow closer in their mentoring relationship as well as develop a friendship.

Classroom Structure: Proximal classroom arrangements did not, however, always contribute to congenial relationships. For the other two dyads – Mentor/Mentee Two and Mentor/Mentee Three - the physical arrangement of the classrooms and the challenges associated with working together in the large cooperative area created dissonance as they competed for space. In this arrangement, tension between mentors and mentees developed from proximity and seemed to detract from the development of congenial mentoring relationships.

Elements of the Professional Environment

Formal Mentoring: With respect to the professional environment, every element (formal and informal mentoring, mentor experience, mentor training, reciprocal relationships and teacher turnover), supported previous findings related to the literature on mentoring relationships. The mentees, in a study done by Rippon and Martin (2006) expressed the need for frequent formal and informal feedback sessions, “the student teachers mentioned repeatedly the importance of having time with a good mentor . . .” (p. 88). Findings in the current study supported mentees’ need for formal mentoring. Mentee One had been formally mentored and considered her mentoring relationship, a friendship as well as a professional relationship. Conversely, Mentees Two and Three did not perceive that they had been formally mentored and consequently felt they had not been properly mentored. This led to their perceptions that they had not developed strong relationships with their mentors. It also led to the perception of some of the participants that the administration at the center did not provide adequate support for the teachers in the mentoring program. However, archival data gathered, documents
provided by the center director, suggested otherwise. These documents show that the teachers had the support of the center’s administration if they requested time for meeting or class coverage. One of the documents also offers suggestions for mentors to help their mentees feel comfortable at the center (See Appendices G & H).

**Informal Mentoring:** The findings on informal mentoring from the current study also supported the findings of a number of studies in the literature. As mentioned previously, the mentees in Rippon and Martin (2006) wanted informal as well as formal mentoring sessions. Findings in the study by Babione and Shea (2005) reported that informal mentoring was actually more well-received by mentees because it was less structured and less invasive to the mentees’ schedules and classrooms. Similarly, in a study by Strong and Baron (2004) mentees were more likely to accept mentors’ suggestions if they were done informally, rather than as direct mentoring. For Mentee One, informal mentoring was viewed as supplemental to her formal mentoring meetings with Mentor One. For Mentor Two, informal mentoring or as she called it “mentoring in passing” was the only way she perceived she could mentor; she also felt it was the best strategy for inducting new teachers. Mentee Two appreciated the informal mentoring she received, even though she expected and preferred formal mentoring. Informal mentoring, however, gave Mentee Two the opportunity to collaborate with her mentor on lesson plans and other professional tasks. Mentee Three was also in a mentoring relationship where most of the mentoring was informal. She perceived she had learned from her mentor under those circumstances. For Mentor and Mentee One, informal mentoring contributed to their mentoring relationship and by extension their friendship. For Mentor One, informal mentoring was a way to stay connected with her mentee after
their formal mentoring sessions had ended. This connection was the foundation of their subsequent friendship.

Mentor Experience: The finding of mentor experience, in the professional environment, was comparable to mentor knowledge in the literature and supported the findings of two studies. In the current study, mentees were comforted by and appreciative of their mentors’ experience which helped foster their interpersonal relationships. Mentee One was comforted by her mentor’s experience in the classroom and Mentee Two was appreciative of her mentor’s knowledge and teaching strategies. The mentees in Whitaker (2000) stated they wanted mentors with experience and knowledge in general and special education. Rippon and Martin (2006) also reported that the mentees in their study valued mentors who had mentoring experience and teaching experience; they considered them more credible mentors. Heung-Ling (2003) reported that “mentor’s expert knowledge” was identified as an important dimension of a successful mentoring relationship (p. 36).

Teacher Turnover: With regard to teacher turnover, the study by Whitaker (2000) focused on whether or not effective mentoring could assuage teacher turnover. Findings showed mentoring that was perceived by mentees as effective – emotionally supportive and knowledgeable – positively influenced mentees’ decisions to remain in the classroom. The findings of the current study show that mentors and mentees perceived effective mentoring could assuage teacher turnover. Mentor One explained that new teachers were more likely to stay in the classroom if they had someone, like a mentor, to connect with; that it [mentoring relationship] could be the difference between whether or not they “came back.” This supported the findings of Billingsley, Carlson, and Klein
In their study related to working conditions and induction supports for special education teachers, they reported that mentoring may not always offset the rate of teacher turnover, but that caring, supportive, and encouraging mentoring can provide support needed by teachers in special education. It should be noted that it is impossible to compare the working conditions of the early childhood environment to those of special education classes, but that both teaching positions have high attrition rates and offer challenges that require extra support, especially for new teachers.

Reciprocal Professional Relationships: Another finding of the current study, reciprocal professional relationships, supported findings by Pavia et al. (2003) that mentoring relationships could be beneficial to both mentors and mentees. All three mentors in the current study perceived that mentoring had been reciprocal in different ways. Mentor One expressed feelings of reciprocity when she stated that mentoring is teamwork, “I mean it’s just like anything else; what you put into it is what you get out of it,” (Mentor 1 # 1); illustrating the reciprocal aspect of professional mentoring relationships. Mentor Two perceived that mentoring helped her become a more reflective teacher. Mentor Three perceived that her mentoring relationship was reciprocal for professional reasons; she was learning about early childhood education in the U.S. while she taught her mentee the rules and regulations of the center. The mentors in the study by Pavia, et al., reported that mentoring new teachers offered them an opportunity to develop themselves professionally and become more self-reflective about their work as early childhood professionals. As one mentor said, “I was able to examine myself and build a level of self confidence,” (p. 253). Additionally, in Pavia, et al., mentors reported that when they helped mentees they felt like they were helping
themselves. Abell, et al. (1995) also reported that not only did the mentors and mentees in their study find mentoring relationships reciprocal; they found that in order for mentoring to be “worthwhile,” mentors and mentees had to perceive that the mentoring process was mutually beneficial (p. 185).

Elements of the Social Environment

Communication: In the social environment, the element of communication supported findings from four of the 13 studies related to mentoring relationships. As Mentor One perceived communication: “Communicating with anybody . . . affects all your other communications.” In the study by Abell, et al. (1995) communication was closely linked with proximity and informal mentoring. Mentees said that on-going communication helped them build rapport with their mentors, especially when they [mentors] would just “pop in” their classrooms to see how they were doing (p. 183). Heung-Ling (2003) also reported that regular communication contributed to a more personal mentoring relationship and conversely, a lack of communication could hinder the development of a personal mentoring relationship. Billingsley, Carlson, and Klein (2004), reported that on-going communication, caring, and emotional support were identified as being essential components of a mentoring relationship by beginning special education teachers. Whitaker (2000) also noted that communication was an important part of effective mentoring relationships, specifically with respect to offering support to beginning special education teachers.

Connecting with Others and Friendship Opportunities: Similarly to the findings of the current study the elements of the social environment intersected for mentors and mentees in the research reviewed for this study. In other words, communication, connecting with others, and friendship opportunities were related and overlapping in the
findings of the current study and other research. For example, Abell, et al. (1995) found that when mentors were communicative, they tended to connect with their mentees and in turn develop friendships with them. Likewise, Billingsley, Carlson, and Klein (2004) found when mentors had open communication, took a personal interest in mentees, and connected with them they were more likely to develop meaningful relationships.

Elements of the Emotional Environment:

**Comfortable Relationships:** In the current study, findings from the emotional environment also supported findings in the study by Pavia, et al (2003). For example, mentees perceived that they had to “identify a problem as a prerequisite to having contact with the mentor,” and did not feel comfortable talking to mentors (pp.253-254). Similar findings, from the current study, were reported by Mentee Three who did not feel comfortable going to her mentor and would go to other teachers for help. Conversely, Mentee One felt so comfortable with her mentor that she would talk to her often and even felt comfortable sharing her personal life with her mentor.

Findings from the emotional environment supported findings in other literature related to mentees’ need to feel they had comfortable, helping, and supportive relationships with their mentors. When mentees felt comfortable with their mentors they were more likely to feel relaxed in their new teaching positions at the center; thus supporting similar findings from Heung-Ling (2003) and O’Brien and Christie (2005).

**Helping and Supportive Relationships:** Additionally, if mentees perceived that they had helping relationships with their mentors they were more likely to feel confident in their new teaching positions, much like the mentees in Achinstein and Barrett (2004) and Kueker and Haensly (1991) who were helped by their mentors to understand cultural differences and the needs of students with disabilities, respectively. Findings
from the current study that reported mentees who perceived they had supportive mentoring relationships and felt understood and respected, and thus, more at ease in their new jobs, supported previous findings from Achinstein and Barrett, Billingsley, Carlson, and Klein (2004); Evertson and Smithey (2000); Heung-Ling (2003); Kueker and Haensly; Rippon and Martin (2006); and Whitaker (2000). The experiences mentees had with their mentors with respect to comfort, help, and support, positively influenced their interpersonal mentoring relationships.

**Personal Characteristics and the Four Environments**

The elements identified in the current study as personal characteristics; the self-described attitudes and personality traits of the mentors and mentees supported findings from the research cited for this study. All previous research on the interpersonal mentoring relationships reported the importance of the personal characteristics of the mentors and mentees with respect to the development of successful mentoring relationships. These traits included the mentors’ and mentees’ perceptions of themselves and each other. Findings from the literature show that mentors’ attitudes could positively or negatively influence the mentoring relationship as illustrated in Abell, et al., (1995). In this example, some of the mentors had an attitude of personal responsibility for the well-being of their mentees. These findings were substantiated by the data from the transcripts from Mentor One who exhibited a tremendous amount of responsibility and care for her mentee, and they subsequently became friends. Furthermore, in the study by Achinstein and Barrett (2004) mentors’ abilities to reframe ideas to their mentees in a gentle way illustrated their attitudes of understanding and kindness.
Conclusion

This insight into the ways in which environmental influences can shape mentoring relationships opens up a new avenue of research with respect to the effectiveness of mentoring programs in early childhood environments. As previously established, the effectiveness of mentoring for professional development is contingent upon the quality of and satisfaction with a mentoring relationship, especially with respect to new teachers and teacher induction. The studies reviewed for this research reported that the personal characteristics and behaviors of mentors and mentees determined the quality of the mentoring relationship (see Chapter 2). According to Tauer (1998) successful mentoring relationships are characterized by, “sustained interaction between the two participants based on a structure the mentor teacher gave to the relationship which corresponded to the needs, wants or expectations of the newer partner,” (p. 206).

In this chapter, however, I presented a discussion to illustrate how the elements from the four theoretical environments of an early childhood mentoring program, and not just personal characteristics, influenced whether or not meaningful relationships developed between mentors and mentees. In order to make sense of these findings with respect to mentoring relationships and early childhood teachers it was necessary to connect them to literature on interpersonal mentoring relationships and literature that addressed mentoring relationships in early childhood centers. Since, to date, only two empirical studies explored the mentoring experience in the early childhood environment it was necessary to compare the elements in the four environments with the personal characteristics found in the previous research studies. Many of the findings of the current study supported previous findings, but the elements of the four environments
have extended the understanding of the complexities of mentoring in the context of early childhood educational settings.
Summary of the Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers’ perceptions of their interpersonal relationships as mentors and mentees in one early childhood mentoring program. As discussed throughout this study, the quality of interpersonal mentoring relationships is essential to the successful induction of new teacher/mentees. Previously done studies that emphasized the importance of the interpersonal relationship between the mentor and mentee focused on the personal characteristics or traits of the mentor (Hawkey, 1997 & 2006; Heung –Ling, 2003; Pavia, et al., 2003). Findings from the current study presented a conceptual model of how the four environments (physical, professional, social, and emotional) of an early childhood center influenced the development of the interpersonal mentoring relationships between the three-mentor/mentee dyads. This understanding of how environmental influences shaped mentoring relationships in one early childhood mentoring program opens up a new avenue of research with respect to the effectiveness of mentoring in early childhood settings.

The process of conceptualizing the data collected from the transcripts into environments offered a new lens in which to view, not only mentoring relationships in early childhood, but also early childhood education in general. This suggests that when doing research in early childhood education it is imperative to acknowledge the challenges of the environment. Unlike other studies that have looked at early childhood environments from the perspective of standardized tests such as the ECERS or the ITERS, (Perlman, Zellman, & Le, 2004) this study presents environments as
conceptual and experiential from the perspective of the participants in order to understand interpersonal mentoring relationships.

Exploring interpersonal mentoring relationships using the proposed conceptual model of early childhood environments not only sheds light on the experience of mentoring in early childhood but also reveals complexities inherent in early childhood education. The complexities that emerged from the data included issues of devaluation of early childhood teachers, high rates of teacher turnover, physical, psychological, and professional challenges of caring and educating young children, and lack of teacher morale and camaraderie. Furthermore, each of the environments from the most contextual or physical to the most experiential or emotional intersects when it comes to the development of interpersonal relationships. This idea offers insight into the workings of the early childhood environment: the physical aspects of the classroom environment intersect with the personal attributes of the mentors and mentees; the challenges and opportunities of the professional environment interconnect with the elements in the social environment; the complexities of the emotional environment are integrated with all the other environments.

The environmental model proposed here encompasses all the aspects of the early childhood setting from the physical limitations of working with young children to the personalities of the teachers who chose to work in the center. Examining interpersonal mentoring relationships using the conceptual model of the four environments delineated in this study facilitates an understanding of the complex and multifaceted nature of the work of early childhood educators.
Implications

The current study reported findings on one mentoring program in one early childhood center. Although it would be presumptuous to extrapolate these findings to other early childhood settings, there were a number of findings that could offer insight into possibilities for more successful interpersonal relationships in mentoring programs in early childhood centers.

First, as illustrated by the data from the physical environment, mentors and mentees perceived that there wasn’t enough time in the early childhood setting to hold formal mentoring sessions. Only one of the dyads – Mentor and Mentee One – was able to schedule formal mentoring meetings. The members of Dyads Two and Three did not perceive it was possible to hold formal meetings due to time scheduling limitations. It is suggested that early childhood centers offering mentoring programs for new teachers, schedule formal mentoring meetings into the daily work routine. This scheduling will not only illustrate the importance administration places on mentoring but also assures that mentors and mentees will meet for mentoring sessions. Additionally these meetings must be held in a location away from the distractions of the classroom in order for interpersonal mentoring relationships to develop. Regularly scheduled mentoring meetings must be a priority of the program if successful induction of new teachers is to occur.

The presence and needs of young children are immediate and can be overwhelming for veteran teachers as well as new teachers. Furthermore, new teachers have immediate needs; they must learn the policies and procedures of the center; they must feel comfortable in their new surroundings; they must be able to work closely with their new coworkers. Young children’s needs can’t be ignored while mentors train new
teachers in the classroom, as illustrated by the findings of this study. It is also important for the development of mentoring relationships that mentors meet with their mentees within the first week of employment. This guideline assures that newly hired teachers will feel connected to their new work environment through their mentors. Furthermore, meeting with mentors within the first week provides mentees with the comfort they need to support them through the first few weeks of their new teaching positions. Mentoring offers the potential of a smooth induction process for new teachers but only if mentors and mentees have time allotted to meet regularly and work together away from the distractions of the classroom.

It is important to note that the administration of the center where the current study took place, offered classroom coverage for mentor/mentee meetings. Documents from the center’s administration (Appendix E) explained that substitute teachers would be provided to allow mentors and mentees to meet, during their scheduled working hours. Mentor and Mentee One took advantage of this offer and met on a regular basis for formal mentoring. Mentors and Mentees Two and Three did not request classroom coverage and did not meet formally during their regularly scheduled working hours. Of the three dyads, according to the findings from the participants’ perceptions, Mentor and Mentee One had the most congenial mentoring relationship: they reported being friends as well as mentoring partners. The individuals in the other two dyads perceived themselves as having difficulty developing relationships with each other. This finding indicates that even when given the offer of classroom coverage, some mentors and mentees might not meet. Nonetheless, early childhood administrators are advised to provide the opportunity for teachers to have regularly scheduled mentoring sessions as
these were found to be essential to the development of interpersonal mentoring relationships.

Secondly, in the context of the professional environment, three main findings offer significant insights into successful mentoring relationships related to: (a) formal mentoring, (b) mentor training programs, and (c) teacher turnover. Five of the six participants in this study agreed that formal mentoring was essential not only for the professional development of new teachers but also for the successful development of mentoring relationships. Mentees reported the desire for formal mentoring; knowing what was expected of them was essential to their comfort and success as new employees. This comfort in turn contributed to their personal connections with their mentors. Mentees also reported appreciating the informal and casual mentoring they received while working with their mentors, but more importantly they desired to know the concrete, specific policies and procedures of the center. When mentees perceived they had been formally mentored, they felt closer to their mentors and they trusted their mentors to help and support them. This finding suggests that formal mentoring contributed to the interpersonal mentoring relationship.

The mentors in this study were asked by the administration to provide formal mentoring for new employees that were assigned to them as mentees. This request, with its responsibilities, was delineated in two documents from the center’s administration: (a) a “Mentor’s” letter (Appendix E) is placed in the box of a teacher at the center advising her that she will mentor a new teacher, and (b) attached to the letter is a “mentor responsibilities” checklist that suggests the mentor meets with her mentee during her first week of employment and provides her with the information on the
checklist. However, Mentees Two and Three reported that their mentors did not meet with them during their first week of employment and did not provide them with the information on the list. Both of these mentees did not develop congenial relationships with their mentors. Mentee One, on the other hand, reported that her mentor met with her during her first week at the center and over a period of a few months, Mentor One methodically went through the responsibilities on the checklist. Mentee One perceived that she and her mentor had a very congenial relationship professionally and personally. These findings suggest that formal mentoring is necessary for the development of not only professional mentoring relationships but also interpersonal relationships.

The idea of a mentor-training program has been discussed in the literature (Evertson & Smithey, 2000) and also appeared in the data from the current study. Mentors and mentees reported that a mentor-training program would increase the effectiveness of mentors and in turn increase mentors’ abilities to develop satisfying relationships with mentees. Mentees suggested that teachers be formally trained as mentors in order to effectively deliver administrative information to new teachers, develop communication skills, and learn appropriate behavior. Mentees also suggested that teachers should be trained to greet mentees and do the tasks suggested on the mentor’s responsibility list.

Problems associated with teacher attrition in early childhood have been well documented (Goodfellow, 2003). The high rate of teacher turnover at the center in this study was shown to have a negative influence on the mentoring relationships of the participants. Mentors felt discouraged by the turnover rate and mentees perceived that their mentoring experience was influenced by teacher turnover. However, as suggested
by mentors and mentees, a successful mentoring relationship and by extension a successful mentoring program could lower teacher turnover and raise teacher retention. If mentors meet with their mentees and begin to develop meaningful relationships with them, mentoring may increase the retention rate of new teachers. Nonetheless, the problem of teacher turnover in early childhood remains a problem due to lack of professional recognition and respect for early childhood teachers, the payment of low wages, high absenteeism, and low morale among teachers; all of which were described by the participants of this study. Mentor Two explained that in her 27-plus years of teaching she has seen a lot of good teachers leave the field because caring for young children is physically and emotionally demanding.

Thirdly, the importance of developing friendships as well as mentoring relationships must be acknowledged. As reported in the literature and in the findings of this study, when mentoring relationships transformed into friendships, they created more beneficial learning opportunities for mentees. Many friendship opportunities occurred in the social environment as a result of the mentoring program, but it was the responsibility of the individuals to develop friendships. Some elements in the social environment of the center eclipsed the quality of the relationship that mentors and mentees developed. Tension that existed among the teachers at the center negatively influenced mentoring relationships. Mentee Three explained that the tension in the atmosphere at the center discouraged her from wanting to develop any connections or relationships with any of her coworkers, even her mentor. On the other hand, when successful mentoring relationships develop they can ease tension among coworkers in the social environment, as illustrated by the Mentor/Mentee One example.
The data from the mentors and mentees demonstrated how the tension that existed in the social environment was the result of poor communication that prevented teachers from developing feelings of camaraderie. On the contrary, when communication and camaraderie were present, the opportunity for developing friendships was open to mentors and mentees as well as coworkers. Conscientious mentors that offer new teachers clear communication, the opportunity to connect with coworkers, and friendship, not only facilitate the induction process but also contribute to harmony in the social environment, as exemplified by the Mentor/Mentee One dyad.

Finally, the importance of the interpersonal aspects of mentoring relationships can be seen most clearly in the emotional environment and personal characteristics as delineated through the conceptual model of this study. In these categories, mentees expressed their emotional needs and described their personalities. These data offer valuable insight into the needs of mentees, thus clarifying elements of mentoring that can help in the development of future mentoring programs in an early childhood setting. The findings of this study offer a greater understanding of the interpersonal relationships of mentors and mentees in one early childhood mentoring program. Additionally when looking through the lens of how environmental elements influenced each mentoring relationship the complexities of mentoring programs in early childhood settings are clearly illustrated.

**Future Investigations**

First and foremost, this study found that there is a general lack of extant research on mentoring relationships in early childhood settings. This indicates the need for more research to explore mentoring and mentoring relationships in the unique setting of the early childhood care and educational center.
Secondly, the environmental conceptual model, developed in this study, offers insights into the complexities and challenges faced by early childhood teachers when trying to develop interpersonal mentoring relationships. This conceptual model does not, however, indicate that satisfying mentoring relationships cannot occur between early childhood teachers. What this model does suggest is that when looking at mentoring relationships through an environmental lens, it may be possible to understand and subsequently implement more realistic, practical, and successful mentoring programs for the induction of early childhood teachers.

Finally, ideally further research would give early childhood teachers the opportunity to describe their experiences and express their feelings about mentoring. The insights gained from this study came as a result of the participants’ willingness to be candid and sincere about their experiences. These insights offer hope that mentoring programs, if developed using the personal and professional contributions of the teachers, can create a sense of belonging and camaraderie between veteran and newly-hired teachers. The fact that so many teachers leave early childhood centers within weeks or months of being hired indicates the necessity for induction support with an emphasis on the development of camaraderie among teachers. Mentoring offers the hope of comfort and caring for new teachers, but only if it is tailored to the individual needs of the mentors and mentees.
APPENDIX A
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

DATE: November 15, 2007
TO: Cathrine Beaunae
    PO Box 117050
    Campus
FROM: Ira S. Fischler, PhD; Chair
       University of Florida
       Institutional Review Board
SUBJECT: Approval of Protocol #2007-U-0932
TITLE: The Interpersonal Mentoring Relationships of Teachers in Early Childhood
SPONSOR: None

I am pleased to advise you that the University of Florida Institutional Review Board has recommended approval of this protocol. Based on its review, the UFIRB determined that this research presents no more than minimal risk to participants. Given your protocol, it is essential that you obtain signed documentation of informed consent from each participant. Enclosed is the dated, IRB-approved informed consent to be used when recruiting participants for the research.

It is essential that each of your participants sign a copy of your approved informed consent that bears the IRB approval stamp and expiration date.

If you wish to make any changes to this protocol, including the need to increase the number of participants authorized, you must disclose your plans before you implement them so that the Board can assess their impact on your protocol. In addition, you must report to the Board any unexpected complications that affect your participants.

If you have not completed this protocol by November 12, 2008, please telephone our office (392-0433), and we will discuss the renewal process with you. It is important that you keep your Department Chair informed about the status of this research protocol.

ISF:dl
# TIMELINE FOR RESEARCH

<table>
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<th>Timeline</th>
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| September 2007 | * Research proposal presented to and approved by doctoral committee  
* IRB submitted for approval  
* Received names of first two potential participants |
| November 2007 | *IRB approval received for proposed research |
| January 2008 | *Emailing and contacting potential participants for research study  
*Two participants agree to be part of the study – Mentor and Mentee One  
*Data collection, analysis, and memo writing begins with Mentor and Mentee One interviews |
| February 2008 | *Contacted center director for more participants for study  
*Visited center to recruit more participants for study  
*Continued data collection, analysis, and memo writing with Mentor and Mentee Two interviews |
| March 2008 | *Data collection, analysis, and memo writing continues with Mentor and Mentee Three interviews  
*Data collection of interviews is completed |
| March – September 2008 | *Data coding, analysis, theory development  
*First presentation of data coding to qualitative support group for critique |
| September – December 2008 | *Preliminary findings presented to participants for member checks  
*Theory development  
*Beginning of theory diagram development |
| January 2009 | *First presentation of theory diagram to qualitative support group for critique |
| January – March 2009 | *Revisions of theory diagram  
*Continuing writing of findings and discussion chapters |
| March – August 2009 | *Second presentation of theory diagram to qualitative support group for critique  
*Completion of theory, writing of findings, and discussion chapters |
Dear (name),

My name is Cathrine Beaunae and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Special Education at the University of Florida. I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study of the center’s Mentoring Program. The purpose of this study is to describe interpersonal mentoring relationships for professional development in early childhood. You're eligible to be in this study because you participation in the mentoring program at your center. I obtained your name from the director. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in three formal, 15-30-minute interviews over the next few months.

During these interviews you will be asked questions about your mentoring relationship. These interviews will be audio taped with your permission. The interview sessions will be scheduled at your convenience. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you would like to participate or have any questions about the study, please email me at cbeaunae@juno.com.

Thank you in advance for your help

Sincerely,

Cathrine Beaunae,
Department of Special Education,
College of Education,
University of Florida,
1341 Norman Hall,
352-392-0701, ext.262
925-876-9454
APPENDIX D
EXPLANATION OF STUDY FOR MENTORS AND MENTEES

Early Childhood Mentoring Study

The purpose of this study is to gain a greater understanding of the interpersonal dynamics between teachers in a mentor/mentee relationship in an early childhood setting.

How does this study benefit you? The center’s mentoring program is unique because it was initiated by teachers and grew out of a practical need to help new teachers become comfortable and familiar in the classroom. My study is constructed in a way that allows you, the participants, to reflect on your work as mentors and mentees. This study was carefully designed to be a beneficial exercise for both participants and researcher. The questions you will be asked are designed to elicit your story about your experience to allow you to reflect on that experience to further your own professional development and growth.

I first became interested in this subject when I worked in an EHS setting. In-class mentoring seemed to me to be a way to encourage and support early childhood teachers in the field. Educational research literature talks about the uniqueness of the environment of the early childhood classroom because of the specific needs of young children. The research suggests the benefits of mentoring programs to introduce new teachers to the classroom. It is also noted that the quality of the interpersonal relationship between mentor and mentee is important to the success of the mentoring process. There is, however, virtually no descriptive research on what the interpersonal relationships between mentor and mentee are like.

One of the many things I learned from my experience at EHS was the importance of developing a personal relationship between mentors and mentees. I also learned that both mentor and mentee have equal areas of knowledge and expertise that they can share in the mentoring process, making the relationship between mentor and mentee equally beneficial. Furthermore, I found that in-class mentoring is a practical way to encourage, support, and train teachers new to the context of an early childhood classroom.
Mentor Letter

Month, day, year

Dear _________

Thank you for agreeing to be a mentor to our new teacher. Attached is a list of Mentor Responsibilities. Please speak to the administrative secretary if you need coverage for your class when you meet with your mentee. Thank you for helping her get settled in and become a part of our center.

The Director and Associate Director
Mentee Letter

Month, day, year

Dear _________

New employees at the center are assigned a mentor-teacher. This teacher will meet with you during your first weeks at the center, give you a tour, and introduce you to the other center staff. She will meet with you regularly to answer your questions and provided you with information about your job and the workings of the center.

Your mentor will be _______. She is a teacher in the 4-year-olds room.

She will introduce herself to you soon. Please let her help you get settled in.

Sincerely,

The Director
APPENDIX F
INTERVIEW GUIDE EXAMPLE

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR BEGINNING MENTOR/MENTEE DYADS
(3-4 months in the mentoring program)

**Interview One:**
1. Describe your experiences as a mentor/mentee in the Center’s mentoring program.
2. Describe a “successful” mentoring relationship in this program.
3. Describe your relationship with your mentor/mentee
4. Describe how this mentoring relationship has contributed to your professional development as an early childhood teacher.
5. Explain why you would or would not continue being part of this mentoring relationship.

**Interview Two:** This interview will consist of follow-up or clarification questions to be determined by the first round of data collection. For example, if the first interview elicits data from a mentee about certain elements that supported or hindered the mentoring relationship, questions like the following could be asked:
1. Describe how (the element) helps you build a successful relationship with your mentor/mentee.
2. Describe how (the element) assists you in your professional development as an early childhood teacher.
3. Describe how (the element) hindered your ability to develop a successful relationship with your mentor/mentee.
4. Describe how (the element) hindered your professional development as an early childhood teacher.

**Interview Three:** This interview will consist of follow-up or clarification questions to be determined by the first and second rounds of data collection. For example, if data from the second interview revealed that a mentor believed she benefited from the mentor/mentee relationship, questions like the following could be asked:
1. Could you tell me more about how you’ve benefited from being mentored?
APPENDIX G
EXAMPLE OF INTERVIEW GUIDE DEVELOPED FROM 1ST INTERVIEW

3-17-08 – 2nd interview guide for Mentee Three (you’re quotes are italicized):

1. Can you tell me a little bit more about how the things like organization, structure, transitions, time (or lack of), hecticness of the environment, cultural differences; “I said her tone of voice at first was very shocking to me and I always felt like I was being reprimanded but then I understood” etc., have hindered your ability to develop a successful relationship with your mentor?

2. Can you talk more about how the reciprocal aspect of your relationship has contributed to the success of your mentoring relationship? “its kinda mutual, she’s learning from me and I’m learning from her and she’s-I’m learning from her the things that I have to learn that-that are you know things that are- the procedure here at work”

3. Can you talk more about how good communication, open-mindedness contributes to the development of a successful mentoring relationship?

4. Can you talk more about the idea of “being an understanding individual” contributes to a successful mentoring relationship?

5. Can you talk more about the following quote . . . “I think everybody’s biggest frustration is that we all have the expectation this dream in our head of how we want the place to be and unfortunately it is not happening because of lack of funds and lack of space and lack of just lack of a lot of things

6. One more quote I was interested in was, “sometimes you wanna disconnect a little bit from work” can you talk a little bit more about that and how that might hinder your ability to connect more with your mentor on a personal level outside of work?

7. Could you talk more about the following quote from an environmental perspective as well as a mentoring perspective?: “we’ve all been put in-in this one position and we gotta make the best of it, so and we help each other out; she’s very helpful; she’s the type that if she sees that I’m busy um she’ll go and just-you don’t really have to ask “oh S can you help me with this” she kind of just sees it and does it

8. How would the following quote work, if, perhaps you were the mentor? “that’s pretty much how I am, um whether it’s something I have to do or not, if it’s bothering me, if, you know, it’s in the way, if it shouldn’t be there I’m just gonna pick it up, and it’s just easier than having to- I don’t like to have to tell someone do this, do this, do this . . .”

PI. So this interview one with (Mentor One); now well get started and, question one is an open-ended question and it’s just describe your experiences as a mentor in the mentoring program

Mentor 1. Hum, (inaudible), I ‘m supposed to know what to say but . . . um I like being a mentor because you get to know new people that are coming in (PI memo: “I like being a mentor” implies reciprocity; the mentor benefits from being a mentor) and you’re someone that they have to go to and, it appears to me a way to make them comfortable right off the bat and feel not quite so alone being in a new job which is something, in a lot of jobs you’re just like okay ‘I don’t know anybody, what am I doing!’ and there was, like, a face where people who have mentors could go to and be like ‘I know I can come to them if I don’t know what’s going on’ (PI memo: Mentor One seems to be a very caring person and is committed to making her mentees feel comfortable – ask her about any other mentees she has had besides the current one)

PI. um, uh

Mentor 1. and I enjoyed that about it . . . is there some way for me to able to see whatever the questions (PI memo: Mentor One wanted to see the questions on the interview guide)

PI. sure yeah; Can you maybe tell me a little bit about the structure of the mentoring program; how it works?
Mentor 1. Well, basically, we're given a sheet of things to go over and its you show them around to all the buildings; tell them about the age groups; ahm, introduce them to all the people that work here; um it looks small but there is still a lot of people that work here

PI. Yeah, yeah

Mentor 1. and even more that come in and out; so you introduce them to people and you kind of make it where they're comfortable with their surroundings and ahm talk to them about the things they need to know in the office, and what they, you know, oh well, 'here's where you punch in and out and here's where you do this' (PI memo: Mentor One uses the collective “you” when referring to herself, e.g. “you kind of make it where they’re comfortable” means she makes it where they’re comfortable).

PI. Um, hum

Mentor 1. ‘you need to make sure you fill out this for in-services’ and you ne – you know, just basically making them comfortable

PI. Um hum

Mentor 1. and helping them to understand, you know, ‘this is the parent handbook, this is, in here it says everything you need to know as far as a staff member,’ you know, just being able to point them in the right direction

PI. Um, hum

Mentor 1. so people don’t feel as thrown in

PI. Right, right, yeah, that makes sense
Mentor 1. and also and then you touch base every once in a while and-and to see how they’re doing, see how things are going, see if they have any problems, see if there’s something they need help with, if they just need somebody to talk to

PI. um, hum

Mentor 1. then they know that you’re there

PI. Yeah, yeah

Mentor 1. and the longer they’ve been here, the mo- I mean its- me- you don’t, want it- it’s very formal at first ’cause you’re doing a check list, but you want it to be very comfortable and you want it to be more like, you know, I’m here for you –

PI. Um hum

Mentor 1. – if you need somebody

PI. um hum, um hum, more like a supportive -

Mentor 1. You feel like you’re a big sister or a mom or something (big laughter) – (PI memo: in Mentor 1’s mentees’ first interview she, the mentee, mentions that Mentor 1 has a daughter a few years younger than her and that she looks up to Mentor 1 as a mother figure).

(PI memo: Mentor 1 is a very caring person).

PI. – yeah

Mentor 1. – basically, (big laugh)

PI. Yeah, yeah so it sounds like it um – from at least from your perspective it’s um your, your intention is to provide comfort and um, in a new environment?

Mentor 1. Yeah, basically what I do with the kids but on a different level (PI memo: some of the literature talks about how teachers mentor the way they teach)
PI. Oh wow

MENTOR 1. Y-you know you-your basically showing them that you care about ‘em and they're under your wing and they can come to you when they need you, and it-its basically the same thing but in an adult level (PI memo: the literature says that mentoring training programs are not always effective because most mentors fall back on their teacher-training skills to do mentoring; mentoring and teaching relationships are quite different).
(Mentor’s comments to children are in red)

Mentor 2. I think both, but I’d prefer just the more natural approach

P.I. Um hum

Mentor 2. I think people can get saturated reading a whole bunch of rules and regulations that don’t mean anything at the time; I just preferred to tell her (Mentee Two) things as they most naturally occurred . . . but we barely have a moment to sit around here anyway

P.I. Um, yeah, I’ve noticed

Mentor 2. Good night, Charlie. Okay friends if you have a book, put the book under your mat, that means Mark also; books go away and it’s time for rest; thank you Judy

P.I. Okay, so the next one is “How would you describe a successful mentoring relationship?

Mentor 2. Ahum one where the people involved have a close working relationship; close proximity wise, I think that makes a big difference; um probably on about the same level; the same grade level I do. I think that makes a big difference because I know what’s going on. They can feel free to talk and ask questions; that’s what I would say … Good night Judy, Judy lay down.

P.I. So how would you describe your specific relationship with your mentee right now?

Mentor 2. Good, I mean, we are actually are in the same homeroom classroom.
Guiding questions related to the findings of the different environments and their impact on the mentoring relationship:

1. How do you feel about my conceptualization of your interview statements?
2. How do you feel about the idea that the mentoring relationship is influenced by these different environments?
3. What aspects of the findings do you agree or disagree with?
4. What do you think is valuable about this study?

Further findings show that two levels of reality also contributed to or detracted from the mentoring relationships:

- The first level of reality is the overt environmental influences that contribute to or detract from developing mentoring relationships as explained in the Theory of Environments taken from the data from the study; specifically related to the center and participants in this study.

- The second level of reality refers to the issues endemic to the wider scope of early childhood education. These issues can contribute to an environment that is not conducive to developing relationships; issues such as power, knowledge, space, high numbers of children, ratio of teachers to children, low wages, turnover rates, absenteeism rates, difficulties of the physical, emotional, and social demands of caring for young children.

5. What do you think of these conclusions?
APPENDIX K
MEMBER CHECK TRANSCRIPT SAMPLE

Mentor Two, member check Nov. 7

PI. First I wanted to make sure you felt like your actual quotes were represented honestly

Mentor 2: I did, they seemed very accurate, yeah

PI. And what did you think about the idea of the different environments?

Mentor 2: I feel like it was very relevant. I feel like this particular setting is not conducive to mentoring because of a lot of the reasons you had listed; it’s the time, it’s the proximity is a big issue, um, just finding the time to sit and talk with somebody else especially someone whose in another building is almost impossible; I think the mentoring program is a very good idea and it would probably and in my opinion it would work best if the teacher who I was mentoring was actually in my classroom, maybe working with me as an assistant or even co-teacher but if they were right next to me; I think that would probably work pretty well; but the way that it is if I was mentoring someone in another building . . . it’s unlikely that in the course of a week I would even get a chance to go over and talk to them

PI. What do you think the value of a study like this is, if there is any value or not, looking at how the mentoring program works…?

Mentor 2: Ahum, I’m not sure if it’s doable at least in this situation, probably a big factor would be money like if I said if the co-teacher was working with me . . . but it would probably be too expensive to have a teacher training with me who didn’t have her own classroom yet because money is always an issue; if they hired a new teacher they would need her to go to work somewhere else right away they couldn’t afford to have her just working with me, hanging out for a while just learning the ropes. I think it’s a very good idea to have a program but at least in this setting it may not work.

PI. Are there other aspects to having a mentoring program that you think would make it more successful like maybe having a time line because it seems a little bit open-ended; do you think you need more structure; how would you conceptualize it

Mentor 2: Well, structure is always good but I think in our setting anyway it would make it more stressful because we already have so much on our plates; with VPK we have to take a lot of time planning every week; in this building there are six or seven teachers all vying to use one computer to do our lesson plans because now everything needs to be emailed; so even finding the time to do weekly lesson plans is a lot; we’re up for re-accreditation next year with NAYCE so we’re putting in several hours a day – often unpaid to get the portfolio done because its hundreds of pages…
### APPENDIX L
EXAMPLE OF CODING TRAIL FOR MENTORS
FOR THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open coding</th>
<th>Focused coding</th>
<th>Selective coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>classroom set up so mentoring happens &quot;on the fly&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>early childhood teachers need mentoring because of atmosphere</td>
<td>Classroom structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>noise level in the classroom influences mentoring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>classroom not conducive to mentoring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mentoring during naptime is difficult because children don't always sleep</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we're with our children 8 hours a day</td>
<td>Presence and immediate needs of young Children</td>
<td>Physical Environment or (immediate environment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>working with mentee while attending to needs of children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The children are constantly with us</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mentor couldn't meet with mentee in other building</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mentoring doesn't work unless mentor and mentee are in the same room</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mentoring relationships are not the same for people in different buildings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>successful mentoring needs mentor and mentee to be in close proximity</td>
<td>Proximity of mentors to mentees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>working in same building with mentee was important for relationship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>working in the same classroom is beneficial for mentoring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mentoring takes time teachers don't have</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>importance of taking time to understand (know) someone</td>
<td>Time schedules (limitations, constraints)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF REFERENCES


Cathrine Beaunae completed her undergraduate degree in cultural anthropology at the University of California at Berkeley. She received her Master of Arts degree in Special Education from the University of Florida in 2006 and her PhD in Special Education from the University of Florida in 2009. While attending the university in Gainesville, Florida, she worked as a mentor teacher for Early Head Start and a parent educator for Even Start. She also taught undergraduate classes in special education as well as online master-level classes for the University of Florida. While at the university she also worked as a field advisor for pre-service teachers and taught the seminar that accompanies field work. Her academic and professional interests are social justice issues related to education, mentoring relationships and early childhood teachers, early childhood special education, and working with families, teachers, and young children with emotional and behavioral disorders.