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A Look at Emotional Intelligence: A Qualitative Study of Peer Mentorship Via Circle of Friends

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A Look at Emotional Intelligence: A Qualitative Study of Peer Mentorship Via Circle of

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I would like to dedicate this work to my mother and my aunt who raised me. These two ladies instilled in me the compassion to do this work and the determination to see it through. I would like to thank Mrs. Reagan of Circle of Friends who believed in my vision of completing an in-depth study on the program. Your guidance and support was invaluable throughout this journey. I would also like to thank Mrs. Palilis, the founder of Circle of Friends. Thank you for trusting me to be the first researcher to study this vast organization. Thank you to Dr. O'Leary and all of my Delta cohort members who kept me lifted up throughout this dissertation journey. Thank you, Dr. Taylor, you have served as my catalyst, sounding board, and supporter throughout this doctoral program. There are a host of family members and people who love me who deserve my gratitude. Know that you are highly esteemed in my heart.

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ABSTRACT

A Look at Emotional Intelligence: A Qualitative Study of Peer Mentorship Via Circle of

Friends

Purpose: The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences

of former Circle of Friends (CoF) nondisabled peer mentors of students with multiple

disabilities to discover how this mentorship program impacted Daniel Goleman's four

dimensions of emotional intelligence.

Methodology: This study employed a qualitative phenomenological design. In

qualitative designs, the researcher seeks to welcome the subject's voice into a chorus that

contributes to the summative ballad of the sample. The researcher must seek to be a

neutral conduit that captures those voices. Thus, the researcher in this study interviewed

14 former peer friends from the CoF program through semistructured face-to-face

interviews to collect the data needed for this study.

Findings: According to the 14 in-depth semistructured interviews, participants in the

CoF program perceived their experience positively affected their acquisition of traits that

are in alignment with Daniel Goleman's tenets of emotional intelligence. Furthermore,

study participants reported an overwhelmingly positive experience that allowed them to

practice skills that are needed for learning 21st century skills such as adaptability,

leadership, critical thinking, and collaboration.

Conclusions: Students who participate as peer friends in the CoF program will develop

and practice self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship

management daily while engaged with their disabled counterparts on school campuses.

Brill (1994) found that increased exposure to nondisabled peers increased socialization,

decreased suspension, and heightened enthusiasm to participate in class. Likewise, this study documented evidence that nondisabled students participating in a form of service learning increased their emotional intelligence capacity and had positive effects on their life after participation.

Recommendations: Future studies should be conducted to determine if similar programs in schools and college produce similar results for the nondisabled participants. Researchers should use this study to design research to obtain staff perceptions and perspectives on the benefits observed as related to the nondisabled peer friends. Further examination of the link between peer mentorship and emotional intelligence can help businesses and organizations identify more programs that allow participants to practice skills needed in the 21st-century career space.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Advancements in technology have made it easier to connect with people and groups in more places simultaneously. With one click, a person could post a message to all his or her social media friends on multiple outlets at the same moment. On the other hand, attachment to virtual "friends" is not the same as authentic personal bonds according to researchers. In a recent study of 94 universities in America, Konrath, Chopik, Hsing, and O'Brien (2014) found that since the 1980s a greater number of students today are satisfied not having close, affectionate kinships. Since the early 1990s, multiple researchers have documented the irony of increased digital connections and decreased personal connections (Konrath et al., 2014). Consequently, students do not seek to build social bonds and relationships.

Could this lack of practice managing relationships affect the career success of Generation Z? Despite the increasing isolation of American students, schools and social-emotional agencies have placed a growing focus on interpersonal skills such as collaboration, teamwork, and self-awareness. According to recent Pew Research data, career trends denote that jobs requiring proficient social skills are growing the fastest (The State of American Jobs, 2016). In the years following 1980, careers that required increased social skills (i.e., management, communication, and interpersonal skills) increased by 83% (The State of American Jobs, 2016). This trend signifies a turning point in career preparation needs of American students.

Unlike academic competencies, *soft skills* are not being taught or practiced in secondary school core classes. Barkonic (2016) asserted that these skills can be comprised of making ethical choices, teamwork, innovation, application of knowledge,

and proficiency in writing and oral communications. What if there was a way not only to teach but to reinforce these critical *workplace* skills? Strategic peer mentorship could be an option, since the early 1900s, peer mentorship organizations like the Big Sisters and Big Brothers programs, Special Olympics, and Homeboy Industries have continued to grow, due to the marked benefits to the mentees. Documented research supporting peer-to-peer support programs continues to grow (Brady, Dolan, & Canavan, 2014). On the other hand, data documenting mentor benefit are less prominent.

Researchers Rebecca Brooks (2014) and Lakeshia Cox (2012) agreed that peer mentorship has been shown to increase a mentor's capacity for empathy. Empathy falls under the category of social awareness of emotional intelligence (EI). Relationship management, self-awareness, and self-management are also domains. Peter Salovey and John Mayer (1990), Daniel Goleman (1995), Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves (2009) all agreed that EI can be a predictor of success in life and careers. Bradberry and Greaves stated, "Emotional Intelligence (EI) is your ability to recognize and understand emotion in yourself and others, and your ability to use this awareness to manage your behavior and relationships" (p. 17). In the corporate world, EI is often used to assess whether or not a potential new hire has the temperament to excel in the organization to which he or she is applying (Chapin, 2015). If research has proven that peer mentoring has improved one aspect of EI, could the latter competencies be affected through programs that foster strategic mentoring experiences?

Background

Aristotle (n.d.) asserted that "educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all" (para. 1). When children come to school, they bring their culture,

beliefs, and emotions with them. Although it is understood that outside influences affect learning, most schools focus primarily on academic pursuits. While most traditional high school systems spend a great deal of time on academic preparation, there is very little concerted focus on social and emotional preparation. Ciarrochi and Mayer (2007) contended that emotions influence conduct, recall, and how much information can be learned. By controlling emotions, learners can focus more in school and handle strenuous mental tasks like test taking.

Generational Needs

The postmillennial generation thrives on innovative modes of instruction. To understand the postmillennial generation, time must be spent examining the millennial generation. The millennial generation was born roughly between 1980 and 2000. Like other generations before it, the millennial generation is very different from its predecessor. Dillon (2007) asserted that millennials have never known what it is like to be without the World Wide Web, hand-held devices or high-tech gaming platforms. As a result, this generation of learners is comfortable with technology and its uses. In a recent study, Kotz (2016) found that millennials want to be educated in an environment that contains multiple forms of media and involves competition. Millennials appear to be most productive in collaborative settings; however, most classrooms today do not lend themselves to collaborative learning.

School System Gap

If educators do not engage the next generation of learners intentionally, schools will become less and less equipped to prepare competitive citizens in the global economy. Data derived from Gallup statistics infer that the millennial generation is not on par with

3

historical and projected career expectations. Adkins (2016) asserted that less than 30% of

working millennials are engaged during work. Additionally, American millennials are

the most underemployed and unemployed in all of the living generations (Adkins, 2016).

It would appear that millennials want to be fulfilled by their jobs, according to Adkins;

however, this is difficult to obtain for some students of this generation. A recent Gallup

poll identified four common characteristics that described millennials: idealistic,

unconstrained, unattached, and connected (Adkins, 2016). In other words, millennials

and Generation Zers are unattached emotionally and connected virtually. Additionally,

deferring to authority figures and conforming to institutional norms and behaviors is a

problem for Generation Zers, especially if authority figures are not their parents (Tulgan,

2015).

Dillon (2007) asserted that the current generation will need to be educated

differently to obtain optimal academic results. Lack of prerequisite skills, limited

technology, and rising student-to-teacher ratios are just some of the reasons why teachers

continue to teach the students with outdated models. Unfortunately, these factors do not

change what appears to be optimal for learners of the "I gen" or Generation Z. Shortly,

the implementation, interpretation, and analysis of knowledge will be more useful.

Because information will constantly change, learners will need to have the ability to

adapt quickly to the shifts in what is known (Dillon, 2007). Changing technology does

not seem to be a problem for the current generation of learners; however, changing

instructional practices has proven difficult for the baby boomers and Generation X.

Social and Emotional Learning

Rickes (2016) claimed that students work best when the curriculum is relevant to them. Collaborative learning is a hallmark of good student-centered education, "and when there is an associated emotional component, such as when multiple senses are engaged, the brain actually forms more neural connections, furthering retention" (Rickes, 2016, p. 30). If America is to keep pace with the rest of the industrialized world, it must identify methods to supplement the required curriculums. According to Ciarrochi and Mayer (2007), heightened social-emotional skills are linked to improved learning outcomes, more positive interpersonal interactions with others, and other indicators of being successful. Connecting new content to prior emotions and experiences can create stronger neural pathways to help a person retain important academic lessons.

Emotional Intelligence

Researchers over the past 3 decades have come to agree that emotional characteristics can be categorized and even quantified to some degree. The study of EI was made popular by the research of Peter Salovey and John Mayer (1990) and Daniel Goleman (1995). These three pioneers of EI agreed that EI can be a relatively accurate indicator of future success, much like the intelligence quotient (IQ). IQ describes a person's cognitive ability to reason or solve problems on a standardized test.

Daniel Goleman (1995) is the most noted pioneer by far in the realm of EI. After Goleman's discovery of the work of Salovey and Mayer (1990), he began his research on EI. His findings pitted EI against the IQ assessment. Goleman (1995) claimed that 80% of the factors that contribute to a successful life are not based on intelligence. Consequently, 20% or less of life success is based on IQ. Goleman alleged that an IQ

score is not the single determinant of a person's success in life. Goleman's findings catapulted the field into the current state of scholarship. Goleman contended that the most successful leaders usually have high emotional quotients and that having a high IQ does not translate to a high EQ. Goleman asserted that although a substantial IQ does not guarantee wealth, contentedness, or success, schools obsess over academics and ignore EI as a possible curriculum.

Before there was EI, the intellectual quotient was the standard for assessing a person's mental capacity. In 1905, the first test of intelligence called the Binet-Simon Scale was developed by Theodore Simon and Alfred Binet in France (Watson, 2014). According to Watson (2014), the IQ score was used to classify students for special education services, qualify job applicants, and served as a predictor of career success. As science later proved, having a high IQ does not guarantee career success. Greenockle (2010) contended that studies soon after proved that an employee with a high IQ could underperform and excel at work because of a lack of social skills. Being able to excel in life despite one's IQ and working well with others was coined social intelligence by E. L. Thorndike in 1920 (Greenockle, 2010). By studying social intelligence, researchers could design models to quantify emotions and their effect on behaviors. Although EI is becoming more popular in its implementation and research, there is still controversy regarding its psychological structure (MacCann, Joseph, Newman, & Roberts, 2014). Consequently, the EI field of research continues to grow and expanded each year.

Implementation Gap

Understanding that the benefits of EI are clear and compelling, one might assume that schools would see value in implementing some of the tenets of social and emotional

learning. Most schools that prepare adolescents and young adults have yet to dedicate

resources to develop a comprehensive plan or curriculum that formally develops social

learning and EI. According to Ujifusu (2017), 47 states in America have adopted the

Common Core State Standards at some point in the past. This fact does not mean that the

remaining states do provide social-emotional education. These holdout states merely did

not adopt this framework of teaching. According to California Common Core State

Standards (CCSS; California Department of Education, 2013), time should be spent

teaching social and emotional competencies as well as English and math standards.

Nevertheless, social and emotional skill development is not contained in the CCSS. Elias

(2014) suggested that learners can access the CCSS more efficiently when they are taught

essential social and emotional capacities from a young age. In summary, CCSS does not

specifically teach social and emotional skills, which are often required to meet rigorous,

content knowledge expectations.

Peer-to-Peer Learning

Joshua Jones conducted a study in 2015 in which peer-mentoring participants

used problem-solving skills to practice the four tenets of EI. Moreover, the researcher

sought to identify how moral reasoning and empathy were affected by peer mentorship.

Through the process of mentoring, these student mentors were placed in weekly

situations where they could utilize skills such as relationship management, self-

awareness, social awareness, and self-management. According to Jones (2015),

> Identifying effective interventions to counter the widespread decline in moral
>
> reasoning and the significant negative effects of poor empathic understanding

must become a central focus of educational research if this area of social science

is to remain relevant for American youth. (p. 147)

The results were overwhelmingly positive in the areas of moral reasoning and empathy

for the mentors. Ignoring the benefits of healthy peer alliances is a missed opportunity to

improve student access to the CCSS.

Mentor Benefits

Ample literature has been archived about the benefits of mentoring on mentees,

yet exhaustive research has not been compiled from the mentor's standpoint. Schindler

(2011) explored the benefits for the mentors by placing students enrolled in an

occupational therapy (OT) program and students with diagnosed mental illness. One of

the two learning priorities was focused on elements of EI. Pairing OT students in a

service-learning model provides opportunities to add to their overall knowledge base

regarding patients with a mental health diagnosis (Schindler, 2011). Occupational

therapists come in contact with patients with mental illness often. A preassessment and a

postintervention assessment were used to identify how effective the program was. After

the study, there was compelling evidence that the OT students had a more favorable view

and appeared more at ease with the target patients (Schindler, 2011). Schindler

documented evidence that mentors came to the realization that people with mental

illnesses are more similar to nondiagnosed people than they had originally thought.

Participants in this study gained valuable insights that made them better practitioners in

their field.

Mentorship in Schools Like the occupational therapists, nondisabled students who lack

exposure to students with disabilities may experience similar outcomes through peer

mentorship and service learning opportunities. Increased service learning opportunities

between the two populations can expose the nondisabled student to the dynamics of

living with multiple disabilities. Additionally, strategic and authentic mentorship can

reduce the stigma surrounding what it means to have special needs. In a similar study,

Weiler et al. (2013) contended that increases in "problem-solving," "self-esteem," "self-

efficacy," and interpersonal skills were among the benefits garnered through several

campus-wide mentorship programs (p. 243).

As of the time of this research, there are such programs that strategically provide

mentorship opportunities for nondisabled students who would like to mentor students

with disabilities. The programs include organizations like Best Buddies, Forever Friends,

and Peer to Peer. These programs seek to decrease the stigma that could be attached to

having a disability. Peer mentorship of students with disabilities can serve as a catalyst

for a more inclusive campus climate. Riester-Wood (2015) stated, "The power of peers

as shown here has a cumulative effect, which makes issues such as bullying

incompatible. Rather, we have peers helping peers become more integrated into the

school culture" (p. 3). Among other states in the 2015-2016 school year, students with

disabilities in Tennessee, Florida, and Ohio were named prom king or queen. Despite

being born with a rare chromosome disorder, Katie Shipley was nominated by her friend

to homecoming court and won by a landslide (Fieldstadt, 2015, para. 3). The amount of

collective empathy, selflessness, and self-awareness that it takes to nominate and elect

prom court students is fostered and practiced in mentorship organizations.

Mentorship Solutions

One such mentoring organization is called Circle of Friends (CoF). CoF is an organization that trains teachers and nondisabled students to make inclusion an integral part of their school campus. According to the CoF (n.d.-c) website, "Circle of Friends is a direct service delivery model for students with social learning and/or expressive language deficits" (para. 1). According to the organization's literature, the program is written into the mentee's Individual Education Plan (IEP) as a service provider. In addition to working with their mentors, students must collaborate with teachers, aides, and language pathologists to ensure that the needs of their mentee are being met. The skills developed by mentors during this process closely parallel those outlined by the 21st century skills as well as the tenets of EI.

Several research studies have found that nondisabled mentor students have remained in long-term symbiotic relationships with their disabled mentees after the studies concluded (Staub, 1999). Brady et al. asserts that teens become more influenced by peers as they grow closer to adulthood. During this transformative time, it appears that positive role models can be beneficial. Brady et al. (2014) attested that peer mentorship is extremely beneficial in situations where formal superintendence is not prevalent, such as on the way home from school or on school transportation. Training is required to obtain the best outcomes; however, this training could be what is needed to help optimize this generation's academic pursuits.

Statement of the Research Problem

High school students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) benefit from peer mentoring socially (Cunningham, 2009, p. 35). Cunningham (2009) asserted that feeling different and not understanding social norms can be *disheartening* for children with ASD. According to a national study by Kleinert et al. (2015), only 37% of the autistic population is educated in the general education setting in elementary and high school. The remaining students are educated in resource classrooms, self-contained classrooms, separate schools, or other placements. In addition to the segregated educational setting, these students often disconnect emotionally from those in their classroom and environment. Cunningham (2009) stated, "He or she must learn to express their [*sic*] desire to interact, to initiate interaction and reciprocate peer interactions" (p. 36). Despite having higher cognitive abilities, students with ASD often lack the social skills that a nondisabled student has.

Current Scholarship

According to Cunningham (2009), "Providing children an opportunity to interact with peers and participate in reciprocal interaction may optimize their likelihood of acquiring an understanding of social situations" (p. 36). Creating a symbiotic platform to practice problem solving and appropriate social interaction can have lasting effects on the mentors as well. While studying the long-term effects of peer mentor elective classes, Cox (2012) found that students who participated in peer mentorship classes in high school ascribed to college majors in careers that required human services like education or health careers. This finding demonstrates that peer mentorships have long-term effects on the tutors' careers and personal lives after high school.

Circle of Friends Introduction

Despite having "positively impacted" 96,000 students with disabilities and nondisabled students nationwide, there have been no direct studies on the organization (CoF, n.d.-a; B. Palilis, personal communication, July 10, 2017). This research will serve as the pioneer study for the organization. According to CoF's founder Barbara Palilis, there have not been any research studies conducted on the programs as of this publication. Furthermore, B. Palilis (personal communication, July10, 2017) added that all of the current research done on CoF has been focused on the mentees of the program. The CoF program was started in 1999 in Santa Monica High School by Barbara Palililis. The movement began as a remedy for the isolation of one student with Down Syndrome who appeared to be isolated and alone during lunch. In 6 years, the program grew from 12 students to more than 400 students, prompting the launch of the nonprofit organization in 2005 (CoF, n.d.-a; B. Palilis, personal communication, July 10, 2017).

Although there has been relatively little research into CoF, there are similar programs that have been studied (B. Palilis, personal communication, July10, 2017; O'Connor, 2016; Schilieder, Maldonado, & Baltes, 2014). For the purpose of this study, the researcher explored the data of past researchers as related to mentor benefits inside and outside of the CoF organization. To that end, this study explored analogous programs as well as the components that make up CoF (i.e., peer mentorship, service learning, disability awareness skills development).

Ironically, there is an organization called "CoF" that originated in Canada (Goldstein, 2013). For the purposes of this study, this program is referred to as CoFCAN. It should be noted that the two organizations are in no way linked as business

constructs (B. Palilis, personal communication, July 10, 2017). Yet CoFCAN provides

peer-mediated interventions and establishes support circles of nondisabled students in

addition to other tenets that closely align with the Los Angeles-based CoF.

Approximately eight studies have been conducted on the CoFCAN program. In each

study, mentored youth improved in areas such as social interaction, independence,

communication, and so on, as a result of the structured interaction with more *capable*

peers (Brooks, 2015; Schlieder et al., 2014). Consequently, the CoFCAN program is a

successful program that promotes inclusion and reduces the stigma of having a disability

on school campuses for students with disabilities. Both CoF programs improve social

skills for students with disabilities and nondisabled participants by using Vygotsky's

theory of social development (Brooks, 2015; CoF, n.d.-a; James & Leyden, 2010;

Schlieder et al., 2014).

Need for Research

What have not been studied are the long-term effects on the students who mentor

the CoF target students. Although not specifically studied, researchers like Lakeshia Cox

(2012) and Mary Schlieder (Schlieder et al., 2014) documented increased levels of

empathy in the mentor students at the conclusion of their respective studies. Many

implementation staff of the CoF program told researchers that in addition to developing

an empathetic belief about the target students, these compassions carried over into their

daily lives with other nonparticipants (Schlieder et al., 2014). Despite the structured

beginnings of the interactions, researchers document long-term continued relationships

between the mentors and the targets after high school.

All of the studies of the CoF program have been general studies or focused on mentee benefit. Consequently, more information is needed on the impact on the CoF mentor benefits to determine how far-reaching they are. The data on empathy unearthed by the researchers of CoF studies were in each case unintentional. Therefore, further studies should be conducted to explore how former CoF participants perceived that mentorship impacted the four components of EI, which are self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship management.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of former CoF nondisabled peer mentors of students with multiple disabilities to discover how this mentorship program impacted the four dimensions of EI.

Research Questions

Central Question

What are the lived experiences of the CoF mentors and their perceptions of EI as related to the four dimensions of EI?

Subquestions

1. How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the EI dimension of self-awareness?

2. How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the EI dimension of self-management?

3. How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the EI dimension of social awareness?

4. How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the EI dimension of relationship management?

Significance of the Problem

According to Bridgeland, Bruce, and Hariharan (2013), educators are in agreement that teaching social-emotional skills is important and that these skills could lead to better school and postsecondary outcomes. Schools must teach a wider variety of skills and qualities to students than in the past if they are to be prepared for careers of the future (Opengart, 2007). CCSS are still in their infancy stage as far as implementation. As a result, the states that have adopted them will be using it for years to come. Career analysts, CCSS developers, and teachers across America agree that social-emotional learning (SEL) education is needed and missing from the curriculum of a majority of American schools. The topic of this study, therefore, is to provide insight into how schools can use the CoF program to supplement the academic curriculums and teach EI character traits.

The common understanding of the benefits of teaching social-emotional traits along with academic pursuits has grown considerably in the past decade. Nevertheless, Miyamoto, Huerta, and Kubacka (2015) affirmed that despite its growing use across continents and territories, there is not a consensus on how to measure SEL programs as related to goal attainment, collaborative inquiry, and emotional acuity. As a result, there is a gap in the degree of implementation of SEL curriculum in schools despite the agreed-upon benefits by the educational and business community. According to García and Weiss (2016), "Several national organizations in the United States, including Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) and the Collaborative for

Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), have long supported work to nurture noncognitive skills" (p. 12). Nevertheless, there are few schools that have SEL programs like CoF to supplement their curriculums.

The identification of an effective program that teaches SEL components can benefit employers and career seekers as well. Friedman and Mandelbaum (2012) asserted that old business models are becoming a thing of the past. Today, more employees need to be able to problem solve, use, and make ethical decisions. Price (2015) contended that organizations desire candidates who can work on a team, possess interpersonal skills, are self-starters, and are goal oriented. These skills are not practiced daily in most academic settings. Nevertheless, these skills are necessary for students who will need to navigate the high school, postsecondary education, and the changing job market. According to CoF (n.d.-b) literature, the organization Autism Speaks has endorsed the program's ability to reinforce "Evidence-Based Predictors" needed for life and career advancement (para. 4).

Data gathered by this pioneering study can be used by the CoF program to compile research on their graduates and improve the outcomes for future mentors. This study can contribute to filling the knowledge gap that exists as related to the benefits of mentors after high school. By studying graduates of the CoF program, trends identified in the data can add to the current body of understanding as related to what schools can implement or offer to supplement their existing SEL curriculum. Outside of academia, employers could benefit from having a means of identifying potential employees who have been trained and have experience implementing the domains of self-awareness, self-management, relationship management, and social awareness.

Definitions

The following terms were used in this study. Because each may have multiple interpretations, the context of use for this research is defined.

Circle of Friends (CoF)

According to their website, CoF (n.d.-b) is a program that fosters inclusion and understanding of individual differences and disabilities. CoF is a school inclusion program for students with disabilities of all ages that establishes an understanding and acceptance of differences on school campuses and in community life, decreasing bullying and erasing the lines between disabled and nondisabled. The organization trains nondisabled students all over the campus to be a "peer friend" to students with disabilities.

Peer Mentor (PM)

"A peer mentor is an individual with a certain level of experience and expertise who can help develop a mentee's skills and habits" (Karcher & DuBois, 2014, p. 39).

Peer Friend

A peer friend is a student who is trained to offer genuine friendship while helping students with multiple disabilities practice their learning objectives in an organic environment within a school that implements the CoF program.

Emotional Intelligence (EI)

"At its most basic, emotional intelligence is the ability to manage the impact of emotions on our relationships with others" (Walton, 2012, p. 4). Bradberry and Greaves (2009) defined EI as "your ability to recognize and understand emotions in yourself and

others, and your ability to use this awareness to manage your behavior and relationships"
(p. 17).

Multiple Disabilities

The term *severe disabilities* is not a category used by the Individuals with
Disabilities Education Act. Therefore, this study utilized the term *multiple disabilities*.
Multiple disabilities means concomitant impairments (such as mental retardation-
blindness or mental retardation-orthopedic impairment), the combination of which causes
such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education
programs solely for one of the impairments. Multiple disabilities does not include deaf-
blindness (Staub, 1999)

Service-Learning

Service-learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful
community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach
civic responsibility and strengthen communities (Seifer & Connors, 2007)

Delimitations

This study was delimited to young adults between the age of 18 and 30 who
served as mentors through the CoF program within the past 10 years in the Santa Monica-
Malibu Unified School District and the Williams S. Hard School District

Organization of the Study

The remainder of this study is organized into four chapters followed by references
and appendices. Chapter II contains an in-depth examination of the history of EI and
peer mentorship. Because the subjects of this study were former mentors of CoF,
Chapter II explores said program in detail. Chapter III describes the research design and

methodology used in this study. Chapter IV contains an analysis of the data gathered

during the study. Chapter V summarizes the findings and provides discussion,

conclusions, and recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter II provides the theoretical framework for this study. The first section of Chapter II offers an in-depth look at the changing teaching methodologies in education today. Current trends in educational pedagogy are presented regarding emotional learning. Next, the researcher reveals seminal authors who have made significant contributions to the field of peer mentorship and service learning. After the theoretical framework has been discussed, service learning and other nonacademic methodologies are explored. Finally, Chapter II explores a program that is the focus of this study.

This study analyzes the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and peer mentorship as it relates to the mentor. This work is relevant in that while most traditional high school systems spend a great deal of time on academic preparation, most curriculums adopted by schools in America do not prioritize social and emotional preparation. Neglecting career-related competencies creates a disconnect in college and career readiness efforts. Chapin (2015) stated, "Outside of academia EI is commonly tested for in the business world, where companies assess potential hires to see if they 'fit' within their culture and organizational plan" (p. 28). This screening for EI is an effort by companies to gauge the potential success of an employee, and yet academic institutions neglect to educate students in this domain. Positive research findings continue to mount in favor of mentorship programs (Brady et al., 2014). Nevertheless, there is a gap in the literature when it comes to mentor benefits. It is the belief of the researcher that service learning, when applied with peer mentorship, can contribute positively to the lived experience of the mentor.

Educating Millennials

It is widely understood that postmillennials are digital natives. That means that they have grown up using technology such as cell phones, computers, digital cameras, and the Internet. Brumberger (2011) purported that it has been assumed that the deluge of technology usage for young adults produces heightened levels of visual literacy (Lemke, 2002), encompasses a myriad of skills, such as "personal, social, and civic responsibility, adaptability, managing complexity, and visual information literacies" (Brumberger, 2011, p. 44). Despite postmillennial students' comfort with visual and digital stimulus, a study by Brumberger (2011) found that today's students are "far from adept at producing and interpreting visual communication" (p. 44). Additionally, the study found that participants from the 500 Virginia Tech student sample were not adept at using critical thinking skills to interpret digital and visual images. In summation, Felten (2008), Palfrey and Gasser (2008), and Riddle (2007) agreed that assuming digital natives have the capacity to interpret and utilize visual literacy is incorrect. Each author agreed that schools must include 21st-century learning skills to make their students more efficient learners and productive citizens (Felten, 2008; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008; Riddle, 2007).

Despite having marked benefits, critics of implementing 21st-century skills alleged that the initiative needs to be augmented and fortified with greater fidelity (Forum for Youth Investment, 2009; Sawchuk, 2009a). Opponents of 21st-century education have varied concerns that range from curriculum limitations, for-profit company influence, and access concerns for the student (Sawchuk, 2009a). For example, P21 is a company that has amassed 20 states that are working together to integrate 21st-century

learning skills. The biggest concern of the nonsupporters of 21st-century learning appears to be core subject, and analytical competencies should not be taught in isolation from one another. Furthermore, detractors maintain that application and skills cannot be used without content knowledge (Forum for Youth Investment, 2009). The Washington, DC-based company has responded to each criticism and works to continually refine the curriculum. Sawchuck (2009b) stated that the primary detractors are advocates of science and liberal arts curriculums.

Twenty-first century learning skills incorporate various literacies, competencies, and character qualities that influence academic and career readiness (Tulgan, 2015). Ciarrochi and Mayer (2007) found through his research that emotional needs are tied to academic performance in many realms. Likewise, Author Poropat (2009) conducted a study with upwards of 70,000 students to determine if there was a link between certain personality traits and academics. Porpat examined correlations between assessments and grades to five personal qualities like conscientiousness and neuroticism. The results indicated that in elementary grades cognitive ability is most tied to academic success. Conversely, the correlation between cognitive ability and success wanes as students proceed into high school and college (Hilton & Pellegrino, 2012). Furthermore, Poropat's (2009) research indicated that high conscientiousness scores had a higher predictive value than the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT; Barrick & Mount, 1991; Hilton & Pellegrino, 2012). In short, research currently supports the argument for modeling and teaching favorable character qualities and social competencies in school.

Why Develop Emotional Skills

Greenberg et al. (2003) stated that rather than testing social competency curriculums in their schools, districts often make the poor assumption that teaching academics only is sufficient. Durlak and Wells (1997) concluded that the Institute of Medicine's 1994 decision to exclude health programs as a preventative means for averting behavioral and social inadequacies in teenagers was premature. Contrarily, their research noted a significant improvement in problem reduction and related aptitudes. After hosting a massive summit including researchers, teachers, and child advocacy groups, the Fetzer group created the social emotional learning (SEL) framework (Greenberg et al., 2003). This framework was designed to combat the subdermal causes of problem behaviors that often hinder student achievement. As a result, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) was established in 1994 to research evidence-based programs and methodologies to enhance education.

The framework and research completed by CASEL acknowledged that teaching SEL competencies should not be isolated to school settings nor isolated as sets of standards (Durlak et al., 2015). As a result, CASEL's research confirmed that an interrelated framework coupled with research conducted by theorists from the past will yield the most universal and efficient SEL model for schools to implement. Durlak et al. (2015) demonstrated that the latest version of CASEL's framework consists of four elements that are necessary for schoolwide implementation of SEL: "five interrelated behavioral domains, short and long-term attitudinal and behavioral expectations, coordination of family, school, and community practices in SEL and district, state, and federal policy supports for SEL" (p. 6). CASEL's five competency domains are drawn

from the research on EI as proposed by Daniel Goleman (1995) and Peter Salovey and John Mayer (1990). Except for the addition of "responsible decision making," the two framework tenets are identical to that of EI. See Figure 1 for details and a side-by-side comparison.
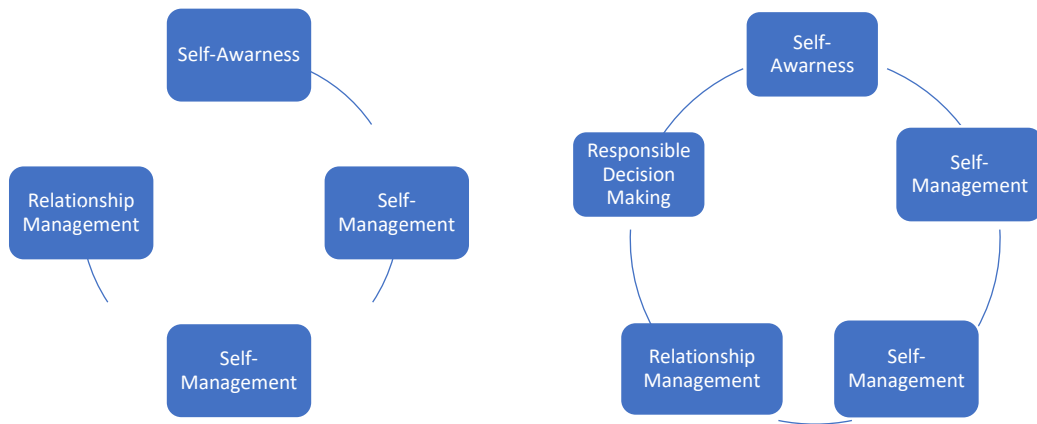
Figure 1. Emotional intelligence domains and CASEL's five competency domains. Adapted from *Handbook of Social and Emotional Learning: Research and Practice,* by J. A. Durlak, C. E. Domitrovich, R. P. Weissberg, and T. P. Gullotta, 2015, New York, NY: Guilford Press.

There is rapidly growing literature on intelligences, which states that intelligence is not set, and that providing instruction in these areas can benefit children (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; Durlak et al., 2015; Goleman, 1995; Hilton & Pellegrino, 2012). The neuroplasticity of the emotional domains was the purpose of incorporating the tenets into their latest framework. Everyone's brain is uniquely organized. Thus, rote memorization and experiential learning are the two preferred storage methods for the brain. Because stress inhibits the functioning of learning, attention, and retention, schools should teach students how to deal with stressful emotions by teaching empathy and self-awareness (Goleman, 2008).

Social and Emotional Education and Teachers

Youngblood (2015) found that teachers who attended training and SEL lessons had a positive experience with the curriculum. Furthermore, teachers experienced a greater appreciation for the value of developing a teacher-student rapport during academic classes and unstructured time as well (Youngblood, 2015). Researchers identified two challenges that were consistent with all teacher interviews. Youngblood suggested that using *advisory* time only to give lessons was insufficient and student buy-in waned because many students saw advisory as *downtime*. Ultimately, the researcher found that SEL instruction made a positive impact on academic performance and student-teacher relationships.

Theoretical Framework

Origins of Mentorship

The term mentor first appeared in Homer's *The Odyssey*. In this epic, Odysseus left Mentor to watch over his son and family while he went off to fight the Trojan War. According to *The Free Dictionary*, "Mentor (měn`tər, –tôr'), in Greek mythology, friend of Odysseus and tutor of Telemachus. . . . His name is proverbial for a faithful and wise adviser" ("Mentor," n.d., para. 1). As a result, the word mentor became synonymous with overseer. Plato was a student, scribe, and mentee of Socrates even until his death. Aviles (2014) stated, "Our memory of Socrates is defined in relation to Plato and Aristotle, and vice versa" (p. 2). Although Plato and Socrates lived more than 4 centuries ago, their mentor bond is well noted, and their philosophies remain relevant today (Aviles, 2014).

Development of Mentorship

Although the research on mentorship has grown significantly since Plato and Socrates, researchers agree that the process of mentoring is complex and difficult to define (Eby, Rhodes, & Allen, 2010; Noe, Greenberger, & Wang, 2002; Ragins & Kram, 2007). In addition to identifying ways to define mentorship, researchers continue to search for a framework that encompasses what makes mentorship successful for the mentor *and* mentee. According to Ensher and Murphy (2011), the social exchange theory remains the most noted construct of what makes mentorship possible. The social exchange theory was posited by George Homans in 1961 in his seminal book called *Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms.* The social exchange theory suggests that individuals are motivated to initiate relationships where the benefits of the relationship outweigh the cost (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961; Ragins & Kram, 2007). In essence, individuals maintain relationships they find mutually valuable and beneficial.

Origins of Social Exchange

B. F. Skinner set up experiments where caged pigeons could be rewarded for pecking a certain target. Pecking the target produced grains to reward the pigeon. This system of actions and rewards was called "operant conditioning" by Skinner (Homans, 1961, p. 73). George Homans expanded the work that B. F. Skinner conducted with pigeon and grains. Homans (1961) contended that using operant conditioning to predict the behavior of pigeons did not truly transfer to human subjects. As a result, Homans sought to explore what a *true exchange* entailed. Unlike Skinner, Parsons and Shils, (1951), claimed that the exchange theory was realized when the behavior of one entity *reinforces or punishes* the second individual in the system. By the same token,

individuals may seek rewards or change their behavior to avoid punishment. To more

accurately extrapolate generalizations for social interactions between humans, George

Homans (1961) developed five propositions that are normally present in social exchange

(see Table 1 for propositions and explanations).

Table 1

Five Propositions of Social Exchange

Proposition	Characteristic
Success	For all actions taken by humans, the more often a particular action is rewarded, the more likely the behavior will be repeated.
Stimulus	If a certain stimulus of the past was rewarded, then stimuli of similar likeness are more likely to elicit the replication of the behavior.
Value	The more valuable the result of an action is perceived by an individual, the more likely the individual will repeat the action.
Aggression/approval	When an action does not elicit an expected reward, aggression is likely to occur. Approving behavior is likely to occur when an action gains an unexpected reward.
Rationality	The individual is more likely to choose an action perceived to bring about the desired reward.

Note. Adapted from *Social Behavior: Its Elementary Forms,* by G. Homans, 1961, New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace, and World.

Social Theory Expansion

After Homans (1961) had formulated the structure and tenets of the social

exchange theory, sociologists like John Thibaut, Kelly Harold, and Uriel and Edna Foa

expanded the work to encompass economic and business connections (Foa & Foa, 1974;

Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). According to the *Handbook of Social Resource Theory:*

Theoretical Extensions, Empirical Insights, and Social Applications, Foa and Foa (2012)

contended that when people are engaged in relationships, *commodities* are exchanged,

and that perceived value depends on the person's satisfaction with the item exchanged or

received. The resource theory states that some exchanges by humans take away resources from individuals, as in the case with money (Foa & Foa, 2012). On the other hand, love can be given to another person without having decreased the amount left for one's self. Additionally, the giver may increase the amount in their own possession in the exchange (Cartright & Zander, 1968; Foa & Foa, 1974).

In a mentorship relationship, there is an exchange of benefits or resources to some degree. These resources could include things like time, money, skills, and affection. Foa and Foa (1974) found that *outcomes* are what remain after cost is subtracted from benefit. Researchers have described cost in various terms. Homans (1961) said, "For an activity to incur cost, an alternative and rewarding activity must be there to be forgone" (p. 59). Regarding this study, time spent with mentees could be time taken away from friends and family. That time taken away from friends and family would, therefore, be a cost. In summation, the social exchange theory is based on a system of varying reciprocal rewards and punishments whereby costs are subtracted from benefits to obtain the outcome of the exchange (Foa & Foa, 1974; Homans, 1961; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959).

Homans (1961) ended his seminal work by surmising that to base relationships on simple reward only can reduce the individual and the institution into exhibiting "elementary behaviors" (p. 397). Elementary behaviors are primal and reactionary ways of dealing with growth and or conflict. Homans added, "The trouble with civilized men is that they cannot live with the institutions they have themselves invented" (p. 397). Homans concluded that science alone cannot correct institutionalized problems that manifest in social and professional relationships. Later, Daniel Levinson (1978) wrote his seminal book called The *Seasons of a Man's Life*. Levinson's book was somewhat

inspired by his fondness of the enduring relationship between the Telemachus above and Mentor from Greek mythology (Ragins & Kram, 2007). As a result, Levinson focused on male mentorship. According to Taibbi (1983), Levinson believed that social training alone was not enough to move inexperienced workers into job proficiency. Levinson's research led him to believe that supervisors could be effective mentors if the correct parameters and motivation are present (Taibbi, 1983).

Approximately 2,000 years after the execution of Socrates, another famous teacher emerged with innovative philosophical views on crime and punishment. In 1969, Travis Hirschi developed the social control theory (Karcher & DuBois, 2014). This theory postulates that individuals participate in maladaptive criminal activities because of a disconnection from society and its accepted norms. Karcher and DuBois (2014) asserted that the peer mentorship became a viable resource to combat adolescent social issues. Karcher and Dubois shared the view of Hirschi that delinquency is severely reduced when youth have strong ties to positive people and organizations. Thus, if a society pairs up responsible adults with potentially delinquent children, the children's behavior could be positively shifted.

Kram's Mentoring Model

Most prominent in the theoretical framework of mentoring is the work of Kathy Kram (1985; Noe et al., 2002; Ragins & Kram, 2007). According to Ragins and Kram (2007), the book *Mentoring at Work* (Kram, 1985) became the standard for theoretical reference as related to mentorship of men and women. Like Levinson, Kram too studied Mentor and Telemachus. However, Kram understood that Athena the female goddess of love often assumed Mentor's form to become a guide and protector of Odysseus's son

(Ragins & Kram, 2007). That being said, Kram (1985) believed that mentorship could be expanded past gender and age boundaries. Kram identified two main functions of mentoring. The first function of mentoring, according to Kram, is *career functions*. In this function, mentors build the vocational capacity for their protégés to help them negotiate the rigors of their current and upcoming job roles. Secondly, Kram asserted that mentors may serve psychosocial functions in a mentoring relationship. Moreover, the mentor can provide support with relationship management, organizational awareness, and self-assessment.

Although the functions of mentorship that Kram (1985) put forth have remained constant, the research and development of subcategories and theories has grown exponentially during the 2 decades after Kram's original theory (Allen & Eby, 2010; Aviles, 2014; Ragins & Kram, 2007). For instance, researchers agree that there are four distinct phases to the process of mentoring that can vary in length and intensity (Aviles, 2014; Chao, 1997; Hamilton & Scandura, 2002; Kram, 1985). The four phases consist of initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition (see Figure 1 for a detailed description of the four phases of mentorship). It is understood that not all mentorship relationships work out. Likewise, successful mentorships vary in outcomes. Regardless, the four phases provide the mentorship community of researchers with a guidepost to better gauge mentorship progress (see Figure 2 for an illustration of Kram's four phases of mentorship).

Formal Versus Informal Mentoring

Although the outcome of a mentoring relationship may not be predicted in its onset, the nature of the relationship can be determined in advanced. According to Allen

and Eby (2010), formal and informal mentoring definitions vary among scholars. Specifically, the distinction is usually determined by how the relationship is *formed*.

```
                  ┌──────────────┐                          ┌──────────────┐
                  │  Cultivation │                          │ Redefinition │
                  └──────────────┘       •Protege moves on  └──────────────┘
  •Introductions    •Mentee learns       •Geographic or       •New relationship
  •Rapport building  from mentor          promotion           •peer-like
                    •Mutually benificial                        friendship
       ┌────────────┐                         ┌────────────┐
       │ Initiation │                         │ Separation │
       └────────────┘                         └────────────┘
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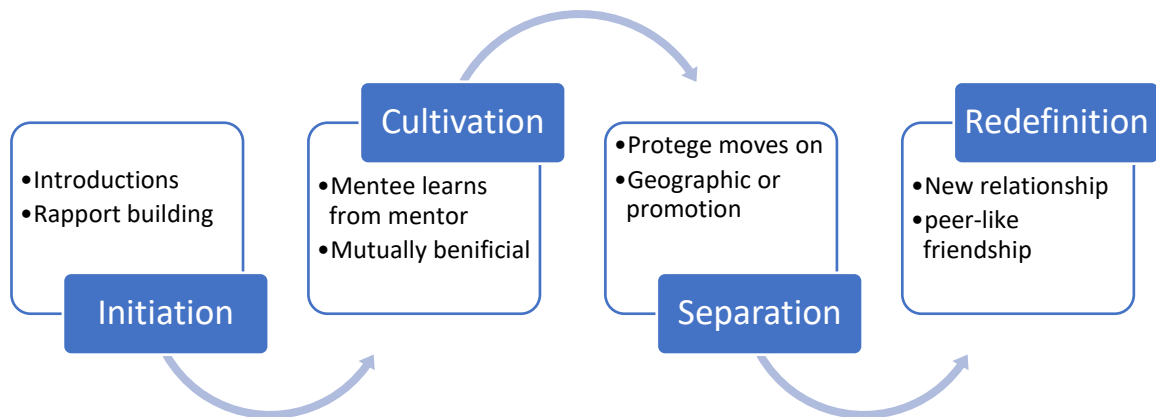
Figure 2. Kram's four phases of mentorship. Adapted from *The Blackwell Handbook of Mentoring: A Multiple Perspectives Approach*, by T. D. Allen and L. T. Eby, 2010, Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Ragins and Kram (2007) stated that formal relationships usually have an outside force that *matches* their skills and needs. Allen and Eby (2010) noted that relationship structure is important to consider when forming mentoring pairs because it can influence the outcome of the relationship. For example, too rigid of a structure could prevent intimacy or prevent meaningful trust building.

Informal mentorships usually occur naturally and can be initiated by the mentor or mentee (Burgess & Huston, 1979). Informal relationships have few time and requirement structures. Despite the lack of formalizing requirements, many researchers in the field agree that the two types of mentorships are not equal in effectiveness (Allen & Eby, 2007; Cavell, Meeham, Heffer, & Holladay, 2002; Ragins & Kram, 2007). Personality among other personal attributes can alter the success of a mentoring relationship.

Nonetheless, researchers agree that informal mentoring can have a greater impact on youth mentoring than formal mentoring (Cavell et al., 2002). In contrast, many formal mentor relationships begin in a formal state; however, over time they can become informal. This is consistent with the final phase of the Kram's (1985) mentorship phases. To that end, this research focuses on mentorship of high school youth in high school in a semiformal setting.

Race and Hierarchy

Researchers over the years have cited flaws in the mentorship theory, which if not attended can minimize the effectiveness of the pairing (Bozeman & Feeney, n.d.; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Downs & Windchief, 2015; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Researchers in the field maintain that if the critical race theory (CRT) is not applied in some method, then the mentorship relationship can be ineffective (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Downs & Windchief, 2015; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). According to Simba (2015), *color blindness* is a ruse designed to mask inherent biases that are inadvertently built into the literature, myths, and rules of some American institutions. As related to mentorship, CRT must be applied to mentorship to counterbalance race, age, and gender dynamics that could diminish true connections (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Downs & Windchief, 2015). By the same token, Bozeman and Feeney (n.d.) found that mentor and mentee bonds are not as strong when the mentor is the boss. Furthermore, if the designers of the mentorship experience create a system in which the mentor is the arbiter of knowledge without respecting the current knowledge of the protégé, mentees could become clones (see Figure 3 for an illustration of the mentorship scheme; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Downs & Windchief, 2015; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Fortunately, the organization

that was explored in this study maintained a model of inclusion that was peer based with no hierarchal levels to friendship.

| My mentor is always right and others are wrong. | My mentor knows a lot, if compared to others. | My mentor knows many things, but I know a lot too. | My mentor has a great way of doing things, but so do I and they are different from my mentor. |

Mentee Mentality

| I will teach the protege (insert pedagogy, methodology) | The student has grown and is ready for the next step. | I see the student is becoming self-sufficient. | I see that my mentee has his/her way of doing things and I want to help, not clone me. |

Mentor Mentality

Figure 3. Mentor and mentee perspective of mentorship scheme. Adapted from "Clone, Critic, or Peer: Mentoring, Developmental Positioning and Potential," by L. Downs and S. Windchief, 2015, *The Researcher, 27*(2), pp. 38-44; and "Critical Race Theory: A Transformational Model for Teaching Diversity," by L. Ortiz and J. Jani, 2010, *Journal of Social Work Education, 46*(2), pp. 175-193.

There is an example within Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America. According to the Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America (n.d.) website, the Big Brothers movement started in 1904. In 1977, Big Sisters International united with Big Brothers Association amassing more than 350 branches. This merger made the organization the largest mentorship organization in the country. When Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America polled more than 1,000 young people in the early 1990s, they discovered that mentor participants were more likely to stay in school and not abuse illegal substances (Aviles, 2014). As a result, an increase in funding was given to mentorship programs to close the mentorship gap.

Following this shift, the wave of support crested with the endorsement of The No Child Left Behind Act in 2002. This act contributed funds for participating schools to implement mentoring programs on their campuses. Funds were distributed to various community programs and schools to provide mentorship programs for children in Grades 4 through middle school (Bernstein, Dunn Rappaport, Olsho, Hunt, & Levin, 2009). As a result, schools began to see an influx in peer mentorship programs. The list of community-based and school-related peer mentorship programs continues to grow.

Emotional Intelligence

Origins of EI (IQ)

Before there was EI, the intellectual quotient was the standard for assessing a person's mental capacity. In 1905, Alfred Binet and Théodore Simon designed the earliest standardized intelligence exam in France (Watson, 2014). According to Watson (2014), the IQ score was used to classify students for special education services, qualify job applicants, and served as a predictor for career success. Greenockle (2010) contended that studies soon after proved that an employee with a high IQ could underperform and not excel at work because of a lack of social skills. According to Greenockle (2010), E. L. Thorndike named the ability to work well with others irrespective of IQ social intelligence in 1920. By studying social intelligence, researchers designed models to quantify emotions and their effect on behaviors.

Despite its wide acceptable usage, the IQ test became embroiled in a historical legal decision that rendered it unusable for a whole population of students. Lambert (1981) stated, "Ruling against the defense in Larry P. v. Wilson Riles, the judge concluded that the defendant's conduct, in connection with the history of IQ testing and

special education, revealed an unlawful segregative intent" (p. 948). In summary, the

court ruled that the state was using the IQ exam to admit African American students into

educable mentally retarded (EMR) classes. The IQ test was deemed culturally biased and

could not be used as the sole indicator for special education placement for many years in

California.

From Single to Multiple Intelligences

The data from studies of social intelligence led researchers to many other

discoveries. In 1983, Howard Gardner of Harvard University first introduced the theory

of multiple intelligences in his seminal book called *Frames of Mind* (Abdallah, 2008).

Gardner theorized that intelligence was not a linear concept. His research led him to

believe that human intelligence is made up of multiple different intelligences that could

not be condensed down into one score. Gardner concluded that the Stanford-Binet test

was not capable of predicting success across multiple domains (Goleman, 1995). By

expanding upon Gardner's work, Salovey and Mayer (1990) derived a model of social

intelligence that allows for an element of human control. They stated, "We define EI as

the subset of intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others'

feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide

one's thinking and actions" (Salovey & Mayer, 1990, p. 189). In summary, researchers

agree that intelligence can not be reduced to one pedagogy or assessment criteria.

Goleman's Contribution

Daniel Goleman (1995) was the most noted pioneer by far in the realm of EI.

After Goleman's discovery of the work of Salovey and Mayer (1990), he began his

research on EI. His findings pitted EI against the IQ assessment. Goleman (1995)

contended that 80% of success indicators in a person's life have to do with factors other than IQ. Goleman alleged that a low IQ score is not the single determinant of a person's success in life. Goleman's findings catapulted the field into the current state of scholarship. Goleman contended that the most successful leaders usually have high emotional quotients (EQ) and that having a high IQ does not translate to a high EQ, although, Goleman asserted that a substantial IQ does not guarantee wealth, contentedness, or success. Consequently, Goleman put forward that schools obsess over academics and ignore EI as a possible curriculum.

Current Scholarship

The Evolution of EI

Although EI continues to gain momentum as an intelligence, it remains a somewhat controversial concept (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; MacCann et al., 2014). EI continues to evolve as a construct. Divergent bodies of work are created as researchers dissect past theories and data. Since the coining of the term EI, research continues to branch and splinter as new knowledge becomes available. Researchers and social scientists continue to look for more accurate means of assessing EI while adding to the present understanding that EI is a quantifiable intelligence. Bradberry and Greaves (2009) put forth a model of EI that illustrates the correlation of personal and social competencies (see Figure 4). Furthermore, compartmentalizing EI makes assessment more accurate. As a result, new assessments for EI continue to emerge with accompanying pedagogies.
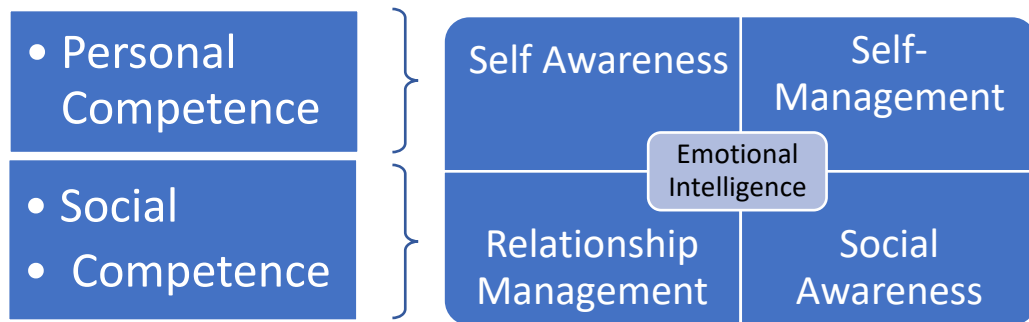
Figure 4. The four quadrants of emotional intelligence. Adapted from *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*, by T. Bradberry and J. Greaves, 2009, San Diego, CA: Talent Smart.

Self-awareness. Because this study explored EI as related to participants in a social setting, each of the four tenets of EI are explained here. The first element of EI is self-awareness. Self-awareness is the ability understand one's mood and emotions in different situations (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; Goleman, 1995; Walton, 2012). Bradberry and Greaves (2009) provided research detailing why emotions are unavoidable. The pair additionally went on to report that the best way to become more self-aware is to spend time understanding one's reactions to different stimuli. Walton (2012) purported that factors like background, beliefs, and personal motivations play a role in how people react to situations. Thus, people must be *mindful* of these things, according to Goleman (1995). People usually react to stimulus by either being *self-aware*, *engulfed*, or *accepting* of what they are feeling (Mayer & Stevens, 1994).

Just as important, self-awareness has been shown to be correlational to job efficacy (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; Goleman, 1995). Eighty-three percent of people ranked high in self-awareness are the most successful at their job, while only 2% of people with low self-awareness scores were among the ranks of top achievers (Bradberry

& Greaves, 2009). Daniel Goleman (1995) found that many emotions occur just below the fringe of consciousness; therefore, recognizing emotional triggers is critical for understanding self-awareness. Time and even experience do not always translate to heightened self-awareness. Researchers agree that *mindfulness* of one's emotions can be beneficial in life (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; Goleman, 1995; Mayer & Stevens, 1994; Walton, 2012).

  Self-management. If self-awareness is understanding one's emotions, then self-management is the ability to remain open to new responses during or after a stimulating event has been experienced (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; Goleman, 1995; Walton, 2012). Emotions are hardwired into people's biology. However, they can regulate how long they stay emotional say researchers (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; Goleman, 1995). If a person's tendency is to have an *outburst* when upset, David Walton (2012) asserted that people can train themselves to delay or dampen the magnitude of its expression. According to their landmark book *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*, Bradberry and Greaves (2009) stated that self-management is more than just delaying "explosive" behaviors (p. 33). They added, "Real results come from putting your momentary needs on hold to pursue larger, more important goals" (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009, p. 33).

  Although scholars differ in their terminology, their definition of what self-management is remains consistent. For instance, Bradberry and Greaves (2009) used the word *emotions*, while Goleman (1995) uses varied and colorful words for feelings like *mood*. Accordingly, Goleman titled the chapter on self-management "Passions Slave" (p. 56). According to Goleman, the Bible, the ancient Greeks, and Shakespeare, to name a few, saw virtue in managing one's emotions. Walton (2012) put forward the view that

there are certain virtues that a person should practice while working with others to enhance emotional self-restraint. Honesty and openness, conscientiousness, resilience, adaptability, and willpower are necessary traits to help a person resist his or her natural proclivity to react in a familiar way when presented with adversity (Walton, 2012).

Social awareness. The first two skills of EI are related to understanding and maintaining personal emotions; conversely, the final two tenets deal with other people's emotions. Social awareness is the ability to accurately depict the emotional state of individuals or crowds of people (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; Goleman, 1995; Walton, 2012). Goleman (1995) maintained that people adept in social awareness could excel in the areas of organizing groups, negotiating solutions, personal connections, social analysis. People who possess these types of skills often have a large social circle and can communicate effectively with different sects of individuals seamlessly. Goleman called these types of people *social chameleons*. Nevertheless, Goleman warned, in the same work, that not being balanced in the areas can lead to ruin. In other words, too much of either competency can make social situations awkward or lead to maladaptive behaviors.

By the same token, Bradberry and Greaves (2009) found that if a person is too entangled in his or her own emotional evaluations, he or she can mishandle social opportunities around them. Empathy is a large component of social awareness. People who are socially aware to a high degree, can "read" people while interacting with them. Reading nonverbal body language can help a person understand when someone is having a bad day or if they are feeling apprehensive. Walton illustrated in *Emotional Intelligence: A Practical Guide,* that 87% of communication is located in voice tone and body language. People who are skilled in the area of social awareness are proficient in

politics and are usually skilled in keeping others calm in stressful situations (Goleman, 1995; Walton, 2012). As a result, social awareness can be an effective trait to possess.

Relationship management. The final tenet of EI is relationship management. Relationship management is the ability to accurately discern group, individual, and personal emotions in a manner that is conducive to maintaining a healthy and productive relationship (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; Walton, 2012). According to Bradberry and Greaves (2009), relationship management is best realized when a person is proficient in the previous three tenets. It should be noted that relationship management is the most difficult tenet to exhibit during periods of stress (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009). Despite being adroit in relationship management, work conflicts, misunderstandings, and uncertainties are situations that people must negotiate daily. Relationship management skills can make navigating through these conflicts less stressful, specifically as it relates to important alliances.

Assessment of EI

All EI appraisals do not seek to gather the same data or measure the same outcomes. Arguments against EI range from the concern that there are too many tests to the inability to come up with a universal definition. Opponents of EI contend that multiple means of testing on a single subject lead to inconsistent data and diminished reliability. Smieja, Orzechnowski, and Stolarski (2014) stated, "The problem of very low correlations between different measures of EI undoubtedly stems from inconsistencies on theoretical and psychometric level, and leads to the conclusion that self-assessed EI and ability EI measured performance tests are different constructs" (p. 8).

The data gathered by this study suggest that this is relatively true. Further

research in aligning EI pedagogy and assessments is needed overall. To better

understand the evolution of EI assessments, attention must be given to distinguish

between the types of assessments.

Assessment Models

Early EI instruments fell into one of two categories. The initial EI assessment

models depended on self-scoring surveys that depended on the participant's ability to

gauge their emotions already (Smieja et al., 2014). Participants were usually asked to

rate themselves on a scale according to how they *usually* respond to emotional topics.

Although this type of assessment was the standard during the infancy stage of EI, as

research progressed its functionality has come into question over the years. Smieja et al.

asserted that personal opinion-based tests are not highly accurate when it comes to

understanding how a person takes in and manages emotions. Thus, social scientists

began to study alternative means of assessing EI.

Further research and EI development improved to include ability-based

assessments. Ability-based assessments ask the tester to construct meaning from

scenarios. Ability-based tests were more predictive than survey assessments (Smieja et

al., 2014). However, they too had drawbacks. Smeieja et al. (2014) contended that

despite the ability-based tests' increased accuracy, the exams were slightly more difficult

to complete, time-consuming, and labor-intensive to administer and score.

Unfortunately, this type of assessment, popularized by Peter Salovey and John Mayer

(1990), has components that do not have concrete solutions. For this reason, the test

could prove difficult for younger audiences and English learners. Cho, Drasgow,

Mengyang, and Cao (2015) concluded from their research of the available models that a mixed approach of ability-based and self -reported scales was the most accurate form of assessment.

Current State of EI Assessments

The most recent types of EI assessments combine previous methodologies and constructs while accommodating for culture. The Test Inteligencji Emocjonalnej (TIE) appears to bridge the gaps in previous assessments. The TIE uses best practices from previous tests while building on the assumption that culture influences emotional responses (Smieja et al., 2014). According to Langley Group (n.d.), today the most widely used scales are variations of the "Mayers Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT), The Bar-On Eq-I assessment, Emotional Competency Inventory (ECI), Genos assessments" (p. 1). The most prominent of the four assessments, MSCEIT and Eq-I, have both developed youth versions which are suitable for young people 7 to 18.

Peer Mentorship

The theoretical premise behind peer mentorship can be summed up as peer support and modeling. Brady et al. (2014) noted a Big Brothers Big Sister (BBBS) program in Ireland that supports the notion that peer mentorship in a school-based setting is effective. They stated, "The added value or 'unique selling point' of the BBBS school-based programme *[sic]* is perceived to relate to its role in mobilising *[sic]* support between older and younger peers" (Brady et al., 2014, p. 249). Creating a forum for friendships to flourish can be very important. Training mentors increases the likelihood of a successful mentoring experience. Aviles (2014) also contended that following a

structure for mentor selection, activities, and implementing learned best practices

increases the likelihood of mentorship success.

When older children mentor younger children, it can place the mentor in a de

facto *in loco parentis* (in place of parent) status when they are together. In comparison,

peer mentors are not parents. However, research shows that many accept and display

paternal roles at times. Although both parties in a peer mentorship relationship can

benefit, this study centers around how the experience influences the nondisabled students

who provides mentorship.

Mentor Benefits

Despite the wealth of literature on mentorship programs, there is a gap in the

literature as related to the mentor benefits (Cox, 2012). Ample literature has been

archived about the benefits of mentoring on mentees, yet exhaustive research has not

been compiled from the mentor's standpoint. The current study attempted to add to the

scholarship in the field peer mentorship. Because subjects in this study participated in a

type of service learning, evidence of its merit was examined. A recent study that

included occupational therapy (OT) students and students with diagnosed mental illness

sought to examine the benefits for the mentors. One of the two learning priorities was

focused on elements of EI. Schindler (2001) opined, "Provide students with a clinical

service learning experience that would supplement their limited experiences with mental

health population and address stigma and negative perceptions regarding individuals

diagnosed with mental illnesses" (p. 56). Occupational therapists meet patients with

mental illness often. A pretest and a post-test were used to identify how effective the

program was. After intervention and testing, Schindler found that the participants were

more comfortable with the students with disabilities and participants had obtained a more positive view of them. Shindler documented evidence that mentors came to the realization that people with mental illnesses are more similar to nondiagnosed people than they had originally thought. Participants in this study gained valuable insights that made them better practitioners in their field.

<div align="center">**Service Learning**</div>

Origins of Service Learning

Service learning as a construct has ebbed and apexed since the 1930s; however, due to various circumstances, it has only begun to take shape in the last few decades (Witmer & Anderson, 1994). John Dewey (1916) was the first researcher to develop studies that promoted the stance that educators should use their community for "experiential learning" (p. 172). He said, "Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder" (Dewey, 1916, p. 172). John Dewey's understanding of educational philosophy and society norms led him to believe that education should be reformed with service learning and civic engagement (Boldemann-Tatkin, 2015; Witmer & Anderson, 1994).

Later William Kilpatrick advocated for projects to be the focus of instruction and assessments (Witmer & Anderson, 1994). The service-learning cycle of failure and renaissance began to evolve in America changing the title with each revolution. The periods surrounding World War II and the Civil Rights Movement witnessed a decline in research and practice for various reasons. According to Witmer and Anderson (1994), there was a resurgence in interest in *school-based community service* programs; however,

most of them failed. Conversely, the 1980s saw a revival of efforts to utilize service

learning due to failing schools and increased public scrutiny of the educational system

(Witmer & Anderson, 1994). Consequently, using service learning to bolster educational

reform has continued to crest until the present day.

Structures of Service Learning

Service learning in schools can take many forms and like mentorship can vary

from school to school as related to implementation strategy (Bohat & Goodrich, 2007;

Boldemann-Tatkin, 2015; Zaff & Lerner, 2010). Before schools offer service learning,

they must decide if the program will be a mandate or not. In other words, they must

decide if the class or program will be mandatory or voluntary. A mandatory model could

take the form of a class or set of projects that must be negotiated for a reward. Zaff and

Lerner (2010) found that being required to serve during high school did not vary a great

deal in its effect on students who wanted the opportunity. Similarly, among students who

originally did not prefer service learning, increased civic motivation and involvement

followed as a result of the experience. Zaff and Lerner asserted that service learning

objectives could be strengthened if parents showed interest in their child's projects at

home and in the community.

The types of projects that students can choose from may vary depending on their

educational setting. The service learning types or categories range from the three most

basic levels to six if students are in college. Although categories of service learning can

vary based on the designer, it may be simplest to place them in one of the following three

basic realms: research and advocacy, indirect service, and direct service (Heffernan,

2002). In the research advocacy model, students take on a challenge to become a positive

catalyst to change in a political or social issue that benefits the community. Opponents of service learning feel that service learning should be mindful to keep a balanced model of liberal and conservative activism (Butin, 2006). The indirect service model allows learners to tackle community issues by compiling research and organizing awareness campaigns. In contrast, direct service models force students to take part in action projects that place them in direct contact with the community or entity they wish to impact (Heffernan, 2002).

The former three service models have been augmented by researchers around the world. Bohat and Goodrich (2007) put forth a popular model that many high schools have adopted over the years. Bohat and Goodrich's model expanded the three categories to include actionable means of expression, that is, placement model, project model, product model, presentation model, presentation plus model, and event model (Bohat & Goodrich, 2007). Bohat and Goodrich pointed out that there are potential risks and drawbacks to each model presented. Some of the risks include concerns of safety, time constraints, confidentiality, and funding. Despite these potential risks, the benefit outweighs the cost implementation. Service learning has become more pronounced in colleges as well. Heffernan (2002) listed problem-based, discipline-based, capstone courses, undergraduate community-based action research, service internships, and direct service learning as collegiate formats. College service learning categories appear to be similar to high school opportunities. However, they can be tailored to a student's career aspirations more easily.

Benefits of Service Learning

Despite the relatively small body of research on the topic, researchers agree with John Dewey's theory that service learning does promote positive social development and civic engagement (Boldemann-Tatkin, 2015; Perkins-Gough, 2009; Witmer & Anderson, 1994; Zaff & Lerner, 2010). Service learning merges community service and academic curriculums to produce opportunities for students to act and reflect on their experiences (Perkins-Gough, 2009). Of the 807 students surveyed by Bridgeland, Dilulio, and Wulsin (2008), 75% of the students reported that service-learning classes are more interesting than traditional classes. While there are no studies that specifically explore increased graduation rates resulting from service learning, correlations have been drawn from the presence of service learning and decreased dropout rates (Bridgeland et al., 2008).

In addition to the promising high school retention rate data, service learning has been documented to produce positive results to other issues that plague educational institutions. For example, Scales, Roehlkepartain, Neal, Kielsmeier, and Benson (2006) maintained that service learning, along with community service, contributed to closing the achievement gap between higher income students and students in lower income households. Working with or in service of people with disabilities is in alignment with the direct service model of Heffernan's (2002) service structure. Roper and Santiago (2014) conducted research with kinesiology students who signed up to do service learning with students with disabilities in an adaptive physical education (APE) setting.

Despite the students coming into the experience with preconceived positive and negative ideas about what to expect from the daily interactions, kinesiology service learners overall found it was an enriching experience that changed the way they would

interact with people with special needs. The consistent direct contact helped them dispel

negative stereotypes that some of the subjects began the study with (Roper & Santiago,

2014). The college students could apply lessons learned in the classroom to real-world

situations. During the reflection process, subjects often continued their learning by

articulating how rewarding and transformative the service learning program was (Roper

& Santiago, 2014). This study is in direct alignment with Schindler's (2011) findings

with the occupational therapist and students with disabilities. Reflection is the largest

component that separates service learning from other programs like volunteering and

community service. Bringle and Hatcher (1999) agreed, "Reflection activities direct the

student's attention to new interpretations of events and provide a means through which

the community service can be studied and interpreted much as text is read and studied for

deeper understanding" (p. 180).

Barriers to Implementation of Service Learning

Although service learning as a construct has been documented to be successful

when implemented correctly, and with fidelity, there are areas that current implementers

and potential coordinators should pay close attention to (Boldemann-Tatkin, 2015;

Bridgeland et al., 2008). First, understanding the correlation and differences between

community service and service learning is critical. Upon conducting related research,

Boldemann-Tatkin (2015) found that service learning was less successful when

implemented in schools with mandatory community service hours. Boldemann-Tatkin

also reported that many faith-based schools are dropping their community service

component and instead using service learning because students often see it as a chore that

can be put off until the last minute. For this reason, researchers agree that service

learning is an integrated method of sustaining the motivation to do community service-type work (Boldemann-Tatkin, 2015; Bridgeland et al., 2008). Finally, mandatory community service hours often result in failed classes, missed credit hours, or even postponed graduation in some schools. A lack of access is one barrier, proported Bridgeland et al. (2008).

Eighty-three percent of all students, 90% of African Americans, 83% of Hispanics, and 81% of Whites, said they would definitely or probably enroll in service-learning classes if they were offered at their school. At the same time, only 16% percent of students said that their school was offering such classes.

Inclusive Service Learning

Despite the complexities of implementing a new service-learning program, designing a successful program that is inclusive to students with special needs is an even greater challenge (Dymond, Chun, Kim, & Renzaglia, 2013). Failing to staff a competent service learning coordinator to advocate for proper alignment of services and programs can be a large barrier to implementing said programs (Boldemann-Tatkin, 2015; Dymond et al., 2013). The site or district service-learning coordinator is responsible for critical necessities of implementation. In a statewide study of 190 schools with service-learning components, Dymond et al. (2013) found that a lack of funds to implement and time to co-plan were the largest barriers identified by the surveys. Developing quality experiences that are meaningful to both students with disabilities and nondisabled students takes time and money to develop. By the same token, Dymond et al. (2013) concluded that activities need to be adapted to individual levels of students with

disabilities for them to be successful and sustain motivation. The reverse was found to be true in the same study as related to students without disabilities.

Researchers agree that motivation without a sound structure and plan leads to poor inclusion of service-learning disabilities (Brill, 1994; Dymond, 2007; Dymond et al., 2013). For this reason, schools have begun to write service-learning activities into student IEPs, individual transition plans, and 504 plans for students with disabilities (Brill, 1994; Dymond, 2007; Dymond et al., 2013). At the conclusion of their study, Dymond et al. (2013) suggested that educators conduct more research on improving service-learning opportunities by being more explicit in the inclusion of language connected to the IEPs of students with disabilities. This recommendation is in alignment with the research done by Brill (1994). Brill's research of more than 300 students of varying disability levels yielded positive findings for inclusive service learning. Some of the findings were increased socialization, decreased suspensions and time always, and heightened enthusiasm to participate in class. Consequently, the results yielded were found to be in part due to the intentional documentation of services in the IEPs and transition plans.

Circle of Friends (CoF)

According to the company's literature, CoF is an evidence-based approach to improving inclusion and developing social skills for students with disabilities (CoF, n.d.-a; Palilis, 2010). The evidence-based distinction is based on endorsements from three prominent organizations that advocate and provide services for students with multiple disabilities around the world. The CoF program uses peer-mediated interventions (PMI) to provide the social skill enhancement opportunities to target students with disabilities.

The National Autism Center states that the CoF program meets three of 11 criteria for being an effective approach for treating students with ASD (CoF, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). The three criteria that the National Autism Center found sufficient in the CoF program were peer training, natural teaching strategies, and modeling. According to CoF literature, the National Professional Development Center concluded that CoF met the criteria for the evidence-based standard because of the presence of modeling, naturalistic intervention, PMI and instruction, and prompting (American Speech-Language Hearing Association, n.d.; CoF, n.d.-a).

The final awarder of the organization's evidence-based practice status is the world-renowned Autism Speaks organization. According to CoF literature and founder B. Palilis and Autism Speaks (2014), the CoF program meets its criteria for evidence-based practice in the areas of inclusive practices and programs, collaborative networks, social and social-emotional skills, self-determination, and independent skill building. According to the founder of CoF, Mrs. Palilis, the organization's commitment to carrying out student circles all over campus allows CoF to continue to earn accolades. As a result, the CoF program has garnered the respect and approval of influential entities in the special education advocacy realm.

The CoF mentorship organization and similar programs have been documented to produce social, emotional, and academic benefits for its mentor participants (Brooks, 2014; CoF, n.d.-a; Palilis, 2010; Schleider et al., 2014). According to B. Maddock (2014), a former CoF mentor/buddy, the skills developed as a mentor helped him be more mindful of individual differences and contributed to his success as an adult. Former buddy interviewees on the CoF's video website professed similar experiences to those of

Maddock (Palilis, 2008). By utilizing peer-mediated interventions, mentors practice implementing social behaviors and modeling strategies on a daily basis (Bass & Mulick, 2007; Brooks, 2014; Schleider et al., 2014). Because peer-mediated instruction provides students with disabilities access to nondisabled "buddies" and staff, the programs are in alignment with Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development framework. CoF peer friends are technically not mentors. Still, nondisabled peer friends perform many of the tasks a mentor would (i.e., support with decision making, social interactions, modeling, etc.; Allen & Eby, 2007; Ragins & Kram, 2007). Against this background, the CoF program is based on a solid framework that allows its participants to practice social and emotional skills safely on a daily basis.

The Circle of Friends Canada Program

CoF Canada (CoFCAN) organization is also designed to alleviate the stigma of having a disability by using PMI to blur the lines of inclusion (Brooks, 2014; Goldstein, 2013; James & Leyden, 2010; O'Connor, 2016; Schleider et al., 2014). Despite the CoF and CoFCAN's lack of affiliation, the two organizations have very similar methods and outcomes. Therefore, evidence is presented on the merits of the CoFCAN due to its continued growth in the United States and the United Kingdom. In the Canadian-born program, students are also paired up with one to two trained buddies during nonstructured times of the day. The goal of the pairing is to strategically provide access to a wider circle of influence and acceptance into more social networks around campus (Calabrese et al., 2008). Calabrese et al. (2008), through their investigation of CoFCAN program, found that there were positive social benefits for the nondisabled students and the students with disabilities.

Although Calabrese et al. (2008) studied the CoFCAN program through the lens of *appreciative inquiry*, the study unearthed additional research about nondisabled participants early in the study. As the nondisabled mentor, students learn to traverse additional parts of the school and community to locate resources for their mentor, their self-esteem was increased. Likewise, the paired youth garnered more self-confidence while building a capacity for tolerance for people who were different from them (Holtz & Tessman, 2006). Schlieder et al. (2014) found that as the peer mentors developed empathy for their target counterparts, their inclusive attitude began to permeate the campus over time. Staff and parents noticed changes in the culture because of the program as well. One facilitator in this study described the nondisabled students as "patient and interested." Schlieder et al. documented that the facilitator also noted that the trained mentors were "really good with her" and that they "really seem to enjoy her" (p. 11). Additionally, one parent noted that his or her child received an invitation to a party by her mentor more than a year after the mentor transitioned from the group.

Although the amount of data on EI and mentorship programs is modest, the findings are usually life-changing for the participants (Cox, 2012; Holtz & Tessman, 2006; James & Leyden, 2010; Schleider et al., 2014). O'Connor (2016) found that peer mentors of students with disabilities showed *greater social empathy* for their targets and in general. Empathy falls under the category of social awareness in the EI framework by Daniel Goleman (1995). By the same token, 80% of the students in the study reported that they are more inclined to accept the differences of people who do not look like them, rather than avoid them. Consequently, the same study revealed that due to their shift in

empathy toward their buddies, these students developed a stronger sense of "belonging" toward the school as a whole (O'Connor, 2016).

Schlieder et al. (2014) stated, "While CoF may be viewed as contrived, artificial friendship at least initially, it appears from this study that some long-term, genuine friendships develop" (p. 35). Jones (2015) was presented with a surprising finding that when discussing moral dilemmas in their life and current relationships, the nondisabled mentors often used contextual examples from their mentoring experiences. In other words, their decision-making skills were altered and heightened by the experience. To better understand the potential benefits on mentor behavior, researchers need to conduct more focused research using a wider range of measures (Cox, 2012; Cushing & Kennedy, 1997; James & Leyden, 2010; O'Connor, 2016).
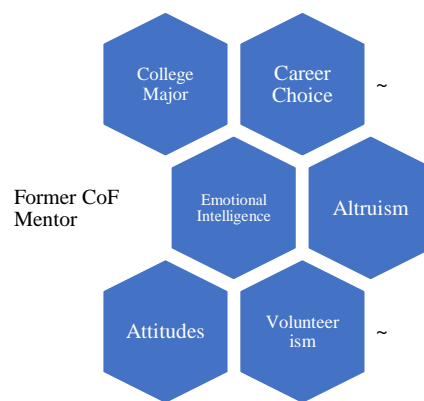
Figure 5. Study concept model.

Summary

Increased service-learning opportunities between nondisabled students and students with disabilities can expose the nondisabled student to the dynamics of living with multiple disabilities (Roper & Santiago, 2014; Schindler, 2011). Additionally, strategic and authentic mentorship can reduce the stigma surrounding what it means to

have special needs. Weiler et al. (2013) contended that increases in "problem-solving,"

"self-esteem," "self-efficacy," and "interpersonal skills" were among the benefits

garnered through several campus-wide mentorship programs (p. 243). This study noted

positive and reciprocal benefits for the mentors and mentees. Although each mentorship

relationship varies, a structured curriculum and effective training program increase the

probability of success. Data from this program and similar studies were utilized to

construct a study that yielded data that can add to the current scholarship on the subject.

This researcher presents research findings that can add to the body of research on EI as

related to the CoF program.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

This chapter chronicles the research methodology used to conduct this study. The research purpose statement and research questions are contained in this chapter. This study explored how participation in the Circle of Friends (CoF) program impacted former mentors of the program later in life. This being the case, the phenomenological approach to qualitative research was chosen to be the framework for this study. As such, the population, sample, and instrumentation conform to the requirements of qualitative phenomenological studies. Data collection and data analysis procedures for this study are communicated in detail in this section. In Chapter III, safeguards and procedures for protecting human subjects are presented as well as limitations of the research design.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of former CoF nondisabled peer mentors of students with multiple disabilities to discover how this mentorship program impacted Daniel Goleman's (1995) four dimensions of emotional intelligence (EI).

Research Questions

Central Question

What are the lived experiences of the CoF mentors and their perceptions of emotional intelligence as related to the four dimensions of EI?

Subquestions

1. How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the EI dimension of self-awareness?

2. How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the EI dimension of self-management?

3. How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the EI dimension of social awareness?

4. How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the EI dimension of relationship management?

<div align="center">

Research Design

</div>

Qualitative Framework

This study employed a qualitative research design. The data derived from qualitative studies tell a story (Patton, 2015). Because this study sought to understand the life experiences of former CoF participants, a narrative data gathering format was most appropriate. According to Patton (2015), qualitative data can be made up of any combination of quotes, documents, observations, and even social media. This type of research differs from quantitative data collection because the data are not quantifiable for statistical analysis (Patten, 2012). Additionally, qualitative research does not allow for the manipulation of participants or behavioral, setting, or stringent protocols (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Because the researcher made no interventions, this type of research is also called nonexperimental (Patten, 2012; Patton, 2015). Contrarily qualitative researchers attempt to reconstruct phenomenon from the participant's perspective through his or her recollection of the lived experience (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; Van Manen, 2014).

In qualitative designs, the researcher seeks to welcome the subject's voice into a chorus that contributes to the summative ballad of the sample. The researcher must seek

to be a neutral conduit that captures those voices. Patton (2015) stated, "Qualitative

inquiry is personal. The researcher is the instrument of inquiry" (p. 3). However, after

data collection, the researcher's experience with the subject as well as a myriad of other

factors will contribute to the reflection and synthesis of the data.

Phenomenological Research

The phenomenological approach is most associated with understanding *the lived*

experience of a population. Patton (2015) explained, "This requires methodologically,

carefully and thoroughly capturing and describing how people experience some

phenomenon—how, they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it and

make sense of it, and talk about it with others" (p. 115). This type of inquiry was used to

gather research from the subjects about their experience in the Circle of Friends (CoF)

program. Edmund Husserl (1931) is credited with developing the phenomenological

approach. Edmund characterized his philosophy as being the accurate accumulation of

pure experiences. Patton (2015) stated that "a person cannot reflect on a lived experience

while living through the experience" (p. 116). Ergo the phenomenological approach

allows a person the levity to re-experience a phenomenon as it comes to them in their

own words (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 2014). Therefore, participants for this study

were chosen from a population of mentors who had been graduated from the program for

a minimum of one year.

Other research designs were considered for this study. Heuristic inquiry and

ethnomethodology are the closest frameworks that might be viable for this type of study.

For instance, a heuristic framework is a form of phenomenology, and most akin to the

framework. However, using heuristics, the researcher takes part in the phenomenon and

is often changed by the experience (Patton, 2015). This study analyzes the lived experience of the participants after their completion of the CoF program. Ethnographical studies are heavily based on observations and fieldwork (Patton, 2015; Van Manen, 2014). Like the heuristic approach, this framework would not have worked because the data collection occurred after the phenomenon in this study. Although the phenomenological approach is based on remembered accounts, that does not make the accounts less valid. Husserl (1931) posited that any experience represents a good place to initialize an investigation. Furthermore, perception is a *thing*, and it can be verified if one chooses to research it (Husserl, 1931; Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 2014).

Population

McMillan and Schumacher (2014) described a population as an accumulation of members who share characteristics that fit the researcher's criteria for a study. Patten (2012) identifies a population as a group of participants *in which researchers are interested*. The population for this study was past mentors of the CoF program. Members of this program include students with various disabilities and nondisabled general education students from the same campus. CoF promotes the inclusion of students with disabilities into the culture of school campuses through a strategic mentoring system. According to the program website (CircleoFriends.org), there are roughly 240 chapters across seven states at present. Of the total chapters, 190 are located in California. The program began in 1999 at Santa Monica High School. Roberts (2010) stated, "Ideally, an entire population would be used to gather information" (p. 149). Geographically it is not possible to study all of the former CoF mentor participants.

The target population for this study focused on the Southern California graduated participants of CoF who were between the ages of 18 and 30. The target population is the entire group of people, within a geographical area, to which the researcher wishes to generalize the study findings. That said, the population is former CoF peer friends; however, the target population is former peer friends from the schools in Santa Monica-Malibu and William S. Hart School Districts. The researcher used a time-location sample as well. In other words, all of the participants who met the criteria and were available geographically were admitted into the study. Hence, the researcher was able to interview participants who were visiting home from college or visiting relatives on break.

The researcher used a combination of purposeful and random sampling. Therefore, participants in this study were former mentors of the CoF curriculum. Since the program's inception in 1999, there have been over 1,000 mentors from these two school districts, which are located in Southern California. The participants were self-volunteered adults who consented to be interviewed and to share artifacts.

Sampling

Roberts (2010) suggested, "When you don't have an opportunity to study the whole group, select a sample that is representative of the total group in which you are interested" (p. 143). The researcher used different methods to identify candidates from the entire population from which to collect data. Random sampling is a method of gathering participants in which every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Because this type of research is based on a smaller sampling of participants, subjects were chosen with a different technique. The population for this study was no longer available in a cluster. A cluster is a group of

people who are close in proximity and readily accessible for study. Consequently, the researcher had to use multiple methods of obtaining participants. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), purposeful sampling occurs when the researcher identifies characteristics that make candidates ideal for a certain study.

Each high school selected for this study had a CoF coordinator. CoF coordinators were responsible for sending the study invitations to all participants who fit the prescribed criteria. This requirement of the study added a level of randomness to those who would then self-select based on their ability to meet for an interview. The researcher created a flyer that informed participants of the study (see Appendices A and B). The flyers were distributed to CoF coordinators and directors in the William S. Hart School District and Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District. The flyers were given to the directors electronically or physically mailed by the primary researcher. The directors and coordinators sent the flyer and study information to former participants with whom they still had contact.

Some coordinators reached out to potential participants by phone to inform them of the opportunity to share their experience with a researcher (see Appendix B) for the study flyer. In summary, this study endeavored to explore the lived experiences of former CoF participants in the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District and the William S. Hart School District. The schools from which high school graduates were drawn were West Ranch High School, Golden Valley High School, Canyon High School, and Santa Monica High School. Former mentors must have been away from the CoF program no more than 8 years. Fourteen participants who met the criteria were selected for interviews and artifact study. The study criteria for the participants were as follows:

- Participant must be between the ages of 18 and 30.

- Participant must have served as a peer friend in high school in the CoF program.

- Participant must consent to and be available for a face-to-face interview.

- Participant must be in the Southern California geographic area.

Patton (2015) asserted that there is not a set formula or number of participants in qualitative research. However, researchers agree that a larger number of participants adds to the depth and breadth of the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; Patten, 2012; Patton, 2015). For this reason, the researcher met with program coordinators from four schools to distribute study materials and educate the coordinators about the study. Comprehensive interviews with fewer candidates can be very worthwhile particularly when the data are voluminous (Patton, 2015). In summation, the sample size is representative of the larger population of CoF program in Southern California.

Instrumentation

In a phenomenological study, the researcher is the research instrument (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; Patton, 2015). According to Pezalla, Pettigrew, and Miller-Day (2012), when the researcher is the data collection instrument, personal experiences, preferences, and interview styles could influence how the interview is conducted. Due to this fact, qualitative data collected in this manner can contain some biases depending on how the researcher conducts the interview. For this reason, the researcher employed the Epoche method when collecting data. Epoche, simply put, means dethatching from one's predeterminations, suppositions, and preconceived notions about a subject. By using this method, the researcher captures the raw data during interviews.

Researchers conduct long, in-depth interviews that should begin with a brief social period to create a relaxed and trusting atmosphere (Moustakas, 1994). To that end, the researcher in this study conducted interviews in well-lit, secured venues of the interviewee's choosing. During this period of collaboration remaining protocols were signed and the researcher answered any questions that remained from the participants (see Appendix C) for the informed consent document. Interviews were scheduled in a manner convenient to the researcher and the participant after initial contact and prescreening took place over the phone. One-to-one interviews took place in coffee shops, restaurants, and public libraries. Participants received information on the study goals, risks associated with participation, and follow-up information. The data collection took approximately one and a half months to compile.

Research Question Development

To ensure that the research questions for this study aligned with the themes of the research, an expert panel was employed to assess the questions and offer feedback on their clarity and effectiveness. Panel participants included college professors, high school administrators, and experts in the field of peer mentorship. The panel was tasked with collaborating to develop meaningful questions that garnered the right type of data. To that end, the committee began by identifying what type of data should be gathered. Since this is a qualitative study, in-depth interviews were to revise the questions to ensure that the questions were open-ended and free from directional steering. Moustakas (1994) contended that key terms of a study should be explicitly defined, analyzed, and reflected upon among different people to ensure the intent and purpose of the study was apparent.

Next, the team established ethical guidelines that were infused into the protocols of the study. These guidelines were designed to ensure that each participant was treated with fairness and with respect to commonly acceptable mores of this society. From there the study protocols were developed (see Appendix E). Finally, the team was tasked with developing the research questions for the interviewer. To properly align the research questions to the study goals, each subquestion was directly related to one of Daniel Goleman's (1995) tenets of EI. Panel experts' cross-referenced subcategories of Goleman's four tenets to ensure alignment of the research questions and the probing questions (see Appendix G for a mockup of the cross-reference tool).

Data Collection

After Brandman University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) had reviewed the study goals and procedures, permission was granted to the researcher to begin collecting data. The researcher contacted the director of special education for the target high school districts. From there the researcher was instructed to obtain permission to conduct the study on the CoF program from their headquarters. As a result, the researcher contacted the CoF, program director. The researcher was provided with a wealth of background information about the organization. Subsequently, the program director set up a contact with the founder of the organization to obtain final permissions. All interactions were productive and provided the researcher with rich data that have been infused into the study.

After all approvals were received, the researcher obtained contact information from the CoF headquarters and from individual schools in the William S. Hart School District. Participants who responded to the flyer through e-mail or a phone call were

scheduled to meet with the interviewer for 45- to 70-minute interviews (see Appendix H) for interview questions. Patten (2012) asserted that qualitative research uses open-ended questions to gather the essence of what a subject experienced. The questions for interviews are usually scripted, and the researcher has the autonomy to ask follow-up questions if he or she so chooses (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; Patton, 2015). In addition to asking scripted questions, the researcher used an interview protocol checklist to ensure ethical and consistent data collection (see Appendix E) for the checklist used with each participant.

Field Testing

Field tests are designed to ensure appropriateness and clarity in the questions. Furthermore, field testing allowed the researcher the opportunity to rehearse questioning protocols and test the equipment. After the completion of the field study, the researcher conducted an oral survey to better understand the appropriateness of the timing constraints, setting, and question wording. An outside observer observed the field tests to look for ambiguous questions and consistency of the interviewer. After the field tests were conducted, the outside observer and the primary researcher collaborated to identify areas that needed to be strengthened (see Appendix F for an example of the field-test questions).

When gathering and analyzing phenomenological data, it is important for the researcher to follow the Husserl's tenets of epoche and reduction (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 2014). Unlike the ethnographic researchers, phenomenological researchers need to disconnect somewhat from the interviewee. According to Moustakas (1994), epoche is a Greek term that means *refrain from judgment* or dismiss the everyday manner of

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perceiving phenomena. With this in mind, the researcher committed to suspending

preconceived notions about what the subjects believed or might have been veiling during

their responses. The researcher took the position of active listener during each interview,

seeking only to chronicle the lived experience as it came to his consciousness. This was

made possible by recording the interview on two separate dictation devices. As the

participants responded to the study questions, the researcher was careful to employ the

technique of *reduction*. Researchers loosely described reduction as consciously focusing

directly on the information that is presented. Furthermore, interviewers must remain

mindful to allow the interview to meander at times to allow the essence of the story to

appear naturally (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015; Van

Manen, 2014).

Data Analysis

Qualitative researchers convert personal accounts and raw data into findings by

coding, categorizing, and interpreting information (Patton, 2015). In doing so,

researchers agree that it is a long and arduous process with varying schemas and

methodologies. Furthermore, it is understood that the accuracy of the findings is

commensurate with the tenacity and analytical skills of the researchers (McMillan &

Schumacher, 2014; Patton, 2015; Van Manen, 2014). That being said, the researcher

began the first step in data analysis, which is transcription. The researcher transcribed all

of the responses and separated them into individual question answers. This process

required prolonged immersion into the depths of participant accounts of the experiences

that they had undertaken in high school and the years following graduation. After

transcription, the data were ready to be themed.

To form themes, the researchers must read the material several times in different ways. For instance, the researcher can read data sets initially to get a feel for the account as a whole. Then the data should be read to find common themes (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). Accordingly, the researcher for this study read and developed themes from within the responses. Later the researcher developed codes or categories that most of the data would eventually be divided into. From there the researcher made a list of major and minor codes. Major codes encompass themes, while minor codes help to provide clarity and support to their major or parent code (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The researcher used open coding which is *relating concepts to each other* (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

After the researcher developed the codes, a qualitative data analysis software was employed to support accurate analysis of the data. The researcher used NVivo, which is a software that allows the researcher to place each segment of data into its respective node or code category. The software stores, organizes, and makes the data readily available for synthesis and reporting. Throughout the process of coding, the major code descriptions were manipulated while rearranging data segments to ensure accuracy. Before employing the reliability software, a second researcher read the transcripts independently to see if they would get similar results. Patton (2015) described intercoder reliability as a process to help analyze data sets to determine if different evaluators obtain similar results. A reliability rater who was familiar with the NVivo software analyzed the completed data sets for coding accuracy. Lombard, Snyder-Duch, and Campanella Bracken (2004) established intercoder reliability as coefficients of .90 or greater are generally acceptable with .80 being acceptable as well. The pair of researchers

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collaborated after the second coder completed his or her analysis. Intercoder reliability

was established at .91, which exceeds the acceptable coefficient of .80. The team made

minor adjustments, which led to the construction of the research findings.

Validity

McMillan and Schumacher (2014) described validity as "the degree of

congruence between the explanations of the phenomena and the realities of the world"

(p. 330). In other words, the researcher's account of the data should have a mutual

meaning with the participant intent (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Thus, the

researcher in this study used two recording devices to chronicle the entire interviews.

During the introduction and preparation phase of the interview, the researcher established

a rapport in an attempt to build trust with the participant to enhance the validity of the

responses. Van Manen (2014) claimed that this process creates more insight into the

experience or phenomenon being developed. Additionally, the researcher asked

clarifying questions when a response might have appeared ambiguous to the researcher.

The participants were allowed to review their transcript after it was finished to

check for inaccuracies and oversights (Patton, 2015). The study methodology was

designed according to accepted principals of phenomenological research methods (Van

Manen, 2014). Finally, field testing was conducted with two subjects who fit the criteria

for induction into the study.

Reliability

Reliability refers to consistency of results, which can be attained through

standardization of data collection (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; Patten, 2012). Van

Manen (2014) noted that phenomenological studies of the same event or phenomenon can

yield very different results. Nevertheless, the researcher in this study used a process to minimize risk and maximize reliability. Each interview was conducted according to the interview protocol checklist with very little variation between participants. Internal reliability was strengthened because all participants were interviewed face-to-face. In-person interviews allowed the researcher to observe facial expressions during the interview. During participant interviews, this led to a repeating or clarifying of the question on the spot. This nuance reduced confusion of questions, thereby providing more reliable and accurate data.

Researchers agree that when a study demonstrates consistency with the data collection, analysis, and results, it is considered reliable (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; Patten, 2012). External validity refers to the degree to which another researcher used the same protocols and methodologies; the results should be equivalent (Patton, 2015). That being said, all protocols and forms are contained in this document and examples provided in the appendix section.

Limitations

According to Roberts (2010), limitations are features associated with a study that has the potential to negatively affect the generalization of results. All studies have some limitations, and the researcher usually has no control over them. Steps can be taken to mitigate limitations. Nevertheless, the reader of the study should be informed. That stated, the following limitations have been identified in this study:

1. This study utilized the phenomenological approach of qualitative design, which requires a smaller sample size. As a result, the sample size was limited to 14 former

mentors in Southern California (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; Patten, 2012; Patton, 2015).

2. Since the researcher is the instrument in phenomenological research, researcher bias is always a potential limiter (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; Patten, 2012; Patton, 2015). Given that the researcher has extensive experience mentoring, researcher bias is a possibility. Therefore, conscious acknowledgment of the researcher's potential for bias was employed during interviews (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

3. Because this study was limited to participants who responded to an e-mailed flyer or a mutual contact introduction, the sample size was not a true randomization. As such, generalization to all CoF members is not possible (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; Patton, 2015; Roberts, 2010).

4. This study attempted to identify the lived experience of the human subjects through in-depth interviews. Accordingly, there is always the potential for omissions of facts and supplying inaccurate details (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; Patton, 2015).

To alleviate limiting factors and strengthen the quality of research the following safeguards were incorporated into the study:

1. Despite the smaller sampling of the larger population, the researcher attempted to obtain subjects from various demographics (age, sex, ethnicity).

2. The researcher practiced bracketing, or removing one's self from the data collection process (Van Manen, 2014).

3. The researcher interviewed the organization's founder, program director, and school implementers of the program to obtain a true representation of potential subjects.

4. Due to the potential for human error in recounting information, the participants were

    allowed to view their transcripts to ensure there were no omissions or unintentional

    false accounts of facts.

Summary

This chapter presented the methodology and procedures used to facilitate this study. The purpose statement and research questions were revealed in this chapter. Included also was the phenomenological research design, which dictated the sampling, data collection, and analysis procedures outlined herein. Limitations and safeguards to protect the human subjects and the integrity of the research were found in Chapter III as well. The key themes that emerged from the data collected are presented in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter examines the findings of the research to describe the lived experience past peer friend participants of the Circle of Friends (CoF) program. The chapter begins with a restatement of the purpose statement, research questions and an overview of the research methods and data collection procedures. This chapter summarizes data collection from 14 interviews of self-identified former peer friends who participated in the CoF program. Next, the chapter includes a set of tables illustrating the themes, patterns, and alignment of data collected during in-depth interviews. Finally, a summary and analysis of the data collected from the 14 interviews are displayed in this chapter.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of former CoF nondisabled peer mentors of students with multiple disabilities to discover how this mentorship program impacted Daniel Goleman's (1995) four dimensions of emotional intelligence (EI).

Research Questions

Central Question

What are the lived experiences of the CoF mentors and their perceptions of EI as related to the four dimensions of EI?

Subquestions

1. How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the EI dimension of self-awareness?

2. How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their

   participation impacted their growth in the EI dimension of self-management?

3. How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their

   participation impacted their growth in the EI dimension of social awareness?

4. How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their

   participation impacted their growth in the EI dimension of relationship management?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

This qualitative, phenomenological research study employed in-depth one-on-one

interviews to probe and explore the lived and perceived experience of former mentor

participants of the CoF program. The interview questions were designed to elicit the

answers to the research questions. Though past studies have been conducted on the

benefits for students with disabilities in programs like CoF, this is a pioneer study on the

nondisabled peer friend participants. Therefore, this study explored how participation as

a peer friend impacted Daniel Goleman's (1995) four dimensions of EI.

The interviews included one central question with a corresponding interview

question. Also, the interview contained two questions that corresponded with each of

Daniel Goleman's (1995) tenets of emotional intelligence. The interviews were guided

by a single interview protocol (Appendix E). A field test was conducted by the

researcher to ensure quality interview procedures and clarity of interview questions.

Adjustments were made to the original procedure and questions as a result (see Appendix

F for field-test participant feedback questions). Subsequently, Questions 1 through 8

were designed to explore the participant's perceived social and emotional growth during

and after participation. Question 9 was developed to capture the participants' perception

of how their affiliation may have impacted their career or life choices after CoF (see Appendix H for study questions and subquestions).

The researcher used purposeful sampling methods to obtain study participants. A study invitation, study flyer, and an interactive survey were developed to inform participants about the nature of the study. These documents also contained contact information for the researcher and procedures to help the potential participants determine if they met the criteria for participation. After obtaining consent from the Institutional Review Board, the researcher contacted the regional director for CoF to gain consent to petition the organization for permission to conduct the study. After consent was granted, the regional director distributed the study information via e-mail to the coordinators of the CoF programs in the target schools. Upon receipt of said e-mails participants contacted the researcher and face-to-face interviews were scheduled and conducted according to the interview protocols.

Before each interview, the participants were asked to complete a demographic information survey (see Appendix D for survey questions). Each interview was audio recorded after consent was obtained from the participant (see Appendix C for informed consent evidence). A handheld digital recorder with microphones and a backup tape recorder were used to record each interview. Each interview was transcribed by a professional company and checked by the researcher for accuracy. Four participants elected to review their recorded transcript. Each participant was pleased with the accuracy and content of his or her transcribed interview.

Reliability

The researcher uploaded each interview into a coding software called NVivo. This software is designed to help the researcher accurately identify themes and patterns that emerge in the individual interviews. A second coder was elicited to identify initial themes. A comparison of the results of the two researcher's codes reveals a high percentage of consistency. The threshold of 80% was surpassed by a score of 92% between the two researchers. Therefore, the results of this study met the standard for having a strong measure of interrater reliability.

Population

The population for this study included former peer friends of the CoF program. Members of this population must have been a nondisabled peer friend of CoF for at least one year during high school. Participants must also have been adults who have since graduated from school. Furthermore, participants of this study had to be willing to consent to a one-on-one interview.

Sample

The sample of participants was limited to participants in the Southern California region. More specifically, the participants were solicited from two school districts in California: William S. Hart School District and Santa Monica-Malibu School District. The sample for this study was limited to people who were between the ages of 18 and 30. Participants who met the criteria prescribed in the solicitation contacted the researcher via phone or e-mail. The employment of snowball sampling was useful in obtaining qualified participants for study. According to Biernacki and Waldorf (1981), snowball sampling uses a referral system derived from participants who are likely to know other

participants who possess similar characteristics. Consequently, an initial pool was

derived from the regional director and school coordinators, and snowball sampling was

used to gather additional participants.

Demographic Data

Sixteen respondents contacted the researcher. However, only 14 participants met

the criteria and were interviewed. All the participants completed their CoF program work

in Southern California. Participants in this study came from two high schools in the

target districts. Thirteen of the participants still live in Southern California although two

of them attend college in other states. One of the participants currently resides in New

York. The ratio of female to male participants was not evenly distributed. However, it

should be noted that this trend was consistent with actual demographics in the schools

that were represented. Although the participants ranged from 18 to 30, all of the working

participants appeared to be in a leadership position at their jobs. It is important to note

that all of the professionals in the study attained white-collar jobs. All of the participants

either worked with a large group of people or worked to serve other people. Table 2

shows the distribution of data collected on all 14 study participants.

Educational Level

According to the gathered data in Table 3, all of the former participants had post-

high school education. Of the 14 participants, nine of the participants had at least a

bachelor's degree. Eight of the nine participants had graduate degrees. Three of the

undergraduate participants were at a university, and the remaining two of the five

undergraduates were attending a community college at the time of this research. Each of

the five undergraduate participants expressed a desire to obtain a 4-year degree.

Table 2

Demographic Information for Former Circle of Friends Peer Friend Participants

Participant	Age	Race/ ethnicity	Gender	Position	Name of employer	Years of experience in current position	High school
1	19	Hispanic	M	Manager	Vallarta	1 year	Valencia
2	26	Caucasian	F	Registered nurse	Unemployed	6 months	Santa Monica
3	29	Caucasian/ Middle Eastern	F	Teacher	Santa Monica Unified	7 years	Santa Monica
4	29	Middle Eastern/ Persian	M	Attorney	Seyfarth Shaw	3 years	Santa Monica
5	29	Middle Eastern	F	Director of donor relations	Occidental College	2 years	Santa Monica
6	29	Caucasian	F	Assist director of education	Temple Akiba	4 years	Santa Monica
7	28	Persian	F	Fashion blogger	Fashionlaine	5 years	Santa Monica
8	18	Caucasian	M	Student	Brown University	1 semester	Santa Monica
9	30	Caucasian	F	Fashion designer	Self-employed	7 years	Santa Monica
10	29	Persian	F	Attorney	Bocarsly Emden	4 years	Santa Monica
11	28	Caucasian	M	Videographer	PBS	5 years	Santa Monica
12	20	Hispanic	F	Special services associate	Home Depot	7 months	Valencia
13	18	Caucasian	F	Shift lead	Sharky's	1 year	Valencia
14	18	Caucasian	F	Student	University of Utah	1 year	Valencia

Table 3

Participant Demographic Information by Educational Attainment

Participant	Age	Gender	Postsecondary degree
Participant 1	19	M	In college
Participant 2	26	F	BA+
Participant 3	29	F	BA+
Participant 4	28	M	BA+
Participant 5	29	F	BA+
Participant 6	29	F	BA+
Participant 7	28	F	BA+
Participant 8	18	M	In college
Participant 9	30	F	BA
Participant 10	29	F	BA+
Participant 11	28	M	BA+
Participant 12	20	F	In college
Participant 13	18	F	In college
Participant 14	18	F	In college

Presentation and Analysis of Data

In this section, participant data are presented to answer this research study's five research questions. Fourteen participants were interviewed to explore how each of them perceived that the CoF program impacted their EI. The central question sought to examine if the lived experiences of a CoF peer friend were in alignment with Daniel Goleman's (1995) four tenets of EI. The four subquestions were designed to probe for evidence of specific experiences of the domains of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. To better understand the four components of EI and connect the gathered data, Figure 6 contains some of the tenets of EI. A more detailed analysis of EI is found in the literature review.
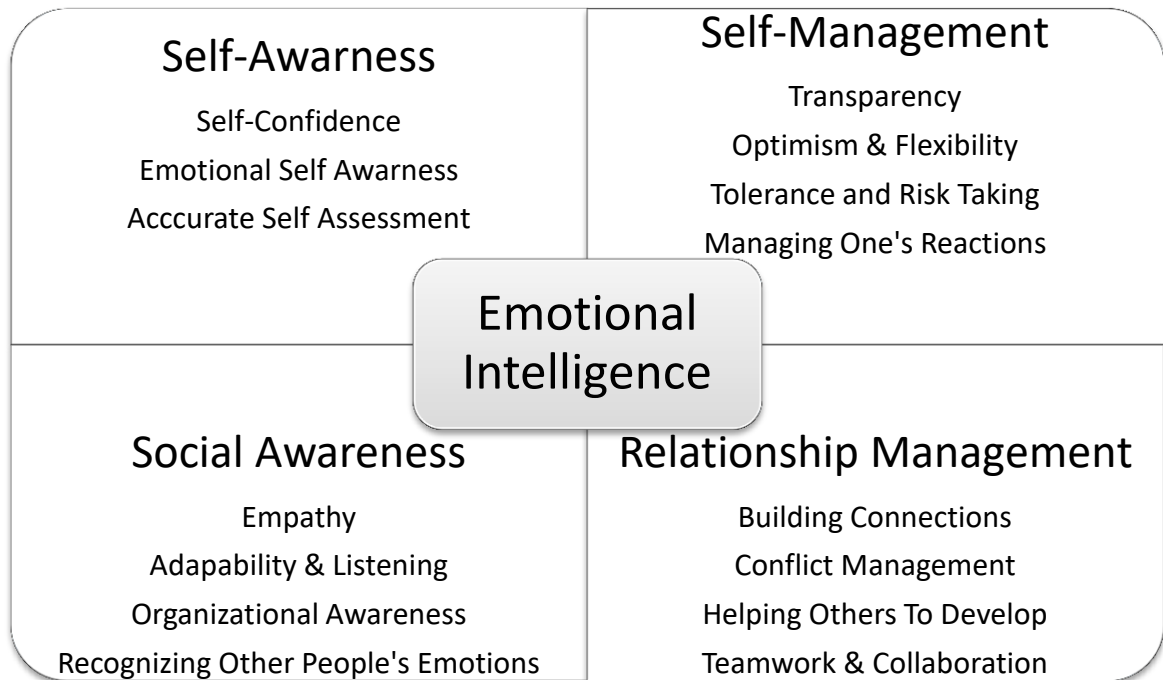
Figure 6. The four quadrants of emotional intelligence. *Note.* Adapted from "How Emotionally Intelligent Are You?" by D. Goleman, 2015 (http://www.danielgoleman.info/daniel-goleman-how-emotionally-intelligent-are-you/).

Data Analysis by Research Question

Central Question

To develop a sense of what the participants experienced during their participation in the CoF program, the researcher developed questions to obtain evidence of the lived experiences of a CoF participant. According to Van Manen (2014), rather than ask an interviewee to give specific details about an event or time, it is much less difficult to obtain their interpretation or rendering of events. For this reason, participants were initially asked to describe their experience as a CoF peer friend. Using the NVivo coding software, the 14 participant responses were analyzed for evidence of characteristics associated with EI (see Figure 6 for themes and evidence).

After transcribing the recorded interviews, the researcher read each interview several times to obtain an initial direction for common themes. The researcher then uploaded the transcripts into the coding software called NVivo. Question 1, which is related to the central question, was broken down into broad themes that are commensurate with the tenets of EI. From there, the researcher divided the 14 respondents' interview parts into their respective code or theme. The resulting themes can be seen in Table 4. From the 14 interviews, five themes emerged after the second round of coding by the researcher and coresearcher.

Table 4

Central Questions and Themes

EI tenets	Theme names	Theme contents	Source	References	%
Self-management	Leadership & responsibility	Coordinated events; being an officer; advocating; collaborating	12	42	27
Self-awareness	Emotional growth	More empathetic; fear management; personal optimism; humbling	13	49	32
Social awareness	Structured & organized	Consistent interactions; structured curriculum; clear expectations by CoF; no pressure	9	19	12
Relationship management	Lifelong connections	Remain friends; valued connections; bond creating	8	16	11
Social awareness	Enjoyment	Cherished time; mutual fun; personally rewarding	11	28	18

Emotional growth. Emotional growth was the theme that occurred the most during the interviews. At 32%, this theme was the most noted while coding the data. To be classified in this category, a participant had to communicate a thought that encompassed their initial feelings juxtaposed to their perceived mental state after

participation. Furthermore, this communicated a data point needed to be in line with growth. For example, Participant 4 said,

> I think I learned most about myself that there's a way to be accepting of other people and there's a way to be able to rid your mind of thinking that there is a line between people who have a disability and people who don't.

This sentiment of commonality was echoed five more times in this theme. According to the data, many of the 14 participants saw the blurring of the line between students with disabilities and nondisabled students as a good thing.

As displayed in Table 4, emotional growth was documented in other ways like the perception of increased empathy and understanding. It should be noted that 13 of the 14 participants contributed to this theme in some way. There were eight instances where participants alluded to growth in understanding as a result of being in the program. Participant 10 stated, "And I think that going through a program like CoF, where maybe students are more visibly struggling with something, just shows that everyone really does have a special need of some kind." Another instance came from Participant 6, "It was definitely an eye-opening experience. Being around people with disabilities things change very rapidly and consistently. It was kind of jarring this being my first experience. It was a good experience for me to learn and grow." Participants repeatedly acknowledged that their participation increased their ability to look at life through other people's eyes.

Finally, there were many instances of participants who believed they developed an ability to manage fear and social awkwardness. Participant 2 noted, "I was a pretty shy high school student, and it's hard to start a conversation with someone and definitely

helped me learn to do that because you have to be the ring leader." "My experience definitely brought me out of my comfort zone," noted Participant 3. The data indicated a pattern of participants developing skills to overcome shyness as noted in Participant 13's comment:

> I didn't really want to meet any new people, just because it didn't seem like something I wanted to do. There was an advertisement for CoF, and it seemed like something really nice. So then once I joined, I was actually able to go away from my feeling of just having my inner circle, and I added a couple more people to my inner circle, and I included my special education friends. But after the years went on, I was able to interact with more people in CoF, not only special education but also the general education students, and learn more about them, too. It really helped me be more confident with the way that I speak to people, and also the way that I interact with other people, whether it's in school or just outside in public.

Leadership and responsibility. The second area of perceived growth by the participants was in the area of leadership and taking responsibility. This area accounted for 27% of the total references in the interview question. The participants' responses were arrayed in areas like advocating for their peer friend, obtaining leadership roles in the program, and recruiting others to participate and make a difference. The data revealed that many of the participants felt a responsibility to their peer friend and the organization. For example, Participant 1 noted,

> During the program, a lot of people would say things like, "Why are you doing this? What do you get out of it?" Or they would just say negative comments. I

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would say, "They're basically like my brothers and sisters." I feel like they're my family in a way, like my little siblings.

Five of the participants were proud to say that they participated "all 4 years" of high school. "I definitely became more aware of what was going on around me and how people interacted with one another on campus. I was able to make a difference and stand up to people that might not have been as self-aware" (Participant 14).

Another point of personal responsibility that was communicated during the interviews was a sense of duty to their peer friends and the organization. Participant 2 stated, "In the high school sense, like as a high schooler, I remember sometimes I was like, 'Oh, I have to go meet with my CoF buddy. I can't have lunch with you,' or whoever it was." Participant 7 stated, "I just feel like I learned a lot about leadership from that, you learn a lot about patience. Just really good qualities that people should just have, and humble themselves and remind themselves about." Moreover, seven participants made references to being responsible for the energy level of the interactions with their peer friends. Participant 8 had the following to say:

> I felt like my responsibility was to make sure they were having a good time and that comes with understanding what they're going through and seeing how they're feeling, seeing how I can change the situation. I guess I tried to read the context of what's going on. I would say, maybe a little bit more observant of how other people are feeling and reacting.

Personal fulfilment. Personal satisfaction with the work was another theme that permeated from the data. Eleven of the 14 participants expressed having a sense of personal enjoyment or fulfillment when participating as a peer friend. Moreover, this

theme garnered 18% of the total responses to this question. It is noteworthy to mention that the word "really" occurred most often in this theme. The word was used to add emphasis to terms used to describe how they felt about their time as peer friends. The word was repeated 18 times right before words like enjoyed, great, friends, and special. For example, Participant 14 stated, "I really enjoyed the interaction that I had, both with the special needs students and their teachers." Participant 2 stated,

> You could tell every person with a disability that was part of this organization felt honored that they got to be a part of it. They felt excited to get to hang out with other kids, and it really made you feel like, "Oh, I'm making an impact and the smallest gesture, like joining me for lunch, could have an impact on someone else."

Additionally, a sense of gratitude was indeed evident in the data. Participant 5 stated, "We were grateful to be able to be helpful." Participant 9 stated, "It was just a really nice way for us to meet someone new, and make a new friend. We found it to be really fun and rewarding." Participant 8 shared that the program helped him open up naturally. When asked about his overall experience he stated the following:

> The program let me realize that it's more important to be myself and not try to fit some role, I guess. They helped me realize that I'm good enough in just being there and being there for the people that matter to me. Yeah, I didn't need to facilitate friendships. Friendships aren't something necessarily you create. The good friendships are but they happen naturally, and it kind of let me see that in making relationships, in facilitating friendships. Good friendships come by being together and enjoying company as opposed to forcing something to happen.

Structure and support. The sentiment of the organization or club giving the participants a purpose with a concrete structure appeared in many layers of the data. Nine of the participants mentioned this topic in their interviews to combine for 12% of the total responses. According to the data, CoF provided a structured environment for the peer friends to interact on a consistent basis. The participant data carried a theme of support throughout the program as well. For example, Participant 3 recounted, "I remember we had an orientation before we started the program, and we were told, every single person has a special need." Participant 2 said,

> So I think that was definitely beneficial because it kind of broke the ice a little bit. However, I remember, I think there was like a training beforehand and then we had lunch every week with the student that we were with.

Like many other interviewees, Participant 5 made the statement, "It was pretty structured." Participant 5 added, "Me and a lot of my friends were really passionate about it, it was well-organized."

Many of the participants in this study were in the program in its infancy stages at Santa Monica High School. In addition to favoring the program for the structure, many respondents mentioned the organization's leadership as a large part of the experience. Participants mentioned receiving guidance and mentorship inside and outside the club from its founder Barbara Palilis. Participant 11 commented, "I don't know if you met Barbara. She was just so welcoming, and so sort of comforting, that's what I remember really that's what I sort of gravitated towards the most. The environment was so friendly, and stuff." Participant 10 noted,

Also think having a supervisor, like Barbara, who's a speech therapist, who has

tools of how to connect to people. And she kind of served as a therapist I think to

a lot of the participants in the program, both students with, and without special

needs.

Participants stated that because of the level of support they received, they became leaders

in the program and participated in events outside of the normal school day. Participant 8

stated,

So essentially, I did the summer program, so it lasted for about a month or two,

and twice a week we would just go and spend time with the kids, not always kids,

adults often, and just do activities I would do with my friends in general.

According to the data, several students participated in summer opportunities and later

became leaders in the summer camps.

Lifelong connections. The final facet of what the participants expressed as their

experience was developing lifelong connections and valued friendships. Although this

theme generated the least amount of comments, the impact of the common sentiment is

enormous. Capturing eight of the participants' comments in this area does not serve the

magnitude of the theme. For instance, the word friend or some derivation of it is the

second most used word in the evidence collected from the interviews. The word was

used 332 times throughout the collected data. Participant 13 stated, "We were able to

build a bond, and be able to build a friendship. . . . Kya, who is someone I still keep in

touch with today." Participant 12 relayed a story of when she endearingly greeted a

person with a disability in their workplace. Her response to the fellow employee was,

"I've known him for years, and we go way back. I can actually see them as friends, honestly."

Participant 14 who is still in college described her plan to keep the program and its goals of friendship creation relevant in her life:

Right now, I'm just volunteering, and I know I'm going to be volunteering for the rest of my life. I'd hope to have something in my career involved special education students because it helped me realize it was something I really love. I also know that for the rest of my life I will either visit Valencia High School and see their CoF program and see how it's going. I would also like to keep in touch with the special education students that I met, and just being able to communicate with other members of the special education in public.

Data Collected by Research Question

After the interview data were entered into the coding program NVivo, the researcher read through the coded data to look for themes that displayed evidence of EI as purported by Daniel Goleman (1995) and other researchers. As a result, the data that fit into an aspect of each research question are displayed in this section. Table 5 displays the amount of references or participants who reflectively made comments in line with characteristics of EI.

Each theme in Table 5 is in direct alignment with one or more of the tenets of EI. Self-assessment and mood recognition coincide with self-awareness. Mood regulation and personal interactions are connected to self-management; empathy and nonverbal communication are connected to relationship management. Finally, the ability

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Table 5

Distribution of Data by Theme

Research question	Theme	Sources	Frequency	% of total
Research Question 1	Self-assessment	14	188	17.0%
Research Question 1	Mood recognition	13	91	8.0%
Research Question 2	Mood regulation	14	352	32.0%
Research Question 2	Personal interactions	14	77	7.0%
Research Question 3	Empathy	14	79	7.2%
Research Question 3	Nonverbal communication	14	136	12.0%
Research Question 4	Ability to connect	14	127	12.0%
Research Question 4	Career & life choices	12	45	4.0%

to connect and career and life choices connect to social awareness. The research themes connected to Research Questions 1 and 2 are all related to personal competence. According to Bradberry and Greaves (2009), personal competence is understanding one's feelings and managing his or her actions and reactions to stimulus. The research themes connected to Research Questions 3 and 4 are related to social competence. Bradberry and Greaves described social competence as one's ability to interpret other people or a group of people's emotions enough to make changes that will benefit the relationship or situation. It was through these competency lenses that the researcher coded the data.

In Figure 7, each of the domains has been correlated to the amount of data collected in the study. From the semistructured in-depth interviews, it appears the participants reflected most often on lessons learned in the self-management domain. Participant perception data reveal that self-competencies attributed to 64% of the total data collected. While social competencies accounted for 36% of the aggregated data. It is important to note that if a participant stated that he or she had no change, the data were not included in a code. Displayed data are only reflective of responses coded to meet one or more of the criteria for EI.
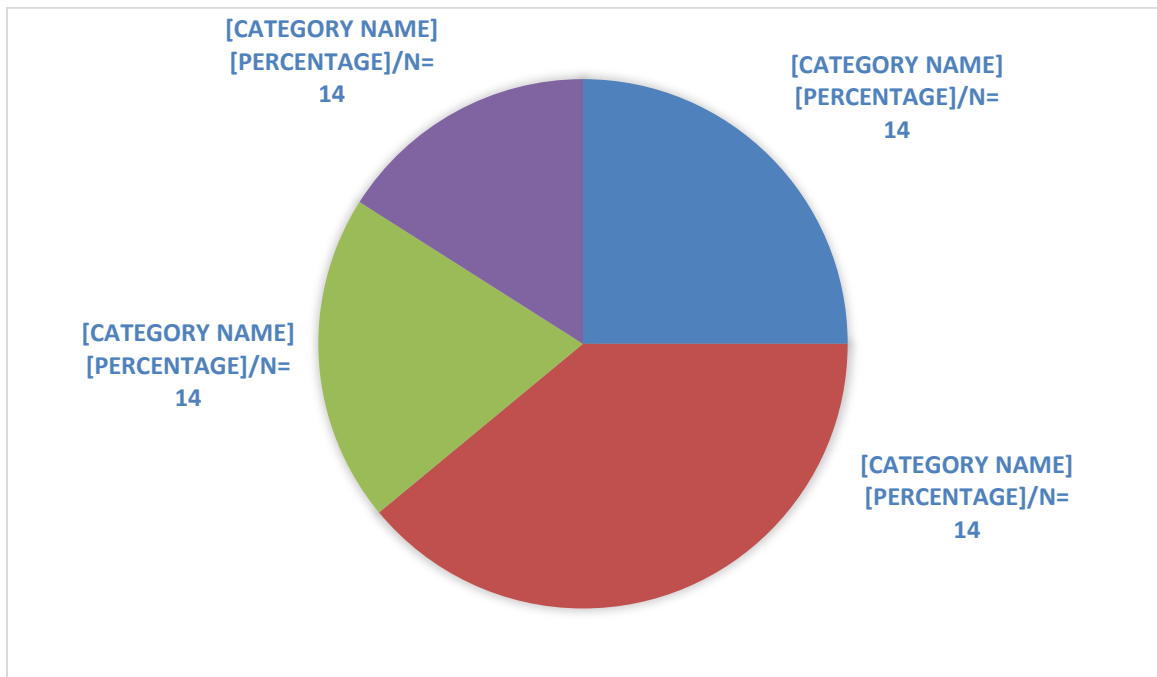
Figure 7. Distribution of data across the domains of emotional intelligence.

Research Question 1

How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the EI dimension of self-awareness?

Self-awareness. Two major themes were identified from the data in the area of self-awareness. The two themes that directly coincide with Daniel Goleman's (1995) tenets of EI are self-assessment and mood recognition. Goleman credited Freud for developing the notion that most of one's emotional life is subconscious and that many of his/her feelings never cross the boundaries into his/her conscious thoughts. Furthermore, Goleman echoes Freud's claim that people often have a preference for things that never registered in their sight or memory. Likewise, the researcher in this study examined the raw interview data to identify themes that are congruent with EI. For instance, many times during the interview after the initial question was asked, the participant would say,

"I don't think I learned anything," but would go on to give a detailed account of what was asked.

Self-assessment. Inside the theme of self-awareness emerged three subcategories from which the data further aligned themselves. Conscious mind shift, stepping out of comfort zones, and heightened self-confidence were the three categories that developed from the data in self-assessment. The numerical alignment of the three categories was 73%, 19%, and 8% respectively. As related to self-awareness, participant data showed that upon reflection, subjects expressed they noticed a change in the way they handled emotional stimuli or their outlook on life in general. Participant 2 noted in the interview,

> I think it also made me focus a lot on people's strengths and what they can do. It also made me more aware of focusing on what people are good at and what they do have to offer. Now, I don't dwell on what they maybe don't have to offer, or what they're limited ability might be.

> Participant 1 described his apprehension before participation: "Emotionally I guess they helped me grow because when you were younger, you feel like 'aww I feel bad for them.' However, later when you meet them you realize they are the same as us."

Along those lines Participant 6 noted,

> After a few weeks of having lunch with the students, it didn't feel so foreign and any more. It became natural and I began to enjoy it. It didn't occur to me that I was having lunch with them and I could actually be with my other friends. I became the type of person who wanted to help those types of people.

One example shared by Participant 10 was,

And I think that when you're in a program like CoF, especially at that age, where you're still growing and you're still learning to understand yourself. I think being able to work a little harder to connect to somebody else, forces you to almost look inward.

Participant 1 stated, "You begin to think working with new friends can change your life and it's amazing I saw the world so differently."

Comfort zone. Abandoning their comfort zone to access new experiences was the next area of self-awareness that the participants noted in their interviews. This subtheme manifested itself mostly in how the participants related accounts of the participants changing their patterns or behaviors to adopt new patterns. Participant 11 noted,

I was nerdy. I felt very uncomfortable in social situations, and I felt like joining CoF gave me a place to fit in, and a place to belong. From the start, it was just a place to go where I felt like I can go to this place, and I don't have to feel uncomfortable.

Participant 1 noted,

I want to say it made me realize that I'm not that hard-headed person that I try to show myself as. Actually, I got broken down. I want to say I seemed weak, but they got to me, and it made me more mellow. It made me more of a caring person, honestly.

In a personal anecdote, Participant 14 described how she left her comfort zone to be a better advocate for the peer friends and students with people in general. She began by saying,

I think that I've been a lot more courageous and a lot more apt to stand up to that

and say something, and be that difference. I think a lot of people say things in a

very casual manner and they don't really think about it. I try to bring that little

piece of awareness, or that friendly reminder, like, "Hey, there are people that

could be offended by something that you said," and just remind them of that.

Self-confidence. Participants noted several instances where they perceived they

were more self-confident during or after mentorship. Participant 13 stated,

So I think that that helped me now because if there's ever someone that I feel

looks lonely or looks upset, instead of just feeling bad, I can actually reach out to

them and ask them what's wrong. Because of my experience in CoF, I had the

opportunity to be able to go up to people and actually ask them, "What was going

on?" rather than just thinking about it. I was able to build more confidence within

myself, to then be able to help someone else to gain confidence in themselves.

Participant 5 recalled becoming more self-confident by stating, "So I think that

now I have a lot more confidence in that way. If there ever is someone that needs

assistance, I have the confidence to reach out to them and help them feel more confident

with themselves." Likewise, Participant 6 said, "I was just being more confident in

saying something when something is wrong, or something that I see on campus isn't

right, or friendly, or can be done in a more friendly way, or in a more aware way."

Mood recognition. Mood recognition is a large component of self-awareness.

This theme stretched across 13 of the 14 participants. When talking about mood

recognition and self-awareness, Bradberry and Greaves (2009) asserted that just

reflecting on the moods or emotions one overcame helps to strengthen the skill of being

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self-aware. By this rationale, the data in this category contain reflections from the participants where they noted a change in their mood toward a topic or situation. For example, Participant 14 stated,

> I would say I understand my feelings, it just made me realize that students who have disabilities often can be sad if somebody focuses on their disability, and they want to be known or seen for what they can do.

Participant 8 noted, "Before I was mentoring I was actually a little afraid to do this because it's something that I've never done before, and I've always seen myself as kind of quiet." While reflecting on her experience, Participant 14 noted,

> I would say that I realized that I became a lot more self-aware in who I am as a person, what I want to be as a person, what I want my personality to be like, how I want people to see me, especially representing a club on campus.

Similarly, Participant 7 noted, "I think, emotionally, it just made me realize that I really care about how other people were experiencing the club at school." How one deals with his or her emotions or moods is critical when it comes to self-awareness, according to Daniel Goleman (1995). Participant 11 noted,

> I was able to improve my social skills and my comfort with public speaking. I became better at interacting with others whereas some people might be uncomfortable in a certain situation interacting with somebody who has a disability. I was able to bridge that gap and set an example and show people that it's OK to be uncomfortable. Not only that, but also it's OK to get comfortable with being uncomfortable.

Participant 2 stated, "I learned that I like to give and like to open up my CoF, but then I'm also reserved. I don't think it was as easy for me to open up right away." In line with the participants overcoming initial reticence, Participant 2 stated,

> I think, in that sense, I was like any 16-year-old girl. I was a little annoyed at
> times; however, now looking back, I'm so happy I had that experience. I think it
> affected me in that you learn about so many different ways that people interact.

Characteristics of self-awareness were evident in the data as reported from participants of the CoF program.

Research Question 2

How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the EI dimension of self-management?

Self-management. Goleman (1995) and Walton (2012) agreed that recognizing emotions alone is not enough. Goleman (1995) and Walton (2012) further aligned in their research to say knowing alone can hurt a person if they do not act appropriately after ascertaining their mood. That said, the researcher in this study searched for evidence that the participants worked to change their emotional state after recognizing it. The two minor themes that emerged were emotional self-restraint (mood regulation) and optimism. Consequently, both characteristics are in alignment with Daniel Goleman's (1995) tenet of EI called self-management.

Mood regulation. This theme was by far the largest indicator of EI in the study. All of the 14 participants commented in some fashion about regulating their feelings or emotions to obtain a positive outcome. This theme was mentioned 352 times in the data.

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When asked about how they learned to utilize and process their feelings, respondents

gave an enormous amount of feedback to the researcher. Participant 14 noted,

> It made me more sympathetic and more open to different perspectives. I became
>
> more understanding of what other people could be feeling and recognizing that
>
> other people's feelings matter. It helped me grow as a person to become more
>
> sympathetic, and more in touch with my feelings, I guess. It allowed me to be
>
> more vulnerable as well in those situations.

Participant 5 stated,

> It made me more sympathetic and more open to different perspectives and
>
> understanding what other people could be feeling and recognizing that other
>
> people's feelings matter. It helps me grow as a person to become more
>
> sympathetic, and the more in touch with my feelings, I guess it allowed me to be
>
> more vulnerable as well in those situations.

In these examples, the participants recognized how their mood coupled with negative

actions could be detrimental to another human. Participant 7 noted,

> I became more reflective about if there was something that went wrong or
>
> bothered me in a situation. Sometimes we would have to deal with things that we
>
> didn't know how to deal with. As high school students, you must work through
>
> that and figure out ways to be able to express yourself and to do problem solving
>
> on the spot.

Learning patience was mentioned in the data as well. Some participants relayed stories

of how they implement self-restraining behaviors in their lives today. For example,

Participant 10 noted, "It just forces me to look inward about the right way of speaking to people and delivering things with sensitivity." Participant 10 said,

> I think keeping that in mind, even at this stage of my life, whether it's with friends, whether it's at work, whether it's romantic relationships, or family, or whatever, it's understanding that everyone has their own storyline. And again, not judging people before you fully know their story.

Optimism. Goleman (1995) asserted that optimism is present only when one believes that he or she has the power to do something to overcome an obstacle or situation. In this study, the researcher analyzed the interview data to identify instances of participants reflecting on their experience optimistically. In other words, was there evidence that they were optimistic in trying times during their participation or after? Participant 9 talked about overcoming challenging personalities: "There's always a way to build a connection with anyone, whether they are not like you or not." Participant 14 stated,

> It definitely made me a more optimistic and open person. I became more sympathetic and very understanding of different circumstances because, obviously, nobody is perfect. We all have things that we struggle with or things that we can or cannot do or are not good at.

Likewise, Participant 1 noted,

> Even if something went wrong in a day, it's easy to get upset, or whatever, but in the scheme of life, seeing what other people have gone through makes you understand it's not as serious as you're making it to be. Be more calm and appreciative.

Being open-minded to new situations is a form of optimism. Several of the participants

shared stories how this trait was practiced during their time as peer friend. One such

comment was, "I became very open to someone who is different." Another perspective

was shared by Participant 10:

> It helped me realize that I need to be a little more understanding and open-minded
>
> about everything. I understand not everybody sees things in the same perspective
>
> or way or can take things in as fast as some other people can, so it really made me
>
> be open-minded.

Participant 2 related a story about how she is optimistic about the abilities of her

coworkers with disabilities.

> Okay, so at the job I'm currently working, they hire people with mental disorders,
>
> and we have them as our greeters. I'm always so open-minded to them, and I'm
>
> always believing in them. Sometimes they even wait for me to take lunch, so they
>
> can take it with me."

Self-management evidence was indicated by the data from all of the participants in this

study.

Research Question 3

How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their

participation impacted their growth in the EI dimension of social awareness?

Social awareness. In Research Question 3, the researcher looked for evidence of

social awareness. Researchers agree that social awareness is obtained by being in tune

with how others are feeling. Goleman (1995) stated that people rarely say exactly what

they are feeling. For this reason, a highly emotionally intelligent person must use other

nonverbal methods to attune to someone else's feelings. From the attunement discerned, innately or overtly, people who have a level of EI can be found to show empathy. After researching the origins of empathy, Goleman (2008) stated that empathy is a process of sharing the same feeling. In this study, the researcher looked for evidence in the transcripts that the former CoF participants used nonverbal channels or other methods to try to obtain positive solutions. This search unearthed two finds in the area of social awareness, recognition of other people's feelings, and nonverbal communication techniques. The evidence spanned 19% of all of the data gathered and included comments from all 14 participants.

Empathy. Recognizing the feelings of others and taking on their struggle was evidenced in many ways in the data gathered through semistructured interviews. Participant 10 shared,

> Socially, it encouraged for me to feel more comfortable reaching out to other
> people and making people feel included and being sensitive to people not feeling
> included in things. As a kid, I was bullied a lot. A lot. So, I always just naturally
> understood what that feeling was like. I really always wanted to make sure no
> one else ever felt that way.

Another participant relayed a story about how he or she connected with people during and after the program. Participant 11 communicated,

> I like to think that I have empathy for people. I think working at the summer
> camp, I got to know the parents of the peer friends more. It was certainly sort of a
> learning situation. You just put yourself in their shoes, and you say, "Wow, that'd
> be tough."

I think even being there helped me to appreciate that other people that

actually work there. For example, like the staff the parents even the parents have

to be with this job 24/7 and I started having empathy for them and realizing that

not everyone's life looks like mine.

When discussing how he dealt with difficult situations in high school with friends and

peer friends, Participant 8 stated,

You just sort of try to just be respectful, and be empathetic, and say, "Okay, I

understand what your situation is, and we're going to try to work this out." I

think it gives you sort of like a leadership position when you're mentoring the

peer friends. It feels like you're kind of the one in charge.

There were multiple instances of participants showing empathy for students inside and

outside of the club as well. One of such instances was reported by Participant 14:

I had to work with both sides of the club, both the mentors and the friends, and

make sure that they understood how their friend was feeling when they didn't

show up. Mainly because it meant so much to them when they showed up, and

that's something that they looked forward to every week.

Participant 2 reflected upon the possible need for expansion of the club:

I feel like the students that were in CoF were just the ones that had extreme

learning differences. We went to a 3,500-student high school; so there were many

students that had disabilities and probably many that needed social work and peer

groups. How many kids didn't get that? That's what I'm thinking about.

Nonverbal communication. Participants in this study reported being able to

learn ways to understand others and/or communicate with them without using words.

This skill was evident throughout all 14 participants and was referenced 136 times in the data. Participant 6 stated, "Absolutely, like being in that experience how could you not learn how to create a bond with someone who's always right next to you. It helped me to understand there's other ways to connect outside of conversation or socializing." Participant 13 stated,

> I learned different ways to be able to express myself. Rather than just communicating out loud, I realized that some people are not as verbal, and they have different ways of saying they need simple things. For example, if they need to communicate a need go to the restroom, or that they're hungry.

Along those same lines Participant 13 shared,

> I was able to kind of understand the way that they felt, just by a physical emotion on their face, but I didn't actually understand what they were feeling inside. But as time went on, I was able to see the way that certain students and certain people in the world communicate with things rather than just their physical facial expressions. So with CoF, I was able to learn for the rest of my life, how I'll be able to help other people and understand what they're feeling, from more than just either a gestures or from words or just a facial expressions.

Participants spoke a great deal about body language and how they had to build the skill of how to read it. This skill is one of the best indicators of a highly emotionally intelligent person, according to Daniel Goleman (1995) and Peter Salovey and John Mayer (1990). The most thorough tests ask a subject to judge the look on a person's face or interpret body language. According to the data, this skill was developed and practiced

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daily in the CoF program. This skill was further demonstrated by Participant 4, who

shared a personal reflection:

> I think especially with my friend he wasn't vocal. I think having to be a little
>
> more emotionally aware helped me to understand body language a little bit and
>
> pick up on clues that normally wouldn't stand out. With our peer friends
>
> sometimes, you couldn't have a normal conversation. That helped and helped me
>
> when dealing with other people by taking into account other people's feelings and
>
> being a little more emotionally aware or intelligent about the way they're feeling.
>
> I learned to pay close attention to other signs that may indicate or tell about how
>
> they're feeling as opposed to straight verbalization.

An abundance of evidence was available in the data collected to support Daniel

Goleman's (1994) domain of social awareness.

Research Question 4

How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their

participation impacted their growth in the EI dimension of relationship management?

Relationship management. Bradberry and Greaves (2009) asserted that

relationship management is knowing how one's emotions and the emotions of others

build connections and have successful interactions. Goleman (2008) posited that to leave

out human values and learned traits from the concept diminishes the concept.   In other

words, connections are highly important when it comes to relationship management. In

the current study, the researcher analyzed the interview data to find instances of

relationship management. As a result, the researcher extrapolated two major themes that

coincided with Daniel Goleman's (1995) components of EI. The two components that

emerged from the data were the ability to connect with others and linkages from the CoF experience to life experiences.

Ability to connect. Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves (2009), Daniel Goleman (1995), and Peter Salovey and John Mayer (1990) agreed that the ability to make connections is one of the first steps in relationship management. From the study data, a pattern of behavior was noticed in the interview transcripts. All 14 of the participants alluded to being able to make and sustain connections with people inside and outside of the CoF program. Participant 13 stated that "there's people that I met throughout CoF that I will now have connections with for the rest of my life. Now with my CoF experience, I am now able to connect with other people in society." Participant 3 relayed a story of connecting with a peer friend by saying:

I guess I was able to push past my feelings. We became friends on Facebook. This was when Facebook was just starting, and that was a cool way for us to interact because we could type to each other. My peer friend had a speech impediment, so sometimes it was hard to communicate in person, but online it was a little bit easier for us to talk. It was a tiny bit easier for me to decipher what she was saying. I learned that I was able to build a relationship online with her as well, and that strengthened our relationship in person.

Participant 11 related a story that was very common in the data gathered by this study:

I think it would take a while to gain the trust of the peer friends, and I think that you're always sort of looking for the thing to relate to with them. I think that you're kind of doing that with anyone when you meet them. It's like, "Oh, you like football? I like football." I met a kid once, and he was just making all these

crazy noises with his mouth, and I was like, "Oh, yeah. That's cool." He was like,

"Yeah." I was like, "You know, I like making noises with my mouth, too." We

made noises with our mouths for 45 minutes together. Whatever it takes. Then

we were friends from that day forward. Life is the same way.

Participant 4 discussed how he uses connection building and perspective taking to

develop potentially adversarial relationships into something positive:

I think maybe at some level, subconsciously, emotional intelligence is developed

in the CoF program. It helps you relate to people who aren't necessarily like you.

The program gives you a little bit more understanding and awareness about other

people and their situations. I sit in conferences in courtrooms and negotiation

situations with people who are suing my clients and you have to understand where

they're coming from and understand their situations.

Participant 4 described how this skill continues to serve him daily:

I think the other thing is just as a negotiator, which is mostly what I do now. I

often have to build that rapport with someone else and get them to me. You have

to learn how to get what you want, how to accommodate them too.

Research Question 4 garnered data on what connections remain from CoF and how the

program influenced the participants' lives. Hence, two themes emerged from the data

after careful analysis. The two linkages discovered in the data were linking the CoF

experiences to career choices and retainment of relationships.

Career and life choices. Much of the participant data contained evidence that the

participants' experience in the CoF program translated to a desire to continue working

with people or in some way had an affect on what career path they chose. Although the

participants may have been performing the tasks daily, it is important to note, most of the participants did not make the mental connection until they reflected during the interview. For example, Participant 2 recounted,

> I mean, to be honest, I haven't thought about CoF since high school; however, now that I am reflecting I see connections. It must have had a really big impact on me, because I went into education and I'm working with students with all different kinds of disabilities.

Participant 5 stated, "I like giving back. So, I wanted a career that allowed me to help people. I wanted a job that gave me a purpose." Participant 11 stated,

> I feel like the program set up things I did after that really well. I went to UCLA for college as an undergrad, and I worked at a summer camp there for three years, which was a great experience. I feel like a lot of the skills I learned from CoF translated to that.

Some respondents, like Participant 2, made direct correlations upon reflection of how the program affected their career choices:

> I went into nursing, so I obviously like helping people and reaching out to people. The CoF was one of the first experiences I had taking care of someone else. You're taking care of that person for that half hour. I would say, that was one of the first experiences I had taking care of people.

Participant 6 related a similar story:

> I chose a career that allows me to work with children and students. I don't have a lot of students with special needs, but they're still around, and they're always going to be a part of our life. As a classroom teacher now I work with

preschoolers. I'm a lot more knowledgeable about students with disabilities and what their educational trajectory could look like. I'm better at understanding what the parents might go through.

Each of the undergraduate participants stated a desire to remain connected to the goals of the program or to careers that help people in some capacity. Participant 12 stated that she has decided to become a teacher of students with special needs as well.

When I graduated, I thought, this is something I really would enjoy doing. Yet I don't want people to say things like, "Oh she has such a nice heart. She has a big heart," No, none of that. "Honestly it really made me realize that if I'm not going to stand up for them, who else is?" And that's where I'm headed now. I want to be a special education instructor for the kids. I hope that comes to happen within the next three years.

Relationship valuation and retention. Maintaining healthy relationships is one characteristic of Goleman's (1995) domain of relationship management. There were many instances of participants expounding upon the value they placed on their friendship with their peer friends. In fact, multiple former participants asserted that they continue to be friends at the time of this study. For example, Participant 13 stated, "There's people that I met throughout CoF that I will now have connections with for the rest of my life." Moreover, Participant 14 stated, "I have built friendships that I will cherish for the rest of my life." Participant 3 stated that she stays connected via social media: "We are still friends on Facebook right now; I love getting messages from her."

During the interview amid a reflection, there was an emotional moment while the story was being shared by Participant 6 about the value of the friendships developed in the program:

I remember we sat in the same area with all the peer friends. We could see all the other peer friends as well. I remember one year I had this student who was not able to communicate well. I remember I could see this girl who was a peer friend. I don't remember what her disability was, but it made her very bubbly and outgoing. She would tell stories, and she looked really fun you know? I remember the first time I saw my peer friend and I thought oh wow. I got this person; I could have had this person. That was an eye-opening experience as well because that was a kind of selfish reaction. Thinking back that would have been a different experience, but now I think about how much more important it is that I was with that person. If I didn't have that person or if they did not have CoF at our school no one would ever sit with them at lunch! Ever! This other girl was fun and bubbly, and someone might have eventually come over to look for someone interesting to talk to, but I really was this person's only opportunity to have a friend on these days at lunch.

The power of the story, coupled with the fervor of the recollection appeared to jettison all the air from the room. According to Daniel Goleman's (1995) tenets of EI, there was evidence of relationship management in the data captured from former participants of the CoF program.

Artifacts analyzed. The following artifacts were analyzed: (a) t-shirts, (b) photo album, (c) pictures, (d) thank-you poster, (e) letters from peer friends, (f) calendar, (g) videos, and (h) pins.

Artifacts. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2014), artifacts are concrete and symbolic representations that aids in describing the totality of an experience and what its value represents to individuals. Often objects become artifacts that reveal insight into what an individual or group ascribes meaning to. For this reason, the researcher thought it prudent to gather some of the artifacts the former participants still have to further explore the lived experience of study participants. All of the listed artifacts were not present; however, the participants did describe them in detail. The participants also stated what the artifact that they shared meant to them. It should be noted that when describing their artifact, most of the participants' demeanors changed. The participants appeared to be excited to describe the artifact and the situation in which it was presented to them.

Participant 14 recalled her list of artifacts, "I have a bracelet that one of my friends made for me. It was made of beads. It spelled out our names. It is no longer a bracelet because it broke, but I still have the beads and the string. Participant 7 described an artifact that was not present:

> Then Barbara, who's very thoughtful and amazing, has gotten me little things. I have this little ceramic thing that you put on your wall that, I can't remember what it says exactly now, but I can send it to you, but "Life is not in things but in people," something, one of those cheesy but amazing quotes that I have hanging up. Just very inspirational, happy things.

Participant 14 stated while sharing her artifacts:

> We cherish all of those photos because they really are a fun time and represent
>
> what we do as a club. It's always fun because the peer friends are always so
>
> excited to go to the photo booth part of the events, and use the props, and put on
>
> masks for Halloween, and reindeer ears and Santa hats for the holiday party. It's
>
> something that is special to them, and it's also special to us, and it's fun to keep
>
> those and cherish those and use those as something that we can look back on and
>
> remember fondly. I think pictures are just so fun to look back on. It's something
>
> that I will definitely continue to keep for a long, long time.

The artifacts added another layer of data when used in conjunction with interview

data and informal conversation to triangulate the lived experiences of former CoF

participants. The artifacts and the value placed upon them by the participants adds rich

data from which conclusions can be made about the essence of the experience lived by

study participants.

According to the data collected, participants in this study perceived that they

experienced growth in all of the areas of Goleman's (1995) tenets of EI. As denoted by

Table 6, the degree to which participants reported the frequency of growth varies by

tenant (see Table 6 for details).

Table 6

Summary of Research Findings

Theme	Frequency	Response
Research Question 1. How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the emotional intelligence dimension of self-awareness?		

Self-assessment (*n* = 14)
     Experienced a conscious mind shift
     Stepped out of comfort zone more often
     Experienced heightened self-confidence
	188	It helped me realize that I need to be a little more understanding and open-minded about everything. Not everybody sees things in the same perspective or way. The program made me be more open-minded.

Mood recognition (*n* = 13)
     Became conscious of emotions experienced:
     Fear
     Inner strength
     Apprehensions
     Caring
	91	

Research Question 2. How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the emotional intelligence dimension of self-management?		

Mood regulation (*n* = 14)
     Optimism
     Worked their way through difficult
     Allowed themselves to be vulnerable emotionally
     More open-minded when faced with change
	352	Even if something went wrong in a day, it's easy to get upset, or whatever. However, in the scheme of life, seeing what other people have gone through makes you understand it's not as serious as you're making it to be. Be more calm and appreciative.

Personal interactions (*n* = 14)
     Participants noticed they were more sympathetic
     Recognizing other people's feelings matter
     Ascribed to being less judgmental of others
	77	

Research Question 3. How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the emotional intelligence dimension of social awareness?		

Empathy (*n* = 14)
     Consciously recognizing empathy while interacting with others
     Reflecting often and making changes as a result
     Perspective taking to be a better leader
	79	Because of CoF, I'll be able to help other people and understand what they're feeling, from more than from gestures, words, or even facial expressions.

Table 6 (*continued*)

Theme	Frequency	Response
Nonverbal communication (*n* = 14)	136	
Participants read body language and responded accordingly		
Used instinct and nonverbal cues to anticipate social situations		
Developed and maintained healthy relationships without using words		

Research Question 4. How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the emotional intelligence dimension of relationship management?

Theme	Frequency	Response
Ability to connect to others (*n* = 14)	127	If I didn't have that person or if they did not have CoF at our school no one would ever sit with him at lunch! Ever!
Devised innovative ways to connect with others (Facebook)		
Embraced diversity among peer groups		
Expanded spheres of influence		
Career and life choices (*n*=12)	45	
Chose careers in fields that require collaboration and care		
Developed skills needed for present careers		
Expressed desires to continue supporting the program or similar programs		

Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of former CoF peer friends. Furthermore, this study sought to discover if participation in the CoF program had an effect on the four domains of EI. The domains of EI are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. This chapter presented the data gathered through semistructured, in-depth interviews with 14 participants. Also, data from artifacts were presented. The data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed. From the analysis, eight major themes emerged along with three minor themes. The analysis was able to identify the lived experience of former CoF participants

as well as determine that former participants did experience and practice skills that are in direct alignment with Daniel Goleman's (1995) four domains of emotional intelligence.

The data gathered from this study indicate that participants are exposed to skills that are tenets of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Evidence gathered suggests that participants were able to recognize emotional growth associated with being in the program. Participants also noted instances of increased self-regulating behavior while with their peer friend and in other settings. The data gathered from this study showed evidence that nondisabled peer mentors became more adept at discerning the mood of a group of people. Not only did participants discern the moods of crowds, they adjusted their behaviors in a manner as to not upset the balance of the entity or group. Finally, it was evidenced by the data that participants learned and practiced skills that helped them manage their relationships with the students and in other social settings.

Chapter V presents a final summary of the study, including major findings, conclusions, and unexpected findings. This chapter expands upon the findings of Chapter IV to put them in context of the lived experiences of CoF participants. Chapter V explores additional topics uncovered by this study that should be examined critically. Chapter V also includes recommendations for additional research and implications for action in addition to concluding remarks and reflections.

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This qualitative phenomenological study was designed to explore the lived experiences of former Circle of Friends (CoF) peer friends to discover how this mentorship program impacted Daniel Goleman's (1995) four dimensions of emotional intelligence (EI). Chapter V begins with a brief summarization of the study, which includes a restatement of the purpose statement, research questions, methodology, population, and sample. After the analysis of semistructured in-depth interviews, common themes were uncovered, conclusions were formed, and recommendations for further research were suggested. Finally, this chapter concludes with closing remarks and reflections from the researcher.

Research Questions

Central Question

What are the lived experiences of the CoF mentors and their perceptions of emotional intelligence as related to the four dimensions of EI?

Subquestions

1. How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the EI dimension of self-awareness?

2. How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the EI dimension of self-management?

3. How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the EI dimension of social awareness?

4. How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the EI dimension of relationship management?

This qualitative, phenomenological research study utilized in-depth one-on-one interviews to probe and explore the lived and perceived experiences of former mentor participants of the CoF program. During the in-depth interviews, artifacts were collected to add another layer of data to the study. Exploration of the artifacts provided a deeper understanding of participant experience as well as insight into the meaning of what the artifacts meant to the participants. The data from interviews and artifacts were transcribed and uploaded into NVivo for disaggregation and theming. The target population was former peer friends of the CoF program who live in Southern California. Members of this population must have been a nondisabled peer friend of CoF for at least one year during high school. Participants must also be adults who have since graduated from school.

A convenience sampling of participants in two Southern California school districts was conducted to gather subjects initially. Later, by using snowball sampling, the researcher gathered a total of 14 qualified participants from which to interview and collect data. To be considered a candidate, participants needed to possess the following criteria:

- be between the ages of 18 and 30,
- had been a nondisabled peer friend in the CoF program in the William S. Hart or Santa Monica-Malibu School District,
- be willing to consent to undergo a semistructured in-depth individual interview, and
- reside or be nearby Southern California.

<center>**Major Findings**</center>

The research question that guided this study analyzed the lived experiences of former CoF peer friends to discover if they perceived growth in self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management as purported by Daniel Goleman (1995). The data collected from the 14 interviews yielded a number of common traits between participants that were in alignment with the four tenets and characteristics of EI. The major findings by the researcher for this study are presented according to the four individual tenets of Daniel Goleman's (1995) EI.

Major Finding 1: Self-Awareness

Research Question 1 was, How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the EI dimension of self-awareness?

According to this study, 25% of the CoF participants perceived positive changes in self-awareness. Based on the perception of this study's sample, four common themes emerged that are congruent with the EI components of self-awareness. The following four components of EI were displayed by the participants:

- Of the study participant data, 73% were evidence that participants experienced growth in self-awareness as described by Daniel Goleman (1995). Respondents noted various intentional shifts in their thinking, which are in alignment with Daniel Goleman's components of EI.

- As a result of participation in the CoF program, 19% of the respondents were able to step out of their comfort zones and try new experiences. Participants noted changes in their daily patterns that helped them explore new experiences.

<center>114</center>

- Of the respondents, 8% noted increases in self-confidence as a result of participation.

- Of the total study, 8% of the participants recognized and documented increases in being able to recognize their changing mood and do something about it.

Major Finding 2: Self-Management

Research Question 2 was, How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the EI dimension of self-management?

- Of the study data, 39% supported participant perceptions that participation with CoF impacted the EI component of self-management.

Inside self-management, two major themes emerged from the data. The following themes were evidenced by the data collected:

- The largest theme in the entire study was mood regulation. This theme accounted for 32% of the whole study. All (100%) of the participants provided evidence of how the CoF program helped them utilize and process their feelings in a manner as to achieve a positive outcome.

- All (100%) of the participants perceived personal growth in the area of optimism; 7% of the respondents' study data gathered showed evidence that participation in CoF made them more optimistic. Participants became more open-minded and prone to overcome challenges by keeping a positive attitude about what the potential outcome of a situation could be.

Major Finding 3: Social Awareness

Research Question 3 was, How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the EI dimension of social awareness?

Of the study participant data, 20% were evidence that participants experienced growth in social awareness as described by Daniel Goleman (1995). All of the study participants experienced growth in this area to some degree. Two major themes were documented by the researcher in this study. The following two themes were discovered by this researcher:

- Of the data gathered, 7.2% showed evidence that the participants became more empathetic as a result of participation in CoF. All 14 participants or 100% of respondents noted improvements in taking on the struggles of others.

- All (100%) of the respondents documented personal growth in the area of nonverbal communication skills. Of the total data gathered, 12% was evidence that all of the participants showed growth in the area of nonverbal communication. Participants learned how to interact and build relationships without oral communication.

Major Finding 4: Relationship Management

Research Question 4 was, How do former students who mentored in the CoF program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the EI dimension of relationship management?

Of the study participant data, 16% were evidence that participants experienced growth in relationship management as described by Daniel Goleman (1995). Two major

themes emerged from the data to support the participants experienced growth in relationship management. The following two major themes emerged:

- All (100%) of the participants experienced growth in their ability to connect with others. Of the study data, 12% contributed to this finding. Participants noted growth in their ability to connect with many groups of people inside and outside of CoF.

- Of the study participant data, 86% showed evidence that participation in the CoF program in some way influenced their career and life choices. More specifically, these participants chose careers that require them to use teamwork and collaboration to be successful. The data to support this finding was evidenced in 4% of the total study data.

- Of the study participants, 64% experienced growth in relationship valuation and retention. In other words, these participants were able to build and retain healthy relationships as a result of participation with CoF.

Major Finding 5: Central Question

The central research question stated, What are the lived experiences of the CoF mentors and their perceptions of EI as related to the four dimensions of EI?

At the beginning of each of the 14 interviews, the researcher asked each respondent to describe his or her experience as a CoF peer friend. The data were analyzed for themes related to EI and later disaggregated to discover major findings. The findings are as follows:

- Of the respondents, 86% experienced growth in leadership and the ability to take responsibility for tasks or others. As a result of affiliation with the program, participants became officers in several organizations and became advocates for the

CoF and their peer friends. Of the data from the central question, 27% was focused on this finding.

- Of the 14 respondents, 93% perceived growth emotional growth due to participation in the CoF program. Participants grew their capacities to manage fear, show empathy, take emotional risks, and make meaningful connections in their communities. Of the central question data, 32% was referenced in this finding.

- Of the respondents of the study, 64% noted that they liked participating in the program because it was structured and organized. Participants repeatedly stated that they liked the consistent interactions, structured curriculum, support staff, and the freedom to be creative with their peer friends. Data from this finding encompassed 12% of the total data from the central question.

- Of the 14 respondents, 57% cited building lifelong connections as a positive aspect of being a CoF peer friend. Participants commented that they built strong relationships with students, staff, and parents. Also, participants continue to be friends and remain in contact with people in and around the CoF program. Building lifelong connections was referenced in 11% of the total data in the central question.

- Of the study respondents, 79% cited personal enjoyment as a large component of participation in the CoF program. Participants consistently communicated that they cherished their time with their peer friends, enjoyed the mutually beneficial relationship, and found the program emotionally rewarding. Of the central question data, 18% was dedicated to personal enjoyment.

Unexpected Findings

Unexpected Finding 1

Although the CoF program is not an assessment or intervention program, the data from personal interviews showed a strong correlation to the methodology of testing using Situational Test of Emotional Understanding (STEU) and Situational Test of Emotional Management. (STEM). Researchers like Daniel Goleman (1995) and Peter Salovey and John Mayer (1990) agreed that self-rating tests are not as accurate as tests that allow test takers to judge facial expressions and body language. According to Libbrecht and Lievens (2012) found that testing EI is very complex and a myriad of emotions need to be assessed to obtain a reliable score. That said, daily exposure to situations that allow participants to judge body language and practice emotional competencies was evidenced in the data of this study. It was surprising to learn how much the participant's practice skills related to STEM and STEU assessments every single day while participating in CoF.

Unexpected Finding 2

Although this study set out to explore the lived experiences of former CoF mentor participants, from the data gathered it appears that most of the participants do not distinguish between mentor and mentee. For example, 78% of the participants used the words "hang out" to describe their time with their friends. The feedback given to the researcher suggested that there was a kinship of sorts; more prevalent even, there seemed to be a symbiotic relationship between the pairs. The respondents repeatedly noted benefitting from the experience in various ways. This is commensurate with the mutualistic symbiotic relationship type, defined as "a relationship between two species of

organisms in which both benefit from the association" ("Mutualism," n.d., para. 1). This distinction in symbiosis is critical because some forms of symbiosis are parasitic. This means, one party does harm to its host or symbiont. It was surprising to see that the former participants thought of themselves as being in a mutualistic relationship without knowing it.

Unexpected Finding 3

It was unexpected to learn that 86% of the participants expressed a desire to work with the program or similar nonprofits in the future. Most of the participants are currently looking for ways to get involved in some type of program with special populations or people who need advocates. One of the participants is currently a part of the board of governance in CoF at the time of this study.

<div align="center">

Conclusions

</div>

Conclusion 1

Based on the findings, students participating as nondisabled peer friends in the CoF program benefit from growth in EI around self-awareness. Due to the mutualistic relationships that develop, the inclusion of nondisabled peer friends also qualifies as peer to peer learning as defined by Joshua Jones (2015). CoF can be considered as an intervention to counter the widespread moral decay and pattern of reduced empathy referenced by Jones. Participants regularly self-assess their feelings and use their judgment to positively influence their world and relationships.

Because of their participation, peer friends were able to identify areas that needed to be addressed in their personality and made adjustments. Some of the competencies that participants addressed were shyness, low self-confidence, personal biases, lack of

exposure to diversity, physical and mental isolation. Participants communicated that they

became aware of these characteristics because of their interaction with their peer friends

daily. It should be noted that hardly any of the self-discovery that took place was explicit

instruction by the program. All of the self-awareness gained was organic and developed

over time because the students were placed in a position to think critically and build new

relationships.

Conclusion 2

Based on the findings, students participating as nondisabled peer friends in the

CoF program benefit from growth in EI in the area of self-management. CoF

nondisabled peer friends repeatedly utilized tolerance, risk taking, and the ability to

manage their emotions to experience benefits like that of Schindler (2011). In

Schindler's study, occupational therapy (OT) students exposed to patients with mental

illness realized that they had more in common with the patients than they originally

thought. Participants in the current study managed their own emotions daily to help

integrate students with disabilities into circles that were formerly off limits to them

because of their appearance or disability.

Study participants experienced other components of Daniel Goleman's (1995)

tenets of EI. For example, the students were very reliable when it came to keeping their

commitments to their peer friends. According to self-accounts, participants noted that

being conscientious about how their negative behavior or absence could affect their

relationships with their peer friends. Many characteristics garnered like these are not in

line with the social trends of Generation Z or the I gen as they are sometimes called. This

program forced students to monitor their mood on a daily basis and make necessary

changes. Self-management skills garnered and practiced in this program proved

beneficial to participants in other social areas like group work, family relationships, and

decision making.

Conclusion 3

Based on the findings, students participating as nondisabled peer friends in the

CoF program benefit from growth in EI in the area of social awareness. Cunningham

(2009) purported placing young adults in situations where they can have a reciprocal

relationship, which can help them be more adept in social situations. CoF participants

engage in semistructured peer-to-peer relationships daily. These social interactions have

improved students' ability to understand the dynamics of organizations, work within

defined social structures, and navigate relationships by using body language and other

nonverbal cues.

It was apparent that many of the participants in this study began their journey

because they were service oriented, which is a tenet of Daniel Goleman's (1995)

components of EI. However, they quickly began to build relationships by unconsciously

increasing their capacity for empathy. As bullying, cyberstalking, and even mass

shootings become more frequent there is a need for programs that allow participants to

practice empathy to strengthen this society. Programs like CoF allow students to

recognize how their isolated tendencies affect others and force them to correct this and

other maladaptive behaviors. Although participants in this study did not ascribe to the

maladaptive behaviors that were just mentioned, many were isolated emotionally due to a

rigorous class schedule, extracurricular activities, organizational leadership, advanced

placement classes, and college preparation. Nevertheless, participation in CoF allowed them to become socially aware of their effect on others.

Conclusion 4

Based on the findings, students participating as nondisabled peer friends in the CoF program benefit from growth in EI in the area of relationship management. Although CoF is not an academic program, some soft skills found in this study are being practiced and reinforced. Barkonic (2016) described skills like making ethical choices, teamwork, application of knowledge as needed skills. According to this research, nondisabled peer friends in CoF engage in each of the skills described by Barkonic in addition to conflict management and helping others to develop. The latter two competencies are components of relationship management; however, they can be considered soft skills as well.

The teaching of soft skills and 21st century skills are additional tools that classroom teachers can use to help students access curriculums like the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The CCSS lay out what standards should be taught in the schools that have adopted them. However, it is left up to the district and the teacher to identify strategies and best practices to help students practice, learn, and retain them. Participants of CoF practice skills like collaboration, communication, and developing others on a daily basis. Ironically, all of these skills are competencies of relationship management and 21st century skills. These competencies, when learned and practiced, can serve to make learning in collaborative settings more productive, thus providing more opportunities for instructors to provide student-centered learning opportunities.

Conclusion 5

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that all four elements of Daniel Goleman's (1995) EI criteria were evident in the data collected in this study. The CoF program qualifies as an organization that allows participants to practice EI skills. That said, this organization can help offset the current trend in Generation Zers and millennials, which states that they are, among other things, *unattached and unconstrained* (Adkins, 2016). Although not specifically noted in the findings, all of Daniel Goleman's tenets in Table 6 were embedded in the data gathered by this study to some degree. According to its website, the CoF mission is "to provide inclusion for students with disabilities on school campuses by establishing the understanding and acceptance of differences, building genuine friendships, decreasing bullying and making a significant social impact within communities nationwide" (CoF, n.d.-d, para. 1). Thia entity is accomplishing its mission by the strategic use of the nondisabled peer friends. Consequently, there are additional benefits that accompany their mission, which are outlined in this study. By developing altruistic emotional competencies, the CoF develops meaningful conditions under which disabled and nondisabled students can practice social-emotional skills on a daily basis. The CoF program is a model for what inclusion could look like in every school.

Conclusion 6

Based on the findings of this study it is concluded that, participants in this study experienced heightened levels of EI character traits by building and maintaining healthy relationships. According to data gathered by this study, participants felt privileged to be a part of this program. Also, many participants made direct connections to how skills

they learned in the CoF program transferred to their career and social life. Participants became more aware of and less tolerant of maladaptive behaviors in their surroundings. Bullying, disablism, sexism, peer isolation, ableism, and oppression of any type was documented by participants as things that they learned to stand up for. Like love, empathy is a commodity when shared it does not lessen the basin from which it came. Social programs like CoF are the solution to the increasing descent of postmillennials into a generation researchers describe as disconnected, individualistic, and socially withdrawn.

Implications for Action

1. School districts must make greater use of programs like CoF to teach and reinforce the tenets of EI. By using the current nondisabled peers and school environments, schools can strategically allocate funds to provide training and curriculum to organically build a culture of inclusion while building the capacity for EI in the peer mentors/friends. Effective peer mentors are reliable advocates for students with multiple disabilities and autism spectrum disorder (ASD). School districts prioritize funds for academic pursuits overwhelmingly; however, this study purports that a greater emphasis should be placed on strengthening the competencies to help them access the academics.

   It should be noted that the school districts that this study's participants attended were located in areas where the median income was well above the national average. Because the CoF program has an associated cost for implementation, smaller, less-affluent districts must use categorical allocations strategically to pay for evidence-based programs that can garner similar data to those of this study. Building EI and other social competencies must be a priority in this educational system. Ronald

Edmonds, the curator of the effective school's movement, said,

> We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose
> schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need to do that.
> Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we
> haven't so far. (Edmonds, 1979. p. 23)

2. School districts and employers must use the results from this study to develop
   innovative curriculums, programs, classes that allow nondisabled students to learn and
   practice EI skills, and 21st-century learning skills.

   a) School districts must develop new curriculums that encompass a greater number of
      participants and can be customized to meet the needs of individual school campus
      settings.

   b) Schools of all levels must develop new clubs that focus on building an inclusive
      culture on campus.

   c) Companies that seek employees that need EI skills must partner with school
      districts to develop, fund, and implement elective classes that use EI competencies
      to teach 21st-century learning skills. These industries include but are not limited to
      education, engineering, health care, management, hospitality, and consulting.

   d) Career counselors and school staff must seek out internship opportunities for
      participants in classes or programs that teach and reinforce EI skills.

   e) Colleges must seek out more class offerings that teach the four competencies of EI
      to students in undergraduate courses of study. New experiences that allow for
      organic practice of EI competencies must be prioritized to meet the needs of a
      changing workforce.

3. School districts must partner with CoF and similar organizations to use organic and inclusive opportunities to reinforce Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals. The CoF program identifies opportunities for its peer friends to reinforce IEP goals on a weekly basis. Cunningham (2009) asserted that using peer-to-peer methods to prompt a change, removes the need to gradually take away prompts and increases a student's ability to translate learned skills to similar situations. Using primary teachers and paraprofessionals to use rote drill and practice to reinforce skills is not natural and has lower effectiveness than authentic peer interaction.

4. Inclusion programs in all grade levels must consider networking to ensure exposure of their programs to school districts and institutions. By collaborating with organizations like Best Buddies, Forever Friends, CoF Canada (CoFCAN), and other organizations, CoF can help identify common strengths and work to interlock their missions, as opposed to working as individuals. Given the low saturation rate for each program as an entity, they will benefit from strategic alliances that place their services with schools and children that need them. Also, creating strong alumni organizations and/or groups can further develop support structures to enhance the efforts of the parent organizations.

5. Business and workforce professionals must invest resources to develop pipeline programs that teach critical EI competencies that they will need in their industry. When businesses partner with schools and organizations to develop the type of professional they are looking for, all parties concerned benefit. However, the business benefits most because the organization obtains an employee who possesses the skills and temperament that it takes to excel in that industry. Research shows that leaders

with high emotional quotients are more proficient at meeting company objectives and retaining employees. The social skills garnered in this program are the skills that school districts and employers must prioritize when designing curriculums in high school and postsecondary education.

6. A book must be written depicting the lived experiences of former CoF participants and other former peer friends or mentors. Although this was an exhaustive study, much of the rich anecdotal accounts are not a part of the research presented. This book should be written in a manner to provide real-life experiences to explore further concepts revealed in this study. Furthermore, a detailed book about the lived experiences of these 14 participants will serve to explicitly portray what is possible under similar circumstances.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. The current study included 14 former CoF participants from two high school districts in Southern California. To provide depth to this study, it is recommended that a study should be replicated in other parts of America and abroad.

2. This study should be replicated on similar programs to determine if they produce similar results for their nondisabled peer mentors. Based on this research, school districts do not allocate ample resources to programs that develop social competencies even though they are needed.

3. This study should be replicated on programs that allow undergraduate college students to participate in mentorship or inclusion programs to determine if results would be similar to the current study. Data gathered in this study concluded that similar results could be achieved with undergraduate students and high school students.

4. It is recommended researchers use this study's findings to develop a quantitative study to assess a broader scope of participants.

5. Additional research should be done to identify the degree to which participation in the CoF program impacts career choices.

6. This study should be replicated using the four 21st-century skill components of critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration to explore whether participants experienced similar growth. Proponents of 21st-century skills and EI do not seek for intersections of the two methodologies.

7. Although the search population was broad, the participants all came from non-inner-city urban schools with only three ethnicities participating in the study. It is recommended that further research be done to determine if similar results would be produced in inner city schools with more cultural and ethnic diversity.

8. This study contained no African American students. It is the belief of the researcher that the results would have been substantially with higher in a positive direction with increased levels of African American students and students from a lower socioeconomic area.

9. Researchers must replicate this study to explore whether informal mentorship or inclusion programs will produce similar results.

10. It is recommended that a CoF model be created at all levels of education to reinforce or identify deficits in empathy. With the increase of mass shootings in schools and cities, programs like the CoF counter many of the feelings like social persecution and despair that are common in active shooters.

Concluding Remarks and Reflections

As an educator, I have spent more than 18 years on various school campuses in different capacities. Except for one or two, they have all been the same; the students with multiple disabilities seem to be the invisible population. I use the word invisible because it appears the nondisabled students and general education faculty do not consciously see them unless there is a problem or behavior. The lack of inclusion in our schools is disheartening, to say the least. However, what is even more alarming is the lack of outrage over this problem. It is time to create a voice for the voiceless. That said, when it was time to choose a topic for my dissertation journey, I could think of no greater cause to champion.

While researching this topic, I learned the extent of the issue and primed myself to take action. I have added organizations to my personal network or mentoring groups and created alliances with organizations to help me become a more focused and strategic leader. Nevertheless, I would be remiss if I did not share my gratitude for being able to meet and learn from the implementers of this organization. While interviewing the former participants of CoF, I was able to relive their experience through their stories. Capturing their passion for helping and listening to their emotional transformations inspired me to strive harder to accurately portray their experiences for others to study. It was amazing to learn that these participants inadvertently learned so much about themselves during participation. However, most of them felt like they were just "hanging out" with a friend.

The findings and implications unearthed in this study should be used to provide a basis for studying the benefits of peer mentorship or strategic inclusion. It is my sincere

hope that my work will inspire others to work together to provide more access to

programs like CoF because of the benefit to both populations. Although I have been a

mentor, child advocate, facilitator, and board member of mentor organizations, none of

those experiences have taught me as much as my dissertation journey. I will use what I

have learned on this sojourn to take inclusion to new heights while building my capacity

as a transformational leader.

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APPENDICES

Letter of Invitation to Potential Participants

Date 10/15/2017

You are invited to participate in a research study designed to explore the lived experience of former CoF (CoF) mentors. The primary principal investigator of this study is Christopher D. DeLoach. I am a doctoral student at Brandman University in the Organizational Leadership program. You have been selected to participate because you were a mentor/Buddy in the CoF program in the past. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and will only require 45-70 minutes of your time.

Purpose: The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences of former CoF non-disabled peer mentors of students with multiple disabilities to discover how this mentorship program impacted the four dimensions of emotional intelligence.

Procedures: Participants in this study will be interviewed by the researcher. During the interview, you will be allowed to share your experience being a CoF Buddy, as well as questions related to your current life. The interview will be audio recorded for later transcription. You may discontinue the interview at any time. All interview contents will remain in a locked structure when not in use. Audio recordings will be destroyed after transcription is complete.

Risk: There is no major personal risk to participating in this study.   In person interviews might be inconvenient for the interviewee. As a result, the principal interviewer will meet in a place of the participant's choosing.

Potential Benefits: Participation in this study will contribute to the body of research on peer mentorship and emotional intelligence. Your narrative can provide insight into the lived experience of a CoF Buddy as it relates to emotional intelligence.

Anonymity: The personal information you provide will not be linked to the data you provide in any way. However, there will be a coding system used to categorize data with participants in case you would like to view your transcribed. You will have the option to review your responses after transcription. If you have any questions feel free to call Christopher DeLoach (310) 213-3733. You may also email me at cdeloach@mail.brandman.edu. If you have any other questions or concerns about this study or your rights as a study participant, you may write or call the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

Respectfully,

Christopher D. DeLoach MA. Ed.
Principal Investigate.

Study Flyer

YOU ARE
THE STAR
NOW

To Be a Part of This Study:

Complete the 4-question survey
using the following link:
https://goo.gl/VEPp2s

Or Simply

Contact Mr. Christopher DeLoach
via email
cdeloach@mail.brandman.edu

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

FOR

CIRCLE OF FRIENDS STUDY

In search of volunteers for a research study
exploring the lived experiences of former

Circle of Friends Peer Friends.

WHO

Former Circle of Friends Peer Friends ages

18 to 30

(Participant Identities will remain confidential)

WHAT

Take part in a brief interview about your
experience (approximately 1 Hour)

WHERE

Convenient location that is discrete serene
e.g. Public library, coffee shop, office

WHY

Why should I participate? Your participation has
been solicited to help add to body of knowledge
surrounding Peer Friends of students with
disabilities. Your experience can add to the
collective of research surrounding the benefits of
being a "Peer Friend"

Approved by...

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent

Research Study Title: A Look at Emotional Intelligence: A Qualitative Study of Peer Mentorship Via CoF

Brandman University
16355 Laguna Canyon Road
Irvine, CA 92618

Principal Investigator: Christopher D. DeLoach, Doctoral Candidate

Title of Consent Form: Research Participant's Informed Consent

Purpose of The Study: The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the lived experiences of former CoF non-disabled peer mentors of students with multiple disabilities to discover how this mentorship program impacted the four dimensions of emotional intelligence.

By participating in this research study, you are consenting to being interviewed and may be asked to share artifacts relevant to your experience. The entire interview will be audio recorded for accuracy in transcriptions. The interview will take between 45-70 minutes of your time. During the interview, you will be asked questions about your experience as a "Buddy" in the CoF program. Additionally, you will be asked questions about your life experiences after your time with the program as it relates to mentorship. You will be asked to fill out a questionnaire that will include questions that provide data on your background. However, this data will in no way be linked to your responses in the narrative of the study.

I understand that:

A) There are no known major risks or discomforts associated with this research.

B) There are no major benefits to you for participation, but a potential benefit may be that your input will contribute to the growing body of research that will impact the field of education. Information provided by you may help to inform the future practices of CoF and schools that utilize the program.

C) Monetary compensation will not be provided for my time and involvement: however, a $10.00 gift card may be provided.

D) Any questions I have regarding my participation in this study will be answered by Christopher DeLoach, Brandman University Doctoral Candidate. I understand that Mr. DeLoach may be contacted by phone at 310 213-3733 or cdeloach@mail.brandman.edu.

E) I understand that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time without any consequences. Also, the investigator may stop the study at any time.

F) I understand that the study will be audio-recorded, and the subsequent recordings will not be used beyond the scope of this project.

G) I understand that the audio recordings will be used to transcribe the interview at a later date.

H) I also understand that none of my personal information will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected and kept secure. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent reobtained.
I understand that if I have any questions or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call of the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the Research Participant's Bill of Rights.

I have read the above and understand it and hereby voluntarily consent to the procedures(s) set forth.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant or Responsible Party   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Witness (if appropriate)   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Principal Investigator   Date
Brandman University IRB, (IRB)

APPENDIX D

Demographic Questionnaire

Instructions: Please write the answer that you most identify with. Remember your name will remain confidential throughout the process. All documents will be kept in a secure locked location.

1. Name:

2. Age:

3. Race/Ethnicity:

4. Gender:

5. Position:

6. Name of employer:

7. Years of experience in current position:

Interview Protocol

Participant Name_____ (Confidential)

Date_____

CoF Participation Site _____

Interviewer Says:

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today. My name is Christopher DeLoach. I am a Doctoral student at Brandman University. I am working on a dissertation to complete a doctorate of Education in Organizational Leadership and this interview will be used as part of my research.

Through this study, I am hoping to gain a better understanding of what it was like being a CoF mentor. Additionally, I hope to unearth how this program affected its mentor participants. As a former participant, your perspective and knowledge will be instrumental in the knowledge I seek. I am interested learning about your journey as a mentor and life after the CoF program.

I anticipate we will be together for be together for 45 minutes to an hour. Shortly you will have time to review the required documents for participating in this study. They include, but are not limited to the Study Invitation, Letter of Informed Consent, Audio Release Form, and Demographics Questionnaire. You will be asked to sign the required documents. After the consent forms have been signed I will answer any questions you may have pertaining to participation. At that point, I will start the recordings. If at any point you feel uncomfortable, let me know and I will stop the recording. Please remember you may discontinue the interview at any time. As I gain insight into your experience as a mentor, your comfort and anonymity are a top priority for me.

Document Review and Signatures:

Now we will thoroughly review the participation documents. We will begin with the Study Invitation, proceed to the Informed Consent, and end with the Participants Bill of Rights. (Pause for Reading and Questions) Please take a moment to sign each of the required documents.

Beginning the Interview:

If I use jargon or words that are unfamiliar, do not hesitate to ask me to define a term or rephrase a question. Do you have any questions? (Pause for Questions) I will start the two recording devices and we will begin the interview now. See (Appendix G) for guided interview questions.

APPENDIX F

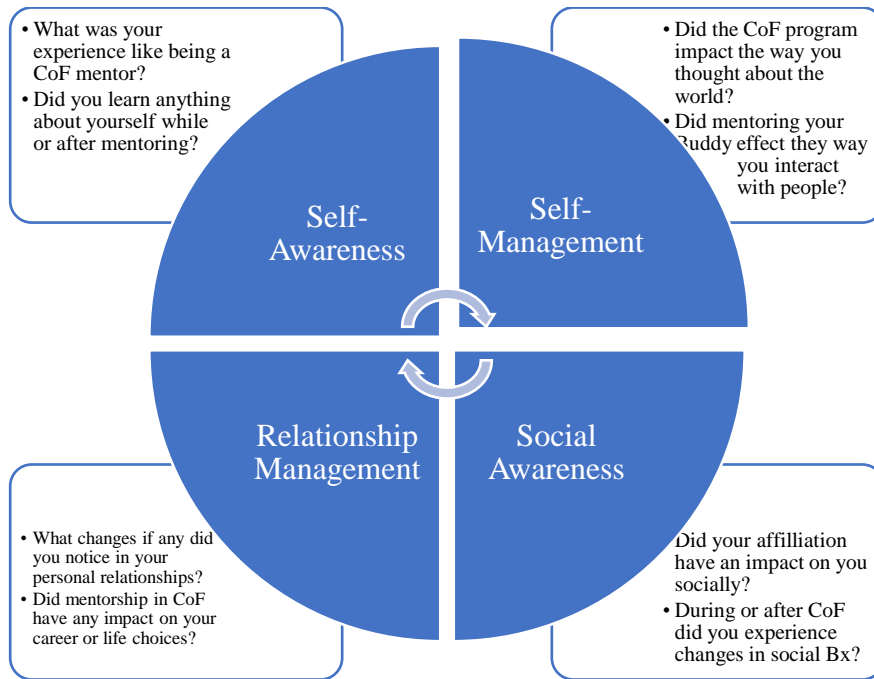# Field Test Participant Feedback Questions

Debriefing Questions

After the field test is over make friendly conversation to lower the stress level or raise the energy of the room. Be upbeat and appreciative. Ask the following questions of the field test participant to obtain feedback on how to improve the study.

1. How did you feel about the interview? Do you think you had ample opportunities to describe your experience as a "Buddy"/mentor?

2. Did you feel the amount of time for the interview was ok?

3. Were the questions clear?

4. Were there places where you were uncertain what was being asked? *If the interview indicates some uncertainty, be sure to find out where in the interview it occurred.*

5. Can you recall any words or terms being asked about during the interview that were confusing?

6. Is there a question that you feel I should have asked to get more data on the essence of being a CoF Mentor?

7. And finally, did I appear comfortable during the interview… (I'm pretty new at this)?
   Remember, the key is to use common, conversational language and very user friendly approach.

Research Question Alignment Matrix

- What was your experience like being a CoF mentor?
- Did you learn anything about yourself while or after mentoring?

- Did the CoF program impact the way you thought about the world?
- Did mentoring your Buddy effect they way you interact with people?

Self-Awareness

Self-Management

Relationship Management

Social Awareness

- What changes if any did you notice in your personal relationships?
- Did mentorship in CoF have any impact on your career or life choices?

- Did your affilliation have an impact on you socially?
- During or after CoF did you experience changes in social Bx?

Interview Questions and Subquestions

	Interview Question
Central Question	• Describe your experience as a Circle of Friends Peer Friend. Describe any social or emotional growth that you experienced during or as a result of the program?
Research Questions 1. How do former students who mentored in the Circle of Friends program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the emotional intelligence dimension of self-awareness?	• Tell me what you learned about yourself while or after mentoring. • Tell me what you learned about your ability to understand your feelings.
2. How do former students who mentored in the Circle of Friends program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the emotional intelligence dimension of self-management?	• Explain how the CoF program influenced the way you processed and utilized your feelings. • Tell me how mentoring your Peer Friend effected the way you interacted with people?
3. How do former students who mentored in the Circle of Friends program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the emotional intelligence dimension of social awareness?	• Discuss how your affiliation with CoF effected your ability to recognize other people's feeling. • Describe the changes you experienced in your social behavior as a result of your involvement with CoF.
4. How do former students who mentored in the Circle of Friends program perceive that their participation impacted their growth in the emotional intelligence dimension of relationship management?	Tell me about how your experience with the CoF impacted your ability to connect with other people. • Discuss how your mentorship in CoF impacted your career or life choices.

Letter of Support: Circle of Friends

Circle of Friends

The Path to Inclusion

To the Brandman University Ed.D. Department,

In January, we were contacted by Christopher Deloach through an administrator at William S. Hart Union High School District. Mr. Deloach described the "Forever Friends" Club he started at AVHS. He explained his interest in measuring the impact that interacting with students with disabilities makes on general education students. We agreed that alumni from CoF's School Inclusion Program would be good subjects to interview for his doctoral research project.

Mr. Deloach has been transparent and responsive in sharing his study parameters and documentation. Robyn will connect him with the advisors at our high schools with established CoF programs, who will then reach out to their former peer friends to participate.

We look forward to learning about Mr. Deloach's findings. Educators like him will move the field forward in building and supporting the 21st Century skills of embracing differences and improving communication in schools.

Warmly,

Barbara Palilis,
Founder and Executive Director

Robyn Stack Reagan, M.A.
Program Director