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Santa Barbara

The Characteristics of Organic Youth Mentoring Relationships: A Qualitative Study

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology

by

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A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

The Characteristics of Organic Youth Mentoring Relationships:

A Qualitative Study

by

A. Pati Cabrera

Naturally occurring mentoring relationships, interchangeably referred to as organic mentorships, have been defined as an emotional bond between a youth and nonparental adult, who provides support and guidance to the youth as a result of the relationship being developed without the assistance of a program designed to foster such connection among youth and adults (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). Natural mentors, or important nonparental adults who youth encounter through their existing social networks, are an important resource for at-risk Latino/a youth as they transition to adulthood. Natural mentoring research to date has primarily investigated the presence or absence of a mentoring relationship and its affect on youth outcomes. An extensive, exploratory, qualitative method was employed to analyze specific relationship qualities and processes among high-risk Latino/a youth and their adult natural mentors. Eight Latino/a youth individuals (3 females and 5 males) and three adult mentors (1 female and 2 males) participated in the study. The results indicated that both youth and adult participants had individual characteristics that promoted and supported the connectedness and emotional bond in their natural mentoring relationships. Furthermore, the findings implied that bonding through shared life

experiences and the mentor altering the relationship according to the needs of the youth could help cultivate long-lasting and meaningful relationships for high-risk Latino/a youth and their natural adult mentors. Several domains and core ideas emerged, which are consistent with the previous theoretical literature, as well as some new findings.

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I. Introduction

There has been a growing youth mentoring movement in the fields of prevention research and positive youth development (Rhodes, 2002). The trend has been maintained by the notion that supportive relationships between youth and nonparental adults, either through formal mentoring programs or informal connections, assist youth to achieve healthy youth outcomes (Scales, 2003). Mentoring has been described as encompassing three elements: the mentor with more experience and wisdom than the mentee, the mentor providing guidance to facilitate the developmental growth of the mentee, and the presence of an emotional bond between mentor and mentee (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). Certain characteristics of mentors and mentoring relationships have been shown to contribute to the effectiveness of mentoring, such as perceived emotional closeness and amount of time mentor and mentee spend together (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; Whitney, Hendricker, & Offutt, 2011), age of the mentor (Whitney et al., 2011), and mentor self-efficacy (Karcher, Nakkula, & Harris, 2005). However, beyond these characteristics, few have been discovered.

Two different types of mentoring relationships have been described in the literature: formal and natural. Formal mentoring relationships have been described as a supportive, matched connection typically between an older, more experienced mentor and less experienced mentee (e.g., Big Brothers/Big Sisters) (Hurd & Zimmerman, 2010). Perceived trust in formal mentorships have been associated with increased improvement in attitudes toward school, academic confidence, self-esteem,

attitudes toward helping others, feelings of school connectedness, and perceptions of guidance and support from adults outside the mentoring relationships among academically at-risk ethnic minority students (DuBois, Neville, Parra, & Pugh-Lilly, 2002; Karcher, 2005). Naturally occurring mentoring relationships, interchangeably referred to as organic mentorships, have been defined as an emotional bond between a youth and nonparental adult, such as a community member, teacher, or youth group leader, who provides support and guidance to the youth as a result of the relationship being developed without the assistance of a program designed to foster such connection among youth and adults (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). Natural mentoring relationships have been associated with improved social, academic, and behavioral outcomes (Herrera, et al., 2007), increased pro-school attitudes, decreased use of alcohol and drugs, and decreased engagement in delinquent behaviors among high-risk youth (Zimmerman, Bigenheimer, & Notaro, 2002).

The distinguishing feature between formal and natural mentorships is the aspect of match, as naturally occurring mentorships are formed organically without the help of a formal mentoring program. While there is quite a bit of research on formal mentoring, the construct of natural mentoring continues to lack a common definition and methods to define such relationships (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). There exists a dearth of research investigating the characteristics of naturally occurring mentoring relationships, which has made it difficult for researchers to empirically investigate the predictors and consequences of natural mentors and relationships. It has been recommended that researchers continue to articulate and test theories

describing the components of natural mentoring, to further contribute to the refinement of the construct (DuBois & Karcher, 2005).

Such mentoring relationships have perhaps best been conceptualized through theories pertaining to resilience and attachment. Resilience theory has been used to understand natural mentoring relationships, for it suggests that high-risk youth facing multiple adversities can transition into successful adults with the support of natural mentoring relationships with nonparental adults that foster interpersonal closeness. More information is needed to better understand how nonparental adult mentors protect high-risk youth from the negative risks associated with the adversities they face (Sanchez, Esparza, & Colon, 2008). Attachment theory has also been used to conceptualize natural adult mentors and their role in the lives of high-risk youth, for its conceptualization of the predictors and developmental advantages of experiencing such emotional supportive bonds. According to attachment theory, youth who experience interpersonal closeness perhaps may gain adaptive interpersonal skills to further establish more connections with nonparental adults (Winnicott, 1971, 1990).

There have been calls in the literature for researchers to explore and gain a better understanding of the types, characteristics, and numbers of natural mentoring relationships and their influence on healthy youth outcomes (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). Suggestions have been made to utilize exploratory research designs to gain a better understanding of organic mentorships, as much of the current available research on natural mentoring relationships has been investigated through a quantitative lens (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). Additionally, much research has

focused on the presence or absence of natural mentoring relationships but has not further explored the types of interactions that occur or how the mentoring relationship evolves over time (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). For example, one study found that mentors' perceptions of their own self-efficacy as a mentor influenced youths' ability to experience empathy, praise, and attention, and overall contributed to the youth's perception of the relationship quality (Karcher et al., 2005). However, it seems that there are likely other factors that influence successful natural mentorships (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). This study will explore these and other factors, including the types of interactions and the development of the relationship.

The U.S. high-risk Latino/a youth population is one that could benefit from naturally occurring mentoring relationships and their implications for healthy youth developmental gains, as this group faces added adversities associated with dropping out of school (Pew Hispanic Center, 2010), living in poverty (Lopez, & Velasco, 2011), having limited English proficiency (Fortuny et al., 2009), experiencing a lack of parental supervision due to parents' strenuous work schedules (American Psychological Association, 2012), having parents with limited education (Fortuny, Capps, Simms, & Chaudry, 2009), experiencing discrimination (Parra-Cardona, Bulock, Imig, Villaruel, & Gold, 2006), adjusting to the dominant White culture (Calzada, Fernandez, & Cortes, 2010), exposure to gangs (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009) and gang involvement (Lemus & Johnson, 2008). High-risk youth have been defined as youth at risk of participating in problem behaviors and they commonly live in poor, unsafe neighborhoods, experience frequent racial and ethnic discrimination,

and have increased amounts of free unsupervised time during nonschool hours (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth, 2002). Werner and Smith (1992) found that high-risk ethnic minority youth facing some of the adversities mentioned above were able to develop into healthy adults, with the help of natural mentors (e.g., teachers and concerned relatives). This finding suggests that natural mentorships may also assist high-risk Latino/a youth to successfully transition into adulthood, and perhaps through the additional support, assist youth to overcome adversities and achieve healthy youth outcomes (e.g., psychological wellbeing, academic achievement, pro-school attitudes, adaptive relationships, greater satisfaction with social support, decreased involvement in problem behaviors).

Research has found that the presence of natural mentors among high-risk Latino/a youth predict fewer school absences, higher educational expectations, increased school belonging, and overall positive academic outcomes (Sanchez et al., 2008). Additionally, in another study focusing on Latino/a youth, it was found that a majority of youth participants reported having a natural mentor with an extended family member of the same ethnic background who provided emotional support (Sanchez & Reyes, 1999). This finding highlights the importance of *familismo* (familism), a Latino/a cultural value that describes a close attachment to family members with feelings of reciprocity, loyalty, and solidarity (Coohey, 2001). There is limited research on the characteristics of natural mentoring relationships among Latino/a youth as, as most of the research is centered on outcomes. Therefore, the

current study will examine the characteristics of naturally occurring mentoring relationships among high-risk Latino/a youth.

It has been shown that high-risk ethnic minority youth, such as Latino/a youth, are more likely to develop naturally occurring mentoring relationships than formal mentoring relationships with members of their communities (Edelman, 1999). This may be because one problematic aspect of formal mentoring relationships and programs that assign mentors to youth is the often short duration of the relationship resulting from a lack of youth and mentor commitment (Rhodes, 2002). This finding suggests that naturally occurring mentorships may be more accessible and available to high-risk Latino/a youth. Additionally, natural mentorships may be more helpful to high-risk Latino/a youth because of their organic development and the possibility that a stronger bond may be formed if it is developed naturally with a member of the youth's own community in comparison to a matched community member mentor.

While much research has been done on the outcomes and characteristics of general mentoring, only a few studies have focused on the characteristics of natural mentoring (Whitney et al., 2011; Dubois & Silverthorn, 2005; Karcher et al., 2005) and even fewer on natural mentoring in the Latino/a population (Sanchez & Reyes, 1999; Sanchez, Reyes, & Singh, 2006; Sanchez et al., 2008) This study will add to the literature on natural mentoring relationships by further delineating the factors, characteristics, and qualities that define such organic relationships among the diverse, U.S., high-risk, Latino/a youth population. High-risk Latino/a youth could benefit from naturally occurring mentoring relationships for several reasons including:

convenience, increased accessibility and sustainability, increased commitment and follow-through by either mentor and youth, and better access to natural mentors in comparison to formal mentors through programs.

Current Study

The intent of this study is to explore the qualities of natural mentoring relationships among high-risk Latino/a youth. As found by Werner and Smith (1992), natural mentoring relationships have assisted youth to overcome adversities in adolescence and transition into successful adults. The current study provides a more in-depth understanding of the duration, frequency and other characteristics of natural mentoring relationships, including their influence on overcoming adversities. This study focuses more on characteristics than outcomes, as the goal is to gain an understanding of the relational processes that occur in naturally occurring mentoring relationships. An exploratory qualitative method was used, as qualitative research is recommended for new or underexplored topics (Hill, 2011) and the natural mentoring relationship is a recent construct that has not been very well defined. Qualitative findings on natural mentorships could assist with better defining the construct and informing future studies in this area of research. Qualitative, semi-structured, individual interviews were conducted with adolescents and their nonparental, natural, adult mentors to try to gain a more complete understanding of the qualities of the mentoring relationship, including the social and psychological factors that influenced its formation, and the cultural factors that may influence the likelihood of having a natural mentor.

Findings from this qualitative study could highlight the importance of understanding the qualities that contribute to the unique emotional bond that exists in natural mentoring relationships. Further, in-depth information about the characteristics of youth and nonparental adults who have successfully formed natural mentoring relationships could be used to inform and sustain existing formal mentoring programs, foster characteristics in Latino/a youth who lack the capability to sustain such connections with mentors, and to train and more efficiently select nonparental, adult mentors in formal mentoring programs (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). Results could also be used to inform program practitioners, researchers, theoreticians, funders, and policy makers in their development of theory-informed, culturally relevant prevention programs that enhance adaptive interpersonal skills in youth and increase their likelihood of having strong ties with nonparental adult mentors.

Research Questions

The primary aim of this qualitative study is to explore the vital features of naturally occurring mentoring relationships with nonparental adults among high-risk Latino/a youth. The secondary aim is to examine the influence that natural mentoring relationships have on high-risk youth overcoming adversities, and the factors that contribute to the quality and duration of the mentoring relationship. The research questions were developed from recommendations made by leading scholars in the area of natural youth mentoring. It has been suggested that future research direct the attention towards the initiation, development, and characteristics of naturally occurring mentoring relationships (DuBois & Karcher, 2005, Karcher et al., 2005;

Whitney et al., 20011). Additionally, resilience and attachment frameworks were used to formulate the research questions and better understand the influence that nonparental natural adult mentors may have in protecting youth from the negative effects of facing adversities. The following qualitative research questions will be investigated:

1. What are some of the characteristics of naturally occurring mentoring relationships?
2. How do naturally occurring mentoring relationships assist youth in overcoming adversities?
3. What youth factors contribute to the quality and duration of naturally occurring mentoring relationship?
4. What mentor factors contribute to the quality and duration of naturally occurring mentoring relationship?
5. How are naturally occurring mentoring relationships initiated?
6. How do naturally occurring mentoring relationships develop over time?
7. What are some of the challenges encountered in naturally occurring relationships?
8. How are challenges resolved in naturally occurring relationships?
9. How do the relationship characteristics in naturally occurring relationships compare to general mentoring characteristics?

II. Literature Review

U.S. Latino/a Population

The current Latino/a population accounts for 50.5 million (16%) of the total U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011), making Latino/as the largest ethnic group in the nation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). It is likely that by the year 2050 in the U.S., the overall Latino/a population will account for 102.6 million and increase from 15.5% to 24.4% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). As the current population estimate may not fully reflect the Latino/a undocumented immigrant population, Latinos/as may currently exceed 16% of the total U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).

Within the Latino/a U.S. population, Latino/a youth are also an increasing subgroup, accounting for one out of every three Americans under the age of 18 (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011). Subsequently, as the Latino/a youth population expands, so does the population of Latino/a children with at least one parent born outside the U.S. (Passel & Taylor, 2010, C. Suarez-Orozco, Yoshikawa, Teranishi, & Suarez-Orozco, 2011; Yoshikawa, 2011). In 2006, the majority of children of immigrants were Latino/a with 41% of children having at least one parent from Mexico, 11% from Central America and the Caribbean, and six percent from South America (Fortuny et al., 2009).

As the overall youth population dramatically increases in the U.S., including citizen youth of undocumented parents, there is a dire need for more knowledge about factors, such as naturally occurring mentoring relationships, that may influence positive youth development outcomes (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). Such factors may

contribute to Latino/as' ability to successfully and adaptively cope with adversities (Kuperminc, Wilkins, Roche, & Alvarez-Jimenez, 2009), which in turn contributes to their resilience (Masten, 2007). There have been calls for more empirical studies investigating the impact that mentoring relationships have on healthy youth development among disadvantaged Latino/a youth (DuBois & Karcher, 2005).

Adversities Faced by Latino/a Youth

There is a dearth of research examining the series of stressors that Latino/a youth encounter (Kuperminc et al., 2009), however it is known that Latino/a youth, particularly immigrant youth (Morgan Consoli et al., in press), may experience challenges (Capps, Castañeda, Chaudry, & Santos, 2007), ranging from dropping out of school (Pew Hispanic Center, 2010) to living in poverty (Lopez, & Velasco, 2011). Latino/a youth may experience added difficulties transitioning into adulthood due to factors such as limited English proficiency (Fortuny et al., 2009), experiencing a lack of parental supervision due to parents working long hours (American Psychological Association, 2012), and having parents with limited education (Fortuny et al., 2009). Furthermore, high-risk, Latino/a youth are confronted with adversities including racial profiling, discrimination (Parra-Cardona et al., 2006), exposure to gangs (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009) and gang involvement (Lemus & Johnson, 2008). It appears that the future success of this country depends on fostering skilled, competent, and responsible U.S. youth (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth, 2002), and in this case much of the weight will be placed on the growing Latino/a youth populations. Program

practitioners, researchers, scholars, theoreticians, funders, and policy makers need to work collaboratively with each other on developing programs for the growing disadvantaged Latino/a youth populations (e.g., community group leaders and youth participants), with the intention of increasing adult and youth natural mentoring relationships (DuBois & Karcher, 2005).

Poverty. Researchers have found that more than 6 million U.S. Latino/a children live in poverty, with 4.1 million having immigrant parents (Lopez, & Velasco, 2011). Latino/as living in poverty encounter distinct challenges, including residing in small homes with other families, having less privacy, experiencing a lack of resources and services, and living in communities with high crime rates (Grzywacz, Quandt, Arcury, & Marin, 2005). Research has shown that Latino/a families experiencing economic hardship endure conflict and tension in their family relationships, and as a result seek social support outside of the family context (Gomel, Tinsley, Parke, & Clark, 1998).

Limited English Proficiency. About 20 percent of children of immigrants struggle with speaking, reading, and writing in English (Fortuny et al., 2009). Researchers have found that students who lack English fluency and proficiency, especially children of immigrants, are placed in less advanced courses where they experience limited opportunities for higher learning and in return become less interested in school-related activities and courses (Wang & Goldschmidt, 1999). Latino/a students encountering educational marginalization due to limited English proficiency may be more likely to drop out of high school (Shaunessy, McHatton,

Hughes, Brice, & Ratliff, 2007). For such students, language difficulties serve as barriers to academic achievement, and unfortunately school staff and teachers often misconstrue a lack of language skills for a lack of academic skills (Wang & Goldschmidt, 1999).

Discrimination. Within the Latino/a population, immigrant families have reported experiencing discrimination contributed to by anti-immigrant sentiment and consequently struggle with feeling rejected by the U.S. American society (Deaux, 2006). Research has shown that Latino/a youth experience repeated discrimination of some kind in various contexts including school and the community (Edwards & Romero, 2008; Flores et al., 2008; Martinez, McClure, Eddy & Wilson, 2011). In fact, a majority of U.S.-born Latino/a children of immigrants and immigrant youth report encountering discrimination and racism (Lopez, Lopez, Suarez-Morales, & Castro, 2005) and have attributed experiencing perceived discrimination to the following: acculturation factors such as parent's country of origin, immigration status, and place of birth (Coker et al., 2009), English-language proficiency, ethnicity, academic ability (Shaunessy et al., 2007), physical appearance, clothing, and the use of the Spanish language (Córdova & Cervantes, 2010). Additionally, studies have indicated that a majority of Latino/a youth experience perceived discrimination at school (Coker et al., 2009; Lopez, et al., 2005), which may cause an increased fear of attending school.

Lack of Supervision. Given that Latino/a immigrant parents often work long hours in unstable occupations and conditions (Yoshikawa, 2011), their children may

be left unsupervised (American Psychological Association, 2012). A lack of parental supervision could pose youth with barriers to participating in community-based prevention youth programs where they may potentially meet mentors (DuBois & Karcher, 2005), as they may have family obligations to care for younger siblings (Borden, et al., 2006). A lack of adult supervision may also result in decreased home structure and family bond which could cause youth to be at risk for gang involvement and association and further participation in problem behaviors (Roffman, Suarez-Orozco, & Rhodes, 2002).

Gang Involvement. Latino/a youth, like many other youth, encounter challenges in the form of gang exposure and violence (Pew Hispanic Center, 2009). A large portion of gang members tend to be ethnic minority youth (Hill, Lui, & Hawkings, 2001) males (Howell, 1998) between the ages of 12 and 24 (Hill et al., 2001). The Latino/a population exhibits several of the risk-factors for gang involvement in that they are relatively younger, less educated, and reside in higher poverty areas as compared to the non-Latino/a White population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Therefore, a large percentage of U.S. gang members tend to be Latino/a (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995). Researchers investigated the impact of mentoring on juvenile offenders, including those who committed gang-related criminal offenses, and found that it decreased recidivism rates among juvenile offenders (Davidson, Redner, Blakely, Mitchell, & Emshoff, 1987; Dembo et al., 2001).

School Drop Out. The U.S. Census data (2002) indicated that 27% of Latino/as have less than a 9th grade education, whereas only 4% of non-Latino/a Whites fall into this category. Furthermore, Latino/as continue to drop out of high school at rates that are higher than those of any other major ethnic group in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008; U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Various factors have contributed to the increasing dropout rates among Latino/a students, including but not limited to, poverty, pregnancy, poor academic achievement, parent's low educational attainment, lack of motivation, low aspirations, disengagement from learning, and single-parent households (Vélez & Saenz, 2001).

In some major U.S. cities, such as Los Angeles, the drop out rate for Latino/a students, who make up 71% of the student body, is as high as 59%. Only 41% of 9th grade Latino/a students in the Los Angeles Unified School district reach the 12th grade (Harvard Civil Rights Project, 2005). According to the Harvard Civil Rights Project (2005), the graduation rate for all Latino/as in California was 60.3%. Taking gender into account, Ginorio and Huston (2000) found that Latinas have higher high school drop-out rates than do girls in any other racial or ethnic groups and are the least likely to earn a college degree.

Lack of Parental Education. Research has found that Latino/a children of immigrants are more likely than Latino/a children of U.S.-born parents to have parents who do not have a high school education, and more specifically it has been shown that children of immigrants of Mexican descent are more likely to have parents with less than a high school education (Fortuny et al., 2009). Studies have shown that

parents who lack education are generally less conversant on how to navigate educational structures (Cooper, Denner, & Lopez, 1999), which may result in their children having limited access to resources and services, such as after-school community-based youth prevention programs (Yoshikawa, 2011). Parents with limited education tend to struggle with advocating for their children in the school system and with providing their children with the extra assistance needed to complete school assignments at home. Some Latino/a students may require educational support to succeed academically and pursue higher education and without that assistance from parents, teachers, and school staff, their commitment, participation, and belief in the value of education may suffer (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007).

Protective Factors in Latino/a Youth

It is also important to highlight protective factors promoting healthy youth development (Lerner, Phelps, Forman, & Bowers, 2009). Positive adaptive behaviors, attitudes, and skills permit youth to cope with a myriad of stressors and maintain normal functioning (Masten, 2007; McWhirter et al., 1998). As noted above, mentoring has therefore been associated with resiliency theory in that in promotes positive youth developmental gains. Several factors, including natural mentoring relationships, have been found to be associated with positive healthy youth development and are discussed below.

Mentoring Relationship Components. Some literature has focused on the characteristics of general mentoring relationships, although there have not been extensive summaries on the specific relationship characteristics and processes (e.g.,

authenticity, empathy, mutuality, trust, respect) that occur in natural mentoring relationships. For example, age of the mentor (Whitney et al., 2011), amount of time mentor and mentee spend together (DuBois & Karcher, 2005), type of mentor (Whitney et al., 2011), and mentor self-efficacy (Karcher et al., 2005) have been shown to contribute to relationship quality in mentoring relationships. In regards to the research on how such connections develop, there has been an inclination to focus more on youth outcomes than on the characteristics of mentoring relationships (Sanchez & Reyes, 1999; Sanchez et al., 2006), which has contributed to the lack of a theoretical, conceptual, and empirical understanding of relationship characteristics in mentoring relationships. It has been recommended that future work in this area draw on relational theories as a possible psychological framework for the study of the characteristics in youth mentoring relationships.

Formal Mentoring Relationships. As stated above, formal mentoring relationships are defined as a matched connection, typically between an older, more experienced adult mentor and less experienced youth mentee, in which the mentor provides guidance and support to facilitate the growth and development of the mentee (Hurd & Zimmerman, 2010). Formal mentoring provides gains for youth as demonstrated by the cross-regional study of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program that showed program participants, when compared to a control group, experiencing decreased alcohol and drug use, increased non-violent problem solving behaviors, decreased truancy, increased self-esteem, improved academic competence and achievement, and improved parent-child relationships (Tierney, Grossman, & Resch,

1995; DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002; DuBois, Neville et al., 2002; Rhodes, 2002). Findings have continuously highlighted the positive effects of formal mentoring relationships and researchers have advocated for more formal mentoring programs for high-risk youth. Research suggests that through relationship-based prevention interventions, youth attain positive gains and promote competency (Zand et al., 2009) due to the closeness and emotional bond found in the relationship (Parra, DuBois, Neville, & Pugh-Lilly, 2002). Additionally, DuBois, Holloway, et al. (2002) conducted a rigorous meta-analysis on the effectiveness of formal youth mentoring and found important factors that contributed to the effectiveness of the relationship, including the duration and amount of contact in the mentorship.

However, drawbacks also exist for formal mentoring programs. For example, it was found that a majority of formal mentorships tend to be short lived and lack regular contact (DuBois, Holloway et al., 2002). Additional disadvantages to formal mentoring relationships include the lack of access to high-risk ethnic minority youth populations, including Latino/a youth (DuBois & Karcher, 2005), the inability for the adult mentor to demonstrate appreciation and acknowledgement of the youth's socio-demographic factors (Hirsch, 2005), lack of mentor training and supervision (Flay et al., 2005; Rhodes & Lowe, 2008), and high rates of volunteer mentor attrition (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). It is also often difficult to recruit and retain volunteer mentors (Rhodes & Lowe, 2008). Mentor volunteer attrition affects the bond between adult and youth, especially if it occurs at the early stages of development (Rhodes & Lowe, 2008). Youth mentees who had been through prematurely

terminated formal mentoring relationships reported increased difficulty, frustration, and disappointment in the early stages of developing a mentorship, indicating that premature termination in formal mentoring relationships may have negative effects on the youth (Spencer, 2006).

Natural Mentoring Relationships. Relationships with caring prosocial adults in natural mentorships have been identified as a protective factor for high-risk Latino/a youth (Masten & Coatworth, 1998). The mentor and youth alliance in natural mentorships has been found to promote youth competency (Hurd & Zimmerman, 2010) and is defined as having four relational processes including authenticity, empathy, companionship, and collaboration (Spencer, 2006). Spencer (2006) conducted in-depth semistructured interviews with 24 adolescent and adult pairs who had been in a continuous relationship for at least one year, with the intention to better understand the characteristics in the relationship. Of the pairs, only three youth were Latino/a. The current study will provide a better understanding on the relationship components in naturally occurring mentoring relationships among high-risk Latino/a youth. Additionally, Sanchez and colleagues (1999; 2006) have found that among Latino/a youth, natural mentoring relationships, are mostly with immediate or extended family members that provide a variety of support including emotional and tangible. It has been found that these youth interact at least weekly with their mentors (Sanchez & Reyes, 1999; Sanchez et al., 2006).

Research has shown that high-risk ethnic minority emerging adults who perceived their natural mentoring relationships as supportive (e.g., assistance with

specific problems, material support) and experienced positive interactions, reported lower levels of anger, rule-breaking behaviors, and aggression (Kogan, Bordy, & Chen, 2011). Additionally, in another study, approximately 54% of youth surveyed reported they had a natural mentor, and those with mentors reported participating in fewer problem behaviors and having more pro-school attitudes (Zimmerman et al., 2002). Longitudinal research on disadvantaged youth who adaptively transitioned into adulthood to become well functioning adults has indicated the importance of at least one supportive, natural mentor who believed that the youth could succeed and aided the youth in maneuvering challenges in adolescence (Werner & Smith, 1992). It is important to highlight that selection may be an issue when investigating the influence of natural mentoring relationships on achieving positive outcomes. Youth with a natural mentorship may have stronger interpersonal skills compared to youth who do not seek such relationships.

Community Involvement. Researchers have underscored that communities and neighborhoods play a vital role in influencing positive youth development (Scales, Benson, & Mannes, 2006). Self-reported and perceived community involvement, participation, and connection among adolescents have been positively and significantly associated with holding high expectations and having an integrated and positive identity (Theokas et al., 2005). It is important to note that adolescents spend much of their time outside of the home and depend on various community and neighborhood contexts and persons (Buhrmester, 1990), such as prevention programs and program coordinators, to foster their positive healthy development. Current

research has found that supportive and positive peer relationships and close meaningful relationships with nonparental adult mentors in the community were significantly and positively associated with life satisfaction among adolescents (Oberle, Schonert-Reichl, & Zumbo, 2011), which suggests that these community-level protective factors promote positive development in adolescence. Similarly, in a comprehensive review of nationwide positive youth development programs, it was found that having supportive and meaningful interpersonal mentoring relationships with community members and contributing to one's community (Allen, Kuperminc, Philliber, & Herre, 1994) fosters resilience (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth, 2002) and reduces problem behaviors in adolescents (Allen et al., 1994).

Participation in Community Youth Programs. Current research has found that involvement in structured and supervised community youth programs contributes to positive outcomes for Latino/a youth, such as increased self-esteem, increased school achievements and aspirations to further their educations, ability to overcome challenges, willingness to help others through community civic involvement, leadership skills, and less participation in problem behaviors (Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003; Junge, Manglallan, & Raskauskas, 2003; Villarruel, Montero-Sieburth, Dunbar, & Outley, 2005). In order to increase community-based youth program participation among Latino/a youth, they need to feel safe and accepted, not feel discriminated against or stereotyped, experience supportive relationships with non-related adult mentor group leaders and peers in the program, and learn important

life skills (Lee, Borden, Serido, & Perkins, 2009).

Social Support. Social support promotes healthy adolescent development and serves as a protective factor for Latino/a youth **(**Kuperminc et al., 2009**).** Social support has been found to be associated with a sense of connectedness, guidance, acceptance, and self-esteem among Latino/a youth (Kuperminc et al., 2009), and can function differently for different Latino/a youth, depending on socio-demographic variables such as adolescents' level of acculturation and parents' immigration status. For example, Latino/a immigrant parents may limit the time that their children spend outside of the home in the neighborhood with non-familial individuals because of Latino/a immigrant parents' cultural emphasis on family support and interdependence (Chen & French, 2008; Parke & Buriel, 2006). Moreover, Latino/a parents may experience a level of discomfort and uneasiness with having non-related adults form close emotional connections with their children (Rhodes & Lowe, 2008). *Familismo* (familism) has been defined as a close-knit sense of family within a hierarchical structure (Coohey, 2001) and has been identified as a cultural protective factor among Latino/a youth (Cauce & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2002; Rumbaut, 2005). Studies have revealed that family support protects high-risk Latino/a youth from engaging in risky-behaviors with peers (Germán, Gonzales, & Dumka, 2009), and consequently increases their engagement in positive behaviors with peers (Bámaca and Umaña-Taylor, 2006). Latino/a youth were more likely to report receiving social support primarily from family, especially from siblings (Pernice-Duca, 2010). Based on these findings, it is possible that mentoring relationships with extended family members or

with non-related adults who have close ties to the family may be more prevalent for Latino/a youth, highlighting the importance of supportive close-knit Latino/a communities for the development of natural mentors among high-risk Latino/a youth. Finally, organic mentoring relationships have been shown to help youth to increase other supportive relationships (DuBois & Karcher, 2005).

Positive Ethnic Identity. Ethnic identity formation is a life-long process and especially vital in adolescence as youth are experiencing social and cognitive growth, and in particular grappling with complicated principles such as ethnicity and race (Umaña-Taylor & Fine, 2004). There is a dearth of research examining Latino/a adolescents' developmental outcomes (Supple, Ghazarian, Frabutt, Plunkett, & Sands, 2006). However, some research findings indicate that positive ethnic identity is positively associated with self-esteem (Umaña-Taylor, Diversi, & Fine, 2002), increased community connection and involvement (Theokas et al., 2005), purpose and meaning in life (Martinez & Dukes, 1997), and proactive coping strategies to deal with perceived discrimination (Ting-Toomey et al., 2000). More research is needed on the multifaceted processes of ethnic identity development among Latino/a adolescents and on the effects of cultural and ethnic factors in natural mentoring relationships on youth development and psychological wellbeing (Umaña-Taylor, Vargas-Chanes, Garcia, & Gonzales-Backen, 2008; Umaña-Taylor, Diversi, & Fine, 2002).

Natural Youth Mentor Theories

The point of this study is to fully understand natural mentoring relationships and research has indicated that to further understand a construct, it needs to be based on theory (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). It is fundamental to utilize psychological theories when investigating the factors that influence some youth to enter naturally occurring mentoring relationships, and to further examine the effects that these organically occurring mentoring relationships may have on positive youth developmental outcomes (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). Therefore, three possible psychological frameworks will be presented as possible frameworks for better understanding the construct in general, and additionally the antecedents and outcomes of natural mentoring relationships including: (1) attachment theory, (2) social support, and (3) resilience theory.

In psychological attachment theory, healthy adolescent youth development is achieved through essential trusting, caring, consistent, and empathic interpersonal relationships, particularly with parents and caregivers (Winnicott, 1971, 1990). According to attachment theory, youths' caring and trusting interpersonal relationships with caregivers provide a foundation in which separation and exploration can occur, and fosters an increased sense of self-worth, emotional self-regulation, skill-building, and development of social, emotional, cognitive, behavioral and moral domains (Winnicott, 1971; Winnicott, 1990). Prevention scientists have recognized the importance of a caring supportive relationship through natural occurring mentoring relationships and the impact it may have on the psychological

wellbeing of youth (Sale, Bellamy, Springer, & Wang, 2008). Overall, youth who perceive parental support and experience close, interpersonal relationships with parents or caregivers will gain the confidence, ability, and openness to develop organically occurring mentoring relationships with nonparental adults (Rhodes, Contreras, & Mangelsdorf, 1994). Specifically, the presence of a caring parental or nonparental adult connection has been shown to promote positive developmental outcomes for adolescents such as healthy socio-emotional and cognitive development (McWhirter, McWhirter, McWhirter, & McWhirter, 1998; The National Research Council and Institute of Medicine Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth, 2002; Rhodes, 2008; Bowers et al., 2010).

According to social support theory, social support consists of emotional, instrumental, informational, and appraisal support that youth receive through reciprocal interpersonal relationships in various social networks (Heaney & Israel, 2002). Youth can receive social support from numerous individuals, including parents, family members, teachers, coaches, peers, and community members. Particularly, parental support is vital to the development of natural occurring mentoring relationships as they provide the guidance, informational support (e.g., motivation to form connections with nonparental adults and instrumental support, advantages of mentoring relationships) (e.g., rides to the community program, funds to participate in extracurricular community activities) to create opportunities for such emotional bonds to form (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). Most importantly, social support theory implies the importance of meaningful connections with natural

mentors as they provide youth with different forms of support including career and educational guidance, emotional support to cope with stressors, and invitations to cultural and community events (DuBois & Karcher, 2005).

According to resilience theory, some individuals faced with adversities are able to overcome challenges and achieve healthy developmental outcomes (Garmezy, 1991; Masten, 2007). Two models of resilience theories indicate the importance of positive and protective factors such as the natural mentoring relationship: the compensatory and protective factor models (Garmezy, Masten, & Tellegen, 1984; Zimmerman, Steinman, & Rowe, 1998). The compensatory model of resilience suggests that positive factors may offset the negative outcomes produced by risk factors encountered by youth (Garmezy et al., 1984). Additionally, the protective factor model indicates that resources and assets may reduce the relation between a risk factor and a negative outcome or further promote the effects of another resource in youth (Zimmerman et al., 1998). Overall, resilience theory suggests that youth with more resources including increased social support, self-confidence, developmental maturity, and adaptive interpersonal skills overcome adversities and return to normal development. Natural mentoring is considered one of these resources. For example, Werner and Smith (1992) found that natural mentoring relationships is a protective factor that contributes to the resilience of high-risk ethnic minority youth.

Integration of Mentoring in Prevention

As stated above, there are many advantages to natural mentoring relationships including promoting and fostering healthy outcomes and competency among youth

(Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). The point of this study is to further understand natural mentoring with the intention to later incorporate it into diverse contexts so it can be used as a direct resource for high-risk Latino/a youth. Studies have shown that organic, relationship-based, prevention interventions can be integrated into existing successful prevention programs (McLearn, Colasanto, & Schoen, 1998; Sale et al., 2008). The findings from a prevention program evaluation will be highlighted in this section due to its examination of natural mentoring on the effectiveness of the program. This program evaluation is an example of practitioners and researchers developing and evaluating a program with a natural mentoring component for low-income ethnic minority youth (Sale et al., 2008). This study is a multi-site relationship-based, prevention program that examined the degree to which the quality of relationships between the adult provider (e.g., staff, community members) and youth participants affected program outcomes across a variety of intervention services and formats (Sale et al., 2008). Researchers found that youth participants who perceived a stronger supportive relationship with their community group leader experienced improved adaptive social skills, as compared to youth participants who perceived a less organic, emotional connection with the group leader. This finding suggests that high-risk Latino/a youth may have more access and opportunities to develop naturally occurring mentoring relationships with non-parental adults in their communities than assigned formal mentoring relationships, considering the socio-demographic characteristics reflective of this population. Additionally, it indicates that opportunities exist within community-based prevention programs for high-risk

youth to develop naturally occurring connections, and it does not necessarily require the additional resources needed to implement a matched mentoring component in prevention program evaluations.

Summary

The Latino/a youth population accounts for approximately one third of Americans under the age of 18 years (Pew Hispanic Center, 2011), and this subgroup is expected to increase as the overall Latino/a population is anticipated to grow (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). High-risk and under-resourced Latino/a youth, specifically citizen children of undocumented Latino/a immigrants, face adversities including, ethnic and racial discrimination, school drop out, and gang exposure. The youth could benefit from prevention services and programs that support the development of naturally occurring mentoring relationships to help counteract the onset of mental health issues (Capps et al., 2007) and help promote positive adolescent development (Catalano, Berglund, et al., 2002). Although disadvantaged Latino/a youth seem to be confronted with an array of adversities, some youth have been able to overcome such challenges by receiving prevention services and most notably by having supportive, nonparental caring adult mentoring relationships (Sterrett, Jones, McKee, & Kincaid, 2011). High-risk youth may be afforded the opportunity to develop natural mentorships with nonparental extended kin, community members, or prevention group leaders. For those youth involved in prevention programs, it is essential for the programs to be based on theoretical perspectives that offer the opportunity for youth to develop emotional bonds with nonparental adult mentors because they offer

Latino/as the appropriate contextual and individual assets needed to foster healthy youth gains (Mueller et al., 2011). The exploration of natural mentoring relationship characteristics in the current study aims to contribute to the limited research on natural mentorships and its influence on positive gains for high-risk Latino/a youth.

III. Method

Participants

Eight youth participants were recruited from a local alternative high school and an afterschool local community youth program aimed at gang prevention, in a mid-sized town on the west coast. All eight participants were Latino/a; three were female, and five were male. Youth participants were asked to indicate their ethnicity and their responses below are described according to their self-reported ethnic identity (e.g., Mexican, Mexican-American, and Hispanic). Four youth participants self-identified as Hispanic, three identified as Mexican-American, and one youth identified as Mexican. Ages ranged from 14 to 17 with a mean of 15.5 years. Five youth individuals attended the local alternative high school (3 female and 3 male) and two youth individuals (2 males) attended the afterschool local gang prevention community youth program. A majority (88%) of the participants were bilingual in Spanish and English. Half of the sample lived in single-Latina headed households (with no spouse present). Eighty-eight percent of the sample had parents who worked in the service industry (e.g., housekeepers, landscapers, cooks) and all participants indicated that their parents were home upon arriving home from school. The youth

sample was largely composed of U.S. born citizens (88%), while 88% of the participants' parents were born in another country (e.g., Mexico and El Salvador).

Each youth participant referred an adult mentor for participation in the study. Three adult natural mentors (1 female and 2 males) were referred by the youth to participate in the study. The female adult was identified as a natural mentor and referred to participate in the study by five youth participants (3 female youth and 2 male youth). One male adult was identified as a natural mentor and referred to participate in the study by one male youth participant. The remaining male adult natural mentor was referred to participate by two youth participants (2 male youth). In a qualitative framework with research based on interviews, a small sample is adequate as the intention is not to generalize the findings to the overall population (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006).

All three adult participants reported being a natural mentor for several years and had many natural mentees. The female adult mentor was employed at the local alternative high school and self-identified as White American. The first male adult mentor was the developer and founder of the afterschool local community youth program and self-identified as Latino. The second male adult mentor participant self-identified as White American and was referred by a youth male participant attending the local alternative high school. This particular male adult mentor was not employed at either recruitment site but instead developed a community program providing etiquette classes to high-risk youth residing in the area, in addition to being employed full-time.

Materials

Demographic questionnaire. A demographic questionnaire (see Appendix) was created by the researcher for the purpose of this study in order to acquire information about participant characteristics to give context for interpreting qualitative results. Questions included topics such as ethnicity, age, sex, English and Spanish proficiency, school enrollment status, community involvement, poverty level, experiences with perceived discrimination, parental supervision, and parents' country of origin, place of birth, and education level.

Youth open-ended questions. Eleven open-ended questions, designed for the purposes of this study and based on the elements of organic mentoring relationships found in the literature, explored participants' personal accounts of the characteristics of naturally occurring mentoring relationships, the initiation and development of natural mentoring relationships, and the youth characteristics that contributed to the quality and duration of naturally occurring mentoring relationships. Follow up questions were used for clarification purposes.

Adult open-ended questions. Twelve open-ended questions, designed for the purposes of this study and based on the elements of organic mentoring relationships found in the literature, explored participants' personal accounts of the characteristics of naturally occurring mentoring relationships, the initiation and development of natural mentoring relationships, and the adult mentor characteristics that contributed to the quality and duration of naturally occurring mentoring relationships. Follow up questions were used for clarification purposes.

Procedures

The researcher obtained approval from the Human Subject Review Board at University of California, Santa Barbara University prior to conducting research. The researcher contacted community contacts at both agencies and requested referrals for participation in the study. Interested youth were invited to participate in semi-structured one-on-one interviews if they met the following criteria for selection: 1) self-identifying as Latino/a, 2) being 12-18 years, 3) being designated as "at-risk" by their involvement in the afterschool community youth violence prevention program and alternative high school, and 4) having experienced a naturally occurring nonparental adult mentoring relationship(s). Anecdotally, it appeared that the sites selected for recruitment were appropriate because they provide increased opportunities for the formation of natural mentoring relationships to occur due to their incorporation of prevention services provided by older, caring, nonparental, community informed, adult individuals who often become natural mentors. These natural mentoring relationships were not a result of a formal matched mentoring program. The increased services and programs offered in each site provided the opportunity for youth to have increased exposure to such adults. Therefore, the local alternative high school and the afterschool local community youth program seemed appropriate locations to recruit high-risk youth participants who engaged in natural mentorships.

Potential youth participants were told that the researcher would have on-site drop-in hours at both agencies on certain days of the week so that they could meet

with the researcher to get more information about the study. At these drop-in hours, participants were given full information about the study and asked if they had any questions or concerns prior to obtaining consent from their parents and signing the assent forms.

Interested youth participants received a consent packet including a parental consent and a youth assent in either Spanish or English, depending on their preference. The prospective youth participant was informed that the parental consent needed to be completed prior to participating in the study.

Once parental consents and youth assents were obtained, a time for an interview was arranged. At the interview, participants were informed of their rights to withdraw from the study at any time or refrain from answering questions if they began to experience any feelings of discomfort. They were asked for their permission to audio-record interviews. They were informed that any identifying information, including names of participants, would be omitted in the transcription to protect participant confidentiality.

The interviews were conducted at the youths' respective community sites, during the researcher's drop-in schedule. Additional times were scheduled for interviews. Youth participants first completed a short screening questionnaire. The short screening questionnaire included the selection criteria described above in "yes or no" and open-ended question formats. Consenting and eligible youth participants completed a demographic questionnaire created by the researcher to acquire information about participant characteristics. Questions included topics such as

ethnicity, age, sex, English and Spanish proficiency, school enrollment status, community involvement, poverty level, experiences with perceived discrimination, parental supervision, and parents' country of origin, place of birth, and education level. The bilingual and bicultural doctoral-level researcher conducted all interviews with consenting youth participants. Eligible participants participated in individual interviews that lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes. A semi-structured interview protocol was used and participants answered open-ended questions in the interviews. These questions were based on the research questions and the current literature on natural occurring mentoring relationships. The interview questions addressed the characteristics of youths' natural mentoring relationship(s), how the natural mentorship assisted them to overcome adversities, the initiation and development of the relationship, and the factors that contributed to a successful natural mentorship. With participants' permission, interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed to ensure that the richness of the data was captured (Creswell, 2007).

At the end of the interview, the researcher asked if the youth would pass on a letter from the researcher to the identified nonparental, natural mentor(s) describing her interest in conducting an in-depth interview with him/her. The letter described the project briefly and asked the natural mentor to contact the researcher if interested in participating in the study. The researcher asked for the youth participant, if willing, to disclose the name of their natural mentor, so that the researcher could follow up in case the adult mentor did not contact the researcher.

Interested adult participants were asked to meet the researcher at the youth's respective site or another convenient community location where interviewing was possible. At that time, adult participants were informed of the purpose of the study. The researcher reviewed the consent with the adult participant and if there were no further questions, asked the participant to sign the consent. The bilingual and bicultural doctoral-level researcher conducted all interviews with consenting adult participants, in the language of their choice (Spanish or English). The researcher informed the adult participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any time or refrain from answering questions if they began to experience any feelings of discomfort. Consenting adult participants participated in individual interviews that lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes. A semi-structured interview protocol was used and participants answered open-ended questions in the interviews. These questions were based on the research questions and the current literature on natural occurring mentoring relationships. The interview questions addressed the characteristics of their natural mentoring relationship, the initiation and development of the relationship, and the factors that contributed to a successful natural mentorship, from the perspective of the mentor. With participants' permission, interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed to ensure that the richness of the data was captured (Creswell, 2007).

The researcher outlined her intentions to both youth and adult participants to protect the confidentiality of their identities and store all data, including audio-recordings and transcribed verbatim interviews, in password protected computer files.

Hard copies were stored in a locked cabinet to which only the researcher had access. Any identifying information, including names of participants, was omitted in the transcription to protect participant confidentiality.

IV. Results

Design and Data Analysis

Various qualitative philosophical paradigms exist, however consensual qualitative review (CQR) was utilized as the preferred data analysis method because it has been noted to be specifically effective for exploration of a newer construct (Hill et al., 2005; Hill, 2011). Additionally, CQR was used for its predominant constructivist emphasis and some postpositivist components. CQR integrates elements from phenomenological (Giorgi, 1985), grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), and comprehensive process analysis (Elliott, 1989). In terms of ontology, CQR is constructivist as it acknowledges that there are multiple truths (Hill et al., 2005). With respect to epistemology, CQR is constructivist with some emphasis on postpositivism as it recognizes that that researcher and participant influence each other, however a standard interview protocol is utilized to gather consistent data across participants (Hill et al., 2005). Further, in terms of axiology, CQR rests in the middle of constructivism and postpositivism as the researcher's biases are acknowledged with the intention to avoid influencing the results, and consensus is reached. The rhetorical structure found in CQR is somewhat based on postpositivism as the researcher presents the findings in third person and attempts to remain as close

to the data as possible (Hill et al., 2005). Finally, according to Hill and colleagues (2005) the methods found in CQR are entirely constructivist as the intention is to utilize interactive data collection methods to discover participants' meaning through words.

It is important to note that this form of analysis does not allow for in-depth stories to emerge similar to other qualitative methods. However, CQR was an appropriate data analysis method for this study because it allowed for the gathering of consistent data across participants in addition to a more in-depth exploration of individual experiences (Hill et al., 2005). CQR was chosen as a qualitative method because of its emphasis on consensus, in which the goal is to gain a common understanding of the data while respecting the different perspectives of each team member (Hill et al., 2005).

Transcripts were uploaded into NVIVO qualitative analysis software and coding of the data was done by three students trained in CQR analysis. Specifically, the qualitative research team consisted of the doctoral level-researcher, a former undergraduate student trained in CQR who has now graduated, and a current undergraduate student with prior CQR coding experience. CQR training consisted of three years of experience participating in CQR analysis for the lead researcher and a three-hour workshop and hands-on experience for the other two analysts. The internal and external auditors were past graduates of the doctoral program and had extensive training in CQR analysis.

CQR analysis consists of several steps. Each team member first examined the data independently by creating domains, sub-domains, and core-ideas. Domains are defined as more general terms used to cluster information about a specific topic. Sub-domains are more detailed categories under the domains. Core ideas are included within each domain and are more detailed terms used to capture more specific information (Hill, 2011). Team members next discussed together the identified domains, sub-domains, and core ideas, until consensus was reached. An internal auditor monitored analysis sessions for "groupthink," differential power dynamics, and provided a more integrated and holistic perspective on the data. An external auditor reviewed coding materials after analysis was complete to ensure that all data was extracted and captured by the domains, sub-domains, and core ideas in a clear manner. The internal and external auditors reviewed the consensus coding list and provide feedback to the analysis team which was integrated back into the coding list as deemed appropriate by the team (Hill, 2011).

This study yielded a coding list containing individual and across sample patterns. The coding list contains domains, sub-domains, and core-ideas describing participants' experiences of the initiation and development of naturally occurring mentoring relationships, the characteristics of natural mentorships, the challenges encountered in such relationships, as well as the youth and mentor characteristics that contributed to the quality and duration of the naturally occurring mentoring relationships. Additionally, information on the critical aspects of naturally occurring mentoring relationship, types of interactions, and key aspects of supportive emotional

bonds described in attachment and resilience theories emerged. These findings will be compared to similar findings on general mentoring in the Latino/a youth population and conclusions about recommended circumstances for optimal mentoring with this population will be made.

CQR analysis (Hill, 2011) revealed six emergent domains which were arrived at through team consensus. They included: Characteristics of the Natural Mentoring Relationship, Factors Contributing to the Development of the Natural Mentoring Relationship, Youth Outcomes, Types of Interactions, and Factors that Foster More Natural Mentoring Relationships in the Community and Youth's Desire to Promote or Create More Natural Mentoring Relationships. Emergent categories were classified according to the labels suggested by the CQR method: categories that applied to all (N=11) or to all but one of the participants were labeled *General*, categories that applied to more than half of the events up to the cutoff for general were labeled *Typical*, and categories that applied to at least two cases up to the cutoff for typical were labeled *Variant* (see Table 1) (Hill et al., 2005; Hill, 2011). A description of each domain followed by categories and examples from the raw data is provided below. Frequency of youth and adult responses are indicated for each category for contextual purposes. All youth participants were self-identified according to sex, ethnicity, age, English and Spanish proficiency, school enrollment status, and community involvement. Domains and categories are listed below according to the CQR labels.

Domain One: Characteristic of the Natural Mentoring Relationship (NMR)

Characteristic of the NMR was defined as qualities of the natural mentoring relationship among high-risk Latino/a youth and a nonparental adult mentor. Both youth mentee and adult mentor participants noted similar characteristics. Emergent Characteristics of the NMR included four variant responses: Parental Figure, Family Support, Reciprocity, and Encouragement. Typical responses included Understanding, Advice, Communication, Care, Providing Basic Needs, Trustworthy, Challenges, and Reliability. The three general responses contained Emotional Support, Work/School Support, and Quantity of NMRs. These categories are outlined in this section.

Parental figure. The CQR analysts defined this characteristic as the mentee viewing the mentor's role in the natural mentoring relationship as a parental or familial figure. This response was exemplified by comments made by youth participants (3 youth), including "she's [mentor] like a second mom to me," or "she's [mentor] always there for me like my mom." More specifically, one 17-year-old, male youth participant stated, "And it kinda opened my eyes too because he was… acting like as a parent…he was helping me." Similarly, the adult mentor participants (2 adults) indicated that their mentees "were like their kids," and continued to describe a sense of responsibility they experienced for their mentees.

Family support. Participants (3 youth and 2 adults) described this quality as the mentor helping the mentee with family-related challenges, while also being a resource to the mentee's immediate family. One 16-year-old, female participant

expressed concern to her mentor regarding her sister's medical health and its impact on the entire family. The female adult mentor reported:

> So I remember, bringing the mom in and I sat down with her and [my mentee] and really talked about the severity of, how her [mentee's sister] health could be affected by what she, she was starving herself. Kind of limiting and restricting her food intake. So I sat down with the mom and communicated, you know, medical concerns that any doctor would probably identify, you know. Understanding…how that whole thing began [mentee's sister's condition]. I just talked to her more cause they were trying to make a plan. They were gonna go get the daughter and bring her to Santa Barbara….they wanted to do an intervention basically. But I talked them through and coached them through how to create that.

Reciprocity. Participants (2 youth and 3 adults) described this quality as both mentee and mentor treating each other as equals and mutually benefiting from the natural mentoring relationship. Youth participants described a desire to contribute to the relationship by providing their mentors with the same support, care, and happiness they provide. The three adult mentors reported that their mentees contribution to the relationship was beneficial and valuable. One male adult mentor participant noted, "[the relationship] is beneficial for both of us… its kind of what you call, this symbiotic relationship where we all get something from each other." Additionally, the female adult mentor participant stated, "I feel like I learn from them as much as they're learning from me."

Encouragement. Participants (3 youth and 2 adults) described this characteristic as the mentor pushing the mentee to succeed, and acknowledging the mentee's accomplishments. This quality was also defined as influencing youth to feel confidant and in return engage in more positive activities. Some youth participants reported that their mentor encouraged them to succeed in school, while others noted

that their mentors urged them to engage in unfamiliar positive activities (e.g., fieldtrips, public speaking, and networking with community members). The adult mentors reported that they were intentional about encouraging youth mentees to succeed. One male adult mentor participant described his role in the natural mentoring relationship and stated, "Somebody who can accept him [mentee] for who he is, somebody that can try to build him up when he is down, somebody who can come back and encourage him to push him forward." Similarly another male, adult mentor described his reasons for providing encouragement and stated, "I want him to walk on his own. Not having to always depend on somebody, or count on somebody, to help them do certain things. You have to learn how to resolve a lot of your own problems."

Understanding. Several youth and adult participants (6 youth and 2 adults) discussed having this characteristic in their relationship. Consistent with the literature, participants described this characteristic as the mentor responding to the mentee with acceptance and lack of judgment, while attempting to relate to the mentee. For example, a 17-year-old, male indicated the importance of his mentor relating to him through the sharing of similar experiences encountered in adolescence:

> She kind of understands where I'm coming from a little bit. I guess she knows, she knows what to say, you know. She just, just, she knows what to say. I mean, she makes me feel a lot better when I, like, go, came in. When I come in. And when, then when I come out, it feels way different. Just, like, just let it all out.

Another 16-year-old, female noted about her mentor, "…It seems like she understands. Like, when we talk about stuff." This female youth participant

discussed that her mentor would continue to demonstrate understanding regardless of whether the mentor agreed with the youth's decisions and behaviors. All three adult mentors discussed having this quality in their relationship with their mentees. One female adult mentor stated:

> I think that they enjoy that somebody is really watching 'em and somebody is watching their accomplishments and watching their failures and not judging. Not judging. That's the biggest deal, I think. You know, saying, no you can't mess up. But you know, not saying, you're a mess up. It's a big difference.

Advice. Participants (5 youth and 2 adults) described the characteristic as the mentor providing suggestions, ideas, and information to the mentee that are in his/her best interest. For instance, a 17-year-old, male stated about his mentor:

> … when I got caught up with, for stuff. Umm, I told her, like, what do I do in Teen Court? Like, Teen Court. What do I have to do? She just told me…just dress nice. To have a nice shirt on. Pants all the way up. Bring a tie or something, if you want. But just a collared shirt. Then she just told me, speak loud, eye contact….Just, like when I got in trouble I talked to her about that too.

Youth participants consistently described receiving "good advice," for example, a14-year-old, female stated "Just like, how she talks to me…how she gives me advice. Like, she gives me really good advice. So, I, that's, that's what makes me like, go back to her."

Two male adult mentor participants described providing advice to their mentees as an important aspect of the natural mentoring relationship. One of these mentors noted:

> And he [my mentee] does that on a regular basis. He [my mentee] will call me also when he has, a concern or a problem or something going on in his life that he wants advice for. I'm going to meet up with him [my mentee],

> hopefully, later today because I see something that I think he really needs to be talked to about. Talk with about, not talked to.

In some instances, the mentor provided advice based on their personal life experiences, specifically providing guidance that the mentor would have wanted to receive as an adolescent. This was exemplified by the following adult male mentor participant description:

> But you need to understand that the part of being a man, or an adult, you need to understand what your emotions are, and how to control them and know ok, I'm not in the position to make a choice right now, then don't. If someone pissed me off, and I know that I'm going to choke this mutha' fucker then I'm walk away. I'll start thinking, ok, what are going to be my options. What am I going to do. That's part of being a man, homie. You need to understand that.

Communication. Youth and adult participants (5 youth and 3 adults) described this characteristic as having open and honest discussions that encouraged the mentee to feel heard and respected. Many of these experiences were related to the way the adult mentor talked to the youth mentee. For instance one 17-year-old, male participant stated, "He [mentor] explains it differently…he [mentor] makes it all clear so I understand it." Both youth and adult participants emphasized having reciprocal conversations where the adult mentor "gets to the level of the youth" and considers the opinion of youth to be meaningful. This was exemplified by an adult female mentor who stated:

> …So if they can give me feedback…they're the experts. I wanna hear from them.…So I think it's also worked really well, kind of like, involving them in that process and, and getting feedback from them. They're the ones who are gonna tell me if something's not working. And I listen. And I make changes if its not [working]. I think that when you talk with someone, you listen to what they have to say as well. And, it isn't a lecture here, it's a discussion.

Care. The CQR analysts defined this characteristic as the mentor having concern and interest in the mentee so that the mentee felt protected. Consistent with the literature, youth participants (4 youth) noted that their adult mentors were able to notice when they were distressed and needed additional support without the mentees having to verbally express their needs. Youth participants indicated that that they appreciated that their mentor wanted the best for them. This was exemplified when a 16-year-old, female youth participant stated, "She tells me to be careful and not to get into trouble. She tells staff to, like, keep an eye on me if she thinks, like, something's going on." Two adult mentors mentioned this characteristic and more specifically an adult female mentor highlighted her style of interaction with her mentees when she noted, "so not even focusing on the discipline if they [mentees] were in the front office for a discipline reason. But just acknowledging them as a person."

Providing basic needs. The CQR analysts defined this characteristic, as the mentor providing the mentee with basic needs necessary to grow and learn, including food and transportation. Surprisingly, six youth described that their mentors provided food, especially during or after school hours. For instance, a 16-year-old, female youth participant stated, "she does buy us things sometimes. Like, food, 'cause you know how they don't provide us food here." All three mentors described this characteristic and more specifically an adult female mentor described her frustration with the restricted food program at the alternative high school and her compassion for her mentees. This was exemplified when she stated:

> Like when the lunch program ceased to exist and they had just the breakfast program. And you had kids struggling staying focused in the afternoon and

> they were hungry. It's like, recognizing what their needs are and providing those needs. Ok, you're hungry? Ok, I'm gonna give you food. You need to go to the bathroom? Ok, I get that you really need to go to the bathroom, I'm gonna take you to the bathroom."

Other youth participants described their appreciation for the transportation that their mentors provided, considering that many of their parents were unable to provide such transportation to and from school, and to after school community programs.

Trustworthy. Youth and adult participants (6 youth and 3 adults) described this quality as the mentor and mentee creating an open and honest space where they both understood that the information shared was not disclosed. This characteristic seemed very important to the youth participants as they often described their frustration with disclosing personal information to peers or family members and discovering that the information was inappropriately shared with others. Youth participants often indicated that they would disclose information to their mentors that they did not feel comfortable sharing with others. A 17-year-old, male youth participant stated:

> I would tell her everything and she won't say anything. Just tell me like, "Oh, be careful"… She'll tell you that. With other people, it's, like, different. With parents, you can't tell 'em 'cause they'll flip out. Or, I don't know. If you tell some of the girls about it, they might rat you out. With her it's different.

Similarly, all adult mentors described the importance of this quality in their relationships with mentees. The adult mentors indicated that they not only trusted their mentees, but also emphasized the value of honesty. For example, one adult male mentor reported, "I know that he [mentee] is not gonna lie to me." Additionally,

another adult male mentor described an incident in which he demonstrated trustworthiness to his youth mentee. This particular adult male mentor stated:

> So he had a problem. Well, he had a challenge that he thought was a problem. And he and I talked it through and we went to a clinic together. And it was very confidential. And, we got everything all taken care of and then we had some long talks about life in general and how you can avoid that situation the next time and stuff like that. And it was very, very personal. And it was, it was confiding. He confided in me greatly. Well, he didn't wanna discuss this with his parents.

Challenges. Youth and adult participants (5 youth and 3 adults) described this characteristic as circumstances or events that had the potential to rupture the natural mentoring relationship while also providing the opportunity to strengthen the relationship. It was difficult for some youth participants to describe any challenges experienced in the relationship, perhaps indicating their discomfort with "talking bad" about their mentor. However, some youth participants described experiences in which a rupture occurred and both youth and adult individuals utilized the incident as an opportunity to strengthen the bond. One 16-year-old, female attending the alternative high school described an incident in which her mentor was busy at school and was unable to take her out of class on a specific day. The youth mentee stated that she became upset and called her mentor a "liar" and a "flaky bitch." Her female adult mentor described the incident as a challenge in the relationship and stated:

> I think the only problem that I've known is that they [mentees] get frustrated with me when they know that they're gonna get pulled out for a 11:00 o'clock group, but because I've had to see an individual or a crisis came up that I'm not there right at the 11:00 o'clock hour so a lot of that was discussion and conversation and having to include them in those conversations…this is my job, this is what I do. If for any reason I'm not there at 11:00 o'clock these are the following reason why. So it's more conversation. It's more developing and understanding so that they [mentees] can be a little bit more empathetic with

> what's happening so they understand why they're not being pulled out at 11:05 or 11:00.

Reliability. Youth and adult participants (4 youth and 3 adults) described the characteristic as the mentor providing consistent support and implementing limits in the natural mentoring relationship, so that the mentee felt that he/she could depend on their mentor in times of need. Most youth participants described their mentor being consistent and following through with plans. For instance, a 16-year-old, male participant reported, "When he [mentor] doesn't answer he will always call me back or text me." Additionally, another 17-year-old, youth participant stated, "He's [mentor] there whenever I need him" and that his mentor often tells him, "Call me and I will be there for you." Respectively, all three adult mentors understood the importance of this characteristic and one adult female mentor exemplified this when she stated:

> Because follow through is going to continue to influence the extent to which they trust you….and consistency. I think the trust was able to exist and be built on the relationship because there's boundaries… So I think also understanding the limits of the relationship is helpful and I think that it enables them to feel safe.

Emotional support. The CQR analysts defined this characteristic as the mentor assisting the mentee with a variety of emotional issues while providing resources and opportunities. Consistent with the literature, youth participants (7 youth) described feeling assured that they could talk to their mentor in a time of need. For instance, one 17-year-old, male stated:

> Well, my mom didn't have any money for rent. Told her [mentor] about it. And, she just gave me, good advice. Just, like, she's just making me feel

> better. Like, she's just making me feel better. Telling me that's it's gonna be ok, but…you know, it's just, it's life. I guess. I don't know.

All three adult mentors noted that they provided emotional support to their mentees, implying that this characteristic was an important quality in their relationships with their mentees. One adult male mentor participant continued to describe this characteristic when he stated, "And I think that every kid that I've established a relationship with has had a need. Whether that be academic, vocational, social, or emotional." Another adult mentor participant described assisting youth to overcome hurdles and challenges, while at the same relaying the message that they do not want anything in return for their support.

School and work support. Youth and adult participants (7 youth and 3 adults) described this quality as the mentor providing the mentee with resources and assistance related to school or employment. Consistent with the literature, youth described receiving support in school from their mentors in various ways including, making after-school tutors available, assisting with the completion of school assignments, applying for college, and advocating for mentees by joining them at meetings with school staff members. For example, a 17-year-old, male stated, "She pretty much helped me with my resume and my cover letter for that class. She helped me do those, like, work samples." Additionally, mentors assisted youth to obtain part-time afterschool employment, seek paid and non-paid internship positions in the community, and obey the regulations and rules outlined by probation. For example, a 17-year-old, male described his mentor assisting him to prepare for a job interview and stated:

> He also took us on a fieldtrip outside of school. To Macy's. And he said, "Go pick out whatever you wanna wear for a job interview." So we all did it and he rated us on how good we dressed. He said, “That would look good,” “Don't wear that,” or "Tuck that in," or "Make sure your tie is done correctly.”

All three adult mentors echoed the youth responses and described their genuine interest in providing mentees with school and work support.

Quantity of Natural Mentoring Relationships (NMR’s). Researchers defined Quantity of NMR’s as the amount of natural mentoring relationships involving the mentee and mentor. This category included 11 responses (8 youth and 3 adults), making it a general response. All youth and adult participants described their total amount of current and active NMR’s. Consistent with the literature, most youth participants reported only having one natural mentoring relationship. Youth participants described past interactions with prospective mentors, however they expressed not feeling as if they could fully trust them with personal information. On the contrary, the adult participants reported having other natural mentoring relationships with youth mentees. The amount of NMR’s involving the youth and adult participants seemed to influence the characteristics of their current mentoring relationship.

Domain Two: Factor Contributing to the Development of the Natural Mentoring Relationship (NMR)

Researchers defined a Factor Contributing to the Development of the NMR as an individual or contextual characteristic that influenced the progression of the natural mentoring relationship. Emergent Factors that Contributed to the

Development of the NMR included one variant response. Typical responses included Mentor Initiation, Hope for Future, Shared Experiences, Mentee Initiation, Mentor's Characteristics, Youth Peer Word of Mouth, and Communication. There were no general responses in this domain. These categories are outlined in this section.

Mentor initiation. Youth and adult participants (4 youth and 3 adults) described this factor as the reason the natural mentoring relationship developed. This was also defined as the mentor encouraging the mentee to form the relationship. All youth participants attending the alternative high school described the adult mentor making herself available to youth interested in developing a relationship. Youth reported that this specific adult intentionally introduced herself to every new and current student. For instance, a 16-year-old, female participant stated, " Cause she called me in and I told her that, when people or counselors would call me in, I wouldn't talk to them. And she was like, Oh, well I don't want you to be like that with me." Similarly, the other adult mentor participants described making themselves available to prospective youth mentees in their respective work environments. One adult mentor participant visiting the alternative high school to provide an etiquette class to the students described his initiation as, "We just sort of developed a relationship, while in the class. And then I don't know, one thing kind of led to another and he won student of the month. I took him out for dinner and then, you know, it's just gone on and on and on."

Hope for future. Participants (4 youth and 3 adults) described this quality as the mentor and mentee having the desire for the relationship to evolve over a longer

period of time. Youth participants indicated that they would continue to have the relationship with their mentor after graduation. Specifically some youth noted reaching out to the mentor through email, phone calls, and school visits. The adult participants echoed the youth responses and one adult mentor noted, "I think it's going to be an ongoing relationship. I think that we'll always be a part of each other's lives. I really do."

Shared experiences. Youth and adult participants (6 youth and 3 adults) described this factor as experiencing bonding contributed by the sharing of similar experiences. A 17-year-old, male participant stated:

> And tells me about his personal life story. We are not that much different. Just age difference. He lived through what I lived through. I see that. I can respect him because he knows what it is to be like me. Not just coming from someone else that has not lived it.

This youth participant was not the only one to highlight the importance of adult mentors relating to their youth mentees. Youth participants emphasized that they were more comfortable trusting their mentors once they revealed their own struggles and challenges encountered in adolescence. For example, one adult mentor stated:

> What would be important for me to disclose, that would assist them and normalize like, they're experiences, I think I did start to disclose, which changed like, the dynamic in the relationship a lot. They started sharing more, they started disclosing more…I think it normalized for them, that adults go through these experiences too at some point in their life. So I think it enabled them to want to share, wanna talk about their issues because it lessened the extent to which they felt judged. Also knowing that, if I tell this person this, they might have dealt with the same thing, so they're not gonna judge me, my behavior or whatever I chose to do.

Mentee initiation. Participants (5 youth and 2 adults) described the factor as the natural mentoring relationship developing as a result of the mentee approaching or encouraging the mentor to begin the relationship. Youth participants noted seeking support from their mentor in a time of need, and situations thereafter understanding that their mentor would be available. A 17-year-old, female participant reported, "Tell her [mentor] to call me in when, like, I was stressed out or something. She would call me out right away too…" Furthermore, adult participants shared the same youth responses. More specifically, an adult mentor participant described this factor as, "She started coming in on her own, asking to come in…I think like, a day or two later, she was asking to come in and wanting to talk about things."

Mentor's characteristics. Youth and adult participants (5 youth and 2 adults) described this characteristic as the mentor providing reliable, attentive, and consistent care to the mentee as a way to further develop the relationship. Youth participants defined this factor as the adult mentors verbally or non-verbally demonstrating nurturing characteristics which contributed to their interest in the relationship. For instance, a 17-year-old, female participant stated, "She just told me that she was there for me. And that meant a lot. I haven't heard that a lot from people." An adult mentor described this factor as "never giving up on these kids." The same adult participant continued to explain the factor even further and stated:

> I love them. I constantly tell them how much I care about them. I constantly tell them how appreciative I am of the relationships that I have with them. So, I talk about the relationship a lot with them. Because I think that it's good for them to hear, I'm benefitting from it too. Maybe not in ways that you're benefitting from it, but I really, I like to share my appreciations with them.

Youth peer word of mouth. Participants (5 youth and 2 adults) described the quality as the mentee initiating the natural mentoring relationship as a result of positive feedback made by their fellow peers. Youth participants highlighted the importance of their friends' feedback and its impact on the initial development of the relationship. For instance, a 17-year-old, male participant stated, "But I didn't know her though. I just heard about her. Seen her. And people started, people started, like girls were saying that she was all nice. Or boy that, she helps out a lot and that stuff." Additionally another youth participant described the impact that word of mouth had on the development of his relationship with his mentor and stated, "Well maybe 'cause the stuff I hear too, going around. That's she's supportive." The adult participants had similar responses and one adult individual in particular stated, "I think the connection with her [mentee] was fostered really quickly because she saw it between her friends and me."

Communication. Youth participants (6 youth) described the characteristic as open, honest, and respectful communication in the natural mentoring relationship. Adult participants did not discuss this factor. Additionally, this factor contributed to youth being able to trust their adult mentors. A 17-year-old, male participant described this factor as, "The way he talks to me. Not like other adults. They talk to me like they are superior to me. He actually talks to me like he would talk to anyone else."

Domain Three: Youth Outcomes

A youth outcome was defined as the mentee acquiring skills and assets as a result of having a natural mentoring relationship. Emergent Youth Outcomes included one variant response, A Desire to Give Back to the Community. Typical responses included Sustainable Skills and Emotional Regulation. There were no general responses in this domain. These categories are outlined in this section.

Desire to give back to the community. Participants (2 youth and 1 adult) described the outcome as the mentee wanting to give back to their community as a result of having the natural mentoring relationship. Youth often described wanting to give back for the mentorship they received, and more specifically reported wanting to be a mentor to other younger youth. A 17-year-old, male described his desire to be a mentor by stating:

> If everybody felt the way it feels to help somebody or to make a difference in somebody's life, you don't know how great that, it feels better than money. Better than drugs. And it's just like, there's no greater feeling in the world except for knowing that you are doing good for somebody else.

An adult mentor described that some youth had the intention to be a mentor to younger youth while others were unintentionally placed in that role. For instance, this specific adult mentor stated, "Without them really realizing it, they [mentees] kind of jumped into the mentor role as well, a leader without them thinking this is who I am. It's starting to come natural for them…" This may indicate that the youth mentee participants may be modeling their mentors and perhaps as they transition into adulthood they may also serve as an adult mentor.

Sustainable skills. Participants (4 youth and 3 adults) described the outcome as the mentee acquiring assets to assist with making positive and enduring decisions.

Astoundingly, many youth described their mentor having a positive impact on their lives and assisting them with making choices that would benefit them in the future. For instance a 17-year-old, male participant stated:

> During that year I changed drastically. My grades went up, I didn't ditch anymore, I dressed differently. I let my hair grow out. I was just different…He has actually changed my life a lot. Honestly, if I would not have met him, I think I would still be in the same bad steps I was going.

Specifically, this youth's mentor noticed the changes and described the mentee's developmental growth as:

> When he [mentee] first came on board, he was very shy and he was very quiet, he could be manipulated very easily and now the man that he is, he can pretty much call you on it. He'll think about things. If its in his best interest, he'll say, I think I'll want to do it. But if he feels like he is wasting his time dedicating to it, he'll tell you straight out too. I see him interact with the other kids, the ones that he used to be friends with, where he would actually stand up to them. They say, c'mon lets get drunk, and he'll say no I cant I have to go to work…The other thing is that he is learning how to ask for help, how to accept it. Before it was like, I don't want to be an idiot, and now its like dude who is going to get me there, how do I come at them.

Emotional regulation. Consistent with the literature, youth and adult participants (5 youth and 1 adult) described the outcome as the mentee learning to manage their emotions as a result of having the natural mentoring relationship. A 17-year-old, male participant described this component of the relationship as:

> He helped me channel my anger into a positive way. Instead of getting angry and just snapping right away and fighting, you think about it. If you don't think about it may cause harm to someone else. Ending up with problems that you could have avoided. If you just thought about it.

The one adult mentor that described this factor echoed the responses of the youth. The adult mentor stated that much of his mistakes both as an adolescent and adult were made when he was angry and acted impulsively. Additionally, the adult mentor

confirmed the difficulty of using new emotion regulation skills and provided this message to his mentee, "I know its hard, to say...I'm just going to fuckin' leave, that's when you call me up. If you don't want to talk, then we don't have to talk."

Domain Four: Type of Interaction

A Type of Interaction was defined as an interaction that occurred in the natural mentoring relationship between the adult mentor and Latino/a youth mentee. This domain included two variant responses (Recreational Activities and Positive affirmation), and one typical response (Contact). There were no general responses in this domain. These categories are outlined in this section.

Recreational activities. Participants (3 youth and 2 adults) described this type of interaction as the engagement in leisure activities. Surprisingly, youth and adult participants reported partaking in various activities including, movies, dinners, fundraisers, and community programs. More specifically, a16-year-old, male participant stated, "…we are doing this project with barrels and we are breaking them down and building Adirondack chairs. And selling them and we are helping other kids in our community too and we are also profiting from it." Furthermore, two out of the three adult mentors discussed having their youth mentees join them at family events.

Positive affirmation. The CQR analysts defined this type of interaction as the mentor validating the youth's positive behaviors, so that it increased youth autonomy. Youth participants (3 youth) reported receiving positive reinforcements and rewards for their behaviors, respectively through verbal feedback and snacks. More

specifically, a17-year-old, male participant described how his adult female mentor responded to him obtaining employment, “I told her [his mentor] about my job she went like, "Aww! That's great. Great. You got a job. I'll help you with that. Definitely. And she [his mentor] would just, help, help me type in stuff in the computer and print it out.” One adult mentor described this type of interaction.

Contact. Youth and adult participants (6 youth and 1 adult) described Contact as the frequency or consistency of their interactions. Consistent with the literature, youth and adult participants reported having consistent contact on a weekly basis. For instance a 16-year-old, male participant described this factor as, “…we meet up on Mondays and we talk about what’s been going on like in our lives.”

Domain Five: Factor that Fosters More Natural Mentoring Relationships (NMR’s) in the Community

Researchers defined a Factor that Fosters More NMR’s in the Community as a feature that contributes to additional relationships among high-risk Latino/a youth and adult mentors. Emergent factors in the Foster More NMR’s in the Community included five variant responses: Adult Interest, Similar Life Experiences, Trustworthy, Boundaries, and Qualities to Avoid. The remaining categories included one typical response (Encouragement) and one general response (Care) in this domain. These categories are outlined in this section.

Adult interest. Adult participants (2 adults) described this factor as an adult having prior training, experiences, or circumstances that influenced him/her to have the interest to be a mentor to youth. Youth participants did not discuss this factor.

Most importantly, adult participants described this component as a genuine interest that lies within all adults, regardless of their current mentor role. For instance, the adult mentor stated:

> It's just being yourself. Being human…Everyone is wanting to do things and think how is this going to benefit me if I do that. So if you really get people out of that way of thinking…It's more about, dude, what would you have liked someone to do for you at that point. Regardless of peoples' experiences, they have a shitty life, no one was there for them, then cool then change that. Just the way you grew up and wished someone was there, then you need to do that for someone else as well.

The two adult participants varied in their opinion about providing training to natural mentors. One adult participant indicated that natural mentoring is a natural skill within every individual, while the other adult mentor emphasized the need for mentor trainings.

Similar life experiences. Participants (2 youth and 2 adults) described this factor as the importance of shared life experiences among adult mentors and youth mentees because of its impact on the development of natural mentoring relationships. Surprisingly, the youth participants emphasized that the sharing of similar experiences and backgrounds contributes to more NMR's in the community. For instance, a 17-year-old, male participant used his personal experience as an example to demonstrate the positive effect of having similar life experiences and stated, "I think I could but maybe I wouldn't listen to him as much as someone who has lived it through? How is someone going to teach a subject that they don't know?" The adult participants that provided responses highlighted that youth mentees could also learn from being in a relationship with an adult mentor who had a different upbringing. For

instance, an adult mentor noted, “The fact that you have different life experiences may be more beneficial to youth because they will learn what it takes to get where they are at.”

Trustworthy. Participants (3 youth and 2 adults) described this factor as the importance of honesty in natural mentoring relationships, and its influence on the mentee’s ability to trust their mentor. Youth participants reported that other youth in the community would be more likely to trust prospective adult mentors if they knew that the mentors were being honest with them. At the same time, the adult participants were adamant about this factor and more specifically an adult mentor reported, “Honesty is the biggest thing. Kids will see through the bullshit so quick.”

Boundaries. Adult participants (3 adults) described this factor as the importance of implementing boundaries in the natural mentoring relationship with the intention for mentors to engage in self-care and become more effective mentors. Youth participants did not describe this factor, while all three adult mentors provided a response. For example, an adult mentor stated, “I think you have to have boundaries and I think you need to let whoever you're dealing with know there are boundaries in this world.”

Qualities to avoid. Youth and adult participants (3 youth and 2 adults) described this factor as behaviors or traits that could be damaging to the natural mentoring relationship. Astoundingly, youth participants used past experiences with adults to describe behaviors that potential adult mentors should avoid. For example, a 17-year-old, male participant stated, “People don't respect you, don't care about you.

Is that they never look at you in the eyes. They never, they never talk in a polite way. They don't have manners. And you can't trust 'em." The adult participants described past childhood experiences with ineffective adult mentors and also with adults in their present communities to highlight the qualities that should be avoided. For instance, an adult mentor detailed a situation and stated, "When I see that a teacher might be communicating that kind of message, or embarrassing them [youth], or putting them [youth] on blast, that's where I immediately interject and kind of facilitate something different because these kids don't need to continue internalizing negative messages."

Care. Youth and adult participants (7 youth and 3 adults) described this factor as the importance of care, attentiveness, open and honest communication, engagement, and time in developing more natural mentoring relationships in the community. Surprisingly, youth participants provided recommendations for increasing more NMR's in the community and emphasized that potential adult mentors should attempt to communicate with youth one-on-one while at the same time understanding that trust is not gained immediately; it takes time as it does in other types of relationships. The adult participants described this component as adults taking the time to engage with youth and avoid from limiting interactions to solely disciplinary reasons. For instance, an adult mentor noted:

> So just making these little, like talking points, I think is helpful. Like creating that atmosphere of openness, and trust and understanding at the outset, whether it just be, how was your day yesterday? Just, it's good to see you today. Or you look really nice…They don't hear that, they don't expect to hear that from adults and so I think I've really tried to engage them in that way and just small conversation.

Additionally, another adult mentor indicated that Care also includes adults relaying to youth, "I'm going to be here for you, regardless of anything else."

Encouragement. Youth and adult participants (4 youth and 2 adults) described this factor as the importance of mentors affirming mentee's positive attributes and consequently increasing the confidence in mentees. Consistent with the literature, most of the youth participants described this factor when they discussed their interactions with past prospective mentors. For instance, a 17-year-old, youth described his fourth grade teacher and reported, "He would help you out so much, even if you didn't get it. He would never yell at you. He would take time to explain things. And once in a while, he would have parties for us." This same youth participant continued to explain the support his fourth grade teacher provided to his students by stating, "He told me that I was bright." The adult mentor participants described the long-term positive effects that encouragement has among youth mentees. For instance, an adult mentor stated:

> If their self-esteem is enhanced they're gonna believe their ability to access education after high school. So, I just see that as the foundation….And if you can influence that I really think that you can influence these other spheres of their life.

Domain Six: Youth's Desire to Promote or Create More Natural Mentoring Relationships (NMR's)

Researchers defined the Desire to Promote or Create more NMR's as a mentee desiring more natural mentoring relationships for self and other youth. This domain included four responses, making this domain a variant response. This domain included only youth participant responses (4 youth), as adult mentors did not discuss

these areas. One youth in particular described the struggles that his generation is facing, including substance use and dependence. The 17-year-old, male participant emphasized the positive effects of having a natural mentoring relationship and stated, "Those kids that are in that situation need the help…[having mentors] would make my generation smarter, stronger, faster and it's gonna help me in the long run." Additionally another 17-year-old who self-identified as Hispanic bilingual English- and Spanish-speaking male participant described the importance of having natural mentoring relationships more accessible and available to youth and stated, "I really recommend all my friends who are going through a bad time and want to change the way they live to go talk to him [his mentor].

Table 1

Domains and Categories From Interviews With Latino/a Youth Mentees and Adult Mentors About Their Natural Mentoring Relationship (NMR)

Domains and Categories	Category Frequency/#	Frequency of Youth and Adult Responses
Characteristics of the NMR		
Parental Figure	Variant/ 5	3 youth and 2 adults
Family Support	Variant/ 5	3 youth and 2 adults
Reciprocity	Variant/ 5	2 youth and 3 adults
Encouragement	Variant/ 5	3 youth and 2 adults
Care	Typical/ 6	4 youth and 2 adults
Advice	Typical/ 7	5 youth and 2 adults
Reliability	Typical/ 7	4 youth and 3 adults
Challenges	Typical/7	5 youth and 2 adults
Communication	Typical/ 8	5 youth and 3 adults
Providing Basic Needs	Typical/ 9	6 youth and 3 adults
Understanding	Typical/ 9	6 youth and 3 adults
Trustworthy	Typical/ 9	6 youth and 3 adults
Emotional Support	General/ 10	7 youth and 3 adults
School/Work Support	General/ 10	7 youth and 3 adults
Quantity of NMR's	General/11	8 youth and 3 adults
Factors Contributing to the Development of the NMR		
Communication	Typical/ 6	6 youth
Mentor Initiation	Typical/ 7	4 youth and 3 adults
Hope for Future	Typical/ 7	4 youth and 3 adults
Mentee Initiation	Typical/ 7	5 youth and 2 adults
Mentor's Characteristics	Typical/ 7	5 youth and 2 adults
Youth Peer Word of Mouth	Typical/ 7	5 youth and 2 adults
Shared Experiences	Typical/ 9	6 youth and 3 adults
Youth Outcome		
Desire to Give Back to the Community	Variant/ 3	2 youth and 1 adult
Emotional Regulation	Typical/ 6	5 youth and 1 adult
Sustainable Skills	Typical/ 7	4 youth and 3 adults
Type of Interaction		
Positive Affirmation	Variant/ 4	3 youth and 1 adult
Recreational Activities	Variant/ 5	3 youth and 2 adults
Contact	Typical/ 7	6 youth and 1 adult

Factors that Foster more NMR's in the Community		
Adult Interest	Variant/ 2	2 adults
Boundaries	Variant/ 3	3 adults
Similar Life Experiences	Variant/ 4	2 youth and 2 adults
Trustworthy	Variant/ 5	3 youth and 2 adults
Qualities to Avoid	Variant/ 5	3 youth and 2 adults
Encouragement	Typical/ 6	4 youth and 2 adults
Care	General/ 10	7 youth and 3 adults
Youth' Desire to Promote or Create More NMR's	Variant/ 4	4 youth

Note. N = 11.

V. Discussion

Natural mentors, or important nonparental adults who youth encounter through their existing social networks, are an important resource for at-risk youth as they transition to adulthood. The current study extends previous research on natural mentoring by focusing more specifically on relationship characteristics and features. Natural mentoring research to date has primarily investigated the presence or absence of a mentoring relationship and its affect on adolescent outcomes. This extensive, exploratory, qualitative study is one of the first to analyze specific relationship qualities and processes among high-risk Latino/a youth and their adult natural mentors. This study highlights the youth-adult interactions in the relationship, frequency of contact, initial development of the natural mentoring relationship, and youth outcomes, with the intention to better understand this type of relationship. Several domains and core ideas emerged, which are consistent with the previous theoretical literature, as well as some new findings.

This study contributes to the literature in several ways. The most significant contribution is a better understanding of the relationship characteristics and processes that may influence positive adolescent development outcomes and subsequent healthy adult transitions among vulnerable youth populations. An important strength of this study is the move beyond exclusively focusing on the absence or presence of the natural mentoring relationship. Instead this study explored the details of specific relationship characteristics, including the quality of the relationship, the various roles fulfilled by the natural mentors, and their associations with youth outcomes. Eight of

the nine research questions were addressed. Research question eight focusing on how naturally occurring mentoring relationships assist youth in overcoming adversities was not addressed as youth and adult participants did not mention this aspect of the relationship in their responses. Furthermore, this study aimed to better understand the pathways in which natural mentors influenced youth outcomes, which is an area that has warranted more investigation.

Natural Mentor Relationship Characteristics

Several unique characteristics of the natural mentoring relationship emerged as important findings (research questions 1, 7, 8, and 9). Many of the characteristics were mentioned by both adult and youth participants, suggesting that both youth and adults were in agreement about what they deemed important in the mentoring relationship. The parallel findings suggest that a special class of relationship existed in which expectations of the youth and nonparental adult natural mentors were met. Participant responses indicated that the perceptions about the roles of the mentor were congruent with how their mentees perceived them. Further, the corresponding data provided increased understanding about the reasons as to how or why adults who serve as natural mentors chose to become mentors.

Specifically, Providing Basic Needs was discussed by the majority of youth and adult participants in this study, indicating the importance of this characteristic in the relationship. This finding highlights that natural mentoring relationships may look different among disadvantaged high-risk Latino/a youth who come from immigrant families compared to other privileged youth populations. This is

consistent with the findings of a recent study which indicated that immigrant Latino/a youth expressed an interest in mentoring relationships to provide academic and personal support, as a way to increase their engagement with their schools and communities (Behnke, Gonzalez, & Cox, 2010). Relationship characteristics among this high-risk youth population may begin by the mentor providing simple basic needs necessary (e.g., food and transportation) for the youth to achieve positive adolescent outcomes. The most distinguishing aspect was the mentors' reliability and unconditional willingness to provide tangible support. The findings suggest that there is not a "one size fits all" model for natural mentoring relationships, especially among special youth populations. While there has been some discussion in the literature about the roles that natural mentors play and the types of support that may promote positive youth development (Allen & Eby, 2010), this study highlighted further necessary characteristics of support and style. As a whole, the findings contribute to the need in the scientific literature for more information on specific relationship characteristics and processes.

A majority of the mentorship literature has focused on the absence or presence of natural mentoring relationships or the relational dimensions of formally matched mentoring relationships (DuBois, et al., 2002; Karcher, 2005). However, little attention has been paid to the interpersonal processes and characteristics in natural mentoring relationships (Allen & Ebey, 2010). For instance, DuBois and Silverthorn (2005), conducted one of the few studies focusing on natural mentorships, which investigated structural aspects of natural mentoring relationships such as, the

mentor's role, frequency of contact, and duration of the relationship as predictors of positive adolescent outcomes. The authors found that specific structural aspects predicted improved education/work, decreased problem behavior, and better physical health among youth (DuBois & Silberthorn, 2005). Moreover, this study had similar findings to Beam, Chen, and Greenberg (2002), who found that diverse West Coast ethnic minority adolescents described the characteristics in their natural mentoring relationships as, having respect, someone to talk to, not feeling judged, receiving school and tangible support, and companionship. The current study supported these findings by unveiling the same characteristics reported by high-risk Latino/a youth and their mentors, thus further increasing the understanding of natural mentoring relationships among Latino/a youth and their natural mentors.

In regards to structural characteristics, the majority of youth and adult participants reported that the duration of the natural mentoring relationship ranged from one to three years. The identified adult mentors were from the youth participants' social networks (e.g., school and community), providing insight to the type of nonparental adult mentors available to this specific Latino/a youth population. Youth participants reported not having prior exposure or contact with nonparental caring adults. This finding highlights the phenomenon found in the literature suggesting that high-risk, low-income, Latino/a adolescents may be in environments that have fewer opportunities to interact with caring adults and fewer access to resources (Stanton-Salazar & Spina, 2003). More specifically, Erickson and colleagues' (2009) study of a nationally representative sample found that African-

American, Latino/a, and Native-American adolescents from disadvantaged neighborhoods were less likely to identify a mentor in their lives than White and Asian adolescents from advantaged neighborhoods. This indicates that school and community agencies that serve high-risk Latino/a youth should provide opportunities for natural mentoring relationships to form as part of an inclusive approach to meeting the needs of vulnerable Latino/a youth.

Factors Contributing to Development

The availability of nonparental caring adults in the youth's environment played a role in the development of the natural mentoring relationship among the youth and adult participants (research questions 4-6). All of the adult participants initiated the formation of the connection, as they had prior exposure and experience developing other natural mentoring relationships. All of the adult mentor participants had additional youth mentees. On the contrary, it was not common for the youth participants to have additional adult natural mentors other than the mentor revealed in this study. Considering that the youth participants did not have prior experience utilizing relationship skills to develop meaningful connections with nonparental adults, most youth participants seemed to depend on what was described in Youth Peer Word of Mouth. Specifically, the majority of youth found it safe to develop the natural mentoring relationship because of their peers' report of a successful relationship with the identified mentor.

Both youth and adult participants emphasized the importance of bonding through shared experiences. Shared Experiences encouraged youth to initiate and

further develop the relationship with the adult mentor. More specifically, youth discussed that relating through life experiences is a factor that supports a long-term, successful, natural mentoring relationship. It is important to highlight that the long-term importance of having a background-matched natural mentor is little addressed in the literature (Syed, Goza, Chemers, & Zurbriggen, 2012), however a recent study found that White adolescents placed less importance on having a matched-background mentor than Latino/a and Asian American adolescents (Syed, Goza, Chemers, & Zurbriggen, 2012). It seems that high-risk Latino/a youth need increased opportunities to interact with adults in order to determine if natural mentors exist in their social networks, and if they are people they would like to connect with through shared experiences.

Youth Outcomes

A majority of youth participants in this study documented learning new skills to make better decisions and manage difficult emotions, such as anger and sadness, as a product of having the natural mentoring relationship. Researchers have demonstrated associations between natural mentoring and a variety of positive youth outcomes, such as academic achievement (Sánchez, Esparza, & Colón, 2008), substance use (Zimmerman, Bingenheimer, & Notaro, 2002), psychological well-being (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005), and improved interpersonal relationships (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). These youth outcomes were captured in the current study and grouped in what was described as the Sustainable Skills theme. Consistent with the extant literature, these findings suggest that natural mentoring relationships

may teach youth how to trust others, be open to developing relationships with nonparental adults, and improve essential social skills (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005). Thus, building relationships with nonparental adults in schools and communities may provide disadvantaged Latino/a youth with access to resources they might not have had otherwise, and as a result increase their likelihood of achieving positive youth outcomes.

Type of Interaction

The importance of frequency of contact was discussed by more than half of the youth participants in this study (research questions 1 and 9). Likewise, literature suggests that the amount of contact between high-risk Latino/a youth and nonparental adults is an important factor that contributes to the effectiveness of the relationship (Dubois, Holloway, et al., 2002; Sanchez et al., 2011). Having a large amount of contact as found in this study may be an advantage in natural mentoring relationships, as it has been found that one of the disadvantages of formal mentoring relationships is a lack of regular contact (DuBois, Holloway et al., 2002). Most youth participants in the current study had daily or weekly contact with their mentors. Research has found that high school transition has affected the frequency of contact and duration of natural mentoring relationships among Latino/a adolescents (Sanchez et al., 2011). Therefore, results suggest that it might be important to promote a consistent amount of contact in the natural mentorship and embrace conversations about high school transitions as a way to protect the relationship against life transitions and the changing of youth's needs.

Additionally, youth and adult participants described the relationship as a companionship, in which the mentor was not responsible for punishing the youth's misbehavior. This finding helped to elucidate the difference between the role of a parent and a natural mentor. Through this companionship role, the adult mentor participants engaged in more social and recreational activities with the youth. Research has documented the importance of natural mentors engaging with and supporting their mentee's various social and recreational activities (Beam et al., 2002), suggesting the importance of this type of interaction.

Factors that Foster More NMR's in the Community

Although there have not been conclusive summaries on how such connections develop, more literature discusses youth outcomes rather than the characteristics of mentoring relationships (Sanchez & Reyes, 1999; Sanchez et al., 2006). Adult mentors' supply of support and opportunities through care, trust, and encouragement has been linked to an increase in confidence and skills in youth that assist them in attaining their personal goals (Jarrett et al., 2005). In the current study, surprisingly the theme of Qualities to Avoid also emerged (research question 3), outlining negative characteristics and processes that affect the natural mentoring relationship. Participants exemplified the harm that prospective adult mentors can do to a potential connection if they demonstrate a lack of respect, lack of care, and lack of genuineness to youth. Youth participants illustrated this theme by relating their experience of being negatively stereotyped as not having ambition and lacking the desire to pursue higher education. Currently, research has focused on positive features and qualities

that contribute to the development of natural mentoring relationships with little attention to characteristics that could potentially harm a prospective connection. This finding is an important contribution highlighting the descriptions of specific qualities to avoid in promoting the development of natural mentoring relationships among high-risk Latino/a youth and nonparental adults, adding to this much-needed research base. Participant responses indicate that it may be beneficial to support the development of natural mentoring relationships that instill care, trust, and encouragement, with adults remaining cognizant of their own potential stereotypes and biases toward high-risk Latino/a youth.

Many of the adults in the present study had an interest in serving in this role because of their personal past experiences being high-risk adolescents facing adversities and challenges, and wishing for the social support of a nonparental adult natural mentor (research question 4). Additionally, adult participants in the current study emphasized a genuine interest in helping youth achieve healthy adolescent development and successfully transition into adulthood.

Overall, little is known about the positive experiences and healthy relationships that may protect high-risk youth of color from the negative outcomes following adversities and challenges. While other high-risk and vulnerable groups are represented in the natural mentoring literature, representation of high-risk Latino/a youth is scarce. A review of the literature indicated that this was the first qualitative study on natural mentoring relationships as reported by high-risk Latino/a youth. This study indicates that both youth and adult participants had individual

characteristics that promoted and supported the connectedness and emotional bond in their natural mentoring relationships. Once in the relationship, they seemed to have a mutual understanding and agreement about expectations, roles, and boundaries. The current study also implies that bonding through shared life experiences and the mentor altering the relationship according to the needs of the youth can help cultivate long-lasting and meaningful relationships for high-risk Latino/a youth and their natural adult mentors.

Limitations

Although the current study assisted in elucidating the characteristics, qualities, and factors in natural mentoring relationships among high-risk Latino/a youth and nonparental adult mentors, some limitations were present. Firstly, although the intention of this method was not to generalize the findings to the overall population, the sample would have been richer had more female youth and adult participants been available for participation, as well as monolingual English-speaking or Spanish-speaking youth. Also, the sample size included 11 participants, however eight natural mentoring relationships were explored because some youth identified the same mentor. Prospective studies could use a different qualitative method allowing the opportunity for each natural mentoring relationship to be further explored. Additionally, an adult questionnaire was not developed and future studies could integrate this tool to provide more context on adult mentor participants when reporting qualitative results. Furthermore, the adult participants in the current study may have been predisposed to be a natural mentor role given their type of

employment and work setting. Similarly, prospective studies could include ethnic minority adult mentors and other vulnerable, ethnic minority youth populations. Secondly, the findings were limited to what the youth and adult participants were aware of and willing to disclose in the interview by self-report. There could be other issues at play that were not addressed through these methods. Additionally, a single data source has its limitations. Future studies investigating natural mentoring relationships could integrate multiple data sources to attain diverse types of data and evidence (i.e., participant observation, focus groups, and site documents) (Morrow, 2005).

Future Directions

Future research is needed in this area and one direction to pursue would be to interview Latino/a youth in other areas of the country, in addition to the West Coast. Latino/a youth residing in areas with a less prominent Latino/a community may experience natural mentoring relationships differently. Furthermore, a different qualitative method may be used such as a case study to allow for in-depth stories to emerge. Also, a mixed methods research method may be used to further investigate this construct as it could connect the qualitative results with quantitative findings to collectively provide a better understanding of natural mentoring relationships above and beyond that given by one method (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). For instance, while the qualitative findings could be used to develop a culturally informed, community-based, prevention program for high-risk Latino/a youth, with opportunities to form supportive, non-matched adult mentoring relationships,

quantitative inquiry could examine the program's effectiveness in achieving positive adolescent development outcomes among Latino/a youth. Moreover, the development of an empirical natural mentoring relationship scale for use with high-risk Latino/a youth could provide further information on associations of natural mentoring relationships, positive youth development, and adulthood transitions in this population. More specifically, a scale could be developed to measure a full range of both positive and negative aspects of the youth-mentor natural relationship and alliance. With further validation of the tool, the role of the youth-mentor alliance in fostering positive youth development and competency could be investigated. Furthermore, investigating natural mentoring relationships has implications for better understanding positive youth development in low-income, high-risk, Latino/a adolescents.

Implications

This research highlights the value of increasing the understanding of the specific characteristics and features of natural mentoring relationships for prevention, intervention development, implementation, and evaluation of prevention programs with a non-matched mentoring relationship component. As natural mentoring relationships have many benefits for at-risk youth and can serve as a corrective experience that supports positive youth development (The National Research Council and Institute of Medicine Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth, 2002; Sale et al., 2008; Sanchez et al., 2011), the current findings may be utilized to promote natural mentoring relationships among more vulnerable minority youth

groups and well-resourced adult community members. Community programs or school programs with an informal mentoring component could target youth who may not have natural mentors or with limited social networks (Sanchez, Esparza, Berardi & Pryce, 2011). Organizations that serve this specific youth population should consider prevention interventions that assess for natural mentoring relationships, teach youth relationship-building skills that promote potential bonds with nonparental adults, and encourage the continuation of these relationships. Lastly, prospective natural mentors should be aware and consider the individual needs of both naturally mentored and nonmentored youth, while accounting for youth who may lack the ability to develop organically occurring mentoring relationships with nonparental adults (Sanchez et al., 2011).

Furthermore, findings from the present study suggest that having a natural mentor who provides tangible, emotional, and unconditional support may be more important to high-risk Latino/a youth than having someone who is of a specific age or sex. Similarly, findings suggest that having a natural mentoring relationship with someone who is understanding and supportive through the sharing of similar experiences may be more important to Latino/a youth than the sharing of demographic categories, as evidenced by two of the three natural mentor participants identifying as White American. It is worth noting that it may be that prospective mentors share similar experiences with youth as all mentors have encountered the struggles and challenges in adolescence with identity formation. Most importantly, the current study brought attention to the traits and characteristics that should be

avoided in prospective natural mentoring relationships in order for a connection to successfully develop and form. Also, the repeated emergence of social support in the present study suggests that school and community environments should facilitate the condition of instructional and emotional support in natural mentoring relationships. This can be accomplished through school staff trainings emphasizing interpersonal relationship-building skills for prospective natural mentors and the importance of providing validation and support to high-risk youth. Lastly, the trainings could focus on a strength-based framework in relation to working with a vulnerable youth group, allowing prospective natural adult mentors the opportunity to appreciate and successfully encourage the relational network that may serve to promote the wellbeing of these youth (Torres, Harper, Sanchez, & Fernandez, 2012).

Conclusion

In sum, the current study helps to address the need for research on the relationship characteristics, features, and development of natural mentoring relationships, in particular with high-risk Latino/a youth, a growing population in the U.S. The data highlights that the natural mentoring relationships were rooted in deep connections based on the bonding through shared experiences, moving beyond the sharing of demographic categories. Some of the findings relate to prior research on the structural characteristics of natural mentoring relationships, whereas others propose areas of further investigation in the literature. Overall, this exploratory study provides a foundation that may be extended upon for further research on increasing

opportunities in the social networks of high-risk Latino/a youth to develop natural mentoring relationships.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Screening Questionnaire

1). What is your ethnic/cultural background (e.g., Hispanic, Mexican, Mexican-American)?_____

2) How old are you? _____

3) Do you attend the afterschool community youth violence prevention program and/or the alternative high school?

Yes _____ No _____

4) Have you had or do you have an adult in your life that is not your parent/guardian who you go to for support or guidance? (e.g., 25 years or older, not a significant other)

Yes _____ No _____

Appendix B

Youth Demographic Questionnaire

1) What is your ethnic/cultural background (e.g., Hispanic, Mexican, Mexican-American)? _____

2) How old are you? _____

3) Can you speak and understand English and Spanish?
   Yes _____ No _____

4) What school do you attend? _____

5) Are you involved in community programs? _____
   If so, which ones? _____

6) Do your parents or caregivers work? _____
   If so, what kind of work do they do?
   _____

7) When you come home from school, are your parents/caregivers around?
   Yes _____ No _____

8) Were your parents born outside the U.S.?
   Yes _____ No _____
   If yes, which country were they born in?
   _____

9) Were you born outside the U.S.?
   Yes _____ No _____
   If yes, which country were you born in? _____

Appendix C

Youth Interview Protocol

Script

Hi, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. (Researcher will review youth assent line by line, and determine if there are further questions. Researcher will let participant know that the informed consent will be stored under lock and key and kept separate from their responses). I know that it's in this consent/assent, but I want to make sure that you are ok with being audio-recorded. Again, the only reason I am using the recorder is to make sure I get all of your answers. When I transcribe your interview, I will use a fake name if your name is on the audio-recording. What fake name would you like to use? Also, once the interview is transcribed, the recording will be deleted. All of these materials will be protected in my office under lock and key, so only I will have access to it.

I invited you to participate because of your answers on the screening questionnaire, for example, you identified as Latino/a, reported being 12-18 years old, being part of the after-school program or alternative high school, and had or currently have a natural mentoring relationship. Is this all true? Let me tell what I mean by natural mentoring relationship. I'm referring to a relationship you had or currently having with an adult, who is 25 years or older, who is not your parent, or a girlfriend/boyfriend, and who you go to for support, help, and guidance. I would like to know more about your experience of this relationship. So, you may have more than one of this type of relationship. I'd like you to think of one relationship that occurred once you became a teenager.

I will go over these questions on this paper (Researcher will show participant interview protocol). I will also write some notes down on paper. I really want to make sure that you are comfortable. Do you have any questions for me? If you ever feel uncomfortable at any point, you can tell me to stop the interview.
Ok. Let's begin.

1) Pretend that you were going to tell a friend about this relationship, how would you describe it?
    (prompt) How do you talk about this relationship?
    (prompt) Tell me more.
2) Do you feel like you can trust this person?
    (prompt) How do you know? Can you give me an example?
3) Does he/she care for you?,
    (prompt) How do you know? Can you give me an example?
4) Does he/she support you in this relationship?

(prompt) How do you know? Can you give me an example?
5) How did the relationship start?
6) What did or do you do together?
7) Can you give me an example of a time when you needed help and this person helped you?
8) Have you had other relationships like this one?
If so, tell me about them.
9) What are some of the problems or challenges that occurred in this relationship?
10) How did the problems end?
11) How long did this relationship last?
(prompt) Why do you think this relationship lasted?
12) Is there anything else that you would like to tell me that can help me understand this relationship in your life?

Thank you very much for your participation and help, Now I want to ask you if it would be ok if I give you a letter to pass along to your mentor? If it is ok with you, I would like to talk to him/her too about his/her experiences being in a relationship with you. This will really help me to understand how these kinds of relationships help kids. Would that be ok? My contact information is in the letter and you can tell them to call me or come by if they are interested in talking.

Appendix D

Adult Interview Protocol

Script

Hi, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. (Researcher will review consent line by line, and determine if there are further questions. Researcher will let participant know that the informed consent will be stored under lock and key and kept separate from their responses). I know that it's outlined in this consent, but I want to make sure that you are comfortable being audio-recorded. Again, the only reason I am using the recorder is to ensure I capture all of your answers. When I transcribe your interview, I will use a fake name if your name is on the audio-recording. Also, once the interview is transcribed, the recording will be deleted. All of these materials will be protected in my office under lock and key, so only I will have access to it.

I invited you to participate because a youth I interviewed identified being in a relationship with you as a mentor and going to you for support, help, and guidance. We are trying to understand how relationships like this help kids. So, I would like to know more about your experience of this relationship.

I will ask you the questions on interview protocol (researcher will show participant interview protocol), but also add follow-up questions if more clarification is needed. I will also write some notes down on paper, just so I can remember what you are telling me. I would like to make this a comfortable experience for you. Do you have any questions for me? If you ever feel uncomfortable at any point, you have can tell me to stop the interview.
Ok. Let's begin.

1) How would you describe your relationship with the youth?
    (prompt) Tell me more.
2) Are there trust, caring, and support in this relationship?
    (prompt) How can you tell? Tell me more.
3) How did the relationship begin?
4) Who initiated the relationship?
    If it was you, then what drew you to develop the relationship?
5) What did/do you and the youth do together?
6) What do you get out the relationship?
    (prompt) Tell me more.
7) What do you think the youth gets out of the relationship?
8) Can you give me an example of a time when the youth needed help and you offered support?
9) Have you had other relationships like this one?

If so, tell me about them.

10) What are some of the problems or challenges that have occurred in this relationship?

11) How did the problems get resolved?

12) Why do you think this relationship lasted as long as it has/did?

13) Is there anything else that you would like to tell me that can help me understand this relationship?