

**An Exploration of the Effects of the
Student Mentoring Programme at the University of the Western
Cape on a group of First Year Students**

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in the Department of Psychology, University of the Western Cape, Bellville.**

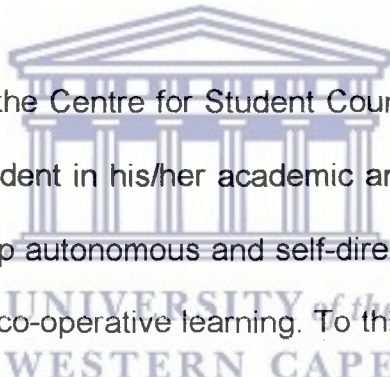
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Abstract

Historical constraints in tertiary education in South Africa force us to look at alternative and innovative ways of ensuring that the first year student receives all the support necessary to ensure a good start to his/her academic career. Universities will increasingly have to rely on talented senior students for a range of services to students. This study will focus on the Student Mentoring Programme (SMP) of the University of the Western Cape (UWC). The SMP is a creative way of utilising the expertise of successful senior students to assist in the adjustment and academic concerns of first year students.

The logo of the University of the Western Cape, featuring a classical building facade with columns and a pediment, with the text 'UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE' overlaid.

The SMP is an initiative of the Centre for Student Counselling at UWC and aims to support the first year student in his/her academic and personal adjustment to university. It aims to develop autonomous and self-directed engagement with the academic material through co-operative learning. To this end senior students are trained to engage in a peer mentoring relationship with the first year students.

The review of the literature reveals that there is a paucity of research investigating the relationship between academic performance and mentoring. Furthermore, there is no consensus as to which aspect of the mentoring relationship is instrumental in affecting change.

The study investigated the relationship between academic performance (real and perceived) and participation in the SMP. This was done by statistical analysis

and by investigating how the students themselves perceived, processed and understood the academic impact of the SMP. Quantitative (t-test comparison) and qualitative (focus groups) methods were employed to investigate the effects of SMP.

The statistical analysis revealed that the mentees achieved significantly better academic results than their non-participating peers. The qualitative analysis of the focus group discussions supported this. The emerging themes revealed that the mentees felt that their overall academic performance was considerably enhanced through their interaction with the mentor. These self-reports were supported by statistical analysis which indicated that the mentees had significantly higher academic results than their non-participating peers. Motivation, modelling, the belief in the mentees' ability and skills development were viewed as enhancing their coping with the academic demands. The mentees perceived the involvement in the SMP as valuable and enabling them to adjust socially and academically to the new demands of tertiary education.

The study concludes that the results support the notion that mentoring facilitates adjustment to and coping with the tertiary educational environment, as well as providing valuable academic support to mentees. Student adjustment and academic performance benefits significantly from involvement in the SMP.

Declaration

The author hereby declares that this whole thesis, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is her own work.

Birgit Schreiber



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Chapter 1: Introduction

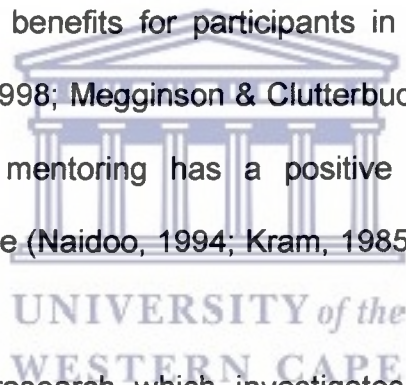
1.1 Overview

Secondary education in South Africa during and after the apartheid rule has disadvantaged black¹ students by offering relatively little guidance regarding academic or life skills. Given the inadequate pre-university preparation it is likely that the first year student enters university with high levels of insecurity, anxiety and alienation. This may impact negatively on the academic performance of the student. Peer facilitated support Programme are perceived by students as less threatening, more accessible and more approachable than Programme which are firmly lodged within the formal structures of academia and personed by staff members (Kagee, Naidoo & Mahatey, 1997). The Student Mentoring Programme (SMP) at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) offers a meaningful way of improving the adjustment of first year students to tertiary education through social and academic support thus providing a potent influence on the student's growth and development.

The concept of mentoring has been in existence for hundreds of years. Mentoring occurs primarily and is particularly effective during times of transition (Kram, 1985). Through personal involvement, the mentor supports, guides and assists the junior person in his or her personal or professional development and thus enhances the probability of successful adjustment to the tertiary educational environment (Kagee *et al.*, 1997).

¹ In this context the term 'black' is used to denote the population which has been disenfranchised under apartheid rule.

The 'Social Support Model of Mentoring' stipulates that an increase in social support is related to an increase in coping and a decrease in stress, which is a good predictor of academic success (Jacobi, 1991). The 'Theory of Involvement in Learning' suggests that the extent to which the student is involved in learning is a good predictor of academic success (Jacobi, 1991). The SMP is firmly grounded in these two theories and aims at holistic development of the student in his/her adjustment to tertiary education. While a causal relationship between academic success and mentoring has not been established (Wilde & Schau, 1991; Scandura, 1997), qualitative studies indicate a wide range of benefits for participants in mentoring Programme (Jacobi, 1991; Goodlad, 1998; Megginson & Clutterbuck, 1995). The literature reviewed suggests that mentoring has a positive effect on the holistic development of the mentee (Naidoo, 1994; Kram, 1985; Zey, 1984).



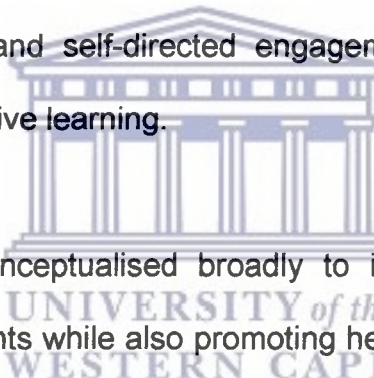
However, there is little research which investigates the academic impact mentoring Programme might have. Investigations into mentoring are primarily qualitative and rely heavily on self-reports. Empirical and objective evaluations which explore the relationship between academic success and mentoring are in short supply (Jacobi, 1991). Hence, there is a need for rigorous research focussing on tangible results (Dennis, 1993).

This study investigates one of the explicit aims of the SMP that is to improve academic development, by doing an in depth study of a group of first year students. Quantitative and qualitative research methods were employed to

illuminate the relationship between involvement in the SMP and the academic performance of the participants in the SMP.

1.2 The Student Mentoring Programme (SMP)

The Student Mentoring Programme (SMP) was initiated in 1992 by the Institute for Counselling at the University of the Western Cape and aims to support first year students in their academic and personal adjustment to university. It emerged out of the need to redress the lack of adequate preparation for tertiary education at historically disadvantaged schools. It aims to develop autonomous and self-directed engagement with the academic material through co-operative learning.

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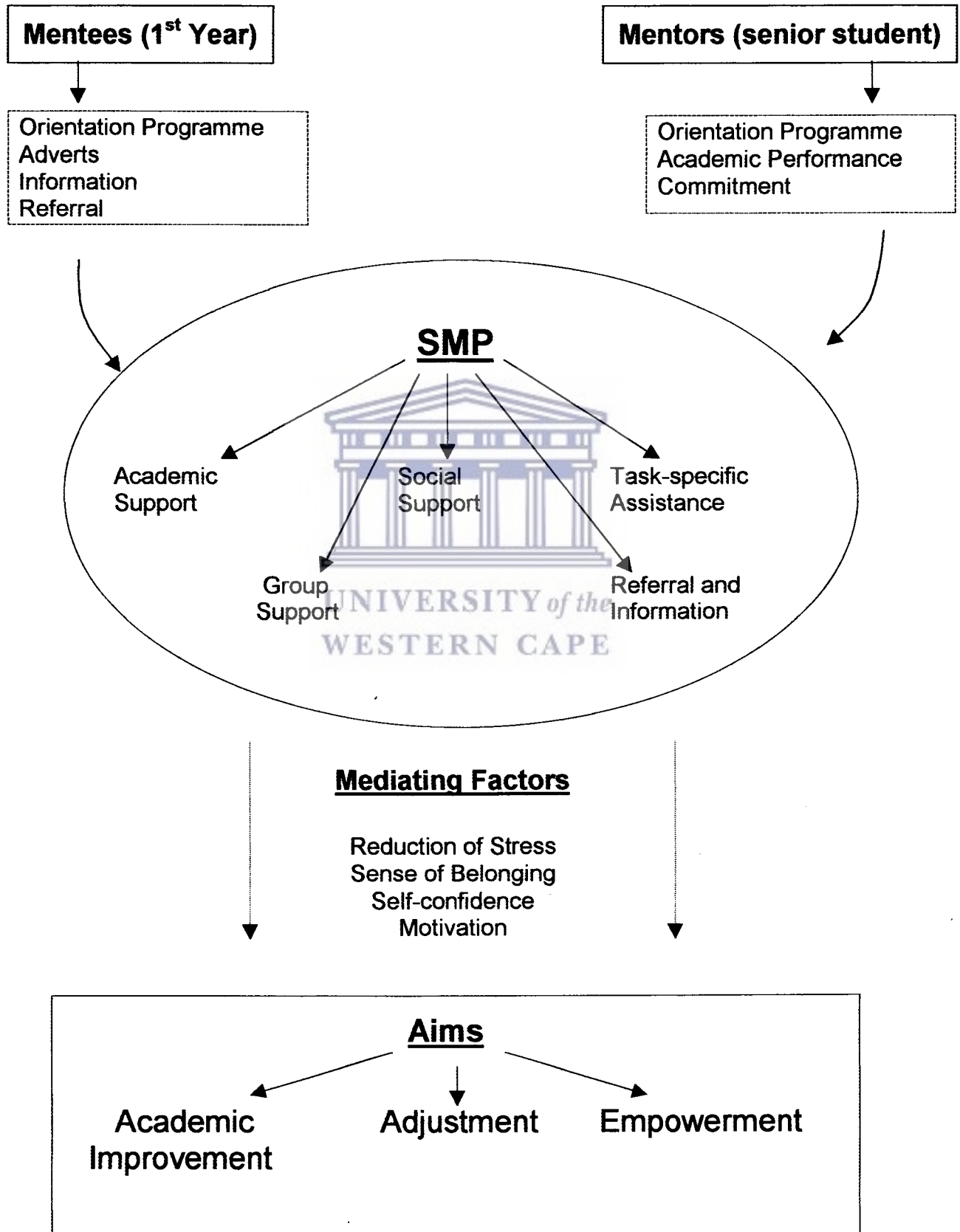
'The Programme was conceptualised broadly to include mechanisms for providing support to students while also promoting healthy peer interaction for the purpose of social and cognitive development' (Naidoo, 1994, p. 2). Senior students with good academic records and who demonstrate commitment and initiative during the orientation programme at the start of the academic year are encouraged to maintain their interaction with their first year groups. Training and supervision enable the mentors to be a supportive element in the students' adjustment to campus life.

This study focuses on the SMP during the year of 1997, investigating the effects of the SMP on 386 first year students. The selection criteria for mentors are participation and commitment in the orientation programme and academic performance. Training of mentors is conducted by the office of the

SMP co-ordinator and focuses on academic skills development, counselling and motivation skills. Typically, a mentor works with a group of 3 - 6 students from the same faculty and meets with this group, or individually with the mentee on a weekly basis. During these meetings personal, social and academic issues are the focus of attention. The mentor assists the mentee with process related issues, task specific problems or refers the mentee to a better equipped person or to a service centre. Skills development and small groups discussions are central. Through improving coping mechanisms, the reduction of stress and a stronger sense of belonging, the aims of academic improvement and adjustment are achieved. See Figure 1 for a conceptual illustration of the SMP.



Figure 1: UWC Student Mentoring Programme 1997



1.3 Synopsis of Current Study

Chapter two reviews the existing literature related to mentoring. It explores the current debates about the definition, role and function of mentoring, the dynamics of the mentoring relationship and the reciprocity of benefits for both mentor and mentee. Different kinds of mentoring Programme and prevalence in South Africa are discussed. This chapter further looks at theoretical models of mentoring and raises concerns related to existing research.

Chapter three discusses the methodological approach used in this study. The qualitative and quantitative methods are described and justified. The chapter outlines the use of the instruments, the selection of the sample and the process by which the data were analysed.

Chapter four entails the discussion of the results and provides the analysis and the interpretation of the data. It focuses on the statistical results of the quantitative aspect of the study and on the thematic patterns which emerged from the qualitative analysis. The similarities and the contradictions with regard to other research are highlighted.

Chapter five summarises the main themes of this study and draws out the conclusions. It elaborates on the value of this research and points to its limitations. Suggestions for further research are made. It concludes by advocating an increase in the use of planned and natural mentoring.

Chapter 2

Conceptualising Mentoring: The Existing Literature

Students represent an enormous untapped resource. We must find ways to engage them and help them relinquish the role of passive learner so they take more responsibility for their own education. Students can be superb caretakers of each other. Institutions often do not realise that students will do a great deal for each other in institutionally endorsed settings just as they do informally all the time. (Katachadourian & Boli, in Giddan, 1988, p. 14)

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the existing literature on the concept of mentoring and attempts to synthesise the various views. It highlights the debates on the definition, role and function. Different kinds of programmes are discussed and the theories and models which underscore these different approaches are explored. Mentoring is widespread and occurs at various levels, benefiting all parties involved. However, the literature disagrees on what constitutes mentoring and largely neglects the use of theory to explain the process and its apparent success. Due to the existing body of research being very context and Programme specific, difficulties in generalising findings and conclusions arise.

2.2 Mentoring in South Africa - and Abroad

The upsurge of interest in the concept of mentoring is mirrored by the Journal for Teacher Education (1992) which generated an issue entitled 'Induction and Mentoring' and by the European Mentoring Centre which hosted a conference in 1994 entitled 'Mentoring Research' (Megginson & Clutterbuck,

1995). Similarly, the University College Dublin hosted a conference in 1998 entitled 'The First-Year Experience' which also described a number of programmes which incorporated mentoring. A few of the well known mentoring programmes include the 'Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America', the 'Help One Student To Succeed', 'One Hundred Black Men, Inc.', and 'The National One-to-One Mentoring Partnership' which are found throughout the USA and Europe (Dennis, 1993). Thus, the concept and practice of mentoring has 'increased in significance for developers and for people seeking development' (Megginson & Clutterbuck, 1995, p.15).

In South Africa mentoring has become a central issue in student development. Goodlad (1998) describes a number of mentoring programmes which have recently emerged at South African tertiary institutions. Furthermore, Rhodes University hosted a conference entitled 'Student Contributions to Learning' in 1996 which presented a number of papers dealing with formal and informal mentoring. Some initiatives in the South African context include:

- The University of Port Elizabeth's Student Advice Centre uses de Jaagers' model and offers training for the development of mentoring Programme on a national basis.
- The University of South Africa's Student Advice Bureau (Cape Town) uses students to assist junior students in their academic and personal development through peer counselling.
- The University of South Africa (Pretoria) uses peer evaluation in one of their language Programme.
- The Goldfields Resource Centre at the University of the Western Cape has implemented a peer supported science Programme which emphasises tutoring and mentoring in their group based learning approach.
- The School of Pharmaceutical Science at Rhodes University has implemented a mentoring Programme.
- Stellenbosch University and Cape Technikon make use of peer counsellors in their Counselling Centre.

The emerging themes highlight the need to adjust the South African higher education to incorporate the increased participation of senior students in tutoring and mentoring of junior students in order to enhance the learning and development process.

Mentoring has long existed in South Africa and is now recognised for its powerful use in all kinds of contexts. Its value during times of transition and change make mentoring an unique, cost effective and beneficial concept which should be enhanced and utilised. Broader applications and more effective use need to be explored and formally researched.

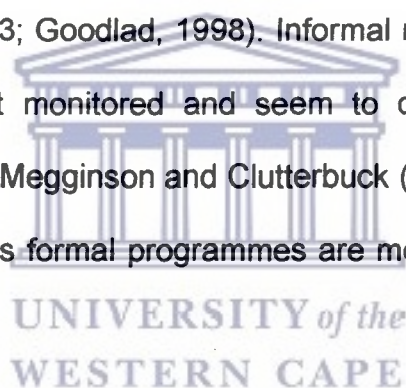
2.3 Operationalising 'Mentoring'

Peer mentoring has been in existence in educational setting for hundreds of years. However, it has in the past received little attention as an educational technique and is only recently 'recognised as a way of enriching education and achieving goals that cannot be achieved by other means' (Goodlad, 1998, p. 2).

The concept of mentoring is a not a new one as Whitehead (1993) and others (Healy, 1989; Kram, 1985) emphasise. The original mentor appears in Homer's *Odysseus*: Mentor is wisdom personified (Healy, 1989). Andrew Bell in 1797 in Madras, India, and Joseph Lancaster in 1798 in London, England, were among the first who formally recognised the value of peer instruction and incorporated it in their educational settings (Goodlad, 1998). Clutterbuck (in Monaghan & Lunt, 1992) traced the root of mentoring to the apprentice

system of passing on knowledge and skills from the senior person to the junior.

Mentoring programmes and relationships exist in all kinds of forms: structured and spontaneous, formal and informal, one-on-one and group settings, virtual and real, within academic institutions, organisations and across different disciplines (Healy, 1989; Jacobi, 1991; Lawrie, 1987; Megginson & Clutterbuck, 1997; Monaghan & Lunt, 1992). They are school-based programmes, living skills programmes, court-mandated or recreational programmes (Dennis, 1993; Goodlad, 1998). Informal mentoring relationships and programmes are not monitored and seem to develop spontaneously between individuals, what Megginson and Clutterbuck (1997) term 'organically grown' mentoring, whereas formal programmes are monitored and evaluated (Burke, 1984).



Mentoring is viewed as a relevant topic within developmental, organisational and educational psychology and each domain uses the term generously resulting in a great deal of inter-professional confusion (Bass, 1996). Charoux (1987) and Jacobi (1991) agree that with the upsurge of interest in mentoring much disagreement on what constitutes mentoring has emerged. This is supported by Stein (cited in Wilde & Schau, 1991) who identified 27 phrases defining mentoring, thus highlighting that 'although a great deal is written in both the professional and popular literature about mentoring, there is no one, concise, accepted definition of mentoring' (Wilde & Schau, 1991, p. 166). The term mentor 'has come to denote everything from a person who helps one

establish a career to someone who teaches us about life' (Daloz, 1983, p. 24). Some view it as role specific behaviours while others view it as a comprehensive and dynamic relationship (Cochius, 1986; Fisher, 1994; Healy, 1989; Hunt, 1991a). Even Levinson (cited in Levinson, Carrow, Klein, Levinson, McKee, 1978) who is seen as one of the key figures in mentoring literature, fails to give a definition which is more concise than a collection of global terms.

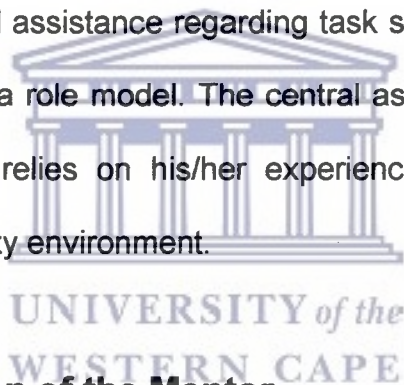
The definition largely depends on the kind of programme and the institutional context within which the mentor functions and it depends on the role which the mentor needs to fulfil. The definitions vary: emphasising more peer-like aspects within educational settings or emphasising power differentials within the organisational and corporate settings (Jacobi, 1991; McManus & Russel, 1997). Definitions include a range of concepts, such as emotional aspects, seniority, growth and maturity, paternalistic aspects, imparting of skills, developmental relationships, modelling and friendship (Bowen, 1985; Cameron-Jones & O'Hara, 1995; Goodlad, 1998; Keith, 1993; Kogler-Hill, Hilton-Bahniuk, Dobos & Rouner, 1989; McManus & Russell, 1997).

The value of a clear conceptualisation of mentoring is highlighted by Anderson and Shannon (cited in Monaghan & Lunt, 1992) who argue that effective mentoring depends on an operationalised definition of mentoring.

Amidst these divergent definitions, Jacobi (1991, p. 512) attempts to find the 'lowest common denominator' amongst all the available definitions and summarises the most central components of mentoring as follows:

1. It is a helping relationship focused on longer term and broadly defined achievement;
2. The central functions include (a) emotional and psychological support, (b) direct assistance with career/professional development, (c) role modelling;
3. Reciprocity is characteristic of the relationship especially in terms of derived benefits;
4. The relationship is primarily personal; and
5. The mentor has greater experience with the particular system/context.

The definition of mentoring in the SMP is closely related to Jacobi's definition: the mentor offers practical assistance regarding task specific problems, offers emotional support and is a role model. The central aspect in the definition of the mentor in the SMP relies on his/her experience with and successful negotiation of the university environment.



2.4 Role and Function of the Mentor

The role and function of a mentor depend strongly on the context, the aims and the kind of Programme which are suitable to the specific context and the ethos of the institution. This is succinctly expressed by Monaghan & Lunt (1992, p. 261) who asserts that 'mentors are constructed. The roles are open to negotiation'.

Generally it has been agreed that mentors promote, 'cut red tape', show the politics and subtleties of the institution and believe in students, thus helping them to succeed (Daloz, 1983; Kram, 1985; Zey, 1984). Mentors are especially relevant during times of major transitions in that they provide

support on a personal, developmental and contextual level (Levinson, in Healy, 1989; Megginson & Clutterbuck, 1995).

A mentor is perceived as 'teacher, coach, trainer, positive role model, opener of doors, sponsor, developer of talents and successful leader' (Schein in Healy, 1989, p. 32). Generally, terms like "guru", guide and counsellor describe more subtle elements of the mentoring role, whereas teacher, adviser consultant describe more specific roles (Burke, 1984; Daloz, 1983; Kram, 1985; Zey, 1984).

A mentor's function is split into two core aspects: vocational/career and psychosocial (Little in Cameron-Jones, 1998; Kram, 1985; Jacobi, 1991; Megginson & Clutterbuck, 1995; Schockett & Haring-Hidore, 1985). Olian, Carroll, Giannantonio and Feren (1988) describe the two different functions as 'instrumental' and 'intrinsic'. Burke (1984) adds role modelling as a third aspect of the mentoring function.

Mentoring functions include enhancing skills, facilitating advancement, hosting and guiding, role modelling, providing psychological support, protection, friendship, monitoring and feedback (Ballantyne, Hansford & Packer, 1995; Kram, 1984; Levinson, Carrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1978).

The above suggests a close relation between the role of the mentor and his/her subsequent function. In addition, the needs of the mentee population also influence the conceptualisation of these concepts. Goodlad (1998)

reports on 26 different peer mentoring and tutoring programmes and not one function/role description is synonymous with another although there are overlaps. This highlights that every programme is specifically tailored to the population it aims to serve and the mentor's function and role is thus context and Programme specific. Researchers have also pointed out that depending on the kind and aim of the programme the needs of the mentees are continuously changing and that one of the roles of the mentor is to respond accurately to these changing needs (Ballantyne, Hansford, Packer, 1995; Burke, 1984).

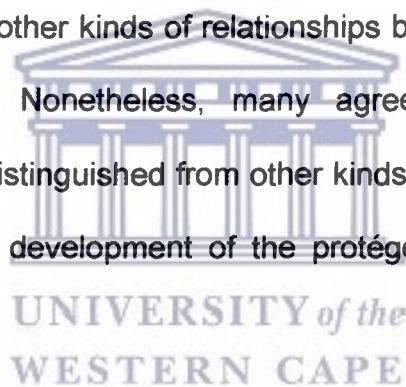
Jacobi (1991) highlights the difficulty in attempting to generate operationalised definitions for the different mentoring functions. This becomes particularly important in establishing which aspect of the mentoring function is the most central in generating academic success. However, she agrees with Bowen (1985), who concludes from his research, that the successful fulfilment of the functions performed by the mentor make the mentoring relationship work.

2.5 Mentoring Relationship

The mentoring relationship has been described as one of the most complex and developmentally important relationship a person can have in adulthood (Daloz, 1983; Kram, 1983). It has been emphasised that a strong interpersonal dimension is not always characteristic of the mentoring relationship, crucial is the willingness on both sides to work together in an atmosphere of trust, respect and a belief in each other's ability and competence (Zey, 1984; Megginson & Clutterbuck, 1995). Central on the part

of the mentor is the other-oriented empathy component in maintaining the relationship (Allen, Poteet & Burroughs, 1997).

Levinson *et al.* (1978) describe the mentoring relationship as emotionally intimate and intense. However, Burke (1984, p. 359) described the mentoring relationship in the sample he investigated as 'friendly and not as strong'. Jacobi (1991) points out that the discussions about the intimacy of the relationship is varied, 'some have described mentoring as the highest end on a continuum of helping relationships' (Jacobi 1991, p. 511), whereas others merely distinguish it from other kinds of relationships by virtue of the role and function of the mentor. Nonetheless, many agree that the mentoring relationship needs to be distinguished from other kinds of relationships in that it focuses on the holistic development of the protégé (Healy, 1989; Kram, 1983).



Daniel (1987) and Bowen (1985) emphasise the importance of role modelling in shaping behaviour and assert that it is a central aspect in an effective mentoring relationship. Modelling, which implies an experiential difference in the relationship (Kagee *et al.*, 1997) aims at 'further development and refinement of the protégé's skills, abilities and understanding' (Moore & Amey cited in Jacobi, 1991, p. 507). The modelling of successful study behaviour is one of the aims of the SMP (Naidoo, 1994).

2.5.1 Stages in the Mentoring Relationship

The literature discusses three to six distinct phases through which the

mentoring relationship develops, where (a) the relationship develops from initiation; (b) to dependence and cultivation; to (c) internalisation of the transformation of becoming an equal and friend of the mentor; and results in (d) redefinition, autonomy and separation (Ballantyne *et al.*, 1995; Healy, 1989; Hunt, 1991a; Kram, 1983, 1985).

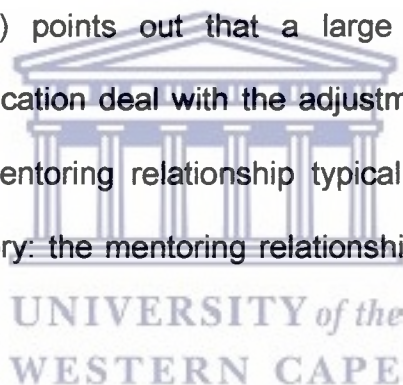
Human development as understood by developmental psychology underscores the stages of the mentoring relationship. According to Erikson's stages, the young adult has to accomplish a number of tasks in order to develop into the next stage, and these tasks revolve around issues of competency and achievement (Gerdes, 1988). These life stages are easier accomplished through the assistance of a mentoring relationship (Kram, 1983). In addition, it is suggested that mentors benefit due to satisfying their developmental needs 'by nurturing and sharing their wisdom with a younger adult' (Olian, *et al.*, 1988, p. 15).

These stages are predictable but not distinct. Certain structural changes or psychological changes in the individuals move the relationship into the next stage where mentoring satisfies the developmental needs of both parties (as per Erikson's life stages) (Ballantyne *et al.*, 1995; Gerdes, 1988; Kram, 1983).

Ochberg, Tischler and Schulberg's (1986) findings support theories which emphasise the importance of idealisation in the formative stages of the mentoring relationship. Similarly, Bowen (1985) asserts that identification is the most prevalent at the beginning of the mentoring relationship. Likewise,

Swerdlik & Bardon (1988) assert that mentoring and the need for emotional support is more likely to occur in the beginning of a career of the protégé. Ballantyne *et al.*'s (1995) study confirms these findings in that the involvement of the mentor is strongest in the beginning of the relationship.

However, Jacobi (1991) points out that there is considerable disagreement regarding the 'typical' duration of the mentoring relationship. Levinson (1978) maintains that the typical duration is about 2-10 years, whereas Phillips-Jones (cited in Jacobi, 1991) suggests that mentoring can take place in one single encounter. Jacobi (1991) points out that a large amount of mentoring Programme in higher education deal with the adjustment issues of first year students and thus the mentoring relationship typically lasts one year. The SMP falls into this category: the mentoring relationship is constructed to last at least one year.



2.5.2 Mixed Mentoring

Another area of debate is gender issues within mentoring relationships. Mixed and same gender mentoring affect mentoring dynamics differently. Jacobi (1991) asserts that the higher education literature is divided regarding the benefits of same-gender mentoring and it seems that many Programme aim to keep in line with same-gender mentoring (Dreher & Ash, 1990; Ragins & Cotton, 1991). This is not the case with the SMP where the mentor/mentee allocation criteria are based on common academic aspirations and not on gender.

It has been suggested that mixed mentoring is not as beneficial as same gender mentoring (Bowen, 1985; Kram, 1983). The potential difficulties regarding the cross gender attraction or possible speculations from outsiders regarding this 'far outweigh any prospective benefits of the relationship' (Bowen, 1985, p. 31). It is also suggested that given the role of modelling within the mentoring relationship, cross gender mentoring is less than ideal (Bowen, 1985). However, he found that female mentees identified as much with their male mentors as they did with female mentors which suggests that cross gender mentoring difficulties are situational and context specific and seem to occur especially in the organisational and corporate structures.

Kram (1983) also points to the difficulties of cross-gender mentoring, which primarily centre around inadequate role modelling. She suggests that the encountered difficulties might be due to increased intimacy. Her conclusions, however, emerge from a small sample of mentor/mentee pairs in an organisational setting which may have had its own gender specific dynamics.

Swerdlik and Bardon (1988) report that more female than male protégés had chosen female mentors which is in line with Bowen's (1985) and Kram's (1983) conclusions. However, Swerdlik *et al.* (1988) found that more male mentors are chosen, which may be due to the larger pool of male mentors, given the patriarchal structures in society, where men are more prevalent in power positions. Swerdlik *et al.* (1988) alerts to the problems for women who have a preference for female mentors, given the shortage of women in senior positions.

2.5.3 Sustaining the Mentoring Relationship

The maintenance of the mentoring relationship depends on both the mentor and the mentee. It is affected by factors such as perceived interpersonal competence, the capability to satisfy the needs of friendship, intimacy and emotional support, and the empathic reaction of the mentor towards the mentee (Allen *et al.*, 1997; Olian *et al.*, 1988; Roux, 1997). Swerdlik *et al.* (1988, p. 221) found that mentors who are 'supportive, knowledgeable, intelligent, caring and encouraging' attract mentees more readily.

Gender preferences also emerged as points of attractiveness of the relationship (Olian *et al.*, 1988). However, these researchers acknowledge that their research was experimental casting doubt on their findings (Olian *et al.*, 1988). Also, it seemed that younger persons were more attracted to the mentoring relationship than older individuals, suggesting that they felt more in need of assistance, reflecting their insecurity and need for support (Olian *et al.*, 1988). Perceived authority and competency are additional factors of motivation (Olian *et al.*, 1988; Aronson cited in Swerdlik *et al.*, 1988).

Behaviour resembling mentoring can be found regardless of the mentor's characteristics (Gernstein, 1985). It is suggested that matching mentor/mentee according to particular characteristics, like for instance gender, is not necessary to enhance the mentoring relationship (Gernstein, 1985).

It has been pointed out that factors within the mentee influence the willingness and commitment of the mentor to engage in the mentoring relationship (Allen *et al.*, 1997; Jacobi, 1991). These factors include performance potential, interpersonal similarity, motivation, competence, learning orientation and perceived compatibility (Allen *et al.*, 1997; Burke, 1984).

The literature suggests that peer support and peer mentoring in higher education is easier accessible and is experienced as less anxiety provoking than seeking support from formal structures within the institution (for instance, support centres and faculty) (Goodlad, 1998; Kagee *et al.*, 1997). Another point of attractiveness of mentoring is thus the relative lack of anxiety associated with seeking assistance from a mentor as opposed to a staff member. This concept is central in the SMP: the mentor, a fellow albeit senior student, is perceived to be more approachable than formal support structures (Kagee *et al.*, 1997).

2.6 Benefits

Qualitative studies reviewed largely indicate that participants in mentoring programmes benefit on a number of levels (Goodlad, 1998; Jacobi, 1991). As Megginson & Clutterbuck (1995, p. 226) points out 'mutual benefits are a recurring theme in mentoring schemes'.

2.6.1 Benefits for Mentees

Mentees benefit on a professional and personal level (Allen *et al.* 1997; Goodlad, 1998). Bowen (1985, p. 31) interviewed 32 mentees and concluded

that 'each considered the relationship with the mentor to be an important career element' and that they experienced positive benefits for their work related and personal relationships. Dunn (1989) and Burke (1984) found that mentees felt that they had gained increased self-confidence and developed an increased ability to work in teams. Wilde and Schau (1991) concluded that mentees reported that they received support and professional advice.

In a study with 80 mentees Burke (1984, p. 353) found that 'the mentoring experience was a positive one for protégés': 76% of the mentees in his sample reported 'that their mentors had extraordinarily or considerably influenced them as individuals, and 63% of the respondents reported that their mentors had an extraordinary influence or considerable influence on their careers' (Burke, 1984, p. 360). Furthermore, the mentees in his study indicated that they gained increased skills in 'dealing with people', 'increased self-confidence', 'insights about themselves' and problem solving (p. 360). Burke (1984) concludes that the mentees had learnt a wide range of different kinds of skills and that this might be due to each one's different circumstances. This reflects the general tendency in research as being very context and situation specific.

In a pilot study of a mentoring Programme done at the College of Science of the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, Rutherford and Matlou (cited in Goodlad, 1998, p. 151) found that mentees had 'adjusted more quickly and appeared relaxed and less confused' than first year students in previous years.

In a qualitative research done by Naidoo (1994) mentees involved in the SMP felt that they had developed their communication and interpersonal skills, had increased their academic performance, benefited from increased social support, gained insight into 'working the system' (p. 3) and gained easy access to peer counsellors.

2.6.2 Academic Benefits

A point emphasised by Jacobi (1991) is that there is a paucity of research indicating that mentoring has a positive effect on academic performance: 'empirical studies of the association between mentoring and academic outcomes are in short supply' (p. 515). One reason for this is the many extraneous variables which could influence academic success and thus make any causal inferences difficult. She points out that a number of studies infer a causal relationship from an observed correlation between academic success and mentoring (Jacobi, 1991). She suggests that mentoring relationships are a by-product rather than the cause of high achievement. Wilde and Schau (1991) assert that few studies have been conducted which examine mentoring in educational settings. However, Jacobi (1991) asserts that indirect support for the link between academic success and mentoring has been found in a few studies (Jacobi, 1991).

Goodlad (1998, p. 33) describes a comparison of two approaches of what is broadly described as 'helping pupils' approaches. The one had a mentoring emphasis ('big brother/big sister') and the other a tutoring (academic emphasis). Their results showed that both groups felt equally strong about the

academic benefits they derived from the involvement with a senior student. As a self-report questionnaire was used as an instrument it is difficult to establish empirically whether their subjective perceptions were reflected in their academic performance.

Scandura (1997) alerts to the danger of neglecting objective and empirical studies to evaluate academic benefits. He views the method of self report as potentially limited. This highlights the danger in generalising research findings which are based on self-reports. As he points out 'further research is needed to examine the *practical* (italics added) significance of these findings' and thus highlights the need for research investigating the practical benefits of mentoring (Scandura, 1997, p. 67).

It is in the light of this paucity of empirical research and the need for objective studies in this area, that this study aims to establish empirically whether the involvement in the SMP enhances the academic performance of the first year student.

2.6.3 Contextual and Reciprocal Benefits

The literature points out that although mentoring is predominantly protégé-centred there are benefits for both parties in the relationship (Allen *et al.*, 1997; Bowen, 1985; Gernstein, 1985; Jacobi, 1991; Megginson & Clutterbuck, 1995; Zey, 1984). Increased personal satisfaction, increased support network, increased self-esteem and self-affirmation and enhanced

task performance are central benefits for the mentor (Allen, *et al.* 1997; Hunt, 1991c; Kram, 1985).

In a study done by Naidoo (1994) on the SMP regarding the advantages for mentors, the mentors felt that their involvement in the SMP improved their academic skills, improved their self-esteem and confidence and that they had an opportunity to practice career related skills such as leadership and public speaking. Benefits for mentors are especially relevant if the programme is aimed at empowering and developing both parties. The SMP is shaped along the lines of offering the mentee *and* the mentor the opportunity to develop their skills.



Organisations, institutions and communities benefit from mentoring programmes in that they facilitate problem solving, enhance coping, and have a preventative and early-intervention value (Burke, 1984; Lawrie, 1987; Moyer de Rosenroll, 1998; Scandura, 1997).

The aims of the SMP are to assist the mentee in adjustment related concerns, to develop self-confidence and self-reliance, to promote peer networks to contribute to a healthy academic ethos, to initiate study groups to promote co-operative learning, to provide opportunities to model successful study behaviour and to provide support for personal development (Kagee *et al.*, 1997). The success of the SMP thus benefits the mentee, the mentor and the institution.

2.7 Models and Theory

There are a number of theoretical models of mentoring in higher education which can be summarised as follows (Jacobi, 1991):

1. **Involvement in learning:** This model postulates that the extent to which the student is involved in learning is a good predictor of academic success.
2. **Academic and Social Integration:** The higher the academic (institutional) and social (personal) integration the more likely the student's success in the academic endeavour.
3. **Social Support:** The increase in social support is related to an increase in coping and a decrease in stress, which is a good predictor of academic success.
4. **Developmental Support:** Mentoring should ideally provide the student with stimulation at only one stage beyond the current cognitive level, which will in turn foster academic development. Levinson (1978) views this as the most adequate theory which underlies mentoring relationships. Using the developmental model for mentoring, Nolinske (1994) advocates the use of multiple mentor relationships.

Each theoretical model defines mentoring in different ways and attaches different functions and roles to the concept mentor. Given the disagreement in the definition and the role and function of mentoring each theory emphasises different aspects and thus pose difficulties in comparing them (Megginson & Clutterbuck, 1995).

The SMP in its conceptual framework is essentially need-driven (Kagee *et al.*, 1997) and as mentioned is shaped along the parameters of the 'Involvement in Learning' and 'Social Support' models.

McManus and Russel (1997) compare different theoretical models and how they understand mentoring in organisations. The four theories they mention are:

1. leader-member exchange theory,
2. organisation-citizen theory,
3. social support, and
4. socialisation theory.

The Social Support and Socialisation Theory reflect similar concept to Jacobi's (1991) Social Support Model in that the induction and socialisation aspect is central. Furthermore, the social and emotional element is emphasised.

Research suggests that social support buffers the effects of stress and that adequate social support reduces emotional exhaustion in people (Gerdes, 1988; Louw, 1991; McManus & Russel, 1997). Social support is thus defined as 'the beneficial interpersonal relationship that aid in preventing or reducing stress and in helping individuals cope with stress' (McManus & Russel, 1997, p. 151) and has thus similar dimensions to mentoring:

1. emotional support (esteem, trust, concern and listening),
2. appraisal support (affirmation, feedback and social comparison),
3. informational support (advice, suggestion, directives, information), and
4. instrumental support (aid-in-kind, money, labour, time, modifying environment).

According to McManus and Russel (1997) the limited research available suggests that mentoring does reduce stress. Thus Social Support Theory explains much of the benefits of mentoring by illuminating the relationship between psychosocial functions and career mentoring functions and the personal benefits the mentee derives from the relationship.

It is noticeable that most research focuses on the activities of the mentors and mentees, on their relationship and on the possible, mainly qualitative

outcomes of the Programme. The focus is primarily on the qualitative aspect, namely the experience of the mentors and mentees. However, most Programme fail to align themselves with any kind of theory which could possibly explain the outcome in a theoretical framework. Also, the conception and development of the mentoring Programme seem to be guided by situational needs and pragmatic considerations rather than by theory (Cameron-Jones & O'Hara, 1995). Common sense, rather than formal theory or rigorous research, seems to convince the organisers and funders that the Programme should be instituted and supported. For instance, Dickstein (1994, p. 492) advocates the use of mentoring as part of the training for psychiatric students. To serve as 'role models', 'shadow' mentors and 'observing their mentors in action' would benefit them in their development. However, this common sense assumption is not based on theory or research, at least only marginally in that it relies on social learning theory (modelling).

2.8 Research - Concerns and Future Questions

The literature has primarily focused on the definition of the mentor concept, on the dimensions of the mentoring relationship, on the functions of the mentor and on the benefits of mentoring (Jacobi, 1991; Olian *et al.*, 1988). However, very little research has been conducted which would theorise about *how* the benefits come about and exactly *why* it works. 'Research on the effects of mentoring is scarce' (Dennis, 1993). The literature is mainly descriptive in nature and scarcely theorises about the mentoring dimensions and the specific aspects which make the relationship effective.

Kogler-Hill *et al.* (1989) illuminates a number of problems within the research on mentoring. They suggest that research has mainly been conducted with *successful* mentoring relationships. Similarly, 'successful unmentored men and women have been ignored in the literature' (p.358). Merriam (cited in Kogler-Hill *et al.*, 1989, p. 356) emphasises that 'no distinct line of research can be traced with respect to mentoring'. Similarly, Megginson and Clutterbuck (1995, p. 18) asserts that 'relatively few schemes carry out systematic evaluations'. This highlights the problems regarding the rigor and the kind of investigation which the mentoring literature relies on. It appears that most research has been conducted by those people who are invested in the Programme.

Mainly qualitative studies have been conducted and as Kogler-Hill *et al.* (1989) point out, the success of persons who did not have a mentoring relationship 'is ignored as a comparison (p. 359). Intuitive sense dictates that mentoring leads to success, however, even the 'most ambitious attempts' (Kogler-Hill, 1989, p. 359) have used instruments which are flawed.

An additional factor which frequently complicates outcome based evaluations are 'vaguely defined objectives' of the Programme (Megginson & Clutterbuck., 1995, p. 19). Ballantyne *et al.* (1995, p. 298) emphasise a similar point in that 'research is needed concerning the specific nature of the mentor's contribution and the character and quality of the practice of mentoring'. This call for more in-depth and more rigorous empirical research is echoed by a

number of other authors (Goodlad, 1998; Jacobi, 1991; Megginson & Clutterbuck, 1995).

It thus seems that the literature lacks empirical and objective evaluations that compare the success of mentoring to the success of other variables and supportive structures. Thus most research remains on a descriptive level, rather than exploring the dimensions which, compared to other forms of support, may make the mentoring relationship a unique and valuable one.

2.9 Conclusion

The literature review reveals that much confusion exists about the exact nature of mentoring, its dynamics, how it functions and why it works. However, overall the literature suggests that mentoring gives support on numerous levels provides broad opportunities and enormous benefits to the parties involved. Mentoring is described as emotionally intense and occurring primarily between two parties with different experience levels.

The literature review reflects the nature of the existing research in mentoring. It is primarily descriptive and cites outcomes of self-reports. Theoretical constructs attempting to explain the process are not prevalent. Conceptualisations rely on the social support model and on developmental theories.

The paucity of research regarding the academic benefits of mentoring is noticeable (Jacobi, 1991; Dennis, 1993), which highlights the need for

increased rigorous research regarding tangible results. It is within this context that the present research aims to investigate the academic benefits of the participants in a mentoring Programme at the University of the Western Cape.



Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction to Methodological Framework

This research utilises qualitative and quantitative research methods to explore the real and perceived academic benefits for mentees of the SMP at the Institute for Counselling at the University of the Western Cape.

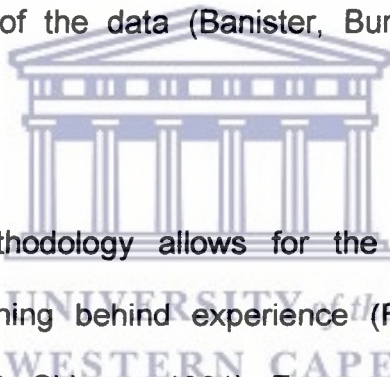
The literature review suggests that there is a need to investigate mentoring in terms of its objective benefits. It has been noted that quantitative research is in short supply (Jacobi, 1991).

The central question for this research is the relationship between mentoring as constructed by the SMP and the academic benefits derived by the mentees. In addition, this research will explore how the mentees themselves understand the relationship between mentoring and academic performance. It is hoped that this might generate some insight into the theory which underscores mentoring in the SMP.

The methods employed are two fold: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative investigation attempts to establish if there are any 'measurable' academic benefits for mentees. It is anticipated that the statistical analysis will provide information regarding the quantitative difference in performance between mentees and non-mentees. While it is hypothesised that the involvement in the SMP leads to greater academic achievement, multiple extraneous variable may minimise the difference. Similarly, multiple variables

may increase the difference. Given the multitude of extraneous variables which cannot be controlled, no linear causal relationship between mentoring and academic success can be established. However, this study explores the association between these two concepts rather than a causal relationship.

To use purely quantitative methods to investigate a construct has disadvantages in that it sheds very little light on 'the why behind numbers' (Basch, 1987, p. 411). Furthermore, the reductionistic tendency of quantitative research minimises the relevance of context and thus frequently fails to 'make meaning' of the data (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1994).



Qualitative research methodology allows for the exploration of issues, constructs and the meaning behind experience (Ferreira, Mouton, Puth, Schurink & Schurink, 1988; Skinner, 1991). Focus group interviews provide the researcher with insight into the feelings and opinions about a particular issue (Basch, 1987) and are a useful vehicle for in-depth exploration of a particular topic (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Therefore, the qualitative aspect of this research aims to illuminate aspects of how the mentees process and understand the involvement and benefits of the SMP. The aim was to discover rather than to confirm certain hypotheses.

Fielding (1988) recognises the power differential and the influence a researcher may have in conducting qualitative research. The role of the researcher and meaning derived from data may be an influencing factor

(Banister *et al.*, 1994). Reflexivity and self-evaluation of the researcher are thus important aspects in conducting qualitative research (Roberts, 1981; Banister *et al.*, 1994). In addition, Oskowitz, Meulenberg-Buskens (1997) suggest that adequate preparation of researchers for qualitative research is important, particularly if they deal with issues which are sensitive or which they themselves are invested in. In the discussion on 'Self-Reflection of the Researcher' these points are discussed more fully.

In exploring the benefits of the SMP for the mentees, certain aspects of the Programme are evaluated. Programme evaluation aims to illuminate and explain a specific situation rather than produce generalisations (Cronbach, 1980). Evaluation research evaluates the 'effectiveness of different types of action in meeting needs' (Banister *et al.*, 1994, p. 111). Feuerstein (1986) points out that the client is in an ideal position to give valuable feedback in evaluating a Programme or service. The mentee, being one of the recipients of the possible usefulness and value of the Programme, is thus in an ideal position to give insight into the functioning and effectiveness of the SMP.

This research further makes use of some action research principles in that the researcher immerses him/herself in a specific context. The researcher aligns him/herself with the participants in exploring the service conditions and thus is able to effect change (Banister *et al.*, 1994; McNiff, 1988). Action research 'implies change in people's lives, and therefore in the system in which they live' (McNiff, 1988, p. 3). The results of this research will be fed back to the Institute for Counselling at it is hoped that this will enhance the effectiveness

of the SMP. In that way, the participants will have impacted on the system through participation and co-operation (Carr, 1984).

A central element of this methodology is the triangulation of research methods. It has been suggested that triangulation of multiple research methods can compensate for the disadvantages of any one method (Mouton & Marais, 1990). This research uses quantitative and qualitative methods to examine convergence or discrepancies of research outcomes. In order to improve reliability and validity of the results the methodology was transparent throughout for participants (Bruinsma & Zwangenburg, 1992).

3.2 Self-Reflection of the Researcher

As mentioned, qualitative research highlights the role of the researcher in gathering data and cautions against the potential danger of bias in interpreting the findings (Banister *et al.*, 1995; Ferreira, Mouton, Puth, Schurink & Schurink, 1988). This section discusses the researcher's own experience of the process of gathering data and her personal investment in the research.

In discussing the SMP the participants generated a sense of excitement and enthusiasm which seemed to emanate from their recollection of their experiences with their group and their mentor. They easily shared memories and stories about their arrival on campus, their sense of being lost, their relief in finding a group of people who are equally alone, and their sense of comfort in knowing their mentors. However, at times the participants referred to 'a friend' or 'another mentee' when describing experiences which allowed them

to disclose but not own the experience. Some of the participants knew one another and thus encouraged each other to recall and share moments, almost reminiscing about their experience of their first year at university. This allowed for very light and humorous moments during the discussions.

I felt that the difference between me the researcher, being clearly older and white, and the participants being first year students and black² did not considerably influence the emerging data. The participants seemed open, honest and direct in their communication. One person had a few negative experiences related to the SMP and freely communicated this showing no signs of discomfort in being critical.

Throughout the discussions and in the analysis of the data a lot of positive issues emerged. I am aware of my own investment in the positive results and the participants might have subconsciously responded to this, thus the positive aspects of their experience might have been accentuated.

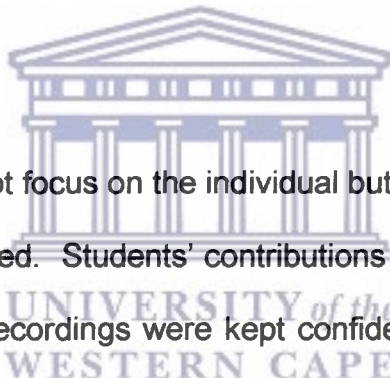
Given the inevitable influence of the attitude of the researcher in generating qualitative data it was for me very important to use triangulation of research methods. It provided the opportunity to investigate possible convergence of benefits of the SMP from more than one angle.

² See Footnote 1

3.3 Ethical Considerations

Permission and support for this research was generously granted by the Institute for Counselling which developed and maintains the SMP. Permission to use the data base of the examination results of the students was negotiated with the computer centre at UWC and the Institute for Counselling.

The data analysis was carried out with minimal links to the specific names of the students, only student numbers were used and anonymity was thus assured.

The logo of the University of the Western Cape, featuring a classical building with columns and a pediment, with the text 'UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE' below it.

Thematic analysis does not focus on the individual but rather on the content of what is being communicated. Students' contributions in the focus groups, the transcriptions and audio recordings were kept confidential and only available to the researcher herself. Confidentiality and anonymity of participants was guaranteed. The emerging information was treated with great sensitivity.

A copy of this research will be made available to the Institute for Counselling and to the University Library allowing the participants access to the findings.

3.4 Aims of the Study

This study investigates the relationship between academic performance and participation in the SMP. The study aims to reveal an association between these two concepts rather than to prove causality. In addition, the differences

in academic performance between mentees and non-mentees and the perceived effects of the SMP are investigated.

The specific objectives of the research include:

1. To assess whether there is a statistical difference in examination results between students who are participating and students who are not participating in the SMP.
2. To explore mentees' own perceptions of the impact of the Programme on their academic performance and ability.

3.5 Participants

The population for this research is the first year first time enrolment student population of the University of the Western Cape during 1997. Out of these 2524 students 386 students participated in the SMP during 1997. The mentees joined the SMP on a self-select basis. Most mentees joined in the beginning of the year, whereas others enrolled in the Programme at various times later during the year. Approximately twelve students from this group of mentees participated on a voluntary and self-selected basis in the focus groups.

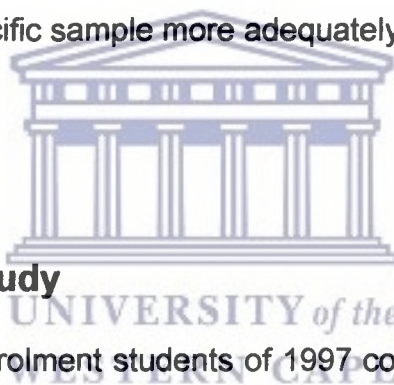
Table 2: Number of Participants

	Non-mentees	Mentees	Focus Group Participants	Total population
Number of subjects	2139	386	12	2525

The mentors were informed about the research, its purpose and aims at their weekly supervision sessions. They were asked to encourage their mentees to participate in the focus groups and were given the time and place of where

the focus groups would take place. Over-recruitment is generally encouraged in focus group research as 'no-shows' are expected (Krueger, 1994). The sample was not drawn randomly and therefore the findings cannot be generalised. However, the aim is to discover hypotheses rather than to confirm or generalise them.

It is assumed that the mentees broadly represent the demographics of the first year population in terms of gender, age, language and population group. Demographic details were elicited from the participants of the focus groups in order to describe this specific sample more adequately.



3.6 Subjects

3.6.1 Quantitative Study

The first time first year enrolment students of 1997 constituted the sample for this study. The total number is 2525. Students who were enrolled in the SMP were separated out. The total number was 386. The following is a breakdown of the salient demographic information regarding the first year population of 1997 as generated by the Office of Student Administration at UWC.

Gender	
Female 53%	Male 47%

Language Distribution	
English 30%	African 30%
Afrikaans 50%	Other 6%

Race Distribution	
Historically Coloured 38%	Historically African 56%
Historically Indian 5%	Other 1%

Faculty Enrolment	
Arts 40%	Community and Health Science 10%
Law 10%	Economics and Management 20%

Due to pragmatic limitations it is beyond the scope of this research to describe the demographics of the mentee population in such detail. However, it is assumed that the mentee population reflects similar demographics to the first year population at large, just as the focus group did.³

3.6.2 Qualitative Study

The total number of students who took part in the focus groups were 12.

Table 3: Demographic Variables of Focus Group Participants

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Faculty	EMS	EMS	Arts	Arts	EMS	EMS	CHS	EMS	EMS	Arts	EMS	EMS
Gender	m	f	m	f	f	m	f	m	f	m	f	f
Home language	NS	E	n/i	Xh	Ak	Xh	Ak/E	Xh	E	E	Ak/E	Ak
Population group	Ac	C	Ac	Ac	C	Ac	C	Ac	C	C	C	C
Age	20	19	18	19	19	22	19	21	19	19	20	19
Place of residence	b	p	p	uni r	p	p	p	b	p	p	p	b

Key:

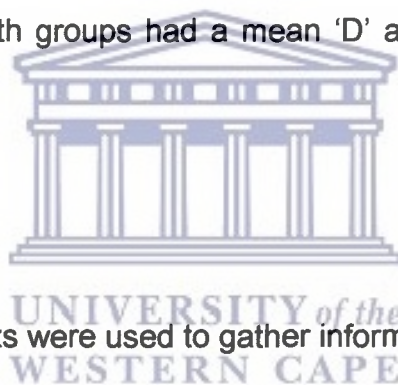
EMS: Economics and Management Sciences Ac: African m: male
 NS: North Sotho C: Coloured f: female
 E: English b: boarding n/i: no information
 Xh: Xhosa p: parents uni r: university residence
 Ak: Afrikaans

The general first year population of 1997 had a 47% male and 53% female ratio whereas the focus group had 42% male and 58% female participants, reflecting the general trend. Of the first year student population 30% is English first language speaking, whereas 45% of the participants indicated that English was their first language. Afrikaans as mother tongue was spoken by 50% of the general first year population whereas this was the case for only 36% in the focus group. However, 36% of the participants in the focus group indicated that they were African language speakers whereas only 30% in the first year population indicated an African language as their home language. Of the focus group participants 58% described themselves as Coloured and 42%

³ See discussion of limitations in Chapter 5.

as African, whereas 38% of the 1997 first year population was Coloured and 56% was African. The age range of the focus group was 19 to 22.

The key variable and potentially distinguishing feature between the two groups of mentees and non-mentees was their academic performance prior to entry or non-entry into the SMP. Thus, it was important to describe the participants on this variable. The matric aggregate was used to give an indication of their academic performance. The analysis revealed that the two groups were 'equal' in terms of their academic attainment prior to being a first year student at UWC. Both groups had a mean 'D' aggregate for the matric exams.

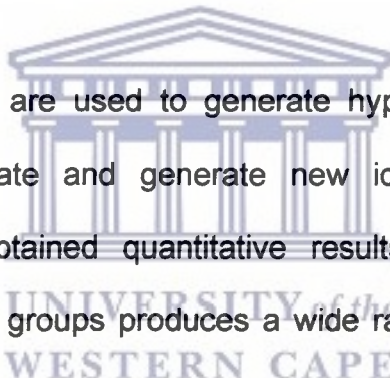


3.7 Instruments

Three research instruments were used to gather information and data.

- (1) Quantitative data for the comparison of examination results of all first year students were gathered by using the data available at the Computer Centre. Student numbers of the mentees were collected from the data base of the SMP office in order to distinguish them from the non-mentee group.
- (2) Demographic information from the participants of the focus groups was elicited using a closed-ended questionnaire. This demographic questionnaire included questions on the participant's age, gender, home language, population group, place of residence and faculty enrolment.

(3) For the focus groups a semi-structured discussion format was used to elicit information regarding the participants' experience of the SMP⁴. This discussion was led by the researcher and was audio-taped and transcribed. The open-ended questions stimulated discussions about their positive and negative experiences of the content and process of the SMP and their mentors. Three main areas were explored, namely, the academic effects the SMP might have had, the psychosocial effects the SMP might have had, and effects on their experience of being a first year student which might be related to the involvement in the SMP.



Explorative focus groups are used to generate hypotheses which can be further tested, to stimulate and generate new ideas and to assist in interpreting previously obtained quantitative results (Basch, 1987). The synergistic effect of focus groups produces a wide range of information and potentially uncovers important insight (Basch, 1987) and the 'interaction among respondents stimulates new ideas and thoughts' (Morgan, 1993, p. 43). The group environment promotes and enhances self-disclosure which might not be the case in other forms of data gathering (Krueger, 1994). It is expected that the group discussions offer rich data and that it allows for the exploration of issues which are too complex to investigate via quantitative means or semi-structured questionnaires.

However, using focus groups is not without problems since group culture may interfere with individual expression, 'group think' is a possible outcome (Strebel, 1997). However, 'group think' occurs mainly in highly cohesive

⁴ See Appendix 3 for Guide to Focus Group Interview Questions

groups (Brown, 1988) which in this case the focus group participants do not constitute. It is also noted that interviewing may have intervention consequences (Kram, 1983), therefore the focus group discussions were conducted towards the end of the first year of study.

During focus group discussions, the participants elaborated on their experience in the SMP. It is thus expected that these discussions provide insight into how the students themselves understand and explain the impact of the SMP on their academic performance and ability.

3.8 Procedure

Authorisation to conduct this research was obtained from the Institute for Counselling and the Programme supervisor and officer. This included authorisation to access the SMP data base, the mentees and the use of the facilities at the Institute.

3.8.1 Quantitative Study

A quantitative comparative analysis of the 1997 end year examination results of the mentees and non-mentees was performed. All the student numbers were gathered and the two groups were separated. The computer centre generated a list of all the end year results in such a way that the average mark compiled of all the courses for which the student was enrolled was reflected. A t-test analysis was performed using a statistical computer package. This generated a overall pass mark for the mentee population and

the non-mentee population. Significance of the results was evaluated using a 5% confidence level.

The two groups are essentially non-equivalent in that they were not randomly assigned. The matric average of all the first year students was gathered and a t-test was performed in order to establish if the two groups differed on this variable. The matric results of all the first year students were thus analysed and a t-test comparison was performed in order to establish if the two groups differ on this variable. It was found that they differ slightly, however insignificantly, with the non-mentee population having a somewhat lower aggregate:

Mentees	scaled score of 103,26 (0,26 below 'D' aggregate)
non-mentees	scaled score of 103,51 (0,51 below 'D' aggregate)

The mentee population and non-mentee population did not differ significantly and are thus considered equal on this variable.

3.8.2 Qualitative Study

In their weekly supervision sessions the mentors were requested to encourage their mentees to participate in the focus groups. Twelve mentees participated on a self-select and voluntary basis in the focus groups which were conducted at the Institute for Counselling. The focus groups were conducted at the end of the examination period of 1997 which caused some difficulties for some mentees in terms of transport and availability. It was thus decided to conduct three focus groups in order to allow for maximum participation and time convenience. All focus groups were conducted in the

same format. The researcher introduced herself and explained the process and methodology of focus group research. The purpose and format of this study was explained to the participants. It was explained that the results of the research would be available to them and transparency was emphasised. Confidentiality and anonymity were discussed and guaranteed.

The demographic questionnaires were completed at the beginning of the focus groups and the discussions lasted one hour each. Refreshments were provided.

The researcher led the discussion and gathered data via semi-structured open-ended questions. Transcript-based analysis as opposed to tape-based or note-based analysis allows for more rigorous analysis of the information (Krueger, 1994). Therefore, the discussions were audio-taped with the participants' consent and later transcribed.

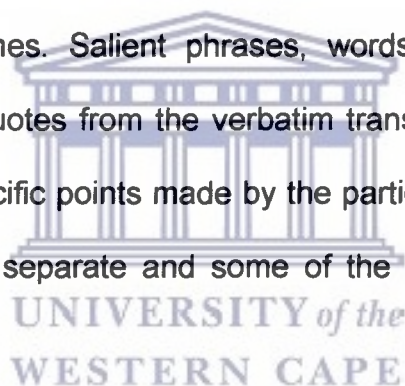
3.9 Analysis

3.9.1 Quantitative Study

A t-test was carried out on the 1997 examination results of the students, comparing the average end year results of the mentees to the average end year result of the non-mentees. The results were analysed using a computerised statistical package and compared using a 5% confidence level.

3.9.2 Qualitative Study

The analysis comprises the extraction of themes which emerge as significant in relation to the research question and which emerge as important to the interviewees. Coding categories were developed according to emerging themes. Krueger (1994) suggests this as useful in situations where the themes are not clear prior to research. Given that exploratory focus groups generate constructs rather than generalisable theories (Basch, 1987) the purpose is to explore the experience of the students by interpreting their contributions in the discussions. The transcriptions were analysed for general trends and specific themes. Salient phrases, words and sentences were selected and grouped. Quotes from the verbatim transcriptions were used to highlight themes and specific points made by the participants. The categories were neither distinct nor separate and some of the quotes thus applied to more than one category.



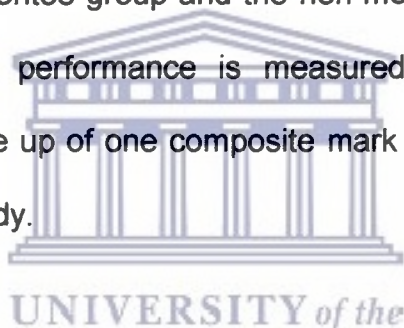
The multiple experiences of the participants highlighted the central themes and issues in the SMP. Convergence and divergence of themes emerged and were discussed.

Chapter 4: Discussion of Results

4.1 Discussion of Quantitative Results

4.1.1 Introduction

Quantitative results were gathered in order to establish if there is a difference in the academic performance as measured by the end of year exam of the two populations, that is the mentee group and the non-mentee group of first year students. The academic performance is measured in terms of tangible examination results, made up of one composite mark for each student at the end of the first year of study.



4.1.2 Matric Aggregate: Academic Performance prior to entry into the SMP

The academic performance prior to entry into the SMP is of importance when comparing the academic results of the two populations. The results from the quantitative analysis strongly suggest that the two populations were equal in terms of their matric performance. The mentee population's average scaled score was 103.2577 and the non-mentee population's average scaled score was 103.5051.

Table 4.1

	Matric Average Means (scaled scores)	N
SMP	103.26	386
non SMP	103.51	2139
	non sig 5% cf lvi	2525

Key: Scale Score breakdown:

100 = G average

103 = D average

105 = B average

101 = F average

104 = C average

106 = A average

102 = E average

The mentee population (SMP – see table 4.1) scored slightly less (0.25) than the non-mentee population (non SMP – see table 4.1). However, this is non-significant at a 5% confidence level ($p < 0.05$).

The variable of academic performance prior to entry into the SMP is not significantly different, which makes the two populations homogenous on this variable.

4.1.3 Examination Results: Academic Performance after involvement with SMP

The examination results of the mentee and the non-mentee population were entered into a computerized statistics programme which analysed the data and generated the following results:

Table 4.2

	YR-AVE Means	N
SMP	52.27	386
Non SMP	50.33	2139
	sig at $p < 0.05$	2525

Key:

YR-AVE: Average of academic results of first year 1997

M-AVE: Matric results average

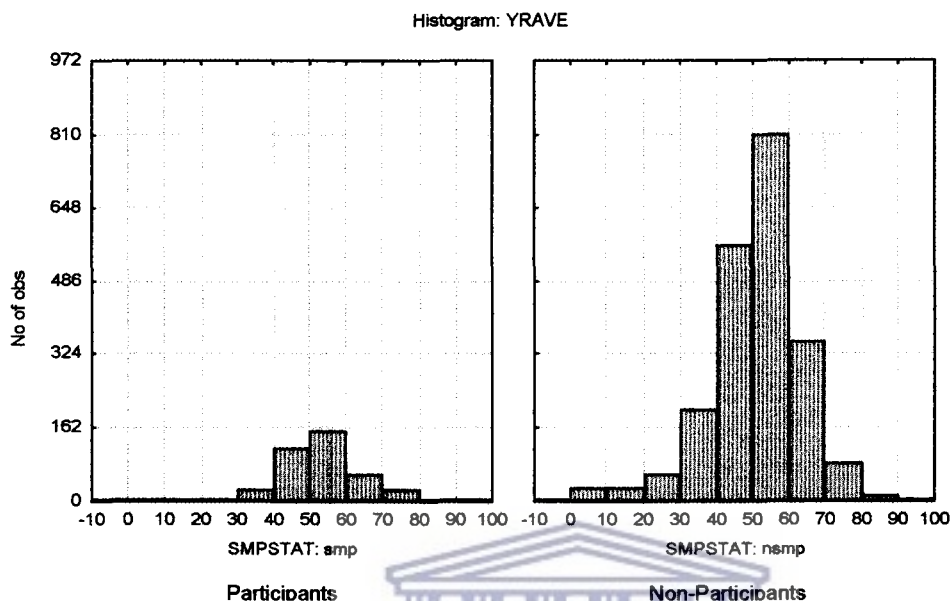
N: Number of subjects

SMP: Student Mentoring Programmeme (mentees)

non SMP: Students who did not participate in the SMP (non-mentees)

Table 4.2 illustrates that the 1997 year average of the academic performance of the mentees was 52.27 percent. The non-mentees achieved an academic average of 50.33 percent. The difference between these two values is significant at a 5% confidence level ($p < 0.05$).

Figure 1: Histogram: Frequency of Results after Involvement in the SMP

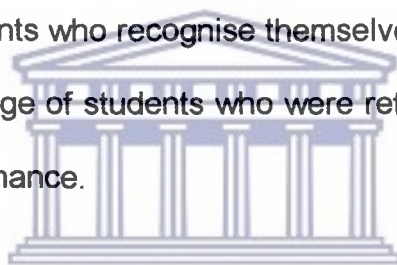


The histogram illustrates the frequency of results achieved by both groups, the SMP and the non-SMP group. In both groups the 50-60% result has the highest frequency. The second highest frequency of marks lies between the 40-50% for both groups. The spread for both groups has noticeably similar profiles. Although the non-SMP group has a higher frequency of marks in the below-30% area, it is problematic to draw conclusions about this, given the difference in sample sizes.

4.1.4 Discussion

The statistical results suggest that there is a significant difference between the academic results of the mentee population and the non-mentee population: the participants in the SMP performed academically significantly better than the non-participants.

While the two populations were not randomly selected Levine's t-test indicated that the two groups had homogeneity of variance and could therefore be considered to be equivalent in terms of academic performance. The variable of self-selection for the SMP might be an influencing factor in the academic results. For instance, the self-selected group i.e. the mentees, might have a higher sense of internal control, or their motivation to succeed in the tertiary environment might be higher. The self-selected group might also be more anxious about the forthcoming challenges and thus choose to enter this support programme. On the other hand, the self-selected group might also be made up of students who recognise themselves as 'at risk', or it might contain a higher percentage of students who were referred by academic staff for poor academic performance.



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This speculation reflects what Jacobi (1991) describes as the coexistence of success and mentoring, in specific, she asserts that mentoring is a by-product of academic success. She is careful not to assert a causal link between these two variables, but rather emphasises the correlation between them. However, the findings in this study do lead to the conclusion that there is a likelihood of an association between academic results and mentoring. It might not be linear or causal, but the results do suggest a significant association between the two constructs.

4.2 Discussion of Qualitative Results

4.2.1 Introduction

This section discusses the results of the thematic analysis. The findings are discussed in terms of the emerging themes and parallels are drawn to related research and studies. Where possible, comparison to outcomes of other research were made and similarities or discrepancies highlighted. The findings were generally consistent with the literature. However, given that the research and literature on mentoring is very situation and context specific, only tentative links were made.

As in other research the themes discussed in this study are specific to the SMP. The discussions and contributions of the participants draw on their individual experience of the SMP at UWC. The quotations which are used illustrate the unique culture and language, including slang and abbreviations which are characteristic of the students at this particular institution. The casual level of expression ought not to detract from the content and prevailing themes.

The participants' contributions mainly compliment each other and contradictions were scarce. The categories of themes are neither discrete nor mutually exclusive and thus overlap considerably.

The emerging themes are grouped into three major areas: (a) academic benefits, (b) psychosocial benefits and (c) the connection between these two aspects.

The quotations do not indicate which participant has spoken in order to ensure confidentiality. 'M' indicates mentee and 'R' indicates researcher. The mentors are referred to by their initial. 'M1' and 'M2' have been used to represent different mentees when a dialogue is quoted.⁵

4.2.2 Information related to the SMP

The following descriptive information (Table 4.2) was gathered using open ended questionnaires⁶ and is supplied in order to elaborate on the participants of the focus group's involvement in the SMP. The majority of mentees were introduced to the SMP during the orientation Programme and joined the SMP at the beginning of the academic year. Only two of the twelve mentees joined the SMP in the second semester. Almost half (5) of the group of mentees had regular meetings with their mentor, a quarter (3) had casual meetings and the remainder of the group indicated that the frequency of contact with their mentor depended on their perceived needs.

This indicates that the mentors and mentees adjusted the frequency of their contact according to their individual needs and within the parameters of the SMP. All the mentees were in the same faculty as their mentors and the majority of mentors (11) were in their third year of study.

⁵ See detailed breakdown of transcript coding convention in appendix 1

Table 4.3: Information regarding involvement with the SMP

Variable	Percentage	No of mentees
initial contact with SMP: Orientation Programme (2 mentees gave no information)	100 %	10
entry into SMP: beginning of academic year	83 %	10
entry into SMP: beginning of 2nd semester	17 %	2
meetings with mentor: regularly, once per week	25 %	3
meetings with mentor: regularly, twice per week	17 %	2
meetings with mentor: casual, when need arises	25 %	3
meetings with mentor: 1st semester: once per week, and 2nd semester: casually when the need arises	25 %	3
meetings with mentor: 1st semester: casually, when the need arises, and 2nd semester: once per week	8 %	1
mentee and mentor in same faculty	100 %	12
year of study of mentor: 3rd year level	92 %	11
year of study of mentor: 2nd year level	8 %	1

4.2.3 Emerging Themes – Academic Benefits

The academic benefits mentioned by the mentees are vast. The different categories which emerged are study related skills development, feedback regarding progress and referrals to more appropriate sources. These themes are also reflected in other research relying on self-report methods on academic benefits of mentoring (Goodlad, 1998; Megginson & Clutterbuck, 1995; Scandura, 1997).

4.2.3.1 Skills-Development

The literature on mentoring agrees that broad and content-specific skills development and task related assistance are central in the development of the mentee (Goodlad, 1998; Kram, 1985). Research shows that mentees felt that skills development was valued as highest in their list of benefits (Burke, 1984; Dunn, 1997). Furthermore, it is emphasised that the development of

⁶ See copy of questionnaire in appendix 2

skills in the mentee is the most central function of the mentor (Cameron-Jones & O'Hara, 1995; Healy, 1989). In the SMP skills development is conceptualised as an expected benefit for the mentee and forms an important aspect in the definition of the role and function of the mentor.

The mentees in this study agreed that they found their mentors very helpful in assisting them with skills development. These were skills related to enhancing academic performance and coping mechanisms without being directly linked to the content of a specific course.

Specific skills which were developed as reported by eleven out of twelve mentees were time management, essay writing, examination preparation, note taking and study skills. This is apparent in the following quotes:

M: my mentor she was ... very encouraging and you know, she also helped us with time tables, told us 'you must draw a time table' and when we meet again she looked at it and fix it you know and tell us, 'you can change it there'.

M: it was important for me because she always helped us to with our essays, because it was my first time to write an essay, and she told us to go to the library, and get some books, then it made a difference.

M1: she gave us some notes on how to write, like writing skills, how to write, yes.

M2: and also time management, how to manage your time.

M1: I found the writing skills very useful.

R: what was useful about it?

M1: when we usually write the whole word out you use abbreviations for the word and I think that was basically it, 'cos then you don't need to write the whole word out, while the lecturer is talking.

M: he drew up this thing, like he took out the main idea, like ... like mind map, ja, and he told me how to link this point to this point, and he also had the question papers from last year and that also helped me.

M: we discussed look, like ... exams, how it's gonna be, how our study skills and stuff like that, how to best manage your time.

M: he would actually say, ... how and what to do when, ... how to manage your time and essay writing, XX I actually found out most from my mentor, XX.

What emerges from these quotes is not only the aspect that the mentees derived assistance of study related skills but also that the mentors appeared very helpful and as the last quote exemplifies, that the mentors were perceived as resourceful and informative. The mentors implicitly helped the mentees realise that the process of studying can be made easier.

4.2.3.2 Feedback

As Goodlad (1998) and others (Cochius, 1986; Daloz, 1983; Kram, 1985) point out, feedback about progress is an important element in mentoring. This also emerged from the discussions with the mentees as the following quotes illustrate:

M: so she asked me 'where is your problem, and have you recognised your problem, and where does it lie', so I said 'yes, I know where is the problem', so she actually helped me in my lunch times. She said, she also struggled with the first year, she knows what it is.

M: he asked, how are we doing in my classes, how is the class, how is the exams and stuff like that.

The importance and value of identifying potential difficulties and responding to the identified academic problems pro-actively is highlighted in these quotes. Monitoring and feedback is thus central to successful mentoring in the SMP.

This preventative element underlies much of the interaction between the mentor and mentee. Potential problem areas are identified and discussed before they reach unmanageable proportions and solution-focused behaviours and interventions are discussed and employed.

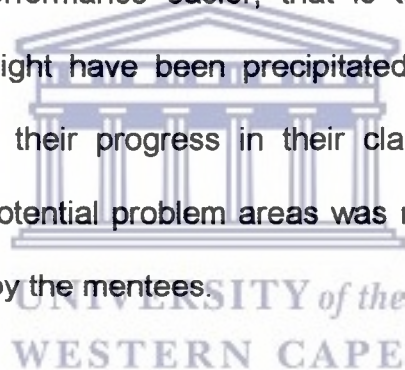
4.2.3.3 Mentor as Representative

Another benefit in terms of academic performance was the role the mentor played as a representative, a voice for the mentee. This is what Burke (1984, p. 361) calls 'batting for the protégé'.

M: now take for example all of us mentees, we all had a problem with the [Psychology] and the [Stats], she went to the [Department] and asked the lecturer to be more specific and all that.

M: XX then R said she would try and talk with the lecturer about making the lectures more interesting.

This illustrates that the mentees themselves identified areas which could make their academic performance easier, that is the performance of the lecturer. This process might have been precipitated by the mentor asking probing questions about their progress in their classes. The preventative approach of identifying potential problem areas was modelled by the mentor and possibly re-enacted by the mentees.



Another benefit for the mentees was the mentors' 'insider' knowledge of the system at this university. This was also highlighted by Naidoo (1994) in his qualitative research on the benefits of the SMP for mentees. The following quotes illustrate this:

M: for me it was like ... our mentor, she XX made us aware of rules that wasn't written, like some rules that everybody just knew and that everybody just sticks to, so she told us those, taught us that XX in lectures what we are supposed to do and what we cannot do XX.

M: where to go in the library, where to find out about the books, and yes, all the small details.

M: I think it did, especially with assignments, you know our [Department] is very small, our class had only thirty in it, so the work is then basically, every year is then almost the same and like during assignments, listen, like, 'I have to have some references, like where do I go', or something, 'all your books you will find on Level 14 or 8, or

you just go to the journal and the lecturers love that if you reference that', and then that really boosted my marks in some way.

M: I mean they know the lecturers already so they know what they want out of you as a student. That also helped me.

It is apparent that the mentees felt that their marks improved as a result of the tips and hints which they received from their mentors. Due to their experience the mentors were able to give first-hand knowledge of the unwritten rules which affect the marks of the students, as in the above-mentioned cases, tips about referencing and the library, tips about each lecturer's preference and tips regarding the general behaviour during lectures which might assist the mentees in improving their marks.

A number of other concepts emerge from these quotes. Receiving insider knowledge, knowing something that others might not, might have given the mentees confidence in their own behaviour. The mentees evidently felt that this information gave them the 'edge', gave them an advantage which made them feel that they performed better academically.

The quotes also illustrate that the mentees trusted the judgement and advice of the mentors. They had confidence in their mentors' assessment and past experiences.

4.2.3.4 Referral

The process of referral seemed to be an important role of the mentor. Most mentees felt that their mentors were very helpful in assisting with personal or academic problems. However, at times the mentor was unable to render

adequate assistance and referred the mentee to either a person who could help in an individual capacity or to a service centre:

M: I always just explain my problems to her, so, what she does, she calls someone she knows, that can help me with that problem.

M: XX and he told me to come to Student Counselling, also, if I need something.

M: ja, because she doesn't know how to go about some of my problems,

R: so she referred you to other people when she couldn't help.

M: ja.

M: she (fellow mentee) was struggling with [Statistics], and so she went to S, but she couldn't do anything about it, 'cos she also just passed the course, XX but she found someone, so she went out of her way to find someone to help her (fellow mentee) with her [Stats].

R: okay, so S referred her (fellow mentee) to a person who could help her with the course.

M: yes.

R: was that helpful for her?

M: yes, she passed.

M: if she knows she can help me she will, XX, or ask someone else to help me.

M: ... and if she couldn't help us she would, XX get someone to help us with the subject, someone who could understand what is required from the subject, exams, question papers and things like that, so it was very useful.

M: she knows where to go to, where you can go to, and XX how you can be helped if you are having a problem or the other.

What emerges is a conviction on the side of the mentee that help is attainable either directly from the mentor or from another source. The mentees seemed confident that the mentor would source the most useful assistance and help. Aspects of this might be empowering for the mentees in that they find an understanding person to hear their concerns and respond to their needs and another person to assist with their problems. However, to rely on the mentor to source help might foster dependency. It is difficult to assess if this aspect of

potentially fostering dependency was a problematic one. The mentees in the focus group discussions did at no point indicate that dependency on their mentor was or became a problem, however, this was also not further investigated.

4.2.4 Emerging Themes - Psychosocial Benefits

The literature elaborates on the psychosocial benefits of the mentoring relationship, in particular for the mentees (Knox, 1988; Swerdlik *et al.*, 1988). It elaborates on the numerous aspects and emphasises that psychosocial support is central in motivating the mentee in the development and achievement set for their mentoring relationship (Allen, 1997; Bowen, 1985; Kram, 1985). Burke (1984) asserts that the smaller the age gap between the mentor/mentee the more psychosocial functions are performed. In the SMP the age gap is on average two to three years. Thus, as the literature suggests, given the minor age difference between the mentee and the mentor, social support should occupy a central position in their relationship.

This assumption was confirmed by the mentees' perceptions of their mentors. The mentors were experienced in very positive terms, mainly as helpful, supportive, encouraging and resourceful. This was apparent in direct reference to the mentor's characteristics and implicitly in discussion of other aspects of the mentors. The perception that their fears, their problems and their insecurities were heard and understood was clearly expressed and highly valued.

The following quote supports this notion:

M: If there was a problem, ... he will comfort you, ... 'if I survived it then so can you', you know, that type of thing, you always have a shoulder to lean on, and we never looked at him as a superior being, as a mentor or something, like I said, he was a friend as well, and, I mean you could XX go with personal problems or whatever, and actually find him really nice because you could confide in him and open up and say 'that was stupid', or something 'now you gonna go and ask you mentor' or something so we were quite open, ... that was nice.

All mentees agreed that their mentors were personally invested in the relationship and took a personal interest in the well-being of the mentee as the following quote clearly illustrates:

M: XX I think the reason why, what basically motivates me to go to the XX mentoring Programme is because the mentor showed that he has some personal interest in your well being and that kind of made me feel that I am important someone cares, someone wants to know how you are doing, where you are going from here and where.

M: So I think it (SMP) is very helpful, she (the mentor) is very helpful, was interested in me. That's why I stayed.

It seems that the experience of the mentor as a resourceful and encouraging person held the promise of gain which increased the attractiveness of the relationship. This is also well documented in the literature. Olian *et al.* (1988) point out that the perceived interpersonal competence increases the attractiveness of the mentor and Allen *et al.* (1997) emphasise the empathic reaction of the mentor as the most valued aspect in the mentor.

4.2.4.1 Encouragement

The themes of encouragement and motivation feature very prominently in the literature (Burke, 1984; Jacobi, 1991). Building self-confidence and nurturing the mentee within this helping relationship is emphasised. In the SMP motivation and encouragement seemed to have been one of the most important aspect of how the mentees gained from the relationship with the mentors. This is highlighted by the following quotes:

M: I mean, she always inspires me that I mustn't say that I've got a lot of work, because I remember the time I was going to write three tests and it was three days before I was going to write those tests, ... she said I mustn't just throw it, I must try and carry on, that helped.

M: I said, no, I can't take it anymore I can see my marks dropping, ... I can't actually handle all those subjects, so she said to me, 'competition is tough, where will you be then'. She said, 'never go from up down, always go up then you go further', I think that was great and that actually motivated me.

M: I think what also helped if your mentor is very encouraging, like give you support if you feel like you are not going to come through, then your mentor is there to say 'it's ok, it's gonna be all right', and tell you that you just have to study more and then, just encourage you, I think that's also what helped.

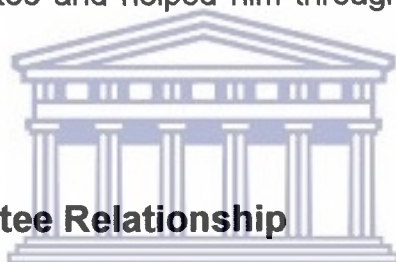
Some of the mentees struggled with loneliness and isolation and felt foreign and scared in the new and unfamiliar environment. The emotional support they received from their mentors seemed invaluable to them. As one mentee described:

M: For me it was useful, ... because when I came here I had a difficulty adjusting myself to this environment, because of the fact that the languages that are used here in Cape Town are the ones that I was not familiar with, and then my mentor was the one who speaks Xhosa, so time and again she would encourage me just to take my time, because I can remember there was a time whereby I wanted to leave this place because I was finding it really difficult to live at this place and also academically, because I can remember very well, that she like time and again came to us and ask us how are we coping now during the

exams, ... how are our preparations going, and even when we write, I sure enjoyed it.

M: like, I was not scared anymore.

This mentee was especially relieved to find support in his attempt to get used to university life especially in terms of his language and possibly cultural adjustment. The loneliness expressed was clearly alleviated through the contact with the mentor, who shared the same language and made him feel more 'at home'. This was highly appreciated by the mentee, who found reassurance and social contact. The knowledge that someone cares and is available was encouraging for this mentee and helped him through the difficult process of adjustment.



4.2.4.2 Mentor - Mentee Relationship

The literature describes the mentoring relationship as one of trust, belief in each other and intimacy (Kogler-Hill *et al*, 1989; Megginson & Clutterbuck, 1995; Nolinske, 1995; Zey, 1984). A few mentees described their relationship resembling the description in the literature. The relationship was equated to friendship and the power or status differential was not acutely perceived. This is well illustrated in the following quote:

M: my relationship with her was not really that of a mentor and first year, but rather like friends.

M: my mentor, he didn't just help me academically, but also, he was a friend as well.

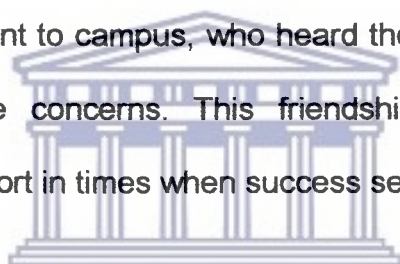
What emerges is the mentees' perception of the mentor as a trusted person and confidante. The emotional connectedness in their relationship becomes apparent:

M: ...you know there are such a lot of things, you get thrown in, especially this past year, a lot of stresses and emotional stresses you got to deal with, and I mean that, you are always in need of a friend, you never, you know, and knowing that there is someone if you fall down, and that person is on campus, and you really need, and there is a time where you say, man I have to talk to someone right now, then he was always there, and I mean that's a comfort to me, knowing that there is someone, who cares, who can listen, not just a guide academically, but on a friendship basis as well,

R: XX

M: and that is something nice to hold onto.

This supports McManus and Russell's (1997, p. 145) assertion of mentoring fulfilling, amongst others, a role of friendship and 'acceptance-and-confirmation'. The mentees seemed to have found a warm and caring friend who eased their adjustment to campus, who heard their fears and provided a space to express these concerns. This friendship provided them with encouragement and support in times when success seemed difficult to attain.



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4.2.4.3 Group Support

Literature suggests that social isolation is relieved through a sense of connectedness and belonging (Cobb, 1976). The experience of being within the group gave the mentees in this study a sense of protection and a sense of belonging and thus facilitated coping within the new and potentially alienating environment. The mentees perceived themselves as less isolated given that the group provided them with a context within which they felt accepted. The following quotes support this assertion:

M: For me, it helped me in a way that being in a group I was able to sort of get friends from the group, get to know almost everyone in the group, because that was something difficult for me since I got a difficult language, ... and also the fact that I am staying outside the campus, so it's never easy for me just to get to know people, so it helped me in that way.

M: You don't need to panic, there is somebody in the same boat as I am.

The sharing of difficult experiences normalised their feelings of loneliness and thus alleviated their sense of isolation.

Support among the mentees featured as a very important contribution to feeling more at home, decreasing loneliness and facilitating adjustment of the mentee. The following quote illustrates the co-operation and support which the mentee experienced among group members:

M: Most of my group are doing the same courses, so if I have many friends they can help me, then we can help each other and all pass.

R: Do you think being with these people in the group helped you academically?

M1: Ja, we all have the same interest of passing, all of us have the same subjects.

M2: All of us have the same goals, so we used to spend all the time mainly talking about how to study, how to get good marks.

M3: It helps me being in the group, because there are students who don't attend lectures who are staying in the student centre, so you mustn't do that 'cos you end up failing.

R: So for you it was important being in the group.

M3: Yes it was important for me in the group.

M: Yes, we always go to lectures together, so we had the same goals that is to pass.

The theme of common shared goals within the group, the lack of distraction and the assistance they would give one another is apparent.

The theme of sharing the sense of being 'lost', unsure and insecure also emerged. Comparing one's own experience, sharing problems and trying out solutions alleviated fears and concerns, as the following illustrates:

R: What was the benefit of being in the group?

M: Support.

R: Support in what way?

M: We talk about things and at least if you, you know, you at least know that what you are doing is not wrong.

R: You can compare yourself.

M: Yes.

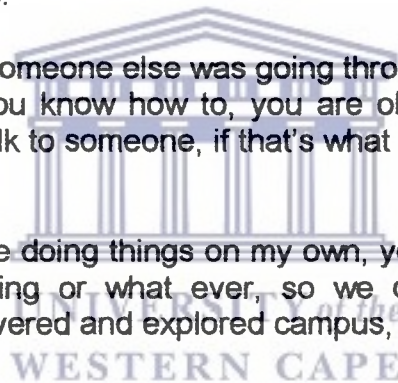
M: I think it's also, XX we didn't know where to go, we didn't know what to do, we don't really know the place, and then we were like in a group and we actually had the same fears about the place and like we could talk about it and we could discuss our fears and then because like making something out of it.

R: So sharing your fears with other people helped you.

M: Actually, say being in the group we got lost together, we had fun together and encouraging each other, you know, the ones that were not doing so well, you can ask what's the problem and maybe you could help, discuss.

M: you could see someone else was going through the same thing, you were not alone, you know how to, you are ok, what to do next, you know, when you talk to someone, if that's what you did, maybe I can try that.

M: I really don't like doing things on my own, you don't know if you are doing the right thing or what ever, so we did basically everything together, we discovered and explored campus, all that.



The group experience also afforded the opportunity to forge friendships, especially friendships with people who shared the same academic interests.

The following quotes illustrate this point:

M: You make close friends with the people who are also first years, and the same stuff that you go through, they probably go through, and you go talk about it and then you find solutions to problems. And you develop close friendships, we are in class together and she is now my best friend.

M: It's like in my [Human Resource] group, ... and we made friends in my group and now we stick together we always help each other 'cos we know that there is people you can go to with the same subject and you can actually sort out your problem in the group.

Group support is not adequately reflected in the reviewed literature, given its primary focus on mentoring as a one-on-one relationship.

4.2.4.4 Modelling

The literature emphasises the role of modelling in successful mentoring (Ballantyne *et al.*, 1995; Bowen, 1985; Cameron-Jones & O'Hara, 1995; Daniel, 1987; McManus & Russell, 1997; Ochberg *et al.*, 1986). One of the loosely stated criteria for the selection of mentors in the SMP is that the mentors provide potentially good role models, and thus provide amongst others, opportunities to model successful study behaviour for their mentees.

A number of mentees expressed gaining motivation, increased focus and encouragement through hearing about the experience of the senior student, their mentor. The SMP is conceived in such a way that the mentor by virtue of having had experience with the academic material and with the tertiary environment is equipped to deal with most of the mentee's concerns, and in this way the mentor models competence. Also, by virtue of having negotiated the tertiary environment successfully, the mentor normalised the experiences which are initially perceived as threatening for the mentee. This is clearly supported by the following quotes:

M: M (fellow mentee) complained that she didn't like [Industrial Psychology], it was not motivating her and it isn't challenging, she just said 'it was boring', so S said, strange but she found the same problem with the first semester [Industrial Psychology], she also found it boring and there wasn't actually motivation there in the course.

This quote highlights the normalising aspect of sharing their experience with the mentor.

M: It really makes you wonder will you ever get there. But then she says, 'yes you will get there, it is possible and tough', she doesn't say it's easy, she says it's tough, so if you work hard, you can. And you know that you can do your matric, you can do what ever else. She makes you look forward to it.

M: When she was in her first year, she just shared with us, that she was rather playful, you know she made friends in the [Faculty], they didn't write a lot of tests, so they would say, ok, let's go and sit in the student centre but [EMS] is very busy writing tests, continuously, so she would waste time there and she failed one subject. So we actually learnt from her mistake, you know.

M: It teaches you to keep your head up, all the time through out the year.

M: I think it also helped, because if you find that you find a leader that particular leader is also a student, at the same time is years ahead of you, it sort of pays dividends because, what ever he or she tells you, you sort of gain from that, because for instance if she tells you that 'I have failed my first year courses because of this reason', then you sort of try and make sure that you don't do such mistakes again, and also if you are having problems it can be easy for her to help you because she has been around for quite some time.

These quotes illustrate that the mentees were willing to listen and learn from the experience of the senior student. Their recollection of their mistakes, their problems and their ways of solving them, helped the mentees. Coping strategies, a sense of endurance and subsequent success were modelled by the mentor.

M: If I get R (the mentor) on campus and I feel like that I'm not doing well in this subject or I am not going to pass, she says 'no okay, now you are going to pass it', she did the same as me and 'yes, you will pass it, I felt the same way in my first year and now I'm in third year, look where I am now. You are going to make it'.

The encouragement and motivation described by this mentee also contained advice and some assurance. The mentor modelled success which made achievement somewhat more possible, real and attainable for the mentee.

4.2.5 The Link: Involvement in the SMP and Academic Performance

The SMP is firmly grounded in the Social Support Theory. The Social Support Theory stipulates that an increase in social support is related to an increase in coping and a decrease in stress, which is a good predictor of academic success (Jacobi, 1991). The mentees themselves seem to have made the link between the support they received through their involvement in the SMP and their own academic success.

The following quotes illustrate this succinctly:

M: It helped me quite a lot, because I came straight out of high school to university and it is big step for me, and for someone who is just thrown into university you don't know where are you going where are you coming from, then they guide me all the way, and, 'cos they had been through it, and I would advise anyone to go, to be in the mentoring Programme.

M: I came directly from high school and I needed guidance, and he was there.

In these two quotes the mentees expressed their perceived need for social support which they felt they received, which in turn improved their ability to cope with the tertiary environment. The mentees' need for guidance and support was satisfied by what they received in the context of the SMP, specifically from their mentors. This connection between emotional well-being and academic performance is clearly expressed in the following quote:

M: I mean if you don't feel comfortable, ... I don't think you can feel comfortable, I mean, you can't study very well, the way you like to study like if you don't feel so happy, so, I mean, I feel that I have, I did my work, I worked hard.

R: So you say she (the mentor) has helped?

M: Ja, yes.

M: Yes I can say it helped because in most cases especially in the beginning of the year, when I was sort of struggling to settle I don't think, had I carried on in that attitude, I would have coped because I believe for a person to cope, he must be happy, and unfortunately if you are not happy, you can't sort of do it.

R: So you find that through your mentor you got more happy, you are more adjusted, you feel more confident.

M: Ja.

R: Do you think that has had any kind of influence on your academic performance?

M: Ja, I think so, because I think if you are happy you know what to do, you can, you will be able to, to do, perform better, and that helped me.

This mentees verbalised succinctly the connection between a sense of comfort, coping and a sense of belonging in the environment, and the subsequent academic performance. Thus, the mentees' experience strongly endorses the Social Support Theory.

M1: Like the first semester was the hardest semester to get through, 'cos you don't know what's going on and what to expect.

M2: Like, he (the mentor) helped me a lot during the first semester, like in the second semester, I mostly stood on my own, just for the little bit of help from him.

The above quotes shows that social support, offering of assistance and guidance, seemed essential at the mentees' arrival in the new environment. Increasingly the mentees tested their own ability to negotiate the environment and found affirmation of their ability.

M: I would say that because of the Student Mentoring Programme I am doing well, because they actually play a part, of doing well, they actually motivate, like S motivates you. She tells you, yes you will make it, she always makes you feel that you are more than you are worth, and, that's why I think that they play a part, but not all of it.

The link between the SMP and academic performance is again clearly stated by the mentee. Motivation, modelling and the belief in the mentee's ability are core elements of the SMP's conceptualisation and reiterated by the mentee,

attesting to its effectiveness. This is adequately reflected by Cameron-Jones and O'Hara (1995, p. 189) who describes a mentor as 'a relatively senior person whose influence is thought to raise the mentee's level of functioning' thus generates a belief that success is attainable.

4.2.6 Conclusion

The predominant themes which emerged from the focus groups are the following: learning related skills development, such as managing their time more effectively, improving their essay writing skills, preparing more adequately for examinations, improving note taking in lectures, and broad subject specific study skills. Other themes which emerged as valuable for the mentees are feedback about and monitoring of their progress and the importance of referral to a more relevant support structure or person should the mentor not be able to assist the mentees. Furthermore, an array of psychosocial factors, such as encouragement and motivation, group support and modelling of success emerged as themes which were important to the mentees. The mentees themselves made a connection between the increase in psychosocial support, the increased sense of coping and the subsequent perception that their academic performance had increased. The conception of the SMP within the parameters of the Social Support theory is supported by the qualitative analysis of the mentees' feedback in the focus groups.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a synthesis of the findings of the previous chapters. The most salient themes are summarised and evaluated against some of the most prominent themes in mentoring research and against the model on which the SMP is based. Some of the limitations of this study will be discussed and recommendations will be made for future research.

5.2 Summary of Findings

5.2.1 Quantitative Study

The results of the quantitative analysis suggest that the mentees performed academically significantly better than the non-mentees in the end of year exam of 1997. The difference in academic performance between these two groups is significant at a 5% confidence level. It is problematic to attribute this difference directly to the mentees' involvement in the SMP. This is due to the multiple variables which might have played an influencing role but which were not controlled for.

Quantitative studies on mentoring in educational settings are scarce (Jacobi, 1991; Scandura, 1997). No other studies were found which employed empirical methods to investigate the effects of mentoring on academic performance. One study investigating mentoring in relation to academic performance is a comparison study done by Fresko and Kowalsky at an

higher educational institution (cited in Goodlad, 1998). However, their study employed self-report methods and thus neglected objective measures.

5.2.2 Qualitative Study

The main themes which emerged from the thematic analysis of the focus group discussions can be summarised into two main aspects. These are academic benefits and psychosocial benefits.

5.2.2.1 Academic Benefits

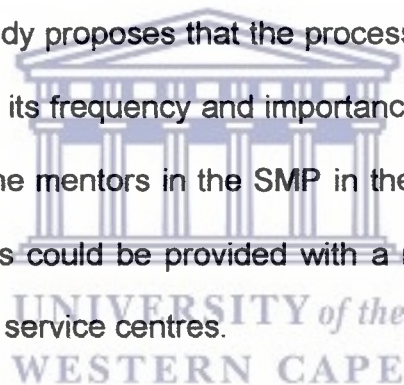
The academic benefits which the mentees mentioned were academic development skills, feedback and monitoring regarding their academic progress and getting referrals to academically more equipped people for content related assistance. The mentees felt that their academic gains were broad, effectual and invaluable to their academic functioning during their first year of study. These were study skills, time-management, essay writing skills, examination preparation and note taking during lectures.

The literature review supports these findings. Skills development and feedback regarding progress are frequently mentioned as benefits for mentees (Burke, 1984; Bowen, 1985; Dunn, 1989; Goodlad, 1998). However, qualitative research regarding academic benefits in higher educational settings are scarce (Jacobi, 1991; Wilde & Schau, 1991). Fresko and Kowalsky (in Goodlad, 1998) have done a qualitative comparison study involving mentoring in an higher educational setting and concluded that mentoring has academic benefits for mentees. Naidoo (1994) did a

qualitative study on the mentees of the SMP and reported that the mentees experienced an increase in academic performance due to their involvement in the SMP.

Despite the predominant theme of referral in the focus groups discussions in this study, this is not reflected in the literature. The literature evidently neglects to highlight the importance of referral. The possibility of it being specific to the SMP Programme is recognised.

The researcher in this study proposes that the process of referral needs to be investigated further given its frequency and importance in the focus groups. It might be useful to train the mentors in the SMP in the techniques associated with referral. The mentors could be provided with a resource list in order to facilitate referral to useful service centres.



5.2.2.2 Psychosocial Benefits

The psychosocial benefits mentioned by the mentees are vast. These include encouragement, motivation, affirmation and support from their mentor. Furthermore, they received group support and felt that their mentors served as valuable role models. The mentees felt that they adjusted easier to the new environment and felt more 'at home', knowing that they had a mentor, an understanding and supportive friend to call on should they need to. The knowledge of having this 'experienced friend' on campus gave them confidence, security and a sense of belonging.

The literature corroborates these findings in that it emphasises the value of psychosocial support in mentoring (Allen *et al.* 1997; Goodlad, 1998; Lawrie, 1987). The findings were also supported by Naidoo's (1994) conclusions that social support and an increase in self-confidence were central benefits for the mentees in the SMP.

5.2.3 Synthesis of Research Findings

The predominant themes from the qualitative analysis elaborate on the subjective experience of the mentees who agreed that the participation in the SMP facilitated their adjustment to the new environment, provided them with motivation, encouragement and a sense of coping. The focus group discussions also revealed that the mentees gained broad academic skills and received content specific assistance. The mentees communicated their understanding of the benefits of the SMP by elaborating on the connection between their sense of coping and their academic performance. They explicitly stated that by having confidence, increased perceived competence and a sense of belonging they felt less anxious and vulnerable. This, they felt, facilitated their academic performance. The mentees made the connection between the increase in social support through the SMP and an increase in academic performance.

It thus seems that the mentees' subjective perception of improved academic performance was reflected in their end year results. The self-reports were validated by empirical investigation. The results of the quantitative analysis corroborate the findings of the qualitative analysis.

The researcher is cautious not to draw a causal conclusion from this association, given the multiple extraneous variables that could not be controlled for. However, a meaningful relationship between the subjective perception of the mentees and their increased academic performance is suggested.

5.3 Limitations of this Study

The main aim of this study was to explore the perceived and actual benefits of the SMP for the mentees. This has been achieved, although some of the conclusions drawn are constrained by limitations of the research methodology utilised.

The focus groups were made up of twelve mentees which constitutes a small sample size. Given that the aim was to illuminate issues and highlight themes rather than to generalise findings it is a limitation rather than a shortcoming. Many opinions and experiences related to the participation in the SMP were thus unheard. The conclusions drawn from the focus group discussions must thus be seen in the light of the sample size.

To elicit qualitative data requires the researcher to be subjectively involved in the process. Thus the researcher's own ability to facilitate discussion and draw out opinions might be a potential limitation. My own ability to elicit information from the participants and my relative lack of experience might thus contribute to the limitations of this study. In addition, my own subjective investment in the results, my interpretations and foregrounding of certain

themes might further have played a role in not generating a more comprehensive range of themes.

The relative difference in social position between the researcher and the focus group participants might have inhibited the contributions in the discussions. However, this was not noticed in the thematic analysis. The participants seemed to have contributed freely and spontaneously to the discussions. Nevertheless, the consideration of this aspect is important in qualitative research.

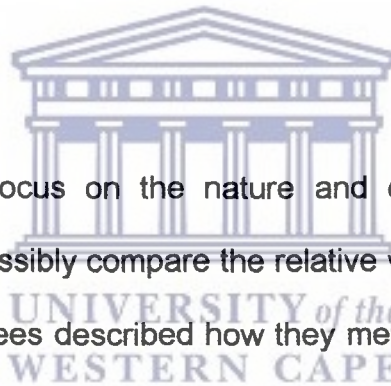
The discussions in the focus groups centred on the experience over the past year. This retrospective re-collection of events, feelings, opinions and experiences might have been distorted and thus might contribute to the limitations of this kind of method of data collection.

Another limitation of this study is the difficulty in accurately describing both samples, that is the mentee group and the non-mentee group. It is beyond the scope of this study to gather extensive data to describe the two populations adequately. The assumption that both populations are similar is a reasonable, if not a confirmed one. This poses a real limitation to this study. This highlights the limitation in mentoring research in general which is the difficulty in drawing clear conclusions from the data: the relative higher performance of the participant group might have been due to multiple variables which are impossible to control for in self-select programme. Even if the samples are

matched, direct causal deductions from mentoring to performance are fraught with difficulties.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Research

In order to explore the value of mentoring in academic settings it would be useful to match the samples. However, this is fraught with great difficulty and poses ethical dilemmas. The context of UWC does not afford the matching of the samples. It would be unethical to exclude certain students from receiving potential benefits as offered by the SMP on the basis of certain qualifying criteria.



Future research could focus on the nature and conceptualisation of the Programme and could possibly compare the relative value of different kinds of Programme. Some mentees described how they met with their mentors on a casual and infrequent basis. This suggests that some mentoring occurred on a spontaneous rather than planned basis. It might suggest that for some mentees a rigid support Programme might not be suitable and thus superfluous. The merit of spontaneous mentoring could thus be further investigated.

Spontaneous and informal mentoring occurs at all levels and in multiple contexts. The researcher cautions against the assumption that mentoring is the only or most valuable way of providing academic and psychosocial support to students. Future research could investigate the relative value of other types of support structures and compared these to mentoring.

Future research could also focus on longitudinal studies, which are in short supply. The benefits for mentees, which this study reports ought to last over time and thus pose interesting research questions. A follow-up study on the mentee population of 1997 would be very valuable in order to investigate the long-term effects of mentoring.

More quantitative studies are necessary to establish if mentoring does constitute what common sense suggests is a valuable medium for academic and psychosocial support. Self-report methods are common in mentoring research. However, these are not based on empirical data and are thus fraught with limitations.

Research could focus on the role of peer mentoring in academic settings. It could be hypothesised that group support entails peer mentoring. This dimension of group support has not been sufficiently researched.

5.5 Conclusion

The findings in this study suggest that the SMP provides a very useful service to the first year students who participate in it. It provides not only psychosocial support and academic assistance and guidance, but also seems to offer the groups of first year students some academic advantage over their non-participating peers. The Social Support Theory provides the theoretical basis on which the SMP is built. The decrease in stress is related to an increase in academic performance. The results of the thematic corroborate the findings of the statistical analysis, strongly suggesting that the

SMP has a positive impact on the academic performance of the participating first year students.



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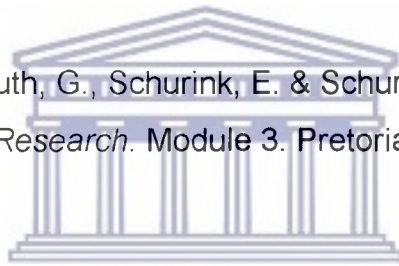
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Appendix 1

Transcript Coding Conventions

R	-	researcher
M	-	mentee
XX	-	irrelevant section omitted
[]	-	subject, course or department
?	-	unclear tape recording
italics	-	emphasised word or phrase by mentee
...	-	pause or hesitation



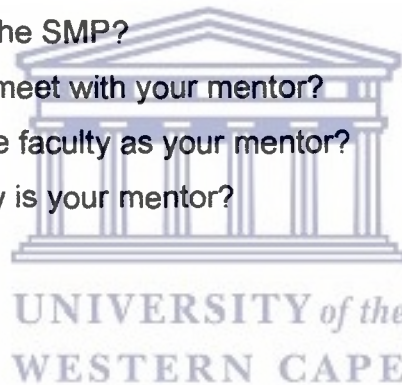
Appendix 2

Copy of open ended Questionnaire

Dear Mentee

Please supply the following information regarding your involvement with your mentor and the SMP.

1. Where do you initially get into contact with the SMP?
2. When did you join the SMP?
3. How often did you meet with your mentor?
4. Are you in the same faculty as your mentor?
5. Which year of study is your mentor?



Appendix 3

Guide to Open-ended Focus Group Questions

- Which good experiences did you have related to the SMP?
- Which bad experiences did you have regarding the SMP?
- What was useful about it?
- What was not useful about it?
- Would you again join the SMP or recommend others doing so?
- Could you elaborate on the relationship with you mentor?
- What did you like about your mentor?
- What did you not like about your mentor?
- Have you learnt anything from the SMP?
- What would have been different had you not been in the SMP?

The researcher used a number of probes to encourage the mentee to elaborate on certain topics:

- Could you tell us more?
- Could you explain more?
- Who else found that?
- What other experiences did you have?
- Did anyone have similar or different feelings?
- So you said ...? (rephrasing for clarity)