

ANTHOLOGY

NASPA Western Regional Conference

Hard Rock Hotel • San Diego • November 16-19, 2011

WHAT DO THEY SAY?

STUDENTS FROM A PRIVATE, FAITH-BASED, FOUR-YEAR UNIVERSITY SHARE THEIR PERSPECTIVES ON COLLEGE AS A MENTORING ENVIRONMENT

Agenda

- Purpose
- Literature
- Limitations
- Findings
- Conclusions and suggestions for future research

Purpose of the Study

To understand better how this group of traditional undergraduate students perceived, received, understood, and experienced one aspect of their college experience: mentoring.

Key concepts from the literature foundational to the project...

- ▣ **Jeffrey Jensen Arnett:** emerging adulthood as a new stage of young adult development
- ▣ **Robert Kegan:** adult development
- ▣ **Marcia Baxter Magolda:** self-authorship, constructivist pedagogy, and the need for good company during young adult years
- ▣ **Sharon Daloz Parks:** the concept of college and other settings as mentoring environments
- ▣ **“When I was in college...”** A more developmentally informed work with college students

Limitations

- Qualitative interviews using self-report data from 12 college students at one institution
- Research site is a private, faith-based institution that costs over \$30,000 a year to attend
- The nature of the data has many potential interpretations
- Possibility for bias in the nominations and in the participant pool that was selected
 - Faculty, staff and administrators who nominated could have sent students who would only speak highly of us.
 - Students could have participated out of fear of punishment or in hopes of reward
- I hold a position of formal authority at the research site

Research Questions

- How do graduating seniors attending a private, traditional, faith-based, four-year liberal-arts university describe mentoring?
- How do the students describe the formal and/or informal mentoring they have received during their college years?
- What suggestions do the students have for improving the university's formal and informal mentoring efforts?



What do they say?

Findings

Finding #1: Relational and Participatory Experiences

A significant finding from an ice-breaker question

Finding #2: The Morrie Syndrome

Only one had one

Finding #3: Functions and Characteristics Described

Intentionality, availability, and interest

Finding #4: Formal vs. Informal

Blurring the mentor lines

Findings: What do they say?

- Relational and Participatory Experiences: Kate
- Several Important Adult Mentors: Erin and Justin
- Functions and Characteristics: Mark and Anna
- Formal vs. Informal: Tonya and Haley

Conclusions

- **Conclusion #1:** Traditional undergraduate education is **optimal** when all stakeholders, including students, are participating in a **holistic educational experience**
- **Conclusion #2:** Efforts around mentoring traditional undergraduate students are optimal as a **shared endeavor**; that is to say when done in the context of a mentoring environment
- **Conclusion #3:** Leaders in the field of traditional undergraduate education would benefit from an awareness of the **difficulties and challenges** involved as college students navigate into young adulthood

Recommendations for Future Research

- Access to education and mentoring networks
- The mentors
- The risk of negative influence
- Peer influence as part of the mentoring network

ANTHOLOGY

NASPA Western Regional Conference

Hard Rock Hotel • San Diego • November 16-19, 2011

COMMENTS, CRITIQUE AND QUESTIONS

WHAT DO THEY SAY? STUDENTS FROM A PRIVATE, FAITH-BASED, FOUR-YEAR UNIVERSITY SHARE THEIR PERSPECTIVES ON COLLEGE AS A MENTORING ENVIRONMENT