FOSTERING CAREER DEVELOPMENT THROUGH MENTORING: A NARRATIVE STUDY EXPLORING THE MENTORING EXPERIENCES OF MID-LEVEL MANAGERS HELPING TO FOSTER CAREER DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE METRO REGION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS.

A dissertation presented

by

Raymond Obeng

B.Ed. (Arts), 2006, University of Cape Coast, Ghana

CEMPA, 2012, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana

to

The School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

in the field of Organizational Leadership

College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts
October 17, 2018
Dedication

To all who have mentored me

To all who I have mentored

To all who keep mentoring me

To all who I keep mentoring

To all who will mentor me

And to all who I will mentor.

This dissertation is specially dedicated to:

Mel O., Becca O., Rhoda O., and Eli O.
Acknowledgements

I thank the Almighty God for His care and love toward me, and for giving me the ability to complete this doctoral research. God has indeed demonstrated to me that his love towards me is immeasurable.

Undoubtedly, everyone who completes a doctoral study of this kind must inevitably lean on one’s hardworking and approachable faculty of Northeastern University’s College of Professional Studies. I owe my thesis committee members, Dr. Margaret Gorman, Dr. Tova Sanders, and Dr. Mustapha Abdulai my most sincere gratitude. I consider myself to have experienced a breakthrough for having been taught by you, Dr. Gorman, during the coursework phase and for coming my way when I was going in circles during the dissertation phase. Dr. Gorman, Dr. Sanders, and Dr. Abdulai supported me, offered me very useful suggestions, and compelled me to discover the worth in being a scholar-practitioner.

I tender my grateful thanks to the members of the Antioch Community Church in Waltham, MA, especially Pastor Sean Richmond, David Pucci, Pastor Brendon Hollingsworth, Pastor John Prickett, and Joe Ewen for their support in prayer. Indeed, I can never forget about the day David and John laid their hands on me and prayed to God to bless me with new ideas and the acceleration to complete the study. Similarly, the day Joe called me in the Sanctuary to reveal God’s prophesies concerning me will remain indelible in my mind. Prayer changes things, indeed.

I owe a deep sense of gratitude to my wife Melinda and our three kids: Rebecca, Rhoda, and Eli, for praying with me in difficult times and for being my support in times of need. I cannot forget about the enormous support I got from my family (especially my grandmother
Grace, my mother Grace, and my sister Blessing) and Melinda’s family (especially her mother Georgina and her father Andrews) as I embarked on my doctoral journey.

I was able to complete my dissertation journey through the support of my co-workers at the Charles River West Area Office of the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services: Lisa Nightingale, Patrick Keane, Jessica Williams, Patrick Sherry, Ed Wong, Craig Fletcher, Jessica Belcher, Jan Carvalho, Eric Scriber, and Kevin McDonough. I met these amazing staff when I was struggling through my executive summary. The early morning check-ins by these caring employees empowered me to get the research done. I indeed owe them for their immeasurable care and thoughtfulness.

I would like to thank the DDS-Central office mentoring team, especially Gerald (Gerry) Scott and Dr. Alberto Barreto, for all their guidance through my doctoral process. Their discussions, ideas, and feedback have been invaluable. They have set an example of excellence as researchers, mentors, instructors, and role models.

Finally, I am indebted to my friends like Thomas Opoku, Grace Mensah, Patrice Jean, Dr. Ellis Kofi Akwaa-Sekyi, Dr. Samuel Anarwat, Michael Wellie, Joshua Akoto Amoyaw, Foster Yakubu, Sampson Brako, Rita Boatemaa Darko, and William Yamoah for their advice and support.
Abstract

This narrative study, informed by Super's (1957) career development theory, explored mid-level managers’ experiences to developing aspiring mid-level managers in a state agency that has faced many challenges to include downsizing and budget cuts which have reduced opportunities for traditional career development. The purpose of the study was to understand mid-level managers’ mentoring experiences of entry-level-staff whom they were formally assigned to as part of a mentoring program at the Department of Developmental Services of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The study focused on nine middle managers who mentor others seeking to be in various developmental paths. Six study conclusions emerged from the study. First, formal mentors value being active and reliable in mentees’ professional lives. Second, formal mentors believe that mentoring programs should be designed to focus on becoming more effective, successful, and sustainable to engineer effective career development among aspiring middle managers in the region. Third, formal mentors value the importance of being professional and sensitive to the needs of mentees who also need to value mutual respect. Fourth, formal mentors believe honesty and level of familiarity are key components to good relationship. Fifth, formal mentors value sharing of experiences and encouragement of opportunities. Sixth, formal mentors believe there should be an establishment of a broader mentoring program to ensure growth and development of young managers. This research concluded with suggestions for further research and implications for theory and practice.

Keywords: Career Development Theory, Mentoring Theory, Mid-level management, mentor-mentee relationship, mentor-mentee characteristics, mentor influence.
# Table of Contents

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION .............................................................................................................17

Overview........................................................................................................................................17

The Topic.........................................................................................................................................17

Statement of the Problem..................................................................................................................19

Research Purpose..............................................................................................................................22

Justification for the Research Problem..............................................................................................22

Deficiencies in the Evidence................................................................................................................23

Relating the Discussion to Audiences..............................................................................................24

Significance of the Problem ...............................................................................................................24

Research Question ............................................................................................................................26

Theoretical Framework .....................................................................................................................26

Super’s (1957) Career Development Theory.......................................................................................27

The Influence of Super’s (1957) Theory of Career Development.......................................................29

Shaping the problem of practice.........................................................................................................29

Shaping the research question............................................................................................................29

Informing the methodology................................................................................................................30

Summation.........................................................................................................................................30

Chapter Summary and Conclusion....................................................................................................31

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ..................................................................................32
Mentoring in the Context of Career Development

Mentoring Definition

History of Mentoring

Significance of Mentoring

Summation

Mentoring and Developmental Network Perspective

Mentoring: A Traditional Perspective

Mentoring: A Modern Perspective

Change in employment contracts

Effects of the changing nature of technology

The changing nature of organizational structures

Organizational membership

Summation

Higgins and Kram’s (2001) Developmental Network Perspective

Developmental Network

Developmental Relationships

Developmental Network Diversity

Relationship Strength

Summation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult Learning Theory, Mentoring, and Career Development</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mezirow’s (1978) Transformative Learning Theory</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Development Theories</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructivist Theory</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parson’s (1989) Trait-Factor Theory</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holland’s (1985) Career Typology Theory</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Super’s (1957) Life-Span/ Life Space Theory</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summation</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-level Management and Career Development</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-level Management</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-level Managers and their Impact on Organizations</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle managers’ influence</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle managers’ power</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Value of Investing in Middle Managers</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Focus on Mid-Level Managers’ Career Navigation Strategies</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening Mid-level Managers for Organizational Excellence</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summation</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivating Talent in Massachusetts’ EOHHS</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor F. Bradford Fellowship Program</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORE Management Program</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EOHHS’ MasSP Program</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EOHHS’ Supervisory Academy</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LMCs’ Training and Career Ladder Program</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDS Mentoring Program</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summation</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion and Chapter Summary</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III: QUALITATIVE</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Tradition</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment and Access</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document review</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot study</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual interview protocol</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up interviews</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alignment of the Research Question</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Storage ........................................................................................................... 110

Trustworthiness ...................................................................................................... 110

Validity, Reliability, and Generalizability .............................................................. 112

Researcher Role .................................................................................................... 113

Controlling Bias .................................................................................................... 115

Protection of Human Subjects ............................................................................. 116

Chapter Summary ................................................................................................. 118

CHAPTER IV: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS .................................. 120

Overview of Participants ....................................................................................... 120

  BRENDA .............................................................................................................. 124

  ROCKSON .......................................................................................................... 126

  CATHERINE ...................................................................................................... 127

  FRANK .............................................................................................................. 127

  SAM .................................................................................................................. 127

  Catherine, Frank, and Sam .............................................................................. 128

  MIKE ................................................................................................................. 129

  RAZIA .............................................................................................................. 130

  OPHELIA .......................................................................................................... 131

  MARTHA .......................................................................................................... 132

Overview of Research Findings ........................................................................... 136
Codes and Clusters………………………………………………………………………………137

Development of Categories and Themes…………………………………………………………138

Findings from Analysis ………………………………………………………………………………140

Fostering Career Development……………………………………………………………………140

Mentoring ……………………………………………………………………………………………141

Career development …………………………………………………………………………………141

Mid-level management………………………………………………………………………………142

The mentor’s active and reliable support…………………………………………………………143

Characteristics of Mentor-Mentee Relationship………………………………………………149

Mutual respect ………………………………………………………………………………………149

Openness……………………………………………………………………………………………151

Balance……………………………………………………………………………………………..153

Social…………………………………………………………………………………………………154

Empathy……………………………………………………………………………………………155

The Mentor’s Influence in fostering Career Development……………………………………158

Offering opportunities………………………………………………………………………………158

Exposing mentees to a wide array of experiences across the field…………………………159

Cross-Case and Cross-Source Analysis…………………………………………………………162

Reflections on Individual Participants’ Experiences…………………………………………165

Compassion…………………………………………………………………………………………166
Excitement........................................................................................................166

Value..................................................................................................................166

Refreshment, encouragement, and satisfaction...................................................167

Summation............................................................................................................167

Response to Research Question and Summary of Findings..............................168

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS..............170

Interpretation of Clusters..................................................................................171

Fostering Career Development.........................................................................172

Characteristics of Mentor-Mentee Relationships.............................................181

The Mentor’s Influence on fostering Career Development...........................183

Implications for Theory.....................................................................................190

Implications for Practice....................................................................................193

Limitations..........................................................................................................198

Recommendations for Future Research............................................................199

Reflections as a Scholar-Practitioner.................................................................202

Chapter Summary..............................................................................................204

References..........................................................................................................206

APPENDIX...........................................................................................................242

Appendix A: Certified Letter to Participants to request Participation in Research.242

Appendix B: Pre-Virtual Interview Protocol Introductory Email........................244
Appendix C: Member Checking Email .......................................................... 246
Appendix D: Informed Consent ................................................................. 247
Appendix E: Virtual Interview Protocol .................................................... 252
Appendix F: Letter to seek Permission to conduct Research ..................... 257
Appendix G: Approval from DDS Research Review Commission (RRC) ....... 260
Appendix H: Sample of Codes grouped by Categories ................................ 261
Appendix I: Question-Participant Matrix in Connection with Super’s Career Development Theory ............................................................. 265
List of Figures

Figure 2.1: Super’s Five Life and Career Development Stages .................................................66

Figure 4.1: Clusters by Category................................................................................................140
List of Tables

Table 3.1: Overview of Study’s Participants ................................................................. 95

Table 3.2: Overview of Data Collection Phases .......................................................... 97

Table 3.3: Study’s Virtual Interview Question Protocol ............................................ 103

Table 4.1: Detailed Look at Research Participants ..................................................... 123

Table 4.2: Detail Description of Participants’ Experiences ......................................... 124

Table 4.3: Summary of Demographic Profiles of Participants ................................... 135

Table 4.4: Description of Codes and Clusters for the Analysis of the Study ................ 138

Table 4.5: Overview of Participants’ Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Career Development as an Organizational Strategic Tool ....................................................... 149

Table 4.6: Overview of Participants’ Perceptions of the Significance of Mentor-Mentee Relationships .......................................................... 158

Table 4.7: Overview of Participants’ Perceptions of the Necessity of the Mentor’s Influence in fostering Career Development ......................................................... 162

Table 4.8: Comparison of Research Components Across All Cases ............................ 164

Table 4.9: Categories and Their Impact on Career Development Through Mentoring .... 165
Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

This dissertation centers on how mid-level managers working in a state agency describe their mentoring experiences of entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers. Specifically, it seeks to understand ways in which experienced mid-level managers as formal mentors draw on their own experiences, successes, and failures to foster career development in their departments.

This chapter begins with the research topic, followed by the statement of the research problem, research purpose, the justification for the research problem, the deficiencies in the evidence, relating the discussion to audiences, the significance of the study, and the research question. Then, the theoretical framework that informs the inquiry is presented, followed by the conclusion of this chapter.

The Topic

The future of organizations is chaotic (Hezlett & Gibson, 2005), and for state agencies to survive, their organizational leaders need to streamline how they develop and implement career development programs for their staff, especially entry-level employees who are willing to advance their careers. Equipping their staff to gain the necessary supports to advance their careers will, in turn, help these agencies to thrive exponentially and become more viable in today’s economy (Safian, 2012). These days, entry-level employees who are focused on the development of their careers are constantly in search of opportunities to grow and develop their careers (Lofton, 2012). As a result, they tend to remain open to continuing to learn and adapt to changes in their environments to help them grow and prosper (Safian, 2012). One major leadership tool that has been developed and implemented by most organizations is mentoring as
an effective career development program. It is, therefore, not surprising that several studies on mentoring have been on career development related issues than on the other major domains comprising human resource development (Hezlett & Gibson, 2005).

A review of the business and psychological literature on mentoring employees identified more than 90 studies that have examined the relationship between mentoring and career-related outcomes (Wanberg et al., 2003). The review indicated that more than 95% of these studies examined outcomes for mentees. It also indicated that only 13% of these studies have explored mentors’ outcomes. Current understanding of the influence of mentoring on career development indicates that mentoring programs are associated with more favorable objectives such as compensation and promotions, and subjective outcomes such as career satisfaction and job satisfaction for mentees (Hezlett & Gibson, 2005). Other potential positive career-related outcomes associated with mentoring include the development of a personal support network, sharing of information and feedback, acquisition of satisfaction and pride, attainment of recognition, increase in one’s career satisfaction, and acceleration of promotion rates (Bozionelos, 2004; Johnson, Yust, & Fritchie, 2001).

As a result of these opportunities for entry-level employees aspiring into mid-level management positions, organizational leaders have sought to provide support systems focused on developing the careers of these aspiring middle managers. Historically, entry-level employees seem to have very limited experience and therefore, may or may not have fully acquired the necessary expertise to effectively perform their jobs (Wilson, 2009). For these employees to ensure their career advancement and higher levels of performance, state agencies need to implement effective mentoring programs to help develop their internal talent and prepare them for the open mid-layer positions that are projected (Lofton, 2012). It is, however, important to
note that, these aspiring middle managers see this agency-wide strategy as an opportunity to learn by gaining valuable skills and developing their overall professions.

**Statement of the Problem**

Numerous budget cuts and government downsizing have resulted in a major talent gap in mid-level managers in many government agencies. Today’s mid-level manager often has significantly less work experience (DuBois-Maahs, 2013) because traditionally, career path systems which allowed for gradual development, apprenticeship, and promotion are now replaced by different expedited advancements and supplemented with mentoring programs designed to help aspiring middle managers transition into middle management positions. For these mentoring programs to be successful, scholar-practitioners need insight into the experiences of those mid-level managers who have received formal mentoring training and are mentoring entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers.

While several organizational leaders recognize the need to support entry-level staff to advance their careers, few departments have more than an informal process to help entry-level staff throughout their first five years in their profession (Conger & Fulmer, 2003). In some cases, seeing and learning that veteran senior executives learned to swim on their own makes entry-level staff feel isolated and unable to ask for assistance. Even though the research examining the impact of mentoring on the advancement of careers among entry-level staff has increased significantly in the last several years (Bozeman & Feeney, 2015; Aryee & Chay, 1994; Johnston & Packer, 1987), many entry-level staff still do not have appropriate support toward their career development. Generally, career developers who mentor entry-level staff bemoan the fact that mentoring comes with great costs to the mentor especially when the protégé’s
personality and attitude are not what the developer cherishes and expects (Menegat & Ruhl, 2010; Merriam, 1983).

However, well-designed mentoring programs can help negate many of these costs and provide support for entry-level staff to advance their careers (Elliot, Issacs, & Chugani, 2010). Most employees leave their positions for the lack of accelerated development opportunities (Bersin, 2015), and in the United States, this situation has affected the overall rate of workforce growth. Dychtwald, Erickson, and Morison (2004) argue:

“After peaking at nearly 30% in the 1970s (as the baby boomers as well as unprecedented numbers of women entered the workforce) and holding relatively steady at 12% during the 1990s and again in the present decade, the rate is projected to drop and level off at 2% to 3% per decade thereafter. That translates into an annual growth rate of less than 1% today and an anemic 0.2% by 2020” (para. 2).

This is a cause for concern since high-risk departments often have a higher turnover rate for entry-level staff. Many organizations have begun to rely on succession planning and leadership development “to create a long-term process for managing the talent roster across their organizations” where to a large extent, “the two practices reside in separate functional silos, but they are natural allies because they share a vital and fundamental goal: getting the right skills in the right place” (Coger & Fulmer, 2003, para. 3). However, leadership is a crucial element in developing and sustaining these programs (Lofton, 2012). Supportive leadership is needed to create programs that would provide entry-level staff with sufficient support (Ensher & Murphy, 2005). Supports such as program vision and design, leadership, program structure and components, and effectiveness and sustainability are areas of need that require supportive leadership to ensure overall success of mentoring programs (Menegat & Ruhl, 2010). Stringer
(2007) emphasizes the importance of leaders in the executive branch creating a vision, putting actions to the vision, and then implementing the actions that advocate for program significance.

Many organizations have a retention problem more than a recruitment problem (Ingersoll, 2003). Organizations with no or ineffective mentoring programs cannot keep their entry-level staff they once recruited. The retention of entry-level staff requires programs that are focused on career development fostered in organizations and supported by the senior team. Recent interest in the field of career development is evidenced by mentoring programs such as the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services mentoring program going on in all of its regional and area offices. This program seeks to develop a model for developing the skills-set of aspiring managers, by combining experiential learning and mentoring relationships. A key feature of this program is the development of relationships of a mid-level manager and a first entry-level state employee aspiring to be a middle manager. The main goal of this relationship is to foster skill development in entry-level employees who want to aspire into mid-level management positions.

Experienced middle managers can serve as organizational channels through which expert knowledge of career development efforts can be transmitted and shared. Their experience as successful managers coupled with their mastery of the career development knowledge-space, as well as their expertise in actualizing their knowledge constitute an appropriate resource for state employees with less experience (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). These middle managers may intuitively depend on various knowledge transmission and skill development strategies in their engagement with their apprentices “unless they have access to prior education focused specifically on learning theory” (LaMan, 2015, p. 12). Having a deeper understanding of the ways in which experienced mid-level managers engage in the mentoring process with aspiring or less-experienced managers will help identify shared organizational strategies that these
experienced mid-level managers utilize. Additionally, illuminating these experienced middle managers’ thought processes as they interact with those who have less experience can lead to key insights as to how career development can be fostered through mentoring (Brockbank & McGill, 2006). This illumination can bring into the limelight the nature of the tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1966/ 2009) shared by these experienced middle managers.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this doctoral research project was to understand mid-level managers’ experiences in mentoring entry-level-staff whom they were formally assigned to as part of a mentoring training program at Department of Developmental Services of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Specifically, this study is focused on ways in which experienced middle managers who have experience as mentors and are serving as mentors draw on their own experiences, successes, and failures in uncovering organizational strategies that focus on the advancement of careers of entry-level employees.

Justification for the Research Problem

Research focused on how mid-level managers help to advance the careers of entry-level staff is a developing field. However, research into how mentoring impacts the advancement of careers of entry-level staff constitutes an important strategy whereby they make “significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking” (Megginson & Clutterbuck, 1995, p. 13). Moreover, career development programs that provide depth in terms of specific mentoring content and breadth in terms of the scope of content across disciplines provide a great advantage to entry-level staff (Hall & Mirvis, 1995). Besides, research indicates that efficient mentors can foster accelerated career development in employees who desire to advance their careers (Montreal
CEGEP, 1988). The exposure of mentees to specific content associated with career development is very beneficial (Chen, 1998; Gray, 1998). This is so because developing such career development content that comes with broader perspective and supportive environment presents greater challenges (Ginzberg, 1984). This is largely due to the element of organizational self-interest involved (Hay, 1995) where the mentor is seen to have the responsibility to focus on the organizational requirements and the mentee’s career development needs. It is, therefore, important that the purpose and intentions of mentoring in a particular context are explicit, and that it is prudent that mentors and mentees “debate what mentoring is to be in their particular context in order that a mutual understanding and vision of mentoring can be shared as they embark on their relationship” (McKimm, Jollie, & Hatter, 2007, p. 1). However, the establishment of mentoring relationships can expose the protégé to “diverse disciplinary content including access to unmodified experience-based knowledge held by the mentor” (LaMan, 2015, p. 14). Clutterbuck (2004) argued that good mentoring relationships recognize the need for personal development and the direction where the partners involved in the relationship desire to go. These relationships help mentors to develop supportive programs that are more effective in meeting the needs of employees who want to move up on the leadership ladder (Ensher & Murphy, 2005).

**Deficiencies in the Evidence**

Employees who desire to advance in their careers may build knowledge capital through their participation in multiple career advancement efforts (Faltermaier, 1992). Mentoring provided by experienced middle managers can foster career development of entry-level staff. So far, very few studies have explored the organizational strategies that experienced mid-level managers rely on to provide career development through mentoring. For example, Shen, et al.
have indicated proper pairing of experienced mentors with willing protégés leads to effective transfer of tacit knowledge from mentors to their protégés. Besides, currently, few studies have examined the fostering of career development of mid-level managers through mentoring. For example, Stewart and Knowles’ (2003) quantitative, survey-based study fundamentally sought to confirm mentors’ perspective that their role is very delicate and that whenever there is an effective mentoring relationship, it tends to make the mentoring process more desirable.

In addition, in seeking to understand how mid-level managers advance the careers of entry-level staff, this narrative study was designed with potential deficiencies. Because of the limited sample size, the ability to generalize the findings was difficult, since the study was limited to mid-level managers of nine participants that helped to gather data through virtual interview protocol, though document review and follow-up interviews were used in addition.

Relating the Discussion to Audiences

Organizational leaders could use the research findings based on this narrative study to initiate or revise their mentoring programs. Also, the study could provide a resource for HR personnel and employee training technicians to use as a tool for understanding how mid-level managers advance the careers of entry-level staff in order to provide the support necessary to ensure effective career development.

Significance of the Problem

Organizational leaders are fundamentally dependent on effective career development programs to ensure the performance and retention of their employees in the United States (Kirchhoff & Phillips, 1988; Neumark et al., 2011) where mentoring programs constitute a
significant proportion of overall leadership career development efforts (United States Department of Labor - Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014; Roueche & Roueche, 1999). However, there are few studies that examine the fostering of career development of entry-level employees through mentoring.

Even though employee career development programs seem to be very effective in ensuring retention, some organizations continue to struggle from pairing mentors appropriately with mentees (Collin, & Young, 1988). Effective mentoring has the potential to “support and accelerate personal and organizational change, make change work by sustaining commitment to corporate vision in a critical mass of senior managers, help manage the downside risk of change management and maintain performance during periods of rapid change, improve business performance by creating personal stretch goals in line with corporate objectives, remove obstacles to successful change management by predicting and managing personal and organizational regression, increase organizational awareness through providing a flow of valid operational data for senior managers, promote balance and provide a stable base during periods of major organizational and career change” (McKimm, Jollie, & Hatter, 2007, p. 21).

Unfortunately, organizations have few points of reference in developing programs to support employees who want to advance their careers. This study serves to identify the ways in which experienced mid-level managers serving as formal mentors can effectively foster the career development of entry-level staff who desire to advance their careers through mentoring as a major leadership support. Such supports can lead to more effective practices within organizations seeking to improve entry-level employees’ “management skills through mentoring skills and techniques” (McKimm, Jollie, & Hatter, 2007, p. 21).
**Research Question**

The objective of this study was to understand ways in which experienced mid-level managers involved in mentoring draw on their own experiences, successes, and failures to foster career development in their departments. Specifically, this study used Super’s (1957) career development theory to uncover how mid-level managers advance the careers of entry-level staff aspiring into middle layer positions in their departments.

The central question for this inquiry is: *How do mid-level managers assigned as formal mentors describe their experiences in mentoring entry level staff aspiring to advance their careers?*

**Theoretical Framework**

Narrative, an important feature of interpretation (Young & Collin, 1992), makes the interpreter “translate according to her or his present and anticipated context” (Young et al, 1996, p. 490). Taylor (1989) argues that individuals find sense of life through narration (Taylor, 1989), “cultivated by stories happening in our everyday life for narrative is a natural form of meaning making” (Chen, 1998, p. 454). According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), “narrative inquirers tend to begin with experience as expressed in lived and told stories” (p. 40). That said, the primary theory used to guide this dissertation research project was Super’s (1957) theory of career development to explore these middle-managers’ experiences as mentors and the dimensions of personal growth, acquisition of skills, and general development as they sought to foster career development of entry-level employees at the Metro Region of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Super’s (1957) career development theory was used as a guide for leadership development experiences. Thus, career development theory (Hall, 1976; Briscoe & Hall, 2006) focused on the meaning-making process of mid-level managers’ experiences
throughout their willingness to support entry-level employees aspiring to advance their careers.

In the sub-section below, Super’s (1957) Career Development Theory and its influence on career development will be discussed followed by a summation of the sub-section.

**Super’s (1957) Career Development Theory**

Super’s (1957) career development theory is in alignment with career advancement of entry-level employees. Building on the theories of Eli Ginzberg, Super (1957) felt that Ginzberg’s work had weaknesses. He then addressed those flaws by extending Ginzberg’s work on life and career development stages from three to five and included different sub-stages. Super (1976) defines career as:

> “the course of events which constitutes a life; the sequence of occupations and other life roles which combine to express one’s commitment to work in his or her total pattern of self-development; the series of remunerated and non-remunerated positions occupied by a person from adolescence through retirement, of which occupation is only one; includes work-related roles such as those of student, employee, and pensioner together with complementary avocational, familial, and civic roles. Careers exist only as people pursue them; they are person-centered. It is this last notion of careers, ‘they exist only as people pursue them’, which summarizes much of the rationale for career guidance” (p. 4).

Ginzberg (1984) asserted that occupational choice constitutes a lifelong process of decision making for those seeking satisfaction from advancing their careers. This leads entry-level staff to make a re-assessment of how they can advance and improve their careers and “fit between their changing career goals and the realities of the world of work” (Ginzberg, 1984, p. 180).

According to Super (1980), an employee’s career comprises a series of major career
developmental stages—growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement, throughout his or her entire life. Chen (1998) has asserted that within each stage, employees play certain career roles in order to strive “to accomplish varied career developmental tasks which correspond to these roles requirements” (p. 439) as they advance their careers to stay fit in the ever-changing career world.

Super’s (1957) career development theory constitutes his contribution to career development by emphasizing the need for the development of self-concept. Self-concept is an underlying factor in Super's (1957) career development theory. Zunker (1994) argues "vocational self-concept develops through physical and mental growth, observations of work, identification with working adults, general environment, and general experiences... As experiences become broader in relation to awareness of world of work, the more sophisticated vocational self-concept is formed" (p. 30). Super (1957) argued that self-concept changes overtime and develops because of experience.

At the center of Super’s (1957) theory is career maturity. Professional maturity manifests itself in the successful accomplishment of age and stage developmental tasks across the life span. Super (1957) recognizes the changes that individuals encounter as they mature. Thus, socioeconomic factors, mental and physical abilities, personal characteristics, and the exposure to career development opportunities constitute the determinants of career patterns of individuals. Super (1957) concludes that individuals seek satisfaction in their professions through work roles that provide opportunity for them to express themselves, develop their self-concepts, and advance their professions.
The Influence of Super’s (1957) Theory of Career Development

Shaping the problem of practice. This study holds in high esteem the experiences of mid-level managers involved in the mentoring process in their organizations. These experiences served as significant sources of data. Qualitative research addressing these mid-level managers’ perspectives concerning how they support to advance the careers of entry-level staff aspiring to advance into middle layer positions in their departments is lacking. In view of this, a theoretical framework that views these middle managers’ experiences and opinions as valuable sources of data is exceedingly necessary for this qualitative study.

Research related to the views of middle managers must be considered more to help policy makers and stakeholders understand and make sense of agency strategies related to how mentoring can be used to foster career advancement efforts of entry-level staff. The goal of this study was to provide insight into the experiences of middle managers serving as formal mentors who have supported the career development of entry-level staff aspiring to advance their professions. The intent of this qualitative study was to provide a better understanding of the mentoring process related to career development as well as provide a better understanding of the experiences of these mid-level managers.

Shaping the research question. This study builds on and expands previous research examining career development through mentoring (Tiedeman, & O’Hara, 1963; Miller-Tiedeman & Tiedeman, 1982/1990) to better understand mid-level managers’ experiences in mentoring entry-level-staff whom they were assigned to as part of mentoring training program at the Metro Region of the Department of Developmental Services of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Super et al. (1996) have argued that employee satisfaction depends on their access to supports that seek to build their skills, abilities, values, and self-concepts. The
willingness to advance one’s career is largely based on one’s access to support systems that seek to foster the career advancement needs of employees who are ready to learn and develop their skills for future advanced management positions. Employees choose their career development needs; therefore, employees’ willingness to advance and transition into higher management positions must be explored in mid-level managers’ experiences. This exploration as well as the literature review and the theoretical framework discussed in this study assisted in the development of the research question that has been outlined in Chapter 3.

**Informing the methodology.** Super’s (1957) Career Development Theory informs the methodology for this study. The theoretical framework specifically aligns with narrative study. In qualitative studies, individual perspectives serve as factual phenomena (Maxwell, 2005). Ensuring an effective mentoring process that fosters meaningful career development rests on understanding the perspectives of middle managers involved in the mentoring process. The use of this theory brings into the limelight how valuable are the experiences of these middle managers, as these experiences bring a deeper understanding of the need to support individuals to advance and develop their careers. This study, therefore, sought to provide an insight for policy makers and organizational leaders to inform their career development processes; however, the goal was not to provide a list of prescribed strategies for organizations to apply in ensuring the effectiveness of existing career development programs, policies, and procedures in organizations.

**Summation**

In this sub-section, Super’s (1957) Career Development Theory and its influence on career development were discussed, followed by a summation of the sub-section. Super’s Career Development Theory constitutes an applicable theory to use in understanding the experiences of
how individuals have advanced their careers. The theory effectively aligns with theoretical frameworks that have been used to inform studies of career development and mentoring in organizations. Besides, the theory has been used in studies considering development of organizations’ supportive programs geared toward employee development and its onward effect on the entirety of organizations. Also, the theory can totally be applied to shaping the problem of practice, research question, and methodology of this study. The overall design will be introduced in the following section and explored in-depth in Chapter 3 of this research.

**Chapter Summary and Conclusion**

In this chapter, the researcher centered the dissertation on how mid-level managers working in a state agency describe their mentoring experiences of entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers. Specifically, the study was centered on seeking to understand ways in which experienced mid-level managers as formal mentors involved in mentoring draw on their own experiences, successes, and failures to foster career development in their departments within the DDS-Metro Region of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This chapter began with the overview of the research topic, followed by the statement of the research problem, research purpose, the justification for the research problem, the deficiencies in the evidence, relating the discussion to audiences, the significance of the study, and the research question. Then, the theoretical framework that informed the inquiry was presented.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

The primary focus of this literature review is to explore mentoring in the context of career development; mentoring theories; adult learning theories; and mid-level management in organizations, with an emphasis on a mentor’s leadership role in the mentoring process. In this chapter, a summary of the literature on which the study is based is provided. The first section of this chapter presents mentoring in the context of career development. This is followed by a historical review of social networks theory and methods as a way of understanding mentoring in the context of career development: typology of developmental networks using core concepts from social networks theory - network diversity and tie strength - to view mentoring as a multiple relationship phenomenon. Then, the role of personality in mentoring relationships is discussed. Following that discussion is a summary of adult learning and its linkage to career development. Mezirow’s (1978) transformative learning theory is then discussed, along with a summary of career development theories, including Super’s (1957) career development theory. Super’s (1957) ideas are particularly significant because they framed this study. The last section of this chapter focuses on mid-level management as discussed in terms of its history and current literature. The section also aims to illuminate the phenomenon of the career advancement process of mid-level managers with an explanation of why the process is necessary in the career development process.

Mentoring in the Context of Career Development

Several studies on mentoring have been done on career development related issues than on other equally important fields consisting of human resource development (Lofton, 2018; Wanberg et al., 2003). In this sub-section, mentoring definition and mentoring history are
discussed. Then, the significance of mentoring is presented, followed by a summation of this sub-section.

**Mentoring Definition**

In most cases, mentoring constitutes a more instructional, directive relationship (Joo et al., 2012). In a mentoring relationship, an individual (the mentor) with knowledge, expertise, skills, and often of a more senior role in the organization teaches another (the mentee or protégé) based on an individual mentee’s career developmental path (Hicks, 2018). Indeed, mentoring tends to be a more intense one-on-one relationship whereby a mentor works with a less-experienced individual (the mentee or protégé) to increase the personal and professional growth of the mentee, through organizational assistance such as career-related supports (Joo et al., 2012). This constitutes a more formal type of mentoring since the relationship is generally defined by the organization where both the mentor and the mentee work (Joo et al., 2012). Thus, mentoring constitutes a relationship that can either be formal (assigned) or informal (sought out) whereby a mentor’s knowledge and expertise are transferred to the mentee. The relationship can involve direct knowledge transfer and training or other support systems, which may include psychosocial, emotional/personal support, networking, advice, or modeling (Andrews, & Bucklew, 2010). This relationship is therefore focused on improving organizational performance (Olivero, Bane, & Kopelman, 1997), increasing self-awareness and ability (Jyoti & Sharma, 2015), and equipping the mentee with skills and knowledge for growth and development (Dawley et al., 2010). This indicates that the participants of the mentoring relationship as well as the third party (the organization) tend to benefit from the relationship.

Mentoring relationships have advanced from its dyadic, linear processes exclusively happening within a confined formal relationship that puts into consideration multiple
developmental relationships (Lofton, 2012). These developmental relationships seek to provide support in the career development and personal learning of mentees. Apart from the mentee and the mentor, organizations also benefit from the information sharing that occurs through these various developmental relationships. That means the benefits of developmental relationships originating from mentoring are far reaching within organizations. Therefore, it is necessary that organizational leaders who want to build a strong workforce consider the overall benefits of and how to promote mentoring relationships in their organizations.

**History of Mentoring**

Mentoring programs seek to support mentees to gain insight into their development needs, refresh their expertise and skills, understand how other organizational members perceive them, and develop their management style for positions into which they are aspiring (Hale, 2000). According to Randolph (2018), mentoring equips mentees to understand how and why things work at levels in their organizations. McInnes (2009) argues that this understanding consists of the synergies between the career and psychosocial aspects of organizations as well as an understanding of self that the mentee cannot achieve by primarily executing self-develop practices. Randolph has argued that this perspective of the mentoring process is similar to the viewpoint of Homer (Rouse, trans. 1937), the acknowledged founder of mentoring.

Melesigenes Homeros, shortened as Homer, embarked on a journey called The Odyssey (Rouse, trans. 1937). In this historical account of the journey, King Odysseus realized that his son Homer had become a stressed and struggling soul seeking respite, guidance, and understanding to shape his future. King Odysseus then entrusted Mentor to provide training to Homer, based on the knowledge that Homer’s potential for success required additional cultivation. According to ancient Greek narrative, the contemporary use of the word “mentor” as
a noun represents a teacher or counselor who is wise and faithful (Skinner & Welch, 1996; Welch, 1996). Following this came the introduction of the word “protégé” originating from a French verb “protéger” to mean “to protect.” When Mentor guided and assisted Homer, Homer’s poetic acumen was improved as Homer understood his poetic gift well and how to develop it better (Rouse, trans. 1937). In the end, Homer’s “mentoring experiences improved his lyrical skills and inspired The Odyssey as a tribute to Mentor” (Randolph, 2018, p. 44.). Ever since, the metaphor of Homer’s Odyssey was employed as illustration of how a mentor’s experiences with a mentee can shape a mentee's future and equip them to realize success in their personal and career development lives.

**Significance of Mentoring**

Research on the significance of mentoring in organizational contexts are abundant. According to Hicks (2018), a few of these predicted outcomes seem highly logical when the purposes of mentoring relationships are examined. Some of these outcomes consist of the cultivation of self-awareness and decisiveness (Bozer et al., 2013) and an increase in the understanding of the mentee’s role in the organization (Kim, Egan, Kim, & Kim, 2013). Other benefits include better career advancement strategies (Enslin & Schulz, 2015), higher career satisfaction and organizational commitment levels (Joiner, Bartram, & Garreffa, 2004), better skills (Jyoti & Sharma, 2015), and reduced turnover intention (Dawley et al., 2010). Apart from individuals benefiting from mentoring programs, organizations tend to realize benefits such as higher productivity (Olivero et al., 1997), integration with other training opportunities (Wales, 2003), improved communication (Graham, Wedman, & Garvin-Kester, 1993), organizational loyalty and motivation (Ellinger et al., 2003), and increased organizational and team effectiveness (Olivero et al., 1997). Hicks argues the organization and mentee share potential
benefits such as greater team dynamics, better job satisfaction, realistic employee retention, greater creativity level, and boosted stress management.

**Summation**

In this sub-section, mentoring was defined. Additionally, the history of mentoring was discussed. Then, the significance of mentoring was presented. In the sub-section, it was highlighted that career development programs such as mentoring are significant in guiding individual organizational members through their journeys toward the realization and pursuance of their career developmental goals (Kovach, 2018). These programs need to consider understanding personality traits, interests, attitudes, values, needs, personal achievements, and self-awareness, as they influence career decisions of organizational members who aspire to move up (Lin, 2017).

**Mentoring and Developmental Network Perspective**

Research on the benefits of having a mentoring relationship for an individual's personal and professional development has been espoused (Dalton, Thompson, & Price, 1977; Hall, 1976; Kram, 1985; Levinson et al., 1978). This has led to the study of the nature and benefits of traditional forms of mentoring (Burke & McKeen, 1990; Mullen, 1994; Ragins, 1997a). In this sub-section, traditional and modern perspectives of mentoring are discussed. Then, the summation of the sub-section is presented.

**Mentoring: A Traditional Perspective**

Studies have indicated that with a "traditional" mentoring relationship, a senior person working in the protégé’s organization assists with the protégé’s personal and professional development (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1993; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990; Fagenson, 1989), where the
mentor provides career and psychosocial assistance (Thomas & Kram, 1988). Studies on mentoring have provided insight into individual-level factors that account for the cultivation of such relationships, including protégé locus of control (Noe, 1988), sex-role orientation (Scandura & Ragins, 1993), and protégé and mentor race and gender (Ragins & Cotton, 1993; Thomas, 1990; Turban & Dougherty, 1994). Additionally, organizational culture (Aryee, Chay, & Chew, 1996), hierarchical structure (Ragins & Cotton, 1991), and diversity (Ragins, 1997b) affect the growth of developmental relationships. Studies have shown that traditional mentoring relationships enhance career development (Kram, 1985; Phillips-Jones, 1982), career progress (Zey, 1984), higher rates of promotion and total compensation (Whitely, Dougherty, & Dreher, 1991), career satisfaction (Fagenson, 1989; Riley & Wrench, 1985; Roche, 1979), and clarity of professional identity and sense of competence (Kram, 1985).

**Mentoring: A Modern Perspective**

Career researchers have focused on the changing nature of career environment (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Hall, 1996). They have argued that there are four broad categories of change that affect the context in which individuals' careers unfold. These categories, however, have direct implications for individuals' developmental relationships. These categories include change in employment contracts, effects of the changing nature of technology, the changing nature of organizational structures, and organizational membership.

**Change in employment contracts.** Rousseau (1995) argued that the change in employment contracts between employees and employers has compelled organizations to negotiate and renegotiate formal employment relationships and the psychological contracts or shared sense of obligations that motivate them (Robinson, 1996). Job security has become a phenomenon of the past (Pfeffer, 1997). However, what has become the phenomena of the
present comprises organizational restructuring, globalization, and the externalization of work (Pfeffer & Baron, 1988). This has, however, compelled employees to look beyond the organization to seek for multiple relationships that can provide valuable developmental assistance (Thomas & Higgins, 1996).

**Effects of the changing nature of technology.** The form and function of individuals’ careers and career development have been impacted by the changing nature of technology use. This rapid pace of change in both information and digital technologies has increased the importance of knowledge workers (Bailyn, 1993; Savage, 1990; Zuboff, 1988). Organizations now focus on placing value on employees who can quickly adapt to and learn recent technological developments (McCauley & Young, 1993). To create a competitive environment, entry-level employees may need to draw on relationships from a variety of sources, not just senior-level, intra-organizational relationships, for career development assistance.

**The changing nature of organizational structures.** Today, the sources from which employees receive career developmental assistance have changed. Higgins and Kram (2001) argue that organizations expand internationally, align and collaborate with other organizations in various structural arrangements, and conduct virtual businesses. As a result, entry-level staff will need to look beyond intra-organizational sources to others who can provide them with career development assistance. Furthermore, Hall (1996) posits that organizations become fast, flat, and flexible. In view of this, the nature of the responsibilities that employees execute has necessitated both constant reconsideration of how to develop professionally and where to look for career development assistance. Higgins and Kram (2001) further explain that a mentor may perceive that offering advice may increasingly be difficult, as the nature of organizational work for the mentor continuously changes. However, they assert that from a pragmatic perspective, the
changing nature of organizational structures may constrain a mentor's ability to depend on one protégé within an organization, due to a mentor's relocation, job redefinition, or organizational change.

**Organizational membership.** The needs and resources available for career development (Blake, 1999; Kram & Hall, 1996; Ragins, 1997a) have been impacted by organizational membership. This is because organizational membership has become increasingly diverse, particularly in terms of race, nationality, and gender. Research on career development has clarified the significance of developing multiple career developmental relationships that extend beyond an employee's workplace (Thomas, 1990, 1993). Thomas and Gabarro's (1999) research on black and white managers and executives indicated that successful employees tend to draw on multiple sources for career and psychosocial assistance. Organizational scholars argue that careers become more boundaryless, and that mid-level managers' duties tend to cross organizational boundaries (Thomas & Higgins, 1996).

**Summation**

Several studies have been done on the benefits of mentoring relationship to include individual's personal development as well as professional development, leading to the study of the nature and benefits of traditional forms of mentoring. In this sub-section, both the traditional and mentoring perspectives were presented. Under the modern perspective, change in employment contracts, effects of the changing nature of technology, the changing nature of organizational structures, and organizational membership were discussed.
Higgins and Kram’s (2001) Developmental Network Perspective

Higgins and Kram’s (2001) development network perspective constitutes an individual's developmental network comprising set of people that a protégé names as taking an active interest in and action to advance the protégé’s career through the provision of career development assistance. In this sub-section, the developmental network perspective consisting of four major concepts will be discussed. These concepts include the developmental network itself, developmental relationships, the diversity of career developmental network, and the strength of career developmental relationships.

Developmental Network

An employee’s development network consists of developmental assistance and support, including career support, such as exposure and visibility, sponsorship, and protection; and psychosocial support, such as friendship, counseling, acceptance and confirmation, and sharing beyond work (Kram, 1985; Thomas, 1993). The provision of developmental assistance comprises an entry-level employee’s entire social network (Burt, 1992). However, the development network does not consist of all the interpersonal relationships of an entry-level staff, nor does it make up of every senior or mid-level manager with whom the protégé communicates concerning his or her career development. Thus, the developmental network comprises those relationships the protégé lists at a point in time as being important to his or her career development; they are simultaneously held relationships, as opposed to a sequence of developmental relationships (Baugh & Scandura, 1999; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Whitely & Coetsier, 1993). Finally, since this relationship constitutes a group of people that the focal entry-level staff identifies, a developmental network, therefore, becomes the entry-level employee’s "egocentric network", which is not the entire set of ties to and from specific senior-level
managers within a bounded social system, such as an organization (Ibarra & Smith-Lovin, 1997). Therefore, consistent with the approach taken in mentoring research, Higgins and Kram (2001) focus on developmental relationships that are known and identified by the protégé and do not consider senior managers who may offer career development support and assistance to a protégé without their knowledge.

**Developmental Relationships**

Distinctions among terminologies pertaining to mentoring relationships such as mentor, sponsor, coach, and peer have been identified (Chao, 1998). Thomas and Kram (1988) have made a distinction between true mentors (those who offer high amounts of both career and psychosocial support) and sponsors (those who offer high amounts of career development support but low amounts of psychosocial support). Higgins and Kram (2001) have identified “developers”, which they define as “people the protégé names as providing developmental assistance (i.e., career and psychosocial support)” (p. 269). This is in similarity to Ibara and Andrews’ (1993) advice network, which they simply call "advisors.” This is, therefore, highly possible that an entry-level employee’s career developmental network is not limited to a single, traditional mentor relationship, but one that is overarching.

**Developmental Network Diversity**

Social network researchers define the concept of network diversity as the one that describes information flow among an employee's various networks, whether the information is either similar or redundant (Burt, 1983, 1992; Granovetter, 1973). Thus, the less redundant the information provided by an entry-level employee's network, the greater the focal his or her access to reliable information to realize his or her career development objectives.
In social network research, two basic ways to define network diversity have been identified. The first is “range”, which constitutes the number of different social systems an individual’s relationships stem from (Burt, 1983). The second is “density”, which researchers define as the extent to which career developers have knowledge of and are connected to one another in the network (Brass, 1995; Krackhardt, 1994). However, Higgins and Kram (2001) have focused on developmental network range as their specific conceptualization of developmental network diversity. They argue that developmental network range “captures changes in the current career environment that prompt individuals to look outside the organization for developmental assistance” (p. 269). By range, they explain that developmental network diversity consists of “the number of different social systems the ties originate from, such as one's employer, school, community, professional associations, and so on” (p. 269). However, they do not define network diversity in terms of differences between the protégé and his or her developers’ race and/or gender (Ragins, 1997a), but emphasize that diversity focuses on the nature of the relationships that exist in the network, rather than the attributes of developers providing career development support.

**Relationship Strength**

Relationship strength constitutes the level of emotional affect, reciprocity, and frequency of communication between a protégé and his or her developers (Granovetter, 1973; Krackhardt, 1992). Clinical researchers indicate that relationships with strong interpersonal bonds tend to be reciprocal, mutual, and interdependent (Fletcher, 1996; Jordan, et al., 1991; Miller, 1986). Aldrich (1999) classifies these ties as either strong, weak, or indeterminate. Krackhardt (1992) asserts that strong interpersonal bonds create strong ties that tend to highly motivate both protégés and their developers. Thus, Higgins and Kram (2001) conclude that although
developmental relationships are not ties with casual contacts or strangers, such bonds are likely to be weak to develop relationships, especially when an entry-level staff aspiring to advance his or her career receives but does not provide valuable opportunity for learning or assistance to the mentor in return.

**Summation**

Higgins and Kram’s (2001) development network perspective discusses an individual's developmental network, which consists of a group of individuals that a mentee names as taking an active interest in and action to advance their career through the provision of career development assistance. In this sub-section, the developmental network perspective consisting of four major concepts was discussed. In detail, the concepts comprising the developmental network itself, developmental relationships, the diversity of career developmental network, and the strength of career developmental relationships, were discussed.

**Higgins and Kram’s (2001) Developmental Network Typology**

Higgins and Kram’s (2001) developmental network typology consists of developmental network diversity and developmental relationship strength. Haggins and Kram argue that these two dimensions are made up of four main categories of developmental networks. In this sub-section, these categories comprising high developmental network diversity, high developmental relationship strength ("entrepreneurial"); high developmental network diversity, low developmental relationship strength ("opportunistic"); low developmental network diversity, high developmental relationship strength ("traditional"); and low developmental network diversity, low developmental relationship strength ("receptive") Higgins & Kram, 2001, p. 270) will be discussed.
Entrepreneurial Developmental Networks

Burt’s (1992) entrepreneurial social networks span multiple groups or sub-networks. Burt explains that these wide-ranging networks are strong enough to bridge unconnected clusters of mentoring parties. Burt also demonstrates that these networks can be valuable to individuals with relatively low levels of organizational legitimacy since they offer various career development resources and information. Thus, Burt’s structural holes social networks are capable of positioning entry-level employees to act as brokers between unconnected mentoring parties to serve as tertius gaudens (Higgins & Kram, 2001).

Higgins and Kram’s (2001) approach captures both the wide-ranging nature of the developmental network and the strength of the existing bonds. They argue that the strength of diverse networks lies in the variety of information such ties tap into. However, the gain of strong ties originates from the motivation that mid-level managers must act on behalf of a focal individual (Granovetter, 1982). Empirical research indicates that strong ties lead to the realization of the highest levels of trust (Krackhardt, 1992) and are particularly valuable to mid-level managers during moments of uncertainty (Krackhardt & Stern, 1988) in the mentoring process. Recent social network researchers have suggested that bridging ties are not necessarily weak ties (Gabbay, 1997; McEvily & Zaheer, 1999), but high correlations are mostly found within bounded social systems, like organizations. In the case of developmental networks, Higgins and Kram (2001) suggest that developmental ties may span organizational boundaries, which tends to reduce the possibility for interconnectedness.
Opportunistic Developmental Networks

Higgins and Kram’s (2001) opportunistic developmental networks do not share similarity with their entrepreneurial developmental networks, due to the levels of strength existing among the relationships that establish a protégé’s developmental network. They explain “opportunistic” as a reflection of “both an individual's openness toward receiving developmental assistance from multiple sources and his or her generally passive stance toward actively initiating and cultivating such relationships” (p. 272). Developmental relationship strength constitutes high levels of reciprocity, frequency of communication, and emotional closeness (Granovetter, 1973; Krackhardt, 1992), which extend beyond an acceptance of mentoring assistance toward advancement of career goals and objectives. Thus, the likelihood that an entry-level employee’s multiple ties may become weak if he or she does not actively seek career development support from a developer and cultivate developmental relationships is higher (Higgins & Kram, 2001).

Traditional Developmental Networks

Higgins and Kram’s (2001) traditional developmental networks constitute few developers possessing strong ties to the protégé, where the relationship is characterized by mutual respect, trust, and sharing. They use the term “traditional” (p. 272) to expound on the classic case of mentoring where protégés tend to have one strong primary relationship. They assert that traditional developmental networks are less likely to be as large as either opportunistic or entrepreneurial developmental networks. Consequently, they posit that an ideal traditional developmental network consists of one strong tie to one social system and one additional tie that shares a relationship with that same social system. Thus, given that the bonds relate with the same social system, it is likely that interconnection will exist between them.
Higgins and Kram further posit that the information received from an opportunistic or entrepreneurial developmental network is likely to be non-redundant. There is possible redundancy or high similarity in the resources that a protégé may receive from a traditional developmental network that is made up of developers originating from the same social system. Therefore, it is likely that relatively fewer differences in the types of developmental assistance that mentors provide to entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers will consist of a traditional developmental network, compared to an opportunistic or entrepreneurial developmental network (Higgins & Kram, 2001).

**Receptive Developmental Networks**

Higgins and Kram’s (2001) receptive developmental networks comprise few weak-tie developmental relationships originating from similar social system. Given Byrne’s (1971) similarity attraction hypothesis, receptive developmental networks are expected to consist of weak ties between of entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers and their mentors. These weak bonds indicate much less clique-like structures comprising strongly linked individuals (Burt, 1980). Developers or mentors in both traditional developmental network and receptive developmental network have greater likelihood to provide similar information, attitudes, and cognitive judgments (Carley, 1991). However, Higgins and Kram assert that with receptive development network, career development assistance provided to a protégé is less likely to be strong. Thus, Higgins and Kram’s (2001) use of “receptive” reflects the openness of entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers to receiving career development support, while not suggesting that the mentee is enthusiastically initiating or cultivating career development relationships.
Summation

The components of Higgins and Kram’s (2001) development network typology consists of developmental network diversity and developmental relationship strength. These two dimensions are made up of four main categories of developmental networks. In this sub-section, these four categories comprising entrepreneurial, opportunistic, traditional, and receptive, were discussed in detail.

**Historical Perspective of Career Development Programs**

Studies on career development programs trace the historical perspectives of the concept of career development. These perspectives are based on how fast or slow organizations, whether private or public, develop and implement career development programs for their organizational members. In this sub-section, a discussion on the private and the public sectors’ perspectives of career development will be made, followed by a summation of the sub-section.

**Private Sector**

Organizations began implementing career development programs since the turn of the century (Merchant, 2008). Currently, the number of senior-level managers implementing these programs has steadily increased since the mid-1970s. This steady increase is due mainly to more organizations striving to meet the needs and expectations of their entry-level staff (Merchant, 2008). For instance, Gutteridge, Leibowitz, and Shore (1993) survey surveyed 1000 private agencies and found out that 70% of the respondents had or were planning to implement such programs in their organizations. The finding suggests that “many organizations are willing to play a major role in career planning and employee development” and “organizations that
emphasized customer service, organizational performance, professionalism and employee empowerment were most likely to have career development programs” (Merchant, 2008, p. 4).

Furthermore, Walker and Gutteridge’s (1979) survey showed that over 90% of the respondents found career development programs to enhance job performance, help employees use personnel systems more effectively, and improve the utilization of available talent. In the late 1980’s, large corporations such as British Petroleum Exploration, Amoco, Baxter Healthcare, and John Deere focused on developing and implementing viable career development programs. These corporations emphasized the use of career counseling, workshops, workbooks, self-assessment testing techniques, and job rotations to enhance the opportunity for growth and development among employees. Walker and Gutteridge (1979) found out that such pedagogies resulted in less employee turnover, fewer employee complaints, and higher levels of job satisfaction.

Public Sector

The increased popularity of career development programs has been given a boost in the public sector (West & Berman, 1993). This new move is due to several reasons. Undoubtedly, private sector organizations “are extremely competitive and their bottom line is directly tied to corporate profits” (Merchant, 2008, p. 5). Obviously, competition seems to occur more globally rather than nationally, just as technological advancement has been given a big boost in the private sector due to the need for more highly skilled workers to ensure competitive advantage. On the other hand, public sector organizations seem to be “service-driven and operate on budgets that are generated primarily by taxes” (Merchant, 2008, p. 5).
In his study, Merchant (2008) found out that career development programs in the public sector have been very slow in developing and implementing. Gibbons (1995) argued that this is due to the traditionally-held view that such programs are “nothing more than promoting officers through the ranks until they are eligible to retire” (p. 16). Apart from this, economic pressures tend to slow the development and implementation of career development programs (Merchant, 2008). For example, Merchant argues that in the mid-1980's, many police departments were forced to reorganize in an effort to reduce costs. However, the "flattening and downsizing implemented by many administrators" (Grossman & Doherty, 1994, p. 11) resulted in less opportunities for career development and satisfaction as well as promotions. Merchant concludes that to stop this trend from continuing into the 21st century, organizations must emphasize the strong value of career development and ensure that their senior-level managers fully support the professional development of their employees.

It is, therefore, important to note that current trends in organizations, such as placing greater emphasis on career development, mentoring relationships, and mid-level management, seek to indicate the likelihood that mentoring will become an effective organizational tool for organizational leaders wanting to build a strong workforce and organization. The role of mentoring in fostering the career development of aspiring mid-level managers has evolved as a component of several adult development theories (Hezlett & Gibson, 2005). Additionally, mentoring role has proven to be an important means through which organizational leaders facilitate learning among organizational members such as those aspiring to be in mid-level management positions (Merriam & Cafarella, 1999). It is important to note that mentoring being recommended as an essential tool for human resource development (Hezlett & Gibson, 2005) is a step in the right direction. It is, therefore, important that organizational leaders ensure that their
members are in an environment that provides supports for “adaptive, resilient, and proactive approaches to their present situations and possible futures” (Turner et al., 2010, p. 155).

**Summation**

In this sub-section, a discussion on the private and the public sectors’ perspectives of career development was made. It was emphasized that studies on career development programs have tracked the historical perspectives of the concept of career development in both the private and the public sectors to indicate how fast or slow organizations develop and implement career development programs. In the private sector, the number of senior-level managers implementing these programs has steadily increased as more organizations are striving to meet the needs and expectations of their entry-level staff. In the public sector, the popularity of career development programs has increased due to several reasons such as retirement and downsizing.

**Personality in Organizations**

To date, research has indicated that success depends more on personality traits such as perseverance and conscientiousness than intelligence alone (Zimmer, 2018). Personality is a description of how an individual’s character complements their workplace and fits with the all-encompassing mission of their organizations, which tends to vary by role, organization, and individual career goals. For managers and organizational leaders, being able to motivate and encourage organizational members while also understanding their shortcomings is critical to the success of an organization. For employees, being able to communicate effectively concerning one’s career choice and decisions pertaining to career advancement is imperative to driving an organization toward the achievement of its goals and objectives. In both instances, a manager's or leader’s ability to build and maintain relationships such as mentoring relationships in the
fostering of career development, especially with subordinates willing to aspire into mid-level management positions within their organizations, is integral to successful attainment of the vision and mission of the organization. In this sub-section, a discussion on individual differences comprising conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism, openness, and agreeability will be made. This will be followed by perception of mentoring relationships, attractiveness and career development, and personality and mentoring relationships, and a summation of this sub-section.

**Individual Differences**

Entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers have diverse personality differences which foster the success of the mentoring process. Research has shown the significance that individual differences place on the opinions of mid-level managers when mentoring entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers (Schultheiss, 2003). Wu, Foo, and Turban (2008) categorize these individual differences as conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism, openness, and agreeability.

**Conscientiousness.** Organizational members who are conscientious tend to strive for achievement and are dutiful, self-disciplined, hardworking, reliable (Costa & McCrae, 1992), and are best in initiating and keeping stronger relationships with their career developers. These traits are connected to high job performance (Judge et al., 1999). These individuals are self-motivated, get along with other members of their organization, and contribute to better interpersonal relationships and performance outputs (Hough, 1992). Further, they tend to be more cautious about taking actions that may damage their reputations (Caligiuri, 2000) as they advance their careers. Thus, they are more responsible and hardworking, making them more highly liked and respected by their career developers.
**Extraversion.** Organizational members who are extraverted tend to be warm, outgoing, positive, sociable, are with a high-energy level, and can comfortably interact with other members of the organization (Costa & McRae, 1992). Research indicates that extraversion is positively associated with the number of friends an individual can make and the time that he or she spends interacting with them (Asendorpf & Wilpers, 1998). However, John (1989) argues that highly extraverted individuals can hurt social relationships because they are outspoken and domineering. Nevertheless, Wu, Foo, and Turban (2008) assert that extraverted employees can curb their domineering tendencies with mentors. Thus, extraversion equips entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers to effectively handle social situations (Goldberg, 1999), and are, therefore, able to foster close relationships with developers to ensure effective career advancement.

**Neuroticism.** Another major individual difference in organization is neuroticism. Neurotic employees tend to be highly moody and poorly emotional, and experience negative affect, stress, and anxiety (Costa & McCrae, 1992). They mostly have less intimate and satisfying relationships (White, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 2004) and are less likely to initiate developmental relationships with co-employees (Turban & Dougherty, 1994). They poorly handle interpersonal differences and simply adopt an avoidance conflict management strategy (Antonioni, 1998). One major negative characteristic of highly neurotic employees is their reluctance to communicate their needs to others (Wu, Foo, & Turban, 2008). Research indicates that neuroticism results in greater vengefulness (McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick, & Johnson, 2001), which tends to sour relationships with other members of the organization. Consequently, entry-level staff who are highly neurotic will have less close relationships with their developers.
**Openness.** Openness, a character that distinguishes an individual from others, tends to create curiosity among members of the organizational community. Entry-level staff who are open are flexible and are receptive to ideas (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Research indicates that open individuals seek novelty and explore their organizational environment to solicit advice from their mentors (Goldberg, 1999). Thus, protégés with the character of openness spend enough time to establish and maintain intimate bonds with their developers and get pleasure from the relationships they build with their seniors mentoring them. Wu, Foo, and Turban (2008) conclude that individuals who are highly open in their organization prefer to communicate less frequently with a specific developer instead of a wider range of other individuals of higher managerial level.

**Agreeability.** Agreeability is a prosocial trait (Ansell & Pincus, 2004) that gives a vivid description of the conduct of individuals’ interpersonal relationships (Wu, Foo, & Turban, 2008). Research has shown that agreeableness equips entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers to interact effectively with other members of the organization to ensure adjustment (Shaffer, et al., 2006). Within organizations, agreeable employees communicate more effectively (Wanberg, Kanfer, & Banas, 2000). Additionally, they tend to be more intimate, satisfying, and secure in their relationships and connections with others (White et al., 2004). Thus, entry-level staff who are highly open tend to be warm, trusting, cooperative, helpful, and empathic, and can effectively adjust with their developers’ personalities and their schedules.

**Perception of Mentoring Relationships**

Research on protégé personality characteristics and protégé perceptions of mentoring has shown that career motivation is related to both psychosocial and career development mentoring received (Day & Allen, 2004). Additionally, research indicates that mid-level managers may
provide effective career development mentoring to entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers who tend to be well motivated, and are more efficacious and competent (Mullen, 1998; Mullen & Noe, 1999). Bozionelos’ (2004) study on the role of the Big Five characteristics in the mentoring process indicated that mentoring received correlated positively with protégés’ extraversion and openness to experience, but negatively correlated with conscientiousness. Turban and Lee (2007) report that self-reported mentoring provided correlates positively with openness to experience, but negatively with agreeableness.

Research focused on measuring personality characteristics from both mid-level managers and entry-level staff’s perceptions has indicated that the dispositional trait of learning goal orientation leads to pursuance of challenging tasks (Godshalk & Sosik, 2003). Turban and Lee (2007) assert that learning goal orientation of both the mentor and the protégé correlates with psychosocial and career mentoring. Also, they argue that a protégé receives the most psychosocial mentoring when both the protégé and the mentor score high in learning goal orientation. Thus, entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers are likely to experience much more meaningful relationships with their mentors when both the mentee and the mentor focus on learning and the development of competencies.

**Attractiveness and Career Development**

Given the potential costs of supporting an entry-level staff to advance his or her career (Ragins & Scandura, 1999) are greater, Turban and Lee (2007) argue that mid-level managers may decide to advance and develop protégés from whom they will obtain more rewards than costs. Olian, Carroll, and Giannantonio’s (1993) experimental study on how personality characteristics influence attractiveness indicated that mentors (developers) have greater willingness to mentor protégés with higher work performance. Also, Allen (2003) indicates that
mid-level managers are more likely to mentor entry-level employees who demonstrate more ability and willingness to learn.

Turban and Lee (2007) further assert that personality is related to work performance and learnability. This means that personality characteristics may be related to an entry-level staff’s attractiveness. Research indicates that mid-level managers seek to provide the necessary support needed for the career advancement of their entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers who are self-motivated, people-oriented, honest, confident, dependable, and competent (Allen, Poteet, & Burroughs, 1997). Thus, protégé personality characteristics that indicate mastery, professionalism, ability, competence, and willingness to learn are attractive to mentors.

**Personality and Mentoring Relationships**

The extent to which entry-level staff aspiring (as mentees) to advance their careers will initiate mentoring relationships with middle managers is dependent on the mentees’ personality characteristics (Fagenson, 1992). Studies indicate that mentors may be more likely to provide mentoring to mentees whose personality characteristics include ability, competence, willingness, and learnability (Allen, Poteet, & Burroughs, 1997; Olian et al., 1993). Thus, entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers who have a higher need for organizational achievement and success tend to be more dominant than their counterparts who have less need for progress (Fagenson, 1992). Also, mentees who are highly confident and self-controlled tend to be more likely to initiate mentoring relationships with their mentors (Aryee et al., 1999; Turban & Dougherty, 1994). However, Turban and Lee (2007) posit that there is mixed evidence about whether an internal locus of control relates to initiation of relationships. Research indicates that individuals who prefer to be in mentoring relationships are those who can comfortably initiate and maintain social interactions (Turban & Lee, 2007).
Entry-level employees aspiring to advance their careers who possess prosocial personality such as other-oriented empathy and helpfulness have higher tendency to participate in and embrace mentoring relationships (Allen, 2003). Bozionelos (2004) posits that mentoring relates positively to openness to experience, but negatively to agreeableness, which is direct opposite of what Turban and Lee (2007) have theorized. However, mid-level managers with greater confidence (Mullen, 1998) and who care about other organizational members, especially those entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers (Allen, 2003), tend to be enthusiastic about creating much more mentoring relationships. Research has proven that career development and advancement relate to willingness to the development of mentees’ careers through mentoring (Allen et al., 1997). Therefore, despite the overwhelmingly potential prize that mentors pay in the mentoring process (such as their use of time and energy), serving as a mentor seems to be a valuable career strategy. However, Turban and Lee (2007) suggest that more longitudinal research is needed to authenticate the value of mentoring as an organizational strategy that ensures mentees’ career advancement.

**Summation**

Personality constitutes how an individual’s character complements their workplace and matches with the mission of their organizations. However, this varies by role, organization, and individual career goals. In this sub-section, a discussion on individual differences comprising conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism, openness, and agreeability was made. This was followed by a detail description of perception of mentoring relationships, attractiveness and career development, and personality and mentoring relationships.
Adult Learning Theory, Mentoring, and Career Development

The several theories of adult learning (Merriam et al., 2007) such as behaviorism, cognitivism, social learning, and constructivism are essential in and align with career development (Allen, 2007). However, the connection between adult learning theory and career development is overlooked (Komolthiti, 2016). Research focused on getting a better understanding of mentoring and career development has focused primarily on educating the adult (Winkler, 2014) and identifying the variety of their learning styles as well as their individual multiple intelligences (Boreen, 2000). Consequently, when senior-level managers tailor their mentoring programs to those learning styles as well as individual differences and needs, it will ensure that entry-level staff seeking to advance their careers are provided with “high quality professional development opportunities” (Clark, 2016, p. 24). Building on Knowles’ (1973) five characteristics of adult learners, Moulson (2015) argues that any adult career development assistance should recognize that adult learners “(a) are independent and are capable of directing their own learning; (b) want to apply their new knowledge immediately; (c) have a history of experience that contributes to learning; (d) have learning needs that reflect their changing social roles; and (e) are intrinsically motivated” (p. 29).

The implementation of the tenants of adult learning theory ensures the effectiveness of mentoring programs employed to support entry-level staff to advance their careers (Muir, 2014). Adult learning theory provides an essential platform for the development and advancement of entry-level employees’ careers regardless of their departments within the organization. Adult learning theory continues to inform the development of mentoring programs and provide the theoretical basis for the institutionalization of mentoring programs (Zepeda, Parylo, & Bengtson, 2013).
The practice of mentoring constitutes a major means through which mid-level managers are supported to develop and advance the careers of entry-level staff (Zepeda et al., 2013). This practice is reinforced by adult learners’ preference to direct their own learning (Leslie & Johnson-Leslie, 2014). As an adult learning approach, mentoring appeals to mid-level managers and allows them to engage actively in the learning process (Moulson, 2015), as well as give and receive feedback throughout the learning process (Leslie & Johnson-Leslie, 2014). Thus, adult learning theory is relevant to mentoring theory (Moulson, 2015) and provides a foundation for the conduct of more research on the development of careers of entry-level staff aspiring to advance in their positions through mentoring. One such adult learning theory relevant to mentoring and career development is Mezirow’s (1978) Transformative Learning Theory.

**Mezirow’s (1978) Transformative Learning Theory**

Based on an extensive grounded theory, Mezirow (1978) presented the Transformation Theory in a paper titled “Education for perspective transformation: Women’s re-entry programs in Community Colleges.” This collaborative research with Victoria Marsick was also presented in the Adult Education Quarterly titled “Perspective transformation” (Marsick & Mezirow, 1978; Mezirow, 1978). The main purpose of Mezirow’s (1978) qualitative study was to identify factors that prevent or facilitate women’s progress in the re-entry program (Mezirow, 1978). Ever since, Mezirow has developed, refined, clarified, and extended aspects of the theory and based the modifications on other researchers’ applications of the model, discussions with peer researchers, arguments and expositions with other scholars, and responses from his colleagues (Taylor, 1998, 2007, 2009). Mezirow concluded that the 83 women from different states in 12 re-entry college programs had undergone a personal transformation and that they might have been through ten major stages in the transformation process. Komolthiti (2016) groups the major stages as “a
disorienting dilemma; a self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame; a critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions; recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change; exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions; planning a course of action; acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plan; provisional trying of new roles; building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships; and a reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s perspective” (p. 48).

By Mezirow’s (1978, 1991, 2000) description, transformative learning constitutes a specific type of adult learning process where adults modify or adjust “narrow, problematic, fixed, or static assumptions and expectations in themselves” (Taylor, 1998, p. 3). Mezirow (2000) argued that adults’ assumptions and expectations are parts of a frame of reference or meaning perspective, which “selectively shapes and delimits perception, cognition, feelings and disposition by predisposing our intentions, expectations, and purposes… provides the context for making meaning within which we choose what and how a sensory experience is to be construed and/or appropriated” (p. 16). Partially derived from Kuhn’s (1990) paradigm shift idea, Mezirow’s “transformation in a meaning perspective means that individuals view their world differently and this includes viewing themselves differently” (Taylor, 1998, p. 3). He further argued that transformations in meaning perspective, either epochal or incremental (Mezirow, 1978, 1991) could occur in either the instrumental domain or the communicative domain.

Mezirow borrowed and expanded his use of domains of learning from Habermas (1971). He argued that adult learning is “the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or a revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action” (Mezirow, 1996, p. 49). He, therefore, applied the worldview of the domains of learning and its
meaning structures as a disorienting dilemma, meaning scheme, and critical self-reflection (Mezirow, 1991). A disorienting dilemma “is an event or a string of events forcing an individual to critically reflect on his or her “meaning schemes” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 18). He further argued that a meaning scheme is a set “of immediate, specific beliefs, feelings, attitudes and value judgments” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 18), that results in a change of an individual’s worldviews (Komolthiti, 2016) and increases his or her self-awareness as the career development process moves on (Allen, 2007). Mezirow (1991) affirms that meaning making “is central to what learning is all about… Learning always involves making a new experience explicit and schematizing, appropriating and acting upon it” (p. 11). Komolthiti (2016) posits that meaning-making helps individuals to think for themselves, “rather than passively receiving what is given” (p. 49).

Despite Mezirow’s (1978) transformative learning theory’s popularity and extensive exploration and discussion, scholars have found limitations about the theory (Taylor, 1997). The theory seems to lack clarification of the definitional outcome of a perspective transformation (Taylor, 1997), as well as “an in-depth investigation of the varied nature of the disorienting dilemmas and the impact of the learner's context, such as personal and social factors” (Komolthiti, 2016, p. 50). Taylor (1997) further argued that the theory seeks to pay extensive attention to the role of critical reflection, ignoring the role of other ways of knowing; and lacks a universal perspective, which tends to ignore “the diversity of learners based on such categories as class, race, gender, and sexual orientation” (Komolthiti, 2016, p. 50). Additionally, there is no proof of the existing conclusion that the theory can be applied to several situations (Snyder, 2008; Washburn, 2008).
In a summary, Mezirow’s (1978) transformative learning theory, as an adult learning theory, aligns with career advancement among entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers. Mezirow’s theory constitutes an adult learning process (Mezirow 1978, 2000). Mezirow argues that learning, a process of an adult modifying or adjusting narrow, problematic, fixed, or static assumptions and expectations in oneself, takes place when individuals engage in activities that cause them to see a different worldview from their own worldview. He argues that for this learning to be transformative, individuals will need to integrate the implications of the different worldviews into their own worldview, which tends to enlarge their worldview. Further, he asserts that the larger the transformation or enlargement of worldview, the larger the impact on the learner’s life, either initially or over time. Mezirow argues that the assumptions and expectations in individuals constitute a “frame of reference” or “meaning perspective” through which incoming sense impressions of the world are filtered by individual learners. The meaning perspective “selectively shapes and delimits perception, cognition, feelings and disposition by predisposing our intentions, expectations, and purposes. It provides the context for making meaning within which we choose what and how a sensory experience is to be construed and/or appropriated” (Mezirow, 2000, p. 16). Mezirow’s idea of a transformation of a meaning perspective is partially derived from Kuhn’s (1970) idea of a “paradigm shift”, which Mezirow sees as “a collectively held meaning perspective” (Mezirow, 1990, p. 46). Mezirow proposes that an individual who experiences transformative learning experiences a “shift” in meaning perspective. Mezirow argues that a transformative learning shift equips an individual to improve on their psychological health, which flows on to different departments in an organization through improved organizational performance outcomes derived from the actions of the individual involved.
Career Development Theories

Adult learning has shifted to the constructivism paradigm (Allen, 2007). In the same way, the modern perspective of career development has shifted to the constructivist view of career development (Grier-Reed & Conkel-Ziebell, 2009). Komolthiti (2016) argues that over time, career development theories have evolved, giving birth to five main career development theories. In this sub-section, these five theories comprising constructivist theory, trait-factor theory, career typology theory, social learning theory of career choice, and life-span/life space theory will be discussed, followed by a summation of this sub-section.

Constructivist Theory

Constructivism constitutes a major career theory (Larochelle, Bednarz, & Garrison, 1998). Career theories have helped to uncover the personalities and capabilities of individuals and matched them with desirable professions (Komolthiti, 2016). This unearthing of individuals’ traits and abilities became the focus of career theorists in the industrial age. However, work in the post-industrial age is more complex (Komolthiti, 2016). Additionally, it seems individuals are “prepared for jobs that may not even exist yet, developmental and postmodern perspectives that provide young adults with a balanced, comprehensive, and meaningful process for exploring and making sense of the interconnections between identity and vocation seem most relevant” (Grier-Reed & Conkel-Ziebell, 2009, p. 23). Constructivists have challenged traditional career development and choices perspectives. Constructivists argue that career development is a lifelong process (Super, 1953) with a focus “on career patterns over time and on process rather than choice” (Hansen, 1976, p. 44).
Constructivists have a different perspective of meaning-making. They argue that individuals have no fixed meaning of their work world, and that they create their own meaning of experiences and realities through their own unique lens (Peavy, 1996). Individuals may reflect on their life stories, constantly revise these stories, and make meanings out of them to influence their career choices and plans (Komolthiti, 2016). Constructivists mainly focus on life planning and the search for meaningful work. However, individuals need to critically reflect on their life experiences and understand their conceptions concerning those experiences in order to find a meaningful profession (Peavy, 1996).

Parsons’ (1909) Trait-Factor Theory

Career development originated from the development of career counseling (vocational guidance) (Pope, 2000). Career counseling was greatly influenced by the work of Parsons (Schmidt, 2003). Parsons, regarded as the founder of the vocational guidance movement, focused his model on the concept of matching an individual’s abilities and interests with available career opportunities (Komolthiti, 2016). Thus, at the center of his theory is the concept of matching. He then developed his talent-matching approach into the Trait-Factor Theory of Occupational Choice to help young people with job placement (Pope, 2000). In this way, a mentee would need the support from a mentor in order to make effective career choices (Brewer, 1918). Parsons (1909) recognized that a successful career choice depends on an understanding of the self, a knowledge of job requirements, and an understanding of the relation between self and job.

Parsons’ vocational testing uses assessment tools to produce interest inventories as the foundation for career counseling (Reardon & Burck, 1975). One such tool is psychological assessments, used to help individuals become aware of and understand their strengths and interests (Patton & McMahon, 2006). Though Parsons’ (1909) theory has contributed to career
counseling, critics have argued that it lacks attention to environmental factors, individual
development, and labor markets (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996; Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996).

**Holland’s (1985) Career Typology Theory**

Trait-factor theory and career typology theory share similarity by focusing on matching
characteristics of individuals to organizational tasks. Career typology theory is attributed to John
Holland (1985). His typology framework for career interests categorizes personality into six
main personality types. These personality types consist of realistic, investigative, artistic, social,
erenterprising, and conventional (RIASEC) (Holland, 1985). The fundamental interests of
employees need to be congruent with the environment of their organization (Holland, 1985).
Komolthiti (2016) has explained that when the congruence is higher, the individual employee
will be more satisfied and stable in the organization. Thus, employees’ satisfaction and stability
are based on jobs that allow them to “exercise their skills and abilities, express their attitudes and
values, and take on agreeable problems and roles” (Holland, 1985, p. 4).


Building on Bandura’s (1997) Social Learning Theory, Krumboltz, Mitchell, and Jones
(1976) developed the social learning theory of career decision-making. Their main purpose was
to explain why an individual seeks to pursue the type of job they desire. Later, the theory was
developed into the learning theory of career counseling to provide suggestions to career
counselors about career-related problems (Mitchell & Krumboltz, 1996). Social learning theory
of career decision-making seeks to find answers to why individuals enter professions, change
their career plans, and make decisions to change their career preferences at different points in life
(Komolthiti, 2016).
Krumboltz and his colleagues identified four categories of factors that influence employees’ career decision-making. These include genetic endowment and special abilities that affect individuals’ ability to gain benefits or get access to certain educational and occupational opportunities; environmental conditions and events that affect career decisions; learning experiences comprising individuals’ personalities, behaviors, and preferences that are the results of learning experiences; and task-approach skills consisting of personal standards of performance, work habits, and emotional responses that interact among genetic characteristics, environmental influences, and learning experiences (Komolthiti, 2016). However, the theory has been criticized for failing to account for job change (Brown, 1990) and for paying less attention to career adjustment process, while paying too much attention to career choice (Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996).

**Super’s (1957) Life-Span/Life Space Theory**

Earlier career theorists focused career counseling on career choice and the matching of employees with what their individual job duties entail, however, their theories did not expound on the development of careers (Komolthiti, 2016). Super (1957) comprehensively developed a career development framework as an ongoing developmental process. He also explained the nature of career advancement among organizational members (Super et al., 1996). Super argued, “It has always seemed important to maintain three-time perspectives: the past, from which one has come; the present, in which one currently functions; and the future, toward which one is moving. All three are of indisputable importance, for the past shapes the present and the present is the basis for the future” (Super, 1990, p. 197).

Further, Super (1957) proposed that an individual’s career development constitutes the development and implementation of his or her self-concept throughout life stages. He also
posited that career development starts right from birth and declines until one dies. He, therefore, hypothesized five major stages of career development (careersnz, 2017), which is further explained in Figure 2.1: Growth: Birth to 14 years; Exploration: 15 to 24 years; Establishment: 25 to 44 years; Maintenance: 45 to 64 years; and Decline: 65 years to end of life

**Figure 2.1**

*Super’s Five Life and Career Development Stages*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Birth-14</td>
<td>Development of self-concept, attitudes, needs and general world of work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploration</td>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>“Trying out” through classes, work hobbies. Tentative choice and skill development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishment</td>
<td>25-44</td>
<td>Entry-level skill building and stabilization through work experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>45-64</td>
<td>Continual adjustment process to improve position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline</td>
<td>65+</td>
<td>Reduced output, prepare for retirement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Super (1985) found out that some organizational members engaged in stable and predictable career development and progression. He also stated that the progression would likely be more adaptive. Super (1985) subsequently made an expansion of his career development perspective. Thriving in today’s work environment requires organizational members to possess capabilities that go beyond organizational, industry, and even national boundaries (Higgins & Kram, 2001; King, 2012). Adults, therefore, need to learn to navigate their careers within their
organizational culture in order to meet today’s career advancement needs (Key, 2013). However, Hall (2002) asserts that mentees may finally not have value placed on them in the future when they transition into new positions within new organizations.

Super (1985) posited that it is possible that macro and micro socio-cultural factors impact an individual’s career development track. Therefore, he argued,

“Career development is a process . . . . In some lives, it appears linear, but in others there are spurts and plateaus, retrogressions and recyclings. The fact that one can identify a maxicycle of growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline through which many people progress in a common sequence should not hide the facts that some people never cease exploring, that some drift, and that some are destabilized by accident, illness, war, politics, recessions, and their own personal development as interests change and values shift with age and experience” (p. 407).

Cook (2011) had argued that Super’s “long-term view of an individual's development across life increases our understanding and insight when using these two perspectives together” (p. 48).

Super (1990) posits that an individual’s self-concept evolves when he or she engages in career developmental tasks. Komolthiti (2016) argues that the experiences the individual gains from these tasks will support him or her to understand himself or herself better and grow to possess the skills that can guide his or her career choices. Super (1990) calls the degree at which an individual can accomplish such tasks as career maturity. Super (1990) used Career Development Inventory (CDI) to assess an individual’s career development based on four dimensions. These dimensions comprise attitudes toward planning and exploring, and competence in job knowledge and in decision-making (Savickas, 1994). However, Super’s critics
have argued that career choice and career development do not entirely constitute a product of self-realization. Leung and Chen (2009) have asserted that both career choice and career development create a platform where self and the environment in which an individual belongs are negotiated, and where culture influences career choice.

**Summation**

Adult learning and modern perspective of career development have shifted to the constructivism paradigm and constructivist view of career development respectively. Over time, career development theories have evolved, and that has resulted in the birth to five main career development theories. In this sub-section, the five main career development theories which consist of constructivist theory, trait-factor theory, career typology theory, social learning theory of career choice, and life-span/life space theory were discussed.

**Mid-level Management and Career Development**

United States Department of Labor’s (2001) census data indicates retirement rates will increase as the US workforce ages over the next ten years. This means a vacuum will be created within today’s middle management. Schiller et al. (2016) have argued that while managers have been the source of much analysis, most of research and writing center either on the C-suite and senior executives or on first-time managers. Therefore, these researchers conclude that the understanding of middle managers is limited. In this sub-section, an in-depth discussion on mid-level management is made, followed by mid-level managers and their impact on organizations including their influence and power, the value of investing in middle managers, organizational focus on mid-level managers’ career navigation strategies, and strengthening mid-level managers for organizational excellence., and a summation of the sub-section.
**Mid-level Management**

Performance in organizations “is influenced by what happens in the middle rather than at the top” (de Boer et al., 2010, p. 230). Viewed for their “middleness” (Rosser, 2004, p. 319), mid-level managers constitute a significant force within their organizations (Tucker-Lively, 2014). They “may be classified as administrators, professionals, technicians, or specialists, and their positions tend to be differentiated by functional specialization, skills, training, and experience” (Rosser, 2000, p. 5). Research has shown that mid-level managers need to balance their skills in order to follow the leadership of senior-level managers and serve the needs of multiple departments (Bisbee, 2007; Lieff et al., 2013). Mid-level managers earn their recognition by contributing to the “tone, manner, and style of the entire institution” (Rossier, 2000, p. 7) and representing their organization as reliable and responsible team members focused on relationship building on and off their worksite. Jo (2008) argues that organizations need to support mid-level managers to ensure success in their role. Thus, organizations need to ensure that middle-managers have access to human resource tools in order to improve in their current roles as well as prepare for more challenging senior-level positions (Wallace & Marchant, 2009).

Lee’s (2012) study on career advancement decision making process and career goal of Generation X female mid-level administrators in community colleges in the Southeast emphasized leadership perceptions, career advancement goals, and factors that cause mid-level managers to support entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers. One major research finding was that senior-level executives took minimal action to understand how mid-level managers prepare for leadership shortages in community colleges and whether such potential mid-level managers are ready for their future positions and responsibilities. Additionally, Lee
found out that female mid-level administrators in community colleges were found to need career development support and assistance.

Marshall (2012) examined change leadership in higher education among ten mid-level leaders in New Zealand. The study sought to find their perception of their middleness and their change leadership roles. Marshall has suggested that there is a need for further study into the working relationships between mid-level professionals and staff groups to provide perspectives that will help with much more understanding of how they develop and advance the careers of others below their ranks. Thus, more research is needed to guide the formation of organizational practices to provide career advancement assistance to entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers (Tucker-Lively, 2014). Lieff et al. (2013) have supported the significance of implementing additional human resources programs to equip and position entry-level staff aspiring successfully to advance their careers into middle management.

Traditionally, mid-level managers must balance both their leadership and management skills in order to become more successful. McGurk (2009) has argued that the need for this balance is largely due to their placement within the organization that is halfway between the senior executives and frontline supervisors. Mid-level managers have had to become more responsible for maintaining stability within their organization through effective coordination. However, Overbay (2017) has argued that “rapid changes in the service delivery, increasing external pressures, and changing technology have resulted in a flatter and more responsive organization” (p. 31), leading to mid-level managers assuming a larger leadership role within the organization (McAlearney et al., 2013).

Current technological changes and service delivery trends going on in organizations have drawn the attention of senior executives to recognize and constantly focus on the need to
effectively use their human capital to benefit their organizations (Kuratko, Ireland, Covin, & Hornsby, 2005). This approach has led to senior-level managers turning their focus on equipping their mid-level managers to assume more, larger management roles, with a major focus on mentoring entry-level employees to ensure their success. Consequently, mid-level managers are now being uniquely positioned to efficiently use scarce resources within their organization to accomplish their mission (Kuratko et al., 2005). Skills-set of mid-level managers greatly impact the performance of front-line employees than senior executives within the organization (Yang, Zhang, & Tsui, 2010). However, mid-level managers must acquire proficiency skills in change management and have the ability to foster cross-organizational relationships (Viitanen & Konu, 2009), which is something they can possess through their participation in career development programs (Overbay, 2017).

The development of management skills is needed to ensure effective mentoring that leads to less turnover (Huston, 2008). Critical shortage in workforce necessitates incorporating mid-level managers into the succession-planning pipeline (Conger & Fulmer, 2003). The development of talent among mid-level managers will ensure better preparation and positioning of entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers into mid-level management positions (Kim & Thompson, 2012). Thus, the best way to bridge the gap in qualified managers is to develop the skills of entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers within the organization (Chilanga et al., 2014; Grandy & Holton, 2013). Mid-level managers fill the management void between the professional staff and senior-level executives (Emberston, 2006). The development of mid-level managers’ management skills maximizes the success of organizations and their employees including entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers (Johnson, 2009). Grooming entry-level staff to assume such future senior or mid-level positions curbs possible turnover due to
retirements and other factors. Though senior-level executives hold the most power and influence over the entire organization, it is very crucial to focus on supporting career development of aspiring mid-level managers to acquire stronger leadership skills, become more competitive and adaptable, ensure quality services in a timely and efficient manner, and aide in succession planning (Leskiw & Singh, 2007).

**Mid-level Managers and their Impact on Organizations**

The theory of traditional management has long placed significance on decisions that senior-level managers make (Davidson, 2005; Floyd & Wooldridge 1997), leading to less focus on the importance of the contributions that mid-level managers make in their organization (Alkendi, 2011). The structure of a traditional organization constitutes upper-level managers, mid-level managers, lower-level managers, and the street-level bureaucrats (Peters, 2004). Based on this structure, senior executives determine the strategic direction of an organization, whereas mid-level managers function as a fulcrum between their seniors and low-level managers (Donnelly, Gibson, & Ivancevich 1995). According to Floyd and Wooldridge (1997), mid-level managers "perform a coordinating role where they mediate, negotiate, and interpret connections between the organization's institutional (strategic) and technical (operational) levels" (pp. 466-467). Thus, mid-level managers link vertically related organizational members, and influence and change the direction an organization takes toward success (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1997).

**Middle managers’ influence.** Research indicates that mid-level managers positively influence decisions and operations in both upward and downward directions in their organizations when they are valued as important members in their departments (Floyd & Wooldridge, 2000). Thus, when senior-level managers increase mid-level managers’ scope and authority and include them in the decision-making process, it will lead to improvement in
organizational performance (Alkendi, 2011). Bower (1970) argues that mid-level managers "are the only men in the organization who are able to judge whether strategic issues are being considered in the proper context" (pp. 297-298).

Alkendi (2011) has pointed out that mid-level managers connect their overall organizational vision and the unpredictable reality of the direct service provider. He further argues that these managers mostly have enough information about their organizational resources and capacity that depict their organization’s operations hierarchy (Vengroff & Alyahya, 2005). This is due to the fact that senior-level managers routinely delegate important, specific organizational responsibilities to mid-level professionals (Floyd & Wooldridge, 2000). Thus, senior executives place mid-level managers in such roles to help support senior executives’ goals as well as support or reject the initiatives that low-level professionals within the organization develop (Ivanova, 2007).

Mid-level managers provide solutions to problems that low-level professionals find and raise so that such issues will not reach senior executives (Lipsky, 1980). They also can effectively address those concerns as well as prevent any further explosion emanating from dissatisfied professionals (Longenecker & Simonetti, 2001). Thus, successful mid-level management can assess and evaluate low-level professionals’ actions and unspoken needs and shift such actions into a usable form. Byrnes (2005) as well as Oyler and Pryor (2009) have argued that the lack of mid-level management and inclusion is a major cause of policy failure. Floyd and Wooldridge (1997) support the need to include mid-level managers in organizational policy decision-making. Thus, organizations need to recognize the importance of involving their mid-level managers in strategic policy decisions to ensure creative ways that lead to success with retention, performance, career advancement, and professional development (Alkendi, 2011).
Middle managers’ power. Mid-level managers most of the time face challenges concerning power and seem to risk their exposure of their individual personalities. Sexton (2013) argues that mid-level managers should understand the impact of power, range of authority fundamentals, and the assumed risk of power on their career. Jarvis (2012) argues that mid-level managers “can be seen less as a deliberate strategy by subject leaders than as a pragmatic response to a situation in which their degree of control and influence is severely circumscribed” (p. 480). Mid-level managers constitute “the folks in the middle who will make or break your organization’s growth strategy. Senior executives can come up with the most brilliant strategy in history, but if the people who design products, talk to customers, and oversee operations don’t foster innovation in their own realms, none of that brilliance will make a whit of difference” (Kanter, 2004, p. 150). However, Kanter concluded that the power of mid-level managers must circulate in the organization so that they can become innovative managers capable of supporting and mentoring entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers.

Power constitutes one’s “ability to get things done the way one wants them to be done” (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1989, p. 349). Jarvis (2012) argues, “On the whole, power that resides at the coercive end of the spectrum operates on what has been called the “essential” level, whereas most other forms are more “consensual” in that they call for participation and commitment from followers to be effective” (p. 484). French and Raven (2001) classify power into five major types. These include “reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, referent power, and expert power” (p. 263). Sexton (2011) posits that each of these five types of power influences one another at any point in time. Jarvis further asserts that influence precipitates from authority, or the power that is being referenced.
Mid-level managers gain influence from distributed power for several different reasons. Sexton argues that most of the time, mid-level managers “can get caught up in the various bureaucracies of organizations” (Sexton, 2011, p. 49), and when this happens, they rather become “reactive rather than initiating” (Markowitz, 1976, p. 367). Floyd and Wooldridge (1997) indicated that mid-level managers have gained influence in the organizational “ebbs and flows depending on the strategic situation” of the organization (p. 481). However, Sexton concludes that mid-level managers take all the risk any time they decide to lead by incorporating their spiritual authority.

The Value of Investing in Middle Managers

Mid-level managers are disapprovingly worthy to the success of their organizations. Seen in their organizations as craft workers, middle managers may be under increased pressure and feel more stressed (Osterman, 2009). However, research shows that their commitment levels to their organizations are very high (Easley, 2018). Based on the critical role they play in their organizations, their leaders need to position them for success. The role of middle managers in progressively flat organizations justifies the need to invest in their developmental success (Schiller et al., 2016). Investing in middle managers provides increases in the bottom line (Bersin, 2018) and improves organizational engagement, retention, and teamwork (Osterman, 2009).

Thus, mid-level managers constitute the driving force behind the execution of organizational priorities such as mentoring and career development. However, a paradox has arisen where the importance of middle managers is growing, but their skills are not standing up to their requirements, and their sense of career security is decreasing (McKinney, McMahon, & Walsh, 2013). If organizational leaders expect their organizations to compete in the future, they
need to effectively devote resources to their middle layer to help equip them to foster career development agenda of others aspiring into mid-level management positions in their organization.

**Organizational Focus on Mid-Level Managers’ Career Navigation Strategies**

The commitment of middle managers to their organizations has become conditional as their leaders have overlooked them (Schiller et al., 2016). However, organizations will be able to improve morale among their middle managers if organizational leaders develop and implement stronger mid-level management development programs. These programs can have a ripple effect in first-entry level employees aspiring to mid-level management positions within their organizations. In turn, this will improve retention of top talent across organizations to enrich leadership pipelines and set the stage for sustainable success (Schiller et al., 2016).

Research indicates that several factors influence the career path and development decision of entry-level employees aspiring to advance their careers (Chartrand & Rose, 1996). Thus, examining the social and psychological mechanisms that affect these professionals and appreciating their mentors (middle managers)’ significance to organizational success is very critical (Taylor, 2014). Studies available so far seem to ignore mid-level management. However, the transition into middle management is a major professional attainment (Yap & Konrad, 2009). Mid-level managers convey growth and prestige, but it is difficult for them to overcome any hurdle associated with their middleness (Hutchison, 2010). Despite these challenges that they face in their positions, mid-level managers have been found to help in paralleling organizational strategy with current changes in technology and careers to achieve profitability (Taylor, 2014).
Nonprofit organizations experience an average job turnover rate of approximately 21% with a large majority being entry-level employees (Futterman, 2010). The turnover rate in the human service sector is at 28% within the nonprofit sector (The Economist, 2008). Three out of four current employees at nonprofits have a desire to leave their current organizations before their fifth year in their current positions (Cornelius, Corvington, & Ruesga, 2008). This leaves gaping vacancies in the management level positions within their organizations. However, research indicates that helping in the selection of the best professionals and sustaining their engagement in their positions “increase affective commitment, assuage burnout and reduce turnover creating organizations where management can go on to become executives and continue onto lead their nonprofits” (Futterman, 2010, p. v).

Turnover intentions of entry-level staff have caught the attention of senior executives (Tucker-Lively, 2014). Senior-level managers need to ensure practices that focus on supporting mid-level professionals, so they can support entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers within the organization (Meyer & Smith, 2000). Tucker-Lively supports that executive management practices that promote career development support must be incorporated in organizations to provide senior managers with data for effective strategic human resource planning, as well as positioning mid-level managers and retaining entry-level employees. More importantly, executive management practices that reinforce career development assistance among entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers may be applied to reduce turnover and enhance performance in their various departments of the organization (Conley & Smith, 2013). Thus, the creation of reliable and effective organizational practices to develop, motivate, and sustain entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers relies on middle managers’ support
leading to an improvement in effective navigation of talent (Chilanga et al., 2014; McAlearney et al., 2013) as well as the quality of service delivery (Martin & Waring, 2012).

Managerial skills should not be limited to senior executives in the organization. Martin and Waring (2012) argues that organizations must ensure they provide development supports that can benefit all professionals of the organization. To ensure quality service delivery at every level, senior-level managers need competent mid-level managers who have access to development resources to improve the skills-set of entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers to prepare them for higher-level positions in case there is, for example, turnovers (Grandy & Holton, 2013; McAlearney, 2010; Walston et al., 2010; Wilson et al., 2013). Thus, mid-level managers are very useful in, "1) executing strategy; 2) facilitating up and down communication about human and economic resources, institutional capacity, and vision; 3) problem solving, and 4) encouraging organizational teamwork and cooperation" (Griffin, 2006, p. 43).

To ensure that they continue to play their role in their organizations, senior-level managers need to support them in the career advancement efforts channeled to support entry-level staff to help prevent unwarranted decrease in workforce. Turnovers among federal and state departments in the United States have become rampant largely due to retirements. For example, the federal government expected 60% of its workforce to retire in 2017 (Young, 2008). Departments that will experience decrease in workforce have highly skilled and educated employees who vigorously compete with the private sector (Young, 2008). New hires are expected to include Generation X employees who are found to be self-reliant, confident, innovative, and creative (Young, 2008). These employees tend to seek employment opportunities that offer reasonable benefits such as health insurance, tuition reimbursement, and employee development (Young, 2008). State departments must provide career development opportunities
for their entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers to encourage them to remain committed. Parker (2014) has argued that “adaptability, human capital, organizational change, and skill enhancement are common performance metrics for individuals who seek to advance within their respective fields” (p. 39). Entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers have different needs within their organizations, and most of them take career development as a way of enhancement and preparation for getting to the top in their respective fields (O’Connell et al., 2008). O’Connell et al. assert that lack of managerial support determines whether mid-level managers will mentor entry-level staff who seek career advancement. Parker (2014) concluded that managerial support and motivation constitute essential components for effective career development, which tends to lead to “adaptability, career change, employability, and marketability” (p. 40).

**Strengthening Mid-level Managers for Organizational Excellence**

Despite middle managers’ value to the success of their organizations, little attention has been devoted to their career advancement until recently (Schiller et al., 2016). Accenture (2018)’s research indicates that 25% of U.S. organizations have either reduced investing in their development programs for their leaders or had none to begin with. However, the study indicates that 39% of organizations recognized the need to invest in their middle managers. More importantly, the study shows the risk posed by an ill-prepared pool of middle managers. Consequently, organizational leaders have begun to increase their investment in programs that focus on the professional development of middle managers. Two of these outstanding programs are Turner Broadcasting System’s management essentials program (which was established in 2010 for all newly-hired managers). To have an opportunity to connect with their colleagues as they engage in webinars, classroom training, and e-learning to gain on-the-job experience to
function effectively in their departments) and NASA’s 16-month mid-level leadership development program (established by its Office of Human Capital Management for employees who have the potential to assume higher management and leadership responsibilities). However, to ensure that these programs become successful, leaders must ensure that they introduce mentoring, coaching, experiential learning, and feedback with formal training as part of the programs offered (Greim, 2018; Franco, 2018; Young, 2018; Nanji, 2017).

Summation

Middle managers’ level of commitment to their organizations has become conditional as they have been overlooked by their leaders. Organizations can improve morale among their middle managers if they prioritize the development and implementation of stronger mid-level management development programs. These programs can improve retention of top talent across organizations, enrich leadership pipelines, and set the stage for sustainable success. In this subsection, mid-level management was discussed. This was followed by mid-level managers and their impact on organizations including their influence and power, the value of investing in middle managers, organizational focus on mid-level managers’ career navigation strategies, and strengthening mid-level managers for organizational excellence.

Cultivating Talent in Massachusetts’ EOHHS

“Learning is the only thing the mind never exhausts, never fears, and never regrets.”

-Leonardo da Vinci

As previously discussed, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) is the largest secretariat in Massachusetts state government and is comprised of 12 agencies (of which one is the department of developmental services), in addition to 2 soldiers’ homes and the
MassHealth program. The efforts of the secretariat are focused on the health, resilience, independence, and cultivation of talent. EOHHS’ Human Resource Division delivers professional development programs that provide the knowledge and skills to state employees in order that they become successful at work. Through a variety of dynamic platforms introduced and organized by EOHHS’ Center for Staff Development such as classroom and web-based training, exercises and practical application, employees are equipped to deliver results and support evolving agency-wide business needs. The division is responsible for attracting, hiring, and developing people to do purposeful work. It partners with agencies to build and support a high-performing diverse workforce. Specifically, it provides support and administers human resource programs and services to current and prospective state employees, agency business partners and select municipal employees. The programs and services include recruiting new employees; delivering learning and development opportunities for existing employees; administering HR policy, employee benefits, and compensation; offering employee self-service HR-related support; administration of collective bargaining agreements and contracts; ensuring an inclusive, safe, and productive workplace; and administering examinations for public safety and promotional opportunities. In the following sub-section, a discussion on some of the best programs established by Massachusetts’s Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) to cultivate talent and ensure the professional development of its mid-level managers will be discussed.

**Governor Robert F. Bradford Fellowship Program**

Founded in 1996 by the family of Governor Robert Bradford, the Harvard Bradford Fellowship is one of the Commonwealth’s most esteemed programs for leaders in public service. Recipients learn from renowned faculty and engage with students from around the world. The
Harvard Bradford Fellowship provides for one academic year, September - May, and includes a summer program in July/August preceding the start of the school year. Completion of the summer program is required as a condition of acceptance into the program. In addition to full tuition and fees for the academic year, fellowship recipients receive full salary while attending the MPA program, including the summer program. Fellowship recipients are personally responsible for the cost of books and supplies that are approximately $2,500 for the full year.

An applicant for the Bradford Fellowship Program must be a college graduate; have taken the GRE (or GMAT) within the last five years of application period; be accepted for admission by Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School of Government, for its Mid-Career MPA Program; upon application, occupy a full time position, be paid from the AA subsidiary, have at least twelve (12) months of full-time service with the Commonwealth, be in an active status, classified as management at levels MV - MXII within the Executive Branch, or be a member of the Massachusetts State Police Department classified as a Lieutenant or above; possess at least seven years of professional work experience in federal, state, municipal, or county government, including time spent as a consultant or volunteer for a public and/or private non-profit organization; or as a manager in a private non-profit organization; be recommended by the appointing authority and supervisor; be willing to sign an agreement to serve in Massachusetts State Government in the Commonwealth in the same or higher level management grade for a minimum of two years following graduation, or to repay the salary received while attending the program if one defaults on this agreement (and this repayment provision will not apply if the individual is not offered a position at the same or higher-level management grade); and not have applied for the Bradford Fellowship more than three (3) times. However, applicants
who hold a graduate degree must specifically address what an MPA would offer them that their current graduate degree does not, in reaching their management career goals.

Certain categories of employees are excluded from the program. They include contract employees; employees in non-management positions; employees classified below Lieutenant; employees in positions classified at level MV who occupy a qualifying position in an "acting" capacity are excluded from participation in the program; employees appointed directly by the Governor; whose salary, by statutory requirement, is set by the Governor; employees employed by the Office of the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, State Auditor, Attorney General, and State Treasurer; employees in public institutions of Higher Education employed by the Legislative and Judicial branches, Massachusetts public authorities, or other quasi-public agencies, and county government organizations.

CORE Management Program

High-performing employees are often promoted into a role of supervising others, but when faced with their new leadership roles, many of these employees struggle to adapt to their new responsibilities. Being a leader of others requires an entirely new set of skills and practices in order to drive successful results. The CORE Management Program offers a learning experience that provides a framework to align leadership readiness strategies with business priorities. Program participants receive fundamental operational business knowledge, HR acumen, and interpersonal competencies needed to take on the responsibilities of being an effective leader in the Commonwealth.

The program consists of eight (8) courses to be completed between December and June each year. Classes are offered at locations across the Commonwealth. The learning framework of
the program consists of competency-based curriculum that is aligned with agency business priorities; a blended learning design including on-demand courses, microlearning segments, flipped classroom learning and workplace assignments; assessments, coaching, and real-time feedback; and a more than theory curriculum that integrates various forms of “practice” – the key activity that promotes real skill development. Employees who benefit from the CORE Management Program include managers and supervisors with at least twelve (12) months of full-time service with the Commonwealth, who have completed at least one Performance Evaluation; or high-performing individuals, who indirectly oversee others in order to accomplish a strategic project or agency initiative.

**EOHHS’ MasSP Program**

Mentoring, Aspiring Supervisors, and Succession Planning (MasSP) is an integrated, secretariat-wide initiative of the Commonwealth’s Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS). It addresses the growing need for workforce planning by establishing pools of competitive candidates that will help to reduce vacancy risks in EOHHS. The focus is on cultivating a highly-skilled workforce that can deliver innovative solutions and approaches that will enhance our service delivery. The operating principle of the program comprise commitment to retention of high-performing employees, program accessibility, and diversity and inclusivity.

All program participants are exposed to core competencies in addition to courses in their chosen MasSP “track” or concentration area. These are resilience, adaptability, interpersonal skills, results-oriented performance, written communication, flexibility, bridging diverse cultures, project management, and visual/oral communication. Each track supports a defined career path. The program is offered in locations throughout the state and location choices vary by track. All MasSP participants identify, implement, and present an innovative project with the
guidance of a project sponsor. Previous tracks have included Aspiring Supervisor for employees who strive to move into a supervisory position and seek to learn about the duties of a supervisor and the skills necessary to be a successful supervisor; Emerging Manager for employees who are experienced supervisors and would like to extend their careers in state government and move into managerial positions; Regional, Office, or Area Director for employees who are currently overseeing a unit or a program and aspire to lead a region, an office, or an area in EOHHS; Clinical Supervisor for employees currently in clinical positions who would like to develop or enhance clinical supervisory expertise to ensure positive outcomes for patients and/or clients; and Senior Leader for employees currently in a mid or upper-level management position who would like to move into agency senior management. In 2017, the tracks offered included Aspiring Supervisor Track, Program Director Track, and Senior Leader Track. In 2018, EOHHS offered Aspiring Supervisor Track, Project Management Track, and Senior Leader Track. As stated above, the aspiring supervisor track is for employees who strive to move into a supervisory position and seek to learn about the duties of a supervisor and the skills necessary to be a successful supervisor. The track is organized for seven days over seven months. The Program Director Track is for employees who currently oversee a program and would like to enhance current skills and learn new techniques to run an effective program in the Commonwealth. It is conducted for seven days over seven months. The Senior Leader Track is a graduate-level certificate program in human services leadership and management, in partnership with Suffolk University, for employees currently in a mid- or upper-level management position who would like to move into agency senior management. Participants earn up to 12 graduate credits toward MPA at Suffolk University, and the program is run for twenty-five days over nine months. The Project Management Track introduced this year is for employees who currently
oversee a project and would like to enhance current project management skills and learn new techniques to manage projects effectively in the Commonwealth. It is run for seven days over seven months.

**EOHHS’ Supervisory Academy**

The EOHHS Supervisory Academy is a comprehensive, three-day program designed to ensure supervisors and managers have the nuts and bolts needed to successfully supervise others in the Commonwealth. It is delivered through an HR lens, and promotes a balanced approach that includes topics in both the business and human side of supervision. Managers and supervisors of all levels are encouraged to attend.

The topics covered are grouped into two—human and business. The human topics comprise expectations of supervisors; fair and equitable, positive and respectful workplace; clear performance expectations; regular 1:1 check-ins; having difficult conversations; supervising the whole person; cultivating and engaging talent; and handling employee complaints. The business topics include classification system, collective bargaining agreements, progressive discipline, employment laws, employee performance review system (EPRS), probationary period, professional development plan, remedial development plan, employee leave benefits, workers’ compensation, ADA/reasonable accommodation, and self-service time and attendance (SSTA).

The EOHHS Supervisory Academy is delivered in three, three-day levels in comfortable settings that invite participation and openness. Class size is limited to 26 participants or fewer, and two or three HRD senior staff are involved in the sessions always. Rather than rely on only PowerPoint presentations, these sessions are engaging, lively, and participatory. Additionally, dialogue is ongoing, and questioning is encouraged. Fifty percent of the time is spent in dialogue,
small group exercises, and role-playing, and participants have the opportunity to visualize, practice, and critique actual leadership activities in a safe environment.

LMCs’ Training and Career Ladder Program

The Training and Career Ladders Program has been a very effective means to enrich training opportunities for bargaining unit employees. Unlike traditional methods of “top down” training, this program has employees involved, though their unions, with selecting training programs that directly impact their daily lives. The training courses selected by the Labor Management Committees (LMCs), not only help employees with their current jobs, but they also provide training opportunities for positions and promotions that they might aspire to.

The program package also includes free online trainings available to union members from NAGE, SEIU 509, Unit 2 – AFSCME/SEIU Local 888, and MOSES. Employees from these unions have access to on-demand, online trainings through Lynda.com, and can choose from more than 6,000 video tutorials covering business, creativity, and technology topics. These categories of state employees have free one-year Lynda.com licenses that are distributed on a first come, first serve basis, and they can request their licenses by emailing Career Ladder Training. Also, SEIU 509 members who are healthcare professionals can access free online trainings at PESI, Inc. by emailing Career Ladder Training with their names, emails, and bargaining units to receive the access code.
DDS Mentoring Program

“Mentoring is like marriages: There are some that make heavens and others that make hell.”

-Dr. Alberto Barreto

In 2008, a group of DDS employees presented to the then Commissioner of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) four strategic plans to help ensure diversity and inclusivity in the department. The Commissioner was to choose either networking, recruitment, retention, or mentoring. The Commissioner selected mentoring from among the four plans based on the idea that mentoring costs nothing and mentees give back to the community. In 2009, nine direct care staff from the North East Region became the department’s first mentees who wanted to develop themselves professionally and get themselves ready to move up into other positions within the department. They were mentored by their experienced professionals including managers and supervisors who were willing to “guide” them see “the light.” Then gradually, the mentoring program became a core point of the department’s diversity and inclusion plan, thereby being implemented in all the regions of the department across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. From 2009 to 2017, the program was run for three months each year for two hours a week. However, since 2017, the program has been running for six months. Interestingly, beginning the year 2018, mentees have included aspiring supervisors and middle managers who need mentoring support to help them advance their careers and develop themselves professionally. This new category of mentees is assigned to senior-level staff or middle managers and supervisors who could mentor these staff to realize their professional and developmental goals and objectives.
The leadership of the program from the central office has set expectations for both mentors and mentees. Mentors are supposed to have such characteristics as humor, intelligence, flexibility, empathy, patience, trustworthiness, reliability in program facilitation, teaching, coaching, and emotional intelligence. Mentees are supposed to be committed to learning, have a clear idea of learning path, and be responsible for their own work with their mentors. Overall, both mentors and mentees need to consider trust building, self-motivation, self-confidence, self-reflection, self-assessment, consistency, and self-drive. Ever since the program was implemented, it has focused on transferring knowledge; navigating organizational culture; diversifying workplace; ensuring collaboration and developmental partnerships through which mentors and mentees share knowledge and skills leading to the creation of emotional intelligence, growth, learning, and overcoming obstacles; preserving DDS culture; creating future leadership; maintaining corporate culture and continuity of services; avoiding turnover; and fulfilling diversity goals of the department.

**Summation**

The Department of Developmental Services (of which the Metro Region is one of its regional offices) is one the 12 agencies of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS). EOHHS is the largest secretariat in Massachusetts state government and is comprised of 12 agencies and 2 soldiers’ homes and the MassHealth program. The secretariat focuses on the health, resilience, and independence, and cultivation of talent. In this sub-section, a discussion on some of the best programs established by Massachusetts’s Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) to cultivate talent and ensure the professional development of its mid-level managers were discussed. Some of these programs discussed include Governor Robert F. Bradford Fellowship Program, CORE Management Program, EOHHS’ MasSP Program,
EOHHS’ Supervisory Academy, LMCs’ Training and Career Ladder Program, and the DDS Mentoring Program.

**Conclusion and Chapter Summary**

In this literature review, mentoring theories, adult learning theories, and mid-level management, with an emphasis on a mentor’s leadership role in the mentoring process were explored. The first section of the review presented a historical overview of social networks theory and methods to help understand mentoring in the context of career development. Such methods included typology of developmental networks using core concepts from social networks theory. Both network diversity and tie strength were discussed to demonstrate that mentoring is a multiple relationship phenomenon. Additionally, the role of personality in mentoring relationships as well as the concept of mid-level management were discussed in terms of its history and current literature. Also, in this review is a summary of adult learning and its linkage to career development. Super’s (1957) career development theory, along with a summary of career development theories, including Mezirow’s (1978) transformative learning theory were explored in detail. Super’s (1957) ideas were explored in detail because they framed this study. Furthermore, this chapter illuminated the phenomenon of the career advancement process by mid-level managers with an explanation of why the process is necessary in the career development process.
Chapter 3: Qualitative

Methodology

The question, explained in detail in chapter 1, is listed here:

*How do mid-level managers assigned as formal mentors describe their experiences in mentoring entry level staff aspiring to advance their careers?*

A qualitative approach was used to conduct this research to ensure an in-depth exploration and explanation leading to a better understanding of issues (Blaike, 1993). Many qualitative studies focus on how research participants make sense of events and how their perceptions inform their actions as opposed to identifying the exactness of the flow of events (Maxwell, 2005). For this study, a realist approach was taken to uncover the experiences of the different individuals involved. Even though qualitative research has a flexible design that evolves throughout a research process, making it possible for the research question to be revised along the way in the research process, the researcher believed that the question was sufficient to guide this study (Meadows, 2003). The broadness of the question was, therefore, appropriate to help gather as much as data related to the advancement of entry-level employees’ careers in their departments.

The use of a qualitative approach allowed the researcher to get to know who and what were studied in greater detail, since it emphasized building connections and interacting with participants (Creswell, 2012). This allowed the researcher to get a much deeper understanding of the participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Thus, the use of qualitative studies provided the opportunity for the research participants to make sense of their experiences, which informed their actions as middle managers and formal mentors (Maxwell, 2005).
For this study, document review was used to gain insight into mid-level managers’ mentoring experiences as they seek to foster career development at DDS Metro Region in Massachusetts. Additionally, the research question was used to plan and develop the semi-structured virtual interview protocol. The semi-structured virtual interview protocol was used to capture the experiences of participants to inform the study and ensure that a rich context for addressing the research question was provided in detail in this chapter. Additionally, the semi-structured virtual interview protocol focused on understanding the experiences of middle managers who rely on mentoring for the advancement of the careers of entry-level employees aspiring into mid-level management positions. Finally, a follow-up interview was conducted to validate the trends and clarify issues that emerged from the virtual interview process and document comparative analysis.

The most significant goal of the researcher concerning the design of the semi-structured virtual interview protocol was to ensure that participants’ responses answered the research question. The main goal of this study was to gather input from middle managers concerning their mentoring experiences of entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers. The virtual interview questions were designed to help gather qualitative data on the lived experiences of these experienced middle managers.

As previously discussed, the goal of the research question was to gather reflections from these experienced middle managers about their descriptions of their mentoring experiences of entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers. The research question was categorized based on Maxwell’s (2005) particularistic nature of questions because it was framed as a group of mid-level managers within a specific organizational context. In conclusion, the goal of the research question for this study was to reveal the mentoring experiences, attitudes, and private
constructions of identity of these middle managers, which was best brought to light through the application of a narrative study.

**Research Design**

The study was conducted using a narrative study approach. That said, narrative study was used as the qualitative methodology for this study. Through narrative, the mentors made sense of the experiences that constituted their existence. They created meaning in their lives through the development of their narratives, and therefore, this narrative study made it possible for their stories to be looked into to ensure understanding of many of life’s phenomena. Given that this study focused on a specific, point-in-time lived experience (Creswell, 2013) of mid-level managers, the frame constituted an appropriate vehicle for understanding the mentoring process in general and for understanding mentoring in the context of career development.

**Research Tradition**

The research tradition covers the specific approach for the choice. In line with the research design, which in this case is the qualitative design, a narrative study (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) was chosen for this current study to provide a means for developing a deeper understanding of the ways in which experienced middle managers as formal mentors foster advancement in careers of entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers.

This narrative study provided the richness of the descriptions of stories offering entry into participants’ inner worlds (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In their original formation of research methodology, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) differentiated between narrative inquiry and narrative analysis or narrative study. However, Clandinin (2007) later acknowledged that the terms were often synonymous. The main value of this narrative study as a
research method was that it offered an opportunity to “understand experience as a narratively composed phenomenon” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 16). This constituted a representation of participants’ social influences on their inner lives, their social influences on their environments, as well as their exceptional individual histories (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). In this study, the researcher was interested in the ways in which middle managers serving as mentors advance the careers of entry-level staff aspiring into mid-level management positions. The study also tapped into how these mentors used their personal and professional experiences to guide their mentees through the process of career advancement and how the mentors experienced and made sense of the mentoring process.

This narrative study, therefore, allowed for the development of an understanding of the chronology of events that occurs as middle managers serve as developers to entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers. It also captured detailed experiences of the mentors (Creswell, 2012) by “intruding on people while living real lives and asking them to help us learn something” (Josselson, 2007, p. 538). This intrusion paved the way for the researcher to understand the stories of the study’s participants (Creswell, 2013), and that led to “insights that have immediate practical impact on practice” (LaMan, 2015, p. 46).

**Participants**

From a total pool of 240 of mentors, the sample of this narrative study was selected from middle managers who have participated in formal mentoring training programs. The researcher then narrowed down the total pool to nine formal mentors who ended up participating in the study. These formal mentors were middle managers who have worked for DDS-Metro Region for at least 5 years; are in mid-level management positions; and have had experiences as mentors to others aspiring to be in mid-level management at the Metro Region of the Department of
Developmental Services. The illumination of the experiences of these experienced middle managers was to ensure that the results of the study were “not generalizable beyond the individual, social setting, or time period” (LaMan, 2015, p. 46). Chapter Four includes more detailed profiles of each participant.

Table 3.1

**Overview of Study’s Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>4 Males and 5 Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>8 Caucasian and 1 African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Titles</td>
<td>3 Service Coordinator Supervisors, 1 RN III, 1 Director of Nursing, 1 Clinical Director, 1 Program Monitor, 1 Director of Programs, and 1 Assistant Director of Investigations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Recruitment and Access**

A purposeful sampling method was used for this study. This was used as a strategy because it relied on the researcher’s judgment to create a representative sample of the population under study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). Besides, this method was utilized because the researcher wanted to “discover, understand, or gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). Thus, for this study, a narrative study methodology was used to capture the experiences of nine experienced mid-level managers as formal mentors who participated in the virtual interview protocol and the follow-up interview processes. With this, the following criteria were used: (a) they have worked for the agency...
(DDS-Metro Region) for at least 5 years; (b) they are in mid-level management positions; and (c) they have had experiences as mentors to others aspiring to be in mid-level management at the Metro Region of the Department of Developmental Services. The reason for the selection was that these middle managers were the best people to provide relevant data for the research. Further, there was so much diversity and broader scope in terms of those involved in the study. The participants, therefore, provided a holistic, in-depth analysis of the subject matter. With purposeful sampling, the researcher selected participants in a manner that facilitated the expansion of the developing theory (Bogden & Biklen, 2003). The researcher mentors EOHHS entry-level employees working at the DDS-Metro Region. He, therefore, has a professional relationship with some middle managers who are also mentors. This association did not interfere with the research process, but rather fostered the type of trust that was essential to deep reflection and truthfulness. Confidentiality was ensured to encourage the respondents to share their stories without fear or discomfort.

Data Collection

In this study, data was gathered from a purely qualitative source to obtain first hand interaction with the subjects of the study. Based on the experiences of the mid-level managers, the best approach was to involve those who also serve as mentors in the DD-Metro Region. The opportunity for detailed and further interaction with respondents informed the choice of this data collection technique. This narrative study relied on document review, semi-structured virtual interview protocol, and a follow-up interview. The data collection process was organized into five main phases. These phases are outlined below. Data was collected over a period of several months. All data was collected by email and on site at the Metro Region in Waltham, MA to
meet with the Human Resources staff and middle managers. A thorough description of each phase follows in the table below.

*Table 3.2*

**Overview of Data Collection Phases**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase I: Document Review</td>
<td>Robust review of available documents which articulated the Region’s efforts towards fostering career development and advancement of its aspiring mid-level managers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase II: Pilot Study</td>
<td>Face-to-face interview and test of virtual interview protocol. Confirmed better data collection strategy and questions, and reflected on accurate responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase III: Virtual Interview Protocol</td>
<td>Questions sent to 14 mid-level managers who have served and continue to serve as mentors to ascertain their career development experiences and observations as mentors using semi-structured questions based on features of Super’s Career Development Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase IV: Virtual Interview Protocol Analysis</td>
<td>Analysis of responses from 9 middle managers to identify trends across the mid-level managers’ experiences and a comparative analysis of these trends relative to findings from the document review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase V: Follow-up Interviews</td>
<td>Conducted with the participants for validation of trends and clarifications of issues that emerged from the survey and document comparative analysis; 30-45-minute interviews; Note taking; Conducted Face/Face; Participants chose location.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phase 1 involved robust review of available documents which articulated the Region’s efforts towards fostering career development and advancement of its entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers. Phase 2 involved the pilot study. At this stage, face-to-face interviews were conducted using two state employees. Additionally, the virtual interview protocol was tested. In the end, the pilot study participants reported and confirmed that responding to the virtual interview questions was a better data collection strategy since it would allow the study’s participants enough time to reflect on accurate responses. They also suggested organizing a follow-up interview either face-to-face or online for the study’s participants to give them the opportunity to clarify some ideas. Phase 3 involved virtual interview protocol questions sent to 14 mid-level managers who have served and continue to serve as mentors to ascertain their career development experiences and observations as mentors. The semi-structured interview
questions were based on features of Super’s Career Development Theory. Among the 14 mid-level managers who received the protocol, only 9 willingly responded and were, therefore, used as the study’s participants. Phase 4 involved the analysis of the virtual interview protocol responses to identify trends across the mid-level managers’ experiences and a comparative analysis of these trends relative to findings from the document review. Phase 5 involved a follow-up interview with the participants for validation of trends and clarifications of issues that emerged from the virtual interview protocol and document comparative analysis.

**Document review.** A document review was done on EOHHS and DDS-Metro Region career program descriptions, professional development documents, department and region memos, DDS mentoring program documents, and training documents related to career advancement and mentoring. According to Bowen (2009), “bearing witness to past events, documents provide background information as well as historical insight” (p. 29). The importance of the main domains of the document review process to this qualitative study was to provide context, suggest new questions for the researcher to ask the participants, broaden the researcher’s knowledge of the case being studied, contribute to tracking changes and developments within the case under study, and provide a system to verify data gained from other sources. The documents reviewed in this study were significant to understanding the mentoring experiences of mid-level managers working for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as they support entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers at the Metro Region of the Department of Developmental Services.

In consultation with the Regional Director of DDS-Metro Region in Waltham, MA and the Area Director of DDS-Charles River West Area Office in Somerville, MA, the researcher contacted DDS Assistant General Counsel, who is the chairperson of DDS Research Review
Commission (RRC) to review DDS regulations, specifically 115 CMR 10.00 et seq. to see if this study did not involve individuals who receive services from DDS, and that no information about these individuals was used in the study accordingly. Upon review, the Counsel decided the researcher did need approval from DDS RRC Board to collect data in the Region. Additionally, as it was agreed upon, no data specific to individual employees and their performance ratings was collected or included in the final report. To clarify, the researcher reviewed agency mission and values, and professional and career development programs including their mentoring program. However, spreadsheets of employee performance and individual middle managers’ portfolios of work were not reviewed as part of this research project. The objective of the document review was to gain a clear understanding of the Region’s efforts towards fostering career development and advancement of its entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers.

**Pilot study.** During the pilot study phase of the study, the researcher solicited feedback from three service coordinators who willingly participated in the pilot study. They were selected three main area offices of the DDS-Metro Region. They included a Traditional Service Coordinator (TRSC), a Children’s Coordinator (CSC), and a Transition Coordinator (TNSC). They ensured the coordination of services for individuals being served and supported by DDS in the Metro Region. At the time of the pilot study, none of them was in a mid-level management position. However, all of them used to be mid-level managers in private agencies had served as mentors before in various capacities.

The Children’s Service Coordinator (CSC) participated in the face-to-face interview. The interview took over an hour to conduct. The CSC’s Comments were “Some of the questions seemed repetitive. I did not understand the question about being an animal but explaining it during the interview was helpful” (Personal communication, December 14, 2017). The CSC
concluded that “It would be better if some of the questions had only one question, because it became confusing and too lengthy to answer” (Personal communication, December 14, 2017). The participant further stated that “clustering questions together would have been helpful, and I would have preferred a virtual interview to an interview” (Personal communication, December 14, 2017).

Both the Traditional Service Coordinator (TRSC) and Transitional Service Coordinator (TNSC) participated in the virtual interviews at the pilot stage. TRSC used an hour to complete it. TNSC used 45 minutes to complete it. The TRSC’s commented that “I love virtual interviews to a traditional interview because I can provide more thoughtful and truthful answers at a pace I am comfortable with” (Personal communication, December 14, 2017). The TNSC’s Commented that “This was best presented as a virtual interview format. This allows someone time to formulate their thoughts and responses. However, easier questions can be presented in a traditional interview format to assess ability” (Personal communication, December 14, 2017).

Thus, the development and use of the virtual interview protocol enabled the formal mentors who participated in the study the opportunity to give meaningful and thoughtful responses to the interview questions. This is because the suggestions from the pilot study participants were very helpful to the researcher as they helped him to refine the questions. Additionally, their suggestions helped the researcher to conduct the interviews virtually to provide an opportunity for the middle managers who ended up participating in the study as formal mentors to give well-thought of responses at their own pace, as the pilot study participants indicated that a traditional face-to-face interview was not a better for the questions for this study based the various components of the theoretical framework.
**Virtual interview protocol.** The researcher decided to use virtual interviews rather than traditional face-to-face interviews to provide participants with reflective opportunities. The researcher believes we live in a virtual world today and that almost everything is being done virtually these days. The effective use of the virtual interview format, therefore, was a deductive way of developing the research question using the theoretical framework of the study.

The virtual interview protocol was sent to fourteen mid-level managers who have served and continue to serve as mentors to ascertain their career development experiences and observations as mentors using semi-structured interview questions based on features of Super’s Career Development Theory. Nine of the fourteen mid-level managers who received the protocol willingly responded and were therefore used as the study’s participants. Before the protocol was sent out, participants were comprehensively briefed on the purpose of the study and required to sign a consent form. Their consent was needed to ensure that the researcher fully followed the highest standards of ethical research. Additionally, the researcher contacted participants individually, by email and phone call to provide each with further details on the research. The researcher used this opportunity to emphasize to participants that their participation in the research was voluntary and that they were willing to opt out of the research at any time. As Sikes (in Bathmaker & Harnett, 2010) cautions, it “would be unethical to offer a version of someone’s life without making clear the nature of the gaze that is being brought to bear upon it. Reflexivity and honesty about one’s positionality and its role in sense-making are integral components of ethical practice” (p. 13). Corbin and Strauss (2008) posit that reflexivity is a valuable and even cathartic tool through which the impact of the presence, position, and perspective of the researcher is made clear, thus promoting rich insight through personal responses and interpersonal dynamics. The researcher’s conformability was, therefore, achieved
by the explicit recognition of personal experiences with the participants, as well as the emphasis and delineation of the evidentiary basis of the conclusions. Thus, the credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability of the study ensured the validity and trustworthiness of this research study. In Table 3.3, presented below, the finalized questions and their link to the theoretical framework are outlined.

Table 3.3

Study’s Virtual Interview Protocol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Connection to Super’s Career Development Theory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting on previous mentors you have had, either at their Agency or earlier in your career, describe how their approach shaped your perceptions of yourself as an aspiring leader/manager/professional</td>
<td>Self-Concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting on your own career advancement, what were the critical experiences that you had which helped develop your set of skills? List at least three and describe how you believe these experiences supported the development of your skills-set.</td>
<td>Skill Acquisition-Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which set of two skills have equipped you in becoming an experienced mentor? How?</td>
<td>Growth-Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting on the different career opportunities you have had and where you were in terms of your own life-span (maturation)</td>
<td>Life Span – stages Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell me about a time when you had some different career choices?</td>
<td>Choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you explore those options? Was there anyone who helped you to</td>
<td>Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reflect on the advantages/disadvantages of those choices?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting on your role as a mentor, how do you approach mentoring</td>
<td>Skill Acquisition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aspiring mid-managers about the best strategies for gaining required</td>
<td>as a Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skills needed for career advancement?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting on your role as a mentor, how do you approach mentoring</td>
<td>Growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aspiring mid-managers given their growth statistics?</td>
<td>as a Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting on your role as a mentor, how do you approach mentoring</td>
<td>Life Span – stages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aspiring mid-managers given they may not have the years of</td>
<td>as a Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experience nor be as advanced/mature in terms of their life-stage?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting on your role as a mentor, what are the factors you</td>
<td>Choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>encourage your mentees to explore when they are considering</td>
<td>as a mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different career choices? What are the strategies you use to help</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aspiring mid-managers consider when making career choices?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you were to select an animal to describe your approach to mentoring</td>
<td>Self-concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aspiring middle-managers, what would that animal be? Why?</td>
<td>Role as a Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assume it is 5 years from now and you have been invited to speak to</td>
<td>Stability and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other agencies about the innovative approach that Metro Region</td>
<td>Predictability in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>launched for fostering career development of its aspiring middle</td>
<td>Career Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>managers. What would the headline/title of that presentation be? What</td>
<td>and Progression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>would be the main points of the story? What role do you think</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mentoring will play in shaping the success of the agency?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If you were to give advice to an aspiring mid-level manager about the best strategies for advancing their career, what would that advice be?

Which of the agency-wide or union-specific professional trainings have you participated in? Which ones were very useful to you in helping to develop and advance your career goals?

If you were to give advice to those who design mentoring programs about what is needed to make this more effective, successful, sustainable, and/or to ensure it has an impact on fostering career development for middle managers, what would that advice be?

What are the useful experiences that you have had to help the development of your ability to be an impactful mentor to aspiring middle-managers?

How long and in what capacity (profession) have you been working for Department of Developmental Services?

How long have you worked in department’s Metro Region?

How long have you been a mid-level manager?

How many times have you served as a mentor in the Metro Region?

Have you served as a mentor in other workplaces, church, school?

Table 3.3 presents the final questions that were refined after completion of the pilot study. The literature review informed these questions. These questions gave the respondents an opportunity to share their experiences related to fostering career development of aspiring mid-level
managers. This opportunity paved the way for the respondents to thoroughly understand the purpose of the study.

**Follow-up interviews:** A follow-up interview was conducted to ensure validation of trends and clarification of issues that emerged from the virtual interview protocol and document comparative analysis. This 30-45-minute face-to-face follow-up interview took place in a location and at a time convenient for participants to clarify some issues identified from the virtual interview protocol responses. With their permission, notes were taken during the follow-up interview. Participants had the opportunity to review their responses for accuracy and clarification. However, they had the opportunity to retain the right to decline answering any questions at any time.

In summary, document review, virtual interview protocol, and a follow-up interview were used to collect data for this study. These strategies focused on gaining an accurate, clear understanding of the perspectives of mid-level managers seeking to advance the professions of entry-level employees in their agency.

**Alignment of the Research Question**

The central question for this narrative study focused on how mid-level managers working in a state agency described their mentoring experiences of entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers within the Metro Region of the Department of Developmental Services of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The document review focused on gaining accurate and clear understanding of the planning, designing, implementation, continuous improvement processes of the DDS-Metro Region’s the mentoring and career development programs. The virtual interview protocol phase of the study centered on addressing the semi-structured questions based on
features of Super’s Career Development Theory. Finally, a 30-45-minute face-to-face follow-up interview was conducted to ensure validation of trends and clarification of issues that emerged from the virtual interview protocol and document comparative analysis. The questions for both the virtual interview protocol and the face-to-face follow-up interview focused on ascertaining the participants’ career development experiences and observations as mentors.

**Data Analysis**

For this study, special attention was given to the data analysis process within the narrative study approach. Also, the use of multiple sources of data (data triangulation) was advocated as a way of increasing the internal validity of the study to help answer the research question appropriately (Crowe et al., 2011). The researcher, therefore, approached the same issue from different angles to develop a holistic depiction of the phenomenon that was studied (Crowe et al., 2011).

The responses from the virtual interview protocol and the follow-up interviews were coded and analyzed to identify multiple perspectives of middle managers who were chosen for this study. To ensure the success of the process of data analysis, the researcher engaged in “preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data” (Creswell, 2009, p. 183). To accomplish this, the researcher proofread the participants’ responses and followed the Miles and Huberman’s (1994) process of open coding which allowed the codes to emerge from the data within each individual transcript. The researcher categorized the codes through inductively formed categories to sort the codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Further, the researcher placed codes on a wall to help conduct a cross-case coding comparison to identify similarities and dissimilarities. The researcher coded each
response separately using open codes that arose from the virtual interview and the face-to-face interview processes. The researcher then labeled passages to identify common areas of thoughts using open coding, as well as wrote memos while coding to capture participants’ perspectives in real time.

During the coding phase, the researcher broke down the information collected into data units according to Rubin and Rubin’s (2005) “blocks of information” (p. 202) that the researcher examined together. The researcher re-read all the responses from the nine cases to verify codes. Further, the researcher conducted a second round of coding to verify open codes and identify any additional emergent codes that might have aligned with previously reviewed literature. The second round of coding helped the researcher to start the process of clustering of similar codes. The open coding and clustering of codes followed the researcher’s referral to the theoretical framework of the study as well as a review of the research question to ensure that responses provided insight to inform the research study. The researcher placing codes on a wall helped to ensure an effective cross-case coding comparison that identified similarities and dissimilarities, as well as helped the researcher to look for connections during the analysis phase to gain insight into the themes that finally emerged from the data (Seidman, 1998).

During the cross-case analysis phase, the researcher linked the codes and clusters to the study’s theoretical framework. This process allowed the researcher to develop themes based on their preponderance within the nine cases. To understand the perspectives of the participants’ approaches to career development through mentoring, the researcher first analyzed the first nine individual virtual interview protocol responses and their face-to-face interview responses. Second, the researcher performed these steps to develop preliminary codes and clusters based on the study’s theoretical framework along with the study’s preliminary themes. Third, the
researcher performed a validation process with four mid-level managers that met the criteria for participation but did not participate in the study. Fifth, two individuals with doctoral degrees were given the opportunity to confirm or disallow the codes, clusters, and preliminary themes from the virtual interview protocol and the follow-up interview processes. This concluded the researcher’s cross analysis of individuals’ virtual interview protocol responses and their follow-up interview responses to understand their perspectives of fostering career development of their aspiring middle managers through mentoring. Thus, these steps were followed to search for “ongoing action/interaction/emotion taken in response to situations, or problems, often with the purpose of reaching a goal or handling a problem” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, pp. 96-97).

Data analysis was crucial to bringing into the limelight the experiences of the middle managers who have served and continue serve as mentors at DDS-Metro Region, since “one cannot ordinarily follow how a researcher got from 3600 pages of field notes to the final conclusions, sprinkled with vivid quotes though they may be” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 16). However, Eisenhardt (1989) asserts that analysis of data is both the most difficult and the least codified part of the process due to the enormous gap that frequently separates data from conclusions. This study adopted a multiple level analysis where all the perspectives of the middle managers involved in the study were examined. The analysis focused on the perspectives of individual middle managers serving as mentors in their individual capacities. What made it a multiple level analysis was that the views of different middle managers were sought on the same phenomena that were studied.

In summary, the researcher performed two rounds of coding that resulted in each participant’s responses being coded and clustered. The researcher placed codes on a wall to help conduct a cross-case coding comparison to identify similarities and dissimilarities. To minimize
researcher bias, the researcher then asked four middle managers and two doctoral degree holders to peer-review the data. The researcher further revisited the study’s foundational literature to gain insight from the analysis. Besides, the researcher reviewed additional relevant literature that provided insight into the themes and findings of the study.

**Data Storage**

This study ensured the protection of the confidentiality of the participants. Consequently, data security that related to the data collected was ensured. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of all participants. These pseudonyms were only known to the researcher and the principal investigator. Besides, the researcher edited any information that might provide clues to the identity of participants or their location to ensure anonymity.

Additionally, all original electronic files such as documents, written drafts, and field notes were backed up to an encrypted, cloud-based storage system (iCloud) to make the research materials accessible while ensuring confidentiality of participants. Furthermore, all electronic files were stored in encrypted form with passwords known only to the researcher and the principal investigator whenever they were not in the physical possession of the researcher or in a locked cabinet. Also, all physical materials such as documents and field notes were stored in a locked cabinet controlled by the researcher whenever they were not in the physical possession of the researcher.

**Trustworthiness**

Seidman (2006) asserts that “it is the researcher’s task to present the experience of the people he or she interviews in compelling enough detail, and in sufficient depth, that those who read the study can connect to their experience, learn how it is constituted, and deepen their
understanding of the issues it reflects” (p. 51). In view of this, the researcher addressed several issues to ensure that the details of the study were valid and credible.

The first issue considered was a possible conflict between the researcher’s role as the principal and the role as a mentor for EOHHS’ DDS-Metro Region. The researcher was careful and did not allow any bias for the region to “interfere with the validity of the research process” (Harrity, 2013, p. 61). Addressing this issue, the researcher clarified the potential bias he brought to this study. Creswell (2009) believes that “self-reflection creates an open and honest narrative that will resonate well with readers” (p. 192). The researcher, therefore, provided explanations regarding how the interpretation of the findings was shaped by one's background, and participation in their departments.

Additionally, the relationship the researcher had with the participants in the study was considered. Study participants were assured that the information they provided would be kept confidential and private, and as such, information gathered through the semi-structured virtual interview protocol and the follow-up interview would, in no way, be used against them.

The researcher ensured that an over-generalization of the data and findings through the semi-structured virtual interview protocol, the follow-up interview, and analysis of documents was avoided. According to Harrity, presenting a study that helps to create transformation is essential to the validity of a study. Accordingly, “rather than decrying the fact that the instrument used to gather data affects this process, we say the human interviewer can be a marvelously smart, adaptable, flexible instrument who can respond to situations with skill, tact, and understanding” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 107).
Various methods were incorporated to assist the researcher in the triangulation process. Coding was an iterative process and occurred throughout the data collection and analysis phases. Virtual interviews and face-to-face interviews were conducted to keep the researcher from making premature assumptions and to balance researcher subjectivity. Researcher memos were used to validate themes that emerged during the virtual interview protocol stage and the face-to-face interview stage. Inter-rater reliability was performed with four middle managers and two doctoral degree holders to review the transcripts to provide the researcher with insight about potential themes and to assess the ampleness of the data collected for the research study.

**Validity, Reliability, and Generalizability**

Addressing validity and credibility, the researcher employed triangulation to ensure accuracy. Triangulation was applied for the examination of different data sources of information for evidence and uses such evidence “to build a coherent justification from themes” (Creswell, 2009, p. 191). Establishing the validity of a study through “the convergence of several sources of data or perspectives from participants” (Harrity, 2013, p. 62) helped the researcher to confirm the themes. Sometimes, when researchers interview different mentors, they appear to find them to be giving corroborating evidence about their career advancement strategies “…but in fact, they all may be echoing the same institutional ‘mantra’ developed over time for speaking with outsiders” (Yin, 2005, pp. 386-387).

Additionally, the researcher used member checking as a strategy to provide study participants the opportunity to give feedback on the findings of the study (Harrity, 2013). According to Sweeney (2013), the use of member checking is a strategy that establishes the trustworthiness of a study and helps to preserve “the participants’ wellbeing” (p. 64). To ensure that the participants of the study receive and agree with the findings of the study, they were given
the opportunity to confirm accuracy (Creswell, 2009). The researcher, therefore, conducted a follow-up interview with each study participant so that they could have the chance to add their comments regarding the findings of the study (Harrity, 2013).

**Researcher Role**

In conducting this narrative study, the researcher recognized that he perceives the fostering of career development through mentoring with biases. The researcher has had the experience of having been a mentor for more than three years at the Department of Developmental Services, one Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) agency in Massachusetts. Before this position, the researcher mentored high school students in Ghana until he migrated to Massachusetts, USA in 2011. The researcher went into mentoring with the assumption that organizations should provide all employees who are ready and willing to advance their careers with a path to a meaningful career development.

The researcher’s vision for organizations is that they should provide organizational members, especially those in the entry-level positions, with a life full of support tailored to their career advancement goals. The researcher feels that senior-level managers are responsible for guiding and supporting entry-level staff and that their leadership strategies must focus on equipping their workforce with skills to develop their professions and providing the necessary resources and training they need to advance their professions.

The researcher has had the opportunity to serve as a practicum supervisor for DDS employees offering the direct support certificate program at Massachusetts Bay Community College. He has also graduated from EOHHS’ Supervisory Academy and the Mentoring, Aspiring Supervisors and Succession Planning (MasSP) program with a concentration in the
Program Director Track. As a state employee who presently works as a service coordinator, volunteers as assistant internship coordinator for DDS’ Urban Youth Collaborative Program (UYCP) and serves as a team member for the DDS-Metro Region Diversity Committee, the researcher has had a favorable bias towards career development efforts. He recognizes that when senior-level managers support career development efforts among entry-level employees, they will be more advanced and willing to support “the change to a new culture”, help “the organization to deliver its business vision”, as well as develop “levels of performance and behavior beyond existing norms” (McKimm, Jollie, & Hatter, 2007, p. 21).

In the conduct of this qualitative research, the researcher’s role became a significant factor since his background, experiences, and perceptions shaped interpretations of the study due to their subjective undertaking nature. It is, therefore, important to note that “subjectivity is not seen as a failing needing to be eliminated but as an essential element of understanding” (Stake, 1995, p. 45). Having participated in various committees of program coordinators and managers to address the needs of entry-level staff who want to advance their professions, the researcher strongly supports a program that identifies employees who are ready to learn and prepare themselves for career advancement opportunities. Having this in mind led to a bias that must be acknowledged and managed (Machi & McEvoy, 2009). Also, as the researcher perused the literature on entry-level staff empowerment and career development theories, he realized that researchers praised career development efforts engineered by the senior-level team for its potential to improve productivity and reduce turnover levels (Rouche & Kirk, 1973). The researcher was aware that what he found as the review of the literature was being conducted served to reinforce his positive bias concerning career advancement through mentoring by experienced mid-level managers who serve as mentors.
As the researcher delved further into the research, he engaged in the effort necessary to surface positionality issues including engaging in processes such as critical reflection (Sparks, 2002) on the assumptions and prejudices that he carried into the work. In addition, he continuously surveyed the literature on positionality effects and developed a greater understanding of the role that bias might play in the development of the research. Controlling my bias, he applied trustworthiness strategies such as his research journal, field notes, analytic memos, and having someone else review his codes and themes.

In this study, the researcher saw it necessary to review his presumptions that he was impartial (Takacs, 2003) to ensure that his perceptions were valid. While the researcher believed that he was reasonably free of what might be considered the most typical bias, his job history predisposed him toward holding some prejudices. These known sources of prejudice included high esteem for employee career development programs and efforts, belief that entry-level staff who received effective mentoring from experienced mentors could make their organizations more stable to excel in the provision of meaningful services for consumers, as well as strong favoritism that appropriate career development efforts could help organizations “to continuously reinvent themselves so as to stay aligned with and responsive to their customers and other stakeholders” (McKimm, Jollie, & Hatter, 2007, p. 20).

**Controlling Bias**

Researcher bias can have a strong influence on the conduct of any research (Takacs, 2002, 2003), especially when the researcher is from a different professional and educational background (Sparks, 2002). Briscoe (2005) argued that with inclusiveness, employees with significant mentoring experience are appropriate to ensure career development. However, the researcher believes that the differences in his experience served to better attune his observations
to a deeper understanding of how to foster career development of entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers within the DDS-Metro Region. As a state employee within the Metro Region, the researcher has familiarity with the setting of the region, which consists of its scope, organizational structure, diversity plan, climate, and its career and professional development agenda. The awareness of this opportunity led to the understanding of this narrative study as well as provided access to the relevant documents reviewed and the middle managers who participated in the study to help gather the study’s data. However, the researcher acknowledged this subjectivity and monitored interpretations and conclusions for bias. To control bias, the researcher asked two colleagues with doctoral degrees who were external to the site to examine the qualitative coding and check for accuracy and comprehensiveness (Saldana, 2013). Additionally, four middle managers who met the research participation eligibility criteria but did not participate in the study examined the codes and themes for accuracy. Further, the researcher applied mixed methodology to ensure objectivity, validity, and reliability (Creswell, 2012). Lastly, the researcher relied on triangulation of qualitative findings to unite data from multiple sources to increase the validity of conclusions (Miles et al., 2014). Thus, the researcher applied these procedures to help bring into the limelight subjectivity role as a measure to ensure validity in the study’s conclusions.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

Sweeney (2013) argues, “ethical qualitative researchers have an absolute responsibility to safeguard the well-being of the participants of their studies and ensure that they come to no harm as a result of the research” (pp. 63-64). Roulston (2010) asserts that “researchers who are examining topics related to groups of which they are members, or to which they have close personal ties, need to consider the possible ethical issues concerning representation of
participants that may arise during the reporting and publication phases of a study” (p. 99).

According to Seidman, this approach is consistent with Regulation 45 CFR 46, which requires “colleges, universities, hospitals, research institutes, and other organizations that conduct human research and receive federal funding to establish local Institutional Review Boards (IRBs)” (p. 59).

To address these issues, the researcher developed an IRB for the Human Subjects Review Board at Northeastern University to seek permission for this qualitative study. Accordingly, the researcher completed an IRB application that comprised a brief statement of the purpose of the research, a description of the participants, the research methodology, the researcher’s qualifications to do research, the risks and benefits involved in the research, and how the researcher obtained informed consent from the potential research participants. Again, each participant was asked to complete a consent form that consisted of “their right to voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time; the central purpose of the study and the procedures to be used in data collection; comments about protecting the confidentiality of the respondents; a statement about known risks associated with participation in the study; the expected benefits to accrue to the participants in the study; and a place for them to sign and date the form” (Creswell, 1998, pp.115-116).

To ensure that the participants of the study were valued “as co-constructors of knowledge” (Sweeney, 2013, p. 64), the researcher ensured that participants had the right to participate in the research and were given the freedom to decline participation at any time. Also, the data from the study was stored in an encrypted form with a password only known to the researcher and the principal investigator. Furthermore, the hard copies of the transcripts including the signed consent forms were kept in sealed envelopes and stored in a locked cabinet,
to which only the researcher will have access. The researcher shredded the hard copies of the study transcripts and appropriately discarded them to protect the participants’ identities.

Finally, study participants were asked to confirm that their experiences related to the mentoring and career development efforts. This was represented in a manner that made them feel confident and comfortable. This was ensured to confirm the researcher’s main aim of conducting this study, which is not “to cause any embarrassment or hardship for the participants, but, rather, to help their highly important and knowledgeable voices to be heard” (Sweeney, 2013, p. 65). If career development plans being implemented in the DDS-Metro Region are to be effective and help entry-level employees to advance their careers, experienced mentors who sacrifice to foster career development in their departments must be recognized by their organizational leaders and policy makers as essential organizational partners. Identified as key stakeholders, experienced middle managers who draw on their own experiences, successes, and failures to foster career development in their departments must be given full recognition as mentors and developers, because their actions can go a long way to affect the success or otherwise, of their departments. Therefore, the narrative nature of the experiences of these middle managers who are regarded as leaders on the ground encompass vital evidence. This narrative has the potential to help provide evidence of the need to mentor entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers in the region.

Chapter Summary

Entrenched in a naturalistic, qualitative approach, this study sought to bring into focus the ways that “people create their own understandings and realities based on their interpretations of their experiences” (Sweeney, 2013, p. 65). Documentary evidence, semi-structured virtual interview protocol, and a follow-up interview were used for the research process. Data was
analyzed with regard to discourse with middle managers who had shared experiences with mentoring process and career development efforts. To ensure validity and credibility, the researcher employed triangulation and member checking strategies. This also demonstrated the facets of trustworthiness of this qualitative research.
Chapter Four: Presentation of Research Findings

The current study explored the mentoring experiences of mid-level managers helping to foster career development within the Metro Region of the Department of Developmental Services of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Department of Developmental Services is the state agency entrusted with providing comprehensive services to Commonwealth's citizens with intellectual disabilities that will maximize their quality of life, and is dedicated to creating, in partnership with others, innovative and genuine opportunities for individuals served by the agency to participate fully and meaningfully in, and contribute to, their communities as valued members. To answer the research question designed for the study, virtual interview protocol questions were sent to mid-level managers who have experience and are serving as mentors within the confines of DDS-Metro Region devoted to career advancement. Thus, the participants were middle managers who have worked for DDS-Metro Region for at least 5 years; were in mid-level management positions; and had experiences as mentors to others aspiring to be in mid-level management at the Metro Region of the Department of Developmental Services. After receiving the responses of the virtual interviews and reviewing the responses from the follow-up interviews, the data was analyzed and resulted in three categories with eleven emerging themes. In this chapter, the findings of the study will be presented. It will start with an overview of the data collection and analysis process. This will be followed by a description of the study participants and then the emerging concepts and themes from the data analysis will be presented. To conclude this chapter, a summary of the key findings will be presented.

Overview of Participants

The participants of this study are situated in the Metro Region (Region IV) of the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services in the United States of America. The
region constitutes one of the four geographically located Regional Offices of the department. The region serves about 8,200 individuals whose cases are coordinated by employees of the regional office in Waltham, MA as well as the four area offices, consisting of Greater Boston in Hyde Park covering: Allston, Chelsea, Jamaica Plain, Roxbury, Beacon Hill, Chinatown, Mattapan, South Boston, Boston, Dorchester, North Dorchester, South End, Brighton, Downtown Crossing, North End, West Roxbury, Brookline, East Boston, Revere, Winthrop, Charlestown, Hyde Park, and Roslindale; Charles River West in Somerville covering: Belmont, Cambridge, Somerville, Waltham, and Watertown; Middlesex West in Framingham covering: Ashland, Hopkinton, Northborough, Wayland, Dover, Hudson, Sherborn, Westborough, Framingham, Marlboro, Southborough, Holliston, Natick, and Sudbury; and the Newton/South Norfolk area office in Walpole, MA covering: Canton, Millis, Norwood, Wellesley, Dedham, Needham, Plainville, Weston, Foxboro, Newton, Sharon, Westwood, Medfield, Norfolk, Walpole, Wrentham (DDS-FS Directory, 2018). These area offices report to the regional directorate. The region has over 100 experienced middle managers who daily mentor their staff to achieve their career development goals. Additionally, the region provides leadership of the area offices and performs regional functions such as intake and eligibility determination, survey and certification of service providers, procurement and contracts business, legal and administration, abuse and mistreatment investigations, and informal conferences to resolve disputes about the identification, prioritization, or provision of services. The primary staff contacts located in the regional office include regional director, community systems manager, regional operations manager, regional family support director, regional eligibility director, regional quality management director, senior investigator, and assistant general counsel.
Nine mid-level managers (five women and four men) participated in the study. They included three human service coordinator supervisors (HSCS), one RN III, one director of programs, one assistant director of investigations, one director of nursing, one clinical director, and one program monitor. Since these mid-level managers worked in various departments, their experience in leadership, management, mentoring, and career development efforts varied. All the participants have worked in the field of career development for at least 5 years and are serving as direct supervisors to their assigned staff. Additionally, they were formal mentors who have participated in formal mentoring training programs.

The participants of this study have provided mentorship to their staff aspiring into mid-level management positions. This mentorship is based on the region’s vision of creating or continuing specific initiatives to attract and develop a diverse workforce and increase awareness of the changing diversity within the agency. The department, through the Metro Region, coordinates events and continues efforts to increase awareness of the changing diversity within the agency, with a focus on initiatives that will attract and develop a diverse workforce within the management positions and the department. In the spirit of continuous learning, these mid-level managers support their aspiring mid-level managers to benefit from opportunities to understand more about each other and to increase their cultural competence. In addition to increasing understanding of people’s ethnic groups and countries of origin different from their own, these mid-level managers seek to cultivate an expanded view of cultural competence to encompass other differences including but not limited to disability, gender identity, gender equity, generational diversity, urban/rural differences, and economic status (Agency Diversity Plan, 2018). Tables 4.1 and 4.2 below depict a detailed look at the subjects of the study.
### Table 4.1

**Detailed Look at Research Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym/ ID</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Number of Years as a DDS Employee</th>
<th>Number of Years in the Metro Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brenda/ The Leader</td>
<td>Clinical Director</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockson/ The Guardian</td>
<td>Assistant Director of Investigations</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine/ The Challenger</td>
<td>HSCS</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank/ The Guide</td>
<td>HSCS</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam/ The Educator</td>
<td>HSCS</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike/ The Advocate</td>
<td>Program Monitor</td>
<td>Over 24</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Razia/ The Connector</td>
<td>RN III</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ophelia/ The Active Listener</td>
<td>Director of Programs</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha/ The Wise Protector</td>
<td>Director of Nursing</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.2

*Detail Description of Participants’ Experiences*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Number of Years as a Mid-Level Manager</th>
<th>Number of times served as a Mentor in the Metro Region</th>
<th>Mentoring Experience Outside Metro Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockson</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Several</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Over 20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>Over 30</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Razia</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ophelia</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BRENDA**

BRENDA, the leader, has been working for Department of Developmental Services as a clinical director for five and half years. She has spent all these years at the Metro Region. However, she has been a mid-level manager for ten and half years. She has so far mentored three
employees in the region. However, she has not served as a mentor to others in other places such as communities, churches, and schools.

As an experienced clinical director, BRENDA supervises three case management supervisors in her area office; actively participates in supervision, including exchanging information concerning implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of programs and services to determine the availability of resources, coordinate efforts, and to resolve problems; provides crisis intervention and participates in risk mitigation activities as needed; performs comprehensive assessments of prospective clients by conducting thorough intake interviews by reviewing histories with families, schools, courts, community groups, and other agencies and by assessing an individual’s goals by honoring a person’s voice and building on their strengths and natural support system; provides casework and supportive counseling to residents, resident groups, and families to assist them in realizing their full potential by using person-centered services and evidence-based best practices, and offering community resources that provide opportunities for rehabilitation, growth, and life fulfillment; plans and participates in multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary teams to determine individual needs and develops person-centered action plans; reviews and documents individual progress, communicates with service providers to ensure continuity of service and recommends and implements referrals and timely transfer of individuals to other programs or community-based settings to ensure agency principles are maintained; and performs other clinical social work duties as required to assist in efficient delivery of agency services.

Reflecting on her own career advancement, BRENDA detailed some of the critical experiences that she had which helped develop her set of skills as:
My role prior to the role I am currently in was not a positive or healthy work environment. I learned a lot about how to create an environment which is positive and empowering to the people working there, by being in environment which isn’t. My clinical skills were greatly increased by my role as an Emergency Services Crisis Clinician. Being on the front line of psychiatric emergencies, forces you to learn quickly how to support someone in immediate need. My undergraduate internship, was at a women’s house of corrections. I was young and very nervous about this opportunity, but I wanted to expand my knowledge and comfort level. I learned from this experience a great deal about how to support and approach people who are not valued by society or have a significant societal stigma. This internship provided me with the information which made me decide to pursue social work as a career.

ROCKSON

ROCKSON, the guardian, is currently the deputy director of investigations in the Metro Region. He has been working in the investigations department his entire career at DDS since 1997, which is 21 years now. He stated that he has been a mid-level manager since 2002, which is 16 years now. He said that he has served as a mentor only once within an actual “DDS mentoring program”, but as a senior investigator, he has acted as a mentor to his investigative team continually. Additionally, he stated that he has served as a mentor and run a mentoring program for at risk youth as one of his first jobs and has participated in volunteer mentoring at their local community center. As the deputy director of investigations, ROCKSON assists the director in providing leadership in the area of investigations, including managing the investigations function, developing and implementing guidelines and practices for conduct of effective investigations, ensuring proper application of due process principles, contributing to strengthening the DDS-Metro Region’s legal framework for addressing non-compliance with the agency's standards of conduct, assisting management in developing and implementing fraud prevention policies, and conducting investigations in very high priority and complex cases.
CATHERINE

CATHERINE, the challenger, has 12 years with a private vendor funded through DDS, 2 years as a service coordinator, and 5.5 years as a service coordinator supervisor. She has worked in her area office at the Metro Region for 5.5 years, and as a mid-level manager for 11 years. She has served as a mentor in the Metro Region for 4 times. Additionally, she has served as a mentor in other workplaces, communities, churches, and schools.

FRANK

FRANK, the guide, has been working as a DDS service coordinator supervisor for more than 6 years. He has worked in his area office at the Metro Region for 5.5 years and has been a mid-level manager for over twenty years. FRANK has served as a mentor in the Metro Region for 7 years. He has also served as a mentor numerous times in other positions in the nonprofit human service field in many positions he has held.

SAM

SAM, the educator, has a background in individual and classroom special education. He worked as a camp counselor and director of a social/recreation program for adults. He has one-to-one teaching and group leadership experience. He has been working for Department of Developmental Services for 33 years as a service coordinator and service coordinator supervisor. He has worked in his area office at the Metro Region for 33 years. SAM has been a mid-level manager for 23 years. As a supervisor, SAM assumes that everyone he has supervised is potentially seeing him as a mentor. He has directly supervised and mentored over 25 different people in the region including three that eventually became supervisors in other area offices and mentored three other staff who were hired as supervisors. He has also had the opportunity to
mentor new staff that eventually became his supervisors. In his part time job, he had the responsibility to train and mentor newly hired group leaders for the recreational groups they were responsible for.

**CATHERINE, FRANK, AND SAM.** As human services coordinator supervisors, CATHERINE, FRANK, and SAM detailed that they provide support and consultation to service coordinators; exercise direct supervision over 1-6 professional human service coordinators; review and approve, as well as coordinate and facilitate the development of individual service plans (ISPs) that incorporate a broad spectrum of individual needs, skills, and desires; oversee the service coordinators’ monitoring of the implementation of individual services provided and maintain regular and consistent contact with individuals, guardians, service providers, and families as indicated; monitor the safety and wellbeing of individuals providing reports as required; facilitate and assemble service coordination information for review by the area director or designee to prioritize services to individuals residing within the defined area; participate as requested in the Survey and Certification processes; provide direct advocacy in human, civil, and legal rights; arrange or organize DDS funded and generic support services in response to the needs of individuals and provide information and referral to and from state agencies, service providers, private vendors, and clinical professionals; coordinate and monitor service delivery through service providers; facilitate and assist with an individual's benefits and financial assistance; maintain individual records and ensure complete and accurate information including compilation and preparation of case statistics, resources, and service data; and respond to requests for information and data verification from their area office management team and others.
MIKE

MIKE, the advocate, has worked in the field of human services for about 31 years, and for the Department of Developmental Services for about 23 of those years. Within DDS, the positions he has held include service coordinator, service coordinator supervisor, assistant area director, acting area director, and program monitor. He has been a mid-level manager for over 24 years. MIKE stated, “I believe that I have been able to provide ongoing mentoring supports to a number of people through my general experience in the field over 30 years as well as direct involvement in many areas of the work that DDS conducts. I have served as a mentor several times in community and church settings, as well as in organized athletic endeavors” (Personal Communication, June 27, 2018).

As a program monitor, MIKE explained that he is considered a critical and integral member of his area office management team and has the lead responsibility for coordinating and developing contracts through the Department’s purchase of services system with provider agencies in the area. MIKE works closely with the area director, assistant area director, and regional office personnel in negotiating and managing contracts to ensure that contractual performance goals are being met, and that contracts follow applicable programmatic and regulatory standards and Office of Quality Enhancement directives. He creates detailed budgets on all programmatic changes and detail its impact to the Area Spending Plan; meets regularly with contracted vendors, maintains ongoing records of agency performance, and completes the Annual Standard Contract Review for each contracted vendor (provider agency). He is routinely involved in helping the Department optimize participation in applicable Federal Waivers; consults with service coordinators and their supervisors to ensure contracted programs and services remain responsive to changing client needs; consults and approves, as directed by the
Area Director, admissions and discharges involving contracted programs, and is involved in activities such as visits to residential and day program sites, and may consult to individual teams; and reviews Disabled Persons Protection Commission/DDS Investigator findings and action plans involving provider agencies, and works with stakeholders to ensure the health and safety of program participants. He may be involved in working closely with the Area’s Clinical Director in the monitoring of DDS developed risk plans as it relates to provider agencies. Further, he participates in the development and implementation of area strategic plans that support DDS initiatives such as the Employment First Policy, development of community-based day services, reconfiguration of residential services, and the development of shared living placements; and takes on other duties as assigned such as management of area of tie changes involving other DDS Area Offices, which involves service coordination and the possible transfer of resources and assignments from the Central and Regional Offices, at the direction of the Area Director or designee.

RAZIA

RAZIA, the connector, has been working for Department of Developmental Services for 16 years and has worked in her department at the Metro Region for 8 years. However, RAZIA has been a mid-level manager for 16 years and has served as a mentor in the Metro Region for 6 years. RAZIA has served as a mentor in her community by assisting nursing students struggling with their course work.

As an experienced, skillful Massachusetts registered nurse (RN III) who functions as an entry level nursing supervisor, RAZIA indicated that she provides direct supervision to the LPN I, LPN II, RN I, and RN II staff. Her position is assigned to the Nursing Administrative Office and she assists in the coordination of the delivery of nursing services and provides supervision
and oversight to the assigned locations. RAZIA provides overall direction in the delivery of nursing services within the assigned homes by assisting with assessing, planning, implementing, and evaluating nursing services delivered to the residents; participates in direct clinical nursing services and indirect nursing services including providing training and information to staff regarding nursing department and agency policies and procedures; ensures compliance with DDS, State, and Federal regulations and performs audits to measure the quality of nursing care provided; provides facility-wide supervision as needed; communicates with off-site physicians and utilize established nursing procedures, policies, and protocols to meet the health care needs of the residents; and continuously communicates and collaborates with staff at all levels throughout the agency to ensure continuity of care and other required or requested.

OPHELIA

OPHELIA, the active listener, has been working for Department of Developmental Services for 7 years. She has spent all these 7 years at the Metro Region as the director of family supports, intake and eligibility, the front desk, and the Family Intensive Resource Support Team (FIRST) program. However, she has been a mid-level manager for 30 years and has served as a mentor in the Metro Region three times. OPHELIA serves in other capacities as a mentor both officially and unofficially. OPHELIA affirmed, “I work with teenagers and so much of the time, I find myself concerned for one or another of them. I feel proud when they will engage with me about their troubles. Sometimes, they are minor teenage troubles that seem gigantic to them. Other times, the kids have real trouble and they need bigger help” (Personal communication, June 6, 2018).

As a director of a variety of programs, OPHELIA supervises 8 staff at the intake and eligibility department among whom are one case manager, one coordinator, and 6 intake and
eligibility specialists. She tracks data and trends and works with the DDS Central Office in Boston and reports trends to the Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner to make policy decisions. OPHELIA also supervises 9 staff in the FIRST program, among whom are one FIRST Coordinator and one Psychologist. Additionally, she supervises one staff at the family support program and pulls staff from a lot of departments who work with providers delivering services to families. At the front desk, she supervises 2 staff. She supervises summer interns who work at the front desk in the region. OPHELIA also works with Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), which falls under the family support program but is totally different, by providing oversight over children’s supervisors in the DDS area offices in the Metro Region. OPHELIA stated, “I do all these and provide support and professional development for my staff because it is the right thing to do” (Personal communication, June 6, 2018).

MARTHA

MARTHA, the wise protector, is a director of nursing in the Metro Region. She received her master’s degree in Health Care Administration from Framingham State College which offered classes on the campus of the Fernald Developmental Center 20 years ago which has been invaluable in advancing her career. She has worked in the region for 12 years. She has been the Director of Health Services for 8 years, served as a mentor 5 times at her agency, and has also served as a mentor at the YMCA where she works as a group exercise instructor. She worked as the charge nurse at the Fernald Developmental Center in Waltham, MA, where she was responsible for giving assignments to nursing staff. That taught her to closely assess the other nurses’ skills and ability to take on certain patients’ needs. MARTHA believes this is an important task for a supervisor who is responsible for making sure all tasks are accomplished in the best way that they can be. The first official supervisory position that she held was at the
Clinical Unit at the Fernald Developmental Center. There, she learned to create schedules, diffuse conflicts, and provide effective feedback to the nurses and health aides that cared for individuals who required 24-hour nursing care. Later, she moved to the DDS-Metro Region’s residential agency, Metro Residential Services as the MAP Trainer and formed a bond with staff as she taught the Medication Administration classes. MARTHA explained that it was a challenge that she enjoyed helping staff to understand Medication Administration duties and learn to give medications safely. Additionally, she stated that she learned to be a better communicator and got a better understanding of the importance of paying attention to detail in that position. MARTHA shared:

I began my career with the Department of Developmental Services as a Graduate Nurse, working under Regina, a very caring and competent nurse at the Fernald Developmental Center. Regina “took me under her wing” to ensure that I had a thorough orientation, including detailed information on resident health histories, medications, skilled nursing procedures and departmental policy and procedures. She checked in with me frequently throughout my shift in the beginning to ensure that I was confident in the nursing care that I gave. This confidence ensured that it was a smooth transition when I did pass the boards and she designated me charge nurse on weekends. Regina was always supportive and never harsh in her criticism. She used many situations as learning opportunities in dealing with both nursing and staffing issues and she always reminded me the reason that we were all in this work is to provide meaningful and healthy lives to the people that we support. I do remember Regina telling me that, “I was going to go far in the department” which gave me self-confidence to pursue leadership roles. I also had a wonderful mentor in the nurse who held my current position at MRS right before me. I had the privilege of her expertise for several months as a consultant after she retired while I was acting Director of Health Services. Sue was extremely knowledgeable of the issues that arise in the position and guided me until I felt comfortable to take on the responsibilities independently.

As an experienced middle manager and professional nurse, MARTHA provides oversight and direction to the nursing department which consists of registered nurses and licensed practical nurses to ensure nursing policies and procedures conform to current standards of practice, philosophy of organized nursing services, and agency mission, as well as compliance with state and federal laws and regulations; assesses and monitors high quality care via rounds, meetings,
and workgroups to maximize delivery of care using available resources; develops, implements, and evaluates programs to enrich the recruitment, retention, and continuing education of the nursing staff; communicates and interprets policies and procedures to staff; participates in direct care activities as needed to ensure uninterrupted services when gaps exist in staffing; assists with provision of care within the day and evening shifts; evaluates the work performance of all nursing personnel and facilitates ongoing feedback and appraisal; establishes quality and efficiency standards in all areas of responsibility and ensures that these standards are measured and reviewed on an ongoing basis; partners with risk managers and human rights officers to take corrective actions and to resolve complaints when individual issues are presented or substantiated; meets with clients individually and in groups to gauge perceptions of delivered care to assess effectiveness of services provided; facilitates daily or weekly meetings to discuss client status, clinical outcomes, discharge planning, staffing/personnel, and other concerns or issues; champions a positive image of the nursing department through effective interaction with patients, visitors, physicians, community, providers, and the general public; maintains professional affiliations and enhances professional growth and development to keep abreast of the latest trends in nursing; and remains current on issues and trends impacting healthcare.

In summary, nine middle managers (Brenda, the authentic leader; Rockson, the guardian; Catherine, the challenger; Frank, the guide; Sam, the passionate educator; Mike, the advocate; Razia, the connector; Ophelia, the active listener; and Martha, the wise protector) participated in this research. Below constitutes the summary of the demographic profiles of the study participants.
Table 4.3

Summary of Demographic Profiles of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Highest Degree Achieved</th>
<th>Choice of Animal Depicting Individuals’ Mentoring Approaches</th>
<th>Rationale for Animal Choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Authentic Leader</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>MSW</td>
<td>Australian Sheep Dog</td>
<td>To lead better and create a safe environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Guardian</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Rockson</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Bear</td>
<td>To keep relationships working and provide needed support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Challenger</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Eagle</td>
<td>To see the big picture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Guide</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Eagle</td>
<td>To parent and teach the young to survive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Age Range</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Animal</td>
<td>Persona Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Passionate Educator</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Spider</td>
<td>To create a teaching web that ensures adjustments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Advocate</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Dog</td>
<td>To be loyal and sensitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Connector</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Razia</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>BSN</td>
<td>Dolphin</td>
<td>To be social and ensure teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Active Listener</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Ophelia</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Grey Wolf</td>
<td>To be highly social and deeply loyal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wise Protector</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>MSN</td>
<td>Mother Horse</td>
<td>To keep watch over the young</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Overview of Research Findings**

The primary research question guiding this study was, “How do mid-level state managers describe their mentoring experiences of entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers?” The analysis of the 9 virtual interview protocol responses and the face-to-face interview responses occurred in two cycles. The first cycle used open coding, which consisted of manual interpretation of the virtual interview protocol responses to ensure grouping of relevant and similar data into categories using initial codes. Thus, the researcher labeled passages to identify
common areas of using open coding, as well as wrote memos while coding to capture participants’ perspectives in real time. The researcher broke down the information collected into data units according to Rubin and Rubin’s (2005) “blocks of information” (p. 202) that the researcher examined together. The researcher re-read all the responses from the nine cases to verify codes. In addition, the researcher conducted a second round of coding to verify open codes and identify any additional emergent codes that might have aligned with previously reviewed literature. The second round of coding helped the researcher to start the process of clustering similar codes. The open coding and clustering of codes followed the researcher’s referral to the theoretical framework of the study as well as a review of the research question to ensure that responses provided insight to inform the research study. This helped to identify potential emergent patterns and themes that were further explored for generalization (Saldana, 2009). A sample of the codes and categories are in Appendix H. Following the second phase of coding, eleven themes under three categories emerged and these categories and their associated themes are listed in Table 4.1. Following is a detailed exploration of the emerging categories and themes found during the analysis. The categories and themes are supported by examples from the personal narratives of the participants of the study.

**Codes and Clusters**

Super’s (1957) Career Development Theory served as organizing frame for the codes and clusters for this study. The theoretical framework provided insight for the development of the central research question and the virtual interview protocol questions. There were three clusters that delineated the precise features of the theoretical framework. A total of 59 codes were identified that reflected the specific classifications drawn from the second phase of the data analysis. The identification of these codes from the categorization process followed their
placement into the three clusters. Table 4.3 below provides a pictorial summation of the code-cluster schemata used in the study’s analysis.

**Table 4.4**

*Description of Codes and Clusters for the Analysis of the Study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</th>
<th>SUPER’S (1957) CAREER DEVELOPMENT THEORY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CLUSTERS</strong></td>
<td>Fostering Career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensuring Effective Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Influencing Mentees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Codes</td>
<td>15 Codes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Codes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CODES</strong></td>
<td>Managing in the middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning from others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leading others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seeking growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relying on friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being honest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-Concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belonging to a family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being empathic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supporting others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trusting people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encouragement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seeking help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being ready</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being mature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accomplishing goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being reliable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improving continuously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skills-set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being willing Value.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Having important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being sensitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Making choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respecting others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mutual respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being in control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stability Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reliable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Predictability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table above provides a summary of the codes and clusters based on the theoretical framework used to organize the study’s data. This process helped to categorize the data from the participants as evidenced in Appendix I (Question-Participant Matrix) that was used to draw macro insights about the questions across the participants’ perspectives. Additionally, the process enabled the researcher to gain insight into the theoretical understanding that helped to develop meaning as part of the data analysis stage.

**Development of Categories and Clusters**

The following subsections constitute the presentation of the findings from the second data analysis which moved from emergent codes in individual participants’ transcripts, clusters, and theoretical framework that were supported by evidence through a cross-case analysis. A total of eleven clusters under three categories emerged (fostering career development, characteristics of mentor-mentee relationships, and the mentor’s influence on fostering career development) provided insight during the cross-case analysis. These categories and their associated clusters are
listed in Figure 4.1 below. These clusters and literature characterizations gave meaning to the responses presented by the participants. This allowed the researcher to conduct thorough analysis and interpretation.

*Figure 4.1: Clusters by Category*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fostering Career Development</th>
<th>Characteristics of Mentor-Mentee Relationships</th>
<th>The Mentor’s influence on fostering Career Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>❖ Mentoring</td>
<td>❖ Mutual respect</td>
<td>❖ Offering opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Career development</td>
<td>❖ Openness</td>
<td>❖ Exposing mentees to a wide array of experiences across the field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ Mid-level management</td>
<td>❖ Balance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❖ The mentor’s active and reliable support in:</td>
<td>❖ Social</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ organizing individualized trainings</td>
<td>❖ Empathy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ being committed in mentee’s professional development life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ supporting mentees to utilize the important people in their lives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Findings from Analysis**

**Fostering Career Development**

In their various departments within the Metro Region, each participant sees the need to foster career development among their staff who are aspiring into mid-level management positions. In each of the virtual interviews, the participants discussed ways in which their experiences made this happen. The idea of fostering career development was frequent as it consisted of four main clusters: mentoring, career development, mid-level management, and the mentor’s active and reliable support (in 1: organizing trainings, 2: being committed in mentee’s
Mentoring. In responding to what mentoring meant to them, participants detailed that mentoring constitutes a very complex process in that it varies from one situation to another. In reviewing the responses of the participants, the researcher realized that participants interpreted mentoring in different ways according to how they understood and saw it. However, they made the purpose and intentions of the mentoring process in any given context explicit in order that a mutual understanding and vision of mentoring could be shared as they establish and maintain their mentor-mentee relationships. According to ROCKSON, mentoring constitutes only one form of support given to his aspiring mid-level managers, though they may have a variety of supports for a variety of reasons over a period of time. In his mind and from his experience, MIKE stated that mentoring could mean several things. He detailed:

The most obvious kinds of examples might include more concrete processes such as providing direct support and training to someone, teaching them systems and processes, and ensuring that they learn and understand specific steps of workplace activities. Beyond that, and in my mind much more importantly, good mentoring is an experiential tool. By that, I mean supporting the mentee to be exposed to not only how I approach my work and interactions, but also those of other individuals in both the local and larger environment.

Career development. In responding to their understanding of career development and how it affects their mentees, the participants explained that their entry-level employees were extremely career-conscious, as they seemed to demand more in terms of their career development. OPHELIA advised that any department that "fails to give their staff the opportunity to meet their career development needs should be ready to lose their valued, talented staff" (Personal communication, June 6, 2018). Similarly, CATHERINE stated that "career
development is using experiences to build deeper understanding of the world while fostering open mindedness (Personal communication, June 26, 2018). She offered that "giving mentees the opportunity to identify their career needs should be a key priority of their agencies and their mentors should assist them in achieving those needs within departmental realities" (Personal communication, June 26, 2018). Expanding on his previous responses, MIKE affirmed that mentoring and career development can be very closely linked, and believed it is incumbent on a mentor to take great care in understanding the role they play and impact that they can have on the person they are supporting.

**Mid-level management.** Five of the participants stated that though they did not have "management titles", they technically functioned as managers. For instance, SAM shared that he was among some functional managers who were part of management. He continued that he was responsible for the implementation of the goals of the senior team. He further argued that though they were valued as leaders, their organizational authority to realize the vision and mission of the agency seemed unclear and confusing. Looking at his relevance in the DDS-Metro Region, MIKE serves currently in the middle to realize the vision and mission of the department. As a major part of the management and leadership team, MIKE affirmed that he manages and leads. He detailed:

I am personally in somewhat of a unique position, given that I have served in multiple roles during my time with DDS. I was originally in the non-management positions of Service Coordinator and Service Coordinator Supervisor, then was in a more formal leadership role as Assistant Area Director and Acting Area Director. I am currently in what is technically a non-management position, even though I am part of the Area Office management team.
The mentor’s active and reliable support. Fostering career development through mentoring required that mid-level managers actively participate in providing support for their mentees. In fact, all the participants felt that being able to provide training was critical in fostering career development. For instance, BRENDA argued that "I think having a supervisor who is very supportive of my growth desires and goals, then allows me to provide the same level of support to the people I supervise in helping them meet their goals” (Personal communication, June 25, 2018). Similarly, seven of the participants believed that equipping aspiring mid-level managers to seek for support contributed to fostering career advancement. Finally, all the participants encouraged their aspiring mid-level managers to focus on their dreams and be ready to challenge themselves.

In her previous position at vendor agencies, CATHERINE was in the role of a house manager. As a manager, she was very detail oriented and liked to run a tight ship, but this came across as harsh and dehumanizing to some of the staff. She explained that her supervisor had over 25 years of experience in the field and she gave her a lot of freedom to make decisions in the running of the program. She was very loyal to the employees and they looked up to her. Her supervisor organized one-to-one trainings for her and taught her the value of seeing the employees as people with dreams, hopes, personal lives, and goals in which they should be empowered as equally important as the individual’s goals instead of numbers to fill a spot in the ratio.

Unfortunately, FRANK has had little experience in receiving mentorship and supervision by supervisors in his 35 years in the human service field. He detailed that:

I have never had regularly scheduled meetings with my supervisors in which to discuss my work responsibilities and/or support my professional growth. This historical lack of supervision in my career has helped to shape my aspirations to become a supervisor in
order to provide individualized training, supervision, and support to others in the human service field, so they can reach their potential in their current and future positions. I have provided supervision, mentoring and professional coaching to either assist a direct care staff to begin in or advance in their human service career. I have also provided direct support to direct care staff who had interest in transitioning to a career in another field. I have promoted a number of staff into management position in the human service provider sector, where I have spent most of my career.

However, MIKE was very fortunate in his career, both at DDS and prior to his employment there, to have had mentors who have had significant influence on how he approaches his work. He shared that:

The tutelage and guidance I’ve received with respect to the various job functions I have been responsible for has been excellent. More importantly, this support has helped me grow as a person, and understand the impact I can have on others, whether in a leadership or managerial role, or through representing the agency with individuals, families and community service providers.

OPHELIA seemed fortunate when she was moving up in her career. She detailed:

When I was young and learning as I was building my career I was learning quickly the way I did not want to be perceived as a manager or leader. I was supervised by people who were short tempered or impatient or seemed to not really have time for underlings. I was aware that I wanted to be different and be a leader that brought people along and helped people grow in their career and not dismiss them. I received many great opportunities and promotions quickly. It was very motivating and encouraging.

OPHELIA suggested that promoting those who deserve it constantly gives staff the opportunity to grow, learn, and see how the pieces of information they have learned fit together. Regarding offering trainings to staff aspiring to move up into mid-level management positions, OPHELIA stated that such an opportunity to attend wonderful trainings helps mentees to see that their job is not just their departments, but an opportunity for them to look at the world. She indicated that the trainings she gained from her supervisors who mentored her “gave me the foundation to have confidence in my ability so I could mentor with confidence (Personal communication, June 6, 2018). Similarly, RAZIA detailed how great mentors go a long way to foster career advancement
of their mentees. She indicated that one person who trained and mentored her was a funeral
director who oversaw the services for two of her grandparents. She shared:

He was so caring, compassionate, and kind that I initially was planning on going into
Mortuary Arts. During the services I wanted to be just like him and be able to bring peace
to families during a time of such distress was profound. I had discussed this with my
parents at the time and they asked him to speak to me. He told me I could do anything
that I set my mind to accomplish. Looking back now this type of encouragement into a
male dominated field, was rare. He went on to tell me what classes I should take to
benefit me in pursuing mortuary arts as a goal.

RAZIA thinks:

Organizing individualized trainings for mentees requires mentors to first get to know
what a mentee has as a skill set and what the mentee’s goals are- so it would have to be
individualized based on what direction they were taking. Or instance if I was working as
a nursing mentor vs a training mentor. Communication would be something relevant to
both where anatomy and physiology would be primarily helpful to the nursing mentee.
Once those have been identified you can start with basic and move forward to the next
level, like building blocks you may need to go back and review trainings from time to
time but doing so will only aid in retention of the information. However, I believe that it
is relevant for mentees to ensure effective individualized trainings for the mentees as they
will need any experience mentors share with them during such one-to-one training
sessions.

In describing the effectiveness of commitment in mentees' professional development
lives, RAZIA offered that lack of commitment on both sides will not lead to great and
meaningful experience and both mentors and mentees may lose interest. She added that if the
experience is boring, mentees may decide against something that they could have potentially
been good at.

FRANK detailed how a mentor’s commitment could empower their mentees to advance
their career. He shared that this opportunity helped him to take on new positions within the same
agency and at other provider agencies in order to provide himself with new challenges and to
develop new skill sets related to his professional goals at that time. It also empowered him to
volunteer to participate in many agency projects and collaborate with other community agencies to develop and implement new services and projects. He said that the empowerment compelled him to initiate the development of new programming to fill a need within agencies, and the creation of these initiatives has allowed him to take a creative approach to addressing need areas within agencies. This he stated has led to the enhancement of services provided to adults who have intellectual disabilities. Also, he affirmed that this has had a direct correlation to his advancement within the agencies.

MIKE explained that he thinks being committed in a mentee’s life is always a very exciting opportunity to have the chance to mentor younger and less-experienced aspiring mid-level managers, precisely because of what might be perceived as deficits or disadvantages. In describing his mentoring approach, he explained that from his time in this field, he has found that it can be very challenging to encourage more experienced people to take a step back and think differently about how to approach a particular issue. Although knowledge and experience are certainly very important, he believes being committed and working with an individual who is excited about the work and eager to make a positive impact is very energizing to him personally.

OPHELIA shared that she believed the experience she went through has helped her to become a more committed and better mentor. She stated that she had experience where she has lost, and she knows what it feels like to be scared and not to have confidence in herself. She explained that she knows what a bad decision it was not to listen to people that probably could have helped her. However, CATHERINE did not seem to have a lot of committed mentors or leaders in her previous jobs when she was moving up. She indicated that when her employer was not paying the salary promised in her contract, it forced her to examine her intentions and motives in supporting the development of her staff and the lives of her individuals. She said she
learned how to be self-aware and intentional in her actions. She stated that she had to go through professional allegations and attacks. She explained her first gut reaction was to defend herself and gain support in the agency. This is because, she learned to monitor her emotions well from previous challenges and decided not to add to the drama, but rather diminish it by remaining silent.

SAM explained that a mentee's professional development life, in most part, depends on their mentors' commitment levels, and as such, organizational leaders cannot deny the fact that mentoring plays a very important role in mentees' career development efforts. He stated that "I think mentees feel more connected when they have experienced colleagues supporting them when they make errors, are afraid to take risks, and need acknowledgement when they succeed" (Personal communication, June 20, 2018).

In describing how one’s most important personalities can help foster one’s career advancement, CATHERINE revealed that “My Aunt Jacque” helped her to develop the patience and self-control to participate in active listening on demand, as well as the confidence to ask uncomfortable or tough questions. She posited that both skills are activated in the intent to benefit and challenge the other person’s professional growth. She indicated, “both patience and confidence have equipped me in both my professional and personal life relationships and taught me much about self-love, self-preservation, and self-growth. These skills have helped me to grow internally/professionally and having tried these techniques on myself and watch myself develop. I feel confident fostering these skills in others (Personal communication, June 26, 2018).
FRANK indicated that he prioritizes discussing career advancement opportunities with his wife, who helped him weigh the pros and cons of the positions and situations. He asserted that “In the end, she supported whatever decision I made, regardless of the outcomes” (Personal communication, July 2, 2018). MIKE indicated that family members, friends, and fellow professionals are people he speaks with at various times over the years. However, OPHELIA stated that when she felt that she needed to make a career change, she was looking for what choices she had. She indicated she had worked for an agency for 24 years. She believed in her heart she had given her all to this agency and she “was stabbed in the back. I lost my confidence, my belief in myself, everything. I was searching for a new career because I thought I was not any good any more. I searched online, spoke with head hunters, career counselors etc. and indeed, though friends and family seemed to be supportive, I was not listening” (Personal communication, June 6, 2018).

In summary, the idea of fostering career development was frequent as it consisted of four main themes: mentoring, career development, mid-level management, and the mentor’s active and reliable support. Besides, all the nine middle managers who participated in the study concluded that fostering career development among aspiring mid-level managers through mentoring is an effective organizational strategy. Below is an overview of participants’ perceptions of career development strategies.
Table 4.5

Overview of Participants’ Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Career Development Efforts as an Organizational Strategic Tool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Effectiveness of Career Development Efforts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>Very effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockson</td>
<td>Very effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>Very effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>Very effective, but there are other factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Razia</td>
<td>Very effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ophelia</td>
<td>Absolutely effective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>Very effective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Characteristics of Mentor-Mentee Relationships

Responding to the virtual interview protocol, the participants listed many qualities they believe lead to strong or meaningful mentor-mentee relationships. However, the most consistent quality was mutual respect. As a result, the discussion on mutual respect focused on its significance in fostering career advancement in the region. Additionally, the analysis revealed a significant focus on openness, balance, and empathy. The following are the narratives that support the themes in this category.

Mutual respect. The analysis revealed that mutual respect is a recipe for a meaningful mentoring relationship leading to a better career development. The analysis for this study supports this finding, as all the participants discussed feeling that someone (mentor) or something (mentoring) is valuable or important as being a key component to career development through supportive mentoring relationships. Additionally, given the frequency of the term’s usage in the study, it is believed that respecting one another as mentors and mentees is a valuable way of caring for each other’s thoughts and feelings. For instance, CATHERINE argued, “it is
imperative that my staff respect me as I do and take the lead in their own development. Identifying where the staff are in their development and how they view their growth takes time but is a first start. Then I respectfully and professionally try to meet the staff where they are and utilize natural opportunities as teaching moments” (Personal communication, June 26, 2018).

RAZIA stated that mentors have to respect their mentees’ life experiences since they may be able to see past their mentees’ appearance. In the same way, she argued that mentees have to respect their mentors. Further, she shared, “I once knew a man who wore the same suit every single day, plaid jacket and pants an olive-green shirt. I had the many opportunities to speak with him and in doing so was so amazed to find out he spoke 10 languages, could teach classes at the college, and frequently did so, had an I.Q of 138 – he was a genius! Many people could not get past the same suit and as a result missed out on a great opportunity and a wealth of knowledge/history” (Personal communication, June 18, 2018).

FRANK explained that in his previous position as a development coordinator, he realized that mutual respect between him and his mentees was key to ensuring boundaries and encouraging each other to respect themselves. He explained that respecting one another yielded great results as he was able to do a significant amount of lobbying with state politicians and with local municipal governments, where he developed a very good working relationship with the mayor of Somerville, who provided his agency with a significant amount of grant funding for new programs that served low-income Somerville residents who had intellectual disabilities. Based on how he respectfully approached the stakeholders, his aid attempted to recruit him into working in the mayor’s office, which would have completely changed his career. They discussed several open positions that the mayor felt he was capable of doing. He chose not to leave the human service field as he felt he could accomplish more in that field by providing services to the
same people he had worked with for many years, where he continued to show respect with both his words and deeds.

MIKE and OPHELIA revealed that catholically, most first-entry level employees seem to be less-experienced in their positions. MIKE stated:

There are always different career choices available to all of us. Earlier in my career, I didn’t necessarily feel that I had the qualifications or experience to pursue something different. However, as time has gone on, I have come to feel that people in this field have involvement in such the wide variety of activities that impact peoples’ lives, and that many human services professionals are much more skilled than we often give ourselves credit for.

OPHELIA affirmed that generally, these less-experienced employees do not have the years of experience and she learned earlier on that people do not want to necessarily want to hear about “the old days” or how ‘the old people’ used to ‘do it’. She posited that “people want reality and truth and real-life experiences. A little bit of history is important, but it cannot be the base of how you mentor. As I want to be respected for my experience, they too want to be respected for their interest and energy” (Personal communication, June 6, 2018).

**Openness.** In describing the characteristics of a mentor-mentee relationship, the participants touched on openness, which was a consistent theme leading to the establishment of strong and meaningful career development efforts through mentoring. With nearly every participant discussing “openness” in their responses, it was evident that, for mentoring to successfully focus on career development of mentees, the level of openness of both mentors and mentees is paramount in improving performance, motivating staff, and engaging them to remain focused. Indeed, eight of the nine participants responded that openness is a major feature of a mentor-mentee relationship. Some participants shared their experiences on the theme of openness. For instance, CATHERINE stated when everyone is open about their capability and
focus, it creates a reflection on the current accomplishments and leads to a point where mentors can ask questions as to why they were successful in their mentoring situations, how they could be more successful, or what they would have done differently. Also, she posited that mentors could reflect on situations that did not go well and talk about why. She stated that she thinks these questions need to be asked with the goal of moving up into the next level position and acquiring self-reflection and preparedness. However, she stated that this will be based on how open mentees become with mentors. Further, she stated that taking the panorama view in life and trying to see the big picture can equip mentors to have a sense of current information and how it can be used to teach their mentees individualized small lessons. Adding to this, RAZIA asserted that mentors "have to be honest, respectful, and open with your mentee. Share experience. Tell relevant parts of your story, make it personal and interesting, but most importantly, make it worthwhile for the mentee" (Personal communication, June 18, 2018).

In his quest to move up in his career, FRANK was open about his focus and intents. He detailed:

When I ran an employment program I developed jobs for individuals served by my agency at an innovative company that offered support services to start-up companies and I personally oversaw the training and skills maintenance of the people in these positions. I developed a very good working relationship with the chief Operating Officer who attempted to recruit me into working for that company. I met with him to discuss a career path within the company. I was very impressed with the innovations that the company accomplished but felt I would be abandoning the individuals and staff I oversaw, especially during a significant transition that was occurring within the agency I was working for.

Coming to understand that the knowledge and experience required of a good manager encompasses an almost endless number of areas, MIKE affirmed that being open to trying things that one may not see as their area of greatest ability is very important. He further explained that most importantly, being open as a mid-level manager, learning from your aspiring mid-level managers, and trying to understand their points of view is critical. MIKE indicated that it equips
mentors and mentees with skills to “carry it on, no matter what” as openness brings into the limelight “the main points of the overview of the journey that the mentoring work has taken, the progress that has been made, and the tremendous amount of work that still needs to be done in order to achieve our mission of full equality and participation for individuals we support” (Personal communication, June 19, 2018). Indeed, MIKE detailed that:

I feel that one of the most important aspects for a person hoping for career advancement is to be open to learning as much as possible in as many areas as you can. As I’ve mentioned, there are so many aspects of life that we can have involvement in and impact on; medical care, legal and financial issues, and so many others. Much can be learned from spending time with individuals themselves, people who provide support to them, peers, managers, representatives from other agencies, and so on. I’ve personally learned a great deal about how not only to try and do things the right way, but also, and sometimes just as important, how not to do them.

In the same way, OPHELIA shared that she always encourages people to be open. She explained that "just because you (mentee) felt one way two years ago does not strap you in for life, because you are free to change your mind if you wish and you are free to not change your mind if you wish” (Personal communication, June 6, 2018).

Balance. The theme of “balance” was discussed by participants as a key characteristic of a mentor-mentee relationship where the focus of the relationship is directed toward fostering career development among aspiring mid-level managers in the region. Most of the participants described balance as a factor that leads to completion and harmony and is essential to maintaining essence. They believed that balance has an incredible drive to working harder on one’s dreams. For instance, having a cursory look at the entire work of the DDS-Metro Region, MIKE affirmed:

The work we do is often a balancing act, in terms of trying to affect the most positive outcomes possible for people. At the same time, there are real life factors that can sometimes impact our ability to do this as well or as quickly as we sometimes would like.
I hope that these skills have enabled me to try and to keep in mind the bigger picture while working on the necessary but sometimes tedious parts of the work that don’t always appear to have a clear and direct impact on the larger goals.

Similarly, as a director who is motivated, driven, and focused on realizing results in her various responsibilities, OPHELIA shared:

Balance is a word I find myself saying to people a lot. What do people have to consider if they are making a career change? Their interest, desire for the position, commuting can be an enormous factor for some people and not for others, will your time commitment be different with travel, evening meetings, weekend conferences etc. Keep your eyes wide open think with your heart AND your head. Balance is the thing that sets the ball rolling for a meaningful mentoring experience.

RAZIA offered that being balanced "builds confidence and enriches / opens opportunities for everyone, both mentee and mentor" (Personal communication, June 18, 2018). MARTHA shared that when mentors are able to strike a balance between all the significant facets of the mentoring process, they stand a better chance of encouraging their mentees to chase bigger goals, which does not help them professionally but also to maintain healthy personal relationships with their mentees.

**Social.** Socializing constitutes one of the characteristics of a mentor-mentee relationship that the participants discussed. In describing the relationships between mentors and mentees, the participants indicated that having a solid social network leads to a better relationship that activates the mentoring process to offer support. They argued that this support leads to meaningful career development efforts among mentees. Discussing how spending time with the people around him gives him fulfilment, MIKE detailed:

The first and most important experience I had was my initial job in human services, in which I provided direct supports to individuals with significant physical and intellectual challenges. Having the responsibility to provide care to someone, and the trust that is crucial to making that successful, was the most valuable experience I have had. Beyond that, as someone who grew up in an environment with very limited diversity, I’ve had the
opportunity to interact with people from many different walks of life with experiences quite different from my own. This has been a tremendous gift and endlessly valuable in helping me to grow both personally and professionally. As I’d guess would be the case for many people, ideas regarding alternative options have taken different forms. There have been times where a simple conversation with a friend, family member, coworker or individual from an entirely different line of work led to thought and research into the possibility of doing something new. On several occasions, I have applied and interviewed for positions that would have meant a change in career.

Adding to that, OPHELIA attributed the theme of socialization to a “Grey Wolf” and argued that they are highly social and that the females can be an alpha. RAZIA stated that being social as a mentor, "You need to be friendly and inviting, but you also need to make sure lines do not get crossed. It can be hard especially when the mentee may be close in age or even older. Keep it professional" (Personal communication, June 18, 2018). BRENDA explained that in her experience as a clinician, she has found social relationships very beneficial. She stated that social ties are associated with higher performance. According to ROCKSON, an increased contact with family members, friends, and social connections in general does not only help both the mentor and the mentee become successful in the process but helps them both to survive the lack of it causes them both.

**Empathy.** The ability to get a sense of and understand an entry-level employee’s desire to aspire into a mid-level management position in the region was discussed by study participants. They indicated that since empathy constitutes a complex relational process involving the understanding mentors have toward their mentees’ feelings and perspectives, it is critical that mentors become responsive to the needs of their mentees. MIKE stated that developing a degree of empathy is a better way of establishing and maintaining a mentoring relationship that works and attempting to keep the “big picture” in mind while working on tasks in the moment is the other skill that mentors should try to use in mentoring others.
On a similar note, CATHERINE uses “passion” as a way of ensuring meaningful learning in the mentoring process. As a committed and resourceful mid-level manager mentoring a lot of her staff on a daily basis in her area office, she is passionate about equipping her staff to access solutions independently when problems arise on their journey to their next levels in the region. CATHERINE believes this will compensate for lack of age or experience. She further stated that “my approach would be to develop a strategy to encourage learning and solving mistakes. Also, using questions as to what they would do in my position to solve either their own problems or other challenges as they arise” (Personal communication, June 26, 2018). Both OPHELIA and CATHERINE applied “sensitivity” as a way of offering helping hands that lead to growth, happiness, and success in the mentoring process. Using the metaphor of the parent of eagles keeping its young in small numbers (1-2 chicks) safe and teaching them the fundamentals of the skills they would need to survive on their own, FRANK argued that mid-level managers serving as mentors to their aspiring mid-level managers need to “demonstrate these skills and then observe the young demonstrating these skills and correct them, if necessary, because their young are allowed to remain with them to continue to learn until they are adolescents. Once they are prepared for the next stage of their lives, they leave the nest and care of their parents/mentors to establish themselves as successful birds of prey” (Personal communication, July 2, 2018).

MIKE explained that although his mentors might not have directly utilized the term ‘empathy’ in their work with him moving up, he believes that through their examples, he was able to develop some ability to do his job in the moment, while also having a perspective that enabled him to be sensitive to the different life circumstances and points of view presented by people with whom he interacts. Similarly, both OPHELIA and MIKE suggested that mentors need to be deeply loyal to their mentees regarding the environment around them. They
suggested that a good mentor should be aware of all aspects of the various fields they work in the region and offer their mentees the chance to experience them and develop their exposure to them, as well as develop knowledge and experience.

In summary, the participants listed many qualities they believe lead to strong or meaningful mentor-mentee relationships. These include openness, balance, and empathy. However, the most consistent quality was mutual respect. Also, all the nine middle managers who participated in the study concluded that mentor-mentee relationships are very necessary in guaranteeing mentoring as a reliable organizational strategy capable of ensuring effective career development among aspiring mid-level managers. Below is an overview of participants’ perceptions of significance of mentor-mentee relationships.

Table 4.6

Overview of Participants’ Perceptions of the Significance of Mentor-Mentee Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Significance of Mentor-Mentee Relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>Very significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockson</td>
<td>Very significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>Very significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Very significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Very significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>Very significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Razia</td>
<td>Very significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ophelia</td>
<td>Very significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>Very significant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Mentor's Influence on fostering Career Development

Mentoring literature discusses that the mentor serves as a role model to their mentees. The influence of the mentor in this relationship on their mentees effectively fosters career development of their mentees. Discussing their mentoring and career development experiences, participants touched on characteristics of their mentors and how they have influenced them throughout their transition as mid-level managers. Each of the participants mentioned that they mentored and are still mentoring staff that are aspiring to move up into mid-level management positions in the region, according to their departments irrespective of the area office or the specific departments in the regional office. Some of these mid-level managers detailed the impact of fostering career development of aspiring mid-level managers they mentor. The clusters identified in this category included offering encouragement and exposing mentees to a wide array of experiences across the field. Following are some of the details.

**Offering encouragement.** In the mentoring process, offering encouragement to mentees equips them to step out of their comfort zones and take healthy risks that pay dividends that come in the form of increased knowledge and confidence capable of causing them to advance in their careers. For instance, CATHERINE shared that she encourages her staff to “take risk and don’t let failure affect your enthusiasm to try again. Listen with the intent to build up others self-confidence and silently praise yourself and verbally praise others when a job is done well. Be unique and your best self at all times” (Personal communication, June 26, 2018). Similarly, FRANK indicated, “I have encouraged staff to apply for positions in other departments within my agency, because it would provide them with opportunities for advancement and the development of new skill sets. I have also encouraged staff to pursue careers outside my agency,
because it helped them follow the career path of their choice” (Personal communication, July 2, 2018).

Further, Frank stated:

I ask them to explain why they want to make this specific career choice; find out if they have a good understanding of the qualifications/education/experience necessary to obtain jobs in this field or in a different field; ask them to develop a plan that will allow them to obtain the desired job in another field, which includes a timeline to achieve this objective and resources needed; encourage them to take advantage of opportunities through many nonprofit agencies and state agencies that will at least partially pay for education in a degree and/or certified program; and encourage them to network with other people in the desired field to ask them to explain their experiences working in that career.

For MIKE, as he works directly with and advocates for individuals with disabilities, the incredible responsibility that comes with that is being able to be a role model. Also, as he acts in a role of representing DDS with families, agencies, and other stakeholders, he always reflects well on the mission of the agency working always to impact lives. MIKE shared that as a supervisor and mentor to others, he has always tried to set a good example in terms of having the right priorities (individual mentees) first and foremost, while accomplishing the day to day tasks set before them in order to meet that most important goal. OPHELIA was enthusiastic about how her mentors encouraged her “to read the poets, to look for adventure and to be open, and developing programs from the bottom up” (Personal communication, June 6, 2018). She indicated that “this was a great opportunity to open brand new program where there was none before, and to take a set of regulations and create a program that served medically complex people was just amazing” (Personal communication, June 6, 2018).

**Exposing mentees to a wide array of experiences across the field.** In describing how the participants influenced their staff aspiring into mid-level management positions, they indicated that it is an important practice for them as mentors to their staff to expose their mentees
to a wide range of experiences across their fields of operation. Participants indicated that offering a broad array of experiences to mentees makes mentees more proficient in their primary role as well as more valuable in the positions they want to aspire into. Thus, according to OPHELIA, when it comes to mentoring and career development of her aspiring mid-level managers, “there is NOT just one approach, so mentors need to alter their approach to fit the mentee, and because mentoring plays a critical role in shaping the success of DDS-Metro Region, mid-level managers serving as mentors need to better prepare their entry-level staff for the stressors of management” (Personal communication, June 6, 2018).

In sharing the same view, CATHERINE indicated that she fosters personal development while creating a supportive network in which her mentees feel safe to express themselves and brainstorm ideas. She believes this environment creates a positive work atmosphere in which her mentees will want to participate and join. According to FRANK, the most related skills that have equipped him to become an experienced mentor were teaching and supervisory skills. He detailed that the teaching skills have enabled him to pass on work-related information that enables new staff to learn how to perform their jobs and veteran staff the opportunity to continue to experience professional growth. He explained that the supervisory skills have provided him with the ability to individualize his mentorship of his staff and address issues that may be roadblocks that prohibit these staff from experiencing professional growth and obtaining future promotions in their career. Further, FRANK shared:

Mentoring aspiring mid-level managers is a very individualized process. Some staff need additional training and/or education. I have always attempted to match these people with appropriate training program and/or learning institutions that would provide them with the knowledge they would need in order to get the promotion they were seeking. Other staff and I would meet on a regular basis to help them identify/clarify their work-related goals and offer to provide them with learning responsibilities related to of the type of positions they were interested in, if possible. If I hired them into a management position
within my department, I would provide orientation and on-going supervision to assist them in developing the skillset necessary for the position. I would also encourage these staff to take available trainings to support their professional growth. In addition, I would also offer these staff opportunities to participate in projects and/or assist with some managerial responsibilities when current managers were not in work, in order to give them real-life work experiences in positions they were interested in being promoted to.

Sharing his view, MIKE posited:

I don’t believe that there is any single strategy that is a ‘one size fits all’ approach to this topic. First and foremost, I believe it’s important for people to identify area of personal interest, passion and skill that can possibly intersect to some degree with their work and pursue that in a wider way. Through no fault of their own, people aspiring to be mid-level managers often have a somewhat narrow experience in the field. For example, a person may have started their career as a direct care staff in a home, moved up to program manager, etc. The same might be said for someone whose career path has taken them through various levels of advancement in a day or employment program. I think it’s very important to expose individuals to a wide array of experiences across the field, so that they can get at least a small taste of the bigger picture. This will hopefully serve to better position and prepare the person for the spectrum of situations they will encounter as a future manager.

In summary, the clusters identified in this category included offering encouragement and exposing mentees to a wide array of experiences across the field. Also, all the nine middle managers who participated in the study concluded that the influence of mentors has the capability to foster career developmental agenda of aspiring mid-level managers. Below is an overview of participants’ perceptions of the necessity of the mentor’s influence on fostering career advancement.
Table 4.7

Overview of Participants’ Perceptions of the Necessity of the Mentor’s Influence on fostering Career Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Significance of Mentor-Mentee Relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>Very necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockson</td>
<td>Very necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>Very necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Very necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Very necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>Very necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Razia</td>
<td>Very necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ophelia</td>
<td>Very necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>Very necessary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cross-Case and Cross-Source Analysis

After the development of individual cases, the researcher examined trends across the questions and looked for patterns across each case (participant) and across each data source (documents, field notes, virtual interviews, etc.) to develop overall macro-level themes. Thus, the researcher performed in-depth analysis of codes and clusters, identified emerging themes and trends across the cases, as well as revisited the literature and integrated insights from these emerging themes and trends. Further, the researcher reviewed the central research question, virtual interview protocol questions, and the theoretical framework to determine how the data related to each case individually and across cases.

As discussed previously, the researcher performed two rounds of coding that resulted in each participant’s responses being coded and clustered. The researcher placed codes on a wall to help conduct a cross-case coding analysis to identify similarities and dissimilarities. To minimize researcher bias, the researcher then asked two individuals with doctoral degrees and four middle
managers to peer-review the data. The researcher further revisited the study’s foundational literature to gain insight from the analysis. Besides, the researcher reviewed additional relevant literature that provided insight into the themes and findings of the study.

To identify any trends between the research components, the researcher spent several days to review each participant’s response as well as executed the study’s cross-case analysis. Again, the researcher grouped participants based on their departments as well as their responses to and perceptions of fostering career development through mentoring, characteristics of mentor-mentee relationships, and the influence of mentors on mentees. The analysis revealed that majority of participants utilized diverse mentoring styles and developmental relationships to foster career development and influence their mentees to make better career choices. This analysis also showed that while participants didn’t feel the agency truly values developing others as evident by their lack of investment in mentoring programs, the mentors did feel empathy for these young people that were getting placed into roles with little experience. This is reflected in Passionate Educator Sam’s comments – “You know I have been here for years and I think it’s not the fault of our mentees the agency isn’t investing anymore in other useful programs that helped previous generations.” Additionally, the analysis indicated that participants felt strongly that the agency does not provide sufficient trainings for mentors. This is evident in Authentic Leader Brenda’s comments – “I didn’t know what I was doing and there was no manual” and that is why the Wise Protector Martha recommends that “Mentees need to choose their mentors wisely since a blind mentor cannot lead a blind mentee.” Interestingly, even though the three service coordinator supervisors and the clinical director who participated in the study are not fully recognized by management as managers in the middle, this lack of recognition did not impact these mentors’ willingness and desire to mentor their aspiring mid-level managers. Tables
4.8 and 4.9 summarize the different research components that the researcher reviewed to develop the interpretation of findings.

Table 4.8

Comparison of Research Components Across All Cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudo Name</th>
<th>Mentor Style</th>
<th>Fostering Career Development</th>
<th>Mentor-Mentee Characteristics</th>
<th>The Mentor’s Influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>Australian Sheep Dog, the Authentic Leader</td>
<td>Career development Mentoring</td>
<td>Balance Sensitivity</td>
<td>Encouragement Involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockson</td>
<td>Bear, the Service Provider</td>
<td>Growth Mentoring Maturity</td>
<td>Flexibility Focus</td>
<td>Encouragement Guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>Eagle, the Challenger</td>
<td>Mid-level management Mentoring Family</td>
<td>Balance Mutual respect</td>
<td>Teaching Assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Eagle, the Guide</td>
<td>Career development Mentoring Family</td>
<td>Honesty Responsibility</td>
<td>Encouragement Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Spider, the Passionate Educator</td>
<td>Support Family Mentoring</td>
<td>Empathy Learnability</td>
<td>Teaching Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>Dog, the Advocate</td>
<td>Growth Family Friends</td>
<td>Sensitivity Openness</td>
<td>Direction Exposure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Razia</td>
<td>Dolphin, the Connector</td>
<td>Family Mentoring Mid-level management</td>
<td>Mutual respect Social</td>
<td>Exposure Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ophelia</td>
<td>Grey Wolf, the Active Listener</td>
<td>Career development Mentoring</td>
<td>Mutual respect Openness Social</td>
<td>Encouragement Acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>Mother Horse, the Wise Protector</td>
<td>Career development Mentoring</td>
<td>Commitment Mutual respect</td>
<td>Encouragement Advocacy Training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.8

Categories and Their Impact on Career Development Through Mentoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Effectiveness of Career Development Efforts</th>
<th>Significance of Mentor-Mentee Relationships</th>
<th>Necessity of the Mentor’s Influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>Very Effective</td>
<td>Very Significant</td>
<td>Very Necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockson</td>
<td>Very Effective</td>
<td>Very Significant</td>
<td>Very Necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine</td>
<td>Very Effective</td>
<td>Very Significant</td>
<td>Very Necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>Very Significant</td>
<td>Very Necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>Very Significant</td>
<td>Very Necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>Very Effective</td>
<td>Very Significant</td>
<td>Very Necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Razia</td>
<td>Very Effective</td>
<td>Very Significant</td>
<td>Very Necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ophelia</td>
<td>Very Effective</td>
<td>Very Significant</td>
<td>Very Necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>Very Effective</td>
<td>Very Significant</td>
<td>Very Necessary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above tables illustrate the participants’ perceptions of fostering career development through mentoring of their aspiring mid-level managers. These components were analyzed across cases to identify themes and findings. The tables depict the participants’ insight into the significance and effectiveness of career development efforts, mentor-mentee relationships, and the mentor’s influence. Besides, the tables depict the participants’ utilization of various mentoring styles to foster career developmental agenda of their aspiring mid-level managers.

Reflections on Individual Participants’ Experiences

Participants of the study provided more descriptive statements that reflected how they felt being formal mentors supporting their mentees who were formally assigned to them to advance their careers. The dominant feelings expressed by the participants included compassion;
excitement; being valued and embraced leading to self-empowerment; and refreshment, encouragement, and satisfaction.

**Compassion.** Two formal mentors (Catherine and Frank) felt compassionate about their role. Catherine, the challenger and Frank, the guide argued that effective mentors deal with their mentees’ distress on a daily basis and that often they instrumentally bring these feelings to the surface in order to address them. The higher the emotional feeling that their compassion provokes in them, the more difficult it makes them to becoming objective and supportive in the mentoring process. Catherine and Frank described their lack of experience of having mentors moving up in their professions and desire to ensure others do not go through that experience.

**Excitement.** Razia, the connector and Martha, the mother horse and wise protector felt excited any time they were impacting lives through mentoring in the agency. Both are nurses in work in the same department in the DDS-Metro region. The follow-up interviews the researcher had with them indicated how they compared excitement in seeing an individual’s health improve to the excitement felt when their mentees achieve their career developmental objectives. They argued that they were very fortunate to have effective mentors who guided them in their lives, and that the realization that their mentors have been able to accomplish their professional advancement objectives excites them to do more to support the agency’s growth and development.

**Value.** Being valued and embraced by organizational leaders and mentees lead to self-empowerment on the part of formal mentors. Mike the advocate and Ophelia, the active listener explained that serving as mentors in the agency constitutes a huge step in making a big difference in people’s lives. They both agreed that mentoring is key to the career success of the “young professionals” (Ophelia, Personal commination, June 6, 2018) and the less-experienced
staff” (Mike, Personal communication, June 27, 2018), coming in to help with retirement and turnover issues in the agency. Mike and Ophelia argued having the opportunity to provide mentoring supports to these two categories of employees and being valued as mentors empower them to continue to seek for more professional trainings and help with agency wide professional development agenda.

**Refreshment, encouragement, and satisfaction.** Brenda, the authentic leader; Rockson, the service provider; and Sam, the passionate educator expressed how they felt refreshed, encouraged, and satisfied when they impact the lives of their mentees and when they realize their mentees have stepped up and taken higher roles in the agency. For instance, Sam stated he felt encouraged and satisfied to see his “mentees exploring other roles or skills to learn new opportunities and exposure to new experiences as this sends the message that you as their mentor value training and their effort to take advantage of learning opportunities” (Personal communication, June 20, 2018). Similarly, Brenda stated that she felt refreshed to see her mentees start where they are currently, without having the expectation that her mentees will meet her standards. She rather feels encouraged to support them to improve and pass their own expectations. By so doing, she prefers to remain neutral and will not allow things to affect her personally. However, she allows experience to help her grow in her profession and her mentoring strategies.

**Summation**

In this sub-section, a description of participants’ expression of individual feelings was made. The virtual interviews and the follow-up interviews provided an opportunity for participants to detail their descriptive statements of how they felt mentoring others in the agency.
They major feelings they described consisted of compassion; excitement; being valued and embraced leading to self-empowerment; and refreshment, encouragement, and satisfaction.

Response to Research Question and Summary of Findings

This narrative study built on and expanded previous research examining career development through mentoring (Tiedeman & O’Hara, 1963; Miller-Tiedeman & Tiedeman, 1982; Miller-Tiedeman & Tiedeman, 1990). This led to a better understanding of the experiences of mid-level managers who mentor entry-level employees to advance their careers. The findings indicated that employee satisfaction depends on their access to supports that seek to build their skills, abilities, values, and self-concepts. The willingness to ensure a meaningful career advancement is largely based on aspiring mid-level managers’ access to support systems that seek to realize their career advancement needs.

In this chapter, the profiles of the nine mid-level managers who have experience as mentors to their aspiring mid-level managers in the DDS-Metro Region were presented. In this narrative study, eleven clusters under three categories were identified that sought to explore how mid-level managers working in a state agency describe their mentoring experiences of entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers. Detailed accounts of the data were provided to support the emerging eleven themes that fell into the three categories. In the category on fostering career development, four main clusters emerged: mentoring, career development, mid-level management, and the mentor’s active and reliable support (in 1: organizing individualized trainings, 2: being committed in mentee’s professional development life, and 3: supporting mentees to utilize the important people in their lives). Five clusters were identified from the category on the characteristics of the mentor-mentee relationship, and they consisted of mutual respect, openness, balance, social, and empathy. Finally, the third category had to do with the
mentor’s influence on fostering career development. With this category, two clusters were identified. They included offering opportunities and exposing mentees to a wide array of experiences across the field. Having reported these findings, the researcher will interpret the results of this study, draw conclusions, and present recommendations for future research in next chapter.
Chapter 5 - Discussion, Implications, and Conclusions

The purpose of this doctoral research project is to understand the mentoring experiences of mid-level managers helping to foster career development within the Metro Region of Department of Developmental Services (DDS) of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Specifically, this study focused on identifying the ways in which experienced mid-level managers effectively foster the development of aspiring mid-level managers' careers through mentoring as a major leadership support in the Metro Region of the Department of Developmental Services in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The central question for this narrative study is: “How do mid-level state managers describe their mentoring experiences of entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers?” This question served as a framework for the following discussion.

To meet the purpose of this study, the researcher selected and recruited 9 participants (mid-level managers who were formal mentors) to participate in the virtual interview, based on the following criteria: (a) they have worked for this agency (DDS-Metro Region) for at least 5 years; (b) they are in mid-level management positions; and (c) they have had experiences as mentors to others aspiring to advance their careers at the Metro Region of the Department of Developmental Services. When the responses of the participants were received, two rounds of coding and a cross-case analysis were performed. Following that, three categories and eleven clusters emerged.

This chapter offers a discussion on the participants’ responses as they relate to the study’s research question, the theoretical framework, and the career development and mentoring literature. The chapter also highlights implications for practice based on the study's findings,
discusses the limitations of the study, and offers recommendations for future study. Finally, this chapter concludes with a reflection on the lessons learned while conducting this study and with a chapter summary.

**Interpretation of Clusters**

As discussed, the analysis of the 9 virtual interview protocol responses occurred in two cycles. The first cycle used open coding, which consisted of manual interpretation of the virtual interview protocol responses as well as the responses from the follow-up interviews to ensure grouping of relevant and similar data into categories using initial codes (Saldana, 2009). The researcher also conducted a second round of coding to verify open codes and identify any additional emergent codes that might have aligned with previously reviewed literature. The second round of coding helped the researcher to start the process of clustering of similar codes. The open coding and clustering of codes followed the researcher’s referral to the theoretical framework of the study as well as a review of the research question to ensure that responses provided insight to inform the research study. This helped to identify potential emergent patterns and themes that were further explored for generalization (Saldana, 2009). Three categories and eleven clusters emerged from the data analysis. The first category, fostering career development, consisted of four main clusters: mentoring, career development, mid-level management, and the mentor’s active and reliable support (in 1: organizing trainings, 2: being committed in mentee’s professional development life, and 3: supporting mentees to utilize the important people in their lives). The second category, characteristics of mentor-mentee relationships, was made up of three clusters: openness, balance, and empathy. The final category, the mentor's influence on fostering career development, had two clusters: offering opportunities and exposing mentees to a
wide array of experiences across the field. Following is an interpretation of these findings based on the various categories of the study.

**Fostering Career Development**

The primary focus of this study was to understand how mid-level managers serving as mentors foster career development of aspiring mid-level managers they mentor. After a review of the data, four main clusters emerged: mentoring, career development, mid-level management, and the mentor’s active and reliable support.

*Mentoring, career development, mid-level management, and mentoring support.*

Researchers within the mentoring and career development literature have emphasized the significance of career development through mentoring (Green & Bauer, 1995; Russell & Adams 1997; Megginson & Clutterbuck, 1995; McKimm, Jollie, & Hatter, 2003, 2007; National Mentoring Consortium, 1995). Indeed, for career development to be successful, someone has to help another person to become what that person aspires to be (Tiedeman & O’Hara, 1963; Miller-Tiedeman & Tiedeman, 1982; Miller-Tiedeman & Tiedeman, 1990; Montreal CEGEP, 1988). CATHERINE summarized this as "supporting another toward learning and growth (Personal communication, June 26, 2018). Further, BRENDA explained that middle managers serving as mentors to their aspiring middle managers should help them understand the expectation of the role and help them understand that the people they support will be their greatest teachers. For mentees to do better in their current positions, they need to be satisfied, and employee satisfaction depends on mentees' access to supports that help them build their skills, abilities, values, and self-concepts (Super et al., 1996). The provision of this access is best made available by middle managers who mentor these first entry-level employees aspiring into mid-level management positions. According to BRENDA, mid-management is best viewed as a
support role and not an authoritative role. In view of this, she posited that she puts those
questions back on the person to answer, creates a collaborative strategy that is most effective to
help them achieve their goals, as well as supports them to create their own paths. She stated that
this has been her goal anytime she is mentoring someone. Further, BRENDA asserted that if
mentoring is given the support of the directors in the DDS-Metro Region, it could be very
influential in contributing to the development of mentees' self-concept, which is an underlying
factor in Super's (1957) career development theory.

Similarly, Russell and Adams (1997) have expressed the need to foster career
advancement through mentoring. They have pointed out that mentoring, a leadership strategy
involving an intense, one-on-one relationship between a mentor and a mentee, has considerable
value to both partners as well as their organizations. Further, these researchers argued that formal
mentoring relationships which are mostly implemented by organizations focus on promoting
several valuable goals such as employee satisfaction and socialization, and employee retention
and success. However, to make this effective, MARTHA stated that "I believe that it would be
important to set goals to establish an effective, successful and sustainable mentoring program. It
would also be essential to provide training to the person who is providing the mentoring,
especially on communication techniques and setting unique goals for each person" (Personal
communication, June 27, 2018). MIKE explained that best mentors should not necessarily teach
their mentees in a manner of rote instruction, but rather let mentees observe them in their work as
well as give the mentees the chance to watch others acting in similar or related roles. MIKE
shared that:

Through those experiences, I was able to take in a much wider variety of styles and ways
of going about the work. I’ve long felt that having the chance to watch others in action
serves the multiple purposes of reinforcing pre-existing sensibilities and ideas, impacting
preconceived notions of how to do things, and opening my eyes with respect of looking at things in new ways. My many experiences of being mentored have ultimately enlightened me significantly in learning what to do, and probably just as importantly, what not to do.

In addition, SAM detailed:

As someone moves on, I have noted how taking some infrequent department trainings should be taken to gain foundations in knowledge before requesting added responsibilities or work with specific consumers or planning committees. You cannot ask to be selected to be on a Travel Training committee without having any knowledge of Transportation Coordination among the state agencies working on that effort. So, when a once-a-year conference on this topic is offered, they should go.

SAM explained that mentoring and career development go together, and they work best if mid-level managers serving as mentors are active and reliable in providing the necessary supports for their mentees. MIKE, RAZIA, and FRANK affirmed that prioritizing the organization of individualized trainings, being committed in a mentee’s professional development life, and supporting mentees to utilize the important people in their lives yield positive results. OPHELIA mentioned that these "positive results" are called "outcomes." According to BRENDA and CATHERINE, some of these benefits include personal growth and development, career advancement, stability in career, motivation, continuous improvement, and socialization. This is in line with the majority of studies on mentoring outcomes, such as job mobility (Scandura, 1992) and career progress (Bozionelos, 2004), job satisfaction (Aryee & Chay, 1994), organizational commitment (Heimann & Pittenger, 1996), and social capital (Lin, 1999; Burt, 2000). However, MIKE argued that as a mid-level manager who has served in different positions, he thinks that without having a general awareness and sensitivity to the responsibilities, challenges, and mindset of a variety of people in the DDS-Metro Region, mentors cannot do much to enforce the career advancement agenda of the region. He shared that:
I have long felt that having the ability to be empathetic is an invaluable asset and is something that needs to be constantly refreshed and re-evaluated. Certainly, a key aspect of the vision and mission of DDS for those who work to realize it is to be able to understand individuals where they are now and where they want to be in the future. By being aware of and sensitive to the unique journey that each person is on is vitally important in order to collaborate with and support them in the best way possible. I believe that this is true as it relates to individuals we support and mentees alike.

The study participants indicated that to ensure stability and predictability in career development and progression, an aspiring mid-level manager needs to know about the best strategies for advancing their professions. ROCKSON advised mentees aspiring into mid-level management positions to "be certain to look at the 'big picture' and don't get tunnel vision for one specific position. There are numerous managerial positions that contribute to carrying out the agency's objectives and mentees should identify and prepare themselves for more than just one path of advancement" (Personal communication, June 25, 2018). Offering an advice, OPHELIA stated as mentees, you need to "be students of the world. Don’t look at your job as the only thing to do. Read articles that could be interesting, read about supervising, chat with others about how to motivate staff etc. Look for fun facts that could be interesting to your staff and get people excited!" (Personal communication, June 6, 2018). This is in alignment with Mezirow’s (1978) transformative learning theory which indicates that learning, a process of an adult modifying or adjusting narrow, problematic, fixed, or static assumptions and expectations in oneself, becomes engaging and transformative when mentees integrate the implications of different worldviews into their own worldview, leading to an enlargement of their worldview. Similarly, SAM shared that mentees need to “be respectful to your co-workers because you may be supervising and mentoring them in the future. I think mentees feel more connected when they have experienced, reliable mentors supporting them when they make errors, are afraid to take risks, and need acknowledgement when they succeed” (Personal communication, June 20, 2018). Furthermore,
FRANK advised that mentees should have conversations with co-workers in their workplaces to better understand what the responsibilities are in order to make sure the job is a good fit for people who desire a mid-level manager’s position. He also suggested that mentees discuss their professional goals with their supervisors and mentors, inform them of their goals and ask their supervisors and mentors to identify what performance areas they should focus on to prepare themselves for their desired job positions. On a similar note, BRENDA expressed that mentees need to make sure they are interested in the responsibilities and expectations of the job. Additionally, she stated that being a mid-level manager and at the same time as a mentor is hard, and if mentors are not motivated by the role and responsibilities of mentoring, they will burn out fast.

The study revealed some innovative strategies that the DDS-Metro Region can employ to launch its mentoring agenda to foster career development of its aspiring middle managers. Participants discussed what their innovative approaches would entail, assuming it is five years from now and they have been invited to speak to other agencies about the innovative approaches that the DDS-Metro Region launched to foster career development of its aspiring middle managers. For instance, FRANK stated his presentation would focus on "DDS supports career growth of its employees through their mentorship program." He explained, “The main point of the story would be to highlight the agency’s innovative mentorship program, which provides real-life 1:1 mentorship opportunities for DDS employees. The program allows interested staff to shadow their assigned mentors as they perform their job responsibilities in order to prepare them for potential opportunities for promotion” (Personal communication, July 2, 2018). According to MIKE, his headline would be "Carry It On." He shared, “The main points would involve an overview of the journey that the work has taken, the progress that has been made, and the
tremendous amount of work that still needs to be done in order to achieve our mission of full equality and participation for individuals we support (Personal communication, June 19, 2018).

Besides, OPHELIA stated that her approach would focus on "Mentoring – There is NOT just one approach" to signal to mentors that it is very important that they alter their approaches to fit their mentees' needs and capabilities. Furthermore, RAZIA indicated that “You can’t go anywhere unless you take that first step", because “As program supervisors leave/retire, mentoring will play a key factor in shaping how the coming years are going to be. If we don’t start with a solid base of knowledge and commitment things will become chaotic and unstable which will result in not providing needed services to the people we support” (Personal communication, June 18, 2018). In addition, SAM shared that his headline would be "The State requires new hires to job shadow." He detailed:

In a new training effort to inherit the history and work culture of an aging work force the State now requires new staff to job shadow other employees whose roles they must learn about for a day. It is hoped that this will expose the new staff to the variety of tasks performed and responsibilities of the agency. It is further hoped that this type of shadowing may inspire some of the new staff to work toward one of these other positions in the future. Some of these positions could be promotional opportunities.

He further explained, “It is very important to foster the teaching of new and less-experienced staff. The agency cannot assume reading a manual or going to a training will give a person the experience and skills they need. Personal and ongoing contact can produce the trust needed to allow new and less-experienced staff to gain confidence and motivation” (Personal communication, June 20, 2018). Similarly, MIKE suggested a couple of things:

The first is to develop as much empathy as possible for all people with whom you may interact. This does not mean agreeing with another person, or in some cases, even liking them. What it does entail is being able to function in the moment while also being able to take a step back and look at the big picture and put all of it into context as much as possible. There are obviously many times when a task simply has to be done but
understanding why and being able to explain that to others in both a meaningful and functional manner can make it much easier to accept.

Finally, ROCKSON stated that he would rather center his presentation on "The Talent Within", because:

How effectively utilizing the talent pool already in the agency to foster managers is a better recipe for success than hiring managers from outside the agency. The commitment to train and promote those already loyal and dedicated to the agencies objectives is not only impactful to those being promoted, but those employees newly employed who can see advancement opportunities within the agency.

Based on those ideas, the participants indicated that it is important that those who design mentoring programs focus on making them more effective, successful, and sustainable to ensure the mentoring process has an impact on fostering career development of aspiring middle managers in the region. ROCKSON indicated that mentoring programs need "to be mentor/mentee driven; allowing people to teach and learn at their own pace" (Personal communication, June 25, 2018).

Regarding the impact of the design of such trainings on mentoring programs, FRANK shared that he has participated in numerous professional trainings that enhanced his skills as a manager before he was hired into his position as service coordinator supervisor. All the participants agreed with FRANK that among the trainings they have had in their careers, the ones that were very useful to them in helping to develop and advance their career goals were those trainings they took while working for DDS.

The document review that the researcher did confirmed the availability of these free professional trainings for state employees. Examples of these trainings included Center of Leadership Development’s courses such as Preventing Workplace Violence for Managers, Creating Charts in Excel- eLearning, Managing Data in Excel- eLearning, Progressive
Discipline- eToolbox for Managers, Difficult Communications, Emotional Intelligence, Strategic Thinking and Planning, Effective Business Writing, Best Practices to Ensure Inclusivity and Accessibility, Facilitative Leadership, Program Management, Fiscal Management and Responsibility, Program Evaluation Efficacy, Clinical Supervision Certificate, Multicultural Awareness and Diversity, Supervision/EPRS Training, and Employment Supports Training. Most of these trainings are provided as part of EOHHS' professional development agenda, with some of them taught at the Secretariat's Supervisory Academy and Mentoring, Aspiring Supervisor and Succession Planning (MasSP) programs. Adding to the list, ROCKSON indicated, “Over the course of my 20-year career at DDS, I have taken and participated in too much training for me to accurately list. In the positions that I’ve held, the 40 hours basic investigations course, communicating with persons with disabilities, interviewing techniques, and report writing trainings have been the most impactful for me” (Personal communication, June 25, 2018).

In describing how these trainings have been beneficial to him in his career, MIKE shared:

I have taken part in many trainings during the course of my career. Many have been Department-mandated, such as Diversity, Conflict of Interest, Prevention of Sexual Harassment, etc. Several have involved ongoing managerial and leadership opportunities in which participation in monthly classroom-type activities. During these experiences, it was possible to hear from the facilitator the wider-ranging themes being discussed while also being in an environment with fellow professionals that allowed for open and honest conversation, development of problem solving skills and the ability to step back and think outside of my own comfort zone. I believe that the longer term, course-style trainings have been most helpful to me in refining my sense of what attributes I wanted to develop in order to be a good manager, as well as clarify in my own mind things that were perhaps not as important or meaningful to me in my work.

Similarly, BRENDA shared that she takes advantage of her clinical trainings, which she feels she can grow from as possible. Also, she stated that she likes to hear what the mentees she supports are being trained on. She thinks that a lot of the times, the trainings are not new information, but
instead good refreshers or are those that she helps her mentees to learn about additional or new resources. However, RAZIA stated that "I primarily stay within my skill set of MAP and Health related trainings. I prefer not to utilize the union trainings. I continue to maintain my status as an NTG affiliated trainer for individuals with developmental disability and intellectual disability" (Personal communication, June 18, 2018). As a nurse like RAZIA, MARHA indicated that it is required that nurses have 15 contact hours every two years to renew their license, and that she found trainings on Hospice, Stress Management, Enteral Feeding, Medication Administration, and many more very useful. In addition to his job as a nurse, MARTHA stated she teaches Health and Safety, Healthy Lifestyles and Fall’s Prevention as part of orientation. Similarly, OPHELIA stated that "Actually, I have found the technical classes helpful lately. I do wish there were more, and I have requested more" (Personal communications, June 6, 2018).

The results of this study suggest that experienced mid-level managers serving as mentors are able to effectively foster career development of their aspiring mid-level managers if they are committed in organizing individualized trainings and providing support for their mentees to become successful.

Therefore, this researcher offers the following three conclusions:

♦ Conclusion 1: Formal mentors value being active and reliable in mentees’ professional lives.

♦ Conclusion 2: Formal mentors believe mentoring programs should be designed to focus on becoming more effective, successful, and sustainable to engineer effective career development of aspiring middle managers.
Throughout the study, it was evident how the mentors applied theories of adult learning (Merriam et al., 2007) such as behaviorism, cognitivism, social learning, and constructivism to their mentoring style, as these theories are essential in and align with career development (Allen, 2007) to indicate the connection between adult learning theory and career development (Komolthiti, 2016). The researcher got a better understanding of mentoring and career development strategies that focused primarily on guiding the adult learner (Winkler, 2014) and identifying the variety of the learning styles of mentees as well as their individual multiple intelligences they bring into their first-entry level positions (Boreen, 2000). Additionally, it was evident that when these mentors tailored their mentoring strategies to the learning styles and individual differences and needs of their mentees, it provided “high quality professional development opportunities” (Clark, 2016, p. 24). However, despite the important jobs these mentors do to enforce the career development agenda of the region, some of these experienced mid-level managers believed that though they functioned as managers, technically, they were not considered as managers. This was evident as some of the mid-level managers the researcher contacted initially thought they were not recognized as employees in the middle who serve in the capacity as managers, as they are not technically called "managers." Even though CATHERINE did not belong to the "management team" but was serving and managing in the middle, she expressed that "I feel privileged to be part of the department. I enjoy assisting others in various forms to reach their personal and professional goals" (Personal communication, June 26, 2018).

**Characteristics of Mentor-Mentee Relationships**

Mentoring, as "an effective method of helping less-experienced individuals develop and progress in their profession" (Byington, 2010, para. 1), is anchored on relationship building (Mincemoyer & Thomson, 1998; Baugh & Scandura, 1999; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Research
on mentoring relationships has indicated some key attributes that influence a successful mentoring relationship (Kutilek & Earnest, 2001). For instance, Byington has suggested the creation of a relationship of trust, clear definition of roles and responsibilities, establishment of short- and long-term goals, the use of open and supportive communication, and collaboration toward solving problems.

In building on Clutterbuck's (1991) views on mentoring relationships, McKimm, Jollie, and Hatter (2007) offered:

Mentoring is a protected relationship in which learning and experimentation occur through analysis, examination, reexamination and reflection on practice, situations, problems, mistakes and successes (of both the mentors and the mentees) to identify learning opportunities and gaps. Mentoring is about helping the learner/mentee to grow in self-confidence and develop independence, autonomy and maturity. The mentoring relationship is a special relationship where two people make a real connection with each other. In other words, they form a bond. It is built on mutual trust and respect, openness and honesty where each party can be themselves. It is a powerful and emotional relationship (p. 5).

Thus, mentor-mentee relationships provide support for the mentees to learn and grow in their agencies. In being consistent with the approach taken in mentoring research, Higgins and Kram (2001) argued developmental relationships that are known and identified by mentees lead to personal growth. However, for this to be successful, there has to be an environment that is safe and protective for the mentee, since the relationship's quality is critical to the success of the outcome of the mentoring process. Thus, either the mentee or the mentor, or both need to feel comfortable within the relationship to ensure the sustainability of both learning and growth. In a follow-up face-to-face interview with OPHELIA, she offered that mentors have to ensure a positive, welcoming relationship to help ensure focus on the objectives of the mentoring process as well as growth and development (Personal communication, June 6, 2018).
In addition to these characteristics, other participants affirmed that mutual respect, honesty, commitment, openness, balance, empathy, and sensitivity were very significant in equipping the mentor to stay on course (Antonioni, 1998) as well equipping the mentee to be receptive to ideas (Costa & McCrae, 1992). For instance, SAM argued:

Mentors need to spend time with their mentees to show them a work task has no initial judgement of their performance. I think trust can happen when no judgment is involved. Respect for each other can more likely occur if it is initially based on this type of interaction. If the mentee does not trust you to ask to for help or guidance, then the role on mentor is not functional. A mentor and mentee can help each other. I think it is reasonable to ask staff to assist you in a task that they learned. This not only helps you but can demonstrate their competence and point toward other areas to build on for their career. When you leave your job, you know there are competent people to replace you.

Based on the impact of relationship building on the professional lives of both the mentor and the mentee, the researcher has offered the following conclusions:

♦ Conclusion 3: Formal mentors value the importance of being professional and sensitive to the needs of mentees who also need to value mutual respect.

♦ Conclusion 4: Formal mentors believe honesty and level of familiarity are key components to good relationship.

The Mentor's Influence on fostering Career Development

As a requirement, the participants for this study were themselves mentored and were serving as mentors as well. This suggests that each of them was exposed to different mentors who impacted their career development agenda. Having been a mentor and now serving as a mentor to others, the participants of this study appreciated the opportunity it gives them to help realize the vision and mission of the department as well as the region through their influence. Research on the theory of influence (Brocas & Carillo, 2002) suggests that the power of influence can be quite significant since the amount of influence is proportional to the individual's
cost of acquiring information. In the mentoring process, the mentor's influence on fostering career developmental aspirations of the mentee is proportional to the mentee's cost of building relationships and their willingness to achieve their developmental goals and objectives. A growing body of research in mentoring and career development documents that mentoring has the potential to influence multiple domains of a mentee's career developmental needs and priorities, even though relationships are likely to vary in the type and degree of positive outcomes that are realized (Rhodes, Spencer, Keller, Liang, & Noam, 2006; DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002; Laursen & Bukowski, 1997).

Mentors influence their mentees in different ways (Grossman & Tierney, 1998; Newburn & Shiner, 2005; O’Donnell, Lydgate & Fo, 1979). In their report prepared for Brå, the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, Jolliffe and Farrington (2008) confirmed that mentors influence their mentees to focus on their career development goals as well as provide them with the supports needed to realize those goals. CATHERINE confirmed this and stated that it was her aunt who offered support to her when she was climbing the leadership ladder. She shared:

After being in the non-profit human service industry for so long with little pay and scandal on the part of the employer I decided to change careers. My goal was to become a dental hygienist and go back to school for an associate degree. I researched the best schools, the most affordable ones, their requirements, thought about how it could be managed with my employment schedule. I started taking my pre-requisites at Bunker Hill Community College and Middlesex Community College to prepare a strong application. However, it was my aunt, Jacque, who guided me to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of those choices toward my growth.

However, Jolliffe and Farrington argued that a greater influence comes about when the mentor and mentee spend more time together per meeting and meet at least weekly. Thus, when organizational leaders make mentoring as a stand-alone strategy to influence their employees, it will not lead to much increase in the developmental success of mentees (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002). MIKE explained this better by affirming that mentoring should not
be seen as a single strategy that is a ‘one size fits all’ approach. This was in agreement with OPHELIA's statement that there is no just one approach to mentoring and as such, mentors will have to alter their pedagogies to fit their mentees, since their mentoring efforts constitute a critical role in realizing the vision and mission of the DDS-Metro Region.

In explaining how their different approaches to mentoring aspiring middle-managers help influence their mentees, participants of the study likened their mentoring styles to their preferred animals. For instance, both BRENDRA and MIKE selected dogs. While BRENDRA preferred to use "Australian Sheep Dog" because these dogs help lead groups of people and create a safe environment for everyone, MIKE shared:

Some of the reasons that come to mind would include the obviously loyalty aspect, as well as the sensitivity dogs possess regarding the environment around them. As a good mentor, it would be important to be aware of all aspects of the field we work in and offering individuals the chance to experience them and develop their exposure to them, as well develop knowledge and experience.

While OPHELIA selected "Grey Wolf" because they are highly social and deeply loyal to their pack, ROCKSON preferred "Bear" because "I see the mentoring relationship as very similar to a family unit and the bear symbolizes that. They maintain contact with their young and show them how to provide for themselves before encouraging them to venture out on their own. There’s a maturation process very similar to mentoring" (Personal communication, June 25, 2018). Both CATHERINE and FRANK chose "Eagle" for similar reasons. Whereas CATHERINE prefers "to take the panorama view in life and try to see the big picture including current information and how it can be used to teach small lessons" (Personal communication, June 26, 2018), FRANK shared that eagles parent their young in small numbers (1-2 chicks) and teach them the fundamentals of the skills they would need to survive on their own. They demonstrate these skills and then observe the young demonstrating these skills and will correct them, if necessary.
He further explained that “their young are allowed to remain with them to continue to learn until they are adolescents. Once they are prepared for the next stage of their lives, they leave the nest and care of their parents/mentors to establish themselves as successful birds of prey” (Personal communication, July 2, 2018). However, SAM decided on a spider and argued that "the web is a plan to teach, present, and explain; the unexpected leaf or wind that breaks the web requires adjustments and changes and to re-build; the prey caught in the web is the task at hand that always requires more effort to complete or subdue” (Personal communication, June 20, 2018).

Within career development theory, the term "life-span" is defined as the various positions that individuals hold as well as the different responsibilities they execute (Super et al., 1996). The roles of the mentor, the developer, and the middle manager are evident throughout life. Thus, mid-level managers are a significant force within their organizations (Tucker-Lively, 2014) serving as administrators, professionals, technicians, or specialists though their positions tend to be differentiated by functional specialization, skills, training, and experience (Rosser, 2000, 2004). According to Super (1976), these mentoring roles constitute the course of events that make up a life, combining to express commitment of mentors to work in their overall pattern of self-development. Within each role, mentors play certain roles to accomplish varied career developmental tasks which correspond to their mentoring program requirements (Chen, 1998). The researcher, therefore, found these roles relevant as they pertain to the different strategies that mentors can apply to ensure an effective mentoring program.

Additionally, the participants of the study discussed how a mentor's influence goes a long way to foster career development in the lives of mentees by offering encouragement and exposing mentees to a wide array of experiences and opportunities. For instance, BRENDA detailed that her first mentor was very influential in helping her figure out that her long-term
career goals were not in being a therapist, even though it meant she no longer was interested in the position which she mentored her for. BRENDA affirmed that each mentee is on their own path, so she sees her role as a mentor as supporting them in the attainment of their goals and helping them grow individually. SAM stated that one way that mid-level managers serving as mentors in the DDS-Metro Region can support their mentees is to encourage them to take the time for classes offered by EOHHS or to attend training by having always a full month of almost daily, scheduled training or work experiences as a base to start. Sharing some of his positive influences on his mentees, ROCKSON detailed that:

Honestly, I don’t know that I am all that impactful. What I do know is I’ve had very positive experiences with my supervisors for the most part. I’ve had supervisors who articulate to me what it is that I do that they like and makes their job easier. I try my best to mirror that with my employees and mentees, giving praise and positive reinforcement for tasks done well. I also respect people as professionals and on occasions when correction or redirection is required, I promote the positive change that is required and obtainable. I do my best not to perseverate on the negative.

Further, the results of this study bring into the limelight how relevant mentors are in the enforcement of program continual adjustment for improvement. The participants shared some of their useful experiences that they have had to help the development of their ability to be impactful mentors to aspiring middle-managers. For instance, RAZIA shared that mentoring programs should focus on helping mentors to analyze and adjust as needed to get the job done. SAM advised that everyone needs to be assigned a minimum number of hours a month to mentor or teach their mentees. Similarly, FRANK shared:

Any agency that designs mentoring programs should also look outside the field and research what other industries are offering employees that lead to professional growth and promotion to managerial positions and these practices that are relevant. One of my ongoing concerns is that the human service field does not adequately train and support staff when they become mid-level managers. I continue to see this as an issue when
working with provider agencies who do not have a formalized training program for managers.

While BRENDA argued that mentors need to pair mentees up in a mindful way, ROCKSON emphasized that the mentor and the mentee should have similar work goals and expectations of themselves. Additionally, BRENDA argued that mentors need to start where someone is- not having the expectations people will meet their standards but have the passion to support them to improve and pass their own expectations. Besides, she said that it is equally important for mentors to remain neutral, not allowing things to affect them personally but allowing experience to help them grow as a professional and a mentor. She also argued that "mentors need to allow their mentees to come to work and be supported with as much positivity as possible. If I didn’t focus on these skills, I would find my job much more difficult to manage" (Personal communication, June 25, 2018).

On the other hand, OPHELIA had an advice for mentees. She stated that mentees should choose the mentors very carefully, because it is not everyone that can mentor others. MARTHA agreed with OPHELIA in that she believes "it would also be important to choose the mentors carefully to ensure they can establish a useful working relationship with their mentees" (Personal communication, June 27, 2018). Further, OPHELIA argued that mentors take on a big responsibility. She likened it to raising a child, supervising staff, and coaching at a high school and in high education level. She posited that since both the mentor and the mentee are developing a relationship and placing trust in each other, it important that both parties know that it cannot be about the mentor, but it must be a shared relationship.

In expounding on how this relationship is important in the realization of the mission and vision of DDS, MIKE shared that he believes that because at its core, the work they do revolves around people, and that there is not, nor can or should there be a set template from which they
operate. He explained that there are certainly numerous systems that are utilized, business practices that are developed and updates, as well as many required processes that need to be adhered to. However, all these systems are various means to an end, and not the end itself. The overarching lesson that he has tried to learn from this is that there is literally no day that is like the one that came before or the one that will come next, because they are engaged in peoples’ lives, and that makes it simply not possible. He added, “being flexible, open-minded and able to meet people based on where they are at a given moment is critical. This applies in different circumstances to individuals, families, coworkers, managers, and anyone else with whom we may be interacting” (Personal communication, June 27, 2018).

Given the findings of this study, the researcher offers the conclusions below based on the influence of mid-level managers as mentors on aspiring mid-level managers as mentees.

♦ Conclusion 5: Formal mentors value sharing of experiences and encouragement of opportunities.

♦ Conclusion 6: Formal mentors believe there should be an establishment of a broader mentoring program to ensure growth and development of young managers.

The literature on mentoring theory, career development theories, influence theory, and mentoring relationships theory helped in explaining many of the findings in this study. Accordingly, the theories assisted in meeting the purpose of the study which was to understand the mentoring experiences of mid-level managers helping to foster career development within the Metro Region of Department of Developmental Services of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In this study, the theoretical framework put the data and emerged themes into perspective. Furthermore, this study's findings illuminated implications
for theory and practice as well as highlighted areas for future research. In the next section, these implications and suggestions for future studies are discussed.

### Implications for Theory

This study provides empirical research to support how middle managers serving as mentors foster career development of their aspiring middle managers. Additionally, the study provides how mentees shape the approaches used by their mentors to support them reach their mentoring and career development goals. The study validates research proving that in fostering career development, the mentor needs to focus on being active and reliable in the mentee's professional life. It also suggests that mentoring programs should be designed to focus on becoming more effective, successful, and sustainable to engineer effective career development of aspiring middle managers. Besides, it encourages mentors to be professional and sensitive to the needs of their mentees as well as informs mentees to value mutual respect. Also, it indicates that the mentor and the mentee need to become acquainted with each other and remain honest. Further, the study confirms that it is significant for mentors to offer encouragement to mentees and expose mentees to several experiences and opportunities. Additionally, it proves that mentoring is not the only organizational leadership strategy to enforce career development of first entry-level employees. The research documents examples, from 9 study participants, of different approaches to mentoring, which validates the need for additional studies exploring how mentors in the DDS-Metro Region foster career advancement of their aspiring middle managers. Furthermore, the study expounds on the significance of the mentor-mentee relationship as well as the understanding of the influence of mentors on their mentees in mentoring and career development efforts.
Super's (1957) career development theory stipulates the various strategies used in developing and implementing an individual's self-concept. According to him, as an individual's self-concept becomes more realistic and stable, their career choice and behavior become more realistic and stable. Thus, mentees choose professions that tend to give them the opportunity to express their self-concepts, and this is relative to their work satisfaction. Super explained that as individuals mature in their careers, the similarity between their actual career developmental behavior and the expectations of their stages of development comes into light, as their readiness to cope with developmental tasks at a given stage tends to be easily identified. With this being said, several career development programs have been affected by Super’s ideas on career development and maturity. This implies that Super’s theory for career development helps to identify individuals' career development stages and set goals for mastery of the tasks unique to each stage, clarify self-concept to enhance self-knowledge which tends to increase career developmental maturity, and expose individual mentees to a wider range of career options since career development options narrow over time. For instance, MARTHA recounted:

I have spent my entire nursing career working for the DDS, beginning as an RN I and am now an RN V. As an RN I, I tried to find any opportunity that I could to further my Nursing skills. I transferred to the Clinical Unit as they were the “hospital” on ground where I would have the opportunity to take care of the sickest patients and build clinical skills. At this point, my focus was based on improving my nursing skills. But, there I also found that I enjoyed being in charge and could work with other nurses effectively. Around this time, I earned a master’s degree in Health Care Administration and become more confident in my ability to lead. I was supported by other nurses in the Clinical Unit and my family and always felt that the transfer was the best choice for me.

As indicated, an individual's career development comes in stages. Additionally, career development theory works together with mentoring theory, as well as relationship and influence theories. Focusing on Super's career development theory allowed the researcher also to use mentoring, relationship, and influence theories as useful frameworks for this study.
Thus, in this study, the researcher did not try to develop a new theory or to make changes to the theoretical framework used in this study, nor did he attempt to use other frameworks to test Super's theory. It is, therefore, important to note that Super’s (1957) Life Span theory of career development as the primary theory used for this study was made to explore middle-managers’ self-concept as mentors and the dimensions of personal growth, acquisition of skills, and general development as they sought to foster career development of first entry-level employees at the Metro Region of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), thus providing a lens to fulfill the purpose of this study. For instance, Super’s (1957) theory details how individuals seek satisfaction in their professions through work roles that provide opportunity for them to express themselves, develop their self-concepts, and advance their professions. After receiving the virtual interview responses from the participants and reviewing the responses from the follow-up interviews, the researcher had the opportunity to understand better how they attempt to foster career development of their aspiring middle managers. Additionally, this study detailed how relationship building and influence positively affect mentors in shaping their mentoring and career development strategies and efforts.

It is important to note that even though Super's theory of career development was useful in guiding the researcher to understand how mentors in the DDS-Metro Region foster career development of their aspiring middle managers, this researcher realizes that it would be better to also explore the experiences of both mentors and mentees, hence the need for studies to investigate both mentors and their mentees. Thus, if researchers are to use Super's (1957) theory to explore the experiences of mentors fostering career development of their mentees, then it would be beneficial to document perspectives of both of partners in order to help in the design of effective mentoring and career development programs in the region.
Given the significance that DDS plays in its mentoring program, which is embedded in its diversity agenda, career development theories may be useful to the department, its regional offices, and its area offices in understanding the career development efforts engineered by middle managers serving as mentors to their aspiring middle managers, as well as their relationships with their mentees and the influence they have on them. Indeed, this study constitutes the researcher’s passion in attempting to begin a meaningful discussion toward that. Thus, it is the hope of this researcher that this study will serve as encouragement to others to advance career development and mentoring research in the contexts of the DDS-Metro Region as well as DDS in general and other state agencies.

**Implications for Practice**

This study was situated in DDS-Metro Region which has four area offices, including Greater Boston in Hyde Park, Charles River West in Somerville, Middlesex West in Framingham, and the Newton/South Norfolk area office in Walpole, MA. The region has over 100 experienced middle managers who daily mentor their staff to achieve their career development goals. This study focused on the experiences of 9 talented middle managers in the region who have participated in formal mentoring training programs and are fostering career development through mentoring of aspiring middle managers. After completing the study and reviewing the data, this researcher offers several implications for practice to the mentors and their mentees, as well as the entire leadership of the DDS-Metro Region.

Findings from this study indicate that career development goes together with mentoring. Employees stand the best chance of realizing their career developmental goals when formal mentoring programs are employed as a vehicle to foster the process. Cross-organizational mentoring is more objective and multidisciplinary (Thew, 2016) and can support aspiring middle
managers' needs for advancement. While mentoring seems critical to supporting first entry-level managers to advance in their professions, it is important that mentors provide the opportunity to their mentees to properly and positively advance. While this is helpful to aspiring middle managers, it is particularly valuable to the DDS-Metro Region and the entire agency, as this will help in fulfilling its agency-wide strategic succession and retention plans.

Besides, the findings of this study show that a better mentoring program focused on fostering career development of its aspiring middle managers needs to be uniquely designed to focus on growth and advancement. With this, MARTHA detailed that the main ideas to consider in its design is to emphasize the importance of good communication skills, flexibility, and the importance of getting to know the people that one supports. She believes that if this is done properly, it will increase the quality of life in the individuals supported, develop employees who demonstrate a high degree of expertise in the fields of professionalism, increase their satisfaction with services, meet their complex employment needs, and help to ensure their overall quality of life. Explaining this further, ROCKSON stated that being able to effectively communicate ensures that all persons involved in the mentoring process are well informed and on board with whatever objectives that are established. He explained that the one thing in life that people cannot recover under any circumstance is time spent. With this in mind, he makes a point to be respectful of other people’s time knowing that he is privileged to have them invest time on him. He detailed that his entire career and all the people he has worked with continue to play a part in his skills development. He believes the greatest part of being a productive investigator and manager is his ability to communicate with others, and merely networking and communicating with the multitude of coworkers he has had over his career has helped him develop skills and gain confidence in his ability to communicate with anyone in any given setting.
Further, the research is clear that mentor-mentee relationship is key to fostering career development of aspiring mid-level managers. ROCKSON stated that he sees this mentoring relationship as very similar to a family unit where members maintain contact with their young and show them how to provide for themselves before encouraging them to venture out on their own. This researcher encourages mentoring partners to make relationship building their priority, since the creation of an environment that instills fairness, trust, and honesty builds loyalty and confidence, leading to greater productivity and quality of service.

Additionally, it would be very useful that the region considers additional training and support on relationship development, establishing mutual respect and trust, openness, and difficult conversations for managers in the middle. This researcher contends that when middle managers who are mentoring their aspiring middle managers to advance their careers receive training on these topics, they would effectively support their mentees to continuously learn new skills to improve service, deliver services promptly, and reduce mistakes. Also, it will help build confidence in the region's workforce and create a better working environment.

Besides, it would be better if the leaders of the region consider what motivates professionals to become formal mentors helping to foster the career development of their mentees. The researcher believes that there is a reason why managers accept formal mentoring training in the region to impact the career advancement lives of their mentees. It will, therefore, be useful if their various reasons are considered since it will help in providing the necessary support they need as mentors so that they can, in turn, support their mentees effectively to achieve their career developmental goals and objectives.

It is, also, equally important for mentors to consider their mentoring styles by offering opportunities to mentees who have not had several years of experience in the field or are not as
advanced and mature in terms of their life stages. Based her mentoring style, MARTHA mentioned that her approach would be mostly like a mother horse, because "as we begin the mentorship, I watch over the mentee closely and check in frequently but as time goes by, there is greater independence in the relationship" (Personal communication, June 27, 2018). MARTHA affirmed that the mentoring approach that she has used has helped her new nurses to get hired in their program, and that has been the most useful experience that she has had to help develop the ability to be an impactful mentor. This researcher would suggest mentors to remain professional, be actively involved in their mentees' professional lives, and appropriately set boundaries, yet remain easily approachable.

Again, this researcher would encourage aspiring middle managers being mentored to have a strategic approach to mentoring and the attainment of their career development goals. These strategies may include choosing their mentors well, continuing to take classes for career development, taking on new responsibilities in their current positions, looking for opportunities to sit on committees to assist with agency policy development, developing and providing training manuals, and expanding their roles and responsibilities in their current positions as much as possible. MARTHA shared that, as a mentor, she finds it very important to encourage first-entry level employees advancing their careers to continue their education and be open to as many experiences as they can be; explore different ways to communicate effectively with staff; look at areas that something may have gone wrong (such as a failure to follow agency policy) and think about ways to ensure that this does not occur again; take up volunteering roles or simply speak with people already working in a career that they are interested in when they are considering different career choices; and take on more responsibilities when making career choices. MARTHA further stated that nurses in the agency can take responsibility of the nurse-on-call
where they respond to individuals' acute health issues and medication-related questions, among many other issues. In this case, the nurses are exposed to a variety of situations which will assist them in making future career choices.

This researcher agrees with Tjan (2017) and asks that middle managers mentoring their aspiring middle managers to advance in their careers keep learning to acquire skills that focus on putting relationship before mentoring, concentrating on their mentees' character rather than their competency levels, and remaining more loyal to mentees. ROCKSON shared that he was tasked with taking over an at-risk juvenile mentoring program at his first job which helped him to develop the skills of setting up clear and practical expectations between mentees and mentors. He further explained that “when I first became a DDS investigator I had a bad experience while attempting to interview and alleged victim. I learned how to better “meet people where they are at” rather than trying to make everyone conform to my particular style of interviewing” (Personal communication, June 25, 2018). According to MARTHA, for example, some of these skills that equip mentors in becoming skilled in their duty include approachability and the ability to communicate. She shared:

Being open and approachable to the staff that I supervise, and mentor helps in motivating and encouraging them to reach their goals and provide the best care. The ability to communicate is so important because staff or a mentee may come from a different backgrounds and environments. This forces me to find a way to communicate most effectively as we navigate our way through our association. Also, by working with someone less experienced and from a different background, I gained fresh perspective on things and learn new ways of thinking – which has helped me, succeed professionally.

The researcher believes that when mentors put relationship before mentoring, concentrate on their mentees' character rather than their competency levels, and remain more loyal to mentees, they will not necessarily be engaging in fostering career development, building high-quality mentor-mentee relationships, and providing active and reliable support to their mentees, but also
maintaining high quality mentoring relationships toward the establishment of a better mentoring program focused on the region's career development and diversity plans.

**Limitations**

This study was subject to a few limitations, which included the gender of the participants, functional title differences, the researcher’s positionality on mentoring and career development, the data collection strategies used for the study, use of virtual interview protocol, and some participants’ challenge to see themselves as middle managers.

Of the nine mid-level managers who participated in the study, only four were males. It is important to note that the approach of most of the participants (who were women) to career development and mentoring may differ from the approaches used by men of similar backgrounds.

Similarly, a small number of middle managers who mentor their first entry-level employees agreed to participate in the study. Coupled to that, most of them had time constraints based on work schedules, hiring issues, and instances where employees' leave impacted the work of the participants.

Also, the participants were selected from the DDS-Metro Region regional and its four area offices. Among the nine participants, only three performed the same functional responsibilities. The other six functioned in other mid-level management capacities in the region. This indicates that their mentoring and career development approaches may differ as well.

Additionally, in this study, the researcher discussed positionality issues in Chapter 3 of the study, relative to qualitative research, which largely focused on researcher bias having the capability to influence the way one conducts a study. This is true with this study. Consequently,
the study’s trustworthiness was supported with member checking. Even though care was taken to ensure trustworthiness, it is possible that this qualitative study was framed through the lens of the past of the researcher.

Further, the study focused on data collected from document reviews, responses from a virtual interview protocol, and follow-up interview responses rather than longitudinal observation of participants in their various offices or departments mentoring their aspiring mid-level managers. LaMan (2015) has noted that a longitudinal study of mentors at work has the tendency to yield different perspectives of their work. This indicates that different perspectives may be yielded through mentoring aspiring mid-level managers or exposing further information that relates to fostering career development through mentoring, the development of mentor-mentee relationships, and influence of mentors on their mentees.

Besides, two other things limited the findings of this study. First, the interviews were conducted virtually as compared to a traditional face-to-face interview format. However, the participants indicated that this format gave them the opportunity to think through the questions before responding to them meaningfully and thoughtfully at their own pace. Second, some participants did not perceive themselves as middle managers even though the program identified and trained them as mentors. The researcher, therefore, had to spend time with this category of formal mentors to explain to them what it means to be a middle manager before they wholeheartedly accepted to participate in the study.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This narrative study with nine participants is only one way to understand the experiences of middle managers serving as mentors to their aspiring middle managers advancing their careers
in their various departments. That said, this study primarily focused on the mentoring and career development experiences of formal mentors in the DDS-Metro Region. A future research study may choose to do the opposite and seek to explore the mentoring and career development experiences of mentees in the region. Besides, researchers might consider studying the impact of mentors' influence on their mentees aspiring into mid-level management positions. Furthermore, another study might focus on mentor-mentee relationships in the development of aspiring middle managers' careers in the region. Also, another study might consider comparing the formal yearly-run DDS mentoring program in the region and the mentoring existing among aspiring mid-level managers being guided and mentored by their supervisors daily. This researcher believes that if one is to study how career development is fostered by middle managers in the region, then it is in the best interest to obtain the perspectives of both the mentor and the mentee. In addition, another study might look into exploring if incentives given to mentors can be an effective tool in boosting their morale to becoming more active and reliable in fostering career development of their mentees. The researcher believes that it is a step in the right direction for the leaders of the region to think through how effective managers can be motivated to receive formal mentoring training, so they can become effective mentors in the region.

Moreover, this study focused on the entire DDS-Metro Region rather than a particular area office or department within the regional office in Waltham, MA. It was, therefore, more directed to general rather than specific methodology. Often, the region uses willing managers as the general mentor who can help support first entry-level employees around specific career-focused responsibilities. It would, therefore, be beneficial if other researchers start to look at what type of mentoring best helps newly-hired first entry-level employees. Indeed, more research around the question of whether a new service coordinator needs a service coordinator supervisor
as their mentor, for example, would be helpful. Much of the mentoring research has been around mentors supporting less-experienced employees with execution of their job responsibilities as well as career development needs, and, while this is important, it is clear from this study that aspiring middle managers might have multiple career paths. Therefore, more research around how political, economic, and psychological/sociological factors influence first entry-level managers’ focus on the advancement of their professions would be helpful since several variables influence how well they choose their professions. In most cases, circumstances beyond the first entry-level managers’ control influence them to leave their jobs within less than two years into their employment. In view of this, building leadership that is focused on first entry-level managers’ career choices and decisions might significantly impact them to reduce turnovers and help ensure a better succession planning in the region.

Finally, although this research has contributed beneficial knowledge to the field of career development and mentoring, opportunities are still available for future research to focus on this topic. Based on the research findings, the following are other recommendations for future study regarding mid-level managers and their successful mentoring approaches, including conducting a similar study by considering a focus on the experiences of aspiring mid-level leaders; focusing on this study in the context of a newly-hired state employee relying on supervision from their direct managers and supervisors while transitioning into a bigger role and how this approach effectively contributes to the department’s short-term and/or long-term succession goals; expanding the population to include mid-level managers in other state agencies and compare the themes that emerge from different state agencies; conducting a similar study while examining the setting from a quantitative viewpoint; considering how the results of this study could transfer into an improved program focused on mid-level managers' strategies for fostering career
development at the area, regional, and central offices of the department; focusing on mid-level managers aspiring into senior-level management positions and exploring what their mentoring and career development initiatives might look like; and considering this study in the context of creating a leadership framework model focused on the factors of attitudes, skills, and knowledge in the work environment and how they would translate into pillars of mid-level management such as relationship building, team work, followership, authentic leadership, appreciative leadership, collaborative leadership, strategic leadership, servanthood, and reframing organizations.

Reflections as a Scholar-Practitioner

The researcher's doctoral journey was not all that rosy as he changed his topics three times before finally, he experienced breakthrough when he was given a new advisor as the other one resigned. The researcher decided on the study’s current topic after thinking through the numerous budget cuts and government downsizing that resulted in a major talent gap in mid-level managers in many government agencies within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Additionally, the researcher was worried about the fact that most of today’s first entry-level employees often have significantly less work experience. Having a discussion of his intent with his new advisor, the researcher decided to explore the mentoring experiences of mid-level managers helping to foster career development within the Metro Region of Department of Developmental Services of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts where he works.

This qualitative study gave the researcher the opportunity to review documents and the literature that sought to outline the theoretical framework for the study. Thus, Super’s (1957) Life Span theory of Career Development constitutes an applicable theory to use in understanding the experiences of how individuals have advanced their careers, aligns with theoretical
frameworks that have been used to inform studies of career development and mentoring in organizations, has been used in studies considering development of organizations’ supportive programs geared toward employee development and its onward effect on the entirety of organizations, and can totally be applied to shaping the problem of practice, research question, and methodology of this study. This enabled the researcher to understand the significance of the study to his agency as well as to the various departments of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The researcher determined that the various approaches employed by mid-level managers in the DDS-Metro Region can be used by other managers in other regions of the department to equip aspiring mid-level managers in the various area offices with skills to accomplish their career developmental dreams. Additionally, by having a cursory look at the depth of literature reviewed, the researcher became aware of some of the critical issues affecting mentoring and career development efforts in the region. This awareness has impacted his worldview of the enormous significance of empirical studies on the success of organizations.

Undoubtedly, this study's findings will greatly support the researcher in his professional life as well as profoundly impact his leadership style. Already, the enormous knowledge he has acquired by embarking on this research journey has positively affected the way he provides leadership support to ensure the realization of the goals and objectives of the DDS-Metro Region's Diversity Committee, Mentoring Program, and the Urban Youth Collaborative Program (also known as the DDS Summer Internship Program). The acquisition of understanding of what being a mentor in the region means (through the establishment of mentor-mentee relationships such as openness, balance, and empathy; and the influence of career development by offering opportunities and exposing mentees to a wide array of experiences across their various fields of operation), has equipped the researcher with skills that focus on putting relationship before mentoring,
concentrating on mentees' attitudes rather than their competency levels, and remaining more loyal to mentees.

The researcher believes that the results from this study can help in identifying the ways in which experienced mid-level managers can effectively foster the development of aspiring mid-level managers through mentoring as a major leadership support. Such supports could lead to more effective practices within the three main area offices of the DDS-Metro Region constantly seeking to improve entry-level employees’ skills-set using mentoring skills and techniques. Thus, the findings of the study can help mid-level managers serving as mentors to explore their self-concept as mentors and the dimensions of personal growth, acquisition of skills, and general development as they seek to foster career development of aspiring mid-level managers in their departments within the Metro Region of the Department of Developmental Services.

**Chapter Summary**

The purpose of this study was to understand how mid-level managers working in a state agency describe their mentoring experiences of entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers. This study confirms that mentors and mentees engage each other differently and that mentor-mentee relationships are key to a successful and meaningful mentoring experience. Besides, the study confirms that mentoring as an organizational strategy does not have all size fits all approach for career advancement in that other equally important factors are necessary to effectively foster career development of aspiring mid-level managers. Also, it confirms that aspiring mid-level managers being mentored in the region are likely to encounter different approaches from their mentors based on their mentors' mentoring, management, and leadership experiences as well as according to their job duties. In this chapter, a discussion on the emerged
themes was made. Additionally, the chapter examined limitations, and implications for theory and practice, and discussed future research opportunities.
References


Lofton, C. D. (2012). *Mid-career transitions: A qualitative study examining the developmental relationships, attitudes, networks, and strategies of frontline workers that seek career*
development and advancement (Doctoral dissertation). The Faculty of The Graduate School of Education and Human Development, The George Washington University.


APPENDIX
Appendix A

Certified Letter to Participants to Request Participation in Research

DATE

Dear PROGRAM MANAGER,

My name is Raymond Obeng, and I am a doctoral student at Northeastern University under the guidance of Dr. Margaret Gorman. I am preparing to conduct research for my dissertation and would like to invite you to take part in my study. Specifically, I am looking to request that you participate in a virtual interview protocol as a mid-level manager who has worked for this agency (DDS/Metro Region) for at least 5 years, is in mid-level management position, and has had experiences as mentors to others aspiring to advance their careers at the Metro Region of the Department of Developmental Services.

The title of my study is *Fostering Career Development through Mentoring: A Narrative Study exploring the mentoring experiences of mid-level managers helping to foster career development within the Metro Region of the Department of Developmental Services of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.* This study will seek to understand the mentoring experiences of mid-level managers helping to foster career development within the Metro Region of Department of Developmental Services of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

To conduct this study, I am asking for participants to dedicate 45-60 minutes for a virtual interview protocol about their experiences. My preference is to do a follow-up interview face-to-face, on phone, or virtually in a location and at a time convenient for you to clarify some issues identified from virtual interview protocol. With your permission, notes will be taken. After the
interviews are done, you will have the opportunity to review your transcript for accuracy and clarification.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Additionally, your participation in this study is strictly confidential, and your identity will not be disclosed. My advisor and I will be the only individuals to know of your participation in the study. Although there are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you for participating in this study, you may withdraw at any time or refuse to respond to any questions of the virtual interview protocol, and even refuse to answer some questions during the follow up interview.

By participating in this study, your experiences may help in identifying the ways in which experienced middle managers can effectively foster the development of entry-level employees aspiring to advance in their careers through mentoring, which is as a major leadership support. Such supports can lead to more effective practices within organizations seeking to improve entry-level employees’ skills-set through mentoring skills and techniques. The results of the study may also be used in future scholarly publications and presentations.

If you are comfortable with the purpose of this study and are willing to participate, please let me know by DATE at obeng.r@husky.neu.edu or call 857-236-2168.

Thank you for your consideration,

Raymond Obeng

Doctoral Candidate

College of Professional Studies

Northeastern University
Appendix B

Pre-Virtual Interview Protocol Introductory Email

Dear PROGRAM MANAGER,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study Fostering Career Development through Mentoring: A Narrative Study exploring the mentoring experiences of mid-level managers helping to foster career development within the Metro Region of the Department of Developmental Services of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The purpose of this email is to confirm some background information about your employment history with the DDS-Metro Region. I obtained this information from the archives of the Region’s Human Resources. Please see below and confirm your employment history.

Additionally, I would like to reiterate that your participation in this study will help in identifying the ways in which experienced middle managers can effectively foster the development of aspiring to advance their careers through mentoring, which constitutes as a major leadership support. Such supports can lead to more effective practices within organizations seeking to improve entry-level employees’ skills-set through mentoring skills and techniques. The results of the study may also be used in future scholarly publications and presentations.

Besides, with your permission, I’ll be sending you a virtual interview protocol to provide your reflective response around your mentoring experiences. If needed, I may need a follow-up interview to clarify some key insights which may occur virtually, on phone, or face-to-face.

I look forward to hearing from you soon at obeng.r@husky.neu.edu.
Thank you,

Raymond Obeng

Doctoral Candidate

College of Professional Studies

Northeastern University
Appendix C

Member Checking Email

Dear PROGRAM MANAGER,

Thank you for your time and willingness to share your experiences with me on DATE. I thoroughly enjoyed learning about your experience as a mid-level manager who has worked for this agency (DDS/Metro Region) for at least 5 years, is in mid-level management position, and has had experiences as a mentor to others aspiring to advance their careers at the Metro Region of the Department of Developmental Services. As we discussed, I am sending you this follow-up email, so you can review the transcription of the virtual interview protocol for accuracy (please see attached). Please feel free to edit the transcription as necessary, as well as offer any additional thoughts, ideas, or reflections you may have had since responding to protocol and/or answering my questions during the follow-up interview.

When you are finished, please send it back to me at obeng.r@husky.neu.edu. If you have nothing to change or report, please send me a quick email to let me know about that. You can also contact me by phone at (857) 236-2168. Again, thank you for your valuable time.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Thank you,

Raymond Obeng

Doctoral Candidate

College of Professional Studies

Northeastern University
Appendix D

Informed Consent Form

Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies

**Name of Investigator(s):** Dr. Margaret Gorman (Principal Investigator) & Raymond Obeng (Student Researcher)

**Title of Project:** Fostering Career Development through Mentoring: A Narrative Study exploring the mentoring experiences of mid-level managers helping to foster career development within the Metro Region of Department of Developmental Services of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

**Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study**

We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher, Raymond Obeng, will explain it to you first. You may ask any questions that you may have. When you are ready to decide, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

**Why is this research study being done?**

The purpose of this narrative research was to understand mid-level managers’ experiences mentoring entry-level-staff whom they were formally assigned to as part of mentoring training program at Departmental Services of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Indeed, numerous budget cuts and government downsizing have resulted in a major talent gap in mid-level
managers in many government agencies. Today’s mid-level manager often has significantly less work experience because traditionally, career path systems which allowed for gradual development, apprenticeship, and promotion are now replaced by different expedited advancements and supplemented with mentoring programs designed to help aspiring employees transition into middle managers. For these mentoring programs to be successful, scholar-practitioners need insight into the experiences of those mid-level managers who have experiences as mentors fostering career development in their agencies.

The goal of this study is to understand how mid-level state managers describe their mentoring experiences of entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers.

**Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?**

We are asking you to take part in this research study because you are a mid-level manager who has worked for this agency (DDS/Metro Region) for at least 5 years, is in mid-level management position, and has had experiences as a mentor to others aspiring to advance their careers at the Metro Region of the Department of Developmental Services.

**What will I be asked to do?**

If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to respond to virtual interview protocol to describe your experiences of fostering career development through mentoring for entry-level employees aspiring to advance their careers at DDS-Metro Region. If needed and with your permission, I may conduct follow-up interviews for clarification and/or to ensure accuracy.

**How much of my time will it take?**

Responding to the virtual interview protocol should take approximately 30-45 minutes.
**Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?**

There is no foreseeable risk to you for participating in this study. However, there may be discomfort as you reflect on your experiences as a mid-level manager mentoring entry-level employees to advance their careers. Therefore, you may decline answering any question that may provide discomfort to you.

**Will I benefit by being in this research?**

There will be no direct benefit to you for participating in the study. However, the information learned from this study may help in identifying the ways in which experienced middle managers can effectively foster the development of aspiring entry-level employees through mentoring as a major leadership support. Such supports can lead to more effective practices within organizations seeking to improve entry-level employees’ skills-set through mentoring skills and techniques. The results of the study may also be used in future scholarly publications and presentations.

**Who will see the information about me?**

Your part in this study will be confidential. Only the investigator and the researcher of this study will see the information about you. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way or any individual as being part of this study. The researcher will take every precaution to keep all information confidential. Research data is used only for reporting of the findings. Pseudonyms will be used for study participants to protect identity, and department names will not be disclosed. The research will only describe characteristics of the Metro Region. Responses, notes, transcriptions, employee documents, and other identifying information will be kept in a personal locked cabinet and on a secure personal computer accessible only to the student researcher. Afterwards, all responses and data files will be destroyed.
In rare instances, authorized people may request to see research information about you and other people in this study. This is done only to be sure that the research is done properly. We would only permit people who are authorized by organizations such as the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board to see this information.

**What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?**

No special arrangements will be made for compensation solely because of your participation in this research.

**Can I stop my participation in this study?**

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time. At any point in time, you may withdraw from this study without explanation, penalty, or consequences of any kind. Your participation or nonparticipation will not affect your relationship with Northeastern University or any other organization.

**Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?**

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact the student researcher, Raymond Obeng, at 857-236-2168 or by email at obeng.r@husky.neu.edu. You may also contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Margaret Gorman, Principal Investigator at 202-425-7111 or by email at m.kirchoff@northeastern.edu.

**Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?**

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina,
Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

**Will I be paid for my participation?**

There is no remuneration for your participation.

**Will it cost me anything to participate?**

There will be no cost to participate in this study.

I agree to take part in this research.

_______________________________________  ________________
Signature of person agreeing to take part  Date

_______________________________________
Printed name of person above

_______________________________________  ________________
Signature of person who explained the study to  Date
the participant above and obtained consent

_______________________________________
Printed name of person above
Appendix E

Virtual Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thank you for being available to speak with me today. You have been selected to participate in this research study because you have been identified as a middle manager who has worked for DDS-Metro Region for at least 5 years; are in mid-level management position; and has had experiences as a mentor to others aspiring to advance their careers at the Metro Region of the Department of Developmental Services. This research project focuses on the experiences of mid-level managers. Specifically, this study is focused on ways in which experienced middle managers who have experience as mentors and are serving as mentors draw on their own experiences, successes, and failures in uncovering organizational strategies that focus on the advancement of the careers of entry-level employees.

Therefore, again, thank you for taking the time to respond to my virtual interview protocol. As I mentioned in one of my previous emails, I am in the final phase of my doctoral studies at Northeastern University, and I am interested in gathering stories about how mid-level state managers describe their mentoring experiences of entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers.

First, I want to emphasize that all my participants will remain anonymous, and that their participation is completely voluntary. Please, I would appreciate it if you could allow me to review these consent forms with you before you begin to respond to the questions.

[Review and sign NEU Consent Forms]
Thank you. I have a few more administrative items to discuss you can respond to the protocol questions. Because your responses are important, and I want to make sure you feel confident to capture everything you have to share, I would like to state that your response sheet (protocol) will be labeled by a pseudonym, which means nobody will know your name, and this is to maintain confidentiality. Once the responses are received by me and cross-checked with you, I will email you a copy for your review. Besides, I will conduct a follow-up interview to validate trends and clarifications of issues that emerged from the survey. Is that okay? Finally, I will forward you a copy of my overall findings soliciting your comments or corrections. I hope that is okay with you.

It should take you approximately 30-45 minutes to respond to the virtual interview protocol. I’m requesting that you complete within 2-weeks.

Awesome! Thank you so much.

**Virtual Interview Questions**

I am now going to ask you questions focused on the topic of the study, exploring the mentoring experiences of mid-level managers helping to foster career development within the Metro Region of the Department of Developmental Services of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. First, let me say, I want to thank you for accepting to be a participant for this study. Below, please find the questions for the protocol:

**Questions**

1. Reflecting on previous mentors you have had, either at their agency or earlier in your career, describe how their approach shaped your perceptions of yourself as an aspiring leader/manager/professional.
2. A: Reflecting on your own career advancement, what were the critical experiences that you had which helped develop your set of skills (e.g. programs, people, apprenticeships, job assignments, etc.)?

B: List at least three and describe how you believe these experiences supported the development of your skills-set.

3. A: Which set of two skills have equipped you in becoming an experienced mentor?

B: How have these skills equipped you?

4. Reflecting on the different career opportunities you have had and where you were in terms of your own life-span (maturation):

A: Tell me about a time when you had some different career choices?

B: How did you explore those options?

C: Was there anyone who helped you to reflect on the advantages/disadvantages of those choices?

5. Reflecting on your role as a mentor, how do you approach mentoring aspiring mid-managers about the best strategies for gaining required skills needed for career advancement?

6. Reflecting on your role as a mentor, how do you approach mentoring aspiring mid-level managers given their growth statistics?

7. Reflecting on your role as a mentor, how do you approach mentoring aspiring mid-level managers given they may not have the years of experience nor be as advanced/mature in terms of their life-stage?

8. A: Reflecting on your role as a mentor, what are the factors you encourage your mentees to explore when they are considering different career choices?
B: What are the strategies you use to help aspiring mid-managers consider when making career choices?

9. A: If you were to select an animal to describe your approach to mentoring aspiring middle-managers, what would that animal be?

B: Why?

10. Assume it is 5 years from now and you have been invited to speak to other agencies about the innovative approach that Metro Region launched for fostering career development of its aspiring middle managers.

A: What would the headline/title of that presentation be?

B: What would be the main points of the story?

C: What role do you think mentoring will play in shaping the success of DDS-Metro Region?

11. If you were to give advice to an aspiring mid-level manager about the best strategies for advancing their career, what would that advice be?

12. A: Which of the agency-wide or union-specific professional trainings have you participated in?

B: Which ones were very useful to you in helping to develop and advance your career goals?

13. If you were to give advice to those who design mentoring programs about what is needed to make this more effective, successful, sustainable, and/or to ensure it has an impact on fostering career development for aspiring middle managers, what would that advice be?

14. What are the useful experiences that you have had to help the development of your ability to be an impactful mentor to aspiring middle-managers?

15. How long and in what capacity (profession) have you been working for Department of Developmental Services?
16. **Background Questions:**

A: How long have you worked in your department at the Metro Region?

B: How long have you been a mid-level manager?

C: How many times have you served as a mentor in the Metro Region?

D: Have you served as a mentor in other workplaces, community, church, school?

*If I come across a need to ask any follow-up questions, I may contact you for a follow-up interview, which would most likely only be the case if I felt clarification was needed regarding one or more of your responses. In that case, would it be alright for me to contact you to schedule for it? Do you have any questions for me? Thank you so much for your participation in this study!*
Appendix F

Letter to seek Permission to conduct Research

210 Charles St. Apt 203
Waltham, MA 02453
March 14, 2018

John C. Geety Jr.
Assistant General Counsel
Department of Developmental Services
324 Clark St.
Worcester, MA 01606

Through;
Gail Gillespie-The Regional Director,
DDS Metro Region
465 Waverly Oaks Rd., Suite 120
Waltham, MA 02451

Through;
Joan Thompson- The Area Director
Charles River West Area Office
255 Elm St. Suite 205
Somerville, MA 02144
Dear John:

Permission to Conduct Research

My name is Raymond Obeng, and I am a doctoral student at Northeastern University under the guidance of Dr. Margaret Gorman. I am preparing to conduct research for my dissertation and would like to ask for permission to collect data through document review and survey-interview protocol the study.

The title of my study is *Fostering Career Development through Mentoring: A Narrative Study exploring the mentoring experiences of mid-level managers helping to foster career development within the Metro Region of Department of Developmental Services of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*.

The purpose of this narrative research was to understand mid-level managers’ experiences mentoring entry-level-staff whom they were formally assigned to as part of mentoring training program at Departmental Services of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

This study serves to identify the ways in which experienced mid-level managers can effectively foster the development of entry-level employees aspiring advance their careers through mentoring as a major leadership support. Such supports can lead to more effective practices within departments seeking to improve entry-level employees’ skills-set through mentoring skills and techniques.

Participants for this study will be selected from the population of mid-level managers who have worked for DDS-Metro Region for at least 5 years; are in mid-level management positions; and have had experiences as mentors to others aspiring to advance their careers at the Metro Region of the Department of Developmental Services. This study will be limited in size and focus on the experiences of six to ten participants. The illumination of the experiences of
these experienced middle managers is to ensure that the results of the study are ungeneralizable beyond the person, social setting, or time.

For this study, agency mission, vision, and values; and career and professional development programs including the Region’s mentoring program would be reviewed. Additionally, participants’ employment history would be verified from our Human Resources Department. Based on Northeastern University Institutional Review Board’s regulations, no data specific to individual employees and their performance ratings would be collected or included in the final report. To clarify, the researcher will not review spreadsheets of employee performance or review individual middle managers’ portfolios of work as part of this research project.

I assure you, that

no participants will be recruited, and no data will be collected without current, written consent from participants, based on the requirements of Northeastern University’s policy and assurance procedures.
the rights and welfare of all participants will be protected according to the procedures approved for this project, and
there are no financial or other relationships that might be viewed as creating a conflict of interest.

I would therefore be grateful if you could heed to the clarion call of my aid and give me the permission to conduct this research.

Yours sincerely,

……………………………

Raymond Obeng

(Service Coordinator, Charles River West Area Office/ Doctoral Candidate

College of Professional Studies, Northeastern University)
Appendix G

Approval from DDS Research Review Commission (RRC)

Obeng, Raymond (DDS)

From: Geenty, John (DDS)
Sent: Wednesday, March 14, 2018 3:25 PM
To: Obeng, Raymond (DDS)
Subject: RE: Permission to Conduct Research

Mr. Obeng:

I have reviewed your email and attachment. I am the chairperson of the DDS RRC board. I have also reviewed our regulations, specifically 115 CMR 10.00 et seq.

Since your research does not involve individuals who receive services from DDS and any information about those individuals, you do not need to seek approval from the DDS RRC board.

Thank you.

John C. Geenty Jr.
Assistant General Counsel
Department of Developmental Services
324 Clark Street
Worcester, MA 01606
(508) 845-9111 Ext 1021
FAX (508) 792-7000

Confidentiality Notice: This e-mail message, including any attachments, is for the sole use of the intended recipient(s) and may contain confidential and privileged information. Any unauthorized review, use, disclosure, or distribution is prohibited. If you are not the intended recipient, please contact the sender by reply e-mail and destroy/delete all copies of the original message. Please consider environment before printing this e-mail.
Appendix H

Sample of Codes Grouped by Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Examples of Pattern Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
## Appendix I

**Question-Participant Matrix in Connection with Super’s Career Development Theory**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Central Research Question:</th>
<th>How do mid-level state managers describe their mentoring experiences of entry-level staff aspiring to advance their careers?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Virtual Interview Questions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Quotes from Participants’ Responses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Concept</strong></td>
<td><strong>Brenda:</strong> My first supervisor out of grad school, was a very kind and supportive person. The confidence which she bestowed on me, has been essential in me developing my professional poise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting on previous mentors you have had, either at their Agency or earlier in your career, describe how their approach shaped your perceptions of yourself as an aspiring leader/manager/professional</td>
<td><strong>Rockson:</strong> I always had good Managers who saw potential in me and encouraged my development. I listened closely to their advice as I sought to advance myself in the field of investigations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Catherine:** My supervisor had over 25 years of experience in the field and she gave me a lot of freedom to make decisions in the running of the program. She was very loyal to the employees and they looked up to her. She taught me the value of seeing the employees as people with dreams, hopes, personal lives, and goals in which they
should be empowered as equally important as the individual’s goals instead of numbers to fill a spot in the ratio.

Frank: Unfortunately, I have had little experience in receiving mentorship and supervision by supervisors in my 35 years in the human service field. I have never had regularly scheduled meetings with my supervisors in which to discuss my work responsibilities and/or support my professional growth. This historical lack of supervision in my career has helped to shape my aspirations to become a supervisor in order to provide individualized training, supervision and support to others in the human service field, so they can reach their potential in their current and future positions.

Sam: My mentors in previous jobs and here always asked me to find answers to my own questions or to find some of my own steps toward resolving a problem. This always reinforced my own self confidence as a potential leader or at least someone with valued ideas to be heard.
Mike: The tutelage and guidance I’ve received with respect to the various job functions I have been responsible for has been excellent. More importantly, this support has helped me grow as a person, and understand the impact I can have on others, whether in a leadership or managerial role, or through representing the agency with individuals, families and community service providers.

Razia: My mother is my greatest mentor. She always told me anything was possible and would often say “look at me I came here to this country with nothing except one pair of shoes.” She showed me a woman can work hard and sustain hardships and still rise up to meet any trial or tribulation and succeed with a positive attitude.

Ophelia: When I was young and learning as I was building my career I was learning quickly the way I did not want to be perceived as a manager or leader. I was supervised by people who were short tempered or impatient or seemed to not really have time for underlings. I was aware
that I wanted to be different and be a leader
that brought people along and helped people
grow in their career and not dismiss them.

**Martha:** I also had a wonderful mentor in
the nurse who held my current position at
MRS right before me. I had the privilege of
her expertise for several months as a
consultant after she retired while I was
acting Director of Health Services. Sue was
extremely knowledgeable of the issues that
arise in the position and guided me until I
felt comfortable to take on the
responsibilities independently.

**Skill Acquisition-Self**
Reflecting on your own career advancement,
what were the critical experiences that you had
which helped develop your set of skills? (e.g.
programs, people, apprenticeships, job
assignments, etc.).

**Brenda:** My role prior to the role I am
currently in was not a positive or healthy
work environment. I learned a lot about how
to create an environment which is positive
and empowering to the people working there,
by being in environment which isn’t. My
clinical skills were greatly increased by my
role as an Emergency Services Crisis
Clinician.

**Rockson:** My entire career and all the
people I’ve worked with continue to play a
part in my skills development. Merely
networking and communicating with the multitude of coworkers I’ve had over my career has helped me develop this skill and gain confidence in my ability to communicate with anyone in any given setting.

**Catherine:** Over my entire career all small and large experiences developed my management style and it continues to morph overtime as more experiences are added by time and events.

**Frank:** I have taken on new positions within the same agency and at other provider agencies in order to provide myself with new challenges and to develop new skill sets related to my professional goals at that time.

I have also volunteered to participate in many agency projects and have volunteered to collaborate with other community agencies to develop and implement new services/projects.

**Sam:** Being put in the position of directing an agency without a lot of notice or time at the agency; Participating in many team meetings for a variety of students, parents, and professionals with a goal of getting to
| Mike | The first and most important experience I had was my initial job in human services, in which I provided direct supports to individuals with significant physical and intellectual challenges. Having the responsibility to provide care to someone, and the trust that is crucial to making that successful, was the most valuable experience I have had. |
| Razia | In my junior year of high school my parents divorced so I began working full time to assist my mother with paying the household bills and in my second semester later promoted to assistant manager. I went on to complete high school and was then promoted to store manager. During this time, I had decided that I wanted to become a nurse and began saving what I could toward nursing school. |
| Ophelia | I received many great opportunities and promotions quickly. It was very motivating and encouraging. |
| **Martha:** As the charge nurse at the Fernald Developmental Center, I was responsible for giving assignments nursing staff. I learned to create schedules, diffuse conflict and provide effective feedback to the nurses and health aides that cared for individuals requiring 24-hour nursing care. I learned to be a better communicator and the importance of paying attention to detail in this position. |
| List at least three and describe how you believe these experiences supported the development of your skills-set. |
| **Brenda:** Being on the front line of psychiatric emergencies, forces you to learn quickly how to support someone in immediate need. My under-grad internship, was at a women’s house of corrections. I was young and very nervous about this opportunity, but I wanted to expand my knowledge and comfort level. I learned from this experience a great deal about how to support and approach people who are not valued by society or have a significant societal stigma. This internship provided me with the information which made me decide to pursue social work as a career. |
| **Rockson:** I was tasked with taking over an at-risk juvenile mentoring program at my first |

job which helped me develop the skills of setting up clear and practical expectations between mentee and mentor. When I first became a DDS investigator I had a bad experience while attempting to interview and alleged victim. I learned how to better “meet people where they are at” rather than trying to make everyone conform to my particular style of interviewing. When I was first promoted to Senior Investigator I learned to appropriately set boundaries yet remain easily approachable, as my employees were former coworkers.

Catherine: Employer not paying the salary promised in my contract. This experience forced me to exam my intentions and my motives in supporting the development of my staff and the life of my individuals. I learned how to be self-aware and intentional in my actions. Professional allegations/attacks. My first gut reaction was to defend myself and to gain supporters in the agency. Because I learned to monitor my emotions well from previous challenges I decided not
to add to the drama but rather to diminish it by remaining silent.

**Frank:** Working as Recreation Coordinator for a human service agency. This was a critical position in my career because it was my first managerial position in the human service field. I responded to the agency’s Executive Director’s strategic plan to collaborate with other agencies in the surrounding community by writing a grant to fund the organization of a multicultural arts festival. I created an employment training program that taught work skills and work-related academics that would lead to better paying jobs in the community.

**Sam:** A co-worker-[manager/mentor] and I had to escort/drive a client to a group home. A co-worker-[supervisor/mentor] and I had to remove a client from his foster home when he was accused of molesting a neighbor’s child. At a team meeting for a client with his parent, the agency involved confronted the parent about not paying the client’s bills. These events helped me develop negotiating
skills in stressful situations as a team member or with a partner.

**Mike:** Working directly with and advocating for individuals with disabilities, and the incredible responsibility that comes with that; acting in the role of representing DDS with families, agencies and other stakeholders, and wanting to reflect well on the mission the agency works to impart at all times.

**Razia:** Dealing with my grandmother and her medical issues ignited my curiosity of how and what affects the human body and ways to assist others in dealing with medical issues. It also taught me patience when dealing with people who are inside their own reality. Working during high school taught me to juggle time, multi task, and it also made me more responsible with money and resources. These experiences also taught me accountability. My actions could have a domino effect on what was occurring in my life and it made me cautious in my choices.
**Ophelia:** Promotions - They constantly gave me the opportunity to grow, learn and see how the pieces of information I have learned fit together. Trainings – I had the opportunity to attend wonderful trainings that helped me see that my job was not just my job. The trainings helped me to look at the world, not just my job. They encouraged me to read the poets, to look for adventure and to be open. Developing programs from the bottom up – This was a great opportunity to open brand new program where there was none before. To take a set of regulations and create a program that served medically complex people was just amazing.

**Martha:** Being open and approachable to the staff that I supervise and mentor helps in motivating and encouraging them to reach their goals and provide the best care. The ability to communicate is so important because staff or a mentee may come from a different backgrounds and environments. Also, by working with someone less experienced and from a different background, I gained fresh perspective on
things and learn new ways of thinking – which has helped me, succeed professionally.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Growth-Self</th>
<th>Brenda: Starting where some is- not having the expectations people will meet my standards, but that I will support them to improve and pass their own expectations; Remaining neutral- not allowing things to affect me personally but allowing experience to help me grow as a clinician and supervisor. They allow me to come to work and support the individuals and the process with as much positivity as possible. If I didn’t focus on these two skills, I would find this job much more difficult to manage.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which set of two skills have equipped you in becoming an experienced mentor? How?</td>
<td>Rockson: Communication and Time Management. Being able to effectively communicate ensures that all persons involved are well informed and on board with whatever objectives are established. The one thing in life that people cannot recover under any circumstance is time spent. I make a point to be respectful of other people’s time knowing that I’m privileged to have them invest time on me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine: The first skill was developing the patience and self-control to participate in active listening on demand. Then second was the confidence to ask uncomfortable or tough questions. Both of these skills are activated in the intent to benefit/challenge the other person’s professional growth. They have equipped me in both my professional and personal life relationships and taught me much about self-love, self-preservation, and self-growth. These skills have helped me to grow internally/professionally and having tried these techniques on myself and watch myself develop. I feel confident fostering these skills in others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank: Teaching skills and Supervisory skills. Teaching skills have enabled me to pass on work-related information that enables new staff to learn how to perform their jobs and veteran staff the opportunity to continue to experience professional growth. Supervisory skills have provided me with the ability to individualize my mentorship of my staff and address issues that may be</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
roadblocks that prohibit these staff from experiencing professional growth and obtaining future promotions in their career.

**Sam:** Planning lessons as a teacher.

Seeing another person’s perspective with as little judgment as possible. If I know what a person need to know I try to organize how it can be presented. When I see I have misunderstood a person’s response to, or interpretation of what I have said, I am usually able to try another approach.

**Mike:** I would say that developing a degree of empathy would be one and attempting to keep the ‘big picture’ in mind while working on tasks in the moment is the other skill that I’ve tried to use in mentoring others.

The work we do is often a balancing act, in terms of trying to affect the most positive outcomes possible for people. At the same time, there are real life factors that can sometimes impact our ability to do this as well or as quickly as we sometimes would like. I hope that these skills have enabled me to try and to keep in mind the bigger picture while working on the necessary but
sometimes tedious parts of the work that
don’t always appear to have a clear and
direct impact on the larger goals.

**Razia:** Patience – allows me to stay focused
on end results of projects and tasks.

Multitasking- has allowed me to step away
from a project that has reached a standstill,
whether it is from dependence on another
person to complete a step or another action
beyond my control.

**Ophelia:** Developing programs from the
bottom up and Trainings. They gave me the
foundation to have confidence in my ability,
so I could mentor with confidence.

**Martha:** I believe the 2 skills that have
equipped me in becoming a skilled mentor
are approachability and the ability to
communicate.

| **Life Span – stages (Self)** | **Brenda:** I’m definitely interested in
continuing my growth within the state system. I have always been someone who
seeks to learn new things and expand my knowledge. Although, I am very happy in my
current position and am always learning new things, growing in my career is always |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting on the different career opportunities you have had and where you were in terms of your own life-span (maturation), tell me about a time when you had some different career choices? How did you explore those options?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was there anyone who helped you to reflect on the advantages/disadvantages of those choices?</td>
<td>something I am focused on. I have never explored career choices outside of Human Services. I originally thought I would be doing direct therapeutic work with individuals, but after being a therapist for a few years, I realized my interest was actually in Clinical Supervision and Management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rockson:</strong> In 1997 I had to make a decision on whether or not to remain with a private non-profit agency providing services to at-risk youth, take a position with the commonwealth investigating abuse and mistreatment of individuals with developmental disabilities, or take the state police exam. I considered the short term and long-term pros and cons of each and soul searched to find out where I really felt I’d be happiest. I consulted with my father and other family members to make a choice. In the end it was essentially about what I wanted to select. There weren’t any truly bad disadvantages.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Catherine:</strong> After being in the non-profit human service industry for so long with little pay and scandal on the part of the employer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I decided to change careers. My goal was to become a dental hygienist and go back to school for an associate degree. I researched the best schools, the most affordable ones, their requirements, thought about how it could be managed with my employment schedule. I started taking my pre-requisites at Bunker Hill Community College and Middlesex Community College to prepare a strong application.

**Frank:** In my position as Development Coordinator, I did a significant amount of lobbying with state politicians and with local municipal governments. I developed a very good working relationship with the mayor of Somerville, who provided my agency with a significant amount of grant funding for new programs that served low-income Somerville residents who had intellectual disabilities.

His aid attempted to recruit me into working in the mayor’s office, which would have completely changed my career. We discussed several open positions that the mayor felt I was capable of doing. I chose not to leave the human service field as I felt I could
accomplish more in that field providing services to the same people I had worked with for many years.

**Sam:** After graduate school I had a choice to be a teacher, a clinician or pursue another degree. I applied to many job opportunities in many locations. I visited a few graduate schools and met with faculty. I spoke to a few clinicians about their work. My father and brother were helpful. So were professors from undergraduate and graduate schools. I sought out advice from friends and family acquaintances that were in the field I was interested in.

**Mike:** I’d say that there are always different career choices available to all of us. Earlier in my career, I didn’t necessarily feel that I had the qualifications or experience to pursue something different. However, as time has gone on, I have come to feel that people in this field have involvement in such the wide variety of activities that impact peoples’ lives, and that many human services professionals are much more skilled than we often give ourselves credit for. On several
occasions, I have applied and interviewed for positions that would have meant a change in career.

**Razia:** I have worked 3 jobs in my life that had the potential for advancement 2 in retail selling shoes and men’s suits and my current position as a nurse. In nursing I started at the entry level and have been promoted twice to my current position of RNIII. In my current position I can review options for promotion via the masscareers website or through networking with other providers like MRS. I have been offered positions multiple times. My current support system, family, and friends helped me to reflect on the advantages/disadvantages of those choices.

**Ophelia:** I felt that I needed to make a career change and I was looking for what choices I had. I had worked for an agency for 24 years. I believed in my heart I had given my all to this agency and I was stabbed in the back. I lost my confidence, my belief in myself, everything! I was searching for a new career because I thought I was not any good any more. I searched online, spoke
Friends and family helped me to reflect on the advantages/ disadvantages of those choices, but I was not listening.

**Martha:** I earned a master's degree in Health Care Administration and become more confident in my ability to lead. I was supported by other nurses in the Clinical Unit and my family and always felt that the transfer was the best choice for me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Acquisition as a Mentor</th>
<th>Brenda: You have to start where the person is and help them create their own goal and strategy plan to meet their goal.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting on your role as a mentor, how do you approach mentoring aspiring mid-managers about the best strategies for gaining required skills needed for career advancement?</td>
<td><strong>Rockson:</strong> I’m a very simple person and always offer very simple strategies. The best way to learn to do something is simply to do it. I encourage people to find someone knowledgeable in the career path or doing the job they wish to do and partner up with that person, shadow them, or ask to consult with them. If I am able to put them in contact with such a person I make the introduction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Catherine:</strong> It is imperative that my staff take the lead in their own development.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identifying where the staff are in their development and how they view their growth takes time but is a first start. Then I try to meet the staff where they are and utilize natural opportunities as teaching moments.

**Frank:** I have always attempted to match these people with appropriate training program and/or learning institutions that would provide them with the knowledge they would need in order to get the promotion they were seeking.

**Sam:** I encourage them to take advantage of any training. I offer to do tasks with them. I suggest they present their own ideas to remedy a problem.

**Mike:** I don’t believe that there is any single strategy that is a ‘one size fits all’ approach to this topic. First and foremost, I believe it’s important for people to identify area of personal interest, passion and skill that can possibly intersect to some degree with their work and pursue that in a wider way.

Beyond this, I have come to understand that the knowledge and experience required of a good manager encompasses an almost
endless number of areas, so being open to trying things that one may not see as their area of greatest ability is also important. Most importantly, learning from people and trying to understand their point of view is critical.

Razia: Set a goal, try to be objective and keep any and all emotion out of it. Stay positive, provide as much support as possible. If things don’t work out brainstorm to determine the next course of action. It is important to stay flexible.

Ophelia: I believe the experience I went through has helped to make me be a better mentor. I had experience where I have lost. I know what it feels like to be scared and not to have confidence in me, and I know what a bad decision it was not to listen to people that probably could have helped me.

Martha: I encourage the staff that I mentor to continue their education and be open to as many experiences as they can be.

| Growth as a Mentor | Brenda: Each person is on their own path. I see my role as the supervisor as supporting |
| Reflecting on your role as a mentor, how do you approach mentoring aspiring mid-managers given their growth statistics? | their goals and helping them grow individually.  

**Rockson:** I speak to them optimistically but realistically. There’s only so many positions and far more people aspiring to said positions. I let them know that timing plays almost as critical a role of skill and knowledge.  

**Catherine:** I would reflect with them on the current accomplishments and ask questions as to why they were successful in these situations, how they could be more successful or what they would have done differently. Also, we could reflect on situations that didn’t go well and talk about why. All of these questions would be asked with the goal of moving up into the next level position and acquiring self-reflection and preparedness.  

**Frank:** I would meet on a regular basis to help them identify/clarify their work-related goals and offer to provide them with learning responsibilities related to the type of positions they were interested in, if possible. I would provide orientation and on-going |
supervision to assist them in developing the skillset necessary for the position. I would also encourage these staff to take available trainings to support their professional growth.

**Sam:** As they gain experience and confidence I have asked what they want to do to learn more. I have tried to help them sort out pro/cons of different choices. Offered examples from my own or other staff’s experiences.

**Mike:** I think it’s very important to expose individuals to a wide array of experiences across the field, so that they can get at least a small taste of the bigger picture. This will hopefully serve to better position and prepare the person for the spectrum of situations they will encounter as a future manager.

**Razia:** I feel being as supportive as possible, teach the skills that are needed using multiple teaching styles. Know who you are mentoring. Teach the person, not just the position.
| **Life Span – stages as a Mentor** | **Ophelia:** *A little bit of history is important, but it cannot be the base of how you mentor.*  
As I want to be respected for my experience they too want to be respected for their interest and energy.  
**Martha:** *I encourage the nurses that I mentor to explore different ways to communicate effectively with staff. I encourage them to look at areas that something may have gone wrong (such as a failure to follow agency policy) and think about ways to ensure that this does not occur again.*  
**Brenda:** *Help them understand the expectation of the role, and also help them understand that the people they support will be their greatest teachers. Mid-manager should be viewed as a support role and not an authoritative role.*  
**Rockson:** *In my humble opinion it’s all about dedicating oneself to a craft and learning it.*  
**Catherine:** *Passion goes a long way in learning. Staff who are committed and resourceful when problems arise can access* |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting on your role as a mentor, how do you approach mentoring aspiring mid-managers given they may not have the years of experience nor be as advanced/mature in terms of their life-stage?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
solutions independently which will compensate for lack of age/experience. My approach would be to develop a strategy to encourage learning and solving mistakes. Also, using questions as to what they would do in my position to solve either their own problems or other challenges as they arise.

Frank: I would also offer these staff opportunities to participate in projects and/or assist with some managerial responsibilities when current managers were not in work, in order to give them real-life work experiences in positions they were interested in being promoted to.

Sam: I try to avoid being arrogant and/or authoritative. I want to be a co-worker first to allow for some level of equality and mutual respect. No one can trust your suggestions or guidance if they do not trust you to treat them with dignity. Humor is important. I often tell them that in our roles as public employees we must assume the public doubts our competence, often distrusts us and will often not accept responsibility toward resolving a problem that requires
their participation. In other words – we are always wrong. Building trust with the public is analogous to building trust with those you work with. It has to start with respecting, listening and mutually accepting roles to solve a problem.

**Mike:** Although knowledge and experience is certainly very important, working with an individual who is excited about the work and eager to make a positive impact is very energizing to me personally.

**Razia:** Determine where the person is at as far as life skills and maturity level. Train to the strong points and work on their weak points. I like to give lots of feedback and if warranted some constructive criticism.

**Ophelia:** Their interest, desire for the position, commuting can be an enormous factor for some people and not for others, will your time commitment be different with travel, evening meetings, weekend conferences etc.

**Martha:** I personally have not mentored someone who has not had several years of
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choices as a Mentor</th>
<th>Brenda: They should explore their own personal interests and life goals. People’s career paths should be their own, and the goal of the supervisor should be to help them reach those goals.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflecting on your role as a mentor, what are the factors you encourage your mentees to explore when they are considering different career choices?</td>
<td>Rockson: Long term and short-term career and personal life goals and the impact each position may have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda: They should explore their own personal interests and life goals. People’s career paths should be their own, and the goal of the supervisor should be to help them reach those goals.</td>
<td>Catherine: What is most important in the person’s long-term career goals? Who are the most important people in their lives? How would work and personal life?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank: I ask them to explain why they want to make this specific career choice and find out if they have a good understanding of the qualifications/education/experience necessary to obtain jobs in this field or in a different field.</td>
<td>Sam: What do they like to do, and why? How will their non-work life be affected?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam: What do they like to do, and why? How will their non-work life be affected?</td>
<td>Mike: I would say that mentees should consider the level of satisfaction and meaning that they currently have or hope to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
find in their future career. There is certainly an intersection with a number of other factors, including salary, travel, impact on family etc., but in the end, I believe those other areas can be successfully addressed if the individual is fulfilled in what they are doing.

**Razia:** Look at all the options and consider any learning experience as a positive one. No skill is wasted. Things learned today may not be used today but it is always something you can have in your toolbox.

**Ophelia:** I always encourage people to be open. Balance is a word I find myself saying to people a lot.

**Martha:** I encourage mentees to take up volunteering roles or simply speak with people already working in a career that they are interested in when they are considering different career choices. I encourage aspiring nurse managers to take on more responsibilities when making career choices.

| What are the strategies you use to help aspiring mid-managers consider when making career choices? | **Brenda:** I really put those questions back on the person to answer. Creating a strategy collaboratively is the most effective way of |
helping them achieve their goals. Helping them create their own path is my goal for anytime I am supervising someone.

**Rockson:** I ask them to consider why they are looking to pursue a given career path. I encourage them to fully research the positions and give serious consideration to whether or not it’s something they are pursuing based upon passion or merely because someone else believes this is how they should progress or whether or not it’s simply the next step on the salary rung.

**Catherine:** They should consider the most important in their long-term career goals and get to know the most important people in their lives.

**Frank:** Ask them to develop a plan that will allow them to obtain the desired job in another field, which includes a timeline to achieve this objective and resources needed; encourage them to take advantage of opportunities through many nonprofit agencies and state agencies that will at least partially pay for education in a degreed and/or certified program; and encourage
them to network with other people in the desired field to ask them to explain their experiences working in that career.

**Sam:** Can they imagine what the day or week will be like in the new job? Is it more stressful than the current job? Do they have a sense of how to get help if they need it?

**Mike:** I would personally prioritize the desire to find meaning in the work I do. In some ways, this has become increasingly difficult due to the additional regulations and systems requirements placed on almost everyone involved in the field, but I still feel that knowing you still have the ability to make a positive impact despite these challenges is extremely important.

**Razia:** Set a goal then make a plan toward achieving that goal. Be realistic as you strive to achieve it. Life can throw some curveballs, so you need to remain flexible. 

**Ophelia:** Keep your eyes wide open think with your heart AND your head.

**Martha:** Exposing them to a variety of situations which will assist them in making future career choices
## Choices as a Mentor

If you were to select an animal to describe your approach to mentoring aspiring middle-managers, what would that animal be? Why?

| Brenda: Australian Sheep Dog. They help lead groups of people and creates a safe environment for everyone. |
|---|---|
| Rockson: Bear. I see the mentoring relationship as very similar to a family unit and the bear symbolizes that. They maintain contact with their young and show them how to provide for themselves before encouraging them to venture out on their own. There’s a maturation process very similar to mentoring. |
| Catherine: Eagle. I like to take the panorama view in life and try to see the big picture. Current information and how it can be used to teach small lessons. |
| Frank: I would choose an Eagle. Eagles parent their young in small numbers (1-2 chicks) and teach them the fundamentals of the skills they would need to survive on their own. They demonstrate these skills and then observe the young demonstrating these skills and will correct them, if necessary. Their young are allowed to remain with them to continue to learn until they are adolescents. Once they are prepared for the next stage of |
their lives, they leave the nest and care of their parents/mentors to establish themselves as successful birds of prey.

**Sam:** A spider. The web is plan to teach/present/explain; the unexpected leaf or wind that breaks the web requires adjustments/changes and to re-build; the prey caught in the web is the task at hand that always requires more effort to complete or subdue.

**Mike:** It would probably be a dog. Some of the reasons that come to mind would include the obviously loyalty aspect, as well as the sensitivity dogs possess regarding the environment around them. As a good mentor, it would be important to be aware of all aspects of the field we work in and offering individuals the chance to experience them and develop their exposure to them, as well develop knowledge and experience.

**Razia:** Dolphin− working together in groups to achieve a goal they are very social animals

**Ophelia:** Grey Wolf. They are highly social; females can be an alpha, and they are deeply loyal to their pack.
**Self-concept: Role as a Mentor**

Assume it is 5 years from now and you have been invited to speak to other agencies about the innovative approach that Metro Region launched for fostering career development of its aspiring middle managers.

- What would the headline/title of that presentation be?

- What would be the main points of the story?

**Martha:** A mother horse, because as we begin the mentorship, I watch over the mentee closely and check in frequently but as time goes by, there is greater independence in the relationship.

**Brenda:** Creating safe environments. The role of the department in protecting the individual served as well as the providers serving them.

**Rockson:** The Talent Within. How effectively utilizing the talent pool already in the agency to foster managers is a better recipe for success than hiring managers from outside the agency. The commitment to train and promote those already loyal and dedicated to the agencies objectives is not only impactful to those being promoted, but those employees newly employed who can see advancement opportunities within the agency.

**Catherine:** Helping Hands. Growth, Happiness, and Success. It will foster personal development while creating a supportive network in which people feel safe to express themselves and brainstorm ideas.
Frank: DDS supports career growth of DDS employees through their mentorship program. The main point of the story would be to highlight the agency’s innovative mentorship program, which provides real-life 1:1 mentorship opportunities for DDS employees. The program allows interested staff to shadow their assigned mentors as they perform their job responsibilities in order to prepare them for potential opportunities for promotion.

Sam: State requires new hires to job shadow.

In a new training effort to inherit the history and work culture of an aging work force the State now requires new staff to job shadow other employees whose roles they must learn about for a day. It is hoped that this will expose the new staff to the variety of tasks performed and responsibilities of the agency. It further hoped that this type of shadowing may inspire some of the new staff to work toward one of these other positions in the future. Some of these positions could be promotional opportunities.
| Mike: Carry It On. The main points would involve an overview of the journey that the work has taken, the progress that has been made, and the tremendous amount of work that still needs to be done in order to achieve our mission of full equality and participation for individuals we support. |
| Razia: “You can’t go anywhere unless you take that first step.” Achieving your goals and taking time to get to them. |
| Ophelia: Mentoring – There is NOT just one approach. To alter your approach to fit the mentee. |
| Martha: The Unique Growth and Advancement of the Developmental Disabilities Nurse. The main points of the story would emphasize the importance of good communication skills, flexibility, and the importance of getting to know the people that you support. |

| What role do you think mentoring will play in shaping the success of the agency? |
| Brenda: I think that if it is given the support of the Directors it could be very influential. |
| Rockson: It will play a major role. As current Managers retire and move to other positions, opportunities for mentees will |
arise. They will be best prepared to fill these roles because of the in-house mentoring.

**Catherine:** Mentoring will create a positive work atmosphere in which others will want to participate and join.

**Frank:** I believe that the mentoring program will create more opportunities for DDS employees to experience professional growth and obtain promotions within the field, if not in DDS positions.

**Sam:** It is very important to foster the teaching of new staff. The agency cannot assume reading a manual or going to a training will give a person the experience and skills they need. Personal, ongoing contact can produce the trust needed to allow new staff to gain confidence and motivation.

**Mike:** I believe that mentoring can play an extremely important role in the work of the region moving forward. Giving less experienced aspiring managers the opportunity to learn from the people doing the work, having that knowledge passed forward, and then moving ahead based on
the new realities presented will help provide these individuals with the skills to advance the work even further in the future.

**Razia:** I think as residential supervisors leave/ retire mentoring will play a key factor in shaping how the coming years are going to be. If we don’t start with a solid base of knowledge and commitment things will become chaotic and unstable which will result in not providing needed services to the people we support.

**Ophelia:** To better prepare people for the stressors of management.

**Martha:** Mentoring will increase the quality of life in the individuals whom we support. The mentoring program will develop nurses who demonstrate a high degree of expertise in the field. Mentoring can increase their satisfaction with services, meet their complex nursing care needs, and help to ensure their health and quality of life.

### Stability and Predictability in Career Development and Progression

| Brenda: Make sure you are interested in the responsibilities and expectations of the job. |
| Being a mid-manager is hard, and if you are |
advancing their career, what would that advice be?

not motivated by the role and responsibilities of the position, you will burn out fast.

Rockson: Be certain to look at the “big picture” and don’t get tunnel vision for one specific position. There are numerous managerial positions that contribute to carrying out the agencies objectives and they should identify and prepare themselves for more than just one path of advancement.

Catherine: Take risk and don’t let failure affect your enthusiasm to try again. Listen with the intent to build up others self-confidence and silently praise yourself and verbally praise others when a job is done well. Be unique and your best self at all times.

Frank: The advice I would give to aspiring mid-level managers would be to have conversations with co-workers in these positions to better understand what the responsibilities are in order to make sure the job is a good fit for people who desire a mid-level manager’s position. I would also suggest that they discuss their professional goals with their supervisor, inform them of
their goals and ask their supervisor to identify what performance areas they should focus on to prepare themselves for their desired job positions.

**Sam:** Be respectful to your co-workers because you may be supervising them in the future.

**Mike:** I feel that one of the most important aspects for a person hoping for career advancement is to be open to learning as much as possible in as many areas as you can. I’ve personally learned a great deal about how not only to try and do things the right way, but also, and sometimes just as important, how not to do them.

**Razia:** Be a sponge. Take everything in. Listen, ask questions. Don’t assume you know it all. Be flexible and always stay positive.

**Ophelia:** To be a student of the world. Don’t look at your job as the only thing to do. Read articles that could be interesting, read about supervising, chat with others about how to motivate staff etc. Look for fun
| **Self-establishment** | **Brenda:** I take advantage of as much clinical training, which I feel I can grow from as possible. Also, I like to hear what the people I support are being trained on. A lot of the times the trainings are not new information, but instead good refreshers or I learn about additional or new resources.  
**Rockson:** Over the course of my 20-year career at DDS I have taken and participated in too much training for me to accurately list. In the positions that I’ve held the 40 hours basic investigations course, communicating with persons with disabilities, interviewing techniques, and report writing trainings have been the most impactful for me.  
**Catherine:** MasSP. All the trainings were very useful to me in helping to develop and advance my career goals. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Which of the agency-wide or union-specific professional trainings have you participated in?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Which ones were very useful to you in helping to develop and advance your career goals?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Frank: I have participated in numerous professional trainings that enhanced my skills as a manager before I was hired into my position as Service Coordinator. The professional trainings I have taken since I have been working for DDS include Supervision/EPRS training, Self-direction training, ISP training, Family Support training, Employment supports training, Benefits (MassHealth, Medicare, SSI and SSDI) training, Waiver training, and Community inclusion training.

Sam: Too many to list. Mediation Training Supervisor Classes offered by EOHHS

Mike: I have taken part in a large number of trainings during the course of my career. Many have been Department-mandated, such as Diversity, Conflict of Interest, Prevention of Sexual Harassment, etc. Several have involved ongoing managerial and leadership opportunities in which participation in monthly classroom-type activities. I believe that the longer term, course-style trainings have been most helpful to me in refining my sense of what attributes I wanted to develop.
in order to be a good manager, as well as clarify in my own mind things that were perhaps not as important or meaningful to me in my work.

**Razia:** I primarily stay within my skill set of MAP and Health related trainings. I prefer not to utilize the union trainings. I continue to maintain my status as an NTG affiliated trainer for individuals with DD and ID.

**Ophelia:** CLD - Preventing Workplace Violence for Managers, CSD - Creating Charts in Excel – eLearning, CSD - Managing Data in Excel – eLearning, CSD - Progressive Discipline - eToolbox for Managers, Mandated Reporter for Child Abuse and Neglect eLearning, plus many, many others. Actually, I have found the technical classes helpful lately. I do wish there were more, and I have requested more.

**Martha:** Trainings on Hospice, Stress Management, Enteral Feeding, Medication Administration and many more. I also teach Health and Safety, Healthy Lifestyles and Fall’s Prevention as part of orientation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Continual Adjustment for Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If you were to give advice to those who design mentoring programs about what is needed to make this more effective, successful, sustainable, and/or to ensure it has an impact on fostering career development for middle managers, what would that advice be?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Brenda: | Pair people up in a mindful way, the mentor and mentee should have similar work goals and expectations of themselves. |
| Rockson: | It has to be mentor/mentee driven; allowing people to teach and learn at their own pace. |
| Catherine: | (No response) |
| Frank: | I would suggest any agency that designs mentoring programs should also look outside the field and research what other industries are offering employees that lead to professional growth and promotion to managerial positions and these practices that are relevant. One of my ongoing concerns is that the human service field does not adequately train and support staff when they become mid-level managers. I continue to see this as an issue when working with provider agencies who do not have a formalized training program for managers. |
| Sam: | Everyone gets assigned a minimum number of hours a month to mentor or teach someone |
| Mike: | The first is to develop as much empathy as possible for all people with |
whom you may interact. There are obviously many times when a task simply has to be done but understanding why and being able to explain that to others in both a meaningful and functional manner can make it much easier to accept.

**Razia:** Have the person in the program self-identify strengths and weaknesses. Ask them what learning style works for them and use that as a basis for training/mentoring.

**Ophelia:** My advice would be to choose the mentors very carefully. You are developing a relationship and placing trust in each other. It cannot be about the mentor, it must be a shared relationship.

**Martha:** Set goals to establish an effective, successful and sustainable mentoring program; choose the mentors carefully to ensure they can establish a useful working relationship with the mentees; and provide training to the person who is providing the mentoring, especially on communication techniques and setting unique goals for each person.
Development-Self

What are the useful experiences that you have had to help the development of your ability to be an impactful mentor to aspiring middle-managers?

Brenda: I think having a supervisor who is very supportive of my growth desires and goals, then allows me to provide the same level of support to the people I supervise in helping them meet their goals.

Rockson: Honestly, I don’t know that I am all that impactful. What I do know is I’ve had very positive experiences with my supervisors for the most part. I’ve had supervisors who articulate to me what it is that I do that they like and makes their job easier. I try my best to mirror that with my employees and mentees, giving praise and positive reinforcement for tasks done well. I also respect people as professionals and on occasions when correction or redirection is required, I promote the positive change that is required and obtainable. I do my best not to perseverate on the negative.

Catherine: (No response)

Frank: Experience working as a manager (on the job training) is the most single important experience. I have also taken a number of courses and trainings prior to becoming a S.C. Supervisor that have
enhanced my skills as a supervisor, including: Strategic planning for nonprofit agencies; supervision training; working with employees who have diverse backgrounds training; racial diversity training; college-level project management courses; and interview training and conflict resolution training.

**Sam:** I have a background in individual and classroom special education, camp counselor and director of a social/recreation program for adults. So, I have one to one teaching and group leadership experience.

**Mike:** There are certainly numerous systems that are utilized, business practices that are developed and updates, as well as many required processes that need to be adhered to. Being flexible, open-minded and able to meeting people based on where they are at a given moment is critical. This applies in different circumstances to individuals, families, coworkers, managers, and anyone else with whom we may be interacting.
Razia: Need to analyze and adjust as needed to get the job done.

Ophelia: Simply living and keeping my eyes open. I pay attention to the world. I watch the news, I listen to people. I see a lot of sadness in my job, so I try to always appreciate. I am not always successful, but I do try.

Martha: I believe the training that I provide to new nurses who have been hired to our program is the most useful experience that I have had to help develop the ability to be an impactful mentor.

**Maturity-Self**

How long and in what capacity (profession) have you been working for Department of Developmental Services?

Brenda: Clinical Director- 5.5 years

Rockson: I have been working in the investigations department my entire career at DDS (1997).

Catherine: 12 years with a private vendor funded through DDS, 2 years as a HSC, 5.5 years as a SC Supervisor

Frank: I have been working as a DDS Service Coordinator Supervisor for 6 years and nine months.

Sam: 33 years as a Service Coordinator and Service Coordinator Supervisor
Mike: I have worked in the field of human services for about 31 years, and for the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) for about 23 of those. Within DDS, positions I have held include Service Coordinator, Service Coordinator Supervisor, Assistant Area Director, Acting Area Director, and Program Monitor.

Razia: 8 years as a nurse.

Ophelia: 7 Years as Director of Programs

Martha: I have worked for Metro Region for 12 years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background Questions</th>
<th>Brenda: 5.5 years; 10.5 years; 3; No</th>
<th>Rockson: 21 years; since 1997. Since 2002; 16 years. Only once within an actual “mentoring program”, but as a senior investigator I acted as a mentor to my investigative team continually. I served as a mentor and ran a mentoring program for at risk youth as one of my first jobs. I have participated in volunteer mentoring at our local community center.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How long have you worked in department’s Metro Region?</td>
<td>Catherine: 5.5 years; 11 years; 4; Yes</td>
<td>Frank: 5.5 years; Over twenty years; 7; I have served as a mentor numerous times in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
other positions in the nonprofit human service field in a number of positions I have held.

Sam: 33 years; 23 years; As a supervisor I assume that everyone I have supervised is potentially seeing me a mentor. I have directly supervised and mentored over 25 different people here including three that eventually became supervisors here or other area offices and mentored three other staff hired to be supervisors. I have also had the opportunity to mentor new staff that eventually became my supervisors. Yes- in my other, very part time job I had the responsibility to train/mentor newly hired group leaders for the recreational groups they were responsible for.

Mike: About 6 years; Over 24 years. I believe that I have been able to provide ongoing mentoring supports to a number of people through my general experience in the field over 30 years as well as direct involvement in many areas of the work that DDS conducts. I have served as a mentor several times in community and church
settings, as well as in organized athletic endeavors.

**Razia:** 8 years; 16 years; 6 years; Yes, community assisting nursing struggling with class.

**Ophelia:** 7 Years; 30 years; Three times Yes, both officially and unofficially

**Martha:** I have been the Director of Health Services for 8 years. I have served as a mentor 5 times at MRS. I have also served as a mentor at the YMCA where I work as a group exercise instructor.