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What I Discovered About Mentoring and Self-Directed Education While Listening to a Cat

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An Abstract of a Project
in
Creative Studies

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Science

May 2017

Buffalo State
State University of New York
Department of Creative Studies

ABSTRACT OF PROJECT

What I Discovered About Mentoring and Self-Directed Education While Listening to a Cat

This project bears witness to the self-directed learning journey of an aspiring self-directed education movement leader. This was an exploratory project on mentoring. The project outcomes are a personal definition and philosophy on mentoring, curated resources for mentors and mentees, and a detailed plan for a leadership development weekend for high school students. The learning journey was documented through journal entries prepared retrospectively. Without realizing it, the author made use of the cognitive behaviors described in the Deepening Expectations stage of the Torrance Incubation Model (TIM) as she attempted to authentically tame this mentoring giant; listening to a cat was her most reliable approach. The author believes mentoring is a key to self-directed education and that the TIM is an authentic self-directed learning model.

Keywords: Mentoring, Leadership Development, Self-Directed Education, Self-Directed Learning, Torrance Incubation Model

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Nicole M. Colter

_____5/7/17_____
Date

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Dates of Approval:

_____5/7/17_____   _____

Dr. Susan Keller-Mathers
Associate Professor

_____5/7/17_____   _____

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Student

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Anyone familiar with the work of E. Paul Torrance will recognize the tremendous influence his Manifesto for Children (Appendix A) had on my personal definition of, and philosophy on, mentoring. I am forever indebted to him for helping me learn to play my own game.

I wouldn't have even started this project if it weren't for Hannah Bergeron and Angel Hernandez, the courageous seniors whom I have had the honor to mentor this year. Thank you for being so receptive to my mentoring and inspiring me to explore this further.

As always my husband Chris has been a constant source of encouragement. I want to thank him for his expression of love on our anniversary this year – eight hours together at the Torrance Center and in the Hargrett Rare Book & Manuscript Library looking through Dr. Torrance's early writings and artifacts. No gift could ever top that!

My children, Krista, Aaron & Faith have each enriched my life in so many ways. I thank them for forgiving my past transgressions and being open to me as a mentor as I try to rewrite the operating system on which our relationships run.

My dear friend, life coach and sister from another mister, Deb Cwynar Miller is always there when I need someone to ground me. Our conversations throughout this project really helped this recovering perfectionist.

The International Center for Studies in Creativity (ICSC) is a tight knit group of cohorts, classmates, alumni and faculty. I continue to feel I can take on the world with this group of creative geniuses always willing to give of their time and resources. Thank you to Sara Smith for getting me going, Alice Jacobs for getting me unstuck, Tamara Doleman for being my sounding board and Jessi Maynard for sharing her love for journaling with me. Two alumni, Nicolas Drayton and Ismet Mamnoon encouraged me early in this project and shared their feedback and resources. I am so appreciative of the shift and ripples their words created in this journey.

My project advisor and mentor, Dr. Susan Keller-Mathers who plays a great game of catch and clearly constrained herself from telling this divergent soul early on that there was no way to accomplish my original plan. She patiently waited for me to figure things out for myself and when the time was right she was compelled to share her wisdom, "Busy people get things done", "Let go of expectations", "It's a FUN journey, huh?" Her key suggestions shaped the arc of my project and I am eternally grateful.

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Purpose and Description of Project

This project is exploratory in nature. For years I have naturally mentored and coached others and have decided I would like to understand the power of mentoring even more. Through my own personal journey of mentoring high school seniors over the last two years where I work and collaborating with one student to start a peer mentoring program at the school this year, I have come to realize how indispensable mentoring is to transition, growth and learning.

I have a compulsion toward doing, but my Early Bird Foursight preference (FourSight, 2014) of high ideator, high clarifier is best served by deep exploration until I can assemble a clear vision of a specific domain. I want to resist the urge to *do* and instead focus on *understand*. I want to better understand how essential mentoring is and be able to articulate its importance to what future education could look like.

I'm going to look for opportunities where I can strengthen and communicate the mentoring process and make my process more deliberate. I have already noticed that I now weave creativity tools and skills into my mentoring style and so I will use these stories to reflect on what mentoring means to me and how I intend to use it going forward.

Below are my specific goals for this project.

Personal Goals

- Grow as a mentor, especially to my emerging adult children

- Learn how to leverage group mentoring to increase mentoring impact

- Understand the elements of a mentoring culture and be able to articulate how to grow it within an organization

- Shift from verbal storytelling to written storytelling and position myself to package this information into a manuscript in the future

Creative Problem Solving (CPS) and/or Creativity Skills Involved

When encouraging the senior students I mentor to communicate about their Capstone projects I kept using the phrase *Start with Why*. This phrase is originally from Simon Sinek's (2009) book and TEDx talk by the same title and refers to how great leaders inspire action. However, I have come to realize that this mantra also works to help people clarify, as in the CPS tool *Why? What's Stopping You*?

I am finding the simplicity of *Why* as something that is worth delving into deeper and want to explore other CPS tools to see how they might apply to mentoring.

I naturally *Look at it Another Way* almost all the time. I want to help other people with this simple creativity skill but will also focus on weaving some of the other 17 creativity skills into my mentoring practice (Torrance & Safter, 1999).

Rationale for Selection

I am passionate about mentoring. I see it as an essential ingredient in all healthy relationships as individuals seek to help each other learn, grow and navigate transition. Intuitively, I believe that mentoring is linked to effective self-directed education of children and youth. Without rigid curriculum or directive teachers, I believe young learners are more dependent on mentors to help them navigate the world.

The culminating project for my graduate certificate in Creativity and Change Leadership was to synthesize my philosophy, vision and strategic plan related to creativity. The program at ICSC challenges you to dream big and declare the impact you will make as a change leader. Throughout that 33 page document it was clear how passionate I am about entrepreneurial and self-directed learning. However, when I searched those pages I was surprised to find five instances

where I used the word mentor or mentoring.   Two occurrences were part of my vision and three were part of my strategic plan.

These were part of My Vision:

"I will serve as mentor and facilitator and focus on growth of the individual team members through providing what Carl Rogers referred to as a *psychologically safe environment* (as cited in Davis, 2004, p. 11) and patiently working through issues together to develop deep supportive relationships" (Colter, 2016, p. 16).

"The goal will be to fine-tune this model and then ignite others to do the same so that we help the alternative education movement to challenge the status quo while making a ruckus as Seth Godin would say; our teams can help mentor these spin-offs from the first inquiry call, through all the planning and be by their side to celebrate when their dream is realized and the new community is born" (Colter, 2016, p. 18).

These were part of my Strategic Plan:

"Ask Joan (targeted mentor) to meet weekly" (Colter, 2016, p. 28).

"Investigate creative community (as I want TeenLLC to develop into and advance creative community) and whether there is a connection to mentoring and growth" (Colter, 2016, p. 29).

"Connect to an organization that helps entrepreneurship in Third World Countries to investigate the possibility of us mentoring and/or doing a trip overseas" (Colter, 2016, p. 32).

As you can see, I dream big!!! And yet I believe in co-creating with adolescents. I believe mentoring is the salt that will bring out the creative flavors inside the youth with whom I work. In the future I see myself starting a self-directed learning community and this project will help inform that endeavor. I would like to better understand the role that staff and outside mentors play in the lives of young self-directed learners. I want to explore the effects of group mentoring and a mentoring culture as influencers in child and adolescent development.

Self-directed education is a growing movement and I want to support its advancement by mentoring and coaching start-ups in other areas. First, it is important for me to understand these learning environments better so I will use this exploration of mentoring as an opportunity to begin networking with existing organizations in the self-directed education movement. I see this as one more piece of the puzzle I've been assembling since before I started my studies at the ICSC; a puzzle that I'm determined to complete before I finish my Master of Science program.

SECTION TWO: PERTINENT LITERATURE

There is an overwhelming amount of literature out there about mentoring. I was most drawn to the literature that explored the connection with creativity and the more recent research on group mentoring. I reviewed the connection to leadership development and a mentoring culture a bit as well. Below are a few resources I started with. These are already leading me to more pertinent resources as I continue to dig deeper to understand mentoring better as part of my master's project journey.

CPS/Creativity Connection to Mentoring

Ruth Noller, E. Paul Torrance and others made a connection between creativity and mentoring. I have found through my own practice that using CPS tools in a mentoring relationship helps with clarification of vision or challenges and reduces stress by helping others see many possibilities. I will continue to explore the benefits of CPS and creativity skills in relation to mentoring. Here are some resources I have consulted thus far:

McCluskey, K. W., Noller, R. B., Lamoureux, K., & McCluskey, A. L. A. (2004). Unlocking

hidden potential through mentoring. *Reclaiming Children and Youth, 13*(2), 85.

"A mentor is a person whose hindsight can become your foresight." – Grey Owl

This article explores mentoring at-risk, talented youth. When you think of drop outs, you probably don't think of bright young people, with A's and B's, who were bored, disheartened, or simply felt they didn't belong to the point of giving up. *Lost Prizes* was a mentoring program developed by three Manitoba school districts to re-engage talented youth who had dropped out and were aimless or in trouble with the law. Pre-service teachers were trained to encourage these youth to "recognize and take responsibility for developing their own talents" (p. 89). Mentor preparation

included training in mentoring and CPS. This program was successful in re-engaging former drop-outs and builds a case for using CPS as part of the mentoring process.

Noller, R. B. (1982). *Mentoring, a voiced scarf: An experience in creative problem solving.* Buffalo, N.Y: Bearly Limited.

This illustrated book was the starting point for my exploration into the connection between CPS and mentoring. In Part I, Ruth Noller used the CPS process to explore mentoring, which is essentially what I needed to do in this project. I got lots of ideas on how to move forward with my own project from this one little source. The title, *A Voiced Scarf*, is an acronym for effective mentoring strategies recommended by Noller. In Part II, each strategy is explained; the most interesting line for me was "how CPS may be used everyday as a motivational and coping tool" (p. 28). In Part III, the reader is given the opportunity to apply the CPS process to a mess in their own lives. It has a lengthy bibliography of publications from 1971-1981 but I preferred the Noller & Frey (1983) annotated bibliography organization and it included the same sources and additional resources as well.

Noller, R. B., & Frey, B. R. (1983). *Mentoring: An annotated bibliography.* Buffalo, N.Y: Bearly Limited.

There is a quote from Sylvia Rivchun on the first page that was a great source of inspiration to me for this project: "Be a mentor and leave a lasting legacy." Noller and Frey compiled and annotated well over 200 publications in this book. What I liked best was that there was a chart in the beginning that helped me identify articles associated with 17 different focus areas. I concentrated on the *Independent Learning* area and found some interesting articles that I may explore in the future.

Noller, R. B., & Frey, B. R. (1994). *Mentoring: An annotated bibliography (1982-1992).* Sarasota,

FL: Center for Creative Learning, Inc.

This publication was not organized as effectively for my preferences. Instead of focusing on

the resources it could direct me to, I read more of its introduction and conclusion. Noller and Frey

explain the difference between what they refer to as spontaneous versus instrumental mentoring.

Spontaneous arises from a close relationship and is voluntary; instrumental is intentional,

orchestrated and assigned. They witnessed the rise in mentoring application from its predominance

in the education world to all kinds of applications; they seem to attribute the spread to the fact that

"the needs have increased for assistance to those who must develop coping strategies and ultimate

independence" (p. 56).

Written in the early 1990's, before group mentoring started to be talked about and studied,

the authors claim that one-on-one mentoring is more effective than "networking" which is one-on-

many or many-on-many. They acknowledge that occasionally a group may be mentored by a single

mentor but it is obvious that this reality was not the norm, nor did it seem promising yet.

Torrance, E.P. (1995). *Why fly? A philosophy of creativity.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing.

This is a collection of articles, unpublished papers and chapters of Torrance's work since

1958. It is divided into three parts. Part I "Why Fly? A Philosophy of Creativity" includes 7

sources, Part II "The Blazing Drive: The Creative Person" has 6 sources and Part III "Learning to

Fly: Creativity Training and Motivation" has 11 sources. I perused the book but focused on the

"Role of Mentors in Creative Achievement (1983) source in Part III. In his research mentor was

defined as "an older person in your occupational field or educational experience who "took you

under his/her wing'" (p. 315). The most interesting facts I found were that only 9% of the mentors

mentioned were elementary or high school teachers or school counselors.

Torrance, E. P. (2002). *The manifesto: A guide to developing a creative career*. Westport, CT:

Ablex Publishing.

In this book Torrance explains, in great detail, the 22-year longitudinal studies behind the original Manifesto for Children (Appendix A). Torrance distilled that work into seven charges, one of which is "Find a great teacher or mentor who will help you." This charge comes right after the one that ends "free yourself to play your own game." I have not had time to read this whole book yet but using the "Find" function within the online book I reviewed the instances where the word "mentor" appeared. Here are the highlights:

"Having had a mentor was related significantly to all five measures of creative achievements" (p. 17). The search for identity, or struggle to "play your own game" was a story told by all of the young people in his twenty-two-year study. Sixty-six percent of participants indicated they had "one or more great mentors who helped you achieve success" (p. 84). Many had parents, teachers or mentors who helped them free themselves and a lot of them maintained these relationships for a long time.

Torrance, E.P. & Safter, H.T. (1999). *Making the creative leap beyond…* Buffalo, NY: Creative

Education Foundation Press.

This book is an update to *The Search for Satori & Creativity* by E. Paul Torrance. There is a whole chapter dedicated to each of the 18 creativity skills and how they can be developed. I took extensive notes on these chapters which are included within Appendix B. I think a mentor who is familiar with these skills could help their mentee develop these abilities which would add to their lifelong success.

Group Mentoring

It is common in churches to have small groups which seek not only to better understand the Bible but focus more on how to put its wisdom into practice in your own life. The small group

typically has a leader. However, the dynamics of the group interaction include elements of mentoring as it builds cohesion and trust between members, thus creating supportive peer to peer relationships. I think a lot can be learned about group mentoring from exploring the small group experience at churches.

Studies of group mentoring officially only started in the late 1990's so there has not been a lot of research as of yet (Kroll, 2016).   I am very intrigued by this model and will continue to explore the literature. Here are the articles I started with:

Altus, J. (2015) Answering the call: How group mentoring makes a difference. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 23(2), 100-115, DOI: 10.1080/13611267.2015.1047629

This is the kind of research I would do and the kind of paper I would write. Altus' qualitative study set out to answer the research question "What types of academic and non-academic benefits do students perceive to gain in a group school-based mentoring program?" (p. 101). A case study analysis approach was used with only three students so although findings cannot be generalized, interesting feedback was uncovered.

The study builds upon aspects of Rhodes' (2005) work which suggests that mentors and mentees need to spend consistent time together over a substantial time period in order for a strong relationship to develop. Rhodes' model of mentoring proposed that a mentoring relationship effects the social-emotional development, cognitive development and identity development of youth which creates positive academic and non-academic benefits. Altus' "study argues that group mentoring offers a viable option to traditional mentoring approaches" (p. 100) and includes recommendations to further explore the benefits of group mentoring programs.

Kroll, J. (2016). What is meant by the term group mentoring? *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning, 24*(1), 44-58. doi:10.1080/13611267.2016.1165488

Kroll starts with a historical perspective on group mentoring as he explains the inner workings and significance of Benjamin Franklin's Leather Apron Club. Next he explains the values of group mentoring: intentionally inclusive, power-distributed and dislocated hierarchy. Marginalized people create an experience where they can advocate for themselves; an environment where every member is valued as a leader and mentor even as they are led and mentored. He then articulates the four group mentoring typologies: one-to-many, many-to-one, many-to-many and my favorite, peer group mentoring. The peer group mentoring structure is a group-directed and group-managed mentoring experience where learning occurs through dialog and social interaction. Peers are in a similar situation in at least one context and should consider each other as equals. Group mentoring may also be referred to as co-mentoring, mentoring communities, collaborative mentoring and mentoring circles.

Kroll next defines groups and articulates the parameters that different researchers have used to define groups. He then combines his definition of mentoring with these group parameters to arrive at the following proposed definition: "Group mentorship can be recognized as a collection of three or more individuals, connected by their social relationship, distinctly gathered for the specific and shared purpose of intentionally challenging, and supporting the others to enhance personal growth and professional skills/development of the others" (p. 55).

Washington, G., Barnes, D., & Watts, R. J. (2014). Reducing risk for youth violence by promoting healthy development with pyramid mentoring: A proposal for a culturally centered group mentoring. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 24*(6), 646-657. doi:10.1080/10911359.2014.922789

This article promotes Pyramid Mentoring (PM) as an intervention to reduce the internal and external risks of exposure to violence for African American males. Pyramid Mentoring is a multigenerational group mentoring program "designed to promote community-based health behavior change" by using "African-centered rites of passage traditions and the 7 Field Principles Model of Carl Bell" (p. 649). This article, along with the Altus study, made me realize that I should dig deeper into the youth mentoring literature in the future.

Mentoring and Leadership Development

"You can't call yourself a leader if you're not raising up leaders" says Natasha Sistrunk Robinson (2014). I couldn't agree more! There is a clear connection between mentoring and leadership development. This will not be the primary focus of my investigation but I am sure that further clarity will be an unavoidable by-product. I see the leadership development connection as part of my interest in building a mentoring culture. I was sure the following book would have some wisdom to offer on the subject at hand, so I revisited it:

Maxwell, J. C. (2007). *The 21 irrefutable laws of leadership: Follow them and people will follow you (Revised & updated 10th anniversary edition).* Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc.

The Law of Explosive Growth (Law #20) has a chapter subtitle "To Add Growth, Lead Followers-To Multiply, Lead Leaders" (p. 245). In this chapter, Maxwell explains how he and a few other leaders started a non-profit named EQUIP; their strategy was called the Million Leader Mandate. EQUIP wanted to develop 40,000 leaders around the world, each of which would agree in turn to develop 25 leaders in their own city. They were successful in this endeavor and reached their goal in four years, two years ahead of schedule. Believing that leadership development compounds, they went for an even more aggressive goal of five million leaders in five years. It

would seem to me that while Maxwell uses the word *develop*, I would use the word *mentor* and I think it is only a matter of semantics.

Maxwell claims that leaders are hard to keep. In order to do so, you have to become a better leader yourself. "It takes a leader to raise up another leader" (p. 253). He also explained that developing leaders requires a different focus. One of his seven points on this topic really resonated with me:

"Leaders who attract followers…focus on weaknesses.

Leaders who develop leaders…focus on strengths" (p. 250).

Reading this chapter made me think of this phrase, which represents a similar philosophy that is in line with my belief in self-directed education:

If you want followers, teach. If you want leaders, mentor.

Mentoring Culture

When I started this project I was amazed that the term *mentoring culture* came to mind and that I found the work of Lois J. Zachary, who has written a lot about building a mentoring culture. Her focus seems to be on a corporate environment but I wanted to read her work to see if, and how, it lines up with my thinking on a mentoring culture. I want to understand exactly what a mentoring culture is and how it can be grown within an organization.

Zachary, L. J. (2007). Mentoring culture: Have happier people. *Leadership Excellence, 24*(5), 16.

Upon viewing this one page article, it was obvious this wasn't a deep scholarly paper but I hoped it would give me some direction as to where to find more information. It provides a high level overview but packed a lot of information into a small space and still left me unclear. I turned to her book to dig deeper.

Zachary, L. J. (2005). *Creating a mentoring culture: The organization's guide.* San Francisco, CA:

Jossey-Bass.

If the Zachary (2007) article was too small and packed to be effective, this 304 page book was too much to be helpful to my exploration. I decided that I may have gotten ahead of myself. Upon browsing this book, I realized I still didn't have a full grasp on mentoring and decided it was probably premature to try to understand the elements of a mentoring culture and expect to be able to articulate how to grow it within an organization. After this project journey is over, I may be able to synthesize my thoughts on a mentoring culture but I decided I had seen enough to realize that I was spreading myself too thin.

These books, publications and people have also influenced my thinking on mentoring:

Freedom Writers with Erin Gruwell. (1999). *The freedom writers diary: How a teacher and 150 teens used writing to change themselves and the world around them.* New York, NY: Broadway Books.

Seth Godin - http://sethgodin.typepad.com – If it is possible to be mentored by someone you've never met, then blogger Seth Godin is my mentor. When I was stuck in a rut, long before I ever started intentionally trying to make the world a better place, his blog and books helped set my thinking free. He has inspired me to make a ruckus and challenge the status quo; the exact message I needed to hear, over and over again. I find it ironic to realize that he grew up in Buffalo, NY the home of the ICSC that has continued to set me free.

SECTION THREE: PROCESS PLAN

Plan to Achieve My Goals and Outcomes

At present, there seems to be several directions I will explore to help me assemble a better understanding of mentoring. One is informing my thinking through ongoing review of literature and practice in schools.

Another is exploring my changing relationship, and development of a mentoring relationship, with my children as emerging adults. Personally and starting immediately I will begin to use the skills I've already developed and any new skills I acquire to shift my relationship with my own 19 year old daughter and 20 year old son. My daughter Faith arrives home on February 15, 2017 and I will actively work on mentoring her instead of picking up the more parental role I have played in the past. Similarly, I will focus on mentoring my 20 year old son Aaron as well.

Based on my observations with my own children, conversations with family and friends and my experience at work, high school seniors feel ill-equipped to handle what comes next. Teachers are primarily focused on helping them get all the credits they need to graduate, their parental relationships are in transition and may be strained and their peers are simultaneously experiencing the same angst. I believe high school graduates would benefit from having a small group mentoring experience in their last semester of high school that would ideally continue for 6 months to a year after graduation.   I will seek to use every opportunity afforded me at work to mentor seniors through their last few months of high school so I can watch them cross the finish line.

Shifting my focus toward mentoring my two young adult children while at the same time mentoring seniors at work will help inform my thinking on the parents' role through their children's adult transition. I believe parents struggle with this transition and need to shift from traditional parent-directive relationships with their emerging adult children and evolve toward mentoring and

friendship relationships. For students in self-directed learning communities and free schools, elements of this relationship transition might need to occur at younger ages. I will seek to articulate my thinking on this transition and beyond the scope of this project I may package this into a library talk that I would test at the Northborough Library in Northborough, MA.

Project Timeline

The timeline in Table 1 was prepared after completion of the project to give a quick overview of what I actually did. One of my goals was to grow my written storytelling skills. I did this in two ways. First, I chose to represent to create a narrative about the journey in the form of journal entries. These appear in Appendix B. The second way I attempted to build my storytelling skills is that I compared the project timeline below to Joseph Campbell's monomyth, otherwise known as The Hero's Journey, and indicated which of the 17 stages I thought correlated to where I was at the time. I will need to study this archetype deeper and may have failed miserably, but I have tried nonetheless.

TABLE 1

Month	Tasks	Hours
"Call to Adventure"	**Wake up at 5am with a vision of "Adulting 101-My Master's Project"** **Call with Sue regarding registering for class late and my concern about deadlines. "Busy people get things done"**	2 hours
FEBRUARY	Call with Sue. She suggested I package my mentoring style in stories. The game of catch begins Develop and submit Final Concept Paper on 2/13/17 Watch the TED Mentoring Playlist and Cameron Herold Call with Nick Drayton about his Master's Project. Email him my Concept Paper	

"Crossing the Threshold"	Call with Sue "Let go of expectations" Call with Jessi Maynard regarding Journaling and how that connects to mentoring **Call with Ismet Mamnoon regarding her Parenting/Mentoring Model. She added me to her Facebook group and gave me her secret blog site and I read it all** **Email reply from Nick regarding my Concept Paper. Key learning on relationship to parenting clicking in place** Reach out to my pastor regarding mentoring/discipleship and schedule a meeting – CANCELLED DAY OF Reach out to Natasha Sistrunk Robinson regarding Group Mentoring – NO RESPONSE	Estimated 50 hours work and 50 more hours of thinking
MARCH **"The Belly of the Whale"** AND **"The Road of Trials"**	Call with Barbara Stomprud regarding Group Mentoring (http://www.vesselofhonorministry.com) Start reaching out to network and create dialogue around peer mentoring and mentoring in self-directed learning environments. Attempted survey. Call with Sue "It's a FUN Journey!" Mentor Interview with Hannah B Full Class Skype Meeting: Adopt a Project Discussion & Master's Project Questions on 3/6 from 7-8pm Spend the afternoon at Mountain Laurel Sudbury School Exchange sections 1-3 with sounding board partner Finish Sections 1 – 3 by 3/13	
"The Meeting with the Goddess"	**Wake up at 5am with the phrases "Define Mentoring" and "Spirit of Adoption" on my mind** Reflect on my learning so far and start draft of sections 4 – 6 Schedule call with Sue to review feedback on sections 1 – 3 and my concerns about sections 4 - 6	Estimated 40 hours work and 40 more hours of thinking

APRIL **"Apotheosis"** **"The Crossing or the Return Threshold"**	Full Class Skype Meeting: Project Overview & Questions on sections 4-6 on 4/5 from 7-8pm Keep working on sections 4 – 6 **While on vacation with my friend and wise Life Coach Deb Cwynar Miller my outcomes really start to come together. I visit the Torrance Center and spend a day looking through boxes of Torrance's original work.** Exchange sections 4-6 with sounding board partner Finish Sections 4 – 6 by 4/10 Schedule call with Sue to review feedback and/or get direction Incorporate Sue's feedback on sections 4-6, review and refine complete project with my friend Deb. Spend the week incubating Submit Finished Project to Chryso D'Angelo, my childhood friend and editor and incorporate feedback before submitting to Sue Attend "Write Without the Fight" webinar hosted by ICSC alumni Julia Roberts **Submit Final Project to Sue - due 4/24** Schedule call with Sue to review feedback and/or get direction Revise Finished Project based on Sue's feedback	Estimated 40 hours work and 40 more hours of thinking
MAY	Prepare for Project Presentation Sign Off week of 5/1 Skype Presentation Meeting on 5/4 from 6:30-9:30pm Upload to Digital Commons by 5/8	Estimated 10 hours work and 10 more hours of thinking

Evaluation Plan

Since the primary focus of this project is to explore and gain a deeper understanding, the evaluation of that goal would be measured in my growth in understanding of mentoring and in my personal goals which are:

- Grow as a mentor especially to my emerging adult children – I will gather feedback from my husband and two children to ascertain to what extent my new mentoring approach with my 19 and 20 year old has changed and/or helped our relationship. This relationship shift will be a work in progress so I will at least hope to establish the trust needed to get insightful feedback from them. I will also include feedback from my 2 senior Capstone students. I will reflect on all feedback and our interactions from my perspective.

- Learn how to leverage group mentoring to increase mentoring impact – I will be able to articulate what effective group mentoring looks like and how it relates to leadership development and a mentoring culture.

- Understand the elements of a mentoring culture and learn how to grow it within an organization - I will be able to articulate what a mentoring culture is and how it relates to the future of education as I see it.

- Shift from verbal storytelling to written storytelling and position myself to package this information into a manuscript in the future – in conversation I tell lots of stories and I see how they connect people to the passion I have for the specific topic. I have done less written storytelling and so capturing my stories in written form will be a new medium for me.

SECTION FOUR: OUTCOMES

Introduction

This project was a journey exploring mentoring. I struggled throughout this whole project. I was wrestling with something bigger and deeper than I originally realized and for over a month it had the upper hand; there were many days I was paralyzed, unable to articulate anything. My truth was gnawing me from the inside out and I wasn't ready to listen.

I wish I had journaled throughout this project but I did the next best thing. In reflecting on the journey, I attempted to accurately recreate my process by writing journal entries retrospectively in Appendix B. I also developed a personal philosophy and definition of mentoring, resources for mentors and mentees as well as updates to my website to reflect this focus. Serendipitously, this project uniquely prepared me to apply for a position that arose late in the project. Two of the questions for that application are included as outcomes of this project. One is a video explaining how I would coach a teenager through a challenge and the other is a detailed plan for a leadership development weekend for high school students. These are included in Appendix C. However, the most important outcome of this project is a stronger relationship with my emerging adult children and my vision to inspire others to embrace mentoring. I believe that one person can spark a mentoring chain and have an impact that transforms generations to come.

The first outcome of this project is my philosophy on mentoring, followed by the most concise definition I could wrestle out of the recesses of my brain. Please keep in mind as you read that these stem from my work with teenagers who are struggling to "adult." I share these with two distinct and overlapping groups in mind. It is my hope to inspire people, young and old, to see themselves as mentors, already equipped with the number one key to help others take control of the wheel and steer their own lives on this journey we call life. I also hope that teenagers and young adults may read this and be intrigued enough to "seek out, be open to, and empower mentors"

(Drayton, 2016, p. 25) in their lives. Recognizing and showing gratitude to the people who are already trying to mentor them will nurture those relationships. When the relationship is esteemed by both parties, mentoring is rewarding for the mentor and mentee.

So without further ado…

My Philosophy on Mentoring

Mentoring is the proactive investment in another person that unlocks their potential. It is inherent in all healthy relationships as individuals seek to help each other learn, grow and navigate transition.   From our first breath to our last, a person will likely encounter mentors from all walks of life; some they will even call mom, dad, aunt, uncle and friend.

A mentor recognizes the mentee's strengths; where once a mentee may have only seen limitations and weaknesses, by using their words a mentor breathes life into, and builds the mentee's confidence in their own potentialities.

On the journey of becoming, mentors help highlight the essence of who we are and who we might become. They help us grasp a vision of our future and then walk alongside us toward that vision.

A mentor seeks to empower their mentee to free themselves from the games others may try to impose on them and instead learn to play their own game (Torrance, Henderson & Presbury, 1983). A mentor does not seek to mold the mentee in their own image, nor a cookie cutter image of success, but instead recognizes that a person's greatest achievement is becoming comfortable in their own skin, fully themselves. In this way, a mentor is a little like Michelangelo when he described his famous sculpture, "I saw the angel in the marble and carved until I set him free."

It's unlikely you will find the word love in descriptions of mentoring. However, if you were to look at the internal motivation of mentors, who are not being compelled by external rewards, you would likely find it goes straight to the heart. Love is a word that most of us think we understand

and yet in one day we could express how much we love our spouse or child and also say "I love tacos!" For my purposes, I am using the definition of love developed by my pastors, Jeff & Carol Sharp. The theme this year at our church is Live Jesus Love. In order to remove ambiguity about what they meant when using the word "love" they developed this definition: "Love is a force that compels and constrains us to do good, be kind and show mercy" (Sharp & Sharp, 2017). The key portion of this definition that I am focused on is "love is a force that compels and constrains us." We are good at being compelled to do things, but seem less effective at being constrained from doing things. I believe that mentoring is rooted and grounded in love and that a mentor is compelled by love to offer their guidance but is also constrained in allowing the mentee to make and learn from their own mistakes.

My Definition of Mentoring

Mentoring is rooted and grounded in love. It is the proactive investment in another person that unlocks their potential. As an individual seeks to do the creative best with their own life, a mentor helps them carve away that which doesn't belong and supports them as they discover, try on, and learn to live their unique creative life.

Resources for Mentors and Mentees

Another outcome of my project is a series of resources and inspiration for mentors and mentees. I want to help others learn to develop mentoring relationships. I curated a series of videos, songs, quotes and movies primarily targeted toward teenagers and young adults. My website was updated to reflect these posts using the tag mentoring. All can be viewed at http://nicolecolter.com/tag/mentoring/. I also created a closed Facebook group called *Teen Liberated Learning Community* to share my content and invited a few like-minded adults to serve as virtual mentors (Appendix D). I have not yet figured out how I will promote the group to potential

learners but I believe if I build it, they will come. Otherwise, I will lean on my years of marketing experience and find them.

A New Direction for Parent/Child Relationship

The most rewarding outcome of this project has been the difference I have felt and noticed in myself and my children since I started to reprogram the operating system I use to interact with, and guide, them.

Aside from the regular friction I believe is present throughout adolescence and transition to adulthood, my relationship with my two youngest children was eclipsed by a few other delicate matters. One matter that complicated our relationship dynamics was family blending. I am their stepmom and it appeared to me that they struggled more in adolescence with reconciling their relationship with their mom and me. Another matter was the "parental extension of the school role" to which I was inadvertently recruited. They both had school challenges, for different reasons, and at times I allowed my parenting to be clouded by the expectations the school set for their behavior. They were not designed for the structure of modern schooling and yet I didn't question its effect on them or our relationship until it was too late. Hindsight is truly 20/20.

They both moved out after high school, were gone for about a year and a half and now live with their father and I again. My son has struggled to find his own path since graduating high school and resisted all attempts I made to discuss the matter with him. Now he is engaged in exploring the possibility of buying or starting a business and he sees me more as a trusted advisor than the parent he wanted to avoid for so long. When he first brought the idea up, I had to defer judgment and focus on the positives and opportunities of the idea. In the past I would have started advising (aka lecturing) my son as I could immediately see the issues and instead of exploring the idea with him, I would have shared those prematurely. As parents, I think we feel responsible for our children's

decisions. At least, I did. By using these creativity skills and seeing myself as his mentor, I handled the situation way differently and we have started to grow closer.

My daughter and I had very little communication over the last year and a half as she didn't live at home and our relationship had been strained for years. She just arrived home a few weeks into this project. She is still adjusting and trying to get things in her life in order.   I have resisted the urge to push her and instead focused on rebuilding the trust that I know to be important in parenting and mentoring relationships. We started talking about her dreams. She is a talented singer, poet and song writer. In one of our recent conversations she said she remembered every day of high school like it was yesterday. Knowing she is a talented writer, I encouraged her to write those stories down. She is starting to write a book and I recently got to read the beginning of Chapter One.

It is too early to report any significant improvements but I believe that the long-term results of the shift I have made will produce closer relationships between us in the years to come.

SECTION FIVE: KEY LEARNINGS

This project has allowed me to be an observer of my own strengths and struggles and I know that I learned far more than I can even express. Below are the journey and content learnings I can wrap words around but they only represent the tip of the iceberg of what this project has taught me.

Journey Learnings

Definitions are Subjective

In the normal course of our everyday lives, rarely do we turn to a dictionary to dig into the nuance of words. We have learned to use context clues and grasp the bigger picture of the message being communicated. Additionally, words have multiple meanings; we don't remember the exact definition and very few words are universally agreed on anyway. This leads me to the conclusion that we are subjectively defining things all of the time. And yet, we feel too small to boldly declare our own definition and to create philosophies and programs around that definition. Instead we search for an expert or authority like a dictionary. Creating your own definition is thinking outside the book and it is uncomfortable to be the minority of one embracing a new way of thinking.

Incubation Comes Before Illumination!

Even when I am "not producing," productive things are happening. Tolerating the discomfort to sit with a problem for as long as it takes to get clear on my own authentic course of action is still hard for me but doing so ensures I avoid premature closure. Next I will have to learn to sit with the discomfort of watching other learners struggle, not cutting the cocoon of their butterfly too early so that it is weak, and possibly lifeless.

Waiting for Permission

When I was stuck trying to figure out a framework to explore, package and present my learning I turned to Seth Godin for some inspiration. As always, Seth was able to jar my thinking and get me unstuck and I was reminded that we frequently find ourselves waiting for permission or approval.

I believe this is a result of how our culture *raises* children through parenting and in traditional schooling. In *Free to Learn: Why Unleashing the Instinct to Play Will Make Our Children Happier, More Self-Reliant and Better Students for Life*, Dr. Peter Gray explains child development from a Darwinian perspective. As an evolutionary developmental psychologist he is "interested in the biological foundations of education" (p. 5). He explains how agriculture changed the goals of parenting from that which was embraced by hunter-gatherer societies for most of history. Today, we use agricultural metaphors of "*raising* children, just as we speak of raising chickens or tomatoes. We speak of *training* children, just as we speak of training horses. Our manner of talking and thinking about parenting suggests that we own our children…and that we control how they grow and behave" (p. 50). Before this shift children as young as two were allowed to freely explore and were expected to educate themselves in hunter-gatherer societies. Fast-forward to today and you will notice significant parental control of their children's lives. "One significant reason for this increase in adult control over children's lives is the ever-increasing weight of compulsory schooling" (p. 7).

Waiting for permission, and its cousin waiting for approval, are relics of the past that keep us stuck. I believe a mentor can significantly help a self-directed or life-long learner by constantly reminding them that permission and approval are not needed.

Don't Box Myself In

This was a self-directed project and I initially felt obligated to articulate exactly how I was going to gather information and achieve illumination; the topic was more elusive than that. I am a highly effective self-directed learner but having to articulate in advance the depth and breadth of my journey created anxiety and detracted from my overall experience. I have to learn to trust my own process and not allow imaginary expectations and pressure from others, including my professors, make me prematurely decide on action steps and methods.

As a quintessential self-directed learner my learning process is dynamic, led by my curiosity that feeds my flow. I can usually only articulate the next step clearly. That step reveals more pathways and I gain deeper understanding and eventually I'm able to master the domain. I need to resist boxing myself in along the way.

Let Go and Trust

Since I plan to start and lead a self-directed learning community and want to be part of the growing movement, I have known that one thing I eventually needed to confront was trust. Trust in myself, trust in children, adolescents and young adults as fully capable to learn on their own, at their own pace.

While not a stated goal of this project, an unintended by-product is that I have gained more trust in myself as a self-directed learner. Therefore, it is easier for me to trust the process of other self-directed learners, even when nothing productive appears to be happening. This helps resolve one of the biggest impediments I have had to moving forward as a leader of a self-directed learning community – the fear that I couldn't let go and truly trust children and adolescents to guide their own learning.

I am a Work in Progress

Reprogramming an operating system takes time. Even though I made the decision to shift my interaction style with my 19 and 20 year old children to a mentoring approach, I was frustrated with how little progress I felt I made within the project timeline.

Throughout this project I am sad to say that I have beat myself up many times; I need to be vigilant on my ability to defer judgment, especially on myself. My tolerance for ambiguity and complexity also hit saturation points. I need to remember it was never about the destination, but always about the journey.

Torrance Incubation Model is an Authentic Self-Directed Learning Model

Without realizing it, I used all eight of the cognitive behaviors described in Stage 2 (Deepening Expectations) of the Torrance Incubation Model (TIM) as I attempted to authentically tame this mentoring giant. Upon reading what was supposed to be the final paper, especially the journal entries in Appendix B, my professor and sounding board partner both commented on the TIM in relation to my journey. Obviously motivated to complete this project, but with a week left before it had to be uploaded to digital commons, I felt I needed to reflect on this insight they revealed.

The TIM is a teaching model developed by E. Paul Torrance that is meant to capitalize on the power of incubation. I studied the model in the Foundations of Creative Learning course (CRS 560) but distinctly remember not feeling the least bit competent in its use. However, that course is designed and taught using the TIM. Burnett and Keller-Mathers (2016) after describing the TIM re-design of that course conclude that "Students participating in TIM'd classes consciously or unconsciously practice and develop their creativity skills. Therefore, the more classes designed in this manner, the more practice the students will have had, and - potentially - the more developed

their skills will become" (p. 301). Feedback solicited on the CRS 560 course included this quote "A lot of learning happened without us even realizing it!" (p. 300). The creativity skills they are referring to are the 18 core creativity skills identified by Torrance (Torrance & Safter, 1990).

I am left questioning to what extent did my explicit introduction to the TIM, and my immersion in it through the CRS 560 TIM design, influence my own self-directed exploration of mentoring for this project. I believe that my introduction and immersion definitely played a part however, I am more convinced that the strategies Torrance described for each stage of the TIM are intuitive and come naturally to curious, engaged learners. Self-directed education is self-selected so curiosity is the spark that starts the engine.   It is intrinsically motivated so curiosity is the lubrication that keeps the motor running through the "deepening expectations" stage. By its nature, self-directed learning ensures the learner is personally connected to the content and therefore I suspect curiosity will continue to fuel the "extend the learning" stage.

I wish I had time to describe the various tactics I used for each of the eight cognitive behaviors but since I don't I will describe the one I used the most. Listening to a Cat was, and always is, my most reliable approach. "In this strategy, the learner must let the information presented 'talk to him' and he must 'talk to the information.' In other words, there is a need for developing skills of reading one's own feelings in response to the information encountered" (Torrance & Safter, 1990, p. 10). This is evident in my journal entries by the number of times I use the word "feel" in relation to the content and approaches. Even now as I proclaim the TIM as an authentic self-directed learning model, I am listening to the cat.

Content Learnings

Mentoring Goes by Many Names

In *A Voiced Scarf,* Ruth Noller reviewed literature on mentoring and found that a variety of terms were used to describe a mentor. Her list included:

guide by the side, not a sage on the stage ⬧ supporter ⬧ advisor ⬧ aide ⬧ encourager ⬧ coach ⬧ host ⬧ godfather ⬧ tutor ⬧ sponsor ⬧ monitor ⬧ facilitator ⬧ fairy godmother ⬧ advocate ⬧ nurturer ⬧ teacher ⬧ influencer ⬧ counselor ⬧ helper ⬧ leader ⬧ role model ⬧ confidant ⬧ ally ⬧ strength ⬧ exemplar ⬧ guru (Noller, 1982, back cover)

While this list may seem exhaustive, in reviewing the list of Torrance's archived documents, I noticed that he includes sensei and patron alongside guru and sponsor as other terms for mentor.

The reality that the term mentor is not well understood became clear to me as I reached out to self-directed learning centers during this project to understand what role staff and outside mentors play in the lives of the children. I visited a small Sudbury school and as I conversed for over an hour with one of their founding staff, it did not seem that she connected to the term mentor. Attempts to schedule calls with other locations did not work well so I tried to be more efficient and created a survey (Appendix E). I sent it to two self-directed education contacts as a test. One didn't answer and the other's feedback convinced me that the term mentoring is not universally understood. This was clearly not the best approach given the timeframe for this project but it made me realize that if I wanted to talk about mentoring, I was going to have to describe what I meant by it. Shortly afterwards incubation worked its magic and I literally awoke to the realization that I had to define mentoring. I will look to refine this definition over time and will use my attendance at the

Alternative Education Resource Organization (AERO) conference this summer as an opportunity to better understand the role mentoring is currently playing in the self-directed education movement.

Parenting is a Form of Mentoring

Early in my project I reached out and had a great conversation with Nicolas Drayton, an alumni of ICSC, as I was reading his master's project. For his project, Nick had interviewed people who were living their passion. He distilled from those interviews *The 7 Secrets of People Who Have Found Their Passions.* Nick hoped that his secrets would be used by those who nurture and influence others such as parents, life coaches, teachers and mentors.

Nick referred me to Ismet Mamnoon, also an alumni. As I started my conversation with Izzy and described my interest in mentoring and the goal of my project, she quickly realized that her "parenting model" was also a "mentoring model." She shared some of her unpublished documents regarding the Blueprint for Raising Adults (Mamnoon, 2016), which I used as a guide in shifting my interaction with my own children.

Nick also reviewed my concept paper and generously shared feedback with me. Below is an excerpt from his email response to me.

> The one question I have, and this may be more my ignorance than anything is, you make the distinction between parenting and mentoring. I would argue that they are different shades of the same beast. I would say that parenting IS a special form of mentoring, and that mentoring is almost like surrogate parenting with focus on some specific areas.....
>
> (N. Drayton, personal communication, February 22, 2017)

Mentors are like Surrogate Parents

When I read that portion of Nick's response, the connection between parenting and mentoring started to get stronger for me. I was drawn back to the origin story for the term mentor that I had initially dismissed as not valuable to my exploration.

The term "mentor" originates from Homer's *Odyssey* where Odysseus entrusted his friend Mentor to serve as teacher and overseer of his son while he went away to fight the Trojan War (Torrance, 1995). While it has become formalized in corporations, schools and through countless programs such as Big Brothers Big Sisters, the first mentor was essentially a parental fill-in.

This origin informed my personal definition of, and philosophy on, mentoring. I started to believe that an untapped resource for becoming a great mentor would be to review parenting literature and to explore to what extent its concepts and approaches could translate to mentoring. The kind of parenting literature I would start with would probably be free-range parenting.

Evaluation of the Project

I have gained a deeper understanding and appreciation for mentoring. I am motivated to inspire others to become everyday mentors who seize the opportunities where their lives intersect with someone else's life and to mentor them in that moment or over an extended period of time.

The number one goal of this project was to grow as a mentor especially to my young adult children. While I assumed I would use CPS tools or go step by step through Izzy's Blueprint for Raising Adults that has not happened much yet. However, a shift has happened within me and I have started to reprogram my patterns. It will take awhile before I internalize them fully, and I will make mistakes but I have already noticed a shift in the atmosphere of our household and I am excited to see how our relationships develop over the next few years.

I only scratched the surface of group mentoring and mentoring culture in my research. I will seek to gain a deeper understanding; I'm considering creating a mentoring group this summer for writers or leadership development. I will also share this project with my Pastor in order to start a dialogue about what a mentoring culture might look like at our church.

If I'm being honest with myself and transparent with all who read this, a major accomplishment of this project is the unintended by-product of the boost in confidence in myself as a self-directed learner. I have been paralyzed with what can only be called *fear* or *doubt* regarding stepping out to advance the self-directed learning movement. The thought of telling learners and their parents that school may be doing more harm than good is an instant source of nausea. Asking them to consider a learning alternative which requires they trust: their child as their own teacher, the real world as their classroom and me as their mentor; that's a lot to ask. Stepping out and creating a community of learners who will mentor other communities of learners is a powerful, and paralyzing, vision. Any activity that helps me feel the slightest more comfortable with this vision is time well invested.

SECTION SIX: CONCLUSION

Last summer when I took the Creativity and Change Leadership course (CRS 635) the stated purpose of the course was presented on day one as "Internalize creativity principles, attitudes and procedures." By the end of that week it became obvious to us all that embodying creativity is a life-long process. I don't believe that I will ever fully arrive. And that electrifies me!

Learning is also a life-long creative process. As part of my process and interaction with others I can now recognize how I vacillate from consciously skilled to unconsciously skilled in my use of creativity skills (Puccio, Mance & Murdock, 2011). Living in the uncomfortable tension between these two planes is preparing me as a mentor of learners who will also struggle as they work to create their own lives. Change leadership requires even more courage and vulnerability than I initially realized.

The parts of the CPS process and the creativity skills you embody can have an impact on those around you without you even trying. Everyday interactions provide others with unconscious instruction. I am looking forward to the summer off so I can allow myself the time needed to fully process my learning and to explore my next steps. I know that my breadth of impact will expand if I take the time to apply the tools and knowledge I've already learned, meditate on them and combine, synthesize and play with them.

Through this project I found the work of Barbara Kerr and was inspired by the idea she fell in love with which was to make the world safe for creative adolescents. She founded the Counseling Laboratory for the Exploration of Optimal States (CLEOS) at the University of Kansas. I plan to dig deeper into her work and E. Paul Torrance's. I will continue to curate content as inspiration for mentors and mentees and post to nicolecolter.com. I also want to grow connections at Teen Liberated Learning Community Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/groups/teenllc) and start to develop website content for TeenLLC.org.

Another stated goal of this project was to shift my storytelling from verbal to written. I owe this goal to one of my mentors, Dr. Susan Keller-Mathers. In one of our first conversations this semester, I came to her distraught about how to start this project and where I might take it. Shawn Blanchard would call this starting a game of catch. He describes how a mentor throws a ball for the mentee and when the mentee brings it back, the mentor continues the game of catch and the mentee grows in the process (TEDx Talks, 2016). She threw the ball in the storytelling direction and I am grateful for that. One way I believe I will be able to help the teen liberated learning movement is to continue to develop my writing skills. I want to help teenagers see how to become the author of their own lives as they take their learning and futures into their own hands. I believe in collaboration and want to co-write my books with teenagers similar to the book *The Freedom Writers Diary: How a Teacher and 150 Teens used Writing to Change Themselves and the World around Them* (Freedom Writers, 1999), which has long been an inspiration for me.

Storytelling is an area I will explore further after this project. In reviewing my "books to read" list on Goodreads, I realized how many of them were about being a writer. I started many stories throughout this project but unfortunately, I was overtaken by resistance and did not complete any yet. Resistance, according to Steven Pressfield (2004) in *The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battle,* is what keeps us from doing our work. I have to prioritize what is most important to me and ensure that my creative work doesn't get thwarted by resistance.

I have a few friends who are also interested in being writers and so I would like to form a book club and start with Mary Pipher's (2006) *Writing to Change the World*. Next we might each pick one of Pipher's books to read and start to explore our own style, story, mission, etc. This

experience would provide some accountability to counteract resistance and would also help me test self-directed learning and peer mentoring in a community setting.

To build on this project in the future, I would hope that myself or someone else might undertake these possible directions:

- Conduct qualitative research to understand the impact of mentoring on self-directed education

- Review and compare the mentoring and parenting literature to see what overlap exists and what concepts from each could be applied to the other

- Explore the group mentoring elements present in the cohort model of the ICSC distance program and share findings with high schools, colleges, online learning programs and self-directed learning communities

- Explore the tight knit creative studies program as a whole to ascertain how the design and/or culture of this program is a breeding ground for mentoring and represents/embodies a mentoring culture

- Explore the culture, design and learning within small groups of thriving churches to articulate the layers of mentoring that operate within to develop a mentoring model that could work in other organization settings. Connect mentoring to the "Spirit of Adoption" referred to by Paul in Romans 8:14-15

- Survey and/or interview effective self-directed learners to understand to what extent the strategies Torrance described in the 3 stages of the TIM are used by them

What I see myself doing next is actively taking the first steps toward my future as a leader in the self-directed education movement. I will start to assemble a team of like-minded people as a founder's group for the first Teen Liberated Learning Community (TeenLLC.org) chapter locally**.** I plan to attend the Alternative Education Resource Organization conference this summer and find mentors who can help me as I seek to create this learning community.

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Appendix A: Manifesto for Children

Appendix A - Manifesto for Children

1. Don't be afraid to fall in love with something & pursue it with intensity.

2. Know, understand, take pride in, practice, develop, exploit & enjoy your greatest strengths.

3. Learn to free yourself from the expectations of others & to walk away from the games they impose on you. Free yourself to play your own game.

4. Find a great teacher or mentor who will help you.

5. Don't waste energy trying to be well-rounded.

6. Do what you love and can do well.

7. Learn the skills of interdependence.

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Appendix B: Journey Narrative Depicted Through Journal Entries

Appendix B: Journey Narrative Depicted Through Journal Entries

This narrative was prepared after completion of the project to reflect on, as honestly as possible, what I actually did. I chose to present it in a journal entry format in an attempt to recreate the events and emotions that were experienced throughout this journey. I wanted to put the problems I faced throughout this project in context so there are references to some personal things but most entries focus only on project components.

(Disclaimer: The truthfulness of this reflection is subject to the limits of my own self-awareness, self-acceptance and self-deception and may or may not represent the full truth, and nothing but the truth).

January: I was just minding my own business.

January 29, 2017 – I wasn't planning to take this course and registered today, a week late. I was going to take this semester off as Faith will be coming home and I was concerned about that transition. It has been over a year and a half since she's lived here. Our relationship has improved recently through phone conversations but I wanted to make sure I wasn't distracted or overwhelmed by deadlines. I was already pursuing an independent study course that I called *The Importance of Play* which I intended to register for, and complete, over the summer. Then my cohort had a Skype call last Thursday to reconnect and I realized how much I missed them. Friday I had my best day at work because my two senior mentees, Hannah and Angel, executed the first major parts of their Capstone projects. At the end of the day a coworker said I was glowing.

I woke up yesterday morning at 5am with a vision of an Adulting 101 class. After a conversation with Sue where she told me "Busy people get things done" I decided to go for it and so I just registered. I feel like this project is a really big piece of the puzzle I've been trying to assemble and that the timing is all God. I spoke at church today. It was completely unplanned but I felt compelled by God to share and so I did. I don't remember exactly what I said but I spoke about

how we are all brothers and sisters and that we will not stand by and watch marriages fall apart. We've got each other's back. I feel like our marriage small group is like family relationships. Family members don't just give up so easily on each other and neither should any of God's people give up on anyone else.

Tomorrow night I'm going to see the Peter Gray talk about Play at the library in Northborough, MA but after that I'm going to have to focus on this project.

February: I did nothing. At least that is what it felt like.

February 5, 2017 – Angel had his big event on Friday and it was amazing. The guided mental rehearsal we did on Wednesday definitely payed off. Since last Saturday when I woke up with the vision for this master's project, then spoke at church the next day for the first time ever…I have felt guided by God ever since. Even though I should have been focused on writing my concept paper the whole week, I felt compelled to write a follow-up sermon to what I said last week. It was connected to mentoring so I had to do it but today I felt it wasn't ready or the right time. I will circle back to this again to see how it fits into this project as I'm sure it will come full circle. That's how God works.

Now I need to put all my attention on my concept paper draft that is already due tomorrow night. The project has morphed into this project on mentoring which includes what I'm seeing in our marriage small group and the Faith transition. I think lots of parents need to switch their parental-directive style to a mentoring style as their children transition into adulthood and are navigating those waters and including this in my project ensures I won't lose sight of my goals for this transition.

February 7, 2017 – I submitted my concept paper draft last night. I feel like there are contradictions in what I'm saying and I'm not sure what to do or read to help me resolve the conflicts. My advisor Dr. Susan Keller-Mathers already replied today that she doesn't think I'm as far off as I think. Good to hear but I still don't agree.

I guess I should be happy that I was able to even get the concept paper draft done within a week. That's not an easy feat for me. I like to take my time to ask a bazillion questions and clarify my goals, methods etc. I would not have been able to get the concept paper draft done without my call with Sara on Sunday and with Sue yesterday. Sara & I were able to encourage each other and help with direction. I've missed her and the rest of the Abutuba cohort since last summer. I'm pumped up and excited to be back in class with her, Alice, Martin and Ana!! My call with Sue helped me clarify my thinking and approach. She suggested since I like to tell stories all the time, I should capture my mentoring style in stories. I like that idea!

She said the Adulting 101 group would require I do the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) program which will only take 3 hours. Then I would just have to do a form to get approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the stuff I want to do with that group would be considered human subject research. How exciting!!

I chose Tamara Doleman from the Jewels cohort as my sounding board partner as I met her my first summer at ICSC and we've been connected on Facebook ever since. She's the head of the art department at a college in Canada. I'm excited to get to know her. So far we've only reviewed each other's concept papers.

I've still got a lot of work to do to finalize the concept paper by next Monday night.

February 14, 2017 – I couldn't fall asleep and so at 1:38am, less than 2 hours after submitting my Concept Paper, I arose to write this:

I have a dream that one day I will be surrounded by generations of people and family members who have come alive because they are living, working and loving their dream lives.   They will not be bound by self-imposed constraints nor will they bow to state mandates. They will live the freest lives their courage will allow. Children will be born into freedom and will never live a day in bondage to the **expectations** and simple-minded reductionist whims of standards and school.

They will never have to conform to specifications of what makes a person a good citizen. We will recognize the inherent worth of the strengths of each individual and they will learn to cultivate and grow those strengths while respecting the inherent worth and strengths of others. They will always look for a win, win, win and seek to leverage and lend each other's strengths.

What will they write on my epitaph?

What will they say in my eulogy?

 How can I create a community of self-directed learners such that parents who believe they can't afford the school will be coached to start business ventures and will connect with a community of other parents running business ventures so that they can experience the joy of creation, self-directed entrepreneurial learning as they create the opportunity for their children to live a truly free education.

Start Up Notes - create a community of interested parents and students and have our website be a public place for releasing the collaborative fruit of our efforts.

Use Appreciative Inquiry in Mentoring

I'm going to try to get to bed now that I got that out of my mind.

February 14, 2017 – I just got home from work and decided I wanted to journal about what's been going on for the last week. The first meeting with our class went well.   Everyone in the class has some really interesting projects. I think I'm really going to like the independence, yet structure of this class.

Last night while cooking dinner and washing dishes I decided to see if TED.com had any talks on mentoring and was excited to find they had 8 talks included in a *How to be a Good Mentor* playlist. I watched them all last night. I couldn't take notes or anything so I might watch them again.

I might change the master's project I adopt. As soon as I submitted my project I started to close down the 20 or so internet tabs I had open and noticed that Nicolas Drayton's master's project might be a better fit for me. It came up when I searched mentoring but the title didn't initially feel like the best fit for me. However, after looking it over again I noticed that he interviewed people about how they found their passions. That's considered human subject research so he already did the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) program and had to do a proposal and get approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). He also used Appreciative Inquiry to develop his interview questions and that intrigues me since it focuses on strengths or when things are going really well instead of starting with the problem like CPS. I'm connected to Nick on Facebook so I think I'm going to reach out to ask more questions about his project.

I requested books from the Buffalo State Library yesterday. It took me awhile to figure out the Interlibrary Loan process but the librarians were helpful. I hope they arrive soon. Hoping to spend time with Chris when he gets home…it is Valentine's Day! I'm signing off as I need to focus on getting ready for Faith's arrival home tomorrow.

February 17, 2017 - I spoke to Nick on Wednesday. I decided to adopt his master's project. He is from the Jewels cohort so I met him my first summer at ICSC. He was really helpful. We only spoke for an hour but our conversation reverberated with me over the last few days.

He also referred me to Ismet Mamnoon. I met Izzy my first summer at a party and then last summer she came into CRS 635 to speak to us about our Philosophy, Vision and Strategic plan paper. I remembered her saying "you will never be clearer than you are right now." The whole

class was like, "No Way!!" She had completed her paper a few years earlier but had recently re-read it and was surprised at how clear she was when she wrote it. While doing that paper, I asked Izzy if she wouldn't mind sharing her paper with me as a sample. I didn't even really know her but she sent it to me and it really helped. And as I questioned everything throughout that philosophy, vision and strategic plan process, I clung to Izzy's words of wisdom. I've already re-read my philosophy paper a few times and can personally testify to the truth of her words. I will have to reach out to her.

Today is my mom's birthday. It's been 2 and a half years since she passed away. I haven't cried yet today but it is still early. I might not. I think I'm mentally processing too many things with this project and with Faith just getting home on Wednesday that I feel a bit numb. And despite how my husband tries to get me to stop volunteering for stuff, tonight is the *Live Jesus Love* fellowship dinner weekend that I coordinated. It sounded like a good idea before I registered for this class but it definitely took my stress level up a notch this week. I am really looking forward to having Skip and Gretchen over for dinner though. I'm also looking forward to eating the carne guisada with rice and beans I'm making. I haven't made that in forever. I didn't think about it in advance but Puerto Rican cooking is a great way to celebrate my mom's birthday! ☺ Happy Birthday Mom…I love you <3

Deb gets here tomorrow. It sucks to have a best friend move hundreds of miles away but I'm looking forward to spending the weekend with her. We are going to a Donna Estabrooks creativity class on Sunday!

February 20, 2017 - I just got off the phone with Sue. I got to give her an update on how things have been going. I told her how excited I was about doing the CITI program but when I started it last week it took me almost 2 hours to get through one module…and there were 16 more modules! #clarifierchallenges

I made the decision that the Adulting 101 portion of the project was not worth the time investment as there are so many other ways to achieve my goal of understanding mentoring. Sue agreed. She said I should "let go of expectations." Not easy for this recovering perfectionist who has a tendency to set my standards so high not even I can achieve them. I shall try to let go of expectations but I make no promises.

I still want to explore doing research so I may finish the training on my own or as part of an independent study course. I almost took the Research Methods course with Selchuk this semester but with Faith coming home, I didn't want to commit to the weekly post, etc. format of that class. I'm glad Sara had that Skype call for our cohort right before the late registration deadline and I decided to do the master's project instead.   This is a much better fit for me right now!

I reached out to Izzy today and she can talk tomorrow at 4pm. I originally had that booked with Jessi but she agreed to move our conversation to 3pm. I reached out to her because I'm finding journaling helpful and I think that it could be a valuable tool for mentors and mentees working together and I wanted to get her opinion about it. She was part of my cohort but like Cesar, she completed her studies with the graduate certificate. I remembered she was passionate about journaling because in CRS 610 the vision she chose to explore had to do with helping others embrace journaling.   I'm looking forward to both those conversations!

The books I requested from Buff State Library arrived today! I'm going to start reading them tonight!!! But first I must make dinner. I'm going to watch that TED talk playlist again.

February 21, 2017 – I spoke to Izzy today and I'm still reeling. After I explained my project Izzy realized her parenting model is a mentoring model.   We talked for about an hour. She walked me through her Raising Adults parenting model. She's going to be presenting it at CREA in April…how cool!! I'm going to use the model for my transition with Aaron and Faith. She also

gave me the URL to her blog and added me to her Raising Adults Facebook group. I read all the prior posts and responded to a few.

I also spoke with Jessi today. I had a sense that journaling could be helpful to the mentoring process and I wanted to collaborate with an avid journal writer to explore that connection. I definitely think a mentor should journal and should encourage their mentee to journal. Our conversation made me want to continue journaling even after this project.

March: I did more of nothing until "illumination" finally came.

March 1, 2017 – I've done nothing for over a week. Everything has been swirling in my mind and I can't seem to make any sense or figure out what to do next. I looked over my timeline process and I finally reached out to Natasha Sistrunk on Sunday. She is a Naval Academy graduate who served as an officer in the United States Marine Corps, worked in the Department of Homeland Security and earned her Master of Arts in Christian Leadership from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. She founded the women's mentoring ministry at Cornerstone Baptist Church in Greensboro, North Carolina in addition to the non-profit Leadership LINKS, Inc., authored a book called *Mentor for Life: Finding Purpose through Intentional Discipleship* and is an advocate for small group mentoring. I believe her experience mentoring in the military, then in the church and with teen girls will help me see how to bring elements of mentoring into learning communities for children and teens. I hope she replies soon.

I emailed Pastor Jeff Monday to see if we could meet to discuss mentoring/discipleship. I let him know that I am hoping to interview Natasha for my project on the topic of Group Mentoring and I wanted to share this blog post with him. I told him I feel like mentoring/discipleship is the answer to a lot of our challenges at NWC. I would like to meet with him as soon as possible. I let

him know this project will end mid-April and I will be done with the class by mid-May and I will have the summer off from work. I will have a lot of time after mid-May to think about how to put some of the things I've been studying into practice in the church and at work. By mid-August I will attend the AERO conference and that will get me geared back up for the Fall semester so the window of opportunity for me to focus on this for church application is mid-May through mid-August.   He replied positively today and we are trying to coordinate a date to meet. I haven't done any reflection on our marriage small group which first got me interested in group mentoring. I should probably start doing that.

March 2, 2017 - I emailed Sue today to let her know that I have tried to remind myself of her words "let go of expectations" and think I've been doing a fairly good job. However, I explained that I am not only uncomfortable with that, I think that I have allowed a lot of other things to absorb too much of my time instead of this project. I've spent way too much time at home working on planning this Day of Service fieldtrip for my Teen Outreach Program club over the last week or so. I don't mind doing some work at home but doing five fieldtrips in one day is a lot and I'm going to have to find a way to do more at work and bring less home.

I reviewed my intended timeline and I am really behind and I have added other things to the list as well. I originally intended to schedule a call with Sue before I went to visit the Mountain Laurel Sudbury School but I just received approval today for that visit and it will take place on Monday. I don't think I need to discuss this with her in advance but I would like to schedule a call with her next week to regroup before I submit my Sections 1-3. I'm sure some of my questions will get answered on the Zoom class on Monday but I know I will "need more information" (the constant companion of the clarifier) and so I wanted to see if we could put something on the calendar for next week.

I haven't heard back from Natasha Sistrunk which is disappointing. I remembered Barbara Stomprud mentioning mentoring when I attended her *Training for Reigning* event a few years ago. I emailed her today to see if we can schedule a call about group mentoring. I hope she replies.

March 4, 2017 – So glad I got to talk to Deb today. I needed it. She helped me "let go of expectations" regarding what I am or am not doing with Faith. She gave me one small step I could commit to making and I feel better, at least for the moment.

March 8, 2017 – It's a FUN journey!! That's my big takeaway from my call with Sue earlier today. I just got home from Accepted Students Night at work and wrote Sue's words on a post-it and put it on my laptop to remind me.

Fun is not how I would describe this right now. I am concerned about it coming together. I have to rewrite my timeline for my project as I'm not doing the things I thought I would be doing. I'm OK with that and so is Sue as this is really turning more into a journey project and I just need to keep my eye on what my goal is but stay open and explore. I'm dropping some things from the project and focusing on others. Sue said that reflecting on why I haven't done something is valuable and that is not the same as avoiding my project. She said I should document everything and outline the process I'm going to go through. I think this journal should help with that. A lot of what I've done has been thinking and trying to clarify and that is still all up in my head. I need to get more of that down on paper.

I had a good call with Barbara on Sunday. She sounds like she has a really good group mentoring program. I would really like for her to come out and do a training at our church and I may do mentoring with her in the future. I also visited the Sudbury school on Monday. That was not as helpful as I thought it might be. I realized that she didn't connect to the word mentoring and I didn't know how to reign her in when she wasn't answering the question I thought I was clearly asking. I will have to regroup before I reach out to other self-directed learning schools or centers.

March 10, 2017 – Mentoring to me is being accessible. It is developing relationships with people and positioning yourself to have the privilege of helping them when they need guidance. I don't focus on the official role. I live this as a lifestyle. I want to make a difference in as many people's lives as possible and so in ALL of my interactions I do the following:

- Focus on their strengths
- Challenge them to look past obstacles and see possibilities
- Help them believe in their strengths and possibilities
- Create accessible lines of communication and proactively use those lines to speak life into what is otherwise, all too often, a dreary experience

That's been on my mind and I just needed to get it written down.

March 13, 2017 – I did a little dreaming with Faith tonight!! She's about to start a whole new chapter of her story. As always, it will be filled with passion, humor and overcoming as she's no ordinary writer. I just submitted what is supposed to be my final version of Sections 1-3 but my comments to Sue were "It doesn't feel right to leave Section 1 & 3 alone and even the title doesn't seem to fit with the direction I think this is going but I labored over this a lot already and need to take a step back to try to see the big picture again of what I want to pursue and to make sure I pursue that."

March 14, 2017 - I woke up this morning to a New England blizzard, a travel ban, and my thoughts were on my Master's Project. Luckily, it is a new day with new thoughts. Here is where the journey gets interesting. The thought I had was "define mentoring" and "connect it to the spirit of adoption".

Wandering around my house this morning before I sat down to do my work, I have been contemplating what framework I should use to really dig deep into this topic. I entertained the possibility of using the CPS process just as Ruth Noller did in *A Voiced Scarf* but that didn't feel right. I started to think maybe I will approach the rest of the project by choosing two small bites of this elephant like the ones that woke me up this morning. I thought if I did this every day until

April 10th when sections 4-6 are due, I would likely have looked at this mentoring thing in so many

other ways. Then I came up with an even better plan. I would choose a different creativity skill

from *Making the Creative Leap Beyond…* and would do that over 18 days to explore mentoring one

or two small bites at a time within a certain framework.

I'm about to sit down to read the chapter entitled "The Problem" with a slew of Brainwriting

sheets and see how this approach will help me move forward.

I just finished "The Problem" chapter and I am happy to report that I gained lots of clarity

around a work problem I have been struggling with but no aha about how this applies to this

mentoring project. I only wrote 5 brainwriting post-its while reading, a kernel of one key learning

and a few next steps possibilities.   I always expect things are going to be immediately productive

for the challenge I have at hand but I am realizing that answers come in due time.

Half-way through reading the chapter I posted a few quotes to Facebook, got up to make

lunch and watched the first 15 minutes of the 2015 Inbound keynote speech by Seth Godin. I have

found that in my moments of greatest struggle, a little Seth Godin goes a long way.

And so while I incubate on how to connect what I just read in "The Problem", I am going to watch

the rest of that keynote and then if nothing surfaces, I will go back to defining mentoring and

connecting it to the spirit of adoption.

March 15, 2017 - I had another lengthy and great conversation with Faith yesterday. I think

she's going to start writing a book. Exciting! I was supposed to meet with Pastor Jeff today but he

had to cancel.

March 17, 2017 – Today was a good day! I brought 11 students to the True Colors,

LGBTQIA Youth Conference at UCONN. All the extra work planning this over the last month was

totally worth it. My car died yesterday and had to be towed. The mechanic says it is the head

gasket which is not worth repairing on this old car. Just what I need…a major decision to make.

March 18, 2017 – Today I'm going to really dig into *Making the Creative Leap Beyond…*I believe this could be a good framework from which to explore mentoring.

In reading the "Produce and Consider Many Alternatives" chapter I realized that this is a cornerstone of mentoring. Expanding a person's thinking is a key to increasing their ability to cope and thereby reducing their stress and anxiety. Torrance & Safter explained de Bono's questions to loosen inhibitions which resonated with me and made me think of a mentor's toolkit:

1. Does it matter if you choose the wrong approach to start?

2. Will more than one approach be necessary in the course of the thinking?

3. What are the dangers of choosing a definite approach?

4. Is it better to use a deliberate approach or just use the obvious line of thought?

"By focusing on different aspects of a situation in a deliberate manner, a person is able to become aware of more alternative explanations, more alternative consequences, and more alternative solutions (p. 69)."

Frequently a person thinks they know exactly what is going on, what the causes of certain problems are and that makes them zero in on a possible solution that is either doable or not doable. If it is doable and doesn't work, they are perplexed and frustrated. If their solution is not doable, then they feel powerless. Learning to produce and consider many alternatives is not only a more realistic way to deal with complicated human problems, but alternative paths make us feel less trapped.

Here are my notes from the "Flexibility" chapter:

"Guilford (1986) also found other types of flexibility like freedom from inertia, reinterpretation of information, and transformations (p. 75)." Synectics looks to draw upon diversity of the group. We frequently claim that diversity is a good thing except for when it is challenging our status quo. A

problem in chemistry may benefit more from input of artists, biologists, musicians, physicists and other disciplines.

When Torrance & Safter begin to explain the problems with being flexible, I really connected to their description. Flexible is perceived as different and others notice differentness. They mention the pressures to be well-rounded which in my experience has been a focus on deficiencies instead of a celebration of competencies. The chapter goes on to explain that "divergent, flexible people prefer to learn on their own" (p. 84). WOW!!!

In another section titled "highly flexible, divergent thinkers want to do the difficult" (p. 84) the challenge of holding students back from exploring is explained. "Parents and teachers are always afraid that the young one might not be ready to learn and that he would be forever scarred by even the most temporary failure (p. 84-85)." It goes on to say "A common experience in the lives of many highly outstanding individuals has been their ability to cope with failure and frustration" (p. 85).

Here are my notes from the "Be Original" chapter:

At first I wasn't finding anything in this chapter that I could immediately think to apply to mentoring. I read it in a relaxed posture away from my computer and I think that detached my thinking from the topic at hand. Upon reviewing it I focused on the "characteristics of experiences to facilitate original thinking" (p. 94-96).

1. Adequate time for the production of alternatives.

2. "Playing with" ambiguities and uncertainties.

3. Heightening concern about the seriousness of importance of the problem.

4. Making original thinking legitimate.

Here are my notes from the "Highlight the Essence" chapter:

Could the use of "titles" for people's problems help them highlight the essence and move more quickly to solutions? Could sociodrama help highlight the essence of a messy problem?

Here are my notes from the "Elaborate – But Not Excessively" chapter:

"Elaboration in the classroom seems to be a function of the time allotted for work, the expectations of the teacher, and the degree to which the end product is seen as more important than the process. Elaboration is often sacrificed in an attempt to get work 'in on time'" (p. 111-112). Planning is a form of elaboration.

Here are my notes from the "Keep Open" chapter:

People tend to jump to conclusions. These jumps are called premature closure and must be resisted. Defer judgment is so important to keeping open. Our creative and critical functions cannot operate at the same time.

"Gordon took the very strong position that the emotional and irrational factors of the human mind are more important in creative thinking than the intellectual and rational aspects of the mind" (p. 118).

Clark Moustakas (1977, 1996) "emphasized the importance of openness in the creative relationship between parent-child, teacher-child, therapist-client, and the like. In this creative relationship a parent, teacher, counselor, or therapist must be willing to permit one thing to lead to another, to be ready to get off the beaten track or to break out of the mold, and to relate to the child as a person. In other words, the creative relationship is an open one" (p. 118).

Carl Rogers' (1979) theory regarding the negative effects of external evaluation. In thinking of applying this to mentoring, I am struck by the comment "only when the child is convinced that you are not trying to reform him that he is able to open up and behave creatively" (p. 122).

Talk about performance according to de Bono (1974):

- Praise;

- Clarification;
- Criticism; and
- Amplification.

Here are my notes from the "Be Aware of Emotions Chapter" chapter:

This is one chapter I want to understand to its fullest!

"Emotional factors must be understood and used for breakthrough ideas – "aha," "satori,"

illumination – to occur" (p 127). In this chapter, affective is described as the inward-looking

approaches such as awareness development and meditation and cognitive is described as the

outward-looking approaches such as problem-solving, decision-making etc. (this was quoted from

Parnes, Noller, & Biondi, 1977, p.6).

De Bono (1976) "declared that emotions are more important than anything else in thinking" (p.

128). Emotions come first or give thinking power.

"Encounter groups", "transcendental meditation" "Zen meditation"

Emotional awareness as described in this chapter seems to be the precursor to Emotional

Intelligence (EI), a very hot topic today.

"Suggestive, Accelerative Learning and Teaching" (SALT) developed by Georgi Lozanov (1977).

See also Jonathan Edwards (1977) on p. 133.

They fell in love with something.

"high level need for the skills of empathy, and an imaginative kind of understanding of another

person that transcends cognitive, intellectual, rational boundaries" (p. 134).

Here are my notes from the "Put Your Ideas in Context" chapter:

"Adults are often busy. They don't answer the child's questions. And then the child goes to school

and the teacher says, "First you're going to learn A, B, C." The child still wants to understand

UNIVERSE and has big questions, and the teacher says, "Never mind that…you learn the parts

first…A, B, C…" Then the child goes to college and never does get back to the whole." – R. Buckminister Fuller, 1977, p. 117

March 19, 2017 - I've spent the whole weekend not feeling well. Yesterday, I was mostly productive and feeling good despite still being sick. I've been run down and have a cold that kept me from sleeping almost all of today. And then I just had a thought of going back to work tomorrow and my stomach dropped and I felt anxious. I think this is what my students feel like all the time. School is a place where they aren't really free to be themselves or do what they want to do. Who would choose to spend their days sitting in a chair hour after hour listening to stuff they don't care about and can't fully learn since it is presented so disconnected from its original context? The feeling is despair. Is there any hope of it changing? Can I really make a difference? They must think "can I make it to the finish line?"

March 25, 2017 – Aaron came to me and Chris wanting to buy Thor's business. He worked it last summer and his uncle is offering it at a good price but I don't know that he is ready to run a business yet. I believe Aaron will be an entrepreneur one day so I deferred judgment and gave him feedback on what he might do next. I handled the conversation way better than I would have normally since there are a bunch of things I could have said but didn't. He wants to look over the Quickbooks with me.

I created a survey for self-directed learning centers and sent that out to two centers on Wednesday. I don't think this is going to be a fruitful pursuit.

I started planning my excursions in Atlanta and I want to visit the Torrance Center. I was looking over their website and started watching stuff that led me to Barbara Kerr. I watched the following YouTube videos: [Making the World Safe for Creative Adolescents](#) and [A Place of Their Own: Creative Career Development & Makerspaces - Barbara Kerr](#). I definitely see her stuff

connected to mentoring but I still have so many things that I had planned to do and haven't done yet so I feel like I need to reign in this divergent mind.

My phone is giving me trouble. We still haven't solved the car problem and now I have another issue. Great!

March 28, 2017 – I finally reviewed Tamara's Sections 1-3 and gave her feedback. I found some interesting intersections with my thinking on mentoring. Pretty cool. We have a call scheduled on 4/2. Looking forward to it.

We decided to buy a new car. We got it on Sunday. So glad that is done. My phone is still having trouble. Grgghhh!!

March 30, 2017 – I think I had a breakthrough today. Over 2 weeks ago I woke to the phrase "define mentoring". I looked to dictionaries, re-reviewed the literature and still wasn't feeling inspired by anything I read. At some point I realized I might need to define what mentoring means to me, articulate my philosophy and then decide where I might go next. I would like to say that decision became clear the same day I woke up realizing that I needed a definition of mentoring, but I'm a highly divergent thinker and I jump tangents and springboard to other tangents and then deep dive into tangents of tangents. When I get really, really lost, I find my way back to the last time I felt really clear and/or I *get by with a little help from my friends* (Lennon & McCarthy, 1967). Today was a result of backtracking and phoning a friend. Over the preceding days I literally had to force myself to sit down and endure reviewing the remnants of things I had sporadically written as I tried to decipher where to steer this project. At the same time, I started waiving the white flag and turned to classmates, especially the classmates with strengths in developing and implementing who have served as sounding board partners for me in the past. I became clearer because my dear friend Alice Jacobs listened to me, and then converged my barely coherent ramblings into 3-4 concise outcomes that she heard me struggling to express.

April: It's coming together! Or is it?

April 3, 2017 – I missed my call with Tamara yesterday. It completely slipped my mind. I can't believe it. We are going to talk after the Zoom class meeting on Wednesday.

April 5, 2017 – Today was the big Day of Service I've been working on at work! So glad it is finally over. All 5 service sites seemed to go well. I stayed after school to oversee the first after-school sports club meeting. There were only 4 students. Hope he can get more interest.

Had the Zoom meeting with the class tonight. Everyone seems so excited by their project and I still feel like I don't have my shit together. Tamara and I had a Skype call afterwards and that was helpful. We talked about my mentoring stories, especially the one from my adolescence about the office of high school admissions. Tamara thinks I need to write that story. I know I do. I tried tonight but I got stuck and decided I should update my thoughts here. I've tried multiple times to sit down and write my mentoring stories and they are all only fragments. I think "resistance" is having its way with me. I'm going to listen to *The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battle* again.

I have some thoughts down on my definition and philosophy but those aren't complete either. I have to start packing for Atlanta as we fly out in less than 56 hours. I can't wait to see Deb!!!

April 10, 2017 – I wrote and revised my definition and philosophy and finalized Sections 4-6 today. I felt bad because we are on vacation and I spent most of the day working on that instead of hanging out with my husband.

April 12, 2017 – Today is my 14th anniversary being married to the love of my life and it was the best one yet! We spent the day in Athens on the University of Georgia campus.   We visited the Torrance Center and the Rare Books & Manuscript Library where I had reserved 9 boxes of Dr. Torrance's work to review. It meant a lot to me that Chris was willing to do something that

was so important to me but that he really had no interest in. I think he started to get interested in Torrance's work as I had him review a few of the boxes for me. We ate lunch at The National and went to Creature Comforts Brewery afterwards. Chris definitely enjoyed that!

April 13, 2017 – I had a call with Sue today. I'm starting to feel a bit better about this. Trying to spend the rest of the week developing website content and incubating. I still need to rewrite Sections 1-3.

April 17, 2017 – I started rewriting Sections 1-3. I decided I'm going to simplify the timeline section and include these journal entries as documentation of my journey. This project has really helped me be more comfortable with the self-directed education journey and I think the backstory shared here would help others understand the struggle that goes on behind the scenes. I sent Sue a sample and she likes the idea. I still have to publish a bunch more of my resources for mentors and mentees but my project has so much clean-up needed and the final version is due next Monday. I want to finish everything tonight so I can get it to Chryso to edit. There is a perfect job opening for me and the application is due this Friday and I really want to spend the rest of this week working on that.

April 20, 2017 – This week has been chaos. I asked for an extension on submitting the final master's project as I didn't finish Monday and totally switched to working on this job application on Tuesday. It's an intense job application. The good news is that this project has totally prepared me for this job. Spending the last few days crafting my responses to the questions has really helped me get even clearer on this mentoring stuff. The application was due tomorrow but they just extended the deadline a week. I need a break so I'm taking the rest of the night off.

I finally got my replacement phone in the mail. I still need to setup all the apps etc but I'm so glad that mess is almost over.

April 25, 2017 – I got an extension on this project as I'm working on the questions for this job application. Two of the challenges are actually really connected to the project so I am investing more time into them since it serves double duty.   I had a call with Dr. Puccio today. He really helped make me feel more confident about my plan for the Leadership Weekend question.

April 30, 2017 – I think I'm just about done with this project. I submitted the application for the job on Friday, had a wedding that night and have been working on the finishing touches all weekend. All I have left to do is the abstract. I'm going to see if Sue can give me some direction/feedback or I may just be clearer on it tomorrow morning but I want to submit the rest of this to her tonight. So glad to be finally done.

Appendix C: Job Application Outcomes Related to Mentoring

Appendix C: Job Application Outcomes Related to Mentoring

I had to prepare a video in response to the following scenario:

A student, Marlen, introduces herself to you at the beginning of the school year. She is a budding fashionista and wants to do a project that is fashion related. She comes to you with an idea for a school-wide fashion show that will require designing and creating a clothing line, hiring photographers, a DJ, and over 30 student performers. The fashion show sounds amazing, and like a huge undertaking! You also know that Marlen has been struggling with her attendance and her grades are dropping because of it. In 2 minutes or less, record a video describing how you'd coach Marlen to both fulfill her fashion show dreams while also stepping up her attendance game.

I chose to use the CPS tool POINt as a framework for this conversation. I believe this was a result of me spending the last few months exploring mentoring, including how CPS could be used in connection with it. Click here to access the video.

Appendix C: Job Application Outcomes Related to Mentoring

Another question from the job application that I felt better equipped to answer given the time I spent studying mentoring is shown below. I listened to the whole audible version of *The 21 Irefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You*, consulted *Creative Leadership: Skills that Drive Change* and Northouse's *Leadership: Theory and Practice*. I reached out to Dr. Gerard Puccio and my call with him really helped me strengthen the cover letter and training. I look forward to actually delivering this training in the future. Here is the question:

> You identify a number of sophomores and juniors on your Dream Team who are interested in taking leadership roles on the team and in student groups in the school. These students have expressed that they're nervous about taking leadership roles, but are also willing to build leadership skills in time for next year. Design a weekend learning experience that introduces these students to concepts of leadership, equipping them with skills that will help them step into major leadership roles in the year ahead. Attach a detailed plan for this experience in a file below.

The cover letter and training plan appear on the next pages.

Dear Screening Team:

According to the 2010 IBM Global CEO Study "of more than 1,500 Chief Executive Officers from 60 countries and 33 industries worldwide, chief executives believe that -- more than rigor, management discipline, integrity or even vision -- successfully navigating an increasing complex world will require creativity."

Why aren't we teaching creativity?

There has been a long-standing myth that creativity is a trait that you either have or you don't. Most people, including policy makers and school administrators do not realize that a deliberate creativity process can be taught. In an era of accountability and standardization, if it isn't on the test, it likely isn't in the classroom.

Deliberate creativity, using the Creative Problem Solving (CPS) Process, is already being taught in innovation, leadership and management courses at the college level. I have taught CPS at the high school level as part of skill-building in an Academic Support class*. There is a clear connection between creativity and leadership and so the Leadership Development Weekend Experience I designed includes an Introduction to CPS.

My design also aims to develop self-awareness and control, the first essential step in building Emotional Intelligence (EI). EI is clearly another core competency of leaders in the 21st century. I use experiential and accelerated learning techniques to immerse participants in the learning experience.

All resources are available at the blue hyperlinks. I know you may not have time to review all links so I urge you to at least look at the Introduction to Creative Problem Solving Day One and Day Two slideshows including speaker notes.

Sincerely,

Nicole M Cotter

*If you want to access a more thorough, yet concise, explanation of CPS and its connection to leadership, this is a valuable slideshare.

Leadership Development Weekend

Developed by [Nicole Colter](#)

Date(s): TBD, Saturday & Sunday from 9:00 AM – 12:30 each day followed by lunch	Facilitator(s): Nicole Colter and her mentee, Hannah Bergeron as process buddy
Location: TBD	Number of Participants: Approx. 10-12 Sophomore and Junior Dream Team Members

Purpose/Goal: Prepare students to serve as leaders of their own lives, at XYZ High School and in all of their future endeavors. Leadership skills being developed are: creativity, problem-solving, decision making, mindfulness, resiliency, communication, teambuilding, and cooperative learning.

SCHEDULE FOR DAY 1

Time	Activity	Materials	Desired Outcome
.10	Full Value Contract and Challenge by Choice – discuss and make additions to meet our needs	Flipchart Posters	Set the stage for the day
.10	Mindful Body Scan	Computer connected to internet & speakers	Settle anxiety and restlessness through mindfulness
.30	Fear in a Hat then Mistake Quota	Paper and Hat, Whiteboard	Warm up, Facing Fear/ Resiliency Building, Building Trust & Unity
.30	Infinite Loops/Handcuffs	Rope	Cooperation, Communication, Building Trust
.45	Lost at Sea	Worksheets	Decision Making, Communication, Influence
.10	Movement Break	Candy on tables after break	Self-care

.05	Student Led Energizer	Student supplies	Build Confidence, Facilitation Skills, Building Trust
.45	Introduction to Creative Problem Solving	My CPS Kit	Problem Solving, Cooperation, Confidence and Resiliency Building
.10	Brainstorm Key Learnings So Far	Flip Chart, Post-its	Self-awareness, Reflection
.15	Journaling & Homework	Journals	Self-awareness, Reflection
.30	**LUNCH TOGETHER**	**Pizza, Salad, Drinks**	**Group Cohesion**

SCHEDULE FOR DAY 2

Time	Activity	Materials	Desired Outcome
.10	Welcome, Incubation Insights, Body Scan Mindfulness Activity		Set the stage for presence and awareness all day
.45	Continuation of Creative Problem Solving training	My CPS Kit	Problem Solving, Cooperation, Confidence and Resiliency Building
.45	Personal Growth Planning	CPS Kit, Journal	Self-awareness, Reflection
.15	Embracing Struggle	Half sheets of paper, scissors	Perspective, Problem-solving, Cooperative Learning
.10	Movement Break	Candy on tables after break	Self-care
.60	Hollow Square – A Communications Experiment	Briefing sheets and Puzzle	Conflict Resolution, Communication, Influence

		Pieces	
.05	Body, Mind & Emotion Check-in & Student-led Stretch		Mindfulness & Self-care
.15	Journal regarding Embracing Struggle and Hollow Square	Journals	Self-awareness, Reflection
.05	Update Key Learnings and Personal Growth Plans	Flip Chart, Post-its	Self-awareness, Reflection
.30	**LUNCH TOGETHER**	**Sandwiches, Drinks**	**Group Cohesion**

Full descriptions of each activity are on the next page.

Leadership Development Weekend
Developed by Nicole Colter

ACTIVITIES FOR DAY 1

Poster that says the underlined portions. My descriptions are below but I would solicit meanings from the group. This discussion creates agreements between the participants…the beginning of trust and relationship.

Full Value Contract (FVC):

> BE HERE:
> Beyond simply showing up, be ready to participate and to work with others.
>
> BE SAFE:
> Respect physical and emotional safety at all times. Allow trust to develop.
>
> SET GOALS:
> Participate to achieve; complete tasks.
>
> SPEAK THE TRUTH:
> Be honest, take the risk of speaking up.
>
> LET GO OF NEGATIVES:
> Release yourself from negatives and use some leadership over your mouth.
>
> CARE OF SELF & OTHERS:
> Help one another in all situations.
>
> BE OPEN TO OUTCOMES:
> Be open-minded about the possibilities for leaning in any situation.

Challenge by Choice (CBC): Participate in what you feel comfortable doing, but don't leave your group, work to contribute to the group.

Mindful Body Scan: Introduce students to a quick mindfulness activity using a YouTube video. This body scan creates a baseline for their physical and emotional tension, stress and anxiety awareness. I can remind them throughout the weekend to check in with themselves and remember to take deep breaths when feeling overwhelmed. *Leaders have tools to ground themselves.*

Fear in a Hat: Students get to share their fears anonymously by writing them on paper and putting them in a hat. Another student picks that "fear" out of the hat and tries to explain his or her understanding of that person's fear. Discussion about fear ensues. *Leaders need to recognize fear as a constant companion and act anyway.*

Mistake Quota: *Leaders need to think differently about mistakes.*
Participants need to relax and embrace failure as part of learning, leading and success. I give them a 30 mistake quota for the weekend and let them know that if they can exhaust them all, I will

give them 30 more!! Show 3 minute clip from Dr. Ellen Langer on Mindfulness and the Psychology of Possibility.

Infinite Loops/Handcuffs: *This introduces the concept of constraints. Leaders may feel their hands are tied (aka powerless), however, when you look at any situation or circumstance in another way you are likely to find a way over, under or around…the loophole! That's when creative solutions and workarounds replace constraints.*
Each participant will need one piece of rope with an opening at each end big enough to slip a hand through—so you've got wrist-cuffs. Now link two participants together interlocking their ropes. The objective is for each pair is to unlink themselves without taking any part of the wrist-cuffs off.

Lost at Sea: *Leadership is influence. Leaders can be loud or quiet, but must influence others to follow them.* A scenario based exercise where participants rank the items individually, group then comes to a consensus. How good was the group at ranking through consensus? What were the group dynamics? Who was the leader? (Hint, there is always a leader) Team ranking is usually better but sometimes an individual's initial ranking is better. Was their voice heard? If not, why not? Access worksheet at this link.

Movement Break: This is a scheduled bathroom/movement break.

Student-led Energizer: *Leaders step up.* I would provide opportunities for students to lead an energizer, stretch or activity. This schedule assumes that only 2 students choose to do so.

Introduction to Creative Problem Solving: *Leaders need to be able to think of many possible solutions to challenges and be able to evaluate the best options.* This session will introduce participants to divergent thinking, convergent thinking and mighty language. Participants will do a brainstorming warm-up activity.

Journaling & Homework: *Leaders are self-aware and reflective.* Participants will be asked to write a quick journal entry reflecting their most important key learnings from the day.   Homework Reflection Journal: Power of Incubation – Participants record any new insights they have tonight and tomorrow morning.

ACTIVITIES FOR DAY 2

Mindful Body Scan: *Leaders have tools to ground themselves.* Practice mindfulness body scan this time reading my own script. Reflect on how they feel compared to yesterday's baseline.

Continuation of Creative Problem Solving Training: *Leaders need to work with a diverse team and be able to master the skills necessary to take a vision through to implementation.* This session will introduce participants to the creative problem solving process and individual differences in thinking style preference. Discussion about the value of diversity in teams includes warning of probability of friction between individuals with different thinking style preferences initially. The language of creativity and leadership is reviewed.

Personal Growth Planning: *Leaders take personal responsibility for their own growth and development.* Participants will be broken into two different groups and select a group facilitator. Using CPS they will explore the question "**What might be all the ways to grow our leadership abilities?**" Groups will "hit" all the ideas that they think are going in the right direction. They will

work together to cluster hits into larger themes and will come up with "What we see ourselves doing is…" statements. Individuals will then be asked to journal regarding their own "What I see myself doing is…" statement. They can choose to use the group statement or customize it as they see fit. I will work with them on their individual growth plans during one-on-one coaching going forward.

Embracing Struggle: *Leaders need to stay positive and persevere in the face of struggle.* In this activity participants are divided into 3 groups. Each group is given a model to reproduce. They cannot touch the model but can discuss it. Paper and scissors are available to experiment. Facilitator(s) listen to the dialogue and record positive and negative exclamations such as "I think I've got it!" or "I give up!"

Hollow Square – A Communications Experiment: *Leaders color outside the lines, especially the self-imposed or imaginary lines.* This group activity is such a rich learning experience! Participants are divided into 3 teams--planners, implementers and observers. Each team is given briefing sheets explaining the ground rules for their team's role in the simulation. Each observer is assigned to watch one person from the planning team and then one person from the implementing team. The activity takes about 30 minutes but debrief discussion easily takes 30 minutes. Participants get so sucked into focusing on the task that they lose sight of the relationship part. They realize how we disable ourselves from being successful through self-imposed constraints, poor communication and relationship investment.

Movement Break: This is a scheduled bathroom/movement break.

Student-led Stretch: *Leaders step up and care for self and others.* I would provide opportunities for students to lead an energizer, stretch or activity. This schedule assumes that only 2 students choose to do so.

Journaling & Homework: *Leaders commit to practices that support continuous improvement.* Participants will be asked to write at least two journal entries before their next one-to-one coaching session with me.
Reflection Journal: What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail?
Reflection Journal: Know the legacy you want to leave. Most people simply accept their lives; they don't lead them. We need to be intentional and proactive about our lives in order to create powerful results. What is your passion? What do you want to be known for? What matters to you? One day someone will summarize your life in one sentence. Pick yours now!
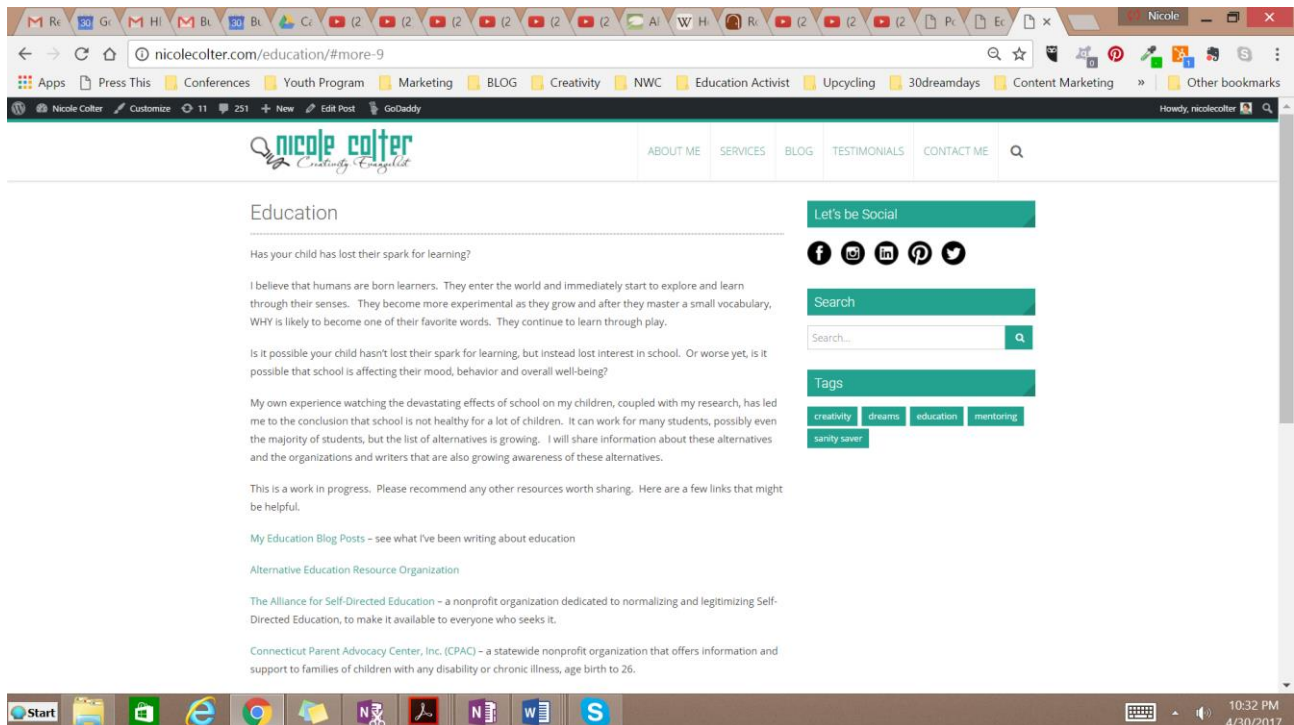
Appendix D: Website Updates and Facebook Group

Appendix D: Website Updates and Facebook Group

BEFORE:

AFTER:

More resources to come at www.nicolecolter.com/tag/mentoring

Here is the Facebook Group I started. I will continue to work on these beyond the scope of this

project.

Appendix E: Mentoring & Self-Directed Education Survey and Email Introduction

Appendix E: Mentoring & Self-Directed Education Survey and Email Introduction

Dear George;

My name is Nicole Colter and I am a graduate student at the International Center for Studies in Creativity at Buffalo State College. I am contacting you to see if you might be so kind as to share some feedback with me for my Master's Project on mentoring.

I am passionate about mentoring. I see it as an essential ingredient in all healthy relationships as individuals seek to help each other learn, grow and navigate transition.   I believe that mentoring is a key to effective self-directed education of children and youth; without rigid curriculum or directive teachers, I believe young learners use mentors to help them navigate the world. However, I would like to hear feedback on this matter from experienced leaders in the self-directed education movement such as yourself.

In the future I see myself starting a self-directed learning center or free school and this project will help inform that endeavor. I would like to better understand the role that staff and outside mentors play in the lives of the children in these learning alternatives. I also want to explore the effects of group mentoring and a mentoring culture as influencers in a child's development.

I developed a quick survey that I was hoping to get your feedback on first. Do the questions make sense? Would you add anything? Combine anything? Take anything out? The survey is available at THIS LINK.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and for any help or direction you can provide. If you have suggestions on how I can get this survey out to the most people in the shortest period of time, I would greatly appreciate that.

Regards,
Nicole Colter
860-917-5842
www.NicoleColter.com

Mentoring & Self-Directed Education

Your Observations about Mentoring

Below are a few questions that I believe will help me understand the role of mentoring in self-directed education. None of the questions are required but any and all feedback is appreciated. I am also collecting mentoring stories. If you have a story to share, please email it to me at hope@nicolecolter.com

1. How important do you think mentoring is to self-directed education?

○ 0 = Not at all

○ 1 = Slightly Important

○ 2 = Moderately Important

○ 3 = Very Important

○ 4 = Almost impossible without it

2. To what extent do you believe SDE learners use *experts* as mentors for their learning?

○ 0 = Not at all

○ 1 = Once in a while

○ 2 = Sometimes

○ 3 = Fairly Often

○ 4 = Frequently, if not always

3. To what extent do you believe SDE learners use *adults* as mentors for their learning?

○ 0 = Not at all

○ 1 = Once in a while

○ 2 = Sometimes

○   3 = Fairly often

○   4 = Frequently, if not always

4. To what extent do you believe SDE learners use *peers (older or younger)* as mentors for their learning?

○   0 = Not at all

○   1 = Once in a while

○   2 = Sometimes

○   3 = Fairly often

○   4 = Frequently, if not always

5. To what extent have you communicated the value of mentors to the learners you work with?

○   0 = Not at all

○   1 = Once in a while

○   2 = Sometimes

○   3 = Fairly often

○   4 = Frequently, if not always

6. Age range of the learners you are referring to:

☐   Children

☐   Teenagers

☐   Adults

7. Approximate number of learners you are basing this information on:

[   ]

8. Number of years of experience with self-directed education:

[   ]

9. Any other comments:

[   ]

10. Your Contact Information:

Name [   ]

Company [   ]

Address [   ]

Address 2 [   ]

City/Town [   ]

State/Province [   ]

ZIP/Postal Code [   ]

Country [   ]

Email Address

Phone Number

Done

Permission to place this Project in the Digital Commons online

I hereby grant permission to the International Center for Studies in Creativity at Buffalo

State College to place a digital copy of my master's project, What I Discovered About Mentoring

and Self-Directed Education While Listening to a Cat, as an online resource.

_____
Nicole M. Colter

_____5/7/17_____
Date