The Role of Mentorship in Achieving NBA Success: Narratives Told by Nine Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame Inductees

Mark J. Lasota
University of New Mexico - Main Campus

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/educ_hess_etds

Part of the Health and Physical Education Commons

Recommended Citation

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Education ETDs at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Health, Exercise, and Sports Sciences ETDs by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu, Isloane@salud.unm.edu, sarahrk@unm.edu.
Mark Lasota

Candidate

Health, Exercise and Sports Sciences

Department

This dissertation is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication:

Approved by the Dissertation Committee:

Todd Seidler, Ph.D., Chairperson

David Scott, Ph.D.

Wade Gilbert, Ph.D.

Douglas Thomas, Ph.D.

Arlie Woodrum, Ph.D.
THE ROLE OF MENTORSHIP IN ACHIEVING NBA SUCCESS:
NARRATIVES TOLD BY NINE NAISMITH MEMORIAL BASKETBALL HALL OF
FAME INDUCTEES

by

MARK J. LASOTA

B.S., Exercise Science and Wellness, Ball State University, 2002
M.A., Kinesiology-Sport Psychology, California State University, Fresno, 2010
M.B.A., International Business, New Mexico Highlands University, 2020

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
Physical Education, Sports and Exercise Science

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

May, 2020
DEDICATION

This dissertation is first and foremost dedicated to my wife, Leticia Lasota. She is a kind-hearted, intelligent woman who comes from a wonderful family in Guanajuato, Mexico. She shares my passion for making a difference in the lives of others and proudly serves as a mentor in an advisory role for her students. Throughout this process, she provided unwavering support and encouragement. I am honored to have met her and she brings out the best in me as a man. Our goals and aspirations have always been a team effort. This is a family accomplishment and I could not have done this without my loving wife.

Although my closest family members have all passed away, they were instrumental in teaching me valuable life lessons, directly or indirectly, that would have a lasting impact on my future. I may have come from humble beginnings, but I would not change my journey or circumstances. Difficult experiences provide opportunities for people to gain perspective and appreciate details otherwise overlooked. It is from these challenges that we build character, develop resiliency, and acquire empathy for others. My late grandparents, Frank and Mary Psenak, took on the responsibility of raising me well into their sixties. As an immigrant from Slovakia, my grandmother knew hardship and taught me that anything worthwhile in life requires hard work. My grandfather, one of nine siblings, worked as a steel worker and provided a roof over my head as a child. My late mother, Frances Lasota, had tremendous strength and a fighting spirit about her that I will always admire and respect. My late father, James Lasota, was a diehard Chicago sports fan and our conversations likely influenced my passion for sports as a child.

My students were a huge motivation for me to pursue this dissertation topic. Over the years, I have had the honor to serve as a teacher, coach, and mentor for thousands of students. For my current or former students who read this document, I want you to know that you mean the world to me and this is for you. Working with you in the classroom or sport context has provided my proudest professional moments. You are very special to me and I am always here for you. I am so proud of you and I hope learning about the mentorship experiences of our study’s legendary participants can benefit you in your personal and professional journeys.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are several people who directly contributed to this project. This project belongs to all of us and your contributions and support helped make this happen.

To Scott Zuffelato, I will forever be grateful to you for making our study possible. I appreciate you believing in me and recognizing the value in our project. You are a great leader and wonderful ambassador for the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame. You are a special person and your kindness and hospitality made this dream come true. God bless you and your family.

To Fran Judkins, your efforts to help coordinate our project are much appreciated. I cannot express what it means for me. You are a dedicated person and the engine that makes things go. You kindly offered your time to work with me extensively to help facilitate this process. I appreciate our thought-provoking conversations and your hospitality. Thank you!

To Spencer Haywood, Charles Scott, Jamaal Wilkes, Dino Radja, Dan Issel, Wayne Embry, Artis Gilmore, Gary Payton, and Rick Barry, thank you so much for graciously dedicating your time to contribute to our project. You are absolute gentlemen and have a special place in my heart. What you shared will provide young people several examples of different mentoring journeys from inspiring and extraordinary individuals who reached the pinnacle of success in their professions. You may have accomplished tremendous success on the basketball court, but you are Hall of Fame human beings who continue to have a positive impact on others. You are my Dream Team!

To Dr. Todd Seidler, as my advisor you were instrumental in guiding me through this process. I have the utmost respect for you and appreciate the great relationship we have developed over the years. We have had a chance to work together in a number of capacities and you always do what you can to help students. You are a Hall of Famer within the risk management discipline. Thank you!

To Dr. David Scott, you are a big reason why I came to the University of New Mexico and I appreciate all your encouragement and support as my advisor. As a scholar, you have made significant contributions to the field of sport leadership. As a leader, you inspire others and are dedicated to promoting fairness and equality. I appreciate our friendship and I am proud of you for your professional accomplishments. Thanks for guiding me through our project.

To Dr. Wade Gilbert, you were as supportive as an advisor could be at Fresno State. You always have a special place in my heart because you gave me the chance to pursue my Master’s degree and believed in me. You served as my first academic mentor and helped me develop as a scholar. You are certainly a Hall of Famer within the coaching science discipline and I am proud of your career success. I appreciate your friendship and miss our camping trips.
To Dr. Arlie Woodrum, I am grateful for you seeing the value in our study and helping me through the narrative process. I have enjoyed our deep conservations in your office and found your qualitative course to be very useful. Your contributions at Harvard and UNM have been game changers in social science research. You are a gentleman and I have the utmost respect for you. Thank you!

To Dr. Douglas Thomas, thank you very much for your encouragement and advice. I have enjoyed our interaction and your international business courses were insightful. The study program in Playa del Carmen was interesting and fun. It has been enjoyable working with you on a number of projects. The Anderson School of Management is fortunate to have you. Thank you and good luck to your Utah Jazz!

There are several others who directly or indirectly contributed to my doctoral pursuits and are very important people in my life. I care deeply for all of you and I appreciate your support.

To Omar Sheriff, you are my brother and best friend of nearly 30 years. We have been through a lot together. You were there by my side through a number of difficult moments. I am very proud of you for your professional accomplishments and being a great family man. I appreciate your support during my doctoral pursuits. I am fortunate to have you in my life. No doubt we are the perfect storm!

To Brandon Cha, you are my brother and always will be. I am proud of all you have accomplished in your industry. Most importantly, I am proud of you for being a great husband and father. Since rooming together at Ball State, you have always supported my dreams. I appreciate that and miss our family visits in Southern California.

To Jesse Puttananickal, you are my brother and a special person in my life. We have had some great times together. We are both passionate people who embrace challenges. I am proud of all you have accomplished in body building. You wanted it and made it happen! You are a great father and I have always respected that you are a dedicated man of faith. Thank you!

To Feras Abuzayda, you are my brother and I fondly remember our time as roommates at Ball State. In the process, we grew together as men. You provided support when I was fighting through some physical challenges and I never forgot that. You have a beautiful family and are a great role model for your children.

To Martha Monge, as you know I view you like a mom. You have a great attitude and are such a positive person. I admire your dedication and resiliency. When you say you are going to do something you fully invest yourself, as you did when I kicked your butt in the dungeon as a trainer. You have always been so encouraging and supportive of my goals. You are and always will be family.

To Jim Ogilvie, you have been a mentor and friend since the San Diego days. I have always appreciated your insight with business and life. You taught me how to do ‘The Deal.’
Over the years, our conversations have helped me stay focused on my goals. I remember you encouraging me to pursue a doctoral degree. Most of all, you have a unique sense of humor.

To **Steve and Sheila Corman**, you have both been very important people in my life. I appreciate all your support over the years in whatever goal I was pursuing. You are advocates for education and have encouraged me throughout this doctoral process. You are outstanding people and dear friends. Thank you for your kindness and hospitality over the years. Go White Sox!

To **Cynthia Koshko**, I have tremendous respect for you as a healthcare professional and as a person. You will always be dear to my heart. Years ago you gave me the opportunity to teach in your medical program and you saw the value in my work. Since then, we have developed a great friendship. You are a phenomenal human being, great leader, and a difference maker everywhere you go. Thank you!

To **Dr. Mi-Sook Kim**, I am always appreciative for the opportunity you gave me to teach full-time and develop a summer program for your department. You saw the value in my work and gave me your full trust. That meant so much to me. Also, you have been supportive over the years with my doctoral pursuits and job searches. You are a great leader and exceptional person. Thank you!

To **Dr. Lunhua Mao**, I really appreciate all that you taught me in regards to research in our program at UNM. You are a fair professor and I have enjoyed our interaction over the years. You are a brilliant man! I look forward to working with you on projects in the future. Thank you!

To **Krista McAuley**, you are one of the kindest people I have ever met. When we got to Albuquerque you were a constant source of positivity. I am proud of you for all that you are accomplishing. You have a great heart and are able to adapt well to new environments. We are always here for you and your family.

I want to extend a special thanks to my former students at UNM, SFSU, CSU STAN, MJC, FPU, Fresno State, UOP, and Heald College, my former personal training clients at LA Fitness, Dr. Joy Griffin, Dr. John Barnes, Dr. Andrew Mooneyhan, Dr. Smith Frederick, Professor John Reed, Professor Clarence Cruz, Jason Dixon, Gig Brummell, Chris Jones, Dan Selstad, Alonzo Maestas, Jeanne Smith, Anita Borrega, Bob Greenstone, Barrett Lambert, The Cortes Family, The Rysiewicz Family, The Noce Family.

Also, I want to thank two individuals who were my role models growing up. Although I never met **Michael Jordan** and **Walter Payton** personally, they were instrumental in my pursuit of a college education. In some of the most difficult times in my childhood and adolescent years, they were my inspiration and kept me out of trouble.
THE ROLE OF MENTORSHIP IN ACHIEVING NBA SUCCESS:
NARRATIVES TOLD BY NINE NAISMITH MEMORIAL BASKETBALL HALL OF
FAME INDUCTEES

by

Mark J. Lasota

B.S., Exercise Science and Wellness, Ball State University, 2002
M.A., Kinesiology-Sport Psychology, California State University, Fresno, 2010
M.B.A., International Business, New Mexico Highlands University, 2020
Ph.D., Physical Education, Sports and Exercise Science, 2020

Abstract

Mentorship entails a special relationship between two people centered on personal or professional growth and development. An effective mentoring relationship is not always easy to acquire. A recent study out of Olivet Nazarene University (2019) suggested around 75 percent of professional men and women want a mentor, but around 37 percent actually have a person in their lives they considered a mentor. On a macro level, the National Mentoring Partnership (2014) estimated only around one-third of children and teenagers have a trusted individual outside their households they can turn to for guidance and support.

Considering the widespread application of mentoring in sport, professionals in the industry must have an understanding of mentoring and the mentoring process. Professional sports organizations such as the National Basketball Association (NBA) are trending toward younger performers. In February 2019, the NBA submitted a proposal to the National Basketball Players Association that will lower the draft age from 19 to 18 (USA Today, 2019). Several former NBA players have identified a need for mentorship with young athletes.
This qualitative narrative inquiry study explored the mentoring experiences of nine Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame Inductees. Guided by servant leadership theory, the study focused on how mentoring helped these accomplished individuals make it to the NBA and how mentoring in the NBA helped them achieve success as players. Sullivan (2019) pointed out that mentoring is a key tool used by servant leaders to influence followers and suggests that in order to reap maximum benefits from a mentor-mentee relationship, servant leadership qualities are necessary.

Criterion and snowball sampling techniques were used to select and recruit participants. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to encourage participants to provide in-depth information on their mentoring experiences as mentees that may have led to their personal and professional success. The findings implicated that all nine participants received impactful mentoring during the course of their lives from a variety of mentors who exhibited a number of servant leadership qualities. Results suggested the mentoring received before reaching the NBA was most meaningful for the participants. A thematic analysis was conducted and several interactive and shared themes emerged that add to the existing body of knowledge in mentoring and sport leadership.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**LIST OF FIGURES** ............................................................................................................. xv

**LIST OF TABLES** .................................................................................................................. xvi

**MY MENTORING NARRATIVE AND STUDY MOTIVATION** ............................................ xvii

**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION** ............................................................................................ 1
  - **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM** ............................................................................... 3
  - **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY** ....................................................................................... 6
  - **RESEARCH QUESTIONS** ........................................................................................... 6
  - **SIGNIFICANCE** ......................................................................................................... 7
  - **DEFINITIONS OF TERMS** ......................................................................................... 9
  - **DELIMITATIONS** ....................................................................................................... 10
  - **LIMITATIONS** .......................................................................................................... 10
  - **PRACTICAL APPLICATION** ....................................................................................... 10

**CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW** .................................................................................. 12
  - **THE ESSENCE OF MENTORSHIP: ORIGINS AND MEANING** .................................. 12
  - **THE ROLE OF A MENTOR** ....................................................................................... 14
  - **THE ROLE OF A MENTEE** ...................................................................................... 18
  - **MENTOR-MENTEE SELECTION PROCESS: THE INITIAL CONNECTION** .......... 20
  - **MENTOR-MENTEE RELATIONSHIP: THE FOUNDATION** ..................................... 23
  - **FORMAL AND INFORMAL MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS** .................................... 27
    - **FORMAL MENTORING** .......................................................................................... 27
    - **INFORMAL MENTORING** ....................................................................................... 30
  - **MENTORING EXPERIENCES IN VARIOUS PROFESSIONS** ..................................... 32
    - **MENTORING IN BUSINESS** ................................................................................. 32
    - **MENTORING IN HIGHER EDUCATION** .............................................................. 34
    - **MENTORING IN NURSING** .................................................................................. 36
    - **MENTORING IN SPORTS** ..................................................................................... 37
  - **MENTOR AS A LEADER** ............................................................................................ 41
    - **TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP** ................................................................. 42
  - **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SERVANT LEADERSHIP** ........................................ 45
    - **SERVANT LEADERS/MENTORS ARE EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT** ............... 51
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 3: Research Design</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodological Approach</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants/Sampling</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Site</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher Role</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection Methods</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Guide</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter 4: The Mentoring Narratives</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview of the Narratives</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spencer Haywood: My Mentoring Narrative</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball Biography</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Rural Mississippi to Urban Detroit</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Athlete, Gold Medalist, Trendsetter</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro Basketball: Facing and Conquering Challenges</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring Reflection and Analysis</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBA Mentoring Need and Player Involvement</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying it Forward: Advice from Spencer Haywood</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Scott: My Mentoring Narrative</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball Biography</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing up in Harlem</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off to Chapel Hill</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celtic Pride</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brotherly Advice</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring Reflection and Analysis</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBA Today: The Need for Mentoring</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying it Forward: Advice from Charles Scott</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaal Wilkes: My Mentoring Narrative</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball Biography</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rooted on the Central Golden Coast</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On to Westwood</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bay Area Magic</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s Showtime</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Helping Hand</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring Reflection and Analysis</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBA Today: The Need for Mentoring</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying it Forward: Advice from Jamaal Wilkes</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dino Rada: My Mentoring Narrative</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball Biography</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball Lessons from the Dalmatian Coast</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaming with Dražen</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a Celtic, Always a Celtic</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Different Worlds</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring Reflection and Analysis</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Mentee to Mentor</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying it Forward: Advice from Dino Rada</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan Issel: My Mentoring Narrative</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball Biography</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the Dairy Farm to Lexington</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Lifelong Friendship</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonels and Nuggets</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner to Lean On</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring Reflection and Analysis</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach Issel</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball is a Team Game</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying it Forward: Advice from Dan Issel</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayne Embry: My Mentoring Narrative</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball Biography</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persevering through Barriers</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life in Oxford</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A True Pioneer</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring Reflection and the P’s of Success</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From One Generation to Another</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

xii
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PAYING IT FORWARD: ADVICE FROM WAYNE EMBRY</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTIS GILMORE: MY MENTORING NARRATIVE</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BASKETBALL BIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JACKSONVILLE CONNECTION</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOUGH UPBRINGING</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALL ABOARD THE A-TRAIN</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENTORING REFLECTION AND ANALYSIS</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR NBA PLAYERS</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAYING IT FORWARD: ADVICE FROM ARTIS GILMORE</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GARY PAYTON: MY MENTORING NARRATIVE</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BASKETBALL BIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROOTS IN OAKTOWN</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALONG THE OREGON TRAIL</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLEEPLESS IN SEATTLE</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE GLOVE FITS</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENTORING REFLECTION AND ANALYSIS</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A DEVOTED MENTOR</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NBA TODAY AND NEED FOR MENTORING</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAYING IT FORWARD: ADVICE FROM GARY PAYTON</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RICK BARRY: MY MENTORING NARRATIVE</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BASKETBALL BIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAYING THE FOUNDATION</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WELCOME TO MIAMI</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIERCE COMPETITOR</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A TEAM OF WARRIORS</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COACH BARRY</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENTORING REFLECTION AND ANALYSIS</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LASTING IMPACT</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAYING IT FORWARD: ADVICE FROM RICK BARRY</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINDINGS</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THEME IDENTIFICATION</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 2-1: KRAM’S FOUR-PHASE MODEL OF MENTORING ........................................ 24

FIGURE 2-2: ZACHARY’S FOUR PHASES OF THE MENTORING PROCESS ............... 27

FIGURE 2-3: SPEARS’ SERVANT LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS ..................... 49

FIGURE 2-4: PAGE AND WONG’S EXPANDING CIRCLES OF SERVANT LEADERS ..... 51

FIGURE 5-1: INTERACTIVE AND SHARED MODEL FOR EFFECTIVE MENTORSHIP ..... 203
LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 2-1: THE MENTORING SCHOOL – MENTOR LEVELS/ROLES ....................... 17

TABLE 2-2: MENTOR ROLES ACROSS VARIOUS DOMAINS .............................. 18

TABLE 3-1: INTERVIEW GUIDE SAMPLE QUESTIONS ........................................ 18

TABLE 5-1: MENTOR QUALITIES/ACTIONS ....................................................... 192

TABLE 5-2: INTERACTIVE COMPATIBILITY ....................................................... 194
My Mentoring Narrative and Study Motivation

Success, whatever that means for each of us as individuals, is often described as a journey that entails a story with a humble beginning and an improbable ending. As the case with various other personal stories, the roots of my ongoing life journey were fraught with challenges and hard lessons. In many ways, our lives resemble comprehensive books with each chapter, page, and paragraph holding special meaning and reflecting a time period or experience we have encountered or conquered. Our chapters, pages, and paragraphs are what we have to reflect on and share with others in hopes of profoundly impacting their journeys. There is no question my life experiences drove me to conduct this research with the sincere goal of helping others who have gone through similar circumstances.

My life journey began when my mother gave birth to me while living in a homeless shelter in an impoverished area on Chicago’s Southside, known by many at the time as “Skid Row”. I was raised by my grandparents in a working class family in Northwest Indiana. English was the second language spoken in our home. My grandmother was an immigrant from Slovakia, a homemaker, and came to the United States on a boat in the 1930s. My grandfather was a Slovak man who worked for over 40 years at the former Inland Steel Company, which was a steel mill located in East Chicago, Indiana, also known by many immigrants who worked the mill as “The Harbor”. My mother was a courageous woman and did her best, but battled mental illness, cancer, and was later paralyzed from a serious car accident. My father battled alcoholism and had his challenges. I am an only child and the first to attend college in my immediate family. I went on to lose both my parents and grandparents and would be forced to navigate life, for the most part, on my own. Without mentors to help at critical times, I learned figuratively from the “School of Hard Knocks.”
Although I may have lacked guidance regarding education and career matters, what I learned from my childhood and adolescent years was invaluable. Growing up in a blue-collar home I learned the value of hard work and sacrifice. I have much respect for my grandparents. I know they did the best they could under the circumstances. Finances were tight in our home. My upbringing forced me to “Become Comfortable with Being Uncomfortable,” and for that I am most thankful because my surroundings compelled me to learn street-smarts, become resourceful, and develop as a communicator. However, when an individual grows up in a dysfunctional environment and has not been exposed to mentors outside his or her immediate family that can provide direction, encouragement, and emotional support, success may be difficult to obtain. In these types of environments, the focus tends to be on survival and big picture goals may not be viewed as realistic.

Despite my personal circumstances, one edge or advantage that has always kept me going is my belief in the importance of having dreams. Dreaming Big! I have always had a burning desire to succeed and prove others wrong. Although I experienced some traumatic events as a child and teenager, sports kept me out of trouble and served as the catalyst that sparked my dreams. In these early years, I participated in several sports. Basketball was my first love and passion. Football was a close second. My childhood dream was to make it to the NBA. I idolized professional athletes. In fact, I most likely would not have pursued college out of high school if it was not for Walter Payton and Michael Jordan. These were my heroes. I knew they attended colleges and that motivated me to want to go. This exemplifies the potential impact professional athletes can have on young people.

Reflecting back on my high school years, I remember seeing parents and extended family members heavily involved in their children’s studies and sport participation. My
grandparents tried to provide the best life for me as they could, but coming from a different culture, having limited resources, and lacking familiarity with the American school system affected their level of involvement. Although my grandmother understood college was important, she was not familiar with the application or navigation processes. Having access to mentors at a young age can certainly provide an individual with a tremendous head start in education and career choices. Because of my desire to follow the path of professional athletes I viewed as role models, I sought college information on my own and applied for a couple of universities with money I saved from delivering *The Hammond Times* newspaper.

When I was accepted to Ball State University and decided to head to Muncie, IN, I felt proud being the first to attend college in my immediate family. Although I was driven and ambitious, I lacked focus and direction at the time. I changed my major multiple times before deciding on Exercise Science. At Ball State, one significant accomplishment that meant a lot to me was being selected to the football team as a Walk-on athlete. I remember the jubilation I felt reading my name on the head coach’s office door after the selection process. It showed me that my persistence and effort was starting to pay off.

After my football pursuits, I got involved in power lifting and body building. As a result of participating in sports, working several labor jobs, and engaging in heavy resistance training, I sustained a life altering injury at 22 years old. A contributor to the injury was improper form and technique during weight training. Again, perhaps mentorship could have prevented the situation. Although I did not have an older person in my life that seemed willing to take the time to mentor me, I also did not understand the value of mentorship during this time period. If I had, I certainly would have sought out mentors or been more receptive to meeting mentors. By necessity, I had always tried to figure out life matters on
my own. The reality is we cannot be stubborn or afraid to ask for advice from experts or people that have the knowledge and experience to help us. Although the injury has caused considerable hardship over the years, the situation allowed me to gain perspective and become more empathetic. It would not be until a few years later that I would truly understand the importance of mentorship.

After graduating with my Bachelor’s Degree in Exercise Science, I moved my life to San Diego in my junky old car, $400 in my pocket, and a significant injury. Initially, I worked a number of jobs to get on my feet and did what I could to survive. There were definitely times that tested my resolve. Eventually, I decided to pursue a career as a fitness trainer with the goal of helping others avoid injury and reach their fitness goals. It was during this time period when I started to learn the importance of mentorship.

As a personal trainer, I had the pleasure of working with a number of people who achieved success in their careers or businesses. I found so many of their stories fascinating and tried to learn as much as I could from them. I met a man named Jim Ogilvie, who never went to college, but had a successful career in the furniture industry. From Mr. Ogilvie, I learned the importance of dressing professionally and he made me think about how I might be able to utilize skills that I had to earn a better living. During this time, I also met a man named Steve Corman, a retired 8-time Emmy Award Winning Television Producer with NBC. Mr. Corman and his wife Sheila offered encouragement and supported my goals and aspirations. There were many other great people I met during those years as a personal trainer in San Diego. During the same time period, I also coached multiple sports, which gave me the opportunity to interact with people younger than me who needed mentoring. Not only was I learning as a mentee from my clients, but I was serving as a mentor to my players. This
was my first exposure to the value of mentorship.

Since then, I have had some incredible life experiences and have met some extraordinary people. However, it was during those arduous moments when I found purpose. For the past several years, I have served as a faculty member for several academic institutions. I have had the honor of working with thousands of students from various situations and socioeconomic backgrounds. I take pride in being there for my students and I know how important it is to have someone show genuine interest or believe in you and how that can potentially change your life.

My life’s work is ongoing and hopefully there are many interesting chapters to come. This project is more than a dissertation to me. It is dedicated to all of my students and young people from around the world. My vision is to provide a platform for NBA legends to share their mentorship stories and inspire current and aspiring NBA players, as well as people from all walks of life. When I lacked mentors, professional athletes were instrumental figures that indirectly impacted my decision-making. JUST REMEMBER – Our personal journeys and how we’ve responded to challenges may guide others who cross similar bridges or encounter treacherous paths. Ultimately, our value as a person is defined by how we’ve paid it forward and positively impacted others.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The following quote is from Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame Inductee Bill Russell, the NBA’s greatest champion and legendary performer renowned for his defensive prowess on the court and his involvement in several significant social causes off the court. He is a founding board member of MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership:

If you ask any NBA player, executive, or coach about their path to success, on and off the court, you’ll quickly see the same pattern emerge. None of us made it on our own. The truth is that in all walks of life, mentors transform lives. Whether it’s the middle school math teacher who drove you home from school every day; the uncle who busted your chops when your grades started to slip; the older student who kept you under a watchful eye; or the basketball coach who believed in you – none of us would be where we are today without the support of our mentors. (Russell via USA Today, 2016)

Mentorship is a term used loosely in professional contexts pertaining to a special relationship between two people that typically involves a more experienced and knowledgeable individual (the mentor) providing guidance and support to a less experienced and knowledgeable individual (the mentee) in order to achieve a goal or objective. Although the concept of mentoring is used often in our everyday vocabulary and seems to have obvious connotation, the process of mentoring is complex and may have more individualized meaning within the confines of each unique human experience. What exactly it means to be a mentor or to provide mentoring differs depending on one’s personal experience. Although the occupational benefits of mentoring may certainly help individuals land employment or progress within an organization, personal growth is often mentioned as a benefit as well. Allen (2006) argues “mentoring is the process that awakens our confidence in our abilities
and opens doors that lead to professional or personal growth” (p. 30). According to Woolworth (2019), “Great mentors focus on the whole person, not just their career.” (p. 1).

Mentorship can positively impact both the mentor and the mentee (Pfund et al., 2016). Individuals who are fortunate enough to have multiple mentors are exposed to a variety of perspectives that may help them achieve success in different areas and become more well-rounded people. Most importantly, mentorship is about relationship building. In order for mentoring to be effective, it requires commitment from all involved.

In a competitive industry such as professional sports, mentorship can be invaluable in equipping sport leaders with the necessary tools to capitalize on professional opportunities as well as to help develop athletes. Some of the most beneficial aspects of mentorship (job performance and commitment, career advancement, and leader development) may be improved by structured formal mentoring programs. Professional sports organizations, such as the National Basketball Association (NBA), are multibillion dollar businesses who allocate significant resources into setting up formal mentoring programs designed to help young players learn to become better leaders. Scaletta (2015) mentioned a core aspect of mentoring is the development of leaders. When discussing the NBA he stated:

Leadership in the NBA matters. It can be the difference in whether a team can reach the ‘next level’ whether that’s getting to the playoffs or winning in the Finals. And to have leadership, a team must have leaders. (para. 1)

Although formal mentoring has been strongly linked to leadership, there are a number of other ways successful people meet mentors. For instance, NBA players have been aided by a number of informal mentors before and during their professional journeys, many of which served in roles such as family, friends, or community members. Several of these informal mentors possessed selfless traits and guided iconic NBA athletes to greatness. Stephen Curry
and Klay Thompson both acknowledge their fathers’ roles in helping them achieve NBA success. During the course of his career, Kobe Bryant received mentoring from NBA greats Hakeem Olajuwon, Bill Russell, Magic Johnson, Larry Bird, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, and Michael Jordan and then he mentored superstars such as James Harden and Kyrie Irving. When discussing the past, present, and future of any profession, one can argue mentorship was, is, and always will be an integral part of success across various domains.

**Statement of the Problem**

As previously expressed, successful mentorship is imperative to the career success and satisfaction for both mentors and mentees (Strauss, et al., 2013). There has been a significant amount of research dedicated to mentorship in a variety of professional contexts. Although much attention has been placed in the area of developing a mentor-mentee relationship, most of the research is purely from the mentor’s perspective (Tsai & Helsel, 2016). Therefore, learning from the in-depth experiences of accomplished professionals who have been advised, trained, and helped, both personally and professionally, may serve as inspiration to those who aspire to obtain similar goals.

Several scholars and practitioners have identified a need for mentorship in sports. Given the widespread application of mentoring in sport, it is imperative that professionals in the field have an understanding of mentoring and the mentoring process. The advantages of mentoring for increased learning and career progression are more developed in non-sport domains because the mentoring process lasts longer and there is less emphasis placed on immediate performance benchmarks, such as wins and losses (Koh, el al., 2014; Clutterbuck, 1998). Achieving success in sports often encompasses a number of personal values or attributes (e.g. work ethic, commitment, discipline, communication, etc.) that may be learned
with effective mentoring. Although sport coaches have been studied as mentors, an extensive literature review has revealed there is a lack of empirical research focused on the mentoring experiences of professional athletes, especially from the perspective of retired athletes who are in a position to introspectively reflect back on their mentoring experiences.

The NBA is a sport environment trending toward younger performers. In February 2019, the league submitted a proposal to the National Basketball Players Association (NBPA) that will lower the draft age from 19 to 18 (USA Today, 2019). In the 2019 NBA Draft, 10 of the top 15 players selected were under 20 years old (Pro Basketball Reference, 2019). As players enter professional basketball leagues in their late-teens, the need for proper guidance increases and the importance of mentorship becomes integral to their success.

According to several former NBA players, veteran mentorship in the locker room is critical to the growth of young players and is lacking in today’s game. Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame Inductee Charles Barkley has expressed when he came into the league veteran players such as Moses Malone, Julius Erving, and Maurice Cheeks served as mentors and taught him how to become a professional (NBA Open Court, 2011). He expressed there are not enough older players to help mentor players today, which is a major problem in the NBA. “I think every NBA team should have an older guy. How did Doc help me? Doc took me shopping. He bought me suits.” said Barkley when discussing his relationship with Julius Erving (NBA Open Court, 2011). Erving’s advice to Barkley was to dress professionally when walking through airports. In a 2015 interview with Jackie MacMullin of ESPN, Barkley described his relationship with another teammate and fellow
Hall of Famer, the late Moses Malone, a person he considered a mentor when he came into the league as a rookie. He talked about Moses’ selfless nature:

He never said anything about what he did for me. Most guys, when they mentor a young player like that, they go around saying, ‘Yeah, that was me. I did that.’ Not Moses. He never told anybody. And that was the best part.

Another former player that has emphasized the need for mentorship in the NBA today is fellow Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame Inductee Steve Nash, who helped create and produce a compelling documentary called Rookie/Vet which focused on mentor-mentee relationships that form in NBA locker rooms. When discussing the impact of these relationships for an article in the Huffington Post, Nash asserted:

It’s kind of poetic — because it’s very cyclical. You have a player coming into the league — green, unsure of what to expect or how to survive — and you have a veteran that was once in his place, who’s able to impact that younger player…So I think it’s beautiful and I think it’s so impactful for a young player to be paired up with a solid veteran. (Spies-Gans, 2016)

Nash shared that when he was a rookie teammate Rex Chapman served as his mentor and taught him about the league and how to be a professional (Spies-Gans, 2016). Nash described how the roles reversed and he took on the mentor role with teammate Leandro Barbosa years later.

As athletes continue to get drafted into professional sports leagues as teenagers, receiving proper mentoring is imperative to their personal and professional development. Learning about the mentorship journeys of high profile retired professional athletes can serve as inspiration for current and aspiring athletes, as well as students and young professionals from around the world.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of mentorship in the career success of retired NBA players who were among the best in their profession during their playing careers. Three main goals or objectives addressed in this study were to: 1) examine the perceptions of Naismith Memorial Hall of Fame Inductees regarding their own mentorship experiences and the impact mentorship had on their basketball careers, 2) bring greater awareness to the importance of mentorship, not only for current and aspiring professional athletes, but also for people from all walks of life, including students and professionals, and 3) attract the attention of individuals who are supposed to be providing mentorship as well as help younger individuals become more receptive to seeking and receiving mentorship. Each person’s journey has a unique set of circumstances and this study attempted to better understand how these former professional athletes overcame various life challenges, with the help of mentorship, to accomplish career success. NBA basketball is immensely popular today and many young people respect and admire former NBA greats who paved the way for the league’s current success. The study focused on how mentoring helped these individuals get into the NBA and then how mentoring in the NBA helped them stay there or achieve success as players.

Research Questions

1. What are the mentoring experiences of Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame Inductees that may have led to their career success?
2. Who were their various types of mentors and what did those relationships entail?
3. What impact has mentoring had in their lives?
4. Through the lens of servant leadership, what characteristics were evident in this mentoring process?
Significance

Other than my parents, no one had a bigger influence on my life than Coach Smith. He was more than a coach – he was my mentor, my teacher, my second father. Coach was always there for me whenever I needed him and I loved him for it. In teaching me the game of basketball, he taught me about life. – Michael Jordan

For nearly four decades, the National Basketball Association (NBA) has experienced tremendous growth and has evolved into a powerful global enterprise comprising of talented athletes from around the world. Today, the average NBA franchise value is $2.12 billion (Forbes, 2020). According to NBA legend Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (2017), “All signs point to the NBA replacing the NFL as the league of America’s future.” The league has become immensely popular and profitable, leading to NBA players being respected and admired by a global audience. Professional athletes are celebrities and have the ability, if they choose, to use their spotlight and influence to make a positive impact on the lives of others, especially young people. However, the enormous pressure put on teenagers entering the NBA and the expectance of them to instantly become role models is improbable without mentoring and guidance from individuals who have experienced similar journeys. Retired NBA players who have reached the pinnacle of success in their profession are in a position in which they can reflect back on their mentorship experiences and determine what impact those relationships may or may not have had on their career success.

On a societal level, there are so many young people who grow up without mentorship and are forced to navigate life without direction and purpose. According to a study conducted by The National Mentoring Partnership (2014) utilizing U.S. Census data, out of approximately 46 million people aged 8 to 18 living in the United States, it is estimated 16 million of them do not have a trusted adult outside of their household they can turn to for advice and guidance. This translates to around one-third of this population lacking
mentorship, which is even higher for at-risk youth. For this reason, the impact of meeting a mentor at a young age can be quite profound. It is a distinct advantage having a support system that enables one to not just survive, but also to thrive. The reality is many young people do not have access to positive role models, cannot envision a career, and have not experienced someone genuinely caring for and believing in them. Consequently, the world is being deprived of potential great minds and kind hearts because adults are not always taking on the responsibility of giving back and paying forward their enriched experiences to equip others with the tools to help overcome similar situations. Although going through adversity can help one build character and acquire psychological hardiness, not having a positive support system or role models may be detrimental to one’s development and produce inverse results. Because so many people look up to celebrities, the stories of retired NBA legends regarding their mentorship experiences may serve as inspiration for those attempting to achieve their goals or become successful professionals.

Although data indicates there is a need for mentoring among children and teenagers, other factors to consider are determining: What is meant by the word ‘mentor’? What are the competencies in a good mentor? How does one obtain a good mentor? For instance, while a mentor often refers to a person who “advises, counsels, or helps younger individuals” (Feldman, 1988, p. 129), this does not mean mentoring is always positive (Scandura, 1998). In a survey administered to two executive development programs at a southwest university, Eby, McManis, Simon, and Russell (2000) found 84 of the 156 protégé participants reported at least one negative mentoring relationship. Mismatching, distancing behavior, manipulative behavior, lack of mentor experience, and general dysfunctionality emerged as reasons for the negative relationships (Eby, McManis, Simon, & Russell, 2000). This supports the notion
that not only should young people have mentors, but it is imperative for them to have the “right” mentors.

Moreover, a recent study out of Olivet Nazarene University (2019) suggested around 75 percent of professional men and women want a mentor, but only around 37 percent actually have someone who fills that void. The survey respondents were between 21 and 68 years old, represented 21 industries, and covered all 50 states. This shows a desire for professionals to receive mentoring, but implies there is a disconnect somewhere in the mentoring process.

**Definitions of Terms**

**Leadership:** One’s ability to motivate, inspire, and guide individuals, or a group of people, toward realizing a collective vision and achieving shared goals and objectives that contribute to the overall betterment of a group or team (Lasota, 2010).

**Mentor:** A person who serves as a role model to the mentee providing emotional, psychosocial, and career-related support (Eby, Rhodes, & Allen, 2007).

**Mentoring:** An integrated approach to advising, coaching, and nurturing, focused on creating a viable relationship to enhance individual career/personal/professional growth and development (Adams, 1998).

**Mentee:** A person who receives support, wisdom, and training in the mentoring process, thus taking an active learning role in order to become increasingly self-directed (Zachary, 2012).
**Servant Leadership**: “Philosophy and set of practices that enriches the lives of individuals, builds better organizations and ultimately creates a more just and caring world.”

(Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership)

**Success**: For the purpose of this study, success relates to former NBA players being inducted in the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame based on their playing career accomplishments.

**Delimitations**

The sample used in the proposed study was delimited to NBA Hall of Fame players.

**Limitations**

Because the sample was delimited to former top professionals in the NBA, participation was contingent upon my ability to connect with and gain access to the desired sample.

**Practical Application**

This study aims to provide current and aspiring athletes, students, and young professionals with information that may be useful to their personal and professional development. For current and aspiring NBA professionals, learning about the mentoring journeys of various basketball legends may help them better understand the value of mentorship as they make their transition to the professional game. The findings from this study may benefit companies and organizations (in the sports industry or otherwise) in implementing effective strategies that can improve employee development and performance through formal mentoring programs. Another goal of this project is to make parents, elders,
educators, supervisors, or other authority figures more aware of the difference they can potentially make in the lives of young people. Lastly, my hope is anyone reading this will **PAY IT FORWARD** and share their gifts, knowledge, expertise, and experience with others in order to make this world a better place for all of us!
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

The Essence of Mentorship: Origins and Meaning

Historians believe the roots of mentorship date back to Homer’s poem *The Odyssey*. In Greek mythology, Odysseus, King of Ithaca, entrusted a close friend named Mentor to look after his son Telemachus and offer him guidance and support while he was away fighting the Trojan War (Roberts, 1999). Athena, the goddess of wisdom, appeared to Telemachus in the form of Mentor and encouraged him to embark on a journey to find his lost father (Hom. Od. 9.25-34). Hence, this epic story inspired the idea of mentorship, which has grown to have special meaning for so many individuals.

The topic of mentorship has received considerable attention among scholars and practitioners. There is not a mutually accepted definition for mentoring, mentor, or mentee because the terms vary across academic fields and professional disciplines. Typically, mentoring entails a relationship between two individuals, the mentor and mentee (or protégé) and the mentoring process often applies to new professionals at the beginning of their careers. Monaghan and Lunt (1992) point out that mentoring derived from the apprenticeship system. Ragins and Kram (2007) characterized the mentoring process as “a developmental relationship that is embedded in the career context.” (p.5). Prior research has identified mentorship as a contributor to career progress, organizational influence, and organizational advancement for individuals (Burke, 1984; Fagenson, 1989; Kram, 1983).

Within the professional setting, mentoring is considered a potentially transformative career development strategy that can offer benefit to the mentor, mentee, and the organization (Gilbreath, Rose, & Dietrich, 2008). When differentiating between the roles,
there is a perceived difference in knowledge, wisdom, or experience of mentor and the mentee (Bozeman & Feeney, 2007). The importance of mentorship cannot be overstated as individuals who receive mentoring can potentially have distinct advantages over their competitors in the professional world. Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, and Lima (2004) conducted a meta-analysis comparing various career outcomes of mentored and non-mentored employees and found mentored employees received higher compensation, obtained more promotions, experienced higher career satisfaction and commitment, and perceived greater opportunities for career advancement.

Although effective mentorship may lead to important career benefits, the concept has also been linked to social and psychological growth. Menges (2016) described traditional mentoring as “the provision of career and psychosocial support by an experienced mentor to a relatively less experienced protégé or mentee.” The relationship often involves a personal connection between likeminded individuals. Clutterbuck (2004) was quoted as stating, “Mentoring involves primarily listening with empathy, sharing experience (usually mutually), professional friendship, developing insight through reflection, being a sounding board, encouraging.” In many instances, mentors help ignite or facilitate an individual’s motivation to set or accomplish goals. To this point, Clutterbuck and Ragins (2002) maintained mentoring includes support, assistance, advocacy or guidance provided from one person to another in order to achieve one or more goals over a period of time. Adams (1998) further defined the mentoring process as “an integrated approach to advising, coaching, and nurturing focused on creating a viable relationship to enhance individual career, personal, professional growth and development.” This definition seems to capture the multiple layers of the mentoring process.
As previously mentioned, the benefits of receiving and providing mentorship may be significant for all involved. Early theoretical research on the subject conveys mentorship may help protégés develop a sense of professional identity and personal competence and can provide mentors with a sense of creativity and purpose (Erickson, 1963; Kram, 1985; Levinson et al., 1978). Mentors may also develop leadership skills and gain personal satisfaction from making a positive difference in the lives of their mentees. From an organizational standpoint, mentoring may facilitate better individual job performance, build team cohesion, and create a continuous learning culture (Leavitt, 2011). According to Young and Wright (2001), “if companies and/or academia want new employees to be successful, then these entities should consider mentoring as a way to guide neophytes through the process to ensure success.” (p. 202)

**The Role of the Mentor**

Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2020) defines a mentor as a ‘trusted counselor’. A mentor has been generally referred to as an individual who guides another to success (Young & Wright, 2001, p. 203), while aiding the development of a less experienced and knowledgeable individual (Hart, 2009). In a traditional sense, mentors are older in age than their mentees. However, this is not necessarily true as some companies have reverse mentoring programs where younger individuals share experiences and teach with older employees (e.g. technology). Professional mentors might include supervisors, colleagues, or someone from outside the chain of command (Eby, 1997). Long (1997) argues that the role of a mentor and supervisor are not interchangeable, but rather serve as a form of integration.
Most people who achieve relative success in their personal lives or respective fields have had some degree of mentoring. Effective mentors not only share information about their career journeys and personal experiences, but they also serve as motivators, advisors, emotional supporters, and role models for their mentees. Strauss, et al. (2013) point out good mentors should be accessible and able to identify and support development of potential strengths and skills in their mentees. They conducted a qualitative study on mentoring across two health centers and participants noticed that effective mentors made sure to remain accessible to their mentees (Strauss, et al., 2013).

In an educational setting, some of the qualities that embody good mentors include: being committed to the role as a mentor, accepting the protégé, skilled at providing support, effective in interpersonal context, communicates hope and optimism, and a model of continuous learning (Rowley, 1999). Hart (2009) specifies that a mentor’s responsibilities include developing and managing the mentoring relationship, sponsoring the mentee’s developmental activities, modeling effective leadership behavior, guiding and counseling, teaching, motivating, and inspiring the mentee. However, in order to maximize their role, mentors must take the role seriously and understand the implications their guidance may have on the futures of mentees. Terblanché (2007) suggested an effective mentor understands the role and meets the needs of the protégé, is knowledgeable and well-respected in the desired field, listens and is a problem solver. Effective mentors may add value to organizations and become a positive influence in the lives of their mentees by providing direction, support, and encouragement.

Mentors may serve in varying roles. Tsai and Helsel (2016) argue the role of a mentor and mentee are somewhat random and evolving. From a business perspective, mentors play
an important role in organizations as they ensure the transfer and continuation of knowledge and help fellow employees contribute as team members (Kram & Hall, 1996). Although mentors may serve in various roles, the most critical role is to aid in the career development of their mentees (Murray, 2001). This is where the mentor’s experience and expertise provide the most value.

Schein (1978), a prominent researcher in organizational development, identified seven types of roles for successful mentors in his book Career Dynamics: Matching Individual and Organizational Needs. He specified that some of these roles require the mentor to be in a position of power. The seven types of roles include:

1. Mentor as a teacher, coach or trainer
2. Mentor as a positive role model
3. Mentor as a developer of talent
4. Mentor as an opener of doors
5. Mentor as a protector
6. Mentor as a sponsor
7. Mentor as a successful leader

An organization may benefit from a mentor’s ability to inform and develop employees to help create organizational change, effectiveness, retention, organizational learning (Yirci & Kocabas, 2010). A mentor’s breadth of knowledge often comes from personal or professional experience. However, aspiring mentors can learn from other effective mentors and develop a useful skillset from studying the subject and understanding the dynamics of a mentor-mentee relationship.
There are a number of programs designed to train people to become mentors. An example of such a program is The Mentoring School, an award-winning international provider of certified mentor training. The Mentoring School has determined eight levels/roles that a mentor must conquer in order to maximize their ability as a mentor in their program. The levels are listed and described below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Level</th>
<th>Basic awareness of what it means to be a mentor and relies on own people skills.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Level</td>
<td>Someone who uses their experience and people skills to mentor another person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Level</td>
<td>A mentor who has taken a recognized course within their curriculum and meets the level of knowledge and reflection required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practitioner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Level</td>
<td>A mentor who has enhanced their third level qualification with further modules. They may train lower level mentors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Practitioner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Level</td>
<td>A mentor who has used their learning about mentoring to produce academic papers with The Mentoring School and a university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth Level</td>
<td>A mentor will work with The Mentoring School community to undertake field based research in best practice mentoring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh Level</td>
<td>A mentor is a master of mentoring when they have spent thousands of hours studying the subject and are seen as experts within The Mentoring School community. They would be involved in writing lower Level qualifications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth Level</td>
<td>A mentor who uses their skills to help others to train people to deliver Mentor Qualifications. They are involved in work with the Found of The Mentoring School to impact Mentoring practice around the world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Game Changer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2-1: The Mentoring School: Mentor Levels/Roles**
Source: http://www.thementoringschool.com/levels-of-mentoring/

The role of mentor has been characterized in a number of ways. Effective mentors are honest, trustworthy, and active listeners who have professional experience and share business contacts or networks with their mentees, which assists in their professional development and employment opportunities (Strauss, et al., 2013). Also, effective mentors empower mentees, yet understand when to keep their distance. There are a various people who may serve as
mentors. The following is a graphic representation of different types of roles mentors may serve within a community.

Table 2-2: Mentor Roles Across Various Domains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family/Friend Mentors</th>
<th>Educational Mentors</th>
<th>Sport/Recreation Mentors</th>
<th>Spiritual Mentors</th>
<th>Business Mentors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>Owners</td>
<td>Clergy</td>
<td>Owners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparents</td>
<td>Administrators / Staff</td>
<td>Executives / Administrators</td>
<td>Religious Figures</td>
<td>Executives / Administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings</td>
<td>Advisors</td>
<td>Managers / Directors</td>
<td>Spiritual Leaders</td>
<td>Supervisors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended Family</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Coaches</td>
<td>Parishioners</td>
<td>Attorneys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouses</td>
<td>Researchers</td>
<td>Camp Counselors</td>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>Agents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close Friends</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Teammates / Peers</td>
<td>Instructors</td>
<td>Professional Peers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Role of the Mentee

The terms mentee and protégé are used synonymously and interchangeably. Mentee is primarily used in the present study, which pertains to an individual who is guided by a mentor. There is extensive research on the mentor-mentee relationship but the focus has been almost exclusively from the mentor’s perspective (Tsai & Helsel, 2016). Few qualitative studies have featured famous individuals reflecting back on their mentoring experiences from a mentee perspective. Learning from the mentoring experiences of successful professionals who were once mentees and have since become mentors may provide a clearer understanding of each role and offer insight into what actions should be taken to excel in both roles.

A good mentee who understands the role of mentors may become a great mentor in the maturation process (Tsai & Helsel, 2016). Ragins & Cotton (1991) indicated mentee experience plays a role in improving skills and confidence when developing mentoring
relationships because experienced mentees may have acquired strategies for obtaining mentors or possess more accurate perceptions of potential obstacles to mentoring. Much of the literature suggests the mentoring relationship is reciprocal. Gouldner (1960) mentioned previous mentoring experience likely reflects the norm of reciprocity in mentor-mentee interactions. As a result, mentees are motivated to reciprocate the encouragement and support they have received by becoming mentors for others (Allen, Poteet, & Burroughs, 1997). An individual’s experience as a mentee often leads to a future desire to become a mentor (Ragins & Cotton, 1993; Allen, Poteet, and Burroughs, 1997; Allen, Poteet, Russell et al., 1997; Ragins & Scandura, 1999; Bozionelos, 2004). In the process, there becomes a higher likelihood of a mutually beneficial exchange between both parties. Although familiarity often impacts a mentee’s desire and ability to transition into a mentor role, there are also individuals who may have lacked mentorship at key moments in their lives, which motivated them to become mentors themselves.

There have been a few studies conducted in the medical field that capture crucial qualities mentees should look for in a mentor and vice versa. Generally, mentees are attracted to mentors based on their attitudes or accomplishments and expect mentors to be approachable and available. Clark et al. (2000) surveyed doctoral students in the world of clinical psychology and determined that mentees expected mentors to serve as role models and friends. In order to attract potential mentors, graduate students and early professionals in the medical field should clarify their own goals, values, motivation, and communication style as mentees (Moores, Holly, & Collen, 2018). Practitioners in medicine often encounter intense work-related pressures which require an abundance of technical and social skills. From the perspective of the mentee, Tsai and Helsel (2016) provide an excellent description
of the ideal mentor for an individual in a mentee role entering the medicine professional to

learn from or emulate:

The “perfect” mentor is someone you want to emulate, admire and develop into—is one who is confident, talented in clinical and technical skills, amicable in social settings, productive in academics, and, not to forget in this day and age, possessed of the financial and business savvy to sustain and grow a successful and productive practice. Above all, this mentor wants, craves, and desires actively to follow, push, and grow your career! A mentor who is clinically and technically talented but who is also empathetic and compassionate in providing the best treatment is an ideal mentor in this arena but often rarely exists. (p. 642)

Much of a mentee’s role is focused on communication, both verbal and nonverbal. In order to be effective, the relationship between a mentor and a mentee requires deliberate effort and clear communication (Masters & Kreeger, 2017). Strauss et al. (2013) maintain mentees should be open to feedback, respectful of their mentor’s input and time, and listen and take advice seriously. Other important strategies for mentees include taking initiative, asking questions, meeting often, expressing their need clearly, being open to discussion/criticism, and being honest/forthright with concerns.

**Mentor-Mentee Selection Process: The Initial Connection**

A mentor-mentee relationship is initially formed based on some type of connection between two individuals. Wright (2004) states that mentoring is an “intentional, exclusive, intensive, voluntary relationship between two persons—a teaching/learning connection…in which both persons work to nurture the relationship and contribute to the connection” (p. 55). However, forming connections with others is really the essence of communication and encompasses a degree of interpersonal skills on behalf of both individuals entering the mentoring relationship. Mentor-mentee relationships are not “One size fits all” and forming unique connections with individuals can be both rewarding and challenging. The mentor-
mentee selection process may require much effort because, in many ways, finding the right connection with a mentor can be a profession within a profession. As previously indicated mentors are often chosen by mentees based on their reputation, experience level, and established success. On the other hand, mentors typically have complete discretion over their choice of mentee. After the mentoring relationship is formed, the career and psychosocial functions that differentiate a mentoring relationship from other types of relationships become apparent (Kram, 1985).

Research on mentor-mentee relationships has primarily been focused on two theories: the similarity attraction paradigm and social exchange theory. The similarity attraction paradigm is an earlier theory that pertains to people seeking to connect with others who are similar. Byrne (1971) suggested mentors will be attracted to potential mentees they perceive to be similar to themselves. Social exchange theory involves more of a cost-benefit analysis where individuals decide to enter relationships if they believe the rewards will be greater than the costs (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1958; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Kram (1985) pointed out that mentors often prefer mentees to be driven, accomplished, and possess technical knowledge. In many instances, mentors choose mentees based on their involvement in important projects (Hunt & Michael, 1983; Zey, 1984). Allen, Poteet, and Russell (2000) indicated ability/potential and the need for help were important factors for mentors in choosing mentees, but found that mentors tend to place a greater emphasis in choosing mentees based on high ability/potential and willingness to learn rather than low ability/potential and low willingness to learn. Allen (2004) further examined the role in selection of mentee ability and willingness to learn in both a laboratory experiment and a field study and the results suggested that a willingness to learn could compensate for low ability. However, the results
indicated that when rewards were available, mentors were less likely to choose individuals less talented or motivated (Allen, 2004).

Costs and rewards can factor into an individual’s decision to get involved in a mentoring relationship. Ragins and Scandura (1999) conducted a study involving a sample of executives examining the costs and benefits associated with being a mentor and revealed five categories of benefits which included rewarding experience, improved job performance, loyal base of support, recognition by others, and generativity (leaving a legacy to future generations). A significant finding was that intention to mentor positively related to expected benefits and negatively related to expected costs (Ragins & Scandura, 1999). This supports reciprocation being an important aspect of mentor-mentee relationships. However, one key characteristic that has been linked to successful mentors is the quality of being altruistic (Strauss, et al., 2013), which is contrary to the rewards argument.

In seeking mentorship in the workplace, research suggests men have some advantages over women in forming mentoring relationships. Men tend to have an easier time initiating mentor-mentee relationships with potential mentors of the same gender (Ragins & Cotton, 1991). Most of the CEOs of fortune 500 companies are men and the majority of power positions in companies are also occupied by men. In terms of mentoring, same-gender mentorships outnumber cross-gender mentorships (Allen & Eby, 2003; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). Therefore, many theorists argue women have more obstacles in acquiring mentors when compared to men (Kram, 1985; Hunt & Michael, 1983; Noe, 1988; Ragins, 1989). In recent years, there has been an increase in mentorship programs aimed to help women develop mentor-mentee relationships.
Mentor-Mentee Relationship: The Foundation

Once the initial selection is made, the process of mentoring is considered long-term (Vance and Olsen, 2002), and consists of a relationship based on mutual trust and respect (Bose, 2016; Ayers & Griffin, 2005). Mentoring is not a one-way transaction, but more of an exchange process that must be reciprocal in terms of the mentor and mentee sharing knowledge, insight, and skills (Pawson, 2004; Woolnough, Davidson & Fielden, 2007). The mentoring relationship is dyadic in nature as both individuals contribute to its development.

There have been numerous studies across several disciplines on mentorship relationships. Ragins and Kram (2007) posit “a core feature that defines mentoring relationships and distinguishes it from other types of personal relationships is that mentoring is a developmental relationship that is embedded within the career context.” (p. 5) Therefore, much of the research conducted on mentoring has been focused in a professional or organizational environment.

Kram’s early work on mentoring relationships served as a catalyst for advancement on the subject. Kram (1983) published a groundbreaking article in which she created four-phase model that illustrates how a mentor-mentee relationship can evolve over a number of years. The four phases are initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition. Each of the phases is defined by developmental functions, intuitive experiences, and connective patterns influenced by the individual needs of each party involved in the relationship along with organizational considerations. The initiation phase is where the relationship is established and trust is built. It typically lasts for 6 to 12 months. The mentor is able to identify the needs of the mentee during this stage. In the cultivation phase, the foundation of the relationship is formed through regular interaction. The phase can last from 2 to 5 years. The separation
phase provides the mentee with some autonomy as meetings become less frequent. More disappointment can occur during this stage because the mentee has more independence in decision-making. In the redefinition phase, the nature of their relationship changes and the mentor and mentee become more like colleagues or peers. Mentors and mentees may have differing perceptions of their relationship. Figure 2-1 is an illustration of Kram’s Four-Phase Model of Mentoring.

![Mentoring Phases](image)

**Figure 2-1:** Kram’s (1983) Four-Phase Model on Mentoring

Two years later, Kram (1985) published another groundbreaking study that focused on the nature of a variety of relationships between junior and senior associates, or between peers. Relevant findings suggest mentoring relationships consist of reflection, knowledge of self and profession, knowledge of mentoring process and skills, communication and social
skills, practice, and support, while mutual liking, identification, and attraction are key interpersonal processes connected with the development of mentoring relationships (Kram, 1985).

An important foundation of mentoring relationships is meeting the developmental needs of each individual involved in the process. According to Kram's mentor role theory (1985), mentors offer two broad categories of mentor functions: career development and psychosocial functions. The career development function helps mentees adjust to a new working environment and assists in the mentee’s advancement within the organization. The theory pinpoints five specific career development functions that mentors provide: sponsoring promotions and lateral moves, coaching the protégé, protecting the protégé from adverse forces, providing challenging assignments, and increasing the protégé’s exposure and visibility (Kram, 1985). This reiterates that tutelage provided by mentors may be invaluable to the professional development of mentees.

The second category, psychosocial functions, pertains to interpersonal aspects of the mentor-mentee relationship and enhances the protégé’s sense of competence, self-efficacy, and professional and personal development (Kram, 1985). Ragins and Cotton (1999) added that although a mentor's power and position in the organization are associated with the career function, the quality of the interpersonal relationship and the emotional connection between the individuals characterizes the psychosocial function. In other words, the focus of career development functions is mainly on the professional development of individuals and organizational performance, conversely psychosocial functions address personal development and a wide range of life skills.
Effective communication is one of the most important life skills an individual can possess. Miscommunications can derail the mentoring process. Effective communication involves active listening, sharing thoughts candidly, maintaining accountability, empathy, and reflection (Zachary, 2011, p. 37-38). Lois Zachary has written multiple books on mentoring and is considered an international expert on the subject. In *The Mentor’s Guide: Facilitating Effective Learning Relationships*, Zachary (2011) emphasized the importance of paying close attention to nuances and cultural differences within the mentor-mentee communication process. According to Zachary (2011), mentors must recognize ethnic differences and develop what a “flexible cultural lens” (p. 42). In other words, mentors must appreciate various cultures and also understand differences in individual personalities.

Zachary described the mentor-mentee relationship as a learning partnership that grows and develops over time and indicated the mentoring relationships move through four phases. Zachary’s four-phase model includes 1) preparing, 2) negotiating, 3) enabling, and 4) closing. The preparing phase requires self-awareness and an assertive effort on behalf of the mentor to better understand the needs of the mentee. The negotiating phase entails coming to a common agreement on shared goals and relationship expectations. In the enabling phase, the mentor nurtures the mentee’s growth through effective communication and building trust, while providing candid feedback and constructive criticism. The closing phase includes evaluating learning outcomes and celebrating achievement. Zachary’s Four-Phases of the Mentoring Process is presented in Figure 2-2.
Formal and Informal Mentoring Relationships

Although there are several ways to provide mentoring, the two main forms often discussed in literature are formal and informal mentoring relationships. There are advantages to both, however, each has distinct characteristics. The primary difference between the two forms is formal mentoring is more structured and based on a business objective of an organization, whereas informal mentoring occurs outside of a formal structure and focuses on the individual. Subsequent paragraphs will further describe the two forms as well as their advantages and disadvantages.

**Formal Mentoring**

Formal mentoring relationships are established through an organizational program, which assigns mentors to mentees and facilities the relationship (Wanberg, et al., 2003). The
formal mentoring process typically entails an organization matching more experienced and knowledgeable employees who serve as mentors with less experienced employees who are considered mentees in order to lend career support (e.g., learning a new system, acquiring necessary job skills) and psychosocial support (e.g., counseling and encouragement) with the goal of helping the mentee develop, both personally and professionally (Baugh & Fagenson-Eland, 2007; Finkelstein, Allen, Ritchie, Lynch, & Montei, 2012; Kram, 1985; Noe, Greenberger, & Wang, 2002; Wang, Tomlinson, & Noe, 2010; Weinberg & Lankau, 2011). Each organization creates and implements formal mentoring programs differently. Formal mentoring relationships tend to be led by organizational coordinators who guide the interaction and set expectations with regard to participation in mandatory introductory sessions or ongoing training, number of meeting times, discussion topics and goal setting (Egan & Song, 2008). Critical determinants to the success of this interaction between individuals within a formal mentoring program is based on the quality and commitment of the mentor involved (Allen, Eby, & Lentz, 2006; Allen & Poteet, 1999; Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000).

There are important benefits to receiving formal mentoring. The development of human resources through mentoring can improve employee motivation, job performance, and retention rates (Wilson & Elman, 1990). Clutterbuck (2004) maintains that businesses who implement mentoring programs experience improved employee motivation, communication, and planning. From an organizational standpoint, effective formal mentoring programs may provide businesses with a strong foundation for long-term survival. According to Wilson and Elman (1990):
Formal mentoring provides a structured system for strengthening and assuring the continuity of organizational culture. The existence of a strong corporate culture that provides members with a common value base and with implicit knowledge of what is expected of them and what they in turn can expect from the organization can be vital to organizational success and effectiveness. (p. 89).

In a randomized experiment conducted in a large U.S. Fortune 500 healthcare organization, Egan and Song (2008) found highly facilitated formal mentoring led to higher job satisfaction, organizational commitment, person-organization fit, and manager performance ratings compared with lower mentored or non-mentoring employees.

With an increased societal awareness of the importance of mentorship, there has been an insurgence of formal mentorship programs set up at various institutions. It is important to understand that although there may be significant career and psychosocial benefits associated with formal mentoring programs, failed mentoring relationships are common as well. When implementing a formal mentoring program, it is imperative that organizational leaders pay attention to the proper matching of mentors and mentees because mismatching is a common practice with assigning formal mentorship relationships. Menges (2015) conducted a study on mentor-mentee dyads in a formal mentoring program and determined the support that mentees received from mentors largely depended on the similarity of personality characteristics. A qualitative study examining relational problems in formal organizational mentoring programs found that mismatches regarding personality, values, and working style were the most common mentoring problems for both mentors and mentees (Eby, McManus, Simon, & Russell, 2000). With mismatching, the benefits of mentoring can be counterproductive. Instead, the failed relationships can lead to higher stress levels for mentees, stronger intentions to leave the organization and the mentoring relationship, less relational learning and job satisfaction, more psychological job withdrawal, and increased
depression compared with successful formal mentoring relationships (Eby & Allen, 2002; Eby & McManus, 2004).

Another disadvantage of formal mentoring is the potential for conflicting priorities. Roberts (1999) argues that formal mentoring could legitimately raise questions in regards to whether the organization or mentee come first. As previously mentioned, in a typical mentor-mentee relationship, there are reciprocal elements involved. However, formal mentoring programs are often focused on raising employee productivity in order to affect the bottom line, rather than the self-betterment of each individual employee.

In many cases, it can be difficult for employees to seek mentors because of feelings of intimidation or limited availability to organizational leaders. Ragins and Cotton (1991) pointed out reasons employees are hesitant or choose not to approach employees higher than them in the chain of command may include: lack of access (e.g. shortage of mentors or lack of opportunity), fear of initiating the relationship (e.g. fear of rejection), unwillingness of the mentor (e.g. because of gender, race, personality, etc.), opinion of others (e.g. supervisor disapproval), and misinterpretation of approach (e.g. possible sexual advance). Despite the prospect of mismatching mentoring relationships or greedy corporate agendas, evidence overwhelmingly supports the overall benefits of having formal mentoring programs within an organization. If implemented fairly and mentors-mentees are matched properly, organizations can greatly benefit from formalized mentoring programs.

**Informal Mentoring**

As previously expressed, informal mentoring relationships are unstructured and happen based on chemistry between a mentor and mentee. Inzer and Crawford (2005) described informal mentoring as “a natural component of relationships that occurs
throughout the society, in the workplace, as well as in social, professional, and family activities.” (p. 35). Informal mentoring relationships develop independently and organically often from mutual identification, interpersonal comfort, and sympathy (Kram, 1985). These relationships often consist of like-minded individuals who share similarities or common traits. There are several ways of meeting informal mentors (family, friends, work, education, faith). For some, informal mentoring relationships may be instrumental in their personal and professional development.

Informal mentoring relationships often occur through mutual initiation and networking between mentee and mentor (Ragins & Cotton, 1991). In informal mentoring relationships, both mentors and mentees collaborate and decide on goals/objectives they intend to pursue and set a timeline for achieving them (Allen & Eby, 2003). There is limited research available on the individual experiences of informal mentoring relationships. Ragins and Cotton (1999) conducted a gendered study on formal and informal mentoring within an organization and found that mentees of informal mentors viewed their mentors as more effective and received greater compensation than mentees of formal mentors. The participants reported overall better satisfaction with their informal mentors compared with formal mentors and expressed better career-related and psychosocial benefits. There are a number of other benefits to informal mentoring relationships. Unlike formal relationships, individuals choose informal relationships and they are not arranged or forced. The mentor and mentee have the flexibility to be selective in terms of whom they wish to associate with and these relationships can last for years (Nemanick, 2000). As a result, the connection is often stronger between the mentor and mentee.

Although there are several advantages to informal mentoring relationships, negative
attitudes toward the practice have been expressed. In a qualitative study conducted from the perspective of outsiders describing their perceptions of informal mentoring others received within their team or organization, participants overwhelmingly felt negative emotions such as frustration, envy, exclusion, discrimination, and perceived arrogance (Tahitu, 2017). In another qualitative study on the informal culture of the academic STEM fields, women felt positioned as outsiders and expressed overt sexism and subtle forms of exclusion (De Welde & Laursen, 2011). Despite these challenges within organizations to develop fair practices to provide mentorship for all employees, the reality is individuals in positions of power must make it a priority to provide mentoring to individuals of all backgrounds. In turn, employees must make an assertive effort to communicate effectively and network.

**Mentoring Experiences in Various Professions: Positive and Negative**

Effective mentorship is crucial to career success and satisfaction for both mentors and mentees (Strauss, et al., 2013). Although mentees are certainly looking for a number of attributes in a mentor, forming positive and productive relationships also requires mentees to exhibit desirable attributes and practices (Hudson, 2013). In the subsequent sections, mentorship will be discussed relative to a variety of professional disciplines.

**Mentoring in Business**

In the business world, mentorship is a major aspect of employee development and an important tool for startups and established enterprises because of its positive results and employee benefits (Moore & Wang, 2017). Entrepreneurs, who are a source of economic wealth and innovation in communities, often engage in the practice of mentoring. Research suggests mentorship is considered to be a useful method for entrepreneurs to transfer
knowledge, skills, and attributes to company employees or aspiring entrepreneurs (Agbim et al., 2013; Wilbanks, 2013; St-Jean and Mathieu, 2015). Moore and Wang (2017) found that effective mentoring may lead to benefits for individuals and companies such as increased innovativeness and adaptability of leaders for fostering an environment of innovation. Three ways quality mentoring has been evaluated is through vocational support (coaching), psychosocial support (encouraging), and role modeling (developing), which foster an environment of risk taking and innovation (Scandura & Ragins, 1993; Godshalk & Sosik, 2000). Innovation and risk taking can lead to increased productivity within businesses and major breakthroughs that can address various global issues.

Company employees gain several additional benefits from receiving effective mentorship. Mentoring can have an impact on employee engagement and company turnover. Sange and Srivasatave (2012) surveyed 170 sales and marketing professionals and determined employees who were part of a mentoring relationship had significantly higher engagement scores when compared with employees who were not mentored. There is evidence that suggests mentorship may reduce turnover in businesses (Kilian, et al., 2005). This makes sense considering an important aspect of employee morale is a positive work experiences. There is also data that links mentorship to employee loyalty. In a survey conducted on 5,000 newly hired sales representatives, those who received mentoring experienced stronger organizational commitment and lower intention to leave their organization compared with non-mentored employees (Brashear, et al., 2006). It appears value of mentorship is worth investing in by organizations.

As technology continues to become an essential and influential part of the job market and academic institutions, there is less reliance on oral and written communication skills by
younger generations. Consequently, it is becoming increasingly difficult for those who have not developed soft skills to connect with mentors. Soft skills are an individual’s ability to communicate effectively through both written and oral skills, utilizing critical thinking and problem solving skills, and building and maintaining relationships with others (Sahni, 2011).

Chris Myers with Forbes Magazine stated:

    As the leader of a growing company, one thing that has always amazed me is the lack of enthusiasm that young employees tend to have about the concept of mentorship. I’m not sure if it’s simply a Millennial trait or something else, but I’ve never once had a team member actively seek out formal mentorship from senior members of the team. (Myers, 2016)

As previously expressed, there is a need for young people to seek mentorship in the professional world in order to acquire the necessary tools to maximum career benefits. It is imperative that young professionals understand the mentor-mentee relationship is reciprocal as well as value the importance of seeking multiple mentors to aid in their development.

**Mentoring in Higher Education**

    Academia is an environment in which mentoring often occurs. There are several individuals in education that tirelessly work to provide mentoring for their students. These may include: teachers, advisors, administrators, researchers, and peers. The doctoral student–faculty dyad is a common platform for which mentor-mentee relationships form. Clark, Harden, and Johnson (2000) conducted a study with a sample 800 clinical psychology doctoral students and revealed 91 percent evaluated the relationship with their mentor as positive. In this study, support, intelligent, and knowledgeable were identified as the most common qualities that they perceive in a successful mentor. Within the graduate educational environment, Galbraith and James (2004) argue that mentoring is “an intricate, long-term,
one-on-one relationship that goes beyond simply providing information.” (p.697). There are countless instances where educators are making a positive impact in the lives of students at all levels of education. However, like so many other professions, the efforts of teachers often go unnoticed due to conflicting priorities, lack of appreciation, and cronyism from high level administrators.

The notable book titled *Beer and Circus* by Murray Sperber provides an in-depth analysis of several complex issues associated with college sports and the educational system at public research universities. It highlights issues in higher education, one of which is a general lack of availability of professors, especially for undergraduate students. In an ambitious and competitive environment such as academia, students are often provided minimum attention by faculty and administrators who are focused on prestige or institutional excellence (Sperber, 2000). Sperber argues uninspiring lectures, research pressures, and lack of effort by professors to connect with students, combined with ill-prepared part-time instructors and TAs, has lowered the quality of undergraduate education.

Sperber pointed out that several professors at public universities come from elite academic backgrounds and have difficulty relating to undergraduate students. He goes as far as to accuse several professors of viewing undergraduate students with contempt. Sperber (2000) proposed one way to address these issues is to “hire, promote, and reward faculty primarily for teaching undergraduates, and very secondarily for research, with some of their research devoted to pedagogy.” (p. 264)

*Beer and Circus* was a wakeup call for many in academia. Having spent the last 12 years as an educator at several academic institutions and another 11 years as a college student, I have a considerable amount of experience serving in both roles, which has
provided a somewhat balanced perspective. As a student, I have had both positive and negative experiences with teachers in the classroom. As an instructor, I occasionally survey my students by asking them to raise their hands if they have had one mentor in education and again if they have had multiple mentors. Typically, less than a third of the class acknowledges that they have had at least one mentor in education. There are professors who take the time to provide mentoring for their students and are doing an outstanding job. However, it is inconceivable and inexcusable when professors neglect their duties to provide mentoring to students of all rankings, especially because of the impactful position they occupy and considering a major aspect of their job description entails being committed to serving students.

**Mentoring in the Nursing Profession**

Much of the mentoring research within the medical field has been focused in the nursing profession. There have been several studies on the subject. In nursing, the mentoring relationship is regarded as a valuable departmental tool and can play a crucial role in early career and business success (Fielden, Davidson, & Sutherland, 2009). When entering the profession, as with many others, there is a steep learning curve for healthcare professionals. Effective mentoring may help ease the transition with job duties and aid in the development of valuable leadership skills. A longitudinal study examined ways in which mentoring relationships impacted the professional development of nurses and suggested that mentoring of early career nurses was an effective form of leadership development (Fielden, Davidson, & Sutherland, 2009). In the case of the medical industry, poor job performance can threaten patients’ health outcomes or even their lives. In an article that focused on a caring approach with mentoring for nurses, Wagner and Seymour (2007) asserted that “when guided by a
caring framework of trust, commitment, compassion, and competence, mentoring as a caring action builds healthy relationships and energizes environments.” (p. 202). This supports the idea that mentorship is a tool to serve others and is most effective when the mentoring comes from the heart.

**Mentoring in Sports**

Compared with other domains, research on mentoring in sport is limited. Much of the mentoring literature in sport focuses on either coach-player relationships or coach-coach relationships. The difference between mentoring and coaching has been discussed often in previous research.

Purdy, Potrac, and Paulauskas (2016) generally described a coach’s role and duty as meeting an athlete’s distinctive needs and focusing on well-being, health, and performance. Motivate, guide, train, and prepare are all terms that have been used when discussing the duties of a coach. Coaching has been mentioned as a way to improve performance or develop skills through tutoring or instruction (Goldsmith, Lyons, & Freas, 2000). Côté and Gilbert (2009) point out effective coaches meet their objectives and produce results through the application of their professional, intrapersonal, and interpersonal knowledge, which are acquired from experience.

Mentoring is considered one of the central functions of coaching. Several successful coaches attribute their successes to mentorship or guidance they received during the course of their careers or lives. Gilbert (2017) suggests a key role for a coach as a quality mentor is being available to listen for athletes. Establishing a mentoring relationship may be easy for some and challenging for others. Gilbert (2017) provided a six-step strategy for coaches to follow in building a mentoring relationship: 1) identify a potential mentor, 2) be specific with
mentoring needs, 3) make contact with the potential mentor, 4) discuss the “rules of engagement” (clarity of needs and wants), 5) schedule meetings or ask for suggestions for another mentor, and 6) formally thank mentor.

Sawiuk, Taylor, and Groom (2016) explored the mentoring experiences of 15 elite coach mentors from a variety of sports. The elite coach mentors recommended mentees seek out multiple mentors, including cross-sports and non-sport mentors. This reiterates Higgins and Kram’s (2001) view that mentoring is most effective when the mentee has access to an abundance of mentors. The biggest distinction made between coaching and mentoring is that coaching is short-term practice, whereas mentoring is more of a long-term relationship. Schempp et al. (2016) found that basketball coaches who maintained longer mentoring relationships regarded their mentors more highly in both psychosocial and career functions. Whether formal or informal, all successful coaches rely on mentors to improve their learning through collaboration (Gilbert, 2017).

In the coaching profession, mentoring is encouraged as a contextual pedagogical tool used to facilitate coach learning (Leeder, 2018). Although coaches often grow and develop within the profession by being taught by other coaches, their first exposure to mentorship usually starts as athletes. In a study that surveyed varsity coaches from a variety of sports on perceptions of their roles in developing player life skills, several of the coaches reflected back on their mentorship experiences as athletes and admitted that it took them several years to realize how much their coaches/mentors impacted their lives (Gould, Chung, Smith, & White, 2006). This provides rationale for interviewing retired athletes who are in positions to holistically reflect back on their mentorship experiences.

In most cases, coaches were once athletes at some level and may have received
mentoring during their sports pursuits. Bloom, Bush, Schinke, and Salmela (1998) examined the importance of mentorship in the development of coaches and athletes. A relevant finding was expert coaches received mentoring from different types of mentors throughout their careers and received guidance and attention of outstanding coaches as athletes, which became invaluable during the course of their careers (Bloom et al., 1998). Then, the expert coaches received additional mentoring throughout their coaching careers that helped allow them to progress and develop.

John Wooden, legendary former UCLA head basketball coach and winner of 10 national championships, is often referenced for having made a positive difference in the lives of his athletes. In his book *A Game Plan for Life: The Power of Mentoring*, Wooden described mentors as caring people who give honest assessments for the betterment of their mentees:

> What it comes down to, I believe, that mentoring often involves telling people what they need to hear, rather than what they want to hear. When you are able to be humbly honest with someone about a situation with which you have personal experience—even if you risk angering or hurting that person—you are offering the most valuable gift of all. (Wooden & Yaeger, 2009, p. 61)

Wooden considered himself a teacher first and a coach second. He created his “Pyramid of Success” to guide and inspire others and talked about what he felt was his main responsibility: “While I made my living as a coach, I have lived my life to be a mentor—and to be mentored!—constantly.” (Wooden & Yaeger, 2009, p. 3)

Wooden reflected back on his mentoring experiences and mentioned seven mentors as having been instrumental to his success. Mentors Wooden listed included: Joshua Wooden (his father), Nellie Wooden (his wife), Earl Warringer (his elementary principal and first
coach), Glenn Curtis (his high school coach), and Ward “Piggy” Lambert (his college coach). Interestingly, the final two mentors he referenced were people he never met in his life, Mother Teresa and Abraham Lincoln. In my own personal narrative, I referenced my lack of mentorship growing up and mentioned how Michael Jordan and Walter Payton were my heroes. Although I dedicated time and effort to researching my heroes and respected the principles they outwardly stood for, I never met these individuals as well. Whether or not they can be considered mentors is debatable. However, this clearly shows the influence famous figures have on young people.

Tony Dungy, a well-respected former NFL head coach and champion, provided some mentoring guidelines in his book titled *The Mentor Leader: Secrets to Building People and Teams that Win Consistently*. The book gives several examples of effective mentoring across multiple domains. He attributes his success to his Mentor-Leader approach and outlines mentoring strategies for enhancing potential. Dungy’s “Seven E’s” for enhancing potential are engage, educate, equip, encourage, empower, energize, and elevate (Dungy & Whitaker, 2010).

Peer mentoring is another prevalent practice within sports, which often involves teammates serving as senior teammates serving as mentors to junior members. In her early work on mentorship, Kram (1983) highlighted the importance of peer relationships in the career context and how they offer “the opportunity for greater mutuality and sense of equality” (p. 623). In the sports realm, many athletes have stressed the importance of being mentored by older teammates. Hoffmann, Loughhead, and Bloom (2017) examined the experiences of peer mentored Canadian elite mentored athletes aged 20 to 34. The results revealed athlete mentors provided personal benefits as well as facilitated better performance
and confidence. There appears to be few other studies in sports that have gained access to elite athletes. Although the sample used in their study is impressive, one observation is the age range of the participants may somewhat limit the breadth of their introspective experiences when compared to interviewing retired athletes who have had a much more in-depth lived experience. As previously mentioned, former professional athletes, such as NBA players, have been outspoken on the need for mentorship and have shared stories on how integral veteran teammates were in their professional development.

**Mentor as a Leader**

There is a close association between mentorship and leadership. Providing sound mentoring to mentees is a trademark of effective leaders. Mentorship is often considered one of the best ways to develop leadership potential (Posner & Kouzes, 1993). Because mentorship is considered a developmental strategy used mainly in the career context, it is imperative to start by better understanding leadership within professional organizations.

To understand leadership in the context of an organization, Bolman and Deal (1984, 1991) maintain that an individual’s behavior within an organization is determined by their frame of reference and their perspective with regard to how he or she sees the world. The four frames identified by Bolman and Deal are: 1) structural frame, 2) human resource frame, 3) political frame, and 4) symbolic frame. The structural frame relates to leaders making sure policies and procedures are clearly understood and followed. The human resource frame focuses primarily on meeting the needs of employees (Scott, 1999). From this perspective, human resource leaders are empathetic and seek to lead through facilitation and empowerment, which are traits of effective mentors. The political frame recognizes the internal battle for resources within an organization and symbolic frame focus on the values of
the organization and attempt to instill pride in its constituents or members through symbolic expression (Scott, 1999). Bolman and Deal argue that a leader of an organization should use these frames when making decisions. Mentoring seems to fit in the human resources frame, which sees the organization as a larger family striving toward collective goals. From this perspective, it is important for leaders to collectively mentor employees for the betterment of the individual and organization.

The next section will discuss three prominent leadership theories that may be connected to mentorship. Research suggests there is a strong correlation between effective mentoring, servant leadership, and transformational leadership (Lawrence, 2013). Leader-member exchange theory has also been mentioned with regard to mentorship. The subsequent paragraphs will cover each of the frameworks and reveal why the servant leadership model fits our study best.

**Transformational Leadership**

Bass (1985) introduced the concept of transformational leadership in which he outlines three ways in which a leader transforms followers: (1) increasing their awareness, (2) getting them to focus first on team or organizational goals, rather than their own interests, and (3) activating their higher-order needs. The theory centers on leader-follower interaction and relationship developing, emphasizing the importance of building rapport and trust. Trust is a foundational principle of mentorship. Sosik and Godshalk (2000) indicate that mentoring relationships may develop from the emotional attachment followers may have to transformational leaders. Empowerment is a process that has been associated with effective mentorship. Aronson (2001) points out that transformational leadership “concentrates on strategies of empowerment.” (p. 247).
The four main elements of the theory are idealized behaviors, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. Bass (1985) suggested that the individual consideration element may have the strongest linkage to mentoring because of the one-on-one interaction and the mentor’s concern with the developmental needs of a mentee. Transformational leadership relates to performance and effective mentoring can help facilitate positive work attitudes, behaviors, and results in employees. The supervisory chain of command is a common emplacement for mentoring. Supervisors are often in the best position to interact with employees and provide mentoring. Transformational leadership theory has been referenced in the context of mentoring in terms of how managers can inspire subordinates by assuming the roles of coach, teacher, and mentor (Leavitt, 2011). Bass (1985) acknowledged that mentoring may be present in some superior-subordinate relationships and expressed that certain situations may facilitate employee mentoring. In a study on mentoring intentions and barriers in state government supervisors, Allen, Poteet, & Russell, et al. (1997) found that employees having good relationships with their supervisors correlated with their willingness to mentor others. A research area that may be expanded on is how a leader’s style may relate to mentoring.

Another argument that provides strong support for the connection between transformational leadership and mentorship is the deep concern for transformational leaders and mentors have for individuals. Transformational leaders genuinely care about the well-being of the people they are leading and agree to engage in a process that will provoke change within those individuals (Vallee & Bloom, 2005). A major priority for elite sport teams is reaching peak performance, which is impacted by team cohesion. A transformational
leader listens to the concerns of individuals and considers multiple perspectives in decision-making, which are traits associated with mentoring.

From an organizational standpoint, transformational Leadership has been portrayed as one of the most effective leadership styles when change is prominent (Mumford, et al., 2002). Transformational leadership and mentoring have a connection when discussing outcomes such as career mobility, performance, commitment, and satisfaction (Dreher & Ash, 1990). In a professional sports league like the NBA where team dynamics constantly change perhaps transformational leadership is an appropriate approach to mentorship. Welty-Peachey, Burton, and Wells (2014) provide support for this argument and suggested leadership begins with an executive officer of an organization and filters to lower levels through empowerment.Although there is little known in regards to the frequency and dynamics of mentoring in NBA front offices, the status, image, and profitability of the NBA has been largely contributed to a transformational leader, former NBA commissioner David Stern. Owners bought into his vision and transformed the league into a multibillion dollar enterprise.

A new interpretation of the theory suggests transformational leadership is based on intrinsic rewards that depend on follower performance (Graen & Canedo, 2017), and any relationship with average leadership style becomes implausible (Kozłowski, Mak, & Chao, 2016). For instance, when a follower may need direction for developing purpose for life and work, a leader may use incentives such as mentoring or counseling. However, a key distinction when attempting to link transformational leadership to mentoring is that transformational leadership is performance oriented (Bass, 1985), while mentoring is development-oriented (Burke, McKenna, & McKeen, 1991). Many of the mentoring
relationships successful athletes form in their lives happen prior to reaching the professional level or working under the organizational umbrella. Therefore, transformational leadership seems to be more applicable to organizations.

**Theoretical Framework: Servant Leadership**

Servant leadership seems to be the most plausible theory that fits the purpose of the present study. Although the idea of servant leadership has arguably been around for centuries, Robert Greenleaf first introduced the term in an essay he wrote in 1970. Greenleaf’s inspiration for writing the essay came from reading *Journey to the East* by Herman Hesse. The main character was a man named Leo, who first served a group of travelers by boosting their morale and keeping their spirits high. Leo then disappeared and the other travelers imploded and did not finish the journey. Years later, one of the men encountered Leo and learned he was in a high leadership position and responsible for sponsoring the journey. The idea behind the theory is in order to lead one must be a servant first.

The most significant attribute of a servant-leader is a good heart. Servant leaders place other peoples’ needs, aspirations, and interests above their own (Greenleaf, 1970). Understanding what motivates people to lead by serving others is critical for the future of humanity (Greenleaf, 1977). The theory can be applied to identifying the needs of communities, colleagues, customers, and protégés. Mentoring is a “developmental, empowering and nurturing relationship extending over time in which mutual sharing, learning, and growth occur in an atmosphere of respect, collegiality, and affirmation” (Vance & Olsen, 1998). Servant leaders and mentors empower individuals to become leaders themselves. Traditional leadership typically involves a show of dominance or authority from
the upper echelons of power, whereas servant leaders share power, put others first, and help others develop (Greenleaf, 1970). Parolini (2004) hypothesized servant leaders “are defined by their ability to bring integrity, humility, and servanthood into caring for, empowering, and developing others in carrying out the tasks and processes of visioning, goal setting, leading, modeling, team building, and shared decision-making” (p. 9). A strong link between servant leadership and mentorship is the development aspect. Servant leaders and mentors have the desire to develop others personally and/or professionally.

Larry Spears is a prominent servant leadership scholar and served as President and CEO of the Robert K. Greenleaf Center from 1990 to 2007. After years of studying Greenleaf’s work, Spears (1998) identified and detailed ten characteristics he viewed as vital to the development of servant leaders: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to growth, and community building. Several of the aforementioned characteristics can be linked to mentorship and are described below:

1. **Listening**: An important aspect of communication is listening. The listening must be concentrative and coupled with periods of reflection. There is an emphasis not only on verbal communication, but also nonverbal cues. Listening is an essential skill that both servant leaders and mentors utilize to demonstrate respect and appreciation for their followers (Poon, 2006; Russell & Stone, 2002; Spears, 2010).

2. **Empathy**: Having compassion and being able to relate to others. People deserve to be accepted and recognized for their special and unique spirits or talents. The acceptance is not conditional. Empathy is a useful tool for mentors and can be instrumental in building a trusting relationship with teachers, coaches, family etc. A successful servant of others is a person who is a skillful empathic listener (Spears, 2004).

3. **Healing**: People go through hard times, lose hope, or suffer from a variety of challenges in their lives. Servant-leaders recognize the opportunity to lift the spirits of those individuals they encounter. It is considered the strongest attribute
of a servant leader. The potential to heal the self and/or others who suffer from some form of emotional hurt in an effort to make them whole is an important contribution to help others be successful. Mentors possessing experience and expertise in teaching and learning offer a solid foundation for understanding the feelings of others (Feiman-Nemser, Schwille, Carver, & Yusko, 1999; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Wong, 2004).

4. **Awareness**: Self-awareness is an important attribute that can help a leader understanding different perspectives and issues. This involves ethics, power and values. It encompasses a well-rounded approach to helping others solve problems. Highly emotionally intelligent individuals possess awareness and many serve in mentoring roles. Awareness also allows a person to understand personal weaknesses and bring out the best in others.

5. **Persuasion**: Persuasion, instead of authority, is used to convince others. The servant-leader is effective at empowering groups to take decisive actions. There is a degree of relinquishing control involved. The persuasion not only happens through words of advice, but also actions. Servant leaders seek to convince rather than coerce others to build consensus (Spear, 2004). Mentors like servant leaders are vested in the capacity of growing others (Poon, 2006; Spears, 2004).

6. **Conceptualization**: Being a visionary and seeing beyond day-to-day operations, yet balancing with the reality of a situation. Servant-leaders help others dream big. For many leaders, this is a characteristic that requires discipline. The traditional leader is consumed by the need to achieve short-term operational goals. In sports, coaches assist players with cultivating a vision, formulating a plan, and taking steps on a daily basis to realize such goals. Mentors facilitate dreams/goals within individuals.

7. **Foresight**: Closely related to conceptualization, the ability to foresee the likely outcome of a situation is hard to define, but easier to identify. Foresight is a characteristic that enables the servant-leader to understand the lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequence of a decision for the future. Learning from past mistakes and anticipating future ones. Effective mentors are a model of continuous learners (Rowley, 1999). Mentors’ ability to anticipate outcomes is based on their expertise and lived experiences.

8. **Stewardship**: Individuals in leadership roles (such as CEO’s, executives, managers) all played significant roles in holding their institutions in trust for the greater good of society. Servant-leadership, like stewardship, assumes a commitment to serving the needs of others. The focus is on openness and persuasion instead of control. Greenleaf (1977) believed all people in an organization were responsible for the well-being of the organization and meeting the needs of others who were part of the institution. This would allow personal growth and more autonomy as members became servant leaders themselves (Van Dierendonck, 2011).
9. **Commitment to the growth of people**: Servant-leaders believe that people have an intrinsic value beyond their tangible contributions as workers. In other words, each individual is unique and not just a replaceable number. The servant-leader is deeply committed to the growth of each individual within the organization and recognizes the important responsibility of nurturing the personal and professional growth of employees and associates. Growth and development are important end goals for effective mentors and servant leaders. Their time and effort are invested in serving others. The mentoring relationship also builds upon this learning and growth to facilitate the personal and professional development necessary to develop leaders (Poon, 2006).

10. **Building community**: There has been a shift from local communities to large institutions/corporations as a molder of individuals. Servant leaders recognize building community among those who work within a given institution. The true community can be created by those who work in businesses or other entities. Servant-leaders guide individuals and demonstrate a sense of responsibility for individuals within a group. Building relationships is the essence of mentorship. Mentoring involves a relationship; interaction between mentor and mentee depends on how each relates to one another. Because servant leadership is relationship-focused, building a community environment is a key concept to the theory of servant leadership (Daft & Lane, 2011). Like quality mentors, servant leaders develop strong leader/follower and follower/leader relationships because of their focus on people (Van Dierendonck & Heeren, 2006).

Spears’ (1998) Servant Leadership Characteristics are represented in Figure 2-3. A servant leadership approach is not self-centered and intentions come from the heart, which is represented by the red coloring in the center of the diagram. The figure depicts Spears’ ten characteristics revolving around the servant’s intention.
Servant leaders are person-focused and help nurture the talents of individuals within organizations. Effective servant leadership gives followers a greater sense of purpose, which helps build value and competitive advantage within businesses or entities (Murari & Gupta, 2012). As previously expressed, relationship building is the foundation for mentorship. Servant leadership focuses on the relationship between the leader and the follower (Daft & Lane, 2011), which is another common denominator between servant leaders and mentors. Both servant leaders and mentors share the primary mission of developing employees and helping them achieve their goals.
In addressing servant leadership from an organizational or executive level, Fisher (2004) writes:

Leaders must be complete followers. They must have the best interests of those they serve in mind, and know them as they know themselves—how they think, feel, believe and behave; what they value, why they value it, and what are their greatest hopes and fears. Otherwise, their ability to serve is a charade. (p. 16)

Page and Wong (2003) constructed a multidimensional model focusing on twelve attributes of servant leadership they previously identified in literature and their personal leadership experiences. The attributes are: integrity, humility, servanthood, caring for others, empowering others, developing others, visioning, goal setting, leading, modeling, team building, and shared decision-making (Page & Wong, 2000). In their conceptual framework, Page and Wong classified the attributes into four orientations, which cover the four fundamental, functional processes in leadership based on prior research. The center of the model is a “Servant’s heart” or character. Page and Wong (2003) added “it is impossible for one to perform the leadership task as a SL, unless one has developed a servant’s heart, and knows how to develop and empower others” (p. 4). The behavior of servant leaders is consistent with effective mentors, who engage in selfless acts to benefit the mentees or organizations. Page and Wong’s conceptualization of the Expanding Circles of Servant Leaders is depicted in Figure 2-4.
Several researchers have identified additional attributes of servant leaders. Russell and Stone (2002) identified nine attributes specific to the professional environment: vision, honesty, integrity, trust, service, modeling, pioneering, appreciation of others, and empowerment. Other servant leadership qualities that have been linked to mentorship include: authentic self, altruism, service, role modeling, self-awareness, commitment, persuasion, influence, credibility, and love (Page & Wong, 2000; Russell & Stone, 2002; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2002; Patterson, 2003; Winston, 2003; Coetzer, Bussin & Geldenhuys, 2017).

**Servant Leaders/Mentors are Emotionally Intelligent**

In previous research, the concept of emotional intelligence (EI) has been linked to the initial connection and development of the mentor-mentee relationship as well as servant leadership theory. Bar-On (2006) defined EI as one’s ability to effectively understand oneself
and others, relate effectively to others, and adapt to and cope with one’s immediate surroundings. Research indicates individuals with high levels of emotional intelligence have greater career success, foster stronger personal relations, and have effective leadership skills compared with those who have low emotional intelligence (Cooper, 1997). Goleman (1995) suggested there are five key elements to emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, which have all been associated with mentorship.

The five key elements of EI have also been indicated as common traits in effective mentors and servant leaders (Poon, 2006; Yong, 2013). Yong (2013) investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence, motivation, integrity, spirituality, mentoring, and servant leadership and found mentoring, spirituality, and emotional intelligence have a strong positive relationship with servant leadership practices. Rocco (2018) suggested servant leaders behave as mentors and pointed out that by being aware of how their own behavior may affect others, servant leaders recognize the value of self-regulation.

Opengart and Bierema (2015) connected EI with mentoring effectiveness and focused on the first two phases of Kram’s four-phase model (initiation and cultivation). As previously covered, in the initiation and cultivation stages of Kram’s four-phase model, both the mentor and mentee solidify the mentor-mentee relationship and optimize the benefits. Opengart and Bierema indicated the concept and measurement of EI may be an opportunity to help prevent, minimize, or improve negative mentoring. One of the main findings of the study was that the abilities of both the mentor and mentee in perceiving, understanding, and managing emotions their emotions should greatly impact their social interaction, and thus the effectiveness of the
mentoring relationship (Opengart and Bierema, 2015). Therefore, higher EI may help individuals provide better mentoring and make mentees more attractive to a potential mentor.

In a study that examined EI and trust in formal mentoring relationships, Chun, Litzky, Sosik, Bechtold, and Godshalk (2010) found a positive relationship between high mentor EI and mentee confidence in their mentors. Empathy was a quality identified to improve mentoring functions by providing better career and psychological support (Chun et al., 2010). In studying the emotional responses of coaches, Cremona (2010) suggested training for executive coaches should involve empathy, relationship building, and connect emotions to engagement. As previously identified, empathy and awareness are important characteristics of a servant leader (Spears, 1998).

From a mentee’s perspective, finding mentors often requires strong interpersonal skills. Cooke, Patt, and Prabhu (2017) considered a lack of self-awareness as a barrier to mentorship. An individual lacking self-awareness possesses low emotional intelligence, which is often a deterrent to establishing mutual respect within a mentor-mentee relationship. In a formal mentoring program, Singh, Ragins, and Tharenou (2009) suggest paring a mentor of high EI with a mentee of low EI to assist mentees in reaching their full potential. This supports a central duty of a mentor and servant leader, which is to bring out the best in others.

Servant Leadership and Education

There have been a few studies that have linked mentoring to servant leadership in the educational domain. In one study focused on the perceptions of first year college students, student responses indicated high-to-moderately high perceptions of servant leadership in regards to their personal mentors (Norris, 2013). Campbell et al. (2012) researched the
impact of servant leadership capacity and the mentoring process on college students and
discovered college students with mentors who engaged them and challenged their personal
development demonstrated a higher capacity for socially responsible leadership. This further
shows the influence of mentoring using a servant leader approach. Poon (2006) conducted a
qualitative assessment interviewing a number of mentors trying to find out important
characteristics with respect to the mentoring process. The nine themes revealed were: moral
love, humility, altruism, self-awareness, authenticity, integrity, trust, empowerment, and
service (Poon, 2006). An additional study that connected mentoring to servant leadership
examined mentoring through the experiences of K-12 educators (Ebbrecht, 2013). This
research was of particular interest considering it appears to be one of the only studies that
utilized narrative inquiry methodology, while linked servant leadership to mentorship. The
participants in the study spoke of the ten servant leader traits and shared feedback that
legitimized the value of the role servant leadership plays in mentoring (Ebbrecht, 2013). One
can reasonably argue servant leadership is an appropriate approach for teachers and fits well
with the sworn missions of various educational institutions. However, there are few studies
that have evaluated how servant leadership qualities vary with the different types of mentors.

**Servant Leadership and Sports**

A leader often gains the respect of subordinates by showing a willingness to complete
any task. An example of leaders “not being above any task” is coaches training alongside
their athletes. Athletes, like students or corporate employees, want to be treated with respect
and feel be valued for their contributions beyond the bottom line. Typically, when
individuals feel appreciated for their work and feel like they are truly part of an organization,
they are more willing to work harder and engage in dialogue with leaders, thus increasing the
knowledge base leaders can use to formulate solutions to issues that arise.

There have been few studies in sports that have incorporated the servant leadership model. Rieke, Hammermeister, and Chase (2008) examined whether high school basketball athletes display a preference for servant leader, as opposed to non-servant leader coach behaviors. This was a pioneering study as it was the first to apply servant leadership in sports. Results revealed that high school basketball players preferred their coaches to display more leadership qualities and coaches should foster an environment of trust, inclusion, and service (Rieke, Hammermeister, & Chase, 2008). The study suggested that servant leader traits may be appropriate for athletic coaches, physical educators, and other practitioners within sport. Ellis (2016) conducted a study on the relationship between intercollegiate coaches’ servant leadership and their athletes’ ethically related sport orientations and behaviors. Mentoring was mentioned as an attribute of servant leadership along with a number of mentoring traits such as role modeling, empowering athletes, nurturing, embracing service to others, and developing caring relationships.

Jenkins (2014) wrote a piece examining servant leadership with respect to legendary Coach John Wooden. Although there was conflicting evidence whether or not Wooden was considered a servant leader, there were certainly servant leader qualities that he embodied. Stoll (2010) suggests Wooden’s coaching style contained elements of servant leadership due to his education-driven approach, his Pyramid of Success, and emphasis on character development. Taylor (2008) felt Wooden’s coaching style resembled servant leadership because of the emphasis he placed on helping other grow. Jenkins (2014) pointed out that Wooden had holistic concern for his players’ well-being and his virtuous behavior earned him respect with his players.
John Calipari, the head basketball coach at the University of Kentucky, has been characterized as a servant leader based on his focus on his players and fans (Blanchard, 2012). The rationale for considering him a servant leader was based on three aspects: the servant, the steward, and the shepherd (Blanchard, 2012). Although Calipari’s players often leave for the NBA after one season, he seems to always put his players and their families’ interests above his own. Blanchard made the point that Calipari refuses to take credit for winning and defers all credit to his players, seems to value all of his players, and guides/supports them in their off-court decisions.

Sullivan (2019) recently wrote a book applying servant leadership to sport management. There were several examples provided linking mentors to servant leaders. Sullivan posits that mentoring is a key tool used by servant leaders to influence followers and suggests that in order “to reap maximum benefits from a mentor-mentee relationship and to build trust, servant leadership qualities are necessary.” (p.97). He provides several examples of servant leadership approaches in sports, including the 2018 Oregon State championship baseball team’s coaching staff relying on trust and relationship building with their players, which are key elements of effective mentoring.

For the various reasons mentioned, servant leadership seems to be the most appropriate theory to guide our study. Although both leadership theories share several similarities and are focused on the concern for others, there are notable differences. The main difference between transformational and servant leadership is transformational leaders tend to focus on organizational objectives, while servant leaders primarily focus on service to their followers (Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2003; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Also, the service of servant leaders may be provided to benefit an organization, but the focus is on the benefit of
the individual. Servant leaders are often preferred by organizations because of their devotion. Contrary to criticisms regarding the leader-member exchange theory, servant leaders are open to serving anyone in need.

In examining the mentoring experiences of Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame Inductees prior to reaching the NBA, it is plausible to guess there are many mentors that assisted in their development who were not necessarily affiliated with an organization. Some of these mentors may have been in a service role exclusively where no rewards were offered. The evidence that servant leadership practices widely exists at different developmental levels and often come from mentors who gain limited personal benefit from the situations other than the satisfaction of making a positive difference in the lives of others provides a solid rationale for applying the theory to the present study.

**Strong Need, Failed Mentoring, and At-Risk Youth**

The literature presents compelling evidence for how mentoring can benefit young people and why society needs to address this issue. There is a clear need for effective mentorship, not only in professional settings, but in the critical childhood and adolescent years. Youth mentoring involves a relationship between a caring, supportive adult and a child or adolescent (Rhodes, 2002). Children and teenagers are most impressionable and need to lean on sound advice from experienced adults who are good role models.

There is a particular need for effective mentorship in the at-risk population. Children who are considered at-risk typically have one or more of the following characteristics: retention in grade level, poor attendance, behavioral issues, low socioeconomic status or poverty, low achievement, substance abuse, or teen pregnancy (Slavin & Madden, 2004). These conditions often lead to young people dropping out of school (Lampley & Johnson,
In many cases, they are failed at home or in the school system, which consequently affect their ability to prosper in the future. Young people who are considered at-risk often face nearly insurmountable challenges such as abuse, poverty, or lack of parental guidance (Frymier & Gansneder, 2001). As a result, they tend to develop negative attitudes in regards to setting goals, attending school, and respecting elders. There is no question individuals who have received mentoring at a young age are provided a tremendous head start compared with those who lacked mentors or received bad mentorship.

One’s life journey starts at home. In many ways, we are all products of our environments. The circumstances in which individuals grow up have a profound effect on their futures. A lack of a balanced parental perspective and male role models can be particularly damaging for children, especially boys. According to U.S. Census Bureau data collected in 2015, approximately 80.4 percent of custodial parents are mothers and around 19.6 percent are fathers (1 in 5). Between 1960 and 2016, the percentage of children living in families with two parents has decreased by 19 percent (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). There are several possible explanations for this taking place (separation, parental neglect, economic instability, changing of social norms, etc.). For many years, the impact for children and teens not having a father present in their lives has been clearly noticeable in terms of several outcomes. In 1998, the U.S. Department of Justice (1998) reported that 63 percent of youth suicides, 90 percent of all homeless and runaway youths, 85 percent of all children that exhibit behavioral disorders, 71 percent of high school dropouts, and 75 percent of adolescent patients in substance abuse centers all came from fatherless homes. Social scientists have long pointed out the benefits of two-parent homes, which include educational, economic, health, and other advantages (Anderson, 2014). Having a positive environment
with stability, support, encouragement, and love from both parents makes a difference in the lives of young people.

The large number of single-parent families is a concern in the African-American community. Pew Research Center revealed only 38 percent of African-American minors lived with both parents in 2015 (Pew Research Center, 2015). The percentage of white children under 18 living in a two-parent home nearly doubles that of black children (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). These statistics are of particular significance. According to Lapchick (2015), around 74.4 percent of NBA players were black in 2015. Often, NBA players serve as role models to at-risk children. In general, a large number of sport participants come from at-risk backgrounds and difficult socioeconomic conditions. Although I am not African-American, I was one of those at-risk cases and my lived experiences propelled me to want to address these issues.

Gray (2011) identified mentoring as an option to combat some of the struggles black males face in high school and when transitioning into the college arena. According to Dr. Bernadette Sánchez at Depaul University, “both formal and informal mentoring have the potential to benefit black boys in a range of areas, including academics, social-emotional well-being, mental health, and preventing risky behaviors” (National Mentoring Resource Center, 2016). There are potential challenges that may serve as barrier for black males. Sanchez (2016) identified cultural mistrust as a potential barrier that may influence black boys’ perceptions of white mentors, but added that positive mentoring experiences may be able to lessen the negative effects of racial discrimination on black boys. Establishing a trustful mentoring relationship between individuals with racial differences requires often requires mentors proving themselves not just by words, but by actions. Sanchez (2016)
expressed a strong need for black male mentors and suggested that black boys may have less access to informal mentors compared to black girls.

If children survive harsh conditions at home, the school system is the next layer of protection or detriment. At-risk youth often become alienated by school administrators, classmates, and teachers (Jackson, 2005). There are young men and women with bright minds who never get the chance to realize their academic potential because they never had the presence of an adult who believed in them. Teachers have the privilege of being in a position where they can positively impact individuals. The primary role of educators is to empower and develop young people, in turn, bring out the best in them as individuals. Ethical principles that have been associated with the teaching profession include professionalism, social responsibility, fairness, equality, loyalty, providing a healthy and safe environment, honesty and integrity, trust, objectivity, continuous development, respect, effective use of resources, respect for human freedom, and compassion (Aydogan, 2008; Aydin, 2003; Keith-Spiegel, Witting, Perkins, Balogh & Whitley, 1993). Parents often trust they are sending their children to school for a positive experience in the classroom.

Although there are wonderful educators doing an exceptional job, there is bad mentoring that occurs at all levels of education. Teachers pushing political agendas, practicing favoritism, and encouraging students to go into the wrong professions are pitfalls that lead to negative mentoring experiences. Teacher favoritism refers to the act of giving preferential treatment to someone based on personal characteristics, status, or contacts (Aydogan, 2008). Several scholars cite student success, socioeconomic status, physical appearance, gender, and political differences as reasons favoritism occurs in schools (Brophy, 1983; Ritts, Patterson & Tubbs, 1992; Dembo, 1994; Aydogan, 2008; Barney,
Pleban, & Dodd, 2018).

A study conducted in Turkey that sought the opinions of 896 high school students found reasons students believed teachers favored students included: students having parents who were friends or relatives with the teacher, students who were from powerful families or had economic privileges, students who held similar political views to the teacher, or students who were physically attractive (Aydogan, 2008). In a recent study at a university in the U.S, Barney, Pleban, and Dodd (2018) interviewed 318 college student participants on perceived favoritism in the classroom and a large majority of students expressed certain students received more praise than others and 83 percent felt their physical education teacher paid more attention to skilled students compared with others who were not skilled.

All students deserve an equal opportunity to succeed. Favoritism promotes inequality as people are rewarded with advantages they did not earn and others are not acknowledged for what they have achieved (Nadler and Schulman, 2006). Favoritism, neglect, and ridicule in the classroom may have a detrimental effect on an individual’s self-esteem and self-efficacy. Research suggests effective mentoring from caring and supportive adults has been associated with better academic performance and higher self-esteem in students (Clasen & Clasen, 1997; Flaxman, 1998; Johnson, 2006; Smink, 2000).

**Brief Summary**

The review of literature thoroughly provided an understanding of mentorship and benefits associated with positive mentor-mentee relationships. It also addressed the need for mentorship and negative impact of bad mentoring. The next section will cover the study’s methodology and approach to addressing our research questions.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

Methodological Approach

Narrative inquiry is qualitative method used for studying individual lived experiences for the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding of the dynamics involved (Clandinin & Huber, 2010; Mitchell & Egudo, 2003). Through collaboration between the researcher and participant, a story can be co-created with the goal of revealing meaning from the individual’s experience. Nasheeda, Abdullah, Krauss, and Ahmed (2019) described narrative analysis as a “fluid method” and noted the flexibility with the approach. In other words, there is not a uniform procedure or process when creating stories from transcripts. They are individualized. The methodology emphasizes relational engagement between researcher and participant, which ultimately leads to the story’s co-creation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Haydon, Browne, & Riet, 2018).

The focus of narrative inquiry is on understanding lived experiences and told stories and is based on understanding not prediction (Kim, 2016; Kramp, 2004; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007; Robert & Shenhav, 2014). In the narrative process, the most common methods used are interviews and conversations (Joyce, 2015; Hawkins & Saleem, 2012). During an interview, both parties collaborate and develop meaning to the narrative.

Though narrative inquiry has gained vast popularity and been used extensively in a variety of social science fields over the last four decades, it is still in its infancy in sport psychology research. Smith (2010) noted that many sport psychology researchers have turned toward narrative inquiry to better understand the experiences of their participants. Although narrative studies are becoming more common in social science research, there have been very
few studies that have utilized this approach in the sports realm. Using a qualitative approach allowed me to examine the participants’ mentoring experiences in rich detail.

In addressing our study’s research questions, the approach allowed an in-depth analysis of the lived experiences of Hall of Fame Inductees and provided theoretical and practical value. Narrative inquiry was appropriate for the present study because humans are storytellers who construct stories based on meaning and experiences. Leaders in the sports world tend to enjoy telling stories in regards to their subjective experiences. Gaining a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of Naismith Memorial Hall of Fame Inductees provided insight into the value mentorship had in their lives. With qualitative research, truth may be subjective but meaning is invaluable. This personalized approach allowed helped captured unique elements of the participant’s individual experiences (Nasheeda, Abdullah, Krauss, and Ahmed, 2019). The study allowed me to develop meaningful relationships with the participants as we actively co-constructed their rich and complex stories.

**Participants / Sampling**

There are only 395 coaches, players, referees, contributors, and teams that have been inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame. A total of 136 Inductees played in the NBA and 44 are deceased. The total population of living Inductees who played in the NBA is 92. Nine Inductees participated in the present study, which is 9.78 percent of the total living population who have played in the NBA. All participants were over the age of 50 and played basketball in various eras. The age range of the participants was between 51 and 82 years old. The oldest participant started his NBA career in 1958. The youngest participant retired from the NBA in 2007.
The participants were originally selected using the purposive sampling technique that enabled focusing on particular characteristics of interest in order to better address the research questions. Using this technique, the researcher acquires a better understanding of the problem and question (Creswell, 2009). Criterion-based sampling was used when determining the participants. The criterion for participants was they must be Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame Inductees who have played in the NBA. The rationale for choosing these individuals is that they have reached the pinnacle of individual success in their profession. Snowball sampling technique was used to recruit participants considering the difficulty of gaining access to this sample. In terms of the screening process, participants must have been retired from professional basketball for at least five years, which is consistent with the Hall of Fame selection and enshrinement processes. As team players, the nine participants in the present study collectively have won nine NBA championships, two ABA championships, four Olympic gold medals, and two NCAA championships. In terms of individual honors, the participants have been selected to a combined 41 NBA All-Star games and 14 ABA All-Star games.

**Study Site**

The interviews were conducted in two separate travels to Springfield, MA. The first two interviews took place on Wednesday July 24, 2019. The setting for the interviews was a quiet, isolated conference room within the MGM Grand Hotel. In September, there was a second trip to Springfield. Three interviews took place on Thursday September 5, 2019 and the final four interviews were on Friday September 6, 2019. All seven interviews during the second trip took place in a private suite within the Tower Square Hotel. The venues were appropriate because they were private, comfortable locations behind closed doors at the
convenience of participants. An informed consent form was administered to each participant in the private locations. All participants were English speakers. The interview processes began after the participants reviewed and signed the forms.

**Researcher Role**

Once access was gained to conduct the present study, there was an asserted effort to establish rapport with the participants. Before beginning each interview, the researcher’s positionality was shared with participants. Mason (2002) noted that people’s knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences, and interactions are meaningful properties of the social reality which research questions are designed to explore. Positionality allows for a narrative placement for researcher objectivity and subjectivity whereby the researcher is situated within the many aspects of perspective and positionality (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The interviewer was aware of potential biases due to having admiration and respect for the participants and attempted to remain neutral during the interviews.

**Data Collection Methods**

Nine semi-structured interviews containing at least 15 open-ended questions and several follow-up questions were used to better understand mentoring experiences of the participants. Mason (2002) suggests the job of the interview is to ensure that the relevant contexts are brought into focus so that situated knowledge can be produced. The specific method of interviews encourages individuals to provide in-depth information that resonates at a personal level and captures the subjective meaning in contextual situations (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008).
An interview guide was created and approved by expert reviewers to make sure the questions were appropriate and fit the context of the field and research goals, which addressed the trustworthiness of the tool. The goal of the interview guide was to seek answers to address the research questions. In developing the guide, data were retrieved from the literature review. By the nature of the open-ended questions, the interview guide was framed in a way that allowed further elaboration by each interviewee. For validity purposes, triangulation was used by examining video clips, autobiographies, and articles related to each participant.

Upon approval from my University of New Mexico Sport Administration Advisory Board and the International Review Board (IRB), my first course of action was to attempt to gain access to this population. I contacted the Basketball Hall of Fame directly via phone. As noted, snowball sampling technique was used to recruit additional participants once I established an initial connection. This technique is used in cases where potential participants are hard to find. The recruitment took place after IRB approval was obtained. Once I gained access, participants who expressed interest were contacted to arrange a convenient time and location for the interview, and provided with a copy of an interview guide. Data were collected through interviews, observation, and field work notes. The interviews were digitally recorded and field notes were gathered for further accuracy. There were nine separate individual interviews with Hall of Fame inductees.

Each interview lasted between 45-60 minutes. The interviews were both videotaped and audio recorded to ensure that there is no oversight of valuable data. Therefore, a camera was set up to film the interaction and an audio recorder was used to record each conversation. Studies have shown that recorded interviews allow the interviewee and interviewer to
develop and foster a better relationship and rapport, which could lead to the interviewee disclosing more detailed and in-depth responses (Mary, 2008). Also, video recording allows the chance to assess body language, facial expressions, and get visual cues not possible with a phone interview or audio recording. Plus, in case one electronic device had a malfunction or failed to record, it was critical to have a backup. As previously mentioned, I took notes to further ensure accuracy. After the interviews, follow-up emails were sent to participants to make sure that the analysis of the data was accurate and to clarify any responses that were unclear.

All nine participants gave consent to use their names in the published report. This was important due to the nature of the present study because Hall of Fame Inductees are public figures who can potentially inspire others by their individual stories. Each participant reviewed and signed an informed consent form to allow their names to be disclosed. Participants were given the option not to allow their names to be disclosed but all gave permission (refer to appendix).

**Data Analysis**

Narrative analysis is a strategy that recognizes the extent to which the stories we tell provide insights about our lived experiences (Bogden & Biklen, 2007). This study used analytic processes that helped detect the main narrative themes within the accounts given by NBA Hall of Famers about their mentoring experiences. Through the analysis, the goal was to make sense of their lived experiences in mentee roles. A thematic analysis was used to pinpoint, examine, and interpret patterns within in the data collected. The data were transcribed, coded, categorized with objective of identifying emerging themes. There were a total of 76 single spaced interview transcripts generated. One key reason I decided against
using a qualitative data management software package (such as NVivo) is the higher likelihood of disengagement from the data. Diligently going through each step of the process using only Microsoft Excel and Word allowed me to become very familiar with the data and enabled me to notice specific nuances like nonverbal communication cues.

The study followed Braun and Clarke’s (2013) inductive thematic analysis steps: (a) transcription, (b) familiarization with the data, (c) coding, (d) searching for themes, (e) reviewing themes, (f) defining and naming themes, and (g) writing. According to Braun, Clarke, and Weate (2016), conducting a thematic analysis “can provide analyses of people’s experiences in relation to an issue, or the factors and processes that underlie and influence particular phenomena.” (p. 4). To analyze data, the interviews were first transcribed into written form for closer study. The transcribing was done verbatim and manually. Although the process was tedious and time consuming, this approach allowed me to fully engage and deeply understand the data. Davidson (2017) suggested the process is the best way to organize data for analysis. Data interpretation involved explaining and framing ideas in relation to theory, and revealed importance and relevance (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

When conducting the data analysis, the data was analyzed in three stages: open-coding, axial coding, and selective coding. During the open-coding stage, transcripts were read and classified in different categories or themes found in from data. During this stage, there was significant time allocated to openly understanding the themes and what they mean. A comparative analysis was conducted to determine consistency in coding the data. For example, new categories were created when necessary to better organize the data patterns. Additional notes were taken to further explain the process in order to eventually construct a conceptual model.
In the axial coding stage, the codes and additional notes were analyzed to determine how they relate to each other. This will be a critical element in formulating a conceptual framework for the mentoring experiences of former professional athletes. Connections and relationships were formed through advanced analysis of the data. The visual model essentially crystallized the information in order to present the findings.

The final selective coding stage encompassed a course of action which included linking the theoretical framework to the narratives. The primary goal was to deeply understand the lived experiences of the participants. An additional goal was to create a visual representation helps explain the connections that were made.

The quality standards were evaluated using a ‘criteriological approach’ and focused on width, coherence, credibility, worthy topic, and transparency (Burke, 2017). The evidence for width was in the meticulous organizing of data and raw data presented in the form of quotations within the narratives. Coherence was addressed by carefully interpreting the findings to paint a meaningful picture specific to each participant’s mentoring experience. The topic is worthy (e.g. relevant, timely, interesting) considering there is a strong global need for effective mentorship and the potential impact a study with high profiled sport figures can have on the development of young people. Transparency was achieved by utilizing two external auditors/critical friends (school counselor and sport coach) by challenging the sequence of questions and to eliminate bias.

In addressing validity, Creswell (2009) suggested that using multiple strategies will help to enhance the research ability to assess the accuracy of findings. Some of the strategies that were utilized included: triangulation, member checking, rich thick description, and the use of external auditors. As previously mentioned, in order to strengthen validity for the
questionnaire an external auditor was used to review the instrument. By having an auditor who was unfamiliar with the project, the auditor determined if the items in the instrument were clear and provided a more objective assessment. Also, a critical friend who was not part of the data collection or data analysis contributed with insight that helped enhance self-reflection and strengthen the study.

Trustworthiness, transferability, dependability and confirmability are all vital elements to the validity of a qualitative study. The participants were individuals that agreed to participate and met the stringent criterion. As previously mentioned, triangulation was used to validate the findings were credible. There were follow-up calls/emails to participants to ensure accuracy within their responses. The knowledge obtained from this study may be valuable and transferable across other domains or sport contexts. In order to maintain dependability, there was a vigorous effort and attention to details during the data analysis. There were not any steps skipped in the process of acquiring the most accurate data. The confirmability was addressed by reverting back to the literature and theoretical background on the subject area.

A strategy used to ensure reliability was conducting a pilot interview with a retired professional athlete from another sport. In the pilot interview, the participant was asked if the questions are clear and conveyed the meaning intended. The goal of the pilot interview was to evaluate feasibility, time, and cost prior to performance of a full-scale research project.
Interview Guide

The aforementioned interview guide included 15 main questions and several follow-ups. Interview questions were ordered and prioritized in a sequence that addresses the research questions. During each interview, there was a chance to elaborate on each question to gain a better understanding of participant responses. Follow-up questions were used for clarification, elaboration, and detailed probes in order to elicit richer data (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Below are four sample questions that were asked in the interviews. The complete participant interview protocol with questions and subsequent follow-up questions are included in Appendix C.

Table 3-1: Interview Guide Sample Questions

Q1: How did mentorship contribute to your success in the NBA?
Q2: Reflecting back from childhood to your present life, who were the people you considered to be your mentors?
Q4: What qualities/characteristics did/does your mentor/s have?
Q8: Describe the role mentorship played during the most difficult times in your life?
CHAPTER 4
THE MENTORING NARRATIVES

Preview of the Narratives

Narrative research provided an opportunity to explore the personal mentoring experiences of Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame Inductees. Clandinin and Connely (2000, p. 20) defined narrative research as "a way of understanding experience" involving "collaboration between researcher and participants.” Constructing the narratives gave the researcher a chance to interpret the interviews beyond the questionnaire and truly understand the mentoring journeys of these accomplished individuals. The compelling stories provide current and aspiring athletes as well as professionals in multiple disciplines insight into how instrumental mentorship was in the lives of some of the most accomplished athletes in NBA history.

The nine Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame Inductees who agreed to participate in the present study are: 1) Spencer Haywood, 2) Charles Scott, 3) Jamaal Wilkes, 4) Dino Rađa, 5) Dan Issel, 6) Wayne Embry, 7) Artis Gilmore, 8) Gary Payton, and 9) Rick Barry. Numbering represents the order in which interviews were conducted. The rationale behind creating the narratives was to reveal meanings and provide contextualization regarding the Hall of Fame Inductees’ mentoring experiences (D’Abate & Albert, 2017). Before each narrative, a brief biography containing the participant’s most significant career accomplishments will be provided. Narratives were created and organized capturing a sequence of chronological experiences and events as told by the participants.
Spencer Haywood: My Mentoring Narrative

**Height:** 6–8  
**Position:** Power Forward

**ABA Career:** 1969–70  
**NBA Career:** 1970–80, 81–83

**Basketball Biography**

Spencer Haywood is an NBA champion, Olympic Gold Medalist, and member of the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, class of 2015. Nicknamed “The Stallion,” Spencer was a prolific scorer and tenacious rebounder. In the 1968 Summer Olympics, he became the youngest athlete in history to complete for an American basketball team and led the team in both scoring and rebounding. During his professional basketball career, he made four NBA All-Star teams and won the 1970 ABA Rookie of the Year and ABA Most Valuable Player Awards. For the ABA, he is the single season record holder for field goals (986), rebounds (1,637), and rebound per game average (19.5). He played for the 1980 Los Angeles Lakers championship team with fellow Hall of Fame Inductees Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Magic Johnson, and Jamaal Wilkes. Off the court, Spencer has had a lasting impact on the game as he won a Supreme Court case that opened the door for undergraduate college players to be eligible to play in the NBA.
From Rural Mississippi to Urban Detroit

Spencer Haywood’s mentorship journey started in Silver City, Mississippi. One may have difficulty finding Silver City on a map, but this tiny town is where Spencer developed his personal character and love of sport. As we began our conversation, Spencer pointed out that mentorship contributed to his life success long before he reached college or the NBA. Devoutly Christian, Spencer’s mother Eunice instilled the values of work ethic, discipline, and gratitude. Spencer’s father was a carpenter and builder of a local church. Unfortunately, he died three weeks before Spencer’s birth, resulting in his widowed mother having the responsibility of raising 10 children, often laboring eighteen-to-twenty hour work days. As a young boy, Spencer was required to pick cotton in the 1950s and early 1960s. Although he recollects his responsibilities were strenuous, he attributes his work in the cotton fields as a major contributor to his basketball success. Spencer admits, “As a farm boy, I would work from sunrise to sundown. It was not peaches and cream, but those experiences taught me gratitude.” During those hard, grueling days, Spencer remembers his mother used to sing a gospel song in the fields by Mahalia Jackson titled, “He’s Right on Time.” Spencer referenced this song in his Hall of Fame speech. With proud emotion, Spencer sings me a verse, “He may not come when you want him, but he’s always right on time.” His Christian faith has always been an important element in Spencer’s life and his mother planted those seeds in him long before he was swooshing turnaround jump shots under the lights at Madison Square Garden.

His desire to excel in sports developed through observation. During his early teenage years, Spencer landed a job as a golf caddy. One of the golfers he used to caddy for would often express his passion for the sport of golf. Spencer mentioned, “In the small town in
Mississippi that I grew up in golfing and cotton fields were king. The mentorship there was teaching me the love of a sport.” He never thought he would love a sport. During these times, Spencer developed a love for basketball, a sport that would later produce income for himself and his family. At age 15, Spencer moved to live with his brother in Detroit, where his love for basketball boosted morale during a tough transition to urban life.

Upon moving to Detroit, Spencer enrolled at Pershing High School. His love for basketball influenced his decision to play for his school team. At first, he felt inadequate because Mississippi would shut down the schools or have half days during harvest time so the children could go home and pick the cotton or shuck the corn, handle farming responsibilities. Spencer reflected, “So, after a two hour high school basketball practice in Detroit I would look around and be like – Is this it? I want to practice again.” He would often practice another three hours with his friend, Wiley, while talking, playing and working on basketball skills. From Spencer’s perspective, “If you work 12 hours a day doing something you don’t really like and now you are doing something you love. I felt grateful and wanted more of it.” His faith is important to him and on several occasions Spencer has felt that God put him in the right place for positive things to happen, including the cotton fields in Mississippi. According to Spencer, his humble upbringing helped him develop as a basketball player. Gesturing with both hands, Spencer describes how his experience picking cotton impacted his basketball career:

I’m dragging this sack that weighs 100lbs, and I’m a young boy. My legs get developed really fast, my body develops, and I get good hand-eye coordination because you are picking it through these thorns. The thing I hated the most developed me the most, which was cotton. The discipline and hard work translated to my basketball career. My mother instilled those values in me.
Spencer acknowledged it may be difficult for some people to see things from his perspective, but he believes that God and the universe put him in situations for a reason, even when he has had to do something he dislikes. He also hopes, through his participation in this study, young men and women may become more aware of his journey and learn the value of work ethic.

While living in Detroit, Spencer faced several challenges but met one of his greatest life mentors, an influential man named Will Robinson, who was his basketball coach at Pershing High School. Coach Robinson would later become the first African-American head basketball coach in NCAA Division-I history when he accepted a position at Illinois State University. In terms of basketball, Spencer helped lead Pershing to its first Class A state title in 35 years in 1967. Spencer credits Coach Robinson for having taught him so much about the game of basketball and life. Coach Robinson was a constant in his life. He was a coach, teacher, and motivator. During this time period, Spencer realized he had a long way to go because he needed to work on his coordination as an athlete. Coach Robinson had him address this area through unconventional methods. Spencer found himself balancing books on his head, posturing, and taking ballet classes. Coach Robinson told Spencer that “one of these days” he would be able to use these skills and apply them to basketball. Sure enough, just a few years later he was competing for the gold in the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City against Yugoslavia when he found himself falling out of bounds with the ball on a key play. Spencer illustrated that as the ball was on its way to going out-of-bounds, he was able to walk the baseline with his toes, stay in bounds, take two steps, catch the ball, and throw the ball back inbounds to fellow Hall of Fame Inductee Jo Jo White, who preceded to make the
layup. For Spencer, this was a big moment as he realized all those lessons directed by Coach Robinson paid off.

Along with Coach Robinson’s direction, Spencer received mentoring from other impactful individuals during high school. James and Ida Bell, a couple who embraced Spencer and offered him their home as a place to live so he could be in the school district, filed for joint adoption and made him feel like part of their family. Spencer reflected, “I felt the loving hands of Mrs. Bell, which was so awesome. They were supportive and provided mentoring through love and acceptance.”

Another prominent figure in Spencer’s life was Wayne Dyer, an author and motivational speaker, who helped him assimilate into the Detroit community. Coach Robinson introduced Spencer to Mr. Dyer, and the both of them mentored him throughout high school. They both insisted he stay two hours after school every day to learn to read and assimilate with people because he was a shy boy. In Spencer’s eyes, “I was a farm boy, so you fell short in terms of education.” Mr. Dyer, who was white, took him under his wing and drove him around in white society. For Spencer, “I was in total white society. I was like – Hey, this is a culture shock, but this is good.” Mr. Dyer would take him to a white community called Birmingham, just outside Detroit, which entailed Spencer attempting to communicate with people because he came from a segregated society. According to Spencer, “Transitioning to Detroit, it wasn’t completely segregated, but not as integrated as I thought it should be. From this experience, I learned to look white people in the eyes and talk with them.” Along the way, he met two white Jewish ladies named Irma and Rebecca, who would bring him lunch, typically a sandwich, and converse with him. They would encourage him to work on his posture. Spencer joked that around them he was not allowed to eat pig and being
from the south that was difficult. Although this type of experience certainly shows
generational differences, Spencer does not carry a negative memory of the situation. From
his perspective, the interaction with Irma and Rebecca were part of his journey in getting to
know people. In his words, “It taught me that there was no difference between us and that
everything is about love.” Looking back, he acknowledged the experience was rather unique.

During this time, Spencer was becoming one of the top two high school basketball
players in the country and felt his confidence rising. As a result of Mr. Dyer’s mentoring and
his improved communication skills, his interviews with the media continued to get better.
However, he recalled the press would come to him after a game and look at him like, “this
Dumb Hick will never get it” and often “drop the mic” on him. Then, afterwards they would
tell him, “You’re a tremendous young man and you are going to go a long way.” Spencer
laughed as he sarcastically referred to the *Detroit Free Press*.

**Collegiate Athlete, Gold Medalist, and Trendsetter**

After high school, Spencer wanted to play college basketball in the south. Originally,
he signed a letter of intent to play for the University of Tennessee, which was closer to native
Mississippi. At that point, his mom had never attended one of his games and he wanted her to
see him play. When he visited Tennessee, he noticed the political impact his decision was
going to have, potentially being the first black athlete in the Southeastern Conference. He
was hesitant about wanting to go through the situation. Also, there was some trouble when he
got to Tennessee because former Kentucky Coach Adolph Rupp had heavily recruited him.
Spencer was reluctant to play for Kentucky after Texas Western University had just beaten
them in the 1966 NCAA championship game, becoming the first team with an all-black
starting lineup to win a title. Spencer vividly remembered players such as Bobby Joe Hill
playing for Texas Western. Therefore, Spencer opted to go another direction with his education. After deciding against going to Tennessee, Coach Robinson found a place for him to go – Trinidad State Junior College in Colorado. Coach Robinson suggested he attend Trinidad for one year, then go play for Coach Bob King at the University of New Mexico. Spencer remembered Coach King telling him he was going to be awesome.

Due to his exceptional performance at Trinidad and a good showing in a tryout that included NIAA, military, and AAU players from around the country, Spencer was selected to the 1968 USA Olympic basketball team, which to this day is one of his proudest accomplishments. He became the youngest player to compete for an American basketball team in the Olympics at 19 years old. The Olympic tryouts were held in “The Pit,” a historical sports venue in Albuquerque, NM. Spencer vividly remembers competing in a dance contest in Albuquerque with future Hall of Fame Inductees Jo Jo White and Charlie Scott during the time of the tryouts. Proudly, he recalled winning $25 in the dance contest. As for greater society, Spencer referenced political statements made by fellow African-American basketball players Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Alvin Hayes, and Wes Unseld, who nearly led a boycott of the 1968 Summer Olympics due to conditions of inequality for minorities in the United States and a history of discriminative decision-making.

After his exceptional Olympic performance where Spencer helped lead USA to a gold medal, he decided to attend the University of Detroit. His purpose in returning to Detroit was to help save the city after the 1967 Detroit Riot. Spencer asserted, “When I went there I had a tremendous year. I wanted to go back to Detroit because I wanted to help the city who had helped me.” After playing for one year at Detroit, Spencer decided to leave college early and challenge the NBA’s previous rule in which players had to wait four years following
graduation from high school to enter the draft. His decision came with expected resistance from the NBA. The University of Detroit sued Spencer. Subsequently, he filed a lawsuit against the NBA and his case was eventually settled in the Supreme Court, which ruled 7-2 in his favor.

Spencer’s legal battle has had a profound effect on the NBA today. As Spencer pointed out, “What this case has done for men particularly, it has given people like Julius Erving, George Gervin, Moses Malone, Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson, Larry Bird, LeBron James, Steph Curry and Kevin Durant the opportunity to make money for their families and do something that they like to do at an early age.” As a result of his case, he figures he had made over $7 billion in revenue for players. “Although I didn’t make the money personally, I gave them the opportunity to make it. In LeBron’s case, he was able to join the NBA out of high school and those four extra years at $43 million per year make a difference.”

Professional Basketball: Facing and Conquering Challenges

After initially playing a season for the Denver Rockets of the ABA and winning Rookie of the Year honors, Spencer went to play for the Seattle Super Sonics. In the process of fighting a high profile legal battle, Spencer wore down, both physically and mentally. The stance he took was controversial and not popular at the time. Spencer recalled, “I would get thrown out of arenas. Public address announcers would shout – We have an illegal player on the floor.” Mentorship from caring individuals previously mentioned, such as Coach Robinson and his family, was able to help Spencer through this difficult time period. He recalled confiding in Coach Robinson when he was on the road. The Seattle community provided support and encouragement during the trial. He remembered times when he would feel beat down and exhausted from the case and would fly back to Seattle to find fans at the
airport encouraging him and saying he will get through it. Spencer would move his family to Seattle and they live there to this day. He said, “If you make it as a kid from the south, you have an obligation to bring your family members.” As an NBA player, Spencer would go on to put up impressive statistics on a consistent basis for the Super Sonics and the Knicks.

After playing around 10 years in the NBA, Spencer admitted he had everything going for him. “I have this gorgeous life and everything was working fine and then I decided – You know what God, I think I want to be in charge. I’m going to take control.” Sarcastically, he referred to himself as “The Big Man on Campus.” In doing so, he used cocaine and watched his career “start to tumble.” During these dark times, he had several people he considered mentors reach out to help. Wiley, his best friend from high school, provided encouragement. His sisters and brothers reached out to support him. Coach Robinson was there as well, providing guidance and support.

Although there was some pressure playing in New York, Spencer’s real issues occurred when he was in Los Angeles playing for the Lakers in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The peer pressure of hanging out with Hollywood types influenced his life. Spencer briefly discussed his marriage with Iman, a Somali-American fashion model, and its impact on his lifestyle. He mentioned, “Being married to Iman helped, but it didn’t help. We were in a position where everyone around us was using. So you’re tipping your toe in the water and the water is like quick sand pulling you right in.” As he fought addiction and felt things were spiraling out of control, Spencer made a courageous decision to take charge of his life. He tried rehab, but ultimately it was his will to give his life to a higher power that saved him. When Spencer reflected on times in his life where he felt most empowered and at peace, it was when he put his full trust in God. His behavior made him feel spiritually unclean.
Spencer described his mindset at the time:

During the time I used cocaine, I was paranoid, looking at lights, wondering whose watching and what’s going on. That’s insanity! Whereas, when you are sober you are at peace and have a spiritual relationship.

A devout Muslim, his ex-wife Iman would pray to Allah five times a day. He respected her dedication to her faith and decided to recommit to his own. So Spencer started praying to his Savior Jesus five times a day. Eventually, he was able to persevere through his hardships and take back control of his life. Despite the trials and tribulations of his journey in professional basketball, Spencer maintains that without these experiences he would be a different person and the difficult times gave him humility and gratitude.

Mentoring Reflection and Analysis

From his interview, Spencer identified his mother and Coach Robinson as his greatest mentors. He sees a mentor as “a person who takes the hand of another and guides that individual.” The mentors Spencer had cared, loved, guided, and embraced. In his opinion, there has to be a willingness to embrace. Spencer described his experience with mentors as “grab me, take me along a path, and it was truly special.” As a person of faith, he feels that his mentoring experiences as a mentee were Godly. In other words, those individuals believed in God and provided advice accordingly. The moments he felt most lost were times when he went astray from his religious beliefs.

NBA Mentoring Need and Player Involvement

In discussing the NBA today, Spencer sees a need for mentorship. In his opinion, retired NBA players should be the key mentors. He was voted in as Chairman of the Board and President for NBA retired players by 1,000 of his peers. Currently, he is involved with
mentoring nearly 1,100 retired players. Spencer takes pride in helping other players learn from his experiences. In many respects, his life has come full circle. Many players whom he competed against or played with are proud of him for how far he has come in overcoming challenges. Spencer does perceive a disconnection with NBA leadership and retired players and hopes that communication will improve.

One area of need Spencer identified in the NBA today pertains to mental health. He believes all players should have personal therapists or sport psychologists on staff. Spencer added, “I think they need a place to talk it out with so many things coming at you. Your game is wrong, or you can’t make a basket.” He feels availability or access to those resources or people will help players, both personally and professionally, and the NBA does not address this enough. The emphasis for professional athletes is always on mental toughness, but Spencer believes people can surrender that part of their lives and treat mental health as the serious process that it is. He remarked, “You don’t have to beat your head against the wall if you have a pillow.” He is working on a program for retired NBA players on the destigmatizing of mental health.

In terms of mentoring current players, Spencer is part of the NBA’s Rookie Transition Program. He speaks to players about the topics we are discussing and feels many are clueless in regards to these matters. He insists they need more awareness and guidance. So how can we get the attention of players? Spencer pointed out that when he gets announced at a gathering and they do a one minute career reflection, the players seem very impressed with his statistics and basketball accomplishments (ex: 30 points, 20 rebounds). That gets their attention. Spencer said their reaction is, “He is one of us. Yeah, he is the record holder
in the Olympics. I want to hear what he has to say.” So credibility is a huge factor in younger players being receptive to mentorship.

**Paying it Forward: Advice from Spencer Haywood**

Young people need to buy in to mentoring and see the value. Mentoring used to be parenting. Mentorship is so important because where would a person get the information and where would they get the emotion. My whole life has been about mentorship; someone mentoring me so I am able to mentor someone else. You are like a track star passing the baton. You get to the first 100 yards and then you have to give it up. And you got to have the freedom and love to know that the next runner or next leg is going to do their job and thereafter. Lord knows once the finalist brings it home, then we can get there.
Charles Scott: My Mentoring Narrative

**Height:** 6–5  
**Position:** Guard  
**ABA Career:** 1970–72  
**NBA Career:** 1972–80

**Basketball Biography**

Charles Scott is an NBA champion, Olympic Gold Medalist, and member of the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, class of 2018. In his professional basketball career, he made three NBA All-Star teams, two ABA All-Star teams, and was 1971 ABA Co-Rookie of the Year. On the floor, Charles was known to be a complete player who could score and play tenacious defense. He set the ABA record for highest scoring average for a season (34.6 ppg). Charles was a member of the 1976 Boston Celtics championship team and played with fellow Hall of Fame Inductees Jo Jo White, Dave Cowens, and John Havlicek. As a collegiate athlete, he excelled at the University of North Carolina and won the 1970 ACC Athlete of the Year Award. Most notably, Charles broke the color barrier as he became the first African-American student to attend UNC on an athletic scholarship.
Growing up in Harlem

Charles Scott’s life story began on the streets of Harlem, NY. He grew up without parental support and was forced to survive at a young age. His father was an alcoholic and his mother left the family when he was just 11 years old. Despite his difficult upbringing, Charles initially made a name for himself as a streetball legend in the famous Rucker Park Basketball Tournament, an event that helped less-fortunate children stay off the streets and aim for college careers. His improbable journey to NBA success was a testament to his determination and resolve. As our conversation began, Charles quickly pointed out how instrumental mentorship had been in his life. Subsequently, he took me through his mentorship journey from middle school to professional basketball, providing an in-depth description of his experiences and insights on the subject.

A child growing up at-risk without parents to guide and protect is less likely to transition successfully to adulthood. Yet, Charles was able to meet some special individuals during the course of his life that showed an interest in helping him. At the same time, his desire to learn and grow made him attractive for potential mentors. The first mentor Charles spoke of was Ms. Evelyn Jarret, his special progress class teacher in seventh, eighth, and ninth grade. In his opinion, even though Ms. Jarret was black she “spoke like a white person.” He continued, “Her values were different than from what I’d seen in black individuals up until that point.” He credits Ms. Jarret as the “backbone” in how he goes about his life and the cornerstone of what came afterward. Although Charles just wanted to focus on basketball, Ms. Jarret made him focus on academics. According to Charles:

She saw something in me that I didn’t see in myself. Mentorship really comes in because a young person may not see certain qualities in his or her self that a mentor does. A mentor sees the potential and then tries to extract that potential from the individual.
Ms. Jarret was his first mentor and taught him important life lessons. She taught Charles to be punctual. As a result, he always comes 15 minutes early to any commitment, which included this interview. Ms. Jarret opened his eyes and expanded his knowledge of the world. Before meeting her, Charles had never been out of Harlem. She took him downtown to watch plays and visit museums. Honestly, “All I knew was 131st Street. I didn’t even know there was such thing as plays until Ms. Jarret took me downtown.” Charles strongly feels that Ms. Jarret’s influence fueled his competitive drive, not only in athletics, but in academics.

Charles then attended Laurinburg High School and met his next two mentors, Mr. and Mrs. McDuffie. Mr. McDuffie was the head basketball coach and his wife was one of the teachers at the prep school. According to Charles, “they would provide double mentorship, one athletically and the other academically.” Similar to Ms. Jarret, the McDuffies saw potential in him that he did not see in himself. Charles reflects, “At 13 or 14 years old, my dream was to finish high school and then go into the Marines because you always wanted to be like the biggest guy on the block and that’s what the biggest guys did. Until meeting mentors, I did not aspire to be anything higher than that.” Charles pointed out that before his mother left him, she worked at a laundry mat and his father was a taxi cab driver. He indicated their situation is really all he knew and mentors opened his eyes to other possibilities. He added, “They believed in me. They shined a light on me and showed me a tunnel that I have never seen before.”

A quality Charles appreciated in Mr. McDuffie was that he grew up in the south and was a proud black man. Charles recalls a time when Mr. McDuffie had Stuyvesant play Davidson College, who had a group of scholarship players. Someone suggested they were overmatched and Mr. McDuffie’s answer was “if you put five guys on the court, the best five
guys will win.” That taught Charles to be confident and have the mindset “give me the opportunity, let me try to prove myself, and then judge me at that point.”

Under Mr. McDuffie’s mentorship, after spending a year at Stuyvesant, Charles transferred to Laurinburg Institute in North Carolina, where he finished high school and graduated as valedictorian. Mr. McDuffie saw potential for Charles to attend the University of North Carolina as the program’s first black athlete. In the process, Mr. McDuffie believed Charles could also compete academically and felt he could handle the pressures and challenges in college because of his upbringing and having to survive on his own. Charles remarked, “His vision of me was bigger than my vision of me. To be honest, I never thought about going to school or being the first black athlete to go to the University of North Carolina.”

Charles admits he wanted to go to UCLA, Providence, St. John’s, or Michigan, but Mr. McDuffie kept on taking him to visit North Carolina. During the recruitment process, Charles visited UCLA in the month of March and remembered an intense rainstorm as he flew out of New York City. When his plane landed in Southern California, his first sights were sunshine and palm trees. Although Mr. McDuffie did not want him to commit to UCLA, Charles (laughing) remembers himself thinking that he was valedictorian of his class so why go back. He met with Coach Wooden and considered not going back. At that point, he wanted to enjoy college.

Another potential choice he considered was playing for Coach Lefty Driesell at Davidson College, a man he got to know and respect over the years. Lefty recruited Charles in 1965 and to this day they are still friends. They call each other all the time. Charles felt Lefty was the first person in his life that liked him as an individual. “Until meeting Lefty, I
had low self-esteem because of my physical appearance of not having front teeth, not having parents, and having to go to other peoples’ homes to eat. So I had low esteem and self-value and Lefty was the first individual who made me feel wanted by someone else.” Charles added, “In order to find mentors you have to have some degree of self-value. No young man should go through life until 16-17 years old feeling like someone doesn’t like him as an individual.”

Although Charles appreciated Lefty’s persistence and sincerity, he chose the University of North Carolina, which ended up being tedious for him. The main reason for the decision was Mr. McDuffie, who Charles described as a visionary wanting him to be the first black scholarship athlete to attend North Carolina and possibly go on to become a lawyer or doctor. Mr. McDuffie saw an opportunity for him to make a difference in society, which he appreciates.

**Off to Chapel Hill**

Once Charles arrived in North Carolina, he wanted to prove his worth on the court and in the classroom. On the basketball court, Charles had the privilege of having three mentors: Larry Brown, John Lotz, and Dean Smith. Larry Brown was his freshman coach back when freshman had a separate team at the collegiate level. Coach Brown was very detail-oriented about the game of basketball. John Lotz was an assistant coach for the varsity team. Charles referred to Coach Lotz as “his soul, his moral turpitude, and the person that made him a moral character.” In fact, the two became so close that Coach Lotz was the best man at his wedding. However, Charles contends that his biggest mentor from college on was Coach Dean Smith.
Coach Smith was a special kind of leader who resonated with several of his former Tar Heel players. To Charles, Coach Smith was his mentor from the time he went to college to when Coach Smith passed away in 2015. After visiting several ACC schools during the recruitment process, the first behavior that really impressed Charles about Coach Smith was “he was the first coach who asked me what he wanted to be called.” Up until that point, everyone would call him Charley Scott, but his name is really Charles. Coach Smith always called him Charles, not Charley. That showed respect and meant a lot to him.

The second behavior that impressed Charles in regards to Coach Smith was he was the only person who asked Charles to go to church on Sundays. Charles found that to be amazing being in the south because although Coach Smith had control over basketball, he could not control who went to church. Charles knew the church would be a mostly white environment and racism was a major issue in the south. After attending, he noticed there was a black family in the church. But, that experience connected him with Coach Smith, especially seeing how open-minded his new coach was considering how uncommon it was at the time for a white man and black man to go to church together. Not many other college coaches had the level of cultural competence as Coach Smith, especially knowing the circumstances in the south. That made an impression on Charles because he saw Coach Smith was going beyond basketball. None of the other coaches who recruited him had really gone beyond basketball. From that point on, Coach Smith has always been the most important person in his life.

Celtic Pride

After playing a couple of seasons for the Virginia Squires of the American Basketball Association (ABA) where he put up his best individual statistics, Charles chose to head to the
NBA. When turning his attention to his professional basketball career, he briefly addressed his tenure with the Phoenix Suns. Although he put up impressive statistics with the team, he stated individualism was never important to him. Charles continued, “Being a part of something was more important to me because I was never a part of anything. I was never a part of a family.” Charles humorously noted while playing with the Suns he would be on the court with his teammates at tipoff and look across at a team like the New York Knicks with Bill Bradley, Dave DeBussure, Willis Reed, Walt Frazier, and Earl Monroe and asked himself: “Do we have a chance of winning? No Chance!” The Knicks played like a unit. He wanted to be a part of that type of structure. However, he made it clear that was with no disrespect to the Suns, especially Jerry Colangelo who he regards as one of the greatest owners of all time. Charles said that Mr. Colangelo could have been his fourth most influential mentor, in addition to Ms. Jarret, Mr. McDuffie, and Coach Smith. He did not per se directly mentor him, but Charles respected and admired qualities in Mr. Colangelo such as his character and loyalty.

In terms of basketball, the Suns did not have a good team so when Charles was traded to the Boston Celtics in 1975, he felt like he was “going to heaven.” Charles pointed out that in college, the ABA, and with the Suns he had always been the number one scorer. With the Celtics, they had him, John Havlicek, Jo Jo White, Dave Cowens, and Paul Silas. To Charles, the Celtics were a great situation because he wanted to be a part of something special. He provided analogies of individual great players mentioned apart from their teams (ex: Michael Jordan and his supporting cast). Charles said (laughing) that he liked it better when it was like “The Temptations.”
His experience with the Celtics was unlike any other in his basketball career. “When I walked on the court with the Celtics, it was not only about having pride in myself, but having pride in being a team. The Celtics gave me the family I needed.” Charles communicated that even up until that time he lacked family. He said he has three sisters and they do not know any more about him than I (the interviewer) does because they have seen him “twice in the last 50 years.” So the Celtics gave him that experience of feeling like he was a part of something. Charles mentioned that in sports athletes do not necessarily say it, but they envy the top players in many cases. With the Celtics, there was a cohesiveness built on respect for one another on a personal basis. It was family and all players were on equal ground, no one better than another. In his estimation, the experiences he had with the Suns and Celtics are not comparable.

Charles credits Red Auerbach, former owner and general manager of the Celtics, with facilitating such a cohesive environment. On a light hearted note, he tells a story about his first interaction with Red back when he was in high school. During the recruiting process, Lefty Driesell invited Charles for a basketball clinic. Future Hall of Famers Dave Cowens and Pete Maravich were there as well. Red came to the clinic. Intentionally, Coach Driesell picked Charles and Pete to participate in a drill in which he rolled the ball out and the two players were supposed to dive on the ground and get the ball. “Neither Pete or I were diving on the ground,” Charles replied with strong laughter. Red then pointed at Pete and Charles saying, “You see those two guys right there, they are going to end up being shoe salesmen.” Ironically, Charles (with amusement) points out he actually owned a shoe store at the end of his career.
Playing for Red was a much different experience. “Red was great at helping you understand the importance he put on you. He helped me block out noise from the outside,” Charles remarked. There was a particular situation he remembers that exemplified Red’s impact on him and captured why he loved playing for the Celtics. The story he shared pertained to a playoff game against Cleveland during the 1976 Celtics championship run. He remembers him and Jo Jo White having exceptional individual games and carrying the scoring load for the Celtics. Charles had the game winning steal to seal the victory. He recalls his team was up eight or nine points in the last three minutes and the Cavaliers fouled John Havlicek to play the clock and have him shoot free throws. The next morning the newspaper headline read “Havlicek hits Free Throws to Seal Game.” Charles commented, “Every athlete wants to be recognized when they do something great. If they tell you different they are lying.” He remembers Red calling him and Jo Jo into his office immediately afterward and mentioning he cannot control the newspapers, but provided an example of another similar situation. Red recalled Bob Cousy, a former point guard for the Celtics and Hall of Fame Inductee, missing a seven day road trip and the team winning all seven games during his absence. In the final game of the trip, Bill Russell had 50 rebounds. Red pointed out a newspaper headline the following day read “When will Cousy be Back?” Charles appreciated Red’s intuitiveness to understand how he and Jo Jo felt because they were upset. Red offered the perspective that “the people who care appreciate you.” That helped Charles better understand “you can’t control perception and you can only control those in your inner circle.”

Charles admitted that leaving the Celtics was tough. “When Red traded me, he was honest and told me why he was trading me. There was nothing acrimonious about it, but I
think I lost interest in basketball after that,” he replied. The camaraderie and strong organizational culture of the Celtics made the game more enjoyable for Charles compared with previous basketball experiences.

**Brotherly Advice**

When asked if he had any peers or veteran players that mentored him early in his NBA career, Charles indicated that he received mentoring that helped him transition into professional basketball. “When I got into pro basketball, there were three guys that mentored me: Archie Clark, Sam Jones, and Sonny Hill. So, there was always someone there to help me understand what to do, and then I was starving for someone to lead.”

Founded in 1968, the Sonny Hill Community Involvement Basketball League is a league that helps keep young people out of trouble and teaches life skills. Charles told a story that impacted him right before he entered the NBA. He was playing in the Sonny Hill league at the time and eating breakfast one morning with Archie Clark, a veteran NBA All-Star player. Archie told him “do not to let anyone tell you that you can’t play.” The interaction had a profound effect on Charles and he appreciated having another star basketball player help him pay attention to potential barriers. Charles added, “That was an important building block. He was telling me – You are a great basketball player and don’t let anybody tell you that you’re not. Don’t let anyone take your confidence.”

As they were eating breakfast, Charles showed appreciation to Archie and remembers Archie’s reaction. He told Charles:

Well, you know I’m not a person of small talk. I feel an obligation because my life is one of people helping me. This is what was done for me. This is what I’m doing for you. Now, you have the opportunity to do it for someone else.
The lesson Charles received regarding confidence from Archie resonated with him. In our interview, he brought up Markelle Fultz, the former first overall draft pick of the Philadelphia 76ers and current player for the Orlando Magic, as an unfortunate example of a player’s confidence possibly being affected by others around him. Charles explained, “The 76ers drafted Markelle Fultz a couple of years ago and he didn’t have a shooting issue initially, but somewhere down the line someone took his confidence in terms of shooting the ball and now his whole career went in a different direction. So a mentor is important to keep your level of confidence and also give you guidance on what to look forward to, especially it helps from someone who has been through the process before.”

**Mentoring Reflection and Analysis**

Reflecting on his mentoring experiences, although he received mentoring at various times in his NBA career, Charles reiterated his most influential mentors were individuals who came into his life prior to reaching the NBA. Charles regards his three greatest mentors that made him the person he is today as: Ms. Evelyn Jarret, Mr. Frank McDuffie, and Coach Dean Smith. To understand the value these individuals mean to him, he has all three of their names inscribed on his Hall of Fame ring. As a boy, Charles does not necessarily think he was particularly receptive to meeting mentors and admits he really did not know. “At 11 or 12 years old I was missing my two front teeth and had never been to the doctor or dentist. I was responsible for myself and had no vision of life.” However, Charles describes himself as a person of curiosity and someone who is always seeking to know more. He feels these mentoring experiences fed his thirst for knowledge. Charles believes he is fortunate because the impactful people he met along his journey took an interest in him. It is hard for him to
understand what they saw in him. As a boy he was introverted. As a result of positive mentoring experiences, his confidence improved and he became more extroverted.

According to Charles:

Before meeting these mentors, I had more of a victim mentality and dim view of life. Why me? Why do other people have this and I have that? Why are these my circumstances? That can really take you to a negative place and give you a negative view of life. Luckily, I met people who gave me a positive view of life because my upbringing didn’t provide that.

When asked to expand on what qualities he felt were important in effective mentors, Charles further described some of his most influential mentors. He mentioned that all of them helped him with their respective backgrounds. Charles commented, “The first two, Ms. Jarret and Mr. McDuffie, were black, educated, and sophisticated. That was impressive to me at the time.” Ms. Jarret did not want him to play basketball and gave him credit for his intellect. Her vision was for him to go to an Ivy League school. In her view, that was the pinnacle of success for an individual. She was a person who brought out the best in Charles and forced him to see life through a different lens. What stood out about Mr. McDuffie was his character and strength of personality. Mr. McDuffie envisioned what Charles could potentially do and the significance he could make. To Charles, that is what mentorship is all about – mentors see more in people then they see in themselves. With Coach Smith, it was respect, acceptance, and loyalty. As previously mentioned, Coach Smith was a life mentor beyond basketball for Charles.

When asked if he recalled any failed mentoring relationships in which people have let him down, Charles indicated a person really disappointed him, but preferred to not mention him by name. The person played with him and always talked about loyalty, but Charles
expressed how disappointing it can be when people “do not live up to how they present themselves.”

**NBA Today: The Need for Mentoring**

When discussing the NBA today, Charles feels that many of the current players need mentorship badly. He remembered the NBA starting a mentorship program 10 or 15 years ago where they paired ex-athletes with younger players on teams and credits them for doing so. In his opinion, mentoring is vital to helping provide direction for younger players. He referenced the “one-and-done” structure and feels players six months removed from high school are ill-equipped to handle the drastic lifestyle change of being wealthy overnight. Charles emphasized the importance of education and believes the transition to the NBA is more challenging for young men than people think. He stated:

> You take a kid like Zion Williamson from South Carolina, which is not a rich state, and all of a sudden you take that young man and you give him millions of dollars. How do you grow from a person from South Carolina to being a millionaire? How does your life change from living in an apartment to buying a mansion? So mentorship is needed because there’s a gap, especially in today’s basketball. The greatest thing college did was get you ready to enter society.

Charles mentioned that many of today’s players at 18 or 19 years old come from difficult circumstances or unstable family situations. He brought up single parent homes as being a significant issue for young people today. His son was a McDonald’s All-American high school player. He joked that if his son says hello to his mom on television he better also say hello to his dad. He went further, “Every time I turn around I see players saying hi to momma, which means 90 percent of players don’t think they have a daddy. That’s how our society looks at a lot of athletes and that’s why mentorship is very important – That male
figure.” Charles strongly feels that several young men are missing key lessons that a father can provide.

**Paying it Forward: Advice from Charles Scott**

Experience is the best teacher. Young people need to listen to the people that have gone through what they are going through. By listening to mentors, young people can avoid making the same mistakes they’ve made. Today’s players need to listen to the players that played before them and really paved the way for them to become millionaires. Somebody paved the way for you and now you have the obligation to pave the way for someone coming behind you. Athletes have a responsibility. Money and fame only makes you a bigger whatever you are. So if you want to grow as an individual, it is important to listen to those who have gone down the same path. Many people believe basketball started with Michael Jordan and before him Julius Erving. I always appreciate people approaching me, whether at the airport, or other places and recognizing me and thanking me for what I have done. Those are the things that let you know that you made an impact. That is what makes me most proud. I don’t expect many from this generation to know about this stuff, but people coming up to me today and showing gratitude makes me feel that my life and what I have done is not wasted. In other words, the sacrifices I made were not in vain. They have positive results and I feel proud about that.
Jamaal Wilkes: My Mentoring Narrative

**Height:** 6–6  **Position:** Small Forward  **NBA Career:** 1974–86

**Basketball Biography**

Jamaal Wilkes is a 4-time NBA champion, 2-time NCAA Champion, and member of the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, class of 2012. During his professional basketball career, he was named to three NBA All-Star teams and two NBA All-Defensive teams. His smooth, graceful style of play earned him the nickname “Silk,” and success seemed to follow him to nearly every team he played with. In 1975, Jamaal earned NBA Rookie of the Year honors and helped the Golden State Warriors win the NBA championship. After spending three seasons in the Bay Area, Jamaal played the next eight seasons with the Los Angeles Lakers during their “Showtime” era, where he was a major contributor to three more NBA championship teams (1980, 1982, 1985) playing alongside fellow Hall of Fame Inductees such as Magic Johnson, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, James Worthy, and Spencer Haywood. As a collegiate athlete, Jamaal played for legendary Coach John Wooden at UCLA where he was a two-time Consensus first team All-American. At UCLA, he helped guide the Bruins to three Final Four appearances, two national titles, and a record-setting 88 game winning streak. As a basketball player, he is one of only five men who have won multiple NBA and NCAA championships.
Rooted on the Central Golden Coast

Jamaal Wilkes’ mentorship journey began on the central coast of California. In fact, he spent his entire youth, college experience, and professional career in the golden state. A true gentleman, Jamaal began our conversation by communicating that although he never really identified it, mentorship has meant everything to him. It was instrumental in his growth and development as a boy and later a young man. Raised in a two-parent home in Ventura, CA, Jamaal expressed that his family did not have much, but he and his siblings were given a lot of love. Reflecting on his life, Jamaal feels blessed to have had key people that helped him develop in multiple areas. He identified three main mentors that he credits as making him the person he is today. These mentoring experiences happened prior to reaching the NBA. The first two occurred during his childhood and adolescent years and set a strong foundation for his personal and professional success.

Growing up in the 1960s, his first life mentor was his father, the late Rev. Leander Wilkes. Jamaal views himself as fortunate having had a great father who was hard working and present in his life. He described his father as a real “Salt of the Earth” guy who was soft spoken, but commanded respect by his actions. When asked how his father built trust and proved himself to Jamaal, he replied, “My father proved himself because he knew when to back off. He didn’t overstep himself. He didn’t talk a lot and you didn’t want him to get excited because that meant he was getting upset.” Jamaal further described his father as a calm and easy going presence. In the Wilkes’ home, there were not any issues as long as each child respected the household and went to church. His father taught him to have a sense of purpose, practice self-control, and to be teachable. Jamaal is grateful to have grown up in a positive environment and those conditions impacted his behavior accordingly. He contends, “We all imitate what we see. I don’t care who you are we all do it.”
Although he did have parental support, Jamaal mentioned there were significant challenges during his youthful years. “I didn’t grow up in a big urban city and grew up in a small town where minorities weren’t expected to do anything or get out. And even though it was a little town you had gangs and drugs – not like today’s gangs, but you still had that element.” Having a strong father figure helped him stay out of trouble. He credits his father as being a positive role model more by his actions, rather than his words.

From a basketball standpoint, his first mentoring experience was with his high school head coach Bob Swanson. He considers Mr. Swanson his second mentor, who taught him several life lessons during their interaction. Jamaal pointed out that high school basketball was huge in the small town he grew up in. Therefore, the local high school basketball coach was an important person in the community. In remembering Mr. Swanson, Jamaal recalls their early interaction in which Mr. Swanson saw basketball talent in him. “I had an older sister and we couldn’t afford to get in the gym so we would sneak in. When I was 8 or 9 years old Mr. Swanson saw me play on the courts on the weekends when the big boys were finished. He would say things like – Hey son, you are pretty good. Can you use your left hand?” As a player, Jamaal admitted he was taller and faster than the other players, but fairly one-dimensional at that point primarily only being able to use his right hand. Mr. Swanson’s challenge made him focus on his game. Endearing qualities that he noticed in Mr. Swanson were his selflessness and sincere expression. “He was a real considerate person,” Jamaal remarked. “He was the kind of coach that would say – Hey, when we win you guys did it and when we lose it is my fault. That built trust in a hurry.” Observing these qualities in his coach had a positive impact as Mr. Swanson would offer credit for successes and take blame for failures. Although Jamaal’s family moved to Santa Barbara before his senior year and
transferred schools, his first three years playing for Mr. Swanson at Ventura High left a lasting impression and were critical to his personal development.

Jamaal described his second high school head basketball coach at Santa Barbara High School as more of a “drill sergeant” and “tough guy.” He had heard about this coach before he arrived because his best friend was one of his nephews. By the time Jamaal played for him, the foundation had already been established by his father and Mr. Swanson. “I already knew I might have a future in something so I didn’t get sidetracked by any shenanigans. I kept my focus.” Although Jamaal respected both his high school coaches, Mr. Swanson’s approach resonated well with his personality and helped him stay focused.

In reflecting on his childhood and adolescent years, Jamaal pointed out there were certain negative situations going on around him. However, he feels the positive mentorship he received helped him stay focused. “I think that’s the biggest challenge for young people in any time period is staying focused. Getting close to the edge without going over and knowing when to pull back,” Jamaal explained. He added, “So because of the positive mentorship I had at a young age, I was aware that if I was going too close to the edge, I could come to my senses and pull back.” Jamaal’s father and Mr. Swanson instilled values that helped prepare him for the next chapter of his life.

**On to Westwood**

As Jamaal stepped foot on the UCLA campus in the fall of 1970 and began playing for Coach Wooden, he immediately noticed how competitive the atmosphere was. According to Jamaal, “The basketball was off the charts. You were bringing your ‘A’ game to practice every day.” He added, “If you didn’t want it, there was someone salivating to take your position. The competition factor kept things in line.” Coach Wooden was his third mentor
and an important figure in molding him into the person he is today. Jamaal mentioned that Coach Wooden was already an icon by the time he attended UCLA and credits his father for helping prepare him for Coach Wooden. “Although my father was not a basketball coach, they had similar philosophies.”

When discussing the impact Coach Wooden had on his life, Jamaal referred to him as “a different breed” and pointed out how dissimilar the conditions are today. When describing Coach Wooden’s approach, he added, “In today’s world where everyone is into branding and self-hype and all that, Coach Wooden liked teaching and developing people. It was such a privilege and honor to be under his tutelage.” Coach Wooden once referred to Jamaal as “the perfect player.” When asked about that, Jamaal said that compliment by Coach Wooden still sends chills down his spine. He is not sure why he said it, but thinks maybe he did because Jamaal tried to minimize problems while playing for him.

There were several reasons why he considers Coach Wooden a mentor. One major reason is because of how much his coach cared for people. According to Jamaal, “Coach Wooden would say so much in a few words and his words stuck with you. He instilled in me that confidence to be the best I can be.” Jamaal noticed that Coach Wooden was not judgmental or condescending. As a mentor, Coach Wooden was genuinely interested in getting to know people and the communication was always open. He was there to offer words of encouragement at various times, even after playing for him. Jamaal strongly feels that trust is a key issue with mentorship and believes it starts with unconditional love. He admits letting his guard down was never easy and he was hesitant to do it on many occasions, but the unconditional love and support enabled him to do so with Coach Wooden. “I think you feel it. And sometimes that’s enough to go on.”
Bay Area Magic

Drafted eleventh overall in 1974 by the Golden State Warriors, Jamaal had to prove he could handle the physicality of the game at the next level. The perception was that he was too frail to survive in the NBA and he used those criticisms as fuel to motivate himself. He was not one to take criticism personally or gloat over success. His motivation was internal. He attributes his ability to maintain focus in spite of criticism during the early stages of his career to having past mentors to lean on. Plus, he felt very fortunate to have been drafted by the Warriors, who he referred to as having a great veteran group of guys. “Our team wasn’t expected to do anything, but we ended up winning the championship my rookie year. It was an ‘Us vs. the World’ mentality.”

The transition to the professional game was not easy, but Jamaal felt immediately welcomed by veteran players on the Warriors. He recalls, “Charles Johnson would have me over for dinner. Clifford Ray was very helpful to all the guys. We kind of looked after each other.” The support helped him acclimate to the NBA. He recognized how different the college and professional games were and how he needed to adapt his style to survive the professional game. The veteran players on the Warriors provided him with much needed information. Jamaal feels that Al Attles, his former head coach with the Golden State Warriors and second African-American NBA head coach to ever lead a team to a title, facilitated this type of environment. “He was a real players’ coach, yet he had so much integrity. There was something magnetic about him,” Jamaal added. Although he viewed Coach Attles as a great coach and had much respect for him, Jamaal felt the locker room talk and private bonding with players was important. “Having peers to learn from who weren’t much older than me. We can go back and forth – That was a form of mentorship.”
In terms of the Warriors’ executive leadership, Jamaal described the ownership approach as being “hands off.” In comparing the franchise back then with today’s version, he admitted:

In 1975, the Warriors weren’t the Warriors of today. They were a small market. A sleepy market. Haight-Ashbury. They are now hot. They weren’t so hot back then. Our owner was a nice guy. He was a Bay Area guy and kind of a hippie. But even after we won the championship he was not involved in the operation of the team.

Jamaal gave former owner Franklin Mieuli credit for managing to keep the Warriors in the Bay Area, but acknowledged there was a big difference in leadership philosophies between the Warriors and the next NBA franchise he would play for. After playing three seasons for the Warriors, he was headed to Los Angeles where he continued his career as an NBA player.

**It’s Showtime**

Although Jamaal’s experience with the Warriors was very positive, he described his transition to the Los Angeles Lakers as “night and day.” He recalls Jack Kent Cooke owning the team when he got there and that Mr. Cooke was going through one of the biggest divorces in the state of California. He was living in Las Vegas at the time and the Lakers were being run by Chick Hearn. In 1979, Dr. Jerry Buss bought the team and built a strong organization. Jamaal credited strong leadership as a factor in the Lakers success and added, “Bill Sharman was the team president, Jerry West was the general manager, and Pat Riley was the head coach – All in the Hall of Fame. We had such strong ownership, similar to the Warriors today.”

In comparing the ownership of the Warriors and Lakers, Jamaal emphasized how supportive the environment was in Los Angeles. Although he insists the players had to make it happen and work together on the floor, he credits the ownership for being very strong.
“When I played for the Warriors we didn’t have the kind of ownership. It was still a rich man’s hobby. Then, the Showtime Lakers was a transition from a hobby to a big time business. Now, it’s a multinational corporation.” In his opinion, the management group for the Lakers was much stronger than the Warriors. That made a difference when it came to sustaining success.

Jamaal reiterated that professional basketball was a business-like atmosphere, but he referred to the Lakers as a “good business with good people.” He feels management created a positive culture in which players could excel. At the same time, players bought into the winning philosophy and formed a cohesive unit. Although he admitted teammates competed against each other for minutes, money, and women, there was a keen awareness that they needed each other to be successful. “We were able to put our personal agendas aside, when necessary and even when it was hard to do, but we were able to do it.” He recalls a ritual the Lakers’ players would engage in before practice called “a circle.” They would organize in a circle and stretch, relax, and discuss various issues with the team. It would prepare them for practice, which was usually intense. According to Jamaal, “the group circle was a form of positive peer mentorship where if a guy was getting out of line, that’s where we would bring it up. Often, it was in a teasing fashion, but everyone knew what was happening.” He remarked that others would jump in and the communication would be “back and forth.” In his view, “the circle” was instrumental in bringing the team together.

A Helping Hand

It is during the most trying moments in a person’s life that mentorship can be invaluable. When Jamaal reflects on difficult times, he remembers his family being there. As previously mentioned, he had loving and supportive parents. He credits his sister, who was
an attorney, for helping manage his career. His wife was especially supportive throughout their marriage. Although most of his mentors have passed away, he would remain connected with them well after his basketball career ended. Over the years, he would keep in contact with Coach Wooden before his eventual passing. In a light hearted manner, Jamaal talked about his relationship with Coach Wooden when coming to him with difficult personal situations. “He was kind of like your dad – You can only tell him so much (laughing). You tell him in third person – Well, I have a friend or something like that (laughing), but he knew what was happening.” Coach Wooden is considered one of his lifelong mentors.

In the face of darkness, sometimes an unexpected person emerges and becomes a ‘Ray of Light’ at a critical juncture. We never know who that may be. Prior to the 1981-82 NBA season, Jamaal was dealing with the nightmare of losing a child. He and his current wife (second wife) Valerie lost their infant daughter. This was devastating for his family. At that point, he had already endured losing a child with his first wife due to a heart ailment. Few could imagine the pain Jamaal was feeling but he continued to do his job. The Lakers had begun their season and were set to take a trip to San Antonio to play the Spurs. People were telling him not to travel to San Antonio. However, each person copes with pain differently and he felt it was most therapeutic for him to go on the trip, continue on, and not to stop.

Jamaal quietly dealt with this tragedy. One evening he was in his hotel room and received a phone call from an unlikely person, one that comforted him and gave him a huge lift at a time when he need it most. Jamaal shared:

No one knew what to say to me. I’m in my room and all of a sudden I get this phone call. Now, this guy we played together for 8 years and half the time he wouldn’t speak to me. I truly love the guy and respect him and I know he loves me. It was Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. He said – Why don’t you come out of your room and talk. It
just totally blew me away. It was the last thing I expected from the person I least I expected.

Mentoring comes in several forms and has different meanings for various people. Jamaal brought up our earlier conversation point regarding trust and letting your guard down. He explained, “Much of it comes from here (pointing to his heart). You got to be open to life because you never know where it’s going to come from and who is may come from.”

Jamaal is grateful for people that have showed support in different ways throughout his career. Dr. Ernest Vandeweghe was a unique person who took an interest in him along with several other NBA players. He was open and transparent about his life and family. Also, he is appreciative for fans and others who got to know him and became part of his life and career. For Jamaal, there was not one ‘go to person’. There were several “go to people” and it has always been a surprise.

**Mentoring Reflection and Analysis**

When reflecting on his mentoring experiences, Jamaal credited his faith and impactful, special individuals for helping him become the person he is today. “I am here by the grace of God and because others invested in me.” As previously mentioned trust was the foundation of his mentoring relationships and took some time to establish. Other qualities he finds essential are caring and love. He feels if those two elements are missing the mentoring experience may have a negative effect. Jamaal insists, “You have to care – If you don’t then find something else to do.” He believes people should not pursue goals with a hidden agenda or if the intent is strictly for the money, power, and fame. Although he does not see anything wrong with those privileges if they are a byproduct of good intentions, he maintains they
should not be the main focus. He added, “Love what you do. If you enjoy what you do you will probably want to share it with people.”

Jamaal experienced bad mentorship during the course of his life. Those situations were learning experiences and taught him how not to behave. He found himself just having to survive and get through those situations and added, “I’ve seen when important people in your life just don’t care. I’ve seen the impact.”

When asked how he was able to differentiate the good mentors from the bad ones, he continued, “Internal warning signals showed me they weren’t good mentors. When you are doing your business and playing the game you don’t really take a lot of time to think about where this guy is coming from, but you just kind of sense something is not right. You still have to work or perform for him and get through it, but later you reflect back and see things more clearly.” Jamaal admitted that in the high stakes game of basketball most people have personal agendas or try to look out for themselves. “We all have to look out for our best interests, but there is a way to go about it,” he acknowledged. Ultimately, internal warning signals or instincts gave him the inclination these individuals were not good mentors.

Having played immediately following the height of the Civil Rights Movement, Jamaal has dealt with discrimination at points in his life. He spoke of inequities that still exist today:

Being a black man there are systemic issues that are not necessarily talked about in public, but behind the scenes. You have mentors advising you on situations – Don’t do this or don’t do that. For white mentors, some are very sensitive to those issues and others aren’t. They’re still good people and you have to work with them, move forward with them. So, yeah there are different mentors, but I think the common theme is that regardless if I agreed with their methods or what they were saying, as long as I felt that their intentions were for my best interest (my benefit) then it nurtured the trust.
Jamaal expressed that all of his mentors had different personalities. At times if he felt other individuals who were trying to mentor him were giving advice or making comments not in his best interest, he would tune them out. With his good mentors, their personalities and objectives may have been different, but their intentions were positive or selfless.

At this point in his life Jamaal is able to fully understand his mentoring journey and his life experiences provided him the opportunity to gain perspective. He admits, “Of course, I didn’t have to listen, but fortunately I did. And now I have a better understanding of why they pointed me in a certain direction. I may not have understood or agreed at the time, but now I see things differently.” Jamaal tries to do what he can to help mentor younger people. His first priority is to raise his children and instill good values in them. As he learned from previous mentors such as his father and Coach Wooden, Jamaal prefers to recognize a situation where a person is in need, provide encouragement, and then completely back off. Through his experiences, he understands the importance of effective mentoring, but humbly prefers that his name not be in the newspaper or singled out for his efforts. He believes it is his duty as a human being and feels a strong obligation to make a difference in the lives of others because “it’s the right thing to do.”

Jamaal pointed out that he was considered at-risk as a child and remembers his experiences at the Boys & Girls Club growing up. He views himself as fortunate and described his mindset in regards to giving back.

I don’t have a title or role, but I live for those situations where I can make a difference in someone’s life – very quietly. I don’t want them thanking me, but I know what it has meant for me and my own children. I feel that it’s a human responsibility. I don’t think we need to make a big deal about it. I just think we need to do it.
NBA Today: The Need for Mentoring

When discussing the NBA today, Jamaal expressed that the current dynamics are so different compared to when he played. He feels effective mentorship is occurring to a lesser degree because of the financial implications. “Everything is about money today – branding. It used to be you took a lot of pride in wearing the uniform and the community you lived in. Yes, you wanted the big bucks, but you understood you not only needed to contribute on the court, but off the court.” Jamaal mentioned that it was not only about individual pride when he played, but group pride. Although he feels there is some pride today, he sees the situation as much different. “Now-a-days there are a lot of people who feel entitled. When I played it was still a game, but now it is multinational corporations.”

Jamaal does not place the blame on players or kids, but rather the system. The corporate influence is where he sees the changes. “These companies are looking for the next Michael Jordan or LeBron James at 9, 10, and 11 years old (gesturing to money).” He recalls how different it was when he was a child or teenager. “When I grew up I would be outside shooting baskets and my mother would say – Sonny, put the ball down and come do your homework. Now it’s like – What are you doing your homework for? Go shoot that ball!” He does not believe it is all bad, but he can recognize the changes. Contracts became the focal point and some of the values have been lost. Also, he sees social media as an issue that can be destructive in some circumstances. “The closet has gone from very small to now your dirty laundry is out there. So, I truly believe mentorship is needed and I think the NBA will take steps to preserve their game if they have a couple of public relations disasters.”
When asked if he misses NBA action and his days on the court, he responded, “No, I treasure them. I cherish them, but I don’t miss them. I had a good run and I still have my family. I still have the same people that love me.”

Paying it Forward: Advice from Jamaal Wilkes

You can fail without being a failure. I think there’s so much pressure on our young people to do it in a hurry. I know we are competing for everything now, globally to get into schools, colleges, social media and the brunt of being a failure and your life is over and there’s no purpose in going forward. As a parent and having the time to reflect on my own life, that concerns me very much. So, I would like to say to the young person reading this: You were put here for a reason and go figure that out. Don’t worry about the other stuff as difficult as it may be. Just do your thing.
Dino Rada: My Mentoring Narrative

**Height:** 6–11  
**Position:** Power Forward  
**NBA Career:** 1993–97

**Basketball Biography**

Dino Rada is an international star who has won professional basketball championships in multiple countries around the world and is a member of the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, class of 2018. A native of Split, Croatia, Dino played four seasons in the NBA with the Boston Celtics posting impressive career averages of 16.7 ppg and 8.4 rpg. Prior to playing for the Celtics, Dino was a 2-time FIBA European Champions Cup champion and won Final Four MVP honors in 1989. He was also a 3-time Yugoslav League champion, Yugoslav Cup winner, and FIBA Korać Cup champion. In 1991, he earned the Italian All-Star game MVP award and was named as one of FIBA’s 50 Greatest Players. After playing in the NBA, he returned to Europe to become a 3-time FIBA EuroStar, 2-time Greek League champion, 2-time Croatian League champion, and 2-time Croatian Cup winner. Dino was a 2-time Olympic Silver Medalist representing the Yugoslav National Team in the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul with fellow European basketball legends Dražen Petrović, Toni Kukoč, and Vlade Divac and representing Croatia in the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona. As one of the first European players to reach the NBA, he was a pioneer and has paved the way for so many future international players.
Basketball Lessons on the Dalmatian Coast

Dino Rada’s roots are in Split, a Croatian city known for its beautiful coastline, rocky coves, stunning architecture, and sports success. Many proud Split residents refer to their city as the “Sportiest city in the world” due to their international success in several sports including rowing, swimming, sailing, water polo, and basketball. When asked how instrumental mentorship was in his early life, Dino communicated that mentorship was an important part of his career, not through only words, but by actions. He stated, “I think it is always important to have an older guy to show you. Because it is one thing that coaches are telling you, but showing you is very different.” He emphasized the importance of having older people to look up to as a young person. From a basketball standpoint, he believes picking the right mentors may be critical for the growth of a team. In his experience, it is important to have someone in the locker room, outside of the coach, that can show young players how to deal with different situations on the floor. At every basketball level, Dino had mentoring experiences and expressed that the process eventually reversed and he became the mentor to others.

In reflecting back to the early stages of his career as an 18-year old young man playing for Jugoplastika, a Croatian professional basketball club in Split (now known as KK Split), Dino remembers an older man encouraging him to wear cologne after practice and take his own shampoo into the locker room. “These were things that were taught in the early 80s. You know, the world was very different back then.” Then, when he became a member of the national team he remembers having older guys who taught him how to prepare for the hard work in training camp, how to prepare for games, and the difference between more important and less important games. For instance, single elimination was different than a group of games where the team can redeem itself.
When asked who his mentors were and what they taught him in his adolescent years, he mentioned that a crucial person in his development was a guy named Slavko Trninić, who was his coach at Jugoplastika. Coach Trninić emphasized work ethic and fundamentals. According to Dino, “Back in ex-Yugoslavia, hard work was the mindset, but this guy worked us twice as hard – like 10 hours a day.” He admitted the team did not run for 10 hours, but they spent significant time learning to pass the ball. Dino says that when he is invited to speak at colleges or to children the one meaningful sentence he always tells them is “The mother of success is the number of repetitions.” For Coach Trninić, the players were spending 10 hours passing the ball “the right way” because he would not tolerate bad mechanics. Dino describes him as a performance-driven mentor who was detail-oriented. Dino added, “You see today in an NBA practice they shoot the ball and pass the ball easy and stuff like that. When I see it, my hair stands up because I had to do it differently.” He recalls Coach Trninić making each team member pass the ball with proper fundamentals where the ball hits each receiver’s hand in the chest and falls a certain way. He demonstrates further with hand gestures – “Also, the passer’s hands needed to finish in a certain position or you had to repeat it over and over.”

Although he had several influential coaches in ex-Yugoslavia, Dino feels the most important period in his career was working with Coach Trninić. “He was a teacher. Today, you have many coaches, but he was a teacher. When you learn the game the right way – shoot, pass, the rules, movement of the team, and how to read the holes; then everything else becomes very easy.” Dino is a strong proponent of the basics of basketball. He insists a player’s growth cannot go beyond a certain level without someone teaching these skills at a
young age. According to Dino, “It is much harder to correct a player’s fundamentals at 17, 18, or 19 years old. If they learn these things at 13, 14, or 15 it is much different.”

Teaming with Dražen

Having been a member of the Yugoslavian and Croatian national teams, Dino played with some great players and teammates. The late-Dražen Petrović had a special impact on him. Dražen was a national hero and three years older than Dino. In terms of basketball experience, he was five years ahead having played for the national team at 18 years old. Dražen’s NBA career was just starting to take off when he died in a tragic car accident in Germany in 1993.

Dino solemnly reflects on Dražen’s memory and legacy:

Dražen had these games where he dominated. He was the superstar of the national team. He won European titles. He was the best player in our country. Then, you come to play on the national team as a young guy. He was the one who yells and screams at you on the practice court when you aren’t doing your job. He always came before practice and stayed after practice. He was a great example of how to prepare and he held guys accountable.

Dino shared a story in which the national team traveled to play some games in a small town in Poland. There was not a weight room and the team preferred lifting weights a little before games. Then, Dražen called Dino saying he found a weight room outside the city in a location of significant distance away knowing Dino had the same passion and work ethic as he did. Once the players went they found an old weight room, full of rust and used by hardcore weight lifters. Dino went further, “So, he is the best guy, the star of the team and the guy that is unthinkable to play without, yet is the guy who is pushing everybody – Let’s work! Let’s work! Let’s work! Then you say – Hey, that’s why he became what he is.” Dino
reiterated that Dražen led by example, not by talking. “Talk is cheap,” Dino says. He insists that learning by example from someone is imperative.

**Once a Celtic, Always a Celtic**

After having been drafted by the Boston Celtics in the second round of the 1989 NBA Draft, Dino was finally able to join the team in 1993. Playing for such a historic franchise was an honor for him and he was proud wearing their uniform. In the process, he was able to learn from several Celtic greats. Dino mentions that learning from Robert Parish in practice was important for his development. He remembers Larry Bird and Kevin McHale coming to training camp and studying them. “Kevin was known for his back to the basket moves. So, you look at him, study him, and try to pick up whatever he is showing you.” Once in a veteran role, Dino felt an obligation to transfer advice to younger players because he remembered how important it was for him.

Another person he is grateful to is Xavier McDaniel. Xavier was a teammate when he arrived in Boston, and a former all-star player who challenged him physically in acclimating to the NBA game. “One year he really kicked my ass in training camp. He beat me up every day – You know in practice you don’t call as many fouls that get called in a game.” As a result, Dino said he would play games in the regular season and feel like his opponents were barely touching him. He would have an easier time scoring and realized how grateful he was that Xavier pushed him. Dino admitted, “As much as I hated competing against him in practice and I would have scratches and marks on me, then you realize it was for your advantage.” He credits Xavier for helping in his transition to NBA basketball.

For European players, the transition to the NBA during this time period was a significant challenge. There were very few and the perception was European players were not
physical enough to complete in the NBA. This stereotype drove pioneers like Dino to prove he had everything it took to be successful. “That is one thing I am really proud of because I think myself, Vlade Divac, Dražen Petrović, Toni Kukoč, and Arvydas Sabonis were the pioneers in showing American coaches and other European players that we can succeed here. That was very important because if you look at the NBA today, the growth of non-American players is enormous.”

**Two Different Worlds**

Although Dino felt he could physically compete, the main challenges when he came to the NBA were cultural. In terms of basketball preparation, he noticed a difference in approach when compared with Croatia. “Here, you are on your own. They tell you what to do or give you a piece of paper, but it is completely different than working with you all the time.” As a player, Dino considered himself a “work-a-holic” and took pride in not letting anyone outwork him. “I can let someone be equal to me, or a better player, or more fast, but more willing to work and sacrifice – I don’t let anybody,” he asserted. However, he admitted it was difficult coming to a training camp for three to five days, and then being on his own for a month. So, Dino hired a private strength and conditioning coach that he brought to the U.S. from Croatia. He wanted the structure and to have somebody to push him. According to Dino, “I think if I wasn’t the first one in the history of European sports, then I was definitely the first one in team sports that hired a private strength and conditioning coach for the entire year. I needed his support.” The way it worked was the coach would spend the entire summer with him. Then, during the NBA season he would fly to Boston and work with him sporadically.
To provide context, Dino described his experiences in Croatia and Italy prior to the NBA. “In Split, we worked a lot. We worked 5, 6, 7 hours a day very rarely having a day off.” Then, he played three seasons in Italy where the schedule was very different. Virus Roma, an Italian basketball club based in Rome, typically played a game each week on Sundays, followed by Monday off and a light schedule the rest of the week when compared to Split. “So, I loved playing in Italy. I loved it for the first couple of weeks and then I realized that could no longer play at the same level I was playing at.” Playing in Italy was a crucial time in his career because he learned that he needed to physically prepare at a certain level to reach peak performance on the court.

When Dino came to the NBA, he would get a five month offseason break. During this time he would often go train in the mountains or play with the international team to get in great shape. However, the NBA season was grind where teams would play two to five games a week against stronger, faster guys. Dino recalls, “All of a sudden in February you hit the rookie wall and you can’t walk – like five minutes after the game you can’t walk.” The all-star break would provide five to six days to recover. In his rookie season upon returning for the first practice after the all-star break, he remembers former Celtics head coach Chris Ford telling him to sit on the sideline because he hit a wall and needed a break. Dino explains, “So, after the practice I went to the weight room and he runs after me and says – I told you don’t practice and don’t even try to find some fitness gym in the city because we know everybody here. I’m going to fine you heavy if I catch you practicing.” Dino’s mindset was that if he missed one practice that meant the end of his career. He just could not miss a practice. In response to being told not to practice, Dino called his strength and conditioning coach, who flew out the same day. His coach found some woods to run and guided him
through a grueling workout. Dino described his approach, “If you can’t shoot you go shoot, if you aren’t strong enough you go lift, if you need to get in better shape you go run. So, I hid myself for those days and it worked better than what Coach Ford was teaching me.” For example, when traveling from Split he would get up at five o’clock in the morning and be in airplanes or airports all day. During the day he would do push-ups or sit-ups because he needed to break a sweat. This was his routine and method of operation.

Although basketball had its challenges, there was a situation with more important implications that affected Dino and his family during the early-to-mid 1990s. The Croatian War of Independence was being fought and Dino would be constantly concerned about his family back home. Emotionally, he reflected on the war:

That was a really terrible time. At first, you don’t realize what is happening and don’t believe with your own eyes what you see. You don’t believe that people are so stupid to go into the war (swallowing and eyes watering). What brings you to another country to do that? I don’t really understand that. But then, you try to protect your family and do what you can and all you can do is try to reason. The guys we played with and ate with and now they are on the other side. Vlade Divac is the reason I came to the Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony this year. We’ve been friends always and have stayed friends always. There is nothing that can make that change. As hard as it was, it was also a challenge for you as a man to try to separate things and act in a peaceful manner.

When asked if there were any mentors there for him during this time, Dino expressed there really was not anyone who was there to talk or understand what he was dealing with. Plus, the communication with his family was an issue. Whenever he called he had difficulty hearing his father on the phone. Although his mother and sister spent some time with him and a couple of friends from Croatia as well, Dino was not able to communicate well with his father due to the conditions and technology at the time. Describing the impact of war, he added, “It was no airplanes; no streets; no connections; no roads available. Sometimes all was completely destroyed.” Dino mentioned that people in the U.S. were friendly and tried
to be supportive, but the situation was difficult for them to understand. What helped him through that time period was his job because there were so many responsibilities coming at him quickly (games, practices, film), which kept his mind stay occupied.

The most difficult moments in Dino’s life reinforced the importance of family. He stated:

There is always family because this is still a game. When you come home to the real things like illnesses – I lost my mother 15 years ago from cancer. You know there are more important things than a game. Everything is a circle that goes through family. Your behavior on the street. Your behavior on the court. Your education. Everything comes from home. That very small circle that you grew up with and gave you the rules.

Dino credits his family for instilling values in him. Growing up, he protected his younger sister and sees protection as a form a mentorship. Now he is a parent and sees life from an even different lens. “When someone is 15 years old and you are trying to teach him something he should have learned at 3 or 4, he isn’t going to listen to you. Even at 1 year old you have a baby who acts differently around the father and mother.” He reiterates these values, just like basketball skills, are foundational principles that need to be taught at a young age.

**Mentoring Reflection and Analysis**

Reflecting on his mentoring experiences, many of the most impactful people in Dino’s life had great work ethic and led by actions more than words. He continues to communicate with individuals he considers mentors and knows they were a very important part of his success. Trust was a key factor in building those relationships. He affirmed that building trust takes some time. From a player’s perspective, he suggested that a mentor’s superior knowledge of the game was a helpful component in building trust. According to
Dino, “I think you have three different kinds of authority: 1) authority of knowledge, 2) authority of work, and 3) authority of power. The third one doesn’t work because there is always a stronger guy than the strongest one, but if somebody shows you that he knows what you are talking about and is willing to work more than you then you start to respect him.”

Dino does not believe an authoritarian approach without substance works long-term. He added, “When somebody is just screaming and yelling you stop caring because the first day maybe you are a little scared, the second day less, and less. But if somebody shows you he knows more than you and he’s proving that to you every day, then you start to build respect for the guy and you trust him and are willing to do anything for him because you believe in what he is preaching.”

When discussing mentoring qualities or characteristics Dino focused on the mentee’s approach. In his opinion, talent is overrated. “I think when you have a guy who is very talented and doesn’t want to work and you have a guy less talented, but he wants to work – both careers go in different directions (hand gesturing signaling opposite directions). The talented guy, one day he is here, one day he is missing, but whenever the tough gets going he will disappear compared with the hard working guy who grinds and may not be a superstar, but gets the respect.” Dino believes coaches, teammates, and opponents will respect the person who shows value through hard work and be more receptive to helping them.

When asked if there were any other coaches, managers, or executives that he considers mentors, he acknowledged there were a number of people that helped along the way. “The team is like a car. You need the wheels, the seats, and the engine to work together to be good – So the same thing applies to a team.” Dino feels employees in the offices are underappreciated because they do so much to make life easier for players.
Upon achieving success in the NBA and internationally, he acknowledged there were people proud of him and he appreciated their support (family, friends). When discussing his basketball relationships, he reflected on the camaraderie he had with his peers. “The best thing on the court is when the game is over. Then, you start really appreciating each other.” He contends that the bonding between players on the court after a victory or important moment is genuine, but feels afterward many outsiders come in who want a piece of the success. He adds, “The guys who really did the labor on the court or the guys in the locker room are most important to you in those moments. Everything else is just for show.”

Dino recalled situations where he experienced failed mentorship. He said, “We learn from the bad and the good. When you are ashamed of the actions of someone else that is a learning process to.” From a peer mentorship standpoint he expressed that learning from the mistakes of others on the court or seeing a teammate arrive to practice late has an impact. “You don’t want to be that guy. I think a bad example is always something to learn from.”

From Mentee to Mentor

Toward the end of his NBA career, Dino noticed himself transitioning into the mentor role. In the process, he began teaching younger players either by telling them what to do and showing them how. He would protect younger players and teach them self-discipline. For example, “If someone gets hit in the game and it’s a young guy and they want to retaliate, but you tell him – No! No! Wait! Then you tell them I will do it for you and you give a hard screen to an opponent.” Dino admits he had fun in this role and tried to teach players how to respond within the context of the rules.

The style of play has changed considerably from when he played basketball in the 1980s and 90s. He referenced the physical play of the Detroit “Bad Boys” Pistons and New
York Knicks of the early-to-mid nineties. “You saw it. It was more physical with harder fouls. Those guys wouldn’t play more than 10 minutes today.” When comparing eras, although he feels the game was much more physical back then, he maintains that the process of mentorship always remains the same. “You always have somebody to look up to.”

Dino recalls a number of situations post-retirement when people have credited him for changing their lives. He shared a couple of stories from playing days in Greece. After competing in the NBA, Dino went to Greece to continue his basketball career. He played for Panathinaikos, a professional team in Athens and later for Olympiacos, a team in Piraeus. At this point he was 30 years old. He was extremely competitive and wanted to see the situation turnaround for his team. He explained, “I came to a team that wasn’t very good. I used to get pissed off a lot throwing water, chairs, and everything. I would yell at the players more than the coach. They would like at me like – This guy is crazy. Let him be.” Around 10 years later Dino was approached by one of his former teammates who told him that Dino did not just change his life, but he changed Greek basketball. The teammate thanked him for pushing him to become better.

One of the most impactful situations for Dino happened around 10 years after he played for Olympiacos. His last season was in 2001 and he played for a coach that was around two years older than him. The coach never played basketball and had limited experience coaching. They did not get along at the time. Then, maybe 10 years later they saw each other at an event. Dino recalls, “The coach sees me and runs like 100 yards, jumps, and hugs me and said – You’re the best player I ever had. I didn’t know it back then, but you are.” As a result of these experiences, Dino started realizing how much impact he had on certain people.
Now, Dino is a dad who serves as a role model for his children. In a light hearted manner, he mentioned that at times his children listen to him and other times they act like they listen but they don’t. He maintains that is part of the process. One phrase he always tells them is: *You can’t run from the mirror.*

**Paying it Forward: Advice from Dino Rada**

My advice is always the same: number of repetitions and the mirror. There is always one thing that you cannot run away from and that is the mirror. Whenever you practice poorly or make mistakes in the game no coach has to tell you what did because you know. The mirror, you can’t run away from because he is the only guy that you answer to. I always like to say to students or kids – Look at yourself in the mirror. If you did wrong and you think what you did was fine then something is wrong and you have to change your approach. Or, if you did right and look at yourself in the mirror, then you will be happy with what you see. So just respect the mirror and you will be fine.
Dan Issel: My Mentoring Narrative

**Height:** 6–9  
**Position:** Power Forward/Center  
**ABA Career:** 1970–76  
**NBA Career:** 1976–85

**Basketball Biography**

Dan Issel is an ABA champion, 6-time ABA All-Star, 1-time NBA All-Star, and member of the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, class of 1993. Nicknamed “The Horse,” for his durability and blue-collar style of play, Dan only missed 24 games in a 15 year professional career and has impressive career averages of 22.6 ppg and 9.1 rpg. As a rookie, he led the ABA in scoring with a 29.9 ppg average and won ABA Rookie of the Year honors. In 1975, he helped lead the Kentucky Colonels to an ABA title as part of an impressive collection of talent coached by Hubie Brown, which included fellow Hall of Famers Artis Gilmore and Louie Dampier. As a collegiate athlete, Dan played for legendary Coach Adolph Rupp at the University of Kentucky and became a two-time Consensus All-American. He is the all-time scoring leader at Kentucky with 2,138 points and averaged an astounding 33.9 ppg as a senior. As a head coach in the NBA, Dan led the Denver Nuggets to one of the biggest upsets in NBA history in the first round of the 1994 playoffs as the Nuggets beat the Supersonics to become the first eighth seed to defeat a first seed in league history.
From the Dairy Farm to Lexington Blue

Dan Issel’s mentorship journey started in Batavia, Illinois, a quaint, suburban town outside of Chicago. Reflecting on the role mentorship has had in his life, Dan mentioned anytime a person is about to have an experience for the first time, it is important that he or she lean on people who have been there before. He continued, “I’ve had mentors. Now, they may not have been called mentors, but people that have mentored me all the way through life starting with my mom and dad to coaches and players.” Dan points out that having good mentorship keeps a person from making a lot of mistakes.

Growing up in Batavia, Dan was raised in a blue-collar family on a dairy farm during the 1950s and 1960s. “There is nothing more labor intensive than a dairy farm. So, at a young age I learned a good work ethic.” Dan considers his parents, Robert and Eleanor Issel, his first mentors. He added, “I think my parents helped me know the difference between right and wrong. I didn’t always do the right thing (laughing), but I always knew what the right thing was because of my upbringing.” His parents taught him the value of hard work and gave him farm responsibilities that challenged him mentally and physically. He is appreciative for having had supportive parents who stood by his side throughout his life.

At Batavia High School, Dan was not an immediate star and had to earn his stripes. He argues that growing several inches between his junior and senior years certainly helped him, but he was not selected to play varsity basketball until his junior year. A big reason he got the opportunity to play for the varsity team was Don VanDersnick, who was hired as the new head basketball coach prior to Dan’s junior year. Dan explains, “He saw something in me. I would go in before school in a tee shirt and gym shoes to work on shots – You know, nothing physical. After practice he’d keep me another half hour or 45 minutes. He’s really the one who made a basketball player out of me.” Dan knew he had the work ethic, but
admitted he was not the most talented person. He could not jump very high or run very fast, but Coach VanDersnick taught him how to play the game of basketball.

When asked how his coach was able to earn his trust, Dan mentioned that children or young adults growing up often think they have all the answers and are not sure on the information they are getting. He expressed that trust does not happen immediately and grows over time. For instance, he would complete the tasks Coach VanDersnick asked him to do and then noticed he was becoming a better player. Most importantly, the team was getting better. Reflecting on his experience in Illinois high school basketball, he continued, “In those days, which was totally unfair, Illinois had only one class with sports. They made all the smaller schools start in a district tournament to eliminate them quickly so they didn’t have a chance to win a championship.” In his junior and senior years, Batavia was the last small school eliminated in the district tournament. Dan said, “When you see that kind of success and schools started recruiting us, and we were winning – my senior year we were 28-2 and that’s playing some big schools around the Chicago area. So, when you see what your mentor is telling you are true, that you can benefit by things that he is telling you to do and you are doing them – that grows trust.”

Another mentor Dan had during high school was a teacher named Ms. Stafford. She graduated from Northwestern University. When she found out Northwestern was recruiting Dan she pulled him aside and said, “If you don’t apply yourself more when you get to college than you are doing in high school you will be home in 6 months.” He felt her intentions were not to scare him, but that she believed he had the ability to do better scholastically. Dan recalls himself just “skating by” at that point. When he got to Kentucky he earned a 3.75
GPA in his first semester and 3.5 in his second. (Laughing) Dan admitted Ms. Stafford scared him, but really helped him maintain focus.

While at Kentucky, Dan had the pleasure of playing for legendary head basketball coach Adolph Rupp. He described Coach Rupp as a stern taskmaster who would not let players take shortcuts. Dan affirmed that if a player wanted to take shortcuts and that applied to all players, including stars, that player would not be around very long. Most of Coach Rupp’s coaching occurred in practice and he would often sit down during the games and let his team play. The experience playing basketball for Coach Rupp was as much mental as it was physical. Though he was a tough coach, Dan regards Coach Rupp as an important mentor in his life.

Playing for the University of Kentucky was an honor for Dan and symbolized how far he came growing up on a dairy farm in Batavia. He points out that because there were never any expectations for him as an athlete, the success was enjoyed by all his mentors. Dan reiterated that he did not make his high school varsity team until his junior year and pointed out that he was not Kentucky’s first or second choice at the center position. He was their third choice. Originally, Dan was more interested in attending the University of Wisconsin. However, he vividly remembers his dad walking into his bedroom and saying, “You know if you are serious about this basketball thing, Kentucky has had more all-Americans and pro players than any school.” That sold him on Kentucky. Dan added, “If you look at my college career I averaged like 16 points my sophomore year, 25 points my junior year, and 34 points my senior year. I was surprised as anybody at what was happening and I had no aspirations of playing professional basketball until maybe after my junior year at Kentucky. So, the people who had made the sacrifices for me enjoyed my success as it continued to grow.”
Dan recalls his mom and dad driving 425 miles from Batavia to Lexington to proudly watch him play. They missed only three home games in his three years playing varsity basketball at Kentucky. His dad went on a couple of road trips each year and visited every SEC school by the time he graduated. “My dad just so happened to be at Ole Miss for the game in which I broke the all-time Kentucky scoring record. My dad didn’t say much but I know the four favorite years of his life were the four years I was at the University of Kentucky.” To Dan, it was special to see people who had made sacrifices for him enjoy the success.

A Lifelong Friendship

In his freshman year at Kentucky, Dan met a dear friend and mentor that is still a big part of his life today. Louie Dampier, a fellow Hall of Famer, was a senior and all-American player for the Wildcats when Dan arrived on campus. At the time, freshman players were not allowed to play with the varsity team in college basketball. Dan recalls, “Louie was senior, all-American, and pretty hot stuff and I was just a pimple-faced freshman coming into school. He took a liking to me and we developed a friendship.”

The two shared a bond at Kentucky and their friendship continued to grow after leaving Lexington. In fact, Louie was one of the main reasons Dan went to the ABA instead of the NBA out of college. Louie was a guard for the Kentucky Colonels and their top player when Dan arrived. They roomed together for five years with the Colonels. He reflects, “It was because Louie was there that I decided to go. Louie really taught me how to be a professional basketball player.”

Although he knew Louie before playing for the Colonels that did not shield him from duties that veterans made rookie players perform coming into professional basketball.
Although these acts would be considered hazing by today’s standards, the practice was common back then. Dan candidly states, “We had an ultrasound machine that was about the size of that coffee table (pointing across the room). I mean, it was absolutely huge. As a rookie, it was my job to carry that ultrasound machine on road trips. I was leading the ABA in scoring and I had to carry this stupid ultrasound machine. So they quickly put you in your place.” Rookie duties aside, Dan credits Louie as helping him learn what it took to be a professional basketball player. He was so grateful to have his mentorship during that transition period. He admits the two were not “prudes” and had some great times, but they were committed to their craft. Today, the two live in close proximity to each other and continue stay close friends. Dan smiles and remarks, “Thank goodness after my rookie year I didn’t have to carry that ultrasound machine!”

Colonels and Nuggets

The Kentucky Colonels did not survive the ABA-NBA merger in 1976, but were a colorful franchise known for its creative marketing campaigns and competitive teams. When referencing the 1975 ABA championship team, Dan maintains that was the best team he had ever played for. “When you look back, we had four Hall of Famers associated with that team: Louie Dampier, Artis Gilmore, Hubie Brown, and myself. So when we won the ABA championship in 1975, I can say without a doubt we weren’t just the best ABA team, we were the best team in professional basketball that year.”

When reflecting on the greatness of that Colonels team and the mentoring involved, Dan credits Hubie Brown for keeping the team focused on winning, rather than individual statistics. He admits the leading scorer usually gets the headlines, but when he won the championship in 1975, that was his worst statistical season up until that point with the
Colonels. Prior to the season, Coach Brown told him it would not be best for the team if he averaged 30 points a game. Dan bought into his philosophy of spreading the ball around. He added, “We won the championship and I realized that’s the important thing.”

Aside from his high school and college coaches, Dan mentioned that he played for some really good coaches at the professional level: Hubie Brown, Larry Brown, and Doug Moe. Hubie is the best coach he ever played for from when the ball went up in the air to the final whistle. His in-game strategy was the best he had experienced. When he became a Denver Nugget in 1975, his first coach was Larry Brown. He feels Larry was a great teacher, which is why he always thought Larry was a better college coach. Doug Moe was the head coach for his last five seasons with the Nuggets. He credits Doug for having the ability to keep it light, which he appreciated as a veteran player. In his experience playing for them, he acknowledged each of the coaches had their strengths and weaknesses, but when Dan became a coach he tried to draw on the strengths from all the great coaches he played for. Looking back, he feels fortunate to have played for the coaches he did.

**Partner to Lean On**

Toward the end of his NBA career, Dan remembers one of his most challenging times in which he received great mentoring from a person he considers his most important mentor, his wife Cheri. Before his last NBA season, he knew his body was physically starting to wane a bit, although he showed remarkable durability in his career. He learned the Nuggets made an offseason trade that sent forward Kiki Vandeweghe to the Portland Trailblazers for multiple players and a couple of draft picks. Dan (laughing) said, “We got Phat Lever, Wayne Cooper. I mean it was a great trade.” Subsequently, the media asked the head coach where all the new players were going to play. He told the media he would start Wayne
Cooper and bring Dan off the bench. One issue was he did not communicate that with Dan, who found out at a car dealer that he had been removed from the starting lineup. Dan viewed the situation as a “slap in the face” because he had been a starter for a long time and did not feel the reason justified the decision. He could accept if one of his teammates beat him out for the position, but did not like the way the situation was handled. He remembers how he felt during this time period. “I had decided that’s my final year because it wasn’t fun anymore. There were times when I was driving to the arena thinking – What are you doing this again for?”

The aforementioned situation affected Dan’s morale during his final season. He considered quitting, but it was his wife that convinced him otherwise. He remembers his wife not helping him “pull the plug” and encouraging him to come off the bench. Although he acknowledges he did not have a good year by his standards, he pointed out that Coach Moe had him back in the starting lineup at the end of the year as they entered the playoffs. Dan boldly states, “I’ve talked about basketball mentors, but my most important mentor is really my wife. I’m like this (gesturing up and down) and she’s like that (gesturing level, straight line, consistent).”

Reflecting on other difficult experiences he has had, Dan maintains that people find out who their friends are during those times and who is there just enjoying their success:

During those difficult periods, it’s the mentors that stand beside you and talk you through it. There are all kinds of clichés (ex: Tough times don’t last but tough people do), but you have to have people, and it might be a handful, or it might be 1 or 2, when you are going through those difficult times they stick with you, continue to encourage you, and tell you that you are doing the right or wrong thing.
Mentoring Reflection and Analysis

Throughout his life, Dan has received mentoring from several individuals who were instrumental to his personal and professional development. From his experiences, Dan insists the most important quality in an effective mentor-mentee relationship is trust. He encourages mentees to listen to the advice of individuals who have done what they aspire to do. “A big part of the trust comes from knowing that they have been there ahead of you (such as playing the game), whether a few years ago or many years ago, and can help you cut corners to avoid making mistakes.” Examples Dan provided are working out, staying in shape, having a decent diet, and avoiding partying until 3 am. In his opinion, the mentor-mentee dynamic relies on 1) the mentor having the experience and 2) the mentee needing to trust the information is correct.

When asked if barriers such as race factor into forming mentor-mentee relationships, Dan does not believe so from his experience in the sport of basketball.

If you are in it for the right reasons, and basketball is a team game, you are taught since you are little that it doesn’t matter how you do individually – it’s how the team does that matters. Once you are mature enough to realize that, then I don’t think you see black and white as much as see guys who can play together with the same goals and wanting to reach the same place. That is more important than white or black.

During his career, Dan established lasting relationships and bonded with players from diverse backgrounds. He appreciates the time he spent with teammates such as Artis Gilmore, who Dan refers to as “The ‘A Train’ and a great guy.” He also feels fortunate to have met several good mentors that kept him focused and taught him to make good decisions.
Coach Issel

Less than a decade after his playing career ended, Dan was hired as head coach of the Denver Nuggets. In only his second season as head coach, he led the Nuggets to an historic upset over the top seeded Seattle Super Sonics in the 1994 playoffs. When asked to describe his experience as a mentor, he responded, “I tried and think I succeeded in some cases.” One of his proudest contributions as a coach was the development of Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf, a sharp shooting guard who won the NBA Most Improved Player Award in Dan’s first season as head coach. Dan remembered, “When Mahmoud came to the Nuggets he was just a whisper of a kid but he could shoot the lights out. He gained a bunch of weight at first because people told me he needed to be heavier, but I decided against it and he later worked very hard to get in great shape. I think he trusted me.” Dan was proud of Mahmoud’s dedication to improving and felt he played a part in his development.

Dan expressed there were other players he coached that he wished he could have gotten through to. “There were players that I never could break that barrier of trust with. I never could get to them and that was 1) very frustrating and 2) made you feel like you were failing.” When asked what he thought those barriers were, Dan responded, “I think some kids are so tainted by their pasts that they have never had anybody they could trust. They never had anybody that wanted to be their friend and help them and didn’t want anything in return.” He recalled a particular case in his coaching career that stood out to him. Dan described this player’s situation, “He never knew who his father was. His mother was running around and he didn’t have any family life. I never could break into that because he had been let down and disappointed so many times and he wasn’t going to trust anybody.”
reflecting on the situation, Dan does not blame the player because he feels the player was responding based on his life experiences.

**Basketball is a Team Game**

When asked if he thought NBA players today are getting the type of mentorship along the way that he received, Dan replied, “I really can’t answer that, but it doesn’t appear so.” He mentioned how different the structure is and how talented players are today. He joked, “I mean you couldn’t ask a rookie today to carry equipment a veteran wasn’t carrying (referencing when he had to carry the ultrasound machine as a rookie). Players are so gifted today and they play basketball year around, including AAU and all that stuff.”

One of the biggest changes Dan has noticed in the NBA is the nature of the way the game is played. “The game has changed because it has become more of an individual sport rather than a team sport. You don’t have the concept of team defense. It’s everybody just guard your man and they don’t move the basketball and involve everybody.” The area he feels players deserve the most mentoring is fundamental soundness. “In many cases, by the time they are 11 or 12 years old and it is clear they are better than their peers, they are allowed to rely on their physical abilities and not learn the game of basketball,” Dan stated. As an example, he brought up the 2018-19 NCAA men’s basketball champion Virginia Cavaliers. “I feel Virginia won the championship last year because to me there are three areas that are imperative to becoming successful: 1) you have to play team defense, 2) you can’t turn the ball over, and 3) you can’t take bad shots. Virginia was the team in the NCAA last year that did those three things the very best.”

From a basketball standpoint, he feels the “one-and-done” rule hinders the mentoring process. At the same time, he understands the economics aspect pointing out that in many
cases “kids can’t stay in college when their folks can’t afford an airplane ticket to come watch them play.” He believes baseball has a more effective model. “I mean if you want to play professional basketball out of high school then God Bless you and go ahead. But if you commit to a college you gotta stay for three years. I like that model, but I don’t like it for the kids that are going out of high school because I don’t think they are getting any mentoring.”

In this structure, Dan pointed out that student-athletes who attend college for three years are getting coaching, going to class, earning an education, and learning how to play the game correctly from college coaches who have the time to teach them how to play.

**Paying it Forward: Advice from Dan Issel**

Choose the people you trust and choose the people you rely on very carefully. Make sure you learn from what they are saying they have lived and have been successful with. And, it’s difficult. But once you find that person then give him all of your trust.
Wayne Embry: My Mentoring Narrative

**Height:** 6–8

**Position:** Center

**NBA Career:** 1958–69

**Basketball Biography**

Wayne Embry is an NBA champion, 5-time NBA All-Star, 2-time NBA Executive of the Year, published author, former business owner, and member of the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, class of 1999. Originally, he was drafted by the St. Louis Hawks of the NBA in 1958. As a player, he was known for his defense and rebounding. Nicknamed “the Wall,” Mr. Embry was a physical presence at center and battled against Hall of Famers Bill Russell and Wilt Chamberlain during his era. In his prime years with the Cincinnati Royals, now the Sacramento Kings, Mr. Embry averaged a double-double in points and rebounds for five straight seasons. Talked out of retirement by Bill Russell in 1967, he joined the Celtics and was a key member of their 1967-68 NBA championship team. After playing his last season with the Milwaukee Bucks, he transitioned into their front office and was critical in orchestrating a trade for Oscar Robertson, who joined a young Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (formerly known as Lew Alcindor) to lead the Bucks to the 1971 NBA championship. However, his professional contributions go beyond the game of basketball. In 1972, Mr. Embry became the first African-American general manager in NBA history and was the first black general manager of a major U.S. team sport. He served in this role until 1979 with the Bucks and later worked in the Cleveland Cavaliers front office from 1986 to 1999. In Cleveland, he became the first black team president in NBA history and won the NBA Executive of the Year Award in 1992 and 1998.
Persevering through Barriers

Wayne Embry’s mentorship journey began in a small farm town outside of Springfield, Ohio. Born in 1937, Mr. Embry grew up in a vastly different time, especially for African-Americans. He indicated that through his trials and tribulations, mentorship had always been a constant in his life. Growing up in a small town, he described his experience, “I was pretty much sheltered from the rest of the world. So in my early years I was very shy and afraid of people that I didn’t know.”

The elementary and grade school he attended had very few African-American students. He then went to Tecumseh High School where he was the only African-American student. During school, he encountered racist remarks on a regular basis. Reflecting on those times, Mr. Embry shared a defining moment in his life. “One day after school I went home and told my parents and grandparents I was going to quit. They said – No, you’re not you are going to go back and persevere through it and you are going to teach the people what it means to be who I am.” That moment was defining for him because his life could have gone in a different direction. Once he returned to school his experience improved as he aged and played basketball, which he had a great passion for at the time. Through the mentorship he received from his parents and grandparents and his own perseverance, Mr. Embry went on to become a three-year letter winner and earned Honorable mention All-State honors at Tecumseh. Although he admits he was shy and scared to return to school, he started engaging in various activities, excelling in the classroom, and performing on the basketball court. As a result, he gained respect from his peers. According to Mr. Embry, the key word is respect. “You have to respect those who are mentoring you. I respected my parents. My grandfather was the patriarch of our family and he commanded respect.”
While at Tecumseh, Mr. Embry received mentoring from a variety of people. “Reflecting back, there were teachers who were great mentors who really cared about me and wanted to see me succeed. They stuck by me.” One particular teacher did not allow him to play in a basketball game because he did not do his homework. That was a valuable lesson for him and he has really valued education since. He also pointed out coaches who guided him in achieving his goals. Mr. Embry emphasized how grateful he is for his coaches both in high school and college. He continued, “Back in the 1950s things were a lot different. My high school coach protected me from many evils in the world that still exist, but those days were pre-Civil Rights Movement.” Being the only African-American student, he acknowledged that it took the care of certain teachers and his high school head coach to keep him isolated from racism.

In discussing his youth and young adulthood, he reiterated that being an African-American in the 1950s and 1960s was not easy. Describing his experience, Mr. Embry added, “We accepted the conditions, but as time went on pride wouldn’t allow you to continue to deal with discrimination, bigotry, and hatred.” Remembering these painful times, he shared a story that gained his trust and respect for his high school basketball coach.

There were times when we traveled in high school going into a restaurant and everyone else is served and you sit there not being served. I remember a specific situation. The coach asked me why I wasn’t hungry and why I didn’t order anything. I told him the server won’t wait on me. The coach asked the server about it and the server said, “We don’t serve those types in here” (Mr. Embry expressed this was softer language than actually used). My coach then responded by telling the server if you don’t serve them we are leaving.

In Mr. Embry’s eyes, his coach really earned respect as a mentor after that. Those situations were defining moments for him and displayed how a mentor, even being a white man, was
able to gain trust and respect. He commented, “There is no way you can mentor without being respected. You have to earn respect. Mutual respect is key.”

Another situation Mr. Embry was gracious enough to share that introduced him to the racist conditions of the time had to do with his college choice. He grew up listening to University of Dayton basketball games on the radio. As a result, he wanted to attend college in Dayton. “That’s all I knew and they never recruited me,” he remarked. Later, he found out from his high school basketball coach that the only reason why Dayton did not recruit him was because they played games in the south and he would not be able to go down there. His high school coach wanted to protect him and not expose him to that environment. In a poignant tone, Mr. Embry said, “And so, I get so emotional when I think back to those days because it is a simple fact of life that is the way things were. Moving on to college and being exposed to racism, we needed someone to guide us in that era.”

Life in Oxford

Due to his success in high school, Mr. Embry was recruited by several colleges to play basketball. Ohio State was the most active in pursuing him. Prior to meeting with Ohio State, he had heard positive things about their university and Head Football Coach Woody Hayes. He met with them and the experience was encouraging, but he did not want to go to Columbus because he preferred a small town environment. Then, he received a call from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. The head basketball coach wanted to visit and came to Mr. Embry’s family farm. His name was Bill Rohr. As he sat in their little modest room, Coach Rohr talked about everything but basketball. Much of the conversation revolved around Miami University academics and he mentioned basketball on his way out. Mr. Embry remembers his future coach, before leaving their home say, “We want you to come here to
play basketball, but we want you to get an education first. But our basketball program is really good too and we’d like you to play.”

As a result of Coach Rohr’s convincing efforts, Mr. Embry scheduled a campus visit. A selling point was walking through the hallway seeing pictures of legendary coaches Weeb Ewbank, Woody Hayes, and Paul Brown, all Miami University alums. Mr. Embry was in awe! The decision became easy for him after that. When he looks back at his time in Oxford, he has fond memories and considers Coach Rohr one of his mentors. He added, “For me, going to Miami was an exceptional experience. I was a pretty decent student in high school, but my grades weren’t very good my first semester in college. Coach Rohr encouraged me to improve and pushed me to become better.” Mr. Embry pointed out that many of the coaches, including Ara Parsegian of Notre Dame and Woody Hayes, helped athletes stay focused on school. It was a different time in regards to some of the responsibilities the coaches took on compared to their involvement today.

In 1957, Coach Rohr left to become the head coach at Northwestern. A new coaching staff was hired at Miami. Mr. Embry had an amazing senior season statistically in which he averaged 24.9 ppg and 18.1 rpg. Before pursuing a career in the NBA he first inquired about becoming a graduate assistant at Miami. He remembers vividly being told “we don’t have colored boys on our bench.” This was after he had just played three years for the university and earned All-American honorable mention honors in 1957 and 1958.

A True Pioneer

Mr. Embry acknowledged that mentors helped him grow and overcome challenges when he was younger. As he became a professional, he learned from various mentors in other ways. In the NBA, he referenced Earl Lloyd as having been instrumental to his success. Earl
was the first black player to play a game in the NBA. Mr. Embry vividly remembers a conversation with Earl early in his career in regards to dealing with racism. At that point, Earl played for the Detroit Pistons and had been in the league a few years. Mr. Embry recollects:

I’ll never forget this. Before a game we were on the court and he says I want to talk to you a little later. He chatted about how to absorb what we were going to be confronted with. He told me not to react but just absorb it and prove yourself on the court. Eventually, you will have an influence on creating change.

At the time, there were very few black players in the league. Mr. Embry added, “We all kind of bonded in a way that we could be successful and hopefully establish a path for those to follow. And I think we did a pretty good job (smiling).” He played for the Cincinnati Royals and remembers other instances that involved discrimination. “I am emotional when I think about it. I was flat out told there could be only three blacks on the team because any more would hurt marketing or sales.”

Another example of the dehumanizing conditions he lived through happened when he went to Boston. He shared a despicable story that involved an interaction with a fan. “One time I was ready to go on the court and I’m on the sidelines and some guy comes up to me and hands me a banana and says – eat this you big ape. I was ready to take the guy out, but thought better of it.” Mr. Embry was able to rise above this tension and turmoil. As a key reserve player with the Celtics, he won an NBA championship in 1968. As a player-head coach, Bill Russell became the first African-American head coach to win an NBA championship and was responsible for bringing Mr. Embry to Boston. When reflecting on that successful season Mr. Embry reminisced, “I was talking with Bill Russell last night. What he had to go through in Boston was unbelievable. We were proud of what we were able
to accomplish in Boston.” Mr. Embry mentioned Red Auerbach as being a good mentor and before his time. The Celtics organization was about winning and being a part of that championship team was a special memory for Mr. Embry.

Shortly after his playing career concluded, Mr. Embry became the first African-American general manager and later the first team president in U.S. major sports history, quite an accomplishment for a quiet kid from rural Ohio who had to overcome various injustices.

**Mentoring Reflection and the P’s of Success**

Mr. Embry persevered through injustices and difficult conditions to make it to the top of his profession. He believes that good mentorship helped him a great deal, especially as a young man. When asked what qualities/characteristics are important in a mentor, he listed four essential qualities: 1) character, 2) strong mutual respect, 3) trust, and 4) compassion. In his opinion, good character in a mentor is the starting point. Then, a mutual trust can be developed. However, Mr. Embry pointed out that trust does not come unless the person is of good character and has compassionate. “Leaders have to have compassion. A mentor, in a sense, is a leader.” When asked how his mentors built trust, he continued, “Through their efforts eventually you are able to test their sincerity. You can tell when people genuinely care about you and they made the sacrifice to dedicate time, effort, and direction. You can eventually tell.”

During those times there were very few, if any, African-American head coaches at any level. Therefore, all of his coaches were white. When asked what made him trust those coaches he considers mentors, he mentioned, “Well, once I developed the comfort level, we connected very well. Back in the day, well it still exists – bigotry, we all know the definition.
So you really had to find out if this person was sincere or had an agenda.” Trust was developed from there. When asked if he had any bad mentoring experiences, Mr. Embry explained:

There are those who want to take advantage and lack sincerity. You have to distinguish between givers and takers – those who actually care. Building that mutual respect takes an effort. If you develop that comfort level with the person that’s mentoring you sometimes you have to do a little background. You really have to be careful. You reflect back and appreciate the effort that your high school coach put into developing you and the effort that took because you are in the developmental stage and so you’re impressionable. My (high school) coach was the driving force behind a lot of things.

Mr. Embry believes personal character makes a big difference. He commented, “Decent people are going to care about you if you have good character regardless of race.”

Some of the most valuable lessons he appreciates learning from mentors in the evolution of his career (high school, college, pros) is their encouragement and not allowing him to give up. “I look back at the way I was able to survive early on without being discouraged. I think back to my family. They encouraged me and did not allow me to quit when I wanted to quit.” There were coaches, teachers, and various others he looked up to in his university (ex: Woody Hayes) who were able to get through adverse situations. In the process, he developed a passion for history. He said, “You need to know history to make history. We study people and circumstances.”

Mr. Embry developed a success story out of one letter. Several words that enabled him to succeed begin with the letter P. The first is preparation. According to Mr. Embry, “to succeed you have to be prepared physically, mentally, and emotionally.” The second is perception or as Mr. Embry put it, “you have to know what you are being prepared for.” The third word is persistence, which pertains to not giving up. The fourth is perseverance. As Mr.
Embry described, “there are a lot of bad elements out there, but you can’t get down.” The fifth word is patience, which he admitted was tested several times by bigoted people. The final two “P” words he mentioned in our interview were pride and passion, which were important personal characteristics he needed to possess to conquer challenges, both on and off the court. The evening of our interview, we ran into each other at the Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony. Mr. Embry approached me and remembered one more P he forgot to mention during our interview. With a warm smile he mentioned “P for Performance.”

**From One Generation to Another**

Today, Mr. Embry stays connected with the game in which he dedicated over 60 years of his life. “I get emotional when I reflect back on those days and look at my life now. I have been accused of being a mentor to many young people (smiling) who have followed my foot steps into the front office,” he remarked. He takes pride in being an inspiration for the players today. “I always tell our young players even when I talk with the team in Toronto I tell them I have been blessed. I have had a very fulfilling life and the joy I get now is hopefully I can be an inspiration to you.” Mr. Embry embraces his role as mentor and feels very fortunate to have been a professional athlete. He feels obligated to give back to others. “I mentor a little bit of everyone. It is important for young people to understand what we did, Dr. King, other civil rights leaders.”

**Paying it Forward: Advice from Wayne Embry**

It is important to know history in order to make history. A man should be judged by his character. Learn from others’ experiences.
Artis Gilmore: My Mentoring Narrative

**Height:** 7–2  
**Position:** Center  
**ABA Career:** 1971–76  
**NBA Career:** 1976–88

**Basketball Biography**

Artis Gilmore is an ABA champion, 5-time ABA All-Star, 6-time NBA All-Star, and member of the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, class of 2011. A potent force at center, he led the ABA in rebounding and NBA in field goal percentage four times each respectively. Nicknamed “A Train,” Artis was an ironman who at one point played in 670 consecutive games. Also, he was a strong and physically intimidating player who made five different professional All-Defensive teams. As a rookie for the Kentucky Colonels of the ABA, Artis earned Rookie of the Year and Most Valuable Player honors in 1972. In 1975, he helped lead the Colonels to an ABA title as part of an impressive collection of talent coached by Hubie Brown, which included fellow Hall of Famers Dan Issel and Louie Dampier. During his NBA career, he played for the Bulls, Spurs, and Celtics and finished with 15,579 points, 9,161 rebounds, and 1,747 blocks recorded in 909 regular season games. As a collegiate athlete, Artis led little-known Jacksonville University on an improbable run to the NCAA Championship game in 1970, where they lost to eventual champion UCLA. At Jacksonville, he was a consensus first-team All-American in 1971, led the nation in rebounding two years in a row, and still owns the highest rebounds per game average in NCAA Division I history at 22.7 rpg.
Artis Gilmore’s life journey began in Chipley, a tiny town of less than 5,000 people in Florida’s Panhandle. Familiar with struggles, Artis was raised in poverty with nine other siblings and barely enough food to survive. He was a young person who needed support and direction, an issue unfortunately common with at-risk youth. With the help of mentorship, he was able to eventually conquer those circumstances, but the process was certainly not easy.

Early in our conversation, Artis corrected me in a gentle manner when I called him Mr. Gilmore. “First, I can’t allow you to call me Mr. Gilmore because that was my father. So Artis is okay. ‘A-Train’ sometimes (smiling).” A consummate gentleman, he spoke only briefly about his childhood and adolescent years at first before returning to them later in our interview. For Artis, high school presented a number of challenges with regard to racism. He recalls, “We dealt with racism at the highest level. There were issues that had significant impact on my early emotional state.” Every now and then he speaks with one of his younger sisters about those times, who he considers is truly educated with a Master’s degree. “I have a Bachelor of Science degree from Jacksonville University and that was the extent for me because my focus was just ahead to become a professional athlete.”

When discussing mentorship, most of our immediate discussion focused around his college experience and whom Artis considers his greatest mentors, which were two of his college coaches at Jacksonville University. Attending Jacksonville was a huge change for him. Prior to arriving on campus, Artis admitted he was not in a comfortable place in his life. He felt secluded and left out. Jacksonville symbolized a new beginning, fresh start. Once he arrived his mindset changed. When discussing mentorship, Artis said the two most inspirational and special people to him are Joe Williams (his head coach at Jacksonville) and Tom Wasdin (his assistant coach at Jacksonville). When referring to his experience with
Coach Williams and Coach Wasdin, he stated, “It was a reset really. They were inspiring, especially with my mental growth.” As a result of his stellar play and leadership, his Dolphins played for a national championship in 1970 against UCLA, an impressive accomplishment for a small, mid-major program. “This next March will be the 50 year anniversary. Hard to believe,” he reflects. Artis continued, “Again, I can’t speak enough of how special Joe Williams and Tom Wasdin’s relationship was with me. They helped me develop as an individual and become more focused, which I needed to compete at the next level.”

When asked how his coaches were able to build trust, especially both being white men, Artis explained, “That’s a great question because prior to that dealing with racial issues in those years, it was almost understood that a white man was superior and respected in every way. So growing up you had that emotional suppress and when I became associated with Joe and Tom, they opened the door and I could see them as individuals.” Artis went on to explain each coach was respectful and treated him like a man, which he appreciated. He felt his two coaches did not treat him as if they had a special superiority. After observing their behavior and intentions, he felt comfortable trusting them. Coach Williams and Coach Wasdin opened his eyes to so many life experiences. Artis described himself as a young individual with a closed mind when he arrived in Jacksonville. Then, he became open to developing and growing. He added, “That was one of the treasures I was able to receive from those two individuals.”

**Tough Upbringing**

When asked if there were any other valuable lessons he learned from mentors prior to reaching the NBA, Artis reflected, “I guess one of the things people talk about in terms of
mentors is parents. My father was an alcoholic and there was a struggle between my mom and dad.” He continued, “My dad loved to drink Moonshine. He wasn’t around much and I guess for what he had to share was not an awful lot.” His father was a fisherman who worked sporadically and mother was a homemaker. Although he feels his father could have been more present in his life, Artis wanted to make clear that he did not purposely leave out his father as a mentor because he knows, in some ways, there were lessons his father shared with him as a child that helped the process of his development. He went further, “I guess I emphasized Joe Williams and Tom Wasden because they were tremendous inspirations for me. Yeah, because usually when speaking about inspiration and mentors, you will find a number of individuals speak about what’s at home, naturally. My parents were there for me and did the best they could under the circumstances.”

Artis pointed out his father was born in 1900 and if he was alive today he would be 119 years old, which was much older than his mother. He could not imagine the racism his father endured in his life. Growing up, he remembers his father telling stories about his childhood in Panama City, a town not far from Chipley. Artis recalls, “He said there were no cars. He remembered the first Model T that they came and rode.” Artis pointed out that his father did not have any opportunities to receive an education and feels there was not much for him to pass down. For example, “There is not a headstone in the cemetery or pictures to identify I had existing grandparents from my mother’s or father’s side,” he asserted. Despite these circumstances, Artis is appreciative that his parents put a roof over his head and food on the table and maintains he always felt safe and secure. His mentoring experience at Jacksonville, however, permanently changed his life for the better.
When Artis made it to professional basketball, he remembers Coach Williams and Coach Wasdin being elated and supportive. To this day, the three of them communicate regularly. “We have a function that is coming up to celebrate the 1970 Jacksonville team. We celebrate often together with a phone call,” Artis shared. Signing his first contract was a surreal moment and both coaches were excited he was able to help his mom and dad. He commented:

If you talk about my upbringing, my mother had nothin and my family had absolutely nothin. If you add all the monies that my father gave me from my childhood all the way up to adulthood it would probably be $20. After I signed my first contract I actually gave my parents a house. In the house I grew up in you could almost see through the floors and look through the ceiling. We had little things around because when it rained it rained in the house.

All Aboard the A-Train

At Jacksonville, Coach Williams and Coach Wasdin had emphasized that the next level of competition would be a big transition, but Artis learned quickly the professional game was all about business. He described his first impressions of professional basketball, “Straight Business. Every decision was about business. The way coaches approached you, the process of coaching each game – It was always about business.” The mentoring he had received at Jacksonville did not exist in the same manner at the professional level. Fortunately he was able to distinguish the difference in his early professional years and “develop a respect and understanding for the system, the process.”

Artis has fond memories of his professional basketball career. “You know it was just an extraordinary experience,” he reminisced. Fans of his era know him as ‘The A-Train’, a dominating physical presence on the court. However, his gentle personality and calm
demeanor stood out in our interview. He expressed his love for the game of basketball and showed much appreciation for the game has given so much to himself and his family.

When discussing his career, he started by providing a timeline. He mentioned that he spent his first five years with the Kentucky Colonels of the ABA. After the NBA/ABA merger he spent six and a half seasons with the Chicago Bulls, five seasons with the San Antonio Spurs, and finished his career for a half season with the Celtics. He felt out of all the places he had been, his short tenure with the Celtics during the 1987-88 NBA season really stood out. Artis elaborated, “That short time with Boston where we excelled and made the playoffs. It was just a different philosophy in terms of the Celtics compared with other franchises. Just putting competitive players on the floor and there was a different mindset from the front office all the way down compared to other organizations I spent time with.”

Artis had a long, durable professional basketball career, which was extraordinary for any position, nonetheless a 7-2 center. Although he made the NBA playoffs with the Bulls, Spurs, and Celtics, perhaps his most significant team accomplishment was winning an ABA title as the leading scorer and rebounder for the Kentucky Colonels in 1975. He briefly mentioned his experience with his Head Coach Hubie Brown, “That was Hubie’s first year as a head coach. He had just come from the Milwaukee Bucks. He had a different system and a different way of approaching the game.” He respects Hubie and referred to him as a “very strict coach.” Artis also brought up Dan Issel, a fellow Hall of Fame Inductee who shared the front court with him for the Colonels. Artis reflected, “Early on, Dan and I spent time with the Colonels and couldn’t reach the anticipated success. The time Dan and I spent together, we became brothers.”
When asked if peers or teammates provided mentorship in the NBA, Artis expressed that the atmosphere felt very businesslike. He felt guys minded their own business when it came to personal matters, especially money. Although players in the league would occasionally say phrases like “put it away” or “there’s going to be a rainy day and you want to make sure you have enough umbrellas with you,” generally they kept to themselves with off court matters. Artis added, “I don’t think there was jealousy in the league where guys were saying I make a few dollars more than you. I think the thought process was that guys were really concerned about each other, not to the point where they were totally into your business, but they would offer any positive encouragement they could provide that would benefit you long-term.” Reflecting on his career, he is grateful for the friendships he made being associated with the game of basketball.

**Mentoring Reflection and Analysis**

Each person’s mentorship journey is different. Some people have had several individuals who have served as mentors at different stages of their lives. Others have had very little mentorship. For Artis, Coach Williams and Coach Wasdin were his two key mentors. They were there for him at a critical time in his life. Artis reflected on the time period and their impact:

There was so much tension in the country. We had just moved through the Martin Luther King era and segregation. In fact, I graduated from an all-black school. Then, all of a sudden you integrate into a new environment where things have been suppressed for your entire life. It was that time frame. Then, I found somebody I trusted in those two guys. I felt comfortable and they helped me as a mentee.

Artis feels trust and honesty are the most important qualities in a mentor. In his opinion, these qualities are the foundation for developing any relationship. Along the way, he has had
bad mentoring experiences. According to Artis, “I’m sure everybody has had challenges throughout their lives. I certainly had some relationships that I felt really personal about and they turned out to be a stab in the back, but I reflect back in a positive way on what Joe Williams and Tom Wasdin did for me in those early years.”

**A Bright Future for NBA Players**

In turning his attention to the current NBA, Artis feels players today are getting good mentoring and have a more advanced mindset compared with players from his era. He provided the example of Steph Curry, whose father played a number of years in the NBA and has mentored him. Artis emphasized that having a father who has competed in the league and serves as a mentor makes a big difference. He added, “The young kids today are super intelligent whereas, in my era, the agents were allowed to take advantage and there were a large percentage of funds that they were able to take as a fee.” Artis credited the league today with making it more challenging for agents to take advantage of athletes and feels the players are better prepared to make business decisions.

**Paying it Forward: Advice from Artis Gilmore**

Listen to whoever the mentor may be. You got to listen. It’s tough to tell an individual what you should do, but the reality is young kids, including mine, are going to make their own decisions. But, as a mentor, you give them the best information you possibly can to make a difference in their lives.
Gary Payton: My Mentoring Narrative


Basketball Biography

Gary Payton is an NBA champion, 9-time NBA All-Star, 2-time Olympic Gold Medalist, and member of the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, class of 2013. Nicknamed “The Glove,” Gary was a tenacious defender and earned nine NBA All-Defensive First Team selections. In 1996, he won the NBA Defensive Player of the Year Award and led his Seattle Super Sonics to the NBA Finals against the Chicago Bulls. Not only was he an exceptional defender, he was a complete player and named to nine All-NBA teams. Gary scored over 20,000 points in his NBA career and is on the top 10 all-time lists for both steals and assists. Proudly representing his country, he led the 1996 U.S. gold medal winning basketball team in assists and won another gold medal in the 2000 summer Olympics. During his career, he showed amazing durability only missing 25 games in 17 seasons. In 2006, Gary won an NBA title with the Miami Heat and ended his career as one of the greatest point guards in NBA history. As a senior at Oregon State, he was a Consensus first-team All-American and Pac-10 Player of the Year. Most importantly, Gary is using his spotlight to make a positive difference in the lives of others and serves as a mentor for at-risk youth.
Roots in Oaktown

Gary Payton’s mentorship journey began in Oakland, CA, a major port city with blue-collar roots and a diverse population. Although he grew up under some rough conditions, he was able to stay on track because of various positive mentors in his life. His first mentor was his father, an authoritarian figure who taught him the importance of respecting his elders. Gary admitted he had a lot of time by himself in high school, which got him into occasional trouble. In fact, he did not play basketball his sophomore year at Skyline High School because he was academically ineligible. He remembered a particular time when his father came to the school and disciplined him in front of other people in an attempt to get through to him. That was one wakeup call that he needed. The other came from a basketball coach who pushed him hard but kept him focused on realizing his dreams.

During his first two years at Skyline, Gary had a head basketball coach who was just about basketball. The school eventually dismissed the coach and hired a new coach named Fred Nolan, who became one of Gary’s greatest mentors. Coach Nolan knew Gary was the future of the program and wanted him to take control. He was really strict, but empowered Gary with the responsibility of being a team leader. However, his new coach had high expectations. Gary remembered Coach Nolan telling him, “I am not going to have any kind of BS. If you want to play for me you are going to have to go to school, show your teammates that you are very serious, and you are going to punish your teammates for what you’ve done.” His new responsibilities included getting up early in the morning for practice at 6 am, then getting an early start on school work at 7 am, even though school did not actually begin until 8:30 am. This routine occurred for two months in a row. Coach Nolan wanted Gary to learn to be accountable for his actions, hold his teammates accountable for
their actions, and expressed that if he wanted to be a star and a leader, this was what he needed to do. Gary admitted, “If he didn’t come into my life I think I wouldn’t have made it to become the basketball player I became or make it to the pros because I wouldn’t have changed my life around. So for him to tell me to be accountable for everything I do – that was a big deal for me.”

Gary had very different experiences with his two high school coaches. He felt his first high school coach tried to use him to win basketball games. Coach Nolan earned Gary’s trust because he saw the value in him and pushed him to apply himself to academics in order to earn a college scholarship. Gary added, “Coach Nolan made me get up before 6 am, made my father get me to school, and made me get tutoring. I interpreted his approach as – This is what I am doing for you because I care for you.” As a result, Gary finished high school strong and earned a full scholarship to play at Oregon State.

**Along the Oregon Trail**

In the fall of 1986, Gary arrived in Corvallis to attend college and play point guard for the Oregon State Beavers. It was a great experience for him. His next mentor was head coach Ralph Miller, who was a hardnosed coach that opened Gary’s mind to learning. “He used to tell me if you know everything already about basketball just hang up your shoes because you’ve accomplished everything,” Gary recalled. In his opinion, Coach Miller was correct because he agrees that nobody knows it all nor is anyone perfect. Therefore, improvement is always possible. He added, “If I think I’m perfect then I should be the greatest basketball player ever. You can always learn from anybody about anything.”
Coach Miller had similar traits as Coach Nolan when it came to emphasizing accountability. Gary conceded, “Coach Miller had never had a freshman starter playing a whole game for him. What he did was allowed me to start and be a coach on the floor.” The trust became mutual when Gary realized his new coach was empowering him to make decisions on the floor and trusting him to run the offense. One way Coach Miller put trust in Gary is communicating to him as long as he played tough defense on the other end of the floor there was flexibility to make mistakes on the offensive end. Defensively, Coach Miller believed Gary could become one of the best defenders ever because of his quick hands and feet. As a leader, Coach Miller wanted him to be his coach on the floor and for both their minds to be in tune with one another. According to Gary, “That’s what made me trust him. When he gave me opportunities where we’re down 10 points and I come down every play making good calls and he doesn’t get up to call plays all the time. He says – You’re in charge. You lead.”

The freedom Coach Miller gave him helped lead to an impressive four year run as a starter at Oregon State. Gary had a highly decorated college career. His senior season, he was featured in *Sports Illustrated* as one of the best players in the nation and became a consensus first-team All-American and Pac-10 Defensive Player of the Year.

**Sleepless in Seattle**

In 1990, Gary was taken with the second overall pick in the NBA draft by the Seattle Supersonics. He was having the chance to realize his dream, but his start in the NBA was not what he envisioned. It is during turbulent times when mentorship is needed the most. Gary recalled, “My first two years in the NBA were the worst times in my life. It was just a lost
time for me. When you don’t have the right coach and he’s not there for you – that’s a lonely feeling.” Gary would communicate with his father over the phone but did not feel it was the same as having him there in person. From a distance, his father would encourage him to hang in there and have tough skin. In reflecting on those difficult times Gary admitted:

At that time I didn’t want to listen. I started drinking a lot and just tried to put the miseries away. When you start looking at TV and newspapers saying that you’re a flop – this and that. You start to not care and say let me get through this and then I’m going to do what I do, which was drinking. You start draining your sorrows and you get lost and start doing other things. But I had a father that kept on calling and talking to me.

As times got worse, Gary’s father stuck by him and he remembered his father telling him, “Look son, I don’t want you to get lost.” Then, his father started flying out to Seattle every other week to check up on Gary. When he noticed his son was drinking too much and engaging in disruptive behavior, he decided to stay with Gary for a while. During this time period Gary started to “get his courage back.” He went to the front office and told management he needed a change. In the process, he let the Sonics organization know that if they saw him as a long-term solution, they needed to consider another coach because he was not receiving any encouragement. Shortly after, the ownership decided to make a change and hired George Karl as their new head coach. Gary spoke of George Karl’s impact, “Then, I got a person like my father. A person who wanted to work with me and cared for me. Some players need that. Even superstar players need a boost.”

The Glove Fits

After a difficult first two seasons on the court for the Sonics where his play did not meet the expectations of several people, there was discussion in regards to trading Gary.
People started labeling him as a “bust” and that did not sit well with him. Gary credits George Karl as a person who changed his life. Coach Karl encouraged Gary not to get lost in trivial matters and to stay focused. Gary started noticing, “While I’m hearing this three times in a row from three different coaches, I started to realize that I’m doing something wrong. So I stopped, tried to be a bigger person, started to listen and show more respect. I started to respect people more, got my game back, and eventually blossomed into who I am now.”

Trust was a major factor in the development of their relationship. “George Karl gave me the opportunity when the team wanted to trade me,” Gary asserted. One important step Coach Karl took to earn Gary’s trust was hiring an assistant coach that had the ability to help him individually. Tim Grgurich, a longtime assistant coach with the successful UNLV Runnin’ Rebels teams of the late-eighties and early-nineties, was hired by the Sonics to work extensively with Gary. “Tim came in and took me the next summer and said – look we are going back to old school and we’re going to watch video to look at how you played in college, we’re going to play in summer league, we’re going to work out by ourselves one hour every day, and you’re going to work just by yourself and get back to the Gary Payton I seen in college.” Coach Karl’s decision to hire a coach to work specifically with Gary demonstrated his full confidence that Gary could be a player to take the team over the top. Gary started to buy-in because his coach showed a commitment to develop him as a player in order to perform at the level of a second overall pick. When referring to all three of his coaching mentors (Fred Nolan, Ralph Miller, and George Karl), Gary mentioned, “That’s what made me trust these three guys. They made all these sacrifices for me and if I can’t trust them after that then I don’t know what’s wrong with me.”
Subsequently, his third season in the NBA (1992-93) until when he left the Sonics (2003-04) was the most fun time period he ever had playing the game of basketball. He earned the nickname ‘The Glove’ for his defensive prowess, became one of the all-time greats at his position, and helped turn the Sonics into a perennial playoff contender. Gary credited George Karl for initially creating a strong culture. He reflected on the Sonics run in the nineties:

When you win 60 or more games several years – 63, 61, 64, and you’re rolling with a good group of guys like Detlef Schrempf, Sam Perkins, Hersey Hawkins, Shawn Kemp, Nate McMillan, Vincent Askew, David Wingate, Ervin Johnson, Frank Brickowski, Eric Snow. I had guys like that always around me. We were like a family. A team you built together. We all were friends. We all went to dinner together and we were like brothers. That was great to build spending 13 years in the same place and having friends like that.

Gary appreciates the tutelage he received from several veteran players throughout his NBA career. One particular teammate stood out as a mentor and selflessly helped him despite losing his starting position to Gary. That man was Nate McMillan. Gary reminisced about being drafted by Seattle in 1990 with the second overall pick in the draft:

Seattle wasn’t supposed to get the pick. They were a playoff level team. They wanted to get into the lottery just to try to get me. And so they got lucky. They got the number two lottery ball and drafted me. The guy they had at the point guard position at the time was Nate McMillan out of North Carolina State. By drafting me, they were basically telling Nate he lost his job. But when I got drafted and came in there, he opened his arms to me – like a big brother. I couldn’t ask for anything more.

From the perspective of Nate McMillan, few players would be able to accept these circumstances, especially losing his starting position to an unproven rookie. In Gary’s words, “A young kid who hadn’t proved anything in this league yet and he did that. They aren’t even telling me to work in training camp to fight for the job. They were like – he is the starting point guard and Nate accepted that and mentored me.” Gary credited Nate for standing by his
side during his rough first two seasons in the league. He would tell Gary to relax or take him to dinner. To this day, they still have a great relationship. Nate was the best man at Gary’s wedding and they talk nearly every night. Gary added, “Now that’s a guy you want – open arms, helpful. That’s a guy you want to be around and know for life because that’s a true friend, a big brother.”

Nate is the current head coach of the Indiana Pacers. Previously, he spent several seasons coaching for Seattle and Portland. In fact, Nate was Gary’s head coach at Seattle for three seasons in the early 2000s. However, he was not shy to discipline Gary when needed:

He suspended me for a game for doing the wrong thing. That’s what a brother should do. When I got the suspension I understood what was going on. I didn’t get mad at him or say – Man, what’s wrong with you we’ve been hanging out all these years and now you get the job and now you do this. He was trying to make me a better person.

In February 2003, Gary was traded from Seattle after an illustrious 12 plus seasons with the team. He went on to reach the NBA Finals with the Los Angeles Lakers in 2004 and won an NBA championship with the Miami Heat in 2006. However, Gary’s experience in Seattle remains close to his heart. He appreciates the fans for being so loyal over the years and he is actively involved in trying to bring an NBA franchise back to the city.

**Mentoring Reflection and Analysis**

Gary enjoyed tremendous success and mentoring at all levels of competitive basketball. When asked to expand on qualities/characteristics he feels are essential in effective mentors, Gary indicated that trust, love, and kindness of a person’s heart are imperative. Mentors cannot be hypocritical and must be of good character. According to Gary, “You have to show you really care and you can’t tell me one thing and then the next day I see you in the paper doing something else.” Providing examples he further explained,
“If you are beating your wife I don’t want to see that. If you are high one day and telling me not to smoke and drink that won’t work. You can’t tell me anything unless you are doing it and showing it by example.” In his opinion, a mentor must serve as a positive figure such as a father or big brother and has to lead the way by actions, not just words. “Show the way! You can’t just talk it,” he said.

In discussing the most valuable lessons he learned from past mentors, Gary mentioned that his mentors held him accountable for his actions. From his observation, when coaches or people stop communicating that is a signal they do not care. After trust is built, he emphasized that mentees cannot take criticism personal. He reiterated that all his mentors pulled him aside when he needed to correct behavior and encouraged him to make those necessary changes. Sometimes he learned from “tough love,” but he was receptive when he felt the criticism came from a good place and his mentor believed in him. For example, his high school coach (Fred Nolan) demanded accountability and told him once he reached the top level he could teach the next person what he was being taught. Gary commented, “I never thought I’d be as big as I am now. You don’t grow up saying I’m going to be a Hall of Famer, or set records, or be ‘The Glove.’ But if he didn’t push me, I wouldn’t have gotten to this level.”

Now Gary feels an obligation to give back as a parent and mentor. He pointed out that he has four beautiful children who have grown up. His daughter is getting married soon and he is excited to have grandchildren. In reference to his family Gary reflected, “They taught me how to become a man. My father gave them a product that was going to listen and be okay, not a knucklehead to come to them.” Gary feels the “tough love” from his father, often screaming and yelling at him, prepared him for coaches. He admitted that getting out of his
neighborhood was really rough. Looking back, he appreciates his father’s persistence in pushing him to mature and become a man.

At Oregon State, he moved to a rural area and learned to cook, wash clothes, and balance a checkbook. His coaches gave him responsibilities and prepared him to one day become a father. “That’s why I stayed in school for four years. I stayed all four years of college to learn everything I could before I went out in this world and had to do things I knew were on me,” Gary shared. His coaches instilled accountability in him and he tries to do the same with his children.

A Devoted Mentor

Accomplished professional athletes are in a position of influence and have the ability to positively impact others. Some decide to use their spotlight in productive ways, while others prefer to limit their involvement. Gary dedicates much of his time today serving in a mentoring role for young people. He understands his influence and takes pride in being a positive mentor. “I never had a Gary Payton or sports idol come into the neighborhoods of Oakland and try to teach me the right way. We have a lot of kids in Oakland who are committing crimes,” he acknowledged. When reminiscing about his childhood and adolescent years, he remembered the eighties crack epidemic and the need for young people to have mentors who can provide guidance and support. “That’s why I am very happy to be in this role and come back and start mentoring kids and see their progress. To go Chicago where you are from, to Detroit, or St. Louis and try to help those kids become somebody and get out of that because they don’t have a mentor or big brother.”
Gary pointed out that many of the young people he works with do not have a big brother or sister. He has empathy for individuals who grew up without parents or lacked mentors. Currently, he has a program in Oakland that gives scholarships to young people who have the intelligence and ability to attend college but do not have the funds. Gary further described the purpose of his program and the role he proudly serves:

I want to be a mentor to these kids and show them – Hey, I want you to go to college. Hey, I want you to take this scholarship to Yale or Harvard. I got the money for you and I want you to prove it to them that you can do it. And they look back 10 or 15 years later and they are doing the same thing I’m doing and saying this is how I started. That’s what I want to happen for these kids and that’s what mentorship with me is all about. I want these kids to have a chance because some of them fail and they only fail because they don’t have somebody to look up to. That they can really trust. They may not have mothers and fathers. They might be from a single parent family or where the father isn’t there and the mother is working all these jobs and these kids have a lot of free time on their hands to get into trouble. That’s what we need to keep them out of.

As previously mentioned, Gary feels trust is one of the key elements in a mentor-mentee relationship but earning a young person’s trust has to come from the heart. He maintained, “A young kid is going to trust you because you are going to show him by giving him love and being there when he or she needs a shoulder to cry on.” He pointed out that everyone makes mistakes and he tries to be there for his kids when they do. At the same time, Gary believes it is important for mentors to use these experiences as teachable moments and help others avoid making the same mistakes in the future.

When asked if he has had any failed mentoring experiences, Gary conveyed he was fortunate to not have personally experienced bad mentoring, but admitted to knowing several people who have. As a mentor, he understands that not all children are going to change. According to Gary, “If I can take 10 kids and get to 3, I think I’ve done a great job because you’re not going to get everybody. Some of the kids you are trying to mentor are already lost
but you still try to work with them.” Individuals who are lost can easily go back to the conditions they previously faced. Gary provided excellent perspective as to what may potentially happen to a lost child and how positive mentoring can make a difference with others on the brink:

If they have the mentality to get away from what we are trying to do they go right back on the streets and to the negativity and their mind is set on something they already want to do. I know a lot of them probably have. You try to mentor some kids and the next thing you know you get a call that they are in jail or killed or something like that. That’s the worst phone call you ever want to receive. Fortunately, I have never had that or want to ever have that. You try to catch some kids, but sometimes they leave and walk away from you. The evil person gets them, or that devil gets them and has a strong hold on them. They can’t break away because they’re so scared of what they might have to deal with when they are not around us. That’s just a bad feeling for anybody. I know a lot of these kids have that. You just got to let them open up because they haven’t had someone to open up to. They’ll start telling you all their problems. And if you make them feel comfortable about opening up, then you’ve won. I’ve got a couple.

Gary graciously shared a powerful and emotional story highlighting the impact professional athletes can have in critical real-life moments. He has long supported the Make-A-Wish Foundation charity and remembered a relationship he had with a young lady who had cancer several years ago:

They only gave her six months to live. By me being in her life she started fighting and she was on this earth a year and six months more. When they called me after my basketball game I was in Detroit. It broke my heart (expressing sadness and strong emotion). It broke my heart that she was dying and that she was asking for me. I got on a plane right away and flew back. As soon as I got there she held my hand. She couldn’t open her eyes but I kept talking to her and she squeezed my hand. And she died. She died about 10 minutes later. It was just something that really touched me about what was going on. You got to touch people that way.
NBA Today and Need for Mentoring

In discussing the NBA today, I asked Gary if he feels the players are getting the mentorship they need compared to his generation. His response was, “That’s a tough question. We can’t blame it on the NBA because the NBA gives you every tool that you need. It’s about the players. Do they want mentorship? Do they let go of their ego?” He mentioned that during his career there were a lot of veteran players. Gary pointed out when he was drafted there were nine players on the team that had been there over six years. He added, “In this era you have a guy that gets drafted at the number one pick one year and the next year you get another number one pick. So what do you have – 19, 20, 21 year olds?”

Gary thinks players today do not value mentorship as much because of the amount of money they are making. “Once you get a lot of money things go out the door. Money changes a lot of people and I don’t think they see it yet,” he remarked. One area Gary believes the players may need mentorship with is financial management. He expressed that unnecessarily spending could be a detriment to their futures and many players do not understand this reality:

These kids they just don’t see it. Their perspective is I am going to be like this for 10 to 15 years and make $2 million a month. But what are you going to have in the end? If you don’t have a mentor telling you let’s save this and do this and buy this right now. That’s rough because you see a lot of us, especially guys in their fifties and sixties who did not make a lot of money and are struggling and need things to do and could have done it in a different way – they’ll tell you that. I look up to the George Gervins, the Dr. Js. I look up to them and listen to what was going on in their day. I ask questions like – what could you have done differently? That’s what kids should be doing now. They should be asking questions and learning from others who paved the way.
Paying it Forward: Advice from Gary Payton

Have goals, listen, and throw your egos out the door. If you want somebody to help you then you have to help yourself first. You have to be humble. If somebody wants to help you then you need to reward them by holding yourself accountable. I am going to help you, but you gotta promise you are going to help yourself. As a basketball player for example, you gotta workout every day and set goals. Put boards up with your goals on them. Don’t just run your mouth about it, be accountable and proactive. Be true about it.
Rick Barry: My Mentoring Narrative

**Height:** 6–7

**Position:** Small Forward

**ABA Career:** 1968–72

**NBA Career:** 1965–67, 72–80

Basketball Biography

Rick Barry is an NBA champion, NBA Finals MVP, and member of the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame, class of 1987. Nicknamed the “Miami Greyhound” he was an aggressive player with tremendous quickness and instincts. During his basketball career, Rick accomplished several impressive individual honors. He is the only player in history to lead the NBA, ABA, and NCAA in scoring. In the NBA, Rick was an 8-time All-Star and 5-time All-NBA first team selection. He earned the 1966 NBA Rookie of the Year and 1967 NBA All-Star Game MVP awards. In 1975, his Golden State Warriors won the NBA championship and he was named Finals MVP. That season he averaged 30.6 ppg and led the NBA in both steals and free throw shooting percentage. In 1996, Rick was named to the prestigious NBA’s 50th Anniversary all-time team. As an ABA player, Rick was a 4-time All-Star and 4-time All-ABA first team selection. His Oakland Oaks won the 1969 ABA title with Rick averaging 34.0 ppg. At the University of Miami, he was a Consensus first-team All-American in 1965 and led the nation in scoring with 37.4 ppg. In addition, Rick was a pioneer that challenged the reserve clause in 1967, helping pave the way for modern players to enjoy the benefits of free agency.
Laying the Foundation

Rick Barry’s mentorship journey began in Elizabeth, NJ, a tough port city known for a series of pivotal battles during the American Revolution. He graduated from nearby Roselle Park High School, attended The University of Miami (FL), and became one of the greatest basketball players in NBA history. However, the foundation for his success was built at home where he received mentoring from his parents and older brother. Rick admitted, “Well, I’m obviously one of the fortunate individuals because when you talk about mentorship the only way you need mentorship is because you are not getting it at home. Unfortunately today there are a lot of broken families or single parent homes and that’s where the issue comes in.” In his opinion, young people do not always get the guidance they need in this scenario when their only parent is working all the time to support them. Often, they get involved with the wrong people. “I remember myself growing up and being around some kids who did some things that I could have really gotten in trouble for. Thank God I didn’t because my father probably would have beaten my butt so bad during the days when you couldn’t go ahead and sue your parents,” he added in jest. Rick emphasized that young people need to choose the people they let into their lives wisely. “I knew the consequences in what I was doing but I wanted to be one of the guys doing this stuff that they did. I’m really ashamed of it because I could have gotten in real trouble.”

Addressing the original question, Rick first credited his father for instilling values and building a solid foundation for him to build on. Although he joked that his mother had trouble walking and chewing gum at the same time, he considers her a major part of his solid foundation. He provided an analogy, “I think it’s important that whatever you do in life, in my case that was sports and basketball, you have to understand the fundamental concepts.
It’s like a skyscraper – you can’t build a tall building on a small foundation because it will get so high and fall over.” Both his parents taught him the difference between right and wrong, but he acknowledged that does not guarantee how a person will turn out. According to Rick, “It still doesn’t mean you are going to be a good person because again I got hooked up with some of the wrong kids and was doing things I shouldn’t have done and fortunately my father never found out about.”

His father provided words of encouragement growing up. He used to tell Rick, “Son, whatever you do in life, always give your best effort. You got to try your best at everything you do whether it’s on the basketball court or in the classroom. Try to be the best person you can be because the reason for it is you could feel good about it even if you fail.” The words really resonated with Rick. He encourages young people to not be afraid to fail and view disappointment as a learning experience. According to Rick, “The quickest way to do something correctly is to do it incorrectly because you don’t like that experience.”

Another important mentor for Rick was his older brother Dennis. He described his relationship with Dennis and the importance of having him as a mentor:

Many times people don’t want younger brothers hanging around doing stuff. My brother Dennis wasn’t that way. He was really great. He was awesome to me. He was like a role model or a mentor for me trying to keep me on the straight and narrow. I remember him telling me don’t hang around this person and things like that. So I had two great people to be able to help me and basically mentor me, but that was family – a brother and a father.

Rick views mentoring as an “awesome thing” for kids who don’t have positive family experiences. He mentioned athletes have the opportunity to change the lives of some young people because kids look up to them. When discussing athletes as role models he expanded, “It is important to understand you have a responsibility. You may not have asked for that, but
it kind of comes with the territory. If you’re a professional athlete and you’re being recognized you can have such a dramatic impact on kids by what you say, by the things you do, and how you conduct yourself.” Rick admires that so many of the NBA players today for helping make a positive difference in so many young peoples’ lives. “They got so much money and they are doing wonderful things with it helping kids but unfortunately all you hear on the front page of the newspaper are all the bad things that are happening to these guys. The other stuff is on page 32 or something of that nature,” he said. Rick pointed out that many NBA players today have foundations and chartered schools. They are trying to put children in an environment where they have a chance to succeed in life. Although he understands some children have no choice but to seek outside mentoring, he reiterated that strong foundational values should be established at home.

Welcome to Miami

In the fall of 1961, Rick headed to Coral Gables to attend college and play basketball for the University of Miami. The tropical weather and beautiful beaches were appealing to him and he did not consider going anyplace else. At the time, Miami was more known for their academics than sports. Therefore, he knew he would have a chance to play varsity basketball as a sophomore. During those times freshman played on a separate team.

When asked if he had any mentoring experiences at Miami, Rick indicated that he did not necessarily learn many life lessons, but he learned a great deal about the game of basketball. An important basketball mentor for him was his head coach Bruce Hale. Rick married Bruce’s daughter Pamela, his first wife. He discussed his mentoring experience with Bruce Hale:
Bruce was great. He really helped me in terms of those fundamental principles and prepared me to have a better chance of succeeding in my profession, which turned out to be professional basketball. I wanted to be a baseball player. Willie Mays was my hero. That’s why I wore number 24. I was actually a better baseball player in high school than basketball, but it turned out that the route to succeed for me was basketball. Bruce really helped me a lot. He was a top pro basketball player in his time. He was able to instill a lot of techniques and processes of how to approach things. So I was prepared when I went to the pros.

Rick was rather rare coming into the NBA as a rookie and immediately being a first team All-Pro. In fact, he graduated from Miami at 21 years old and was a year ahead of many in his class. “I think my mother wanted to get me out of the house as soon as possible,” he joked. He attended kindergarten and finished his senior basketball season in high school at 16 years old. Rick reflected, “I was very young coming to Miami but having a mentor in basketball in particular helped me a lot. Bruce was a great person as well.” Although he got the basketball mentoring he needed to excel at the next level, Rick expressed that he did not have the type of mentoring experience off the court as some other players share. “Like I’ve heard some of the stories like Bill Walton talks about how great John Wooden was and his Pyramid of Success and all those things. I didn’t necessarily experience that with coaches but what I did experience was learning the game of basketball, which was very beneficial to me as well.” He reiterated that his parents and older brother were the ones to instill the values of right and wrong. Rick also credited good coaches for enhancing his basketball knowledge.

**Fierce Competitor**

Playing professional basketball was a dream that Rick did not take for granted. He described his mindset during his professional basketball career:

How lucky am I. I got go get up and go play basketball and someone paid me. I got paid to play basketball! That’s not work. People say it’s so hard for guys to travel and I say – Are you freaking kidding me. Hard? I mean I played 40 minutes a game for
three or four times a week and somebody paid me. They pay for all my expenses. I get a food allowance. Are you kidding me? Hard? Work? I know that work was. In the summer in college I worked six to ten hours a day doing road construction, got done with that and for five hours go and run five miles, try to get something to eat, go and play pickup basketball for two hours, get up five in the morning and do it again. Now that was hard work! I said I am not doing this the rest of my life. So yeah you learn from experiences.

In 1965, Rick was drafted second overall by the San Francisco Warriors. He had an illustrious career playing for a number of NBA and ABA teams. After playing two seasons with San Francisco, he was one of the first players to jump to the ABA, where he signed a lucrative contract with the Oakland Oaks. At the time, Bruce Hale was the head coach of the Oaks, a basketball mentor he previously discussed. Rick was a pioneer who challenged the reserve clause even before Curt Flood did in baseball. He was ordered by the courts to sit out the 1967-68 season before joining the Oaks. In 1969, he helped lead the Oaks to the ABA title.

After briefly playing with the Washington Caps and Virginia Squires of the ABA, he was traded by the Squires to the New York Nets, where he gained great respect for another of his basketball mentors, Lou Carnesecca. He described his relationship with Lou:

I have such great respect for Lou Carnesecca, who I love dearly. He was my coach with the Nets. Lou’s in his nineties now and I’ll call him when I’m back east to say hello. So here was a successful college coach coming into the pros for the first time. He didn’t think he had all the answers. He actually would ask questions to Billy Melchionni and me who had experience and asked what we thought about this or that. He earned my respect tremendously because he didn’t think he had all the answers. He wanted to hear our input. It wasn’t as if he is going to accept everything we said, which I understood. He would evaluate and decide if he wanted to incorporate those ideas or not because it’s his decision as the coach but just the fact that he was willing to ask my opinion showed openness.

Rick admitted he never had a coach quite like Lou. He mentioned that he had coaches that would look annoyed when he would raise his hand to give input wondering what he was
going to ask next. He added, “That’s why I respected Lou so much. He was willing to listen and hear what my thoughts were as someone involved in this particular venture that we’re in together.

His competitive drive fueled him throughout his career. Although he was a committed professional, he was human being as well. When asked what mentoring he received during his toughest moments, Rick responded that he did not remember any times that were extremely depressing. However, he shared a difficult experience that uncharacteristically affected his play:

I remember I was going through a difficult time with my marriage and let it impact my performance on the basketball court. I have the ability to compartmentalize and put something on the back burner and not let it be there in the present because that can impact how you perform or how you act. I remember I was so mad at myself that I allowed myself to lose my focus and not be mentally ready to go out and do what I was paid to do. It really bothered me a lot but as I said I am fortunate. I don’t remember a situation where I was so low or down.

Former players often credit teammates or peers with helping their transition to professional basketball. During his career Rick received important advice from Jerry West. It was during his rookie year and the Warriors were on a tour with the Lakers playing exhibition games. The advice had to do with preparation. He said Jerry told him, “Rick, you have to understand if you go out they are going to watch you and they are going to make some adjustments. He said you have to be prepared to respond to what they are doing in order to continue to be successful.” Rick added, “So I remembered that and that was great advice to get. That’s one of the greatest players in the history of the game. The NBA logo, right? That was very meaningful to hear that from him just to know that I was prepared and this may happen and obviously I was able to deal with it.”
When asked if he remembered any other advice he received from peers and if the conditions are the same with NBA players today he responded, “I don’t think it occurs as much today as it did back then. There were only nine teams in the NBA when I came in so there weren’t many players and today guys are buddy-buddy and friends and everything.” Rick expressed that not fraternizing with other players may have costed him in his career. He explained, “I didn’t have a whole lot of friends. I went out to try to kick their butt. My teammates sure, but you’re the opponent. I don’t want to be friends with you. I want to beat you. I wasn’t after friends.”

Rick feels his competitive approach may have costed him the chance to be MVP of the league. “It was so crazy. The year we won the championship in 1975 I had a great season and didn’t even finish second or third in the voting because for the first time ever, God only knows why it happened, they changed the voting from the writers to the players. I mean how stupid is that? Players let their personal feelings get in the way (laughing).” Clifford Ray, a close dear friend to Rick and teammate on the Warriors, joked with him once about his competitiveness. Rick stated, “We are like brothers. He said B (he calls me B) you did a really good job of that because those guys didn’t like you.” Although Rick places much more value in team accomplishments, he acknowledged that winning the regular season MVP award would have been nice on the resume. He further explained his feelings on the snub along with the true reason why he played the game:

So they didn’t vote for me. I mean I had a great season. The writers picked the All-Pro team but the players picked the MVP. I was the only unanimous choice for the All-Pro team. So it kind of shows you I would have been MVP if the writers chose the MVP but with the players I think I came in like third or fourth. I mean it was ridiculous. Not that it’s a big deal because that’s just an individual honor. Who cares? It might get you a buck and a half cup of coffee somewhere but I only played for this (pointing at his 1975 NBA championship ring). I mean the Hall of Fame is awesome. I am very appreciative for being a part of the Hall of Fame but that is an individual
honour. You play for championships because that’s what it is all about. It’s not about you or individual stuff.

When discussing the importance of team accomplishments compared with individual ones, Rick provided an analogy, “If you took all the icing, candles, and adornments they put on cakes and stick it on a plate without the cake, it doesn’t look very good. It looks like a big mess. You need the cake!” He referred to the NBA championship ring as “the cake” and reiterated that is what he played for.

**A Team of Warriors**

When describing the continuity of the 1975 Warriors, Rick indicated the team had a family-like atmosphere and believes that was a big reason why they won the title. Head Coach Al Attles helped create an unselfish environment. “Al Attles went ten deep and you usually do not have a rotation of seven or eight deep. We had the luxury of having a lot of people very close in ability so if someone was not having a good game Al was not reluctant to put somebody else in,” Rick asserted. Typically, when Coach Attles made substitutions the player exited the game was not upset. The players bought into this team-first philosophy. According to Rick, “whether a guy played two minutes, five minutes or forty minutes he was going to play as hard as he could play and give everything he had with a commitment to the defensive end of the court because that’s where it all starts. You don’t necessarily have to be the best defensive team but you have to be a good defensive team to win a championship.”

In reference to today’s game, Rick specified that one of the most redeeming aspects to him is the one-on-one play and believes the teams that win are good defensive teams who play unselfishly at the offense end of the court. “If you want to be successful in a team sport you take your egos and put them in a closet because it’s no longer about you, it’s about the
team,” Rick said. He pointed out that in order for a team to be successful, individuals must ask themselves how can they help the team and decide what sacrifices they are willing to make. The application is the same in any work environment. Rick added, “When I talk to companies I say – it’s not about you. You need to share things with your fellow employees because the main goal is to make the company successful. If you do what it takes to make the company successful you will benefit from that.” He suggested if employees are driven by individual agendas they may not only fail, but the results will be detrimental to the company.

In terms of social dynamics during his pro career, Rick witnessed a lot of racial tension. He pointed out that the 1975 NBA Finals was the first championship series to have two African-American opposing head coaches (Al Attles and KC Jones), which was unusual at the time. Personally, Rick enjoyed playing for Al Attles and working with players from all backgrounds. Part of 1975 Warriors’ greatness was men unified for a common goal regardless of race. However, when Rick played in the ABA he did notice issues between blacks and whites. He went described his experience:

There were a lot of people who were very prejudice. I had a player who could have been that way (without mentioning his name or race) but what I respected about it was he didn’t take it onto the court. When you go onto the court or work environment you have to play within those rules and do what’s right for that situation. You don’t have to go out for dinner afterwards and don’t have to socialize together but when you’re there as a part of that team, whatever differences you may have or feelings you may have that may come to bear off the court, should not be there on the court. I always respected those players who were bitter towards white people, and justifiably so in some cases, but didn’t take that onto the court with them. That earned great respect with me because that’s the way it should be.

The Importance of Communication

After his playing career Rick transitioned successfully into broadcasting. When entering the broadcasting profession, Rick acknowledged receiving advice from other
professionals in the field. In the process, he feels the most important qualities a mentee can have are 1) being open to learning and 2) listening. In fact, he recalled a situation when a person was asking him a question during an interview and he could tell the interviewer could not wait for him to finish answering in order to ask another question. “You know I could have said – Yeah, on the way over here I beat someone up and he would never asked the next question because he would have never heard what I said,” Rick remarked. Over 50 years of broadcasting experience taught him the importance of listening. He further reiterated that the interviewee may lead the interviewer down a path that is way better than what was originally intended.

Occasionally, he has given talks to businesses. He never understood why businesses would not be open to listening to what others have to say and added, “Listening never hurts. You cannot get in trouble if you aren’t talking.” Rick pointed out that too much talking can get people in trouble and admitted he learned that over the years. He has worked on becoming a better listener and brought up the fact an individual may hear an idea that might resonate and dramatically influence his or her next step.

One example of a time when Rick listened to advice that helped him tremendously was on the golf course. A person he met asked him if he had ever tried making a certain adjustment in his swing. “It made all the sense in the world to me. So I changed my whole putting style because this guy told me something that made sense to me,” he commented. Another example he used pertained to the tennis court. “I was playing a lot of tennis and I had the worst time with backhands. I got with one of the Gullikson twins (former professional tennis players) and one of them, either Tom or Tim, explained it in a way that resonated.” Mentors, coaches, or instructors communicating a teaching point in a relatable
way made all the difference for Rick. That entails delivery style, demonstration and observation. As a coach, Rick remembered the eyes of some of his former players open widely when they started to understand a concept and they became more interested in learning. He also touched on the importance of reading body language and interpreting how they react in a given situation. These are all aspects of communication.

The importance of communication cannot be overstated. “Lack of communication is why we have wars,” Rick remarked. As a mentor, he is currently working with an individual that he is trying to positively impact. Rick described their relationship:

I have a guy that does stuff for me that I love. He’s a hard worker. I told him he has to learn to listen. He gets so excited and interrupts me. Listen to what I have to say! What you wanted to say might be totally irrelevant if you listen to what I have to say. I might have answered the question you had. I know you get excited by stuff and I used to be the same way. Trust me, I’m mentoring this guy. He’s like a wild pony running around and I’m trying to put a bit in his mouth and pull back a little but that’s mentoring and you have to stick with it.

Rick emphasized that most people he knows probably would have lost patience with this individual. “If he would have done some of the things he’s done with me, most people would have dropped him like a “hot potato (smiling). But I see the potential in him and he is like an unrefined jewel. I’m trying to refine him.” Joking aside, Rick cares for him and wants to see him successful so badly. His approach is, “Just listen and don’t get upset with me. Its constructive criticism and I’m trying to make you better.” In Rick’s opinion, one of the most important qualities in a mentor is honesty. Sometimes certain comments may hurt but they are for the best in the long run.
Coach Barry

During the nineties, Rick coached for several developmental basketball leagues including the GBA, CBA, and USBL. Honesty was one of most important elements of his coaching style. He described his honest and candid coaching approach he used with his players:

I am going to tell you guys something and you might not like my honesty sometimes but I am not going to BS you. I’m going to tell you the truth. If you don’t like it fine. You can come to me but the last thing I want to hear a comment you made in the newspaper or on TV about something with our team without coming to us first. So if you have a problem – you come to us. I have an open door. Don’t air your dirty laundry out in public. Take care of it in house. Let’s talk about it.

Having been in both the player and coach roles, Rick acknowledged an issue can linger and escalate out of hand if not dealt with. When feelings are bottled inside and are avoided for some time the situation can grow into a major problem. “You make the proverbial mountain out of a molehill,” Rick argued. Sometimes the issue may be resolved very easily with communication.

As previously expressed being honest and straightforward is how he preferred to communicate with his players. His wife, whom he credits as having made him a better person, has told him, “You are one of the most honest people I’ve ever known but you got to get the brutality out of your honesty. You are brutally honest. I said alright I will try to work on that (smiling).” Rick always strives to a better at any endeavor he pursues, including when he played the game, and feels when a person is satisfied that is the start of the downward spiral. He expanded, “You can be happy with what you achieved but you can also try to be better.”
One of the most discouraging situations for Rick is seeing talent wasted. As a coach, he had a player who he described as “Jordanesque” in terms of his size and stature. “He was actually bigger, stronger, and about the same height as Michael,” he recalled. Although this player had amazing physical gifts and a great attitude, he was never taught how to play the game the right way. Rick elaborated, “He was a great kid. He was one of the first guys to practice and one of the last ones to stay after.” In retrospect, the situation was heartbreaking for Rick because the player was 27 years old and had a family with two children. Rick added, “It was too late and I said to Clifford Ray (his assistant coach and former teammate with the Warriors) – Could you imagine what we could have done with this kid when he was younger.” There are people from all walks of life whose talent goes unnoticed or underutilized.

From a coaching perspective, Rick also believes his sons could have been better utilized as players. Two of his sons, Brent and John, had long, productive careers in the NBA. His son Canyon went undrafted and currently plays in the NBA G League. “I don’t think Brent was ever utilized as effectively as he should have been. I mean Brent could do things and should have had the ball in his hands to play point guard for more often,” Rick contends. He remembered a game when Brent played for the Seattle Supersonics during the 2002-03 NBA season and head coach Nate McMillan gave him the chance to play point guard. Brent has 16 assists in that contest. “Brent could see the floor and had a flare to his game but rarely got the opportunity to show that,” Rick stated. He feels the same about his son Canyon and hopes he will be put in a position where his talent can be utilized. “He was only really utilized when he played in China. I mean he can score 30 points a game, 58.5% shooting, 47% three point shooting, and 90% from the foul line.” At the same time, Rick
does not wish to overstep his boundaries. “I’m not a meddling parent and I don’t call up the coach. I just tell my son that he has to deal with it and he handles it very well,” Rick proudly added.

Although Rick’s a proud parent and provided his honest assessment, he has seen other NBA players go through similar situations. He elaborated:

There are so many examples of it. One of the examples is Dale Ellis who played for the Dallas Mavericks early in his career. So Dale plays for a regimented system under Dick Motta and was never utilized properly. Then, he gets traded to Seattle and becomes one of the best three point shooters in the league and becomes an all-star player. Why? Because he got put in an environment or situation where the coach let him do what he is able to do.

Statistics prove his point. Dale Ellis averaged single digit points per game in his first three years with the Mavericks. Subsequently, after being traded to Seattle he averaged in the 25.4 ppg in his first four seasons with the Sonics.

Rick compared underutilizing athletes to a “thoroughbred race horse pulling a plow instead of letting him run.” Aside from professional basketball, Rick mentioned there are children from all walks of life that have amazing talents and potential but never get utilized. “That’s so sad to see that. I can’t even imagine how much talent and ability is out there in our country alone that has not been tapped into.” As a coach, Rick enjoyed trying to identify and extract those abilities in individuals. He has fond memories of his coaching experience and still stays in touch with several players. “There were guys that played for me and if I was really in a position where I had a business and could utilize them as employees I would give back to them. If you can do something and change the life of one person, the time and effort you put into it is worth it.”
Mentoring Reflection and Analysis

Reflecting on his mentoring experiences, Rick maintained that the foundational life principles should be learned at home. His parents and older brother instilled character-related values and various coaches at different levels taught him basketball lessons. Although he has had the good fortune of mentoring, Rick expressed many young people lack the supervision or the type of mentoring that is necessary for their development.

When asked what qualities or characteristics he feels a mentor should have, Rick communicated that a mentor has to be able to earn the respect of the mentee. Credibility helps in this regard, but the mentee needs to understand the mentor’s intentions are positive. Then, the mentee must be able to accept criticism, which comes from honesty on behalf of the mentor. He continued, “You just have to know that this is in your best interest and I’m not trying to be mean to you. I’m trying to help and if you’re willing to accept that we have a chance to do this together, and if you can’t then this is not going to work.” The process does not entail forcing advice down the throat of the mentee. There is a communication process involved. As previously mentioned, openness and listening are two key mentee qualities.

Although Rick mentioned that candid honesty and constructive criticism are part of the process, he does not believe that entails screaming or aggression. “Many kids grow up and they are sometimes beaten or yelled at,” Rick remarked and emphasized the importance of the mentor showing respect to the mentee. However, he admitted there are cases where a mentor tries to encourage an individual but it just does not work. If the mentee is not willing to accept mentoring, both parties are wasting their time. He suggested that people who intend to mentor others read up on best practices. “Anything you want to do in life you need to learn about. If you are going to be a mentor then you need to learn from people who have been
successful doing it.” An example Rick gave was acting, an endeavor he has always had interest in. He recalled being offered opportunities to act, but turning them down because he did not feel prepared. He related his acting pursuits to developing as a mentor:

I actually turned jobs down because I had seen other athletes try and it was embarrassing to me how bad they were. My God, I am not going to go out and embarrass myself and be that horrible. So when I finished playing ball I went to study film with some people in LA for a little bit and took acting classes and did all this stuff to try to learn in case an opportunity came I would at least have an understanding of what the hell I’m supposed to do because I had pride in myself. I didn’t want to go out there and make a fool of myself. So if you are going to be a mentor read up about mentoring. Read books, go online, and listen to some speeches from people who are mentors telling you what they did to be successful. Then, use the things that make sense to you to become a better mentor.

**Lasting Impact**

The NBA landscape today is vastly different than Rick’s era in a number of ways. In terms of basketball, he feels an area in today’s game that needs mentoring is teaching proper fundamentals. He compared eras:

I think we were much more fundamentally sound than the players today. I think a lot of AAU basketball has hurt that. I don’t think kids are being taught and given that foundation of understanding of how to play and how to do it right. They are so gifted athletically but they don’t know how to utilize all that God given natural ability that they have in the proper manner in order to maximize their full potential. That’s the part that hurts me as a purist of the game to see that talent wasted.

In his position as a celebrity and Hall of Famer athlete, Rick feels a sense of responsibility to give back to young people. “I mean that’s a wonderful thing to know that you can have an impact on a young person’s life and in some cases save a life.” He mentioned that fellow Hall of Famer Bill Russell has a mentoring program and has raised money through charity golf events.
At different points in time Rick has seen people years later that may have met him at his basketball camp or elsewhere that show appreciation, which means a lot to him. Although Rick has been a part of several initiatives to help young people, there have been a couple of personal interactions that stood out. The first involved a meaningful connection with a young man he provided help to years ago. He told the story:

I remember helping this young man who had a disease and wasn’t going to live very long. I did some stuff for him and then later in life I ran across his brother who was a chiropractor in Colorado Springs. He told me that his brother loves me and that I did something for his brother when he was young. And I said – Oh, I remember that’s so sad. He said – No, he’s still alive. I was still alive. I got to see his kid later on when he was actually working for the FBI and that was kind of cool knowing that you did something for someone. He’s passed away now, but it was meaningful in his life. So I don’t think guys realize the kind of impact you can have on a young person.

Another person that stands out to him is a waitress he met at a restaurant in Denver. Rick described their interaction:

I told her – why are you working here? You are a really good at what you are doing. Do you want to interview for a better job because I have a friend named Allen Bernstein, who was the former CEO of Morton’s Steakhouse and took them international? We were college friends. I arranged for her to have an interview with Morton’s because she could do the same work and make a heck of a lot more money and advance or become a manager. I set up the interview but I am not sure what happened afterward.

These situations are very rewarding for Rick. He wishes he made the kind of money NBA players make today in order to make an even greater difference. “The things you could do to help people. I mean I am a much better giver than I am a receiver. How much do you need? I am perfectly happy right now but if I had three more zeros or a 250 million dollar contract – I mean think of the things that could be done.” However, he feels that if he is able to change one person’s life through mentoring, the time invested is totally worth it to him. According to
Rick, “You can overcome difficult situations if you put your mind to it and have someone who gives you the right direction and the right guidance.”

**Paying it Forward: Advice from Rick Barry**

Find someone that you feel you can relate to and be willing to open up to them and listen to what it is they have to say and to try the things that make sense to you. Don’t be closeminded. You never know what you’re capable of doing until you try it. Find something you have a passion for and apply yourself by learning as much as you can. Don’t be afraid to fail. You’ll learn from your mistakes very quickly.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

During the interview process, all nine participants indicated mentorship was instrumental in helping them reach the NBA and contributed to their NBA success to varying degrees. The majority expressed their most impactful mentoring experiences occurred prior to reaching the NBA. This was a key finding as several participants played for legendary NBA coaches, yet considered mentoring they received in their childhood and adolescent years as most meaningful. All nine participants named at least two important mentors as a part of their lives before entering the NBA.

Mentoring started for most participants at home. Seven of the nine participants named their mothers, fathers, or both parents as early mentors. Four participants credited their fathers as the primary figures who instilled values in them at a young age, while one described his mother as that presence. Six participants grew up in nuclear families and five were from at-risk backgrounds.

Outside the family, six participants had high school head basketball coaches, four had teachers, and one had other community members serve in mentoring roles. Eight participants reported college head basketball coaches as integral mentors, which were the most common mentor type. Several participant responses indicated their college coaching mentors were involved in aspects of their lives other than just basketball (example: academics, personal growth). This emphasizes the importance of college basketball coaches mentoring players beyond the game of basketball.
All nine participants believe mentoring plays an important role in developing young NBA players, both personally and professionally. Eight participants see a need for mentoring in the NBA today and expressed although they do not know how much mentoring players are getting, it does not appear they are getting as much as they need. Although only three participants considered head professional basketball coaches as their mentors, seven participants mentioned at least one player or teammate took on the role of mentor in their transition to the NBA, which illustrates the importance of peer mentoring. This is consistent with accounts from other NBA retired players who emphasized the importance of peer mentoring. To this point, one participant mentioned when he was drafted there were nine veteran players on his team with over six years of playing experience in the NBA. He commented, “In this era you have a guy that gets drafted at the number one pick one year and the next year you get another number one pick. So what do you have – 19, 20, 21 year olds?”

From a basketball development standpoint, five participants emphasized either coaches or peers at the high school, college, or professional levels provided career mentoring. Basketball specific learning areas included: fundamentals (shoot-pass-movement), rules, techniques, team cohesion, and in-game strategy/adjustments. In today’s game, multiple participants expressed a need to teach young players the proper fundamentals. Potential barriers for teenagers entering the NBA were identified by participants and included lack of college mentoring, too much corporate involvement, and overnight wealth.

All participants have taken on the role of mentor in various ways. Some serve as parents and take pride in providing mentoring for their children. Others are heavily involved in their communities through mentoring programs or foundations. Five participants took on the role of a mentor through coaching or front office positions in professional basketball. All
nine participants expressed an obligation to pay forward the mentoring they received to others. One participant said, “it is the right thing to do,” while another participant feels an obligation “to transfer advice to younger players because he remembered how important it was for him.” There was also a strong sense of pride among multiple participants in wanting to help their cultural communities, home cities, and neighborhoods. Building community is one of the ten characteristics of servant leadership (Spears, 1998).

As expected, participants from a variety of backgrounds who played in different eras have varying perspectives regarding cultural or racial factors. Out of the nine participants, six are African-Americans, two are Caucasian-Americans, and one is an international player from Europe. The oldest participant entered the NBA in 1958 and played during the Civil Rights era and the youngest participant retired in 2007, which provided a wide range of viewpoints.

Racial relations seemed to improve for African-Americans from one era to another. However, all five African-American participants who played in the sixties or seventies dealt with racism. Pertaining to mentorship, all African-Americans in the study expressed positive experiences with white mentors that showed respect, courage, loyalty, support, acceptance and good intentions without hidden agendas or motives.

The following responses are from African-American participants who played in the sixties and seventies. One participant commented, “Decent people are going to care about you if you have good character regardless of race.” A second participant mentioned, “It was almost understood the white man was superior and respected,” but what earned his respect was his two white college coaches “did not treat him as if they had a special superiority.” A third participant mentioned that having both black and white mentors was important for him.
He admired qualities in his black mentors such as “pride, education, and sophistication” and appreciated the loyalty, acceptance, and courage of his white mentors in the face of racist turmoil. A fourth participant acknowledged that some of his white mentors were “sensitive to racial issues and others were not,” but said “the common theme is regardless of their methods or what they were saying, as long as I felt that their intentions were for my best interest then it nurtured trust.” A fifth participant expressed “there were racial issues, but trust developed from love, care, and support.”

White participants acknowledged racial issues existed and empathized with African-American struggles, especially off the court. On the court, they were most concerned with team success and were proud of their friendships with African-American teammates. One participant felt “if you’re in it for the right reasons and basketball is a team game, I don’t think you see black and white as much as you see guys who can play together with the same goals and wanting to reach the same place.” Another participant said, “I always respected those players who were bitter towards white people, and justifiably so in some cases, but didn’t take that onto the court with them. That earned great respect with me because that’s the way it should be.”

The international participant had a very different experience. Most of the cultural differences he outlined had to do with basketball. However, he experienced a vastly different situation because his family was dealing with a war in his home country. Although he encountered Americans who attempted to empathize, it was difficult for anyone outside of his culture to fully understand how he felt.

During the most difficult times, mentoring played a crucial role in participants’ lives. Seven participants felt they had mentors to turn to for guidance and support. Two participants
chose to compartmentalize and deal with the situation on their own. In analyzing when the most difficult personal challenges occurred, seven participants mentioned their most difficult moments happened during their NBA careers. Some of the challenges included: legal issues, lack of confidence, doubters, cultural differences, racism, marital issues, disconnect with coaches, and transition/adjustment to NBA competition. One observation is receiving effective mentoring prior to reaching the NBA may have helped better equip those individuals with the tools to cope with their circumstances.

Six participants reported having experienced failed mentoring. Two additional participants shared experiences that could be interpreted as failed mentoring in the interviews but preferred to not label them. One participant did not specify, however, he did mention that failed mentoring can result from a lack of communication. Multiple participants felt lack of sincerity and hidden agendas were roadblocks in mentor-mentee relationships. One participant said he had been “stabbed in the back” before, while another participant shared that his mentor “let him down because his actions did not follow his words.”

**Theme Identification**

As a result of an extensive thematic analysis, there were 17 themes identified. They were classified as ten *interactive* themes and seven *shared* themes. All themes represent a mix of the most common qualities or actions that participants indicated lead to a positive mentor-mentee relationship. The interactive themes that emerged encompassed collective compatible qualities/actions that are necessary for both individuals to exhibit while engaged in a mentor-mentee relationship in order to maintain successful interaction. The seven shared themes were identified as reciprocal elements that need to be present for an effective mentor-
mentee relationship to take place. All themes were tied to previous literature and connections were made using the lens of servant leadership.

**Interactive Themes**

This section will focus on how the interactive themes were derived and matched. An important aim in this study was to attract the attention of individuals who are supposed to be providing mentorship as well as help younger individuals become more receptive to seeking and receiving mentorship. With this objective in mind, each theme encompasses the duality of the mentoring relationship. As previous research indicates, mentorship is not a one-way transaction, but an exchange process with mentors and mentees each contributing to the relationship (Pawson, 2004; Woolnough, Davidson & Fielden, 2007).

There are two parts to an interactive theme that may potentially lead to a positive mentor-mentee relationship: 1) the mentor approach and 2) the mentee response. All ten interactive themes were based on frequency, compatibility, and additional data provided by participants during the interviews. Table 5-1 represents the mentor’s approach in the mentor-mentee interaction. Listed are the most notable qualities/actions as expressed by participants while describing their mentors. The stars indicate particular qualities/actions that were mentioned by the majority of participants (at least five) as integral qualities their mentors possessed or they feel a mentor should have.
Although the mentor approach addressed the study’s fourth research question on qualities/characteristics evident in the mentoring process, the mentee response component emerged as a result of several participants sharing their insights as a mentor. Currently, several participants expressed they are providing mentoring to others. In the context of our conversations, when discussing the qualities/characteristics of their mentors many added subsequent actions they felt must be taken by mentees in order to become more attractive to mentors and to be able to meet them halfway during the interaction. For instance, one of the participants expressed he was a coach and mentioned honesty as an integral quality that a mentor should possess. Subsequently, he further explained that mentees needed to be able to accept honest criticism for the mentoring relationship to work. Therefore, mentor approaches (e.g. honest) and mentee responses (e.g. accepts criticism) were matched based on diligent interpretation of participant responses. Table 5-2 illustrates the number of participant connections that contributed to the formation of the interactive themes.
Table 5-2: Interactive Compatibility

With each interactive theme, the mentor approach on the left of the basketball pertains to how the participants described their mentors. The mentee response on the right of the basketball represents the interactive component, which can be a quality or action on behalf of the mentee that contributes to the effectiveness of the relationship. The following are the ten interactive themes and their connection to the literature and servant leadership.

**Instills Values**

A key finding was that all participants expressed their most impactful mentoring experiences, by and large, happened prior to reaching the NBA. Seven participants credited parents or immediate family members for being instrumental in instilling character values such as integrity, work ethic, spirituality, punctuality, compassion, pride, discipline, respect, and gratitude. One participant asserted, “my parents instilled values and built a solid foundation for me to build on.” A different participant credited his mother for raising him with the Christian faith. Another mentioned that his father did the same. Servant leaders are characterized by values such as vision, integrity, trust, service, appreciation for others, and empowerment (Russell & Stone, 2002). Several participants felt many of the values they

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mentor Approach</th>
<th>Mentee Response</th>
<th>Participant Connections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instills Values</td>
<td>Openly Receptive</td>
<td>P1, P2, P3, P5, P8, P9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guides</td>
<td>Desires to Learn</td>
<td>P1, P2, P3, P5, P8, P9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest</td>
<td>Accepts Criticism</td>
<td>P4, P5, P9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available</td>
<td>Holds Oneself Accountable</td>
<td>P2, P4, P5, P8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourages</td>
<td>Values Oneself</td>
<td>P2, P6, P8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Envisions Potential</td>
<td>Proactive Approach</td>
<td>P2, P4, P5, P8, P9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selfless Role Model</td>
<td>Grateful</td>
<td>P2, P3, P8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparent</td>
<td>Good Judgement</td>
<td>P2, P3, P5, P6, P7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credible</td>
<td>Humble</td>
<td>P1, P3, P5, P9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitates Growth and Development</td>
<td>Maintains Focus</td>
<td>P1, P2, P3, P4, P5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
learned are being lost today, especially pertaining to younger NBA players. There were multiple participants who implied that mentees must be receptive of what is being taught to them. This is consistent with prior research. Strauss et al. (2013) pointed out mentees should be open to feedback, respectful of their mentor’s input and time, and listen and take advice seriously.

**Guides 🏛️ Desires to Learn**

Eight participants expressed providing guidance was a key action of their mentors. This is consistent with Young and Wright’s (2001) definition of a mentor as “an individual who guides another to success.” Ragins (2002) framed a mentor’s role as someone who guides another to achieving goals. As expected, coaches, professional peers, and other community members often provided career direction. The majority of participants felt their mentors provided direction at critical times that enabled them to get through difficult life challenges or improve performance on the basketball floor. Five participants pointed out their desire to learn as a mentee helped make them more attractive to mentors. One participant who lacked parental support growing up described himself as “a person of curiosity and someone who is always seeking to know more” and his mentoring experiences “fed his thirst for knowledge” which he felt enabled him to connect with mentors. Another participant referred to a mentor as a person “who takes the hand of another and guides that individual.” Multiple participants reported guidance they received was often empowering and a few mentioned their mentors “opened their eyes to new experiences.” This suggests many of their mentors tried to convince rather than coerce, which is a characteristic in servant leaders (Spears, 2004).
**Honest ◇ Accepts Criticism**

Six participants included honesty as an important mentor quality. In his book *A Game Plan for Life: The Power of Mentoring*, Coach John Wooden (2009) referred to honesty as “the most valuable gift of all” and said “mentoring often involves telling people what they need to hear, rather than what they want to hear.” One participant’s response echoed this assessment as he mentioned “certain comments may hurt but they are for the best in the long run.” Russell and Stone (2002) identified honesty as a recurring attribute of servant leadership in the workplace. Multiple participants expressed that a mentee needs to be able to accept constructive criticism in order to grow. One participant commented “criticism does not entail screaming or aggression,” which implies a more empathetic approach may be required to deliver the message.

**Available ◇ Holds Oneself Accountable**

As previously noted, there are a variety of ways in which mentors can provide support, but in order to be supportive mentors must first be available. All nine participants expressed in some way or fashion that a mentor’s availability or willingness to help was important. Gilbert (2017) suggested a key role for a coach as a quality mentor is being available to listen for athletes. Several participants shared that their coaching mentors would dedicate significant time to helping them improve their basketball skills. On a personal level, during the most difficult times in their lives seven participants felt they had mentors to turn to for guidance and support. This connects with the primary focus of servant leaders, which is service to followers (Stone, Russell, & Patterson, 2003; Van Dierendonck, 2011). When speaking of their mentee experiences, multiple participants voiced various mentors held them
accountable for their actions. A participant credited his high school coach with changing his life by teaching him to hold himself accountable for his actions. Another participant suggested if the mentee does not practice accountability, the relationship could be a waste of time for all involved.

**Encourages Values Oneself**

Eight participants mentioned encouragement as a key attribute in mentoring. Encouragement may be most useful during difficult times. One participant expressed that his parents and grandparents encouraged him not to quit as he was dealing with intense racism in his school. When discussing good mentors, another participant said, “when you are going through those difficult times they stick with you, continue to encourage you.” Spears (1998) maintained that as a healer, servant leaders recognize the opportunity to lift the spirits of those they encounter. In the process, multiple participants emphasized the importance of mentees having self-confidence and believing in themselves. One participant stated, “in order to find mentors, you have to have a degree of self-value.”

**Envisions Potential Proactive Approach**

There were eight participants that expressed their mentors identified talent or saw potential in them. When discussing his junior high school teacher, one participant emphatically said, “She saw something in me that I didn’t see in myself.” Three more participants echoed the same sentiment when discussing their high school basketball head coaches. In fact, all these participants had previous high school coaches they did not connect with before new coaches were hired or they transferred schools. Allen et al. (2000) indicated ability/potential as an important factor for mentors choosing mentees. One interesting finding
is that participants identified mentors who saw potential in them outside of their basketball abilities. Multiple teachers encouraged participants to pursue academic endeavors. Also, one coaching mentor encouraged a participant to attend a university because he envisioned his mentee making history and breaking a color barrier. These behaviors are consistent with servant leaders, who are visionaries with foresight who anticipate potential outcomes (Spears, 1998; Page and Wong, 2003). Greenleaf (1997) maintained that leaders have a “sense for the unknowable and are able to foresee the unforeseeable” (p. 22).

**Selfless Role Model 🌱 Grateful**

Seven participants referred to various mentors as positive role models. One participant described his older brother as “a role model or mentor trying to keep him on the straight and narrow.” Ellis (2016) mentioned role modeling as a mentoring trait and mentoring as a servant leadership attribute in his work on coach-athlete relationships. Many mentors earned the respect of participants because of their willingness to dedicate time and effort to helping them achieve their goals, which showed selflessness. John Wooden once said “selfless teamwork is great teamwork.” (Gordon, 2009) One participant expressed that he received selfless mentoring as a rookie entering the NBA from a teammate. The participant stated, “When I got drafted he knew he would likely be losing his starting position but he opened his arms to me, even during difficult times.” In turn, once participants achieved NBA success several paid homage to their mentors. “Seeing people who made sacrifices for you being able to enjoy that success. That’s special,” one participant said. One participant commented that during his Hall of Fame speech “the spirit of gratitude took over.” It is plausible to conclude that if mentors invest significant time and effort to provide mentoring, even without expecting anything in return, mentees should take it upon
themselves to show gratitude because the mentor-mentee relationship is reciprocal.

**Transparent Good Judgement**

As previously mentioned several participants had negative mentoring experiences or grew up in at-risk situations. As a result, multiple participants emphasized cautiousness when entering mentoring relationships, especially as they grew older and became more experienced. One participant who dealt with racism and bigotry throughout his life stated, “You really had to find out if this person was sincere or had an agenda.” Fries-Britt and Snider (2015) emphasized the importance of transparency in effective mentoring relationships. Several of the participants suggested mentees need to be careful who they choose to trust as mentors and learn from past mistakes.

**Credible Humble**

Six participants emphasized the importance of a mentor possessing knowledge and expertise, especially in the sport of basketball. From a basketball standpoint, multiple participants were more receptive to receiving mentoring from individuals who have been played at the top level. One participant said, “A big part of the trust comes from knowing they have been there ahead of you, for example, played the game.” Credibility has been identified as a servant leadership quality linked to mentorship (Page & Wong, 2000; Russell & Stone, 2002; Sendjaya, 2002; Patterson; 2003; Winston, 2003; Coetzer, 2017). In the process, multiple participants suggested mentees take a humble approach when entering a mentor-mentee relationship.
Facilitates Growth and Development  Maintains Focus

All nine participants indicated having mentors who directly impacted their growth and development, some personally and others professionally. Career development and psychosocial functions have been identified as two important mentoring functions (Kram, 1985a). One participant mentioned that he started to buy-in to receiving mentoring once his coach showed a commitment to developing him as a player. Pertaining to life skills, another participant commented, “You reflect back and appreciate the effort that your high school coach put into developing you and the effort that took because you are in the developmental stage.” A commitment to the growth of people is an essential servant leadership characteristic (Spears, 1998). In connection with servant leadership, the mentoring relationship “builds upon learning and growth to facilitate the personal and development necessary to develop leaders.” (Poon, 2006).

Shared Themes

The shared themes collectively capture the salient trend most participants experienced with mentors’ willingness to go beyond basketball. “Going Beyond Basketball” meant mentors showed a commitment to helping mentees in other aspects of their lives (e.g. academics, personal matters). The seven shared themes are trust, respect, authenticity, love/care, loyalty, empathy, and listening. Trust was the most frequently reported shared theme and several participants indicated trust took time to build. If trust was not established or obtained, then the mentor-mentee relationship did not take place. Therefore, trust was a key component and building block in mentoring relationships. The responses suggested that trust was built in uniquely different ways depending on each individual relationship and each participant required varying approaches based on personal characteristics such as age,
personality, life experience, and culture. Also, the time periods they lived in presenting different sets of circumstances. One example a participant provided was his college coach allowing him to start every game as a freshman. He felt empowered by his coach trusting him, and that built mutual trust.

After an extensive analysis, trust was revealed to be the binding element that connected the other shared mentoring themes, which have all been associated with servant leadership theory. Research indicates the mentoring experience is invaluable and likely reflects the norm of reciprocity in mentor-mentee interactions (Gouldner, 1960). The relationship requires deliberate effort and clear communication (Masters & Kreeger, 2017). In our model, trust is at the center of the mentor-mentee relationship and the other six shared themes contribute in establishing trust.

Previous research has connected respect with trust when referring to the foundation of a mentor-mentee relationship (Bose, 2016; Gehrke & Kay, 1998; Ayers & Griffin, 2005). This is consistent with participant responses. One participant maintained that trust does not occur without mutual respect and added, “there is no way you can mentor without being respected.”

Five participants specified loyalty as a critical trait in their mentors. One participant described a defining moment when his coach earned his trust and respect by showing loyalty in the face of racism. Several participants expressed having to keep their guards up because of people with hidden agendas and others experienced failed mentoring relationships where the mentor proved to be disloyal. Several participants were proud to stand by their mentors and celebrate with them after achieving NBA success.
Multiple participants indicated **authenticity** (genuineness/sincerity) was important and needed to be tested in order to gain trust. Six participants indicated mentors earned their trust when they felt unconditionally **loved**, cared for, valued, and included. The feelings and approach needed to be sincere. One participant explained, “I think if someone is genuinely concerned about people and unconditionally loves people you feel it and sometimes that’s enough to go on. Then, the trust can grow and develop.” Another participant stated, “a young kid is going to trust you because you are going to give him love.” This is consistent with Page and Wong’s (2003) conclusion that “it is impossible for one to perform the leadership task as a servant leader, unless one has developed a servant’ heart, and knows how to develop and empower others” (p. 4).

Some participants felt trust will not be established without the mentor showing compassion. One participant commented, “leaders have to have compassion and a mentor, in a sense, is a leader.” Also, several participants expressed that mentors should try to understand mentees’ situations and mentees should be **empathetic** of their mentors’ commitment. As one participant stated, “You can tell when people genuinely care about you and they made the sacrifice to dedicate time, effort, and direction.” Spears (2004) reiterated that a successful servant of others is a person who is a skillful empathetic listener.

**Listening** is one of the most important shared themes. Clutterbuck (2004) stated, “mentoring involves primarily listening with empathy.” All nine participants mentioned listening as a critical skill they felt mentees should possess. A majority also expressed listening was a way for mentors to build trust with mentees and shared experiences where various mentors were available to listen to them during tough moments. A participant mentioned one of his coaching mentors earned respect because he was willing to listen to and
consider his thoughts, instead of discounting them. Lastly, research points out listening as an essential skill that both servant leaders and mentors utilize to demonstrate respect and appreciation for their followers (Poon, 2006; Russell & Stone, 2002; Spears, 2010).

The following framework presents an overview of the findings. Figure 5-1 illustrates the interactive and shared themes previously discussed and the mentor-mentee interaction or exchange process.

**Figure 5-1:** Interactive and Shared Model for Effective Mentorship
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for Future Research

Results from this study add to the existing body of knowledge in a variety of areas. First, the study explored the mentoring experiences of several Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame Inductees and how those experiences may have helped them reach the NBA and achieve success as players. Second, various types of mentors were identified by participants and the in-depth nature of those relationships were explained. Third, participants described the impact their mentors had in their lives, including during their most difficult moments. Lastly, mentor qualities/characteristics that emerged in the study were analyzed using servant leadership theory as a guide. As a result, several key findings and the richness of the narratives provoke future research possibilities and initiatives. Future recommendations to build off this study are as follows:

First, interviewing coaches or educators to find out what qualities they consider important in mentees to build effective mentor-mentee relationships would be an interesting future direction. The participants provided valuable insight into what qualities/actions they feel are important in a mentee, which was additional information. Better understanding what teachers and coaches look for in their ideal students or players may help add to the body of literature in areas such as mentorship and emotional intelligence. In turn, students, athletes, and young professionals may become more informed on best practices when interacting with coaches or educators during team tryouts or graduate school. As previously mentioned, research suggests 75 percent of professional men and women want a mentor, but around 37
percent actually have a person in their lives they considered a mentor (Olivet Nazarene University, 2019).

Second, exploring the mentoring experiences of women’s professional basketball players to determine similarities or differences would add a female perspective to the body of literature. Retired female basketball players’ mentoring experiences are likely different from their male counterparts. Historically, there were a different set expectations regarding women sport participation. Many women sport pioneers have great stories to share and overcame tremendous challenges as well. As a result, there could be valuable advice shared for future generations. As Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame Inductee Teresa Witherspoon (2019) stated during her induction speech when referring to personal challenges she faced, “Know your worth. Know your value.”

Third, attempting to reproduce this study with multiple sports or across other domains to identify similarities or differences depending on the participant demographics would help identify specific issues in mentoring process. For example, would the results be much different if retired professional golfers, tennis players, or soccer athletes were interviewed. Race, ethnicity, and socioeconomics may be factors in their experiences.

Lastly, producing a broader study (perhaps quantitative) considering broader measures of success may be helpful. The rich data in this study presents an opportunity to measure several aspects of mentorship and create additional testable hypotheses.

**Mentoring Recommendations**

This study produced a number of practical solutions to better understand the mentoring process. It is imperative that mentoring is taken seriously and addressed early in a person’s development. Whose responsibility is it to provide mentoring? It is the
responsibility of all of us. Obviously, parenting is typically looked at as the starting point for mentoring. However, if children are not receiving effective mentoring at home or do not have proactive parents, who are those next mentors to step up and provide guidance to children who have no control over their circumstances. For many of the participants in our study, it was teachers, coaches, and other community members that served in those roles. Therefore, the results highlight the importance of early life mentors to help in a young person’s development.

As previously mentioned, the NBA is trending younger and teenagers are entering the league, which is an enormous transition for someone so young. Multiple participants pointed out that college used to fill the gap between adolescence and young adulthood for NBA players. However, if college is not the chosen option for young players under the current structure and we continue to see teenagers drafted in the NBA, one important question is: How can the NBA fill this gap? The NBA currently has mentoring partnerships and programs in place that have acknowledged and addressed mentoring relationships. As one participant in our study indicated, there is a need for mentors to serve their communities and go to the neighborhoods in most need. Are the current mentoring programs reaching out to young people who need mentors the most? Several participants in this study and other former players highlighted the importance of veteran leadership in the locker room.

Another area to assess is how mentors and mentees are paired in formal mentoring programs. Mismatching has been pointed out in literature as a reason for failed mentoring relationships (Eby, McManis, Simon, & Russell, 2000; Ragins & Kram, 2007). The model produced from this current study may be a useful tool to develop successful mentoring
relationships. Further recommendations can made based on evaluating specific and situational mentoring needs.

**Conclusion – Final Remarks**

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of mentorship in the career success of retired NBA players who were among the best in their profession during their playing careers. It is our intention these narratives will serve as a mentoring tool for current and aspiring professional athletes, as well as people from all walks of life. In completing this comprehensive project, we hope people who ordinarily would not read an academic study may be inclined to do so. Furthermore, we aim to attract the attention of individuals who are supposed to be providing mentorship as well as help younger individuals become more receptive to seeking and receiving mentorship. It is the responsibility of all of us to pay forward kindness, knowledge, and experiences to make our world a better place for future generations. So I end my dream study with the following message.

**Paying it Forward: Mark Lasota**

JUST REMEMBER: Our personal journeys and how we’ve responded to challenges may guide others who cross similar bridges or encounter treacherous paths. Ultimately, our value as a person is defined by how we’ve paid it forward and positively impacted others.
REFERENCES


Hom. Od.: Homer, *Odyssey*


surpassed-nfl-league-of-americas-future-kareem-abdul-jabbar


doi:10.1080/00970050.1978.10619386


NBA Open Court, Season 1 Episode 2, “My Generation,” aired November 29, 2011 on NBA.TV, operated by Turner Broadcasting.


Olivet Nazarene University (2019). The truth about mentors (survey). Retrieved from https://online.olivet.edu/research-statistics-on-professional-mentors


Regent University, School of Leadership Studies Web site:


is so crucial. Huffington Post, Retrieved from https://www.huffpost.com/entry/steve-nash-rookie-vet-interview_n_56a82abce4b0947efb65ef5b


Terblanché, S.E. (2007). Understanding mentorship and the development of a structure to implement and manage a mentorship program to support extensionists toward


APPENDICES

Appendix A

DATE: July 22, 2019

IRB #: 12319
IRBNet ID & TITLE: [1459769-2] Exploring the Role of Mentorship in Achieving Success: Narratives Told by Professional Sports Hall of Fame Inductees
PI OF RECORD: Todd Seidler, PhD
SUBMISSION TYPE: Response/Follow-Up

BOARD DECISION: APPROVED
EFFECTIVE DATE: July 22, 2019
EXPIRATION DATE: July 22, 2020
RISK LEVEL: MINIMAL RISK
PROJECT STATUS: ACTIVE - OPEN TO ENROLLMENT

DOCUMENTS:
- Consent Form - Consent Form (UPDATED: 07/18/2019)
- Protocol - Protocol 062919 (UPDATED: 07/18/2019)
- Questionnaire/Survey - Questionnaire (Possible Follow-up Questions During and After the Interview) (UPDATED: 07/18/2019)

Thank you for your Response/Follow-Up submission. The UNM IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an acceptable risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks to participants have been minimized. This project is not covered by UNM’s Federalwide Assurance (FWA) and will not receive federal funding.
The IRB has determined the following:

- Informed consent must be obtained and documentation is required for this project. To obtain and document consent, use only approved consent document(s).

This determination applies only to the activities described in the submission and does not apply should any changes be made to this research. If changes are being considered, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to submit an amendment to this project and receive IRB approval prior to implementing the changes. A change in the research may disqualify this research from the current review category. If federal funding will be sought for this project, an amendment must be submitted so that the project can be reviewed under relevant federal regulations.

All reportable events must be promptly reported to the UNM IRB, including: UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to participants or others, SERIOUS or UNEXPECTED adverse events, NONCOMPLIANCE issues, and participant COMPLAINTS.

If an expiration date is noted above, a continuing review or closure submission is due no later than 30 days before the expiration date. It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to apply for continuing review or closure and receive approval for the duration of this project. If the IRB approval for this project expires, all research related activities must stop and further action will be required by the IRB.

Please use the appropriate reporting forms and procedures to request amendments, continuing review, closure, and reporting of events for this project. Refer to the OIRB website for forms and guidance on submissions.

Please note that all IRB records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the closure of this project.

The Office of the IRB can be contacted through mail at MSC92 1665, 1 University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131-0001; phone at 505.277.2644; email at irbmaincampus@unm.edu; or in-person at 1805 Sigma Chi Rd. NE, Albuquerque, NM 87106. You can also visit the OIRB website at irb.unm.edu.
Appendix B

Exploring the Role of Mentorship in Achieving Career Success: Narratives Told by Professional Sports Hall of Fame Inductees

Consent to Participate in Research
September 6, 2019

Purpose of the research: You are being asked to participate in a research project that is being done by Mark Lasota from the Sport Administration Department at the University of New Mexico. Dr. Todd Seidler is a professor, graduate coordinator, and my advisor for this project.

The purpose of this research is to explore the role of mentorship in the career success of retired professional athletes. Our goal is to examine the perceptions of Professional Sports Hall of Fame inductees regarding their own mentorship experiences and the impact mentorship had on their careers. You are being asked to participate because you are an adult over the age of 18 and a retired professional athlete who has been inducted into the Hall of Fame within your respective sport.

This consent form contains important information about this project and what to expect if you decide to participate. Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. Your participation in this research is voluntary.

What you will do in the project: The interview process will take approximately 1 hour, and will be both videotaped and audio recorded to ensure that there is no oversight of valuable data. Therefore, a camera will be set up to film our interaction and an audio recorder will be used to record our conversation. The interviews will take place in a private location behind closed doors within your Professional Sports Hall of Fame or sport facility (ex: conference room or vacant room). An interview guide has been created to ask questions focusing on your mentorship experiences throughout your life and their impact on your career success. You have the right to skip any question that makes you feel uncomfortable and stop the interview at any time. A follow-up email will be sent after the interview to make sure that the analysis of the data is accurate and to clarify any of your responses that are unclear.

Risks: There are risks of stress, emotional distress, inconvenience and possible loss of privacy and confidentiality associated with participating in a research project. Also, video recorded interviews could potentially result in a loss of confidentiality. Breach of confidentiality or invasion of privacy are risks for all participants.

Benefits: There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this research. However, it is hoped that information gained will have a positive impact on the lives of others. Through your story, we hope to bring greater awareness to the importance of mentorship, not only for current and aspiring professional athletes, but also for all students and young professionals. We hope your story will attract the attention of individuals who are supposed to be providing mentorship and help students and professionals become more receptive to seeking and receiving mentorship.
Confidentiality of your information: To ensure confidentiality, the video and audio recording will be stored on a laptop computer that is password protected. The laptop is for home use only and will be stored in a locked file cabinet. Upon collecting the data (after recording the interview), both the video and audio memory cards containing the interview will be transferred to the laptop computer using a Multi Card Reader transferring device. Immediately following the transfer, the interviews will be deleted from the memory card. Dr. Seidler (my advisor) and I will be the only ones to review and analyze the data. Your name may be used in any published reports about this project because of your powerful image and the impact that can have on people from around the world. If you give us permission to use your name in this study, please check the “yes” box below. If you choose not to have your name identified in this study, please specify by checking the “no” box.

☐ Yes, I give you permission to use my name in this study
☐ No, I choose not to have my name identified in this study

Use of your information for future research: Your information collected for this project will NOT be used or shared for future research, even if we remove the identifiable information like your name or date of birth.

Payment: You will not be paid for participating in this project.

Right to withdraw from the research: You can withdraw from the study at any time. After being interviewed, you are still able to withdraw from the study. However, if you withdraw after being interviewed, the data provided can be used in the study.

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the research, please contact:

Dr. Todd Seidler
Sport Administration Department
1 University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131
(505) 205-4402
tseidler@unm.edu

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, or about what you should do in case of any research-related harm to you, or if you want to obtain information or offer input, please contact the IRB. The IRB is a group of people from UNM and the community who provide independent oversight of safety and ethical issues related to research involving people:

UNM Office of the IRB, (505) 277-2644, irbmaincampus@unm.edu. Website: http://irb.unm.edu/

CONSENT

You are making a decision whether to participate in this research. Your signature below indicates that you have read this form (or the form was read to you) and that all questions have been answered to your satisfaction. By signing this consent form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights as a research participant. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. I agree to participate in this research.

_________________________________________  __________________________________________  ____________
Name of Adult Participant  Signature of Adult Participant  Date
Researcher Signature (to be completed at time of informed consent)

I have explained the research to the participant and answered all of their questions. I believe that they understand the information described in this consent form and freely consents to participate.

Name of Research Team Member  Signature of Research Team Member  Date
Appendix C

Participant Interview Protocol

Participating Hall of Fame Inductee: ___________________________

Date: ___________________ Start Time: _______________

Introduction: Greeting (good afternoon), my name is Mark Lasota and I will be interviewing you. Thank you very much for meeting with me and graciously offering your time to share your mentoring experiences. I will be recording this interview and taking notes to ensure the accuracy of your information. I’m interested to learn about your mentorship experiences and I am looking forward to our conversation. I’m hoping to listen to your personal story about the people in your life that you consider to have been mentors and their impact on both your personal and professional development. Your personal mentoring story can be valuable for current and aspiring professional athletes, as well as students, young professionals, and people from around the world. I would appreciate it if you could be detailed in your responses and provide any examples you feel comfortable with sharing. The interview will take between 45 minutes to an hour. I’m sincerely grateful for your time.

Interview Guide

Question #1: In general, how did mentorship contribute to your success in the NBA?

Question #2: Reflecting back from childhood to your present life, who were the people you considered to be your mentors?

• Where/how did you meet them?
• Why do you feel this person (these people) was/were a mentor to you?
• Discuss each mentor in detail and how he/she has impacted you?

Question #3: How were you and your mentor/s able to build trust in your relationship/s?

• What were conversations like?
• What feedback did they give you?
• Do you still communicate?
• How did they prove themselves?

Question #4: Did cultural differences play a role in their mentoring experiences? If so, to what extent did cultural factors impact your mentoring relationships/experiences?

Question #5: What qualities/characteristics did/does your mentor/s have?

• How would you describe his/her personality?

Question #6: In addition to the qualities you mentioned, from your experience, what are the most important qualities you feel a mentor should have and why?
Question #7: What do you feel are the most valuable lessons that you learned from your mentors?

- What life lessons did you learn?
- What changes have occurred in your personal or professional life because of your mentor/s influence?

Question #8: What specific goals did this person (these people) help you accomplish? How did they help you accomplish them?

Question #9: Describe the role mentorship played during the most difficult times in your life.

- What advice helped you through those difficult times?
- If you did not have mentors during those times, in what ways could a mentor have helped you?

Question #10: Do you recall any failed mentoring relationships where trust was broken and left you disappointed?

- If so, what impact did that experience have on you and your position on trusting individuals?

Question #11: Reflecting back on your playing career, tell me about your experience when you first came into the league and what were your biggest challenges?

Question #12: Upon achieving NBA success, what was your mentor/s reaction and who did they support you?

- Did you feel cared for by your mentor?
- Did you mentor share in your success?

Question #13: In your opinion, what role does mentoring have in assisting in the development of young NBA players?

- Where do you see the greatest need for mentorship is? Why?

Question #14: Have you taken on the role of a mentor? If so, can you describe your experience as a mentor?

- What are you currently doing to positively impact the lives of others?

Question #15: As a result of your experience as a mentee, how does that influence the way you mentor people today?

- Do you feel any sense of obligation to mentor any particular population?
- Where does it come from?

Question #16: Do you have a take home message for young people who may read this dissertation? What advice would you give them?
**Possible Follow-Up Questions after the Interview**

Your response indicated …. I just want to clarify this is what you meant? Is that accurate? If not, specify what you meant in more detail? Please elaborate.