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CROSS-AGE PEER MENTORING

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Introduction

Since the previous chapter on this topic was published in 2005, much has changed on the landscape of peer mentoring. The 2008 economic downturn, resulting in withdrawal of public and philanthropic investments in youth development programs, was followed by some surprising studies on both youth mentoring in schools and peer mentoring in particular. Given this state of affairs, one could imagine this chapter would begin on a dour note—fewer peer mentoring programs are active now than a half a dozen years ago, support for peer programs has declined, and the residual effects of the economic downturn on public coffers and private foundations has made the resources necessary for operating a fully functional peer mentoring program few and far between. These are all true. However, during this same period we have learned more about how to run effective peer mentoring programs, and many agencies and organizations learned from the hard lessons in recent years and have fortified their programs in many ways. We have also learned from research about the positive effects of peer mentors for the mentors, in terms of gains in academic connectedness, self-esteem, and cultural competencies, as well as in core qualities necessary for successful citizenship such as responsibility, leadership, and hopefulness.

In short, having found the glass half empty (from recent studies that I describe in this chapter), and seeing the diminishment of available resources further deplete the glass, there have been reasons for concern; conversely, we have seen a cup half full, as well. The fact that we can have more faith in the benefits of these programs when run well should lead us to increase our efforts to improve peer mentoring programs.

As a starting place, I put forth a definition of cross-age peer mentoring, the importance and value of which should become apparent to readers in later sections, even if readers question the necessity of some of the overly prescriptive details of this definition. In cross-age peer mentoring*, a middle- or high-school-aged mentor (a youth at least 2 years older* than the child being mentored) and mentee *meet regularly*, usually weekly, for a sustained, consistent period of time (*minimally* 10 times; ideally 20 or more*) to engage in conversations, play, or curricula/ structured activities* (ones that do not directly or solely teach information or skills in which the mentee has been found lacking) that help to *forge a close relationship* in which the mentee experiences empathy, praise, and attention from the mentor. Furthermore, staff or other program stakeholders should view the developing relationship (and not the attainment of specific skills or knowledge gains) as the primary mechanism of change. This level of detail may seem arbitrary, and certainly is subject to critique and modification, but it is necessary to differentiate cross-age peer mentoring from the host of other peer programs available to youth in schools.

Origins of Peer Mentoring

One of the important points to keep in mind about peer mentoring is that it is not really new. Although it usually takes place in schools, all the evidence I have found suggests the practice of peer mentoring well predates the formal introduction of adult mentors in schools, what we call "school-based mentoring" in Chapter 14. Variants of peer mentoring appear to have been in place in schools across the United States as early as the 1960s even though most reports about mentoring in schools date

the emergence of school-based mentoring as starting in the late 1990s following a swell in the number of adult volunteers wanting to mentor. Colin Powell's America's Promise campaign, propelled by the first President Bush's 1990 "Thousand Points of Light" initiative, relied on the Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) program evaluation led by Grossman and Tierney (1998) as evidence of the power of volunteerism in general and of mentoring in particular (Benson, 1999).[1] School-based mentoring began, at least for the BBBS organization, after Grossman and Tierney's (1998) evaluation of the BBBS community-based mentoring program resulted in more mentors volunteering and the concomitant need for more contexts in which to place them.

In a 2007 report, Carla Herrera and colleagues suggested that BBBS started to move into schools in earnest only 10 years prior to the evaluation of school-based mentoring detailed in that report. Cavell (2012) and Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, Feldman, McMaken, and Jucovy (2007) reported that, between 1999 and 2006, the number of school-based matches increased fivefold from 27,000 to 126,000; during this same period, teen mentors were first trained and matched in the BBBS organization. In 2000, fewer than a third of mentors were under the age of 21, but by 2006 nearly half of the school-based mentors were teenagers.

Consistent with the emergence of teen mentors in the BBBS program, it seems that most people think adult school-based mentors were on the scene before peer mentors were, yet it appears peer mentoring preceded adult-youth mentoring in schools by about 20 years. In *Mentoring a Movement*, Susan Weinberger (2005) reported she and others in the Norwalk, Connecticut, school district implemented the first school-based mentoring program in 1983. Bill Milliken didn't even found Communities in Schools until 1977. So school-based mentoring programs appear to have emerged at the earliest in the 1980s, while peer mentoring programs were in place by the 1960s (see Hebeisen, 1973; Varenhorst, 1983).

It may be that the concept of "peer mentoring" was not commonly known until the term *mentoring* had become a common household word. This occurred in the late 1990s (also as a result of attention directed to Grossman and Tierney's evaluation of BBBS). Some observers would say that the BBBS program has used the term *mentoring* for 100 years. This may be true, but they use the term *Bigs*, not *mentors*. Milliken (2007) reflected, "I'm not even sure the term was even used back in 1960, but if you had to call us anything (other than crazy), I suppose we were mentors" (p. 14). In the 1970s and 1980s, there were ample reports of mentoring programs calling mentors "Buddies" (O'Donnell, Lydgate, & Fo, 1979) and "Companions" (Goodman, 1972).

Similarly, cross-age peer mentoring has suffered from inconsistent naming over the past 50 years. The earliest reports of peer mentoring programs refer to the mentors as "Pals" or "Friends" and were more inclined to call mentoring "counseling" or "helping" (see Heneisen, 1973; Varenhorst, 1983). Indeed, there are important differences between cross-age peer mentoring and the various other peer programs, such as peer helping, peer counseling, peer tutoring, or peer support (see Karcher, 2007). Most peer helping, tutoring, counseling, and support programs (both in high schools and in colleges) have youth helping same-age peers. This defies the definition of a mentor. Peer *mentors* must, by definition, be "older and wiser" (Rhodes, 1994). Therefore, programs in which youth serve, assist, or support same-age peers should not be considered mentoring.

I consider cross-age peer mentoring to be occurring only when there are two or more years' difference between the mentor and the mentee (Karcher, 2007). Although the terms *high school mentor*, *teen mentor*, or *peer mentor* all convey the age of the mentor, these terms alone do not confirm that the mentor is indeed older (and presumably wiser and more mature) than the mentee. Because the terms *peer mentor*, *teen mentor*, and *high school mentor* are sometimes used by others to refer to interactions between same-age peers (such as in college or high school peer mentoring programs), for our purpose I reconfirm the definition of the mentor as being someone significantly older than the mentee by adding the adjective "cross-age" to peer mentoring that occurs between teen mentors and their younger mentees.

Even using just this definition, we can find several cross-age peer mentoring programs as early as the 1960s. Hamburg and Varhenhorst (1972) described the Palo Alto School District

[1] Grossman, currently head of the Department of Labor's evaluation efforts in the Obama administration, was also a lead investigator of the Big Brothers Big Sisters High School Bigs peer mentoring program (Herrera, Kauh, Cooney, Grossman, & McMaken, 2008) described in this chapter. It is ironic that one of her evaluation efforts can be credited with helping to introduce mentors into schools, while another report, some 10 years later, is sometimes blamed for the diminution of support for school-based peer mentoring programs (at least in the BBBS network).

Peer Counseling Program. Peer counseling, depending on how it was structured, was sometimes much like cross-age peer mentoring today. The use of students as providers of psychosocial support to other youth, and the dual benefits of such nonprofessional helping programs, were thoughtfully described 50 years ago by Reinherz (1964). Hebeisen initiated the first study of peer mentoring in 1970 (funded by the National Institutes of Health), suggesting their PEER program had been around in the 1960s. The PEER program was done in a group context and was modeled after a parent effectiveness training program. The book *Peer Program for Youth*, which is based on the PEER program, is really a curriculum for older adolescents to use when working with younger children in a supportive, befriending capacity. An accompanying book, *Extend: Youth Reaching Youth*, emphasized the importance of training youth to work with youth (Fletcher, Norem-Hebeisen, Johnson, & Underwager, 1974). This program and research study emerged from the Youth Research Center, which later became the Search Institute.

So there is considerable evidence that peer mentoring (in the form of peer "helping" or "counseling") was in play in the late 1960s. In the previous edition of the *Handbook of Youth Mentoring* (and more recently elsewhere; Karcher, 2007), I went to considerable lengths to explain how mentoring differs from peer tutoring, counseling, and helping. In the past 30 years, there has been considerable differentiation of peer mentoring, counseling, tutoring, and helping. Each of the latter three have become more task and problem focused during this time (see Goodlad, 1998; Topping, 1996), whereas peer mentoring, at least as implemented and practiced in the past decade by the BBBS program, has been quite the opposite. It is now more relationship focused and also has been, until recently, much less structured. Cross-age peer mentoring (at least in BBBS) had become, up until Herrera et al.'s 2008 report, a group-based program sometimes lacking structure, focus, or goals. Many programs employ match agreements and goal setting at the inception of the match, but programs often fail to keep these goals a priority for matches. Without a clear structure, many such programs reflect little of the original wisdom of the well-organized peer programs (described above) that preceded it.

Although peer mentoring has been in existence for 50 years, its prevalence has increased dramatically in the past 15 years and multiple peer mentoring models have emerged. This is illustrated best and most concretely by the number of youth served through peer mentoring in the BBBS programs in the United States and Canada. In the United States, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA) started using teen mentors in 2001, but within 5 years, nearly 45% of youth served in BBBSA were mentored by teenage Bigs (Herrera et al., 2008). In Canada, more than 60% of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada (BBBSC) agencies offer a teen mentoring program, and of these more than 90% are less than 10 years old. In both countries, the large majority of matches are between one teenage mentor and one child. Group or team approaches exist, and are more popular in Canada (Cavell, 2012), but they occur much less frequently in both countries. Also of relevance for this chapter's focus is that in both the United States and Canada, the use of a curriculum to structure teen mentoring interactions in BBBS has been rare, but there appears to be a growing recognition even in BBBS of the need to provide activities, structure, and guidance (Cavell, 2012; Karcher, Hansen & Herrera, 2010).

A growing body of research, virtually all appearing since the first edition of the *Handbook*, points to the problems that result from unstructured, unfocused, group-based peer mentoring. It is noteworthy that the first programs, noted above, were structured using a curriculum or planned activities. This practice, I suggest later, may be an essential one for safe and effective cross-age peer mentoring programs. Those early pioneers recognized that such structural components helped to minimize what we now call "deviancy training effects," when peers reinforce one another's unconventional, anti-authority attitudes and behaviors, as can happen in unstructured peer-group contexts, both among the mentees and among the mentors. This term was not named as such until the 1990s, but the effects of these processes were evident in some of the earliest mentoring program studies (see McCord, 2003).

To expand on these points, this chapter begins with an overview of the theories and concepts that I think are key to establishing and maintaining safe, effective peer mentoring programs, at least based on extant literature. The research supporting these practices and program structures are described in the second section. In addition, the benefits to mentors (the older teens) as well as the unique benefits of peer mentoring to support youth development of mentees in the areas of cultural identity, healthy behaviors, and social connections also are described. Finally, in the section on practices, I go further into detail about the practices that the research literature and unpublished reports have reported to be useful in structuring programs. I apply a list of empirically based best practices (originating from DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper's [2002] meta-analysis) to several

existing peer mentoring programs to detail the landscape of peer mentoring as it is practiced currently. Descriptions of the specific program structures that may be necessary to operate a peer mentoring program effectively—like matching procedures, youth development curriculum, and closure practices—also are highlighted in that last section.

Theory

Helper Therapy Principle

One of the selling points for cross-age peer mentoring programs since their first reported use has been that the intervention serves mentors and mentees alike, regardless of whether it was framed in terms of the program fostering positive youth development or preventing risk-taking behaviors. Much has been written recently about the effects of involving teens in roles of responsibility and the effect of doing so on their attitudes toward adults, self-perceptions, and engagement in school (Wong, Zimmerman, & Parker, 2011). Less in vogue right now among program proponents and researchers, but perhaps more important in the eyes of those ultimately responsible for deciding whether a peer program will be supported in a school (e.g., principals), are the dual benefits of peer mentoring simultaneously helping older and younger youth at risk at the same time. In fact, one of the earliest references to peer support programs was in a special issue of the journal *Social Work* that focused on the indigenous helpers and the helper therapy principle (Perlmutter & Duram, 1965).

The helper therapy principle, described by Riessman (1965), suggests that there are identifiable (and thus testable) processes that may lead those who provide support services to benefit as much as those who receive them. Some of these mechanisms of change in attitudes and behavior are the consequence of being placed in a role in which one is "doing something worthwhile in helping someone in need" (p. 30), engaging in "self-persuasion through persuading others" (p. 31), and experiencing the sense of importance and status associated with the role of helper. In addition, Riessman suggests "some children develop intellectually not by being challenged by someone ahead of then, but by helping somebody behind them, by being put in the tutor-helper role" (p. 29). One additional benefit Riessman proposes is that often the helper "becomes more efficient, better motivated, and reaches a new stage in helping skill" (p. 28) and becomes more open to "the possibility of embarking on a teaching career" (p. 29). Therefore, selecting mentors who may already be inclined toward careers in the helping professions may facilitate such benefits and career-congruent skill developments.

Deviancy Training

One of the earliest reports of using teens in a way "similar to Big Brother programs" made two important points (Perlmutter & Durham, 1965). The first point was regarding the benefits to the mentors, noted earlier. The second point emphasized the need for programmatic efforts to *do no harm* to the mentees involved in the program. Perlmutter and Durham's program involved a formal mentor application process, including a personal interview; mandatory monthly training; monthly written feedback for each mentor provided by a caseworker; and the closing of all matches at the end of each academic year. Not all of these practices are found in even the most structured peer mentoring programs in operation today. But perhaps the most important programmatic guideline for this pioneering program was to make sure "the teenage volunteer operat[ed] with minimal autonomy with children of low vulnerability whose needs can be met through a nonprofessional helping relationship" (p. 46). "Children with behavior problems were not chosen, since the teenager was not prepared or qualified to handle 'acting out' or aggressive behavior" (p. 43). The exclusion of behaviorally at-risk youth is critically important, but it has been, in my experience, the hardest program component to sell to principals.

The possibility of iatrogenic or adverse consequences of mentoring have been documented in the literature for almost 50 years, although it is not a point many program staff or researchers have wanted to discuss until lately (see Spencer, 2007), and it is even more critical to consider in peer programs. These iatrogenic effects often result from the presence of deviance training that occurs in the context of group interventions with youth, regardless of whether the helper is professional or nonprofessional (Dodge, Dishion, & Lansford, 2006a). These negative consequences are especially likely to occur "under conditions of poor supervision and lack of structure" (Dodge et al., 2006a, p. 3). "Deviancy training occurs when a peer displays antisocial behavior or talks about it and other peers positively reinforce that behavior by smiling or giving verbal approval and high status to the first peer" (p. 5).

Peer program coordinators should consider several moderators of deviancy training effects. First, both younger children and youth who are moderately involved in deviant behavior—neither delinquent nor

nondelinquent, but on the fence—are more susceptible. Helper experience matters, such that more experienced helpers (trained, seasoned professionals) could curb these effects, but novice helpers (teen mentors being perhaps the most novice helpers imaginable) have the worst outcomes. Finally, structured programs yield fewer negative outcomes than unstructured programs. Group time with peers and especially unstructured interactions should be minimized; high degrees of structure supervised by adult staff should be in place to support the dyads of teen mentors and younger mentees. Professionals operating peer programs must learn about these processes and what they can do to prevent them by reading academic and applied materials on the topic (e.g., Dodge et al., 2006a, 2006b).

Youth Development and Self-Psychology

Two things that differentiate peer mentoring from other peer interventions are the role of the relationship and the breadth of the outcomes targeted by programs. In peer mentoring, youth development is targeted broadly and it is believed to be facilitated by the establishment of a close relationship that affords empathy, trust, and mutuality (see Rhodes, 2005). The mentoring relationship—specifically the mentee's experience of its developmental properties—is what is believed to mediate or leverage the change in the mentee.

One theory of human development that may be particularly helpful in understanding this developmental process is Kohut's self-psychology theory. Although Kohut's writings (1977) about his psychoanalytic theory are dense, the theory is very simple. Kohut believes all humans seek from others opportunities to receive mirroring, to idealize other individuals, and to experience a sense of twinship or oneness with select others. The mirroring is often received from others in relationships in the forms of empathy, praise, and attention. The opportunities for idealization follow from these mirroring experiences and occur in relationships that provide clear, consistent structure, such that the individuals in these relationships know what they can expect from the other person because they feel confident in their knowledge of the other's interests, values, and goals. This confidence develops when the other acts in a consistent manner. In short, *we need others in our lives who provide empathy, praise, and attention in the context of clear, consistent structure*. We need this emotional support and this structuring from parents and peers alike. When this support and structure is in place, they provide or represent the two "poles of development" (mirroring experiences and idealizing experiences) that set the stage for the person to form a connection with others whom they view as similar and sympathetic to themselves. Mentors can provide just this opportunity for "twinship," sameness, oneness, or "We-ness" (Karcher, 2012a). But, as with parents, this we-ness cannot be achieved in the absence of empathy, praise, and attention or in a relationship in which the partner is inconsistent, unpredictable, and untrustworthy. Therefore, peer mentoring programs should foster both these emotional experiences and a clear, consistent structure.

Adolescent Connectedness Theory

Program curricula can be used to help foster development, but not always in the ways program staff and mentors expect. Cross-age peer mentoring programs can use a curriculum in part to provide a consistent way to structure the mentoring relationship, so that these developmental processes can occur. One must be sure, however, that the curriculum itself does not supersede the relationship in importance. The curriculum can also be used to focus the match on a broad array of topics relevant to youth development. To target a diffuse array of skills, behaviors, and attitudes critical for successful growth and development, the curriculum could take an ecological approach. An ecological approach considers not just the mentoring dyad but also the other important relationships and contexts in the youth's life. The adolescent's ecology includes relationships with peers, parents, friends, and teachers. It involves the contexts of home, school, neighborhood, and cultural or religious places and practices. The adolescent's world broadens beyond the present to include the future, whereas most children experience themselves only in the present (Karcher, 2012a; Karcher, Holcomb, & Zambrano, 2008).

Youth engage in their social ecology through behaviors and feelings, not only through thinking (which is the common method of engagement upon which most prevention curricula rely), such that youth connect through action and feelings to each of these worlds. Programs that use curricular activities to help mentors engage in discussion about these relationships and contexts, or that allow the practice of new, more adaptive and functional behaviors in these relationships, not only help the mentor get to know the youth better, more holistically, but also allow multiple opportunities for growth and change rather than narrowly targeting a few behavioral skills or prosocial attitudes. In peer programs, it may be more appropriate to use models of intervention that target the broader social ecology of adolescent

connectedness as program goals than models targeting specific knowledge or skills that are more appropriately served by peer tutoring, peer counseling, peer education, and peer helping. This approach also may provide a helpful heuristic tool for differentiating between such programs.

Research

This section summarizes recent research on cross-age peer mentoring. It focuses on both the theoretical concepts presented above and the key practices used to buttress programs that have been the subject of research. Many more programs are described in the Practice section than appear here, because this section reviews only empirical studies of the effectiveness of programs or specific processes. A PsycINFO search was conducted using the term *peer mentoring* and either *youth* or *children*, yielding 25 citations. The majority of articles (88%) were published after 2005. Most were excluded because they focused on peer mentoring for parents/teachers (4 articles), included mentors who were the same age as the mentees or who were over age 18 (4), described peer education (3), or simply argued that it was a good idea (5). Using the term *peer mentor* yielded only one additional study. The term *teen mentor* yielded two additional dissertations. Two other studies were identified by contacting staff at BBBSA and BBBSC. A web search of the terms *peer mentoring* yielded many program descriptions and evaluation reports. Most of these programs, however, were not really cross-age peer mentoring programs or the evaluations had flawed or weak designs.

Peer Mentoring Research: To Be or Not to Be Considered Evidence

Few of studies resulting from the above-described search inform readers about peer mentoring. Many researchers inaccurately defined interventions as "mentoring" that appear to be tutoring or peer education or that embed peer activities in programs providing mentoring relationships with adults, and many used research designs that prohibit causal attribution.

Undermining the utility of many studies of peer mentoring is a lack of clarity about how peer mentoring differs from problem-focused tutoring, helping, or counseling. Often this results from the absence of information on the nature of the interactions that took place between older and younger youth. The web-based search for peer mentoring described above, for example, yielded several promising programs called "peer mentoring." Upon closer inspection, most of these programs placed little emphasis on the mentoring relationship (e.g., in program descriptions or evaluations), thus indicating that they were peer helping, skills-training, tutoring, or educational programs.

The Teen Trendsetters program, for example, which involved 3,500 students in Florida in 2010, is a great program, but there is little evidence that it provides mentoring or that changes demonstrated by participating youth in a recent evaluation can be attributed to the program. Bessell and Kloosterman (2011) reported, "Teen Trendsetters™ is a program that engages high school students in tutoring and mentoring while simultaneously helping underperforming elementary school second and third-graders improve their reading skills" (p. 5). Their report provided no evidence that this intervention involved more than teens reading with elementary-aged students, nor did it provide other evidence that this was a mentoring program. Equally problematic, their program evaluation also omitted a comparison group and included considerable missing data, so that little could be inferred from the report about program impacts.

Another common problem in "peer mentoring" research reports is confusion between peer education and mentoring. One program evaluation (Johnson, Holt, Bry, & Powell, 2008) included 8 weeks of "selective" structured mentoring by adults ("Achievement Mentoring") in addition to 16 weekly "universal" group activities led by older peer leaders (Powell, 1993). (Here, "selective" means that only "at-risk" youth received mentoring and it was from adult mentors [who were teachers at the school], but all youth ["universal"] participated in youth-led group activities weekly; see Cavell & Elledge, this volume, Chapter 3, for further explanation of terminology used in the prevention field.) Included in the "manualized universal program," called Peer Group Connection by Powell (1988), were 97 freshman who met in groups of 12–15 with pairs of upperclassmen student peer leaders for 16 weeks to discuss 16 modules covering peer pressure, goal setting, school connectedness, and other processes related to program outcomes.

Twenty program youth deemed at greater risk of dropping out were also assigned an adult mentor. Findings suggested the program had larger effects on the higher-risk youth on two of four outcomes. But almost half of these "higher-risk" youth had an adult mentor, whereas presumably none of the "lower-risk" program youth or comparison group youth (a cohort of 60 students from a gym class) had an adult mentor. The authors reported the "integrated program"

had a larger effect ($d = 1.11$) on the more at-risk program youth; however, it was integrated (i.e., including both a mentor and older-peer-led group prevention activities) only for half of the highest-risk youth. That is, the low-risk youth got a different program (no mentors), leaving it unclear whether the adult mentoring was the important active ingredient for the high-risk youth, whether the peer activities had any effect on their own, or whether changes observed among high-risk youth reflected the processes of a regression toward the mean among those most at risk. Fortunately, a stronger test of this peer program on longitudinal outcomes (Johnson, Simon & Mun, in press) is described in the next section.

A dissertation by Mathews (2007) created a similar confound in two ways. First, the peer mentoring was really peer tutoring in social skills over 16 sessions by an older youth. More specifically, "Resilient Peer Training" was provided in which "mentors" were trained that "a peer mentor is a teaching friend" (p. 108). This peer program was designed by Fantuzzo, a leader in the field of peer tutoring for two decades. Such programs—in which program or school staff identify youths' deficits and the program targets these deficits for remediation by older peers who are instructed to teach the skills in which the mentees are deficient—are more appropriately labeled peer helping, education, or tutoring. Further, by coupling this "peer mentoring" with two other interventions (i.e., social skills training and token economy reinforcement), no unique effect of this peer support program could be identified.

Another evaluation of a promising multicomponent intervention program appears to report impacts from peer mentoring but provides little evidence of this. Peer mentoring was only one of the programs in the Chicago Life Directions: Peers Inspiring Peers program (Life Directions, 2006). The sample included 58 students participated in the Peer Mentor program and 481 students were part of the other program components, which included "Peer Motivation" and "Neighborhood Enrichment". Teachers and students completed surveys regarding program impacts on student attendance, school participation, and behavior, but only descriptive statistics were provided. The lack of inferential statistics, an absent comparison group, aggregation of data across programs, and small sample size make it difficult to link any impacts to peer mentoring, per se.

In one multicomponent study of a peer mentoring program, 10th to 12th graders mentored 137 9th graders who failed one or more classes in their first term in high school. Although these youth received after-school credit-recovery activities in addition to mentoring, and the comparison group for the study was the prior year's freshman class, reports of grade-wide declines in failure rates were attributed to the presence of the peer mentoring program (Chew & Wallace, 2008). The percentage of 9th-grade students who failed major subjects (e.g., science, social studies, English, math) did decline the year the peer mentoring program was implemented (from 15.6% to 11.7%), but serious methodologic shortcomings limit the viability of these attributions. For example, it seems unrealistic to infer that changes across the entire class ($N = 632$) were due to the program, when only 137 9th-grade students participated in it. That would require the peer mentoring program to have had a massive contagion effect on the rest of the students in the school. There also was no evidence that the two cohorts were sufficiently comparable to allow a comparison. But perhaps most important, the school-based program was implemented solely to assist students who were at risk of academic failure with little explicit reference to the role that the mentoring relationship was expected to play in mediating these programmatic effects.

The point of highlighting *these studies that do not speak to the effects of peer mentoring* is simply to suggest that perhaps most of the research and evaluation reports of peer mentoring programs that one finds either are not studies of peer mentoring or their designs are such that no program effects can be linked to the peer mentoring uniquely. This is troublesome.

Evaluations of Cross-Age Peer Mentoring Programs

To remove other types of peer programs from consideration, I consider in this section only programs that meet the strict definition of cross-age peer mentoring provided earlier: Cross-age peer mentoring entails *a school-aged youth at least 2 years older* than the child being mentored (e.g., "older and wiser") *meeting regularly*, usually weekly, for a sustained, consistent period of time lasting *at least 10 times* (ideally 20 or more*).* They *engage in conversations, play, or curricular activities* (that do not directly or solely teach skills in which the mentee has been found to be deficient) *that serve to forge a close relationship* in which the mentee experiences empathy, praise, and attention. Furthermore, program staff (or researchers) should clearly articulate that it is this relationship, not specific skills or knowledge gains, *that is believed to foster the youth's development*. Note that programs in which college students mentor school-aged children or teens are excluded from this definition. The overlap between programs such as Lunch Buddy

(Cavell & Henrie, 2010), peer mentoring in college (e.g., Larose et al., 2011; Smith-Jentsch, Scielzo, Yarbrough, & Rosopa, 2007), and peer mentoring in schools deserves attention, but it will not receive it here. This chapter focuses primarily on high-school-aged mentors of youth.

High School Bigs Program. Herrera's evaluation of the BBBS High School Bigs program in 2008 provided perhaps the most rigorous test of peer mentoring to date—perhaps too rigorous given the degree of program development that preceded it and the absence of prior studies of programmatic efficacy, moderators of effects, and mediating mechanisms of change (Cavell, personal communication). Up until the time of this evaluation, the program consisted of relatively unstructured weekly, school-based meetings between a teenage mentor and an elementary- or middle-school-aged mentee. I underscore "until the time of this evaluation" because after this evaluation, the program was thoroughly redesigned by Keoki Hansen and members of the High School Bigs Demonstration Program at BBBS, and this new model was being field tested between 2009 and 2011 (see Hansen & Karcher, 2010).

The original program was dyadic in nature, but it often occurred in a larger group context and it was generally unstructured. In Herrera et al.'s (2008) study, half (49%) of the mentors were high school juniors, another quarter were seniors, and the rest were sophomores or freshmen. Two-fifths received course credit for mentoring. Bigs and Littles usually met in groups during or after school, but sometimes they met individually during the day or over lunch. The focus of the interactions was on relationship development, and any use of curricular activities was not consistent across sites. When present, curricula were used extemporaneously (e.g., as a result of an individual coordinator's or mentor's planning at a given site). The mentors took a more developmental, relationship-oriented (at first) approach with their mentees/Littles. Herrera et al. reported that "relationships with high school Bigs were similar in length and quality of those with adults" (p. iii). But this may be where the similarities ended.

The difference between effects for adult mentors and teen mentors was stark. For all mentors combined, Herrera et al. (2007) found impacts on 9 of 23 academic outcomes (and none on the 8 non-academic outcomes), but when program effects were examined separately for adult and teen mentors, adult mentors' mentees demonstrated statistically significant improvement on 12 of 31 outcomes. Comparing youth who received a teenage mentor to youth on the waitlist yielded only one program effect. "Littles matched with high school Bigs improved relative to their non-mentored peers in only one measure, teacher-reported social acceptance" (Herrera et al., 2008, p. 2). (*Note:* These are all at a p-value less than .10; all representing small effects from .09 > d > .24). None of the effects of the teenage mentors on these outcomes approached an even "small" effect size (all d < .15).

Several program practices were associated with statistically significant outcomes, however, and these are worth noting. Although these reveal the important role that programmatic structure plays in achieving outcomes from peer mentoring, not all are easy to understand. Matches with teen mentors that took place in the context of other matches in one location lasted longer, which is good, but their mentees felt they got less attention than mentees meeting alone with their mentors. Therefore, group meetings may be appealing for mentors (allowing them to meet their social needs) and thereby help to retain mentors across years, but efforts to redirect mentors' attention back to their mentees may be critical. This may be done through training or through the use of planned activities. Indeed, teen mentors who viewed their training as higher in quality and mentors who received more than 2 hours of training had higher quality relationships. Similarly, more frequent communication with program staff was associated with statistically significant improvements by mentees on five social and academic outcomes (Herrera et al., 2007, p. iv).

The mentor's attitude also seems critically important. Karcher, Davidson, Rhodes, and Herrera (2010) found that BBBS teen mentors who valued youth more highly in general had mentees who were more emotionally engaged in the match. Additionally, the interaction of mentor's attitude and mentee's risk level moderated program outcomes. Mentees who were more disconnected (i.e., at greater social, academic, and behavioral risk) but were matched with mentors who valued youth in their community more highly (e.g., saw them as resources) reported significantly higher teacher relationship quality after mentoring than did similarly disconnected control group youth, whereas teachers reported more disruptive behavior among those mentees least at risk who were matched with mentors who held less positive attitudes toward youth in their community (compared to low-risk control-group youth). Therefore, mentors' attitudes toward youth may serve as one tool for identifying mentors. Karcher, Davidson et al. (2010) reported the items in the attitude toward youth scale so that agencies could use those items for recruitment purposes.

Cross-Age Mentoring Program (CAMP) for Children With Adolescent Mentors (Karcher, 2008, 2012a). CAMP is a year-long, after-school dyadic peer mentoring program that uses developmental theory to structure mentor and mentee interactions. Child developmental theory is used to structure the 2-hour sequence of interactions that takes place during each weekly meeting, and also provides one of the two core frameworks used to organize the curricular activities. The other framework is a theory of adolescent connectedness across the youth's social ecology, which provides a definition for what it means to promote connectedness and what domains of connectedness are critical to focus on in the program. For example, the first-year curriculum focuses on promoting connectedness to teachers, peers, friends, family, self, reading, and culture. CAMP also includes specific matching and match-closure procedures as well as structured family involvement and teacher involvement to ensure these elements are present.

One factor that may distinguish the original High School Bigs program (not the revised model described in the next section) from CAMP, and thus what might account for the differences in their impacts, may be the presence of a curriculum in CAMP to provide a clear, consistent structure around which to organize relationship development. Peer tutoring and education also may use curricula, but peer mentoring is differentiated from them in its focus on relationship development and the careful use of curricular activities for the sake of the relationship, not to effect specific outcomes. The curriculum content, however, is designed to be changed to suit local needs of specific populations of youth; testing CAMP effects using another curriculum would be a way to test the hypothesized role of the curriculum in program impacts. However, another explanation may be that in studies of CAMP, the program may have been implemented with greater fidelity (implemented as intended), and the High School Bigs programs studied by Herrera et al. (2008) may have varied widely in program fidelity or not had clear implementation guidelines at all.

One study using peer mentoring to prevent obesity provides a particularly interesting example of the fine line between peer mentoring and peer education and provides another test of the role of a program curriculum in peer mentoring. Based on the definition provided above, peer mentoring should be not be overly problem focused, and program planners should not view as the mechanism of change specific gains in information or skills learned through the program, even if the program teaches skills and those skills are used as outcome measures of program impact. In many cases, the main way to differentiate between peer mentoring and peer education or tutoring is in terms of the hypothesized role that the mentoring relationship plays in changing behavior.

Cross-age peer mentoring also has been used to influence eating habits. Smith (2011a) hypothesized that it was the mentoring relationship that would boost mentees' self-efficacy and, in turn, change behavioral intentions regarding eating and exercise. To specifically test the mediating effect of the peer mentoring relationship, Smith (2011b) randomly assigned half of the youth to a comparison group in which teens taught the same health education curriculum in a group format. Therefore, any differences in outcomes, such as behavioral intention and health (body mass index), should be the effect of the dyadic mentoring relationship in one group but not the other.

In Smith's study, 72 students in 3rd and 4th grades were divided randomly and assigned to the two conditions: (a) curriculum delivered by teens in a group format ($n = 27$), and (b) curriculum delivered in the context of a dyadic peer mentoring relationship ($n = 25$). In addition to the small sample size (yielding low statistical power sufficient to detect only medium-sized effects), the duration of the mentoring was only 8 weeks. The mentors received $100 for participating in the 2-day training used in CAMP (Karcher, 2012b), additional training in delivering the curricular materials (which were adapted for dyadic rather than group delivery), and weekly supervision. Using paired-samples t-tests, Smith measured pre-post changes within each intervention group separately (the effect sizes reported here, d, reflect by how many standard deviations the youth differed after the intervention, compared to their pre-intervention scores). Statistically significant changes were found after 8 weeks for body mass index for mentored youth ($d = -.41$), but not for curriculum-only youth ($d = -.26$). Mentored youth also had significant improvements in behavioral intentions ($d = .35$), but the curriculum-only youth did not ($d = .06$). Comparing pre-post change between the mentoring and peer education groups yielded a statistically greater gain in intentions to eat healthfully among mentored youth ($d = .35$) but no difference in body mass index. Smith hypothesized that this change in intentions would result from improved self-efficacy that would occur mostly among mentees. Counter to expectations, however, the mentees gained in nutritional knowledge and attitudes toward eating healthfully, while the curriculum group youth reported greater self-efficacy at posttest. Therefore, although the data did not support the hypothesis about how teen mentoring may work, the probability that the teen mentoring program yielded larger healthy behavior changes was supported.

Karcher (2005b) reported another attempt to assess the relative effects of the CAMP curriculum versus the mentoring relationship. In the context of a randomized impact study of CAMP, a quasi-experimental comparison was made to estimate whether changes in enabling outcomes were associated more strongly with exposure to the curriculum (mentee's attendance) or exposure to the mentor (mentor's attendance). These enabling outcomes (change in social skills and self-esteem) were expected to be "caused" by time spent with the mentor and would mediate (or explain) the effects of program participation on distal outcomes (i.e., connectedness). Karcher found significant between-group differences in changes in connectedness to school and to parents (consistent with prior research, see Karcher, Davis, & Powell, 2002) favoring mentees. Among mentees, mentor attendance was, as hypothesized, significantly related to improvements in five of eight measures of social skills, self-esteem, and connectedness. None were associated with mentee attendance. However, no evidence was found that program effects on connectedness to school and to parents were mediated by these enabling outcomes.

Future research should test some of the helper therapy principles and other theories. Smith's study supports the argument that it is the relationship between mentor and mentee that is associated with peer mentoring program success, but how the relationship brings about these outcomes remains unclear. For example, although Cavell's Lunch Buddy program (Cavell & Henrie, 2010) uses college- and not high-school-aged mentors with elementary-aged mentees, research on the program may inform our understanding of peer mentoring processes. It may be that in peer mentoring, as in the Lunch Buddy program and as proposed by Riessman (1965), improved peer interaction quality and social status for mentees is improved by a mentor who is publically empathic, praising, and attentive in the presence of the mentee's peers. This may explain how the relationship effects positive outcomes in group-based peer mentoring programs like CAMP.

Other Cross-Age Peer Mentoring Programs. One group-based peer mentoring program that provides considerable structure to support mentors is the Peer Group Connection (Powell, 1993), which was evaluated longitudinally to assess its influence on high school graduation. In a study by Johnson, Simon, and Mun (in press), 16 seniors were trained as peer leaders and assigned in pairs to work with small groups of 12 first-year students. The mentors provided an average of 18 weekly meetings "outreach sessions" that coached relationship, emotional, and academic skills to small groups of freshmen. Program participants were provided two additional booster sessions their sophomore year.

The incoming 9th graders in 2005 were randomly assigned to received the Peer Group Connection program (n = 94) or become part of the control group (n = 174). Researchers then used logistic regression to predict graduation likelihood 4 years later in 2009. After including a group of 35 baseline characteristics as predictors, including gender, researchers found virtually no differences in the likelihood of graduating between program and control youth. The propensity scores for the program youth (.72) and controls (.70) suggested the randomization was successful in that groups were very similar before participation in the intervention.

The main effect analyses of program impact on graduation reached only marginal significance (to be expected given the sample size). Program youth graduated at a rate of 77% and controls at a rate of 68%. Planned moderator analyses were then conducted to estimate program impact across genders and for students at high and low risk for graduation. Risk was determined by a cutpoint of .60 on the propensity score. The school's graduation rate was typically 70%, so the .60 cutoff put 70% of the sample above this point. Thus the 30% below .60 were those not expected to graduate based on characteristics measured in 2005.

The effect was moderated by gender, with a statistically significant effect of the program for boys but not for girls; the effect for boys was moderated by risk level. Boys at high risk for dropping out were twice as likely to graduate if they participated in the program (60%) than if they did not (30% graduation rate). Note, however, that these finding may be spurious given the small sample sizes. The proportion of graduated to not-graduated high-risk males in the program (n = 14, 8:6 = 1.33 odds of graduating) and the control group (n = 28, 8:20 = .4 odds of graduating) yields an impressive odds ratio of 3.325. High-risk boys who participated in the program were more than three times more likely to graduate from high school if they participated in the program. Although this program requires a lot of infrastructure—with the course for the mentors taught weekly as perhaps the most costly—and there is no evidence that a one-on-one relationship was established between mentors and mentees, this appears to be a very promising program.

Finally, a study with older peer mentors in the workplace revealed the importance of studying key developmental processes, like those described by Kohut (1977), as mediators of program effects. Westerlund, Granucci, Gamache, and Clark (2006)

used workplace mentors to facilitate the skills of teenage cosmetology students in a vocational training program. The students/mentees ranged in age from 16 to 18 years, while the mentors ranged in age from 18 to 61 years. Single-subject multiple-baseline designs were used in which baseline levels were estimated for such skills as setting rollers and combing out hair. Then the mentors provided task and emotionally supportive training interventions. This could be viewed as a tutoring study, of course, in which researchers looked to see how demonstrations, corrective feedback, and descriptive praise helped students learn vocational tasks. But there was an enduring relationship of more than ten meetings, and the authors hypothesized that the relationships that developed, specifically the degree of social support that was experienced, more than the instructional interventions alone, would be what facilitated the mentees' confidence and skills. The researchers examined the co-occurrence of mentee comfort levels as a function of mentor praise and encouragement, and how skill development was related to experiences of increased social support. Two of the four mentees nominated their mentors as individuals in their "circle of support," and researchers identified the importance of praise and clear, consistent structure in fostering that social support. This research was innovative in its planned assessment of the role that relational support and relationship building played in the development of vocational skills.

Mentors, Moderators, and the Helper Therapy Principle at Work

The earlier study by Karcher, Davidson et al. (2010) that found mentors with more positive attitudes toward youth had a bigger effect on those mentees at greater behavioral risk is consistent with another study of mentor attitudes as a moderator of program impact. In a study with a small sample (33 mentors, 27 mentees) that correlated mentor and mentee characteristics, Karcher and Lindwall (2003) found that mentors who reported higher levels of social interest, as measured by Crandall's (1991) social interest scale, were more likely to choose the more challenging youth to mentor and were more likely to persist into a second year as a mentor than those with lower social interest. Brewer (2009) also found social interest to be higher among peer mentors.

A second study reported by Karcher and Lindwall (2003) compared 120 youth, half of whom volunteered as teen mentors. Peer mentors reported more conventional connectedness to school, family, reading, and their future than did youth who did not volunteer to mentor. Taken together, these findings indicate that peer mentors in general and more successful peer mentors in particular tend to differ from their peers in their connectedness to school, their attitudes toward youth in general, and their social interest. Recruiting those mentors who value youth more and who report greater social interest may increase the chances that strong and enduring relationships form with their mentees. For this reason, Karcher included the social interest scale as the first part of the online training at www.highschoolbigs.org. After mentors complete the survey online they can direct their scores to program staff for use in mentor selection or matching efforts.

There also is some quasi-experimental evidence that peer mentors benefit from participating as mentors. Consistent with the helper therapy principle, in a comparative study of 111 rural high school students (Karcher, 2009a), those who volunteered to serve as peer mentors reported greater changes on multiple measures of academic connectedness and self-esteem across one academic year than did youth in their same classes who did not serve as mentors. In this way, serving as a mentor may indeed allow mentors an opportunity to practice helping roles that may serve to inform career choices and strengthen their empathy and relationship skills. It is worth nothing, however, that Karcher and Lindwall (2003) found that mentors with the greatest social interest and who chose more challenging mentees reported declines in connectedness to school following the experience (although they persisted as mentors the following year anyway), and some mentors felt so challenged that they reconsidered whether they should continue to pursue their goal of being a teacher (Karcher, 2006). However, it may be that becoming more realistic about the challenges of helping (and perhaps of being a teacher), as well as the experience of struggling to persist through a difficult mentoring relationship and ultimately succeeding, are likely important life lessons that may serve to bolster resilience and steel youth for later interpersonal challenges.

Cross-Age Peer Mentoring and Inclusion of Diverse Populations

The use of peer mentoring to foster mentees' conventional connectedness to school has been reported by other researchers as well. Peer mentoring has been used to facilitate connectedness to school and a sense of belonging at school for youth who may otherwise feel marginalized or "different" in some way. Like Carter and Hughes (2005), who

provided within-grade peer support to youth with special needs by pairing them with a regular education student (but which does not qualify as cross-age peer mentoring because of age similarity between participants), others have reported using peer mentoring to help nonmainstream youth feel more welcome in their new schools.

One study used a very short-term peer mentoring approach to foster peer attachment among immigrant youth (Yeh, Ching, Okubo, & Luthar, 2007). Twenty-three immigrant high school students self-selected to participate in a school-based peer mentoring program. They were each matched with another high school student with whom they met once a week individually, once weekly in small groups, and during lunch once a week. The program was relatively short, lasting only 3 months, but the weekly dosage (number of contacts) was relatively high for school-based mentoring.

Yeh et al. (2007) reported significant outcomes on only one of three outcomes: peer attachment. Using a pre-/posttest research design, the researchers tested for changes among participating youth in college and career self-efficacy, academic self-efficacy, and peer attachment (trust and need for closeness). Significantly higher peer attachment scores for both the trust scale ($d = .35$) and the need for closeness scale ($d = 1.33$) were reported at posttest. No differences were found on college, career, or academic self-efficacy. However, the absence of a comparison group, the self-selected nature of the sample, and the small sample size strongly challenge the assertion that these changes were due to program participation.

In a qualitative dissertation by Steiman (2006), examining processes and perceptions among an even smaller group of nine elementary students who participate in peer mentoring, the mentored 3rd-, 4th-, and 5th-grade immigrant students reported greater self-confidence and a stronger sense of attachment to the school community after participation in the peer mentoring program. Newcomer students who had been in the United States for less than a year were matched with middle- and high-school-student mentors. Again, the pairs met three times a week (high dosage) at the elementary school for an 8-week period (low duration). The main purpose of the program was to help alleviate some of the social and emotional stress associated with being in a new country. Structured and unstructured interviews were conducted with teachers, mentors, and newcomer students, and a parent focus group was also conducted at the end of the program. Document analysis of some writing samples of mentors and mentees were conducted to identify themes, trends, and patterns. Interpretations of the qualitative data collected from mentors, mentees, teachers, and parents in this study support the finding that peer mentoring can assist immigrant children in gaining a stronger connection to and belongingness within the school environment. The use of different types of data (interviews, observations, focus group) increased credibility of the researcher's interpretations and provided a means of triangulation, but the lack of a comparison group restricts any causal interpretation of data.

Several studies of programs that met the proposed definition for cross-age peer mentoring were problematic due to validity threats posed by the research design; therefore, these studies are not described here. O'Hara's study (2011) had two comparison groups, one of which was an attention placebo ("reading mentor"), but the samples were too small to provide reliable outcome estimates. Like O'Hara, another study (Rosenblum et al., 2005) reported declines in conduct or behavioral problems after peer mentoring, but this study had a treatment group that was compromised by self-selection. Only half of the mentees attended the program, which meant the control group no longer served as the counterfactual comparison for the treatment group (e.g., most likely the more behaviorally at-risk in the treatment group self-selected out). Attendance was used instead as the measure of dosage, increasing the self-selection bias; only 70% of participants were available at the 1-year posttest. An otherwise good mixed-methods dissertation on peer mentoring also was hampered by attrition as well as a poor response rate, imbalanced membership, and survey reporting across genders that undermined the utility of the study's quasi-experimental design (Finckler, 2003). Finally, another well-done study (Eddy, 2011) included a detailed literature review but unfortunately selected an effect size two or three times what should be expected based on meta-analyses (e.g., DuBois et al., 2002). This is surprising given that the intervention was only 10 weeks long, suggesting the need to attempt to detect even smaller effects. Finally, this study used 5th graders as reading mentors (like O'Hara's [2011] control group) to 1st and 2nd graders. It gave little indication that the mentors were trained or encouraged to develop a personal relationship with their mentees, leading one to question whether this was a mentoring or tutoring intervention. All of these studies have merits and strengths but reveal important barriers to effectively studying cross-age peer mentoring.

Conclusion and Future Research Recommendations

It is probably fair to say the research on peer mentoring is fairly weak at this point with respect to breadth and depth, and much future work is needed. In terms of breadth, there are very few studies of cross-age peer mentoring. Few programs have more than one or two studies of effectiveness, and randomized controlled comparisons are rare. Several studies of peer mentoring have been of little utility because the research design incorporated other interventions into the treatment package or the studies provided insufficient detail to differentiate peer mentoring from peer helping, tutoring, counseling, and education. In terms of depth, despite there being multiple rich program descriptions (e.g., Crooks, Chiodo, Thomas, & Hughes, 2010; Willis, Bland, Manka, & Craft, 2012), few studies of program moderators or active ingredients have been done to empirically link program practices with outcomes. What evidence I did find, such as of the importance of curricula and other support practices, I piecemealed together inductively by comparing studies rather than basing it on formal comparisons of such practices explicitly or within a given program (e.g., dismantling design) more deductively or affirmatively. Therefore, we clearly need more research on different types of mentoring program designs, but the field also needs more detailed and specific tests of what program practices yield the largest outcomes. Theory-based tests would be useful as well, because those few studies that have tried to test theoretical mediators of program effects have not been successful to date.

Practice

In the first edition of the *Handbook of Youth Mentoring*, Karcher (2005a) described several recommendations for practice, which included important implications for structuring programs, screening mentors, supervising matches, and training mentors. Fortunately, since the *Handbook*'s first edition, various programs have developed novel approaches that respond to some of these recommendations. Several of these are described in this section. In particular, the BBBSA High School Bigs has undergone a thorough overhaul and now includes a host of best practices, CAMP curriculum and training have been manualized, and the BBBSC High School Teen Mentoring program materials have been developed and disseminated. This section describes each of these resources, as well as other peer mentoring training and support materials. Like the excellent summary of key practices written by Garringer and MacRae (2008), I focus specifically on program practices that have been identified in the peer mentoring literature, and when possible I have used the program descriptions (e.g., manuals) instead of research studies alone. To frame this presentation of peer mentoring practices, this section uses DuBois et al.'s (2002) empirically and theoretically identified best practices in youth mentoring.

Program Best Practices: An Overview of Practices Used in Several Peer Programs

DuBois et al. (2002) conducted a meta-analysis of 55 studies of youth mentoring program impact. This review included no peer mentoring programs, but a more recent review of youth mentoring program impacts did (DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011). That review found no statistically significant difference in the program impacts for adult versus peer/teenage mentors, nor was any evidence reported that mentor type moderated the association between program practices and program outcomes. Therefore, the best practices identified by DuBois et al. (2002) likely apply to peer mentoring as well. DuBois et al. measured effects associated with both theory-based and empirically based best practices. *Theory-based practices* are those practices recommended in mentoring literature, whereas *empirically based practices* are those that are not necessarily discussed in mentoring literature but that were found to be associated with greater effect sizes in the meta-analysis. DuBois et al. identified three theory-based practices—parent involvement, use of structured activities, and ongoing training—that explained over 25 percent of the between-program variability in impacts. Other theory-based practices include mentor screening and recruitment, matching based on specific criteria, training from pre-match throughout the life of the match, and monitoring of program implementation. Important empirically based best practices identified in the meta-analysis include using a nonschool setting and selecting mentors from the helping professions.

Because there were relatively few peer mentoring studies to consider, and because significant strides have been made in the past 50 years in other peer helping methods, I briefly describe noteworthy peer helping programs—namely, *Peer Power* (Tindall, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d) and *Peer Buddy Program* (Hughes & Carter, 2008)—and stand-alone materials for training and support for peer programs in general (e.g., *Expanding the Spirit of Mentoring; Cox,*

2006). Then I focus specifically on peer mentoring programs, as defined earlier: BBBSA's revised *High School Bigs* program, BBBSC's *High School Teen Mentoring program* (Government of Alberta, 2010a), the *Cross-Age Mentoring Program (CAMP) for Children With Adolescent Mentors* (Karcher, 2008, 2012a), *Mentoring Works* (Avani, 1998), and the *California Friday Night Live Mentoring Program* (Scott-Nakai, 2008). In the sections that follow, I review training materials, comprehensive peer support programs, comprehensive cross-age peer mentoring programs, and specific best practices. Unfortunately, to my knowledge none of these training activities or curricula has been studied in a way that would allow any estimation of its efficacy relative to another's.

Mentor Training

Expanding the Spirit of Mentoring *(Cox, 2006).* Cox's 56-page training material includes activities that can be modified to fit various program needs and, although targeted to adolescents, can be used with various age groups. Training activities focus on developing team-building, communication, and strength-building skills among mentors.

Peer Connection Program (Powell, 1988). Available through the Princeton Center for Leadership Training, this set of leadership training materials has been used by multiple researchers and doctoral students to train mentors in the peer mentoring programs they studied. The focus of the training is on leadership, group skills, and problem solving. The *Peer Group Connection* is a peer leadership training program intended to be used by educators to prepare upperclassmen to work with freshmen and sophomores in a mentoring or other supportive role. In their recent impact evaluation, Johnson et al. (in press) explained that, using the materials, "[h]igh school juniors and/or seniors become trained peer leaders who meet once a week with [small groups of] freshmen in outreach sessions designed to develop skills, promote a respectful school culture, nourish meaningful connections, and strengthen relationships among students across grades. Booster sessions are provided during students' sophomore year to reinforce learning from the previous year" (p. 5). The program provides considerable mentor training by coupling the mentoring program with an academic service-learning class that provides opportunities to prepare for the mentoring meetings and to debrief about meetings afterward.

An Asset Builder's Guide to Training Peer Helpers *(Varenhorst, 2003).* This resource is targeted at training teenage peer helpers rather than mentors, and Varenhorst (1983) is a pioneer in the peer helping field. This 159-page resource includes a host of skills-based training activities that are similar to the training materials for the CAMP intervention described earlier (Karcher, 2012c) and that focus on communication and assertiveness skills. It also provides activities to help youth understand their own assets in order to help them better cultivate assets among the peers they serve in the program. Training in peer mediation also is provided. For those whose peer mentoring program takes place in a school that utilizes the Search Institute's developmental assets model, this set of training materials will complement those curricular goals well. Additional asset-based mentor training and support materials also are available (Probst, 2006).

Meaningful Mentoring *(Bowman & Bowman, 2005).* For program coordinators who meet weekly with their mentors and need additional training activities that are unique from those described above, as well as for training mentors who will be working with mentees on their own without a curriculum (which I do not advise), this set of activities may be helpful. Using the metaphor of the mentor as a copilot, this 155-page book includes activities focusing on training mentors in the skills they need to communicate, listen, and address problems as they arise.

Peer Helping Programs With Useful Program Design and Training Materials

Peer Buddy Program (Hughes & Carter, 2008). The Peer Buddy Program was designed to promote supportive interactions between students with disabilities and their general education peers. It is a structured program, and peers commit to volunteering for a full academic year. Hughes and Carter suggest their buddies "may describe themselves as a friend, tutor, advocate or instructor in relation to their peers with disabilities" (p. 90). These relationships are between same-age peers, and thus may provide peer support but don't qualify as "older and wiser" peer mentors. The program guide includes a host of useful procedures for programs and training teens, and supplemental training materials are available (Carter, Cushing, & Kennedy, 2009).

Peer Programs: An In-depth Look at Peer Programs—Planning, Implementation and Administration *(Tindall & Black, 2009)* and the Peer Power Set *(Tindall, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d).* The Peer Power program was developed for middle, high school, and higher education students and may be

most useful to teachers coordinating service-learning courses. Generally, youth should be at least 12 years of age to participate in the training. The training materials were developed to assist peer helpers in successfully communicating with their peers and mediating conflict (like Varenhort's, above). Although Peer Power is not a cross-age peer mentoring program, the two volumes of training and reflection activities could be useful for training peer mentors as well. One has to be impressed with the materials the author has assembled. Any professional whose work is to facilitate peer programs should have a set of these materials. *Peer Programs* is the only book I've found that discusses the development of the peer program professional (you, perhaps), the history and future of peer helping efforts, different models (not just activities) for training, and program details like budgeting and staff team development. The *Peer Power* series, including *Strategies for the Professional Leader: Becoming an Effective Peer Helper and Conflict Mediator* (Volumes 1 and 2) and *Workbook: Applying Peer Helper Skills* (Volumes 1 and 2), covers training strategies and includes the accompanying worksheets for youth on topics from substance use, coping, and mental health, to the use of peer helping in various forms (tutoring, peer education, peer helping, and peer mentoring—though only 16 of the 401 pages in Volume 2 of the workbook discuss mentoring). The experience, vision, comprehensiveness, coverage, and field-tested wisdom in these materials is unsurpassed.

Youth Helping Youth: A Handbook for Training Peer Facilitators *(Myrick & Erney, 2004).* This 266 page spiral-bound guide is nearly as comprehensive as the Peer Power set described above, but it is contained in one book. Like Tindall's work, *Youth Helping Youth* provides not just training activities but the bigger picture on the history of peer helping, tips for peer helping professionals, evaluation suggestions, and ideas on how to organize and manage a peer helping program. It is a more succinct set of materials covering the basics of teaching listening skills, communication and peer support skills, and both decision-making and problem-solving skills. It has less information on how to set up and manage a program than the *Peer Buddy Program* but much more information on training peer helpers. It covers a narrower range of training activities than Tindall, but is not redundant with Peer Power materials. It does duplicate some material from another text by these authors called *Caring and Sharing*. But as with Tindall's work, these materials have stood the test of time and are useful and insightful.

Three Comprehensive Peer Mentoring Programs

In this section, I overview three programs currently in existence that include all or most of the best practices identified by DuBois et al. (2002). Two of these are BBBS programs and the third is CAMP. However, I begin this section by describing a program that no longer exists because it informed or could have informed all three of the other programs. The Teen Mentoring Initiative (not the one associated with 4-H in the United States) was a collaboration between YouthLaunch and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Texas that was intended to support High School Bigs in Texas. In 2004, YouthLaunch published a resource manual: *The ABCs of Teen Mentoring*, which was, as it was entitled, "an implementation guide for BBBS coaches." This short manual covered not only enrollment, matching, and relationship development specifics, but also guidance on how to structure the Big-Little RAP ("reflection and planning") conversations. It also emphasized the importance of district and campus partnerships, mentor training, and closure procedures. For mentors, a 46-page handbook (*The Next Big Thing*) was provided that overviewed mentor roles, how the program worked, mentoring tips, communication skills information, and 20 pages of activities to use. YouthLaunch closed its offices in 2011, and these materials are presently unavailable. They are, however, still in use by some of the largest BBBS agencies (M. O'Teeter, personal communication) and may have informed Canada's impressive materials for training and supporting teen mentors.

High School Teen Mentoring Program—Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada. BBBSC is Canada's main provider of youth mentoring programs. A wider scope of mentoring program formats are conducted through BBBS of Canada than BBBS of America, and BBBSC devotes considerable resources to supporting their various youth mentoring efforts. In this program, mentor-mentee matches meet for a decided period of time, once a week, to participate in relationship-building activities. The *High School Teen Mentoring Activity Book* and *Handbook* (Government of Alberta, 2010a, 2010b) are resources developed by the BBBSC: Edmonton and Area agency and Alberta Education. The 56-page mentor handbook is similar to that developed by YouthLaunch. In fact, on the last page it notes the "original manual was received from Big Brothers Big Sisters of North Texas with permission to use the content" (p. 56), suggesting a link may exist between the BBBSC and YouthLaunch materials.

The 120-page *High School Teen Mentoring Activity Book* provides a host of activities "to assist mentees in discovering their interest in talents, how

they best learn, possible career pathways, learning after high school, and how to make decisions and start planning" (p. 1). Although the mentees targeted by the activities (those in grades 3–5) may seem too young to benefit from career guidance provided by their mentor-as-career-coach, most of the activities are quite age appropriate self-exploration activities. Perhaps the real career coaching happens for the mentors/Bigs who, consistent with the helper therapy principle, may benefit as much or more from these activities as do the mentees/Littles. In addition, there are additional resources (*High School Teen Mentoring Bin Resources*) available for mentors to use with their mentees. These fantastic materials are available at alis.alberta.ca/publications (*key phrase:* mentoring). What they lack that the YouthLaunch materials provided more explicitly in their *Resource Manual* are specifics about how to recruit participants, match them, support the matches, and close the matches. Apparently the specifics needed to get the program off the ground and securely established in a school are left to the agencies.

Cross-Age Mentoring Program (CAMP) for Children With Adolescent Mentors. CAMP is a highly structured developmental mentoring program that pairs high school students with elementary and middle school students from grades 4–6 (Karcher, 2008). Together, the mentor-mentee pairs play games, participate in structured activities, and join others in events that link the youth with their families, teachers, and communities. CAMP's main purpose is to increase connectedness of youth to their teachers, families, communities, and futures (Karcher & Santos, 2011b). This program is designed to be tailored to meet local school and youth needs. As such, it has been used with different curricular foci and with older mentees (Boy With a Ball, 2012; Sar & Bledsoe, 2011; Smith, 2011b). Learn more at www.crossagepeermentoring.com.

Implementation of CAMP is guided by the *Program Manual* (Karcher, 2012a), which provides the sort of programmatic specifics not found in the BBBSC Teen Mentoring materials described earlier. CAMP and its program, manual, training materials, and mentor handbook were developed between 1995 and 1998 and evaluated as used in the St. Stephen's Episcopal School in Austin, Texas (Karcher et al., 2002). Like the BBBSC Teen Mentoring program, it is accompanied by both a *Mentor Handbook* and a theory-based curriculum of structured activities. The *Mentor Handbook* (Karcher, 2012b) is linked to the *Training Guide* (Karcher, 2012c), which includes over 30 training activities. The curriculum, which is intended to promote social skills and connectedness across the adolescent social ecology (e.g., connectedness to teachers, school, peers, reading) was developed and evaluated in Columbus, Wisconsin (Karcher, 2005b, 2008, 2009a; Karcher & Lindwall, 2003). The *Program Manual* is a guide for evaluating CAMP using validated measures of connectedness and social skills, so that the program's impact can be measured in terms of these outcomes. The *Program Manual* also addresses the specifics of negotiating with school districts to establish the program; the details on what research says about who should mentor and be mentored in peer programs; and the specific steps for matching youth, involving parents, structuring meetings, evaluating impact, and closing matches. CAMP is currently under review for inclusion in the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices.

Mentoring Works!: A Peer Helping Program (Avani, 1998). Avani's Mentoring Works program is structured to match an older student with a younger student. Avani suggests the program can be applied across building levels (e.g., high-school-aged mentor with elementary-aged mentee), within a building level (upperclassmen mentoring freshman), and with mentees and mentors in the same grade. Avani's training materials are for use with both mentors and mentees. The 70-page spiral-bound *Facilitator's Guide* provides specifics on setting up a peer program, mentor and mentee recruitment, and what to do on the first meeting. The *Facilitator's Guide* also includes a host of activities that mentors and mentees can use to interact together. The program emphasizes short- and long-term goal setting, critical-thinking and problem-solving skills, and communication skills. It is not clear that these activities would be sufficiently engaging to maintain the attention of elementary-aged children, as many worksheet activities in the accompanying *Student Workbook* use language not likely to appeal to or be developmentally appropriate for children. The materials include three posters and pamphlets for marketing purposes.

Friday Night Live Mentoring Program. Although this program does not have a set of materials that are available for use by the public, it does present a skeleton of its program components online, and it has been described as an exemplary peer mentoring program (Scott-Nakai, 2005). The peer mentoring is part of a larger set of programs, but the specifics of the peer mentoring program, and specifically the mentor-support strategies it employs, are summarized fully online at http://www.yli.org/fridaynightlive. The program includes two lead adult staff,

mentor and mentee training, parent orientation specific matching procedures, a 16-week curriculum, longer interactive group activities, and recommended summer booster activities. It also includes ongoing relationship monitoring procedures, ongoing parental feedback and engagement procedures, closure activities, and mission- and model-driven program evaluation. Assuming these procedures are implemented consistently and competently, this program is a good model to emulate.

The Revised High School Bigs Model. Recently developed and currently being field-tested by BBBSA, this program does not currently have materials that are available to the public, and it has not been implemented federation-wide in all BBBSA agencies, but it is a much more comprehensive program than the one Herrera et al. (2008) evaluated. Working in collaboration with Herrera, Karcher, and staff from the Rochester and Kentuckianna agencies, Keoki Hansen led the development of this comprehensive model (Hansen, 2010; Hansen, Swinton, & Christensen, 2009). Briefly reviewed here are the key elements: Big/teen training and mentor orientation; Little training; staff training; recruitment, screening, and enrollment guidelines; matching; and match meetings (e.g., location, duration, focus, structure). Specific training on how mentors and mentees should choose their activities is based on theoretical and empirical evidence of what works best in this program (see Karcher, Herrera, & Hansen, 2010; Karcher & Hansen, this volume, Chapter 5). Perhaps most important, this model specifies the minimum amount of ongoing support that program staff should provide, ways to involve parents and the importance of doing so, how to secure administrator buy-in and establish school partnerships, and the need for effective closure practices.

Essential Youth Mentoring Best Practices in Peer Mentoring: From Match to Closure

Key practices in the order in which they occur during an academic school year, as most peer mentoring programs operate in schools, frame the next section. Given the importance of mentor training, I address elements of program training in a separate section later in the chapter. Most of these practices are summarized as questions for practitioners in Table 16.1.

Table 16.1 Checklist for Practitioners

Creating the Right Context for the Program
1. Is it clear to all involved—school administration, teachers, parents, mentors, and children—that the program is indeed to be a cross-age peer mentoring program, and not a tutoring, peer education, peer counseling, or peer helping program? 2. Has a budget been developed such that sources of funds have been secured to cover any curriculum, food, transportation, or other after-school program essential materials? 3. Have program coordinators been relieved of other duties in order to adequately plan, prepare, implement, monitor, and evaluate the program (whether the coordinator is a school employee or external program staff member)? 4. Have you secured buy-in from school administration and negotiated and documented in writing what the school will provide (e.g., transportation, location, copies) and for how long? 5. Have mentee identification procedures been approved by the school that will lessen the likelihood that stigma or deviancy training processes will be associated with the program by ensuring that only a fraction of program youth are at high behavioral or emotional risk?
Key Startup Procedures
1. Do you have forms and procedures for securing consent from mentees' *and mentors*' parents? 2. Have recruitment and screening procedures for prospective mentors been selected? 3. Will the process of selecting mentors use recommendations from teachers and school staff, and will an interview of youth be conducted by a program staff member?
Program Fidelity and Evaluation
1. Have you established a plan for monitoring program implementation and assigned to specific individuals responsibilities for monitoring each element of program fidelity?

(Continued)

Table 16.1 (Continued)

2. Have you considered how you might keep an implementation log or track attendance? 3. Will you have mentors use a reflective journal, complete activity reflections following the day's activities, or in other ways keep track of program fidelity and mentor satisfaction? 4. Have measures of relationship quality and program satisfaction been identified? 5. Have you aligned any curriculum with program outcomes, identified adequate measures of constructs to use in program evaluation, and made sure these measures reflect outcomes of interest to the community, school administration, parents, and youth? 6. Have measures of primary outcomes been identified (a) that reveal the program has as its primary goal youth development generally, not skill or content mastery, and (b) that underscore this is not a tutoring, education, or counseling program? 7. Has any evidence of the scales' validity and reliability, when used with similar populations (age, race, risk level), been found to support the use of these (versus some other) outcome and process measures?
Involving Stakeholders and Participants
1. When determining how mentees are assigned to their mentors, do you have plans to utilize choice or other input from youth? 2. Do you have plans to ensure parent and teacher involvement? 3. Do program structures encourage parents to communicate with mentors and the program coordinator? 4. Will parents be encouraged to serve as volunteers or otherwise be involved in program activities that may promote connectedness between children and their parents, between parents and the mentor, and between parents and the school staff? 5. Have you considered whether teachers may assist in identifying participants, in implementing (and developing) the summer program, or in other ways to foster teacher buy-in?
Program Structure and Activity Focus
1. How will you provide structure for the weekly meetings? 2. How can you prepare *from the start* for the end of the match? 3. How will you structure, supervise, and reinforce match closure practices? 4. What policies, practices, and consequences are in place to foster mentor commitment, enthusiastic use of planned activities (e.g., curriculum use), and consistent attendance?
Training
1. How will you train mentors continuously throughout the program? 2. What will you do to make these requirements crystal clear to mentors before they commit to the program? 3. When and how will you provide mentors with needed training in the role of mentors, the ways they should and should not interact with each other or with mentees, and how to identify times when they need to seek additional support? 4. When during the year (and during the school day, specifically) will you provide ongoing training both to teach mentors the goals and specifics of any curriculum that is used in the program, and to help them deal with developmental issues related to the match (e.g., about gift-giving policies in winter, honest closure in spring) that often arise after the initial training? 5. Will you provide training on key issues such as the relationship life cycle, active listening and effective communication, peer and social negotiation strategies, conflict resolution and mediation, the need to model enthusiastic use of the curriculum, how to reflect on the match, ways to monitor the quality of the match, and how to discourage deviancy training? 6. How will you monitor who has participated in required trainings? 7. Do you have a plan to identify who needs and who has received additional training?

Having suggested fairly consistently so far that some sort of planned activities or themed curriculum of activities may be useful to orient mentors and mentees, I do not restate that point here. And, because so few programs have proposed the best practices for mentoring activities, and no research has examined what types are best, I refrain from identifying such practices as well. Research and time may tell us this, but right now we know too little to speak with confidence. The state of the research to date also cannot speak to the basics of program format and meeting location, time, and duration. Seemingly contradictory findings, like those mentioned earlier (e.g., teens like meeting in groups, but their mentees don't), make it hard to be confident in any specific recommendations. But other promising practices seem less equivocal, and so I describe these in greater detail.

Recruitment and Screening of Prospective Mentors. One of DuBois et al.'s (2002) theory-based best practices is related to the recruitment and screening of prospective mentors. In particular, recruiting mentors from the helping professions was an empirical best practice. Several programs reviewed in this chapter include teacher referral and recommendations and suggest conducting interviews to determine whether the mentor is mature enough to serve in the role of a peer mentor. For example, the Mentoring Works program bases its selection of mentors on recommendations from teachers and school staff, followed by an interview with a program facilitator (Avani, 1998). The Teen Mentoring Initiative (YouthLaunch, 2004) used a similar approach; if there were too many applicants, a selection committee used a scoring matrix to rank the most promising applicants. In CAMP, mentors who have higher scores on social interest and attitudes toward youth are given priority because research suggests they are the most helpful (Karcher & Lindwall, 2003; Karcher, Davidson et al., 2010).

Matching: How Mentees Are Assigned to Their Peer Mentors. The ways in which matches are made shapes the outcome of the mentoring experience for both the mentor and the mentee. A key element of effective mentoring programs is a systematic matching method (DuBois et al., 2011), and using interest surveys to match by similar interests is the predominant method (e.g., O'Hara, 2011). However, virtually no research has examined how often this practice takes place or the outcomes of varying types of matching procedures (see Pryce et al., this volume, Chapter 29). Equally common—especially in school settings with matches not meeting at a set time as part of a larger group—is for matches to be based on scheduling or availability (see Herrera & Karcher, this volume, Chapter 14). For example, in the *Peer Buddy Program*, matching is done by selecting volunteers in the same classes, pairing students with shared interests/experiences, or pairing students who know each other and/or live near each other (Hughes & Carter, 2008).

Self-selection is another viable approach. In his *Mentoring Works* program, Avani (1998) describes matching mentors and mentees with whom they feel "connected" and suggests one day of the program be set aside especially for determining matches. Avani suggests this matching meeting take place after two or three "getting to know you" meetings are held. This allows mentors and mentees to intuitively decide with whom they feel most "connected." Avani, however, does not give clear guidelines as to how this matching ought to occur.

In contrast, in the "meet-n-greet" approach (see Karcher, 2012a), mentors and mentees interact using icebreakers and afterward list those people they liked meeting to provide program staff with additional information for matching (Pryce et al., this volume, chapter 29). In the meet-n-greet procedure, small groups of five to six mentees and mentors come together to meet, interact, and get to know each other. Before the interaction time, both mentors and mentees are instructed try to remember the names of one to three individuals whom they enjoyed meeting. Afterward, mentors and mentees go off into separate groups and are asked to simply list the names of individuals they remembered meeting and with whom they enjoyed interacting. They are explicitly asked not asked to rank their choices in order to avoid the disappointment of a first choice being unavailable. Following this process, program staff take the names and create matches, using all other available information (interests, schedules, etc.), attempting to make matches based on the mutual preferences of mentors and mentees when possible. A quasi-experimental pilot study of the meet-n-greet process (Karcher & Santos, 2010a) found higher relationship quality in matches in which one or both of the participants were matched with someone they listed than when neither partner received someone they listed.

Monitoring Program Implementation. DuBois et al. (2002) described the importance of monitoring program implementation. Several mentoring programs describe methods for monitoring their programs, ranging from keeping log sheets and taking attendance (YouthLaunch, 2004) to maintaining a reflective journal (Hughes & Carter, 2008). CAMP

(Karcher, 2012a) encourages participants to complete activity reflections following the day's activities to ensure that the mentees' needs have been met, and also to have pairs reflect on what can be changed and improved in the next meeting. Earnest efforts are encouraged by linking the information written down to a competitive between-match game called the Newlymatched Game in which mentors use these notes to answer questions about their mentees.

Parent and Teacher Involvement. Parent involvement is key. The revised High School Bigs model (Hansen, 2010) explicitly requires program staff to communicate with the parents of both Bigs and Littles multiple times each year, to report on their child's absence from the program, and to invite parents to in-person and end-of-year activities. Information for parents is provided throughout the child's involvement and a parent guide is provided. CAMP hosts quarterly "Super Saturday" events in which parents spend time with their children's mentors and see the work their children have done. Saturday events have included trips to the zoo, a picnic at a public park, or a mini-carnival at the school. The intention is to provide time for parents to understand what their children have been doing, as some evidence indicates that the academic achievement gains from CAMP are mediated by improvements in youth reports of parental connectedness after program participation (Karcher et al., 2002). This day serves to promote connectedness between children and their parents, and between the parents and both the mentor and the school staff.

Another component of CAMP is strategic teacher involvement through a teacher connectedness activity. During this 1- to 2-month series of transactions, the mentee and the mentor learn interview skills, practice these skills, conduct an interview with a teacher, and relate the teacher's experience to their own experiences. The goal is to increase the children's caring about teachers, to prompt improved behaviors in and attitudes toward school as a function of this caring, and engage the teachers in the mentoring program to secure their support.

Meeting and Match Closure Practices. Both BBBSA and BBBSC describe the importance of "wrapping up" the matches effectively (Government of Alberta, 2010; YouthLaunch, 2004), but only recently has BBBSA detailed the specifics of this process (e.g., how many absences a mentor can have before the match is closed). In the revised High School Bigs model, the same closure ritual used in CAMP is employed, when it is deemed necessary to close a match. By contrast, all CAMP matches are closed at the end of the year, so CAMP takes additional steps to prepare mentees and mentors for the ending by using regular relationship reflections and practice closures.

The daily 3-2-1 activities and quarterly reflections prepare youth to be successful at saying goodbye at year's end (Karcher, 2012a). The 3-2-1 activity is a helpful approach to structuring the opening and closing of each mentoring session. At the start, the mentor and the mentee take turns describing three good things that occurred the prior week, two bad things that happened, and one thing they hope to be different in the next week. At the end of the meeting, the same 3-2-1 process occurs, but this time the reflection is on the day's activities or the relationship itself (with mentors usually having to model this relationship reflection for quite a while before mentees feel comfortable trying it). This makes sure mentors and mentees know what's going in each other's lives, that they get immediate feedback on their interactions and the curricular activity for the day, and that they air problems quickly. In addition, quarterly "relationship reflections" take place, which involves the mentor and the mentee reflecting on what worked well in the match, what challenges they faced in their match, and what they could change to avoid that problem in this and future relationships. This procedure helps youth experience a successful goodbye by coaching them in how to reflect on their experience. Successes in goodbyes are critical for youth who have had little control over the losses of important people in their lives.

Training Mentors

Both intuitively as well as empirically, training is related to the formation of a strong cross-age mentoring relationship (Herrera et al, 2008). DuBois et al. (2002) described training, both prematch and throughout the duration of the match, as a theory-based and empirically based best practice for all youth mentors. Training teens to mentor may be a bit more challenging than training adults simply because adults are generally more cognitively mature, but also because, as described earlier, teen mentors are more likely than adults to be distracted by their peers. In the programs described earlier, there was considerable overlap in terms of the training that mentors received. Common themes and training content across the training programs include a focus on training mentors about the relationship life cycle, active listening, negotiation strategies, conflict resolution, and mentor roles.

Relationship Life Cycle. Most programs describe the cycle of mentoring relationships from "hello

to goodbye." Manuals describe specific tips for interacting with mentees at different stages in the process, as well as goals that they might set at specific stages. The training prepares mentors for dealing with the awkwardness of the beginning of the relationship and the importance of celebrating their progress and successes in the relationship as it ends.

Active Listening and Effective Communication. Communication and active listening are key components of all the training programs. Some programs provide training on effective communication, including the use of body language, eye contact, clarifying and reflecting, and attending. The YouthLaunch (2004) materials train mentors to use conversation builders to show their mentees that they are important by being empathic, paying attention, praising effort, and caring about what their mentees are saying. Mentors are also given a list of conversation blockers, such as criticism and sarcasm, which might prevent mentees from engaging in relationships. They are trained in the basics of nonverbal communication (e.g., to "SOFTEN" up: smile, open, lean forward, touch, eye contact, and nod; YouthLaunch, 2004, p. 24).

Interactive rather than didactic training seems especially developmentally appropriate. Although interactive training could allow for deviancy training, it also may meet youths' valid needs for socializations in ways that inhibit deviancy training (or at least allow its expression away from the mentees). For example, to introduce the importance of communication in relationships, facilitators in the *Mentoring Works* program (Avani, 1998) introduce several role plays in the training exercise to help mentors identify some of their everyday mannerisms that might be ineffective communication strategies.

Negotiation Strategies. Included under the umbrella of negotiation strategies are the ways in which mentors and mentees decide what they are going to do during a meeting, how they will collaborate, and what the main goals of the mentoring session will be. Training in the importance and means of collaborating when making decisions about activities and conversation topics seems critical given the empirical support for such collaboration (Karcher, Herrera et al., 2010) and the developmental sophistication required for mentors to scaffold the collaboration process for mentees who otherwise could not perform it (Karcher, 2008; Karcher, 2012a). The YouthLaunch training program emphasizes a process titled "Discovering and Negotiating." In this stage of training, mentors are taught how to negotiate goals for the relationship.

Conflict Resolution/Mediation. Multiple programs addressed problem solving and conflict resolution in their training (Tindall & Black, 2009; Varenhorst, 2003). In the *Mentoring Works program*, trainees use a problem-solving checklist to resolve hypothetical conflicts in case studies. Karcher's (2012c) training teaches cognitive problem-solving techniques at different developmental levels and provides exercises to illustrate them.

Mentor Roles. Mentors, especially high school mentors, can experience confusion in their new role. Several of the programs use training time to explore the various roles mentors might have, as well as to address any confusion they might experience due to their new role as a mentor. CAMP uses video presentations and discussions to describe mentor roles. Using video clips, such as from Disney's *Jungle Book* and the *Kung Fu Panda* movies, the trainings explore ways in which the films' characters illustrate different mentoring styles (Karcher, 2009b). A CAMP training activity developed by Ze'v Korn uses hats to help mentors consider the different hats they will wear as a cross-age peer mentor.

Involving High School Mentors in Creation of the Curriculum. Given the evidence emerging in the field of positive youth development, and in particular on the importance of involving youth in creating the intervention programs in which they serve (Wong et al., 2011), finding ways to strategically involve mentors in developing the curricular activities makes sense. The YouthLaunch (2004) training recommends letting the teen Bigs help with as much planning as possible. The CAMP curriculum guide and *Training Guide* (Karcher, 2012c; Karcher & Judson, 2012) provide information on how program staff should develop theoretically consistent curricula and how to involve mentors in curricula development. Mentors are explicitly taught the theory and coached to apply it to their own lives in order to develop activities for their mentees that are meaningful and programmatically consistent.

Training Mentors to Monitor the Status of the Relationship. Mentors will be most effective in seeking out the support they need and thereby less likely to experience negative effects of being overwhelmed by challenging relationships (e.g., Karcher & Lindwall, 2003) when they are trained in how to monitor their own relationship. The YouthLaunch (2004) materials train mentors in conducting RAP sessions for this

purpose. These sessions are conducted to monitor and support the matches in an informal way without a formal agenda. The questions that guide the RAP sessions are, “what?”, “so what?”, and “now what?” Mentors describe what happened in the last week with their mentees, how these events affected their relationships, and what can be done to further develop the relationships. The CAMP curriculum also encourages this in 3-2-1 activities and relationship reflections. While these activities are intended to prepare the mentors and the mentees to more effectively perform the match termination ritual at the end of the year, the written information that is collected also helps them identify and record how the match is going so that the mentor or program staff (who read it afterward) can identify red flags as they emerge. These RAP sessions and end-of-meeting 3-2-1 activities help mentors plan to improve their relationship in the future but also help mentors provide mentees empathy, praise, and attention in a clear, consistent format.

Summary

DuBois et al.’s (2002) list of best practices provides a lens for understanding how cross-age peer mentoring programs may be organized to achieve maximal impact. It is vital that practitioners implementing cross-age peer mentoring programs incorporate the necessary techniques and key practices. It is also important when drafting program manuals to include specific details regarding how to tailor program practices developed for adults or community mentoring settings to schools and to teen mentors. Finally, and perhaps unique to peer mentoring, the use of an orienting activity (a curricular or planned activity) may be a useful practice for organizing mentors and mentees in dyads that have prosocial engagement and minimal deviancy training. But there are likely other ways besides using curricular activities to do what is needed—that is, to foster the developmentally critical experience of receiving empathy, praise, and attention from a mentor within a clear, consistent structure (the program). However connection and sustained attention between mentor and mentee is cultivated, it is important to keep the focus of mentors and mentees on the matches; the program processes or practices that achieve this focus may be what differentiates cross-age peer mentoring from other peer interventions.

Conclusion

I suggest that, to foster thriving matches, cross-age peer mentoring programs need to create a holding environment that allows the power of peer relationships to take shape and operate over a sustained period of time. Good peer mentoring programs should provide the opportunity for a child to idealize an older peer from whom the mentee receives empathy, praise, and attention. Successful peer mentoring, in my opinion, requires program structures that minimize mentor-to-mentor interactions (particularly their spontaneous, youth-focused interactions) and fosters supportive teen-child interactions.

I described as a “promising practice” in cross-age peer mentoring the careful use of a *general* curriculum, like those described in the pioneering peer mentoring work of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s described earlier. But the use of any curriculum must not be intended to fix kids, solve problems, or teach academic skills; rather, its purpose should be to promote positive youth development generally, and primarily to help orient the mentor and the mentee toward one another. This is key. The curriculum’s purpose is to contain and direct the participants’ attention to one another, not necessarily to impart information or teach specific skills.

Despite evidence of the utility of planned activities; the importance of matching, training, supervision, and closure practices; and the apparent benefits of cross-age peer mentoring for mentors and mentees, and in particular for different combinations of types of youth, we have not really scratched the surface of what there is to know about what makes cross-age peer mentoring work. We must acknowledge that we have not exercised due diligence to know what practices are most helpful (Cavell, 2012).

Between now and the next edition of the *Handbook of Youth Mentoring*, I hope more studies of cross-age peer mentoring are conducted that exemplify high fidelity of implementation, strong elements of programmatic support, and research designs that can tease apart the unique benefits of different programmatic structures. Only through such research can cross-age peer mentoring move from a good idea with lots of training activities available to support it to a systematic approach to intervention and the promotion of positive youth development that can become part of a school counselor’s arsenal of empirically supported intervention options.

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