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MENTORING

Mentoring is a relationship in which an older person provides ongoing guidance, instruction, and encouragement to another, younger individual, usually a youth, with the goal of further developing that individual's competence and character (Rhodes, 2002a). Typically viewed as older and wiser, *mentors* develop supportive relationships with younger youth, who are referred to as *mentees* or *protégés*.

NATURAL VERSUS PROGRAM-BASED MENTORING

A major distinction in the definition of mentors and mentoring relationships is between natural mentors and program-based mentors. Natural mentoring, as the name suggests, emerges naturally. Youth often develop natural mentoring relationships with adults who pay special attention to them, and who provide guidance, encouragement, and a sympathetic ear. In the context of school, natural mentors may include teachers, coaches, counselors, psychologists, administrators as well as many other "older and wiser" individuals. Outside of schools, youth may develop natural mentoring relationships with adults in their extended family, neighborhood, religious organizations, and in recreational settings.

Program-based mentoring refers to a formalized process by which an organization recruits an individual to serve as mentor to a youth. The adult and youth usually have had no prior contact or relationship, and their interaction results from being matched together in a mentoring relationship. Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) of America is the largest formal mentoring program in the United States and has been actively recruiting adults to work as mentors with youth for 100 years. Initially, BBBS recruited men to work with boys from fatherless homes, but today this organization serves both boys and girls and reaches beyond those from single-parent homes to support the development of competence and character of youth from a variety of settings.

COMMUNITY-BASED VERSUS SCHOOL-BASED MENTORING PROGRAMS

The context of mentoring plays a significant role in shaping the nature of program-based mentoring relationships. The majority of mentoring programs are based on or originate in the community through BBBS and other organizations such as Boys and Girls Clubs of America and the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations (YMCA and

YWCA). However, schools also have emerged as a viable context for mentoring. Some advantages of school-based mentoring programs include significantly lower operational costs. Herrera and colleagues (2000) estimate school-based programs cost approximately half as much as community-based programs. School-based programs also provide increased access to youth, and greater opportunities for school staff and program coordinators to supervise mentors and provide mentors with immediate support, instruction, and feedback. Mentors often prefer school-based mentoring because it is less time-consuming. Typically, school-based mentors meet with their mentees once per week for an hour, whereas community-based programs often encourage weekly meetings of three to four hours.

HISTORY OF MENTORING

The term *mentor* has held the same meaning for more than 1,000 years. The word originated from the character Mentor in Homer's *The Odyssey* (see Baker & Maguire, in press). Mentor was a trusted friend of Odysseus, the king of Ithaca. When Odysseus went to fight in the Trojan War, Mentor was asked to watch over, befriend, and provide council and support to Odysseus's son, Telemachus. For hundreds of years, adults have served as mentors to youth in work apprenticeships. However, formal mentoring programs did not emerge until the early 20th century with the help of Jane Addams and Ernest Coulter, who encouraged the juvenile courts system to address delinquency. Adults working with needy or problem youth became known as Big Brothers, long before BBBS was founded. (Big Brothers was founded in 1904, and Big Brothers and Big Sisters maintained separate identities until 1978 when they merged to become Big Brothers Big Sisters of America.) Perhaps the most public statement in support of formal mentoring programs was President George W. Bush's pledge to commit 150 million dollars to mentoring programs. Although intuitively appealing and a popular approach to intervention, there has been limited research on the effectiveness of mentoring programs to date.

MENTORING RESEARCH AND LITERATURE

In 1936, Richard C. Cabot, a Harvard-trained physician, initiated the first systematic study on the effects of mentoring in his Cambridge–Somerville Youth Study (CSYS), which examined various intervention programs for delinquent youth (Baker & Maguire, in press). The 30-year follow-up study revealed the potentially negative effects of poorly run intervention programs that do not sufficiently counter delinquent youth's tendency to undermine authority (Dishion & colleagues, 2003). They found that youth who participated in a comprehensive intervention program that included mentoring fared worse 30 years later than youth who had not participated. These negative results, they argued, resulted from aggregating delinquent youth together in the intervention. Based on these findings and more recent studies consistent with this view, it can be argued that psychologists coordinating mentoring programs in schools should avoid including solely children viewed as at risk for underachievement or delinquency.

Until recently, the enthusiasm for mentoring has eclipsed the few systematic efforts conducted to assess whether mentoring works. The intuitively appealing nature of mentoring and concomitant enthusiasm for mentoring has been tempered by research illustrating that successful mentoring programs take a lot of work, planning, dedication, and resources (e.g., time, funding, and staff energy) to be effective. Nearly 20 years before *The Kindness of Strangers* (Freedman, 1993) heralded a wave of enthusiasm for mentoring, which crested at the end of the 20th century, Goodman (1972) conducted the first systematic study of college-age mentors to youth. This was the first study of youth mentoring to reveal its positive effects on youth's social skills, self-esteem, and relationships with other adults. Goodman's study also foreshadowed more recent research findings by revealing the importance of ongoing training and the duration of the mentoring relationship, the differential effectiveness of shy and extroverted mentors, and the impact of mentoring on the college mentors themselves. The more recent and frequently cited study of the BBBS program reveals that youth who receive mentors are less likely than those without a mentor to engage in substance use, fighting, or skipping school, and are more likely to report improved relationships with their parents (Grossman & Tierney, 1998). However, there are limitations to this study, the most significant of which is that all outcomes were self-reported by the youth. No teacher, parent, or significant adults' reports of the effectiveness of the mentoring program were collected.

The sophistication of research on mentoring's effectiveness has been increasing in recent years (Rhodes, 2002b), and now there are a number of research-based publications on mentoring (Rhodes 2002a) that balance the naïve enthusiasm of much of the earlier mentoring literature. DuBois and colleagues (2002) conducted one of the most important studies of youth mentoring. In 1999, they undertook a meta-analysis of all the available research in the field of mentoring. Among the hundreds of articles touting the potential of youth mentoring, DuBois and colleagues found that only 55 studies had comparison groups and measured outcomes before and after mentoring. The authors' study was the first systematic effort to examine the effectiveness of mentoring practices that had previously been proposed by those in the field. They tested several theoretically based "best practices," as well as other commonly used components of mentoring programs, and found that the most effective mentoring programs employed a larger number of identified mentoring best practices than did the less effective programs. Consistent with Goodman's findings, some of DuBois and colleagues' best practices include the systematic matching of mentors and mentees and the provision of ongoing training and supervision to mentors. Table 1 provides a set of best practices for the mentoring field (MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, 2003). These best practices provide guidelines for school psychologists, counselors, teachers, and administrators who intend to develop and implement school-based mentoring programs.

Other findings revealed by DuBois and colleagues' (2002) meta-analysis and more recent research (e.g., Rhodes, 2002a, 2002b) are worth noting. For example, although providing structured activities emerged as a best practice, more recent research has revealed that recreational and sport activities as well as casual discussions about family, friends, and personal issues were strong predictors of whether the mentees came to see their mentors as significant persons in their lives (DuBois & colleagues, 2002). Therefore, even in school settings, activities that promote connectedness between the mentor and mentee may be more effective at unleashing the potential effects of mentoring than academic or goal-focused activities.

School psychologists are likely to perform several roles in the development and maintenance of school-based mentoring programs. They may be responsible for identifying students who might benefit from a mentor; when they do, they should avoid selecting only students who are at risk for problem behaviors

and underachievement. Such students do not appear to be the best candidates for mentoring, and their problem behaviors may worsen as a result if gathered into a group-based intervention. School psychologists may be responsible for training and supervising the adults who work as mentors; during the training, they should attempt to incorporate as many of the best practices of youth mentoring as possible. Finally, school psychologists may be responsible for collecting data for evaluation purposes; they should begin this work by turning to the burgeoning literature on youth mentoring or the *Handbook of Youth Mentoring* (DuBois & Karcher, in press) to identify instruments and procedures specific to this important task. In program coordination and evaluation, school psychologists should include parents by facilitating contact between mentors and parents and by including parents' perspectives when assessing important outcomes. As planners, coordinators, and evaluators, school psychologists can play a central role in the development of successful youth mentoring programs.

—*Michael J. Karcher, Laura Roy-Carlson, Chiharu Allen, and Debby Gil-Hernandez*

See also Intervention

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Table 1   Effective Practices in Youth Mentoring

Designing a Program

- Design specific program goals and procedures.
- Establish an evaluation component to the mentoring program.

Initial Procedures

- Define clear roles for staff and advisors of the mentoring program.
- Establish criteria for matching youth with mentors (e.g., gender, race, interests).*
- Establish a public relations component.
- Establish a system to maintain regular contact with mentors/mentees.
- Design a plan for staff support.

Funding

- Design a financial plan (budget management, timeline, system for managing finances).
- Plan for future funding.
- Document staff information and mentor/mentee matches.

Mentor/Mentee Relationships and Participation

- Conduct mentor/mentee orientation.†
- Recruit mentors in helping roles/professions (e.g., teachers, counselors, psychologists).†
- Use screening procedures (e.g., background checks, interviews, etc.).*
- Communicate clear guidelines of where and when mentors/mentees will meet.
- Clarify expectations regarding frequency of mentor/mentee contact.*
- Clarify expectations regarding duration of relationships.*

Parental Involvement

- Conduct parent orientation.
- Encourage parent support and involvement.†
- Encourage parental feedback.

Program Implementation and Maintenance

- Supervise mentors (provide guidance from staff).*
- Monitor mentors (mentor activity logs).*
- Provide ongoing mentor support (mentors discuss feelings/experiences with staff).*
- Provide structured activities for mentors and youth (e.g., events planned by host organization).†
- Provide ongoing training of mentors.†
- Monitor implementation.†
- Help mentors/mentees reach relationship closure.
- Reflect on and disseminate findings from the evaluation.
- Recognize contributions of program participants.

*Theory-driven best practices lacking empirical support (DuBois & colleagues, 2002).

†Empirically supported (evidence-based) best practices (DuBois & colleagues, 2002).

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