RESEARCH INSIGHTS FOR PRACTITIONERS

An NMRC E-Newsletter Focused on Mentoring Research and Research-Informed Tools for Program Improvement

Welcome to the fourth edition of the National Mentoring Research Center E-Newsletter! This newsletter focuses on mentoring research, the work of the NMRC Research Board, and emerging knowledge that can help you plan and implement more effective mentoring services for youth. In this issue, we:

- Feature a reading by Manolya Tanyu and colleagues about findings from a recent evaluation of Reach & Rise®, a national program that trains adult mentors to utilize cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) strategies in their mentoring relationships,

- Summarize some great new research articles produced by the members of our NMRC Research Board and other scholars,

- Highlight NMRC announcements including our latest blogpost about strategies to combat youth loneliness, and upcoming webinars about program assessment, combating cyberbullying, and credible messenger mentoring,

- Share a Q&A about when and if data can lose its relevance over time.

Do you have a question about mentoring evaluation and research? Please write to rbennett@mentoring.org and we'll answer your questions in a future issue.

The Insights Newsletter will be taking a brief hiatus for a few months but will be back with more research-focused content and resources later this year. Thanks for reading!

- Rachel Bennett, Research Manager at MENTOR

Fourth Edition
August 2023

NATIONAL **MENTORING** RESOURCE CENTER
A Program of OJJDP

Effective Applications of Cognitive Behavioral Strategies in Mentoring

Manolya Tanyu, PhD – NMRC Research Board Member
Roger Jarjoura, PhD – Principal Researcher, American Institutes for Research
Carla Herrera, PhD – NMRC Research Board Member
David DuBois, PhD – Chair of the NMRC Research Board

Two decades of research on mentoring programs support their effectiveness in improving youth's emotional, behavioral, and academic functioning (DuBois et al., 2002; DuBois et al., 2011; Raposa et al., 2019; Tolan et al., 2014). The most typical model is one-to-one mentoring in the general community in which adult volunteers spend time with a young person without a specific focus on identified needs (Garringer et al., 2017). Recently, however, there are calls for training mentors to take on more targeted approaches to mentoring (see the Room to Read box). The therapeutic mentoring approach used in the Reach & Rise® program provides one approach to doing this. **This blog shares takeaway messages from a recent evaluation of Reach & Rise® and reflects on program practices that helped or hindered mentors in taking on a targeted approach.** This video posted by MENTOR Virginia shares more about the program and the study.

ROOM TO READ

Are supportive relationships enough?

How mentoring programs can help address the youth mental health crisis

Therapeutic Mentoring

Paraprofessional mentoring

The Program

Reach & Rise® is a national program that prepares adult volunteer mentors to assume paraprofessional therapeutic roles, rooted in the principles of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). Mentors learn about the principles of behavior change strategies (e.g., goal setting and reinforcement) and ways they can help youth understand and modify negative behavior patterns. For example, mentors learn how to ask structured questions to help youth identify how their thoughts are linked with their behaviors and guide their mentees in testing out more adaptive thinking patterns and behaviors at home with family members, or at school with their peers. The program is designed to prepare and support mentors in a variety of ways to help them infuse CBT strategies into their mentoring relationships:

- The program provides 15 hours of pre-match training and materials for mentors.
- Mentor-mentee matches are expected to identify goals to work toward, which are used to develop a growth plan for youth.
- Mentors are expected to regularly provide a log of their mentoring activities to program staff.
- Monthly mentor check-ins with the Reach & Rise® program site director are used to review progress toward match goals and encourage the use of CBT strategies.
- Each program site director supports a caseload of 30 matches annually. Caseloads are small to enable intentional and intensive support to the match and youth's family.
- Site directors have an advanced degree in social work, counseling, or other mental health field.

The Evaluation

From 2018 to 2021, with funding through the OJJDP FY 2016 Practitioner-Researcher Partnership in Cognitive Behavioral Mentoring Program, researchers (Roger Jarjoura, Carla Herrera, and Manolya Tanyu) examined program implementation and outcomes across 22 Reach & Rise® sites (*for details, see Jarjoura et al., 2023*). **Using a rigorous randomized controlled design, we identified several positive outcomes for program youth.** Youth randomly assigned to the Reach & Rise® program group experienced behavioral (reduced delinquent behavior and substance use), academic (school connectedness, academic performance), and relational (family connectedness) benefits. An important question for the study team was "*What types of supports helped mentors feel prepared to adopt this approach and to what extent were the mentors able to take on these approaches?*"

Program Supports that Helped Mentors Use CBT Strategies

Mentors identified the initial training and the materials and resources they received as the most important sources of information that helped them learn about CBT strategies and feel prepared. Mentors also benefitted from ideas provided by staff during their discussions, as well as other program structures for monitoring (e.g., mentee's growth plan, activity log).

Use of CBT Strategies in Mentoring

Although in the pre-match training mentors learned a menu of CBT strategies, most mentors tended to use only a small set of these strategies frequently (e.g., celebrating success, getting their mentee to stop and think about their behavior, creating new habits, mindfulness).

Other more specific CBT strategies (e.g., mood mapping, journaling) were used by fewer mentors and less frequently. Mentors suggested that some CBT strategies seemed more appropriate to use with the personality of their mentee and the activities they were engaged in.

> "We didn't use mood mapping. Like my mentee, I was more of a doer than a deep thinker. We did a lot but we didn't do a lot of talking as much as just doing activities together."
>
> Mentor

Not all mentors experienced program supports at the same levels, which influenced their use of CBT strategies and, ultimately, youth outcomes. Mentors who experienced higher levels of program supports for their use of CBT strategies had mentees who reported mentors' more frequent use of these approaches during their interactions, which were in turn associated with stronger relationships and ultimately more positive outcomes.

> "The language is clinical, so we make it more relational [in match support calls]. The training is good, but they also need to try it out. Teaching them and then having them use intuition is how things come out in really cool ways."
>
> Program Site Director

An effective practice shared by site directors was their conscious efforts to use simpler, more relatable terminology when discussing CBT strategies with mentors. This helped mentors think about practical ways they could use CBT strategies in their interactions with their mentees.

Site directors' level of experience and knowledge of CBT was important in helping mentors use CBT practices in their interactions with their mentees. Staff turnover, therefore, was a significant challenge for several program sites that disrupted the continuity of supports mentors received. In addition, when new staff was hired, not all came with training and experience in CBT principles, which also affected the quality of guidance they were able to provide mentors in their application of CBT strategies.

Takeaway Messages

Adult volunteers with no previous CBT experience can be effectively trained and supported in incorporating CBT principles into their mentoring relationships with youth.

Pre-match training and continued support are both important in providing mentors with practical information and tools that are key to helping them understand CBT principles and apply CBT strategies in their interactions with their mentees.

References

DuBois, D. L., Neville, H. A., Parra, G. R., & Pugh-Lilly, A. O. (2002). Testing a new model of mentoring. In G. G. Noam (Ed.-in-chief) & J. E. Rhodes (Ed.), *A critical view of youth mentoring* (New Directions for Youth Development: Theory, Research, and Practice, No. 93, pp. 21-57). Jossey-Bass.

DuBois, D. L., Portillo, N., Rhodes, J. E., Silverthorn, N., & Valentine, J. C. (2011). How effective are mentoring programs for youth? A systematic assessment of the evidence. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 12,* 57–91. doi:10.1177/1529100611414806

Jarjoura, G. R., Herrera, C., & Tanyu, M. (2023). Evaluation of Reach & Rise® Program Enhancements to Cognitive Behavioral Mentoring: Technical Report. Final Report submitted to the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Garringer, M., McQuillin, S., & McDaniel, H. (2017). Examining youth mentoring services across America: Findings from the 2016 Mentoring Program Survey. Boston, MA: MENTOR: National Mentoring Partnership.

Raposa, E. B., Rhodes, J., Stams, G. J. J., Card, N., Burton, S., Schwartz, S., … & Hussain, S. (2019). The effects of youth mentoring programs: A meta-analysis of outcome studies. *Journal of youth and adolescence, 48*(3), 423-443.

Tolan, P. H., Henry, D. B., Schoeny, M. S., Lovegrove, P., & Nichols, E. (2014). Mentoring programs to affect elinquency and associated outcomes of youth at risk: A comprehensive meta-analytic review. *Journal of Experimental Criminology, 10(2), 179-206.* https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-013-9181-4.

NATIONAL
MENTORING
RESOURCE CENTER
A Program of OJJDP

RESEARCH INSIGHTS
FOR PRACTITIONERS

4

Each quarter in this space, we'll highlight new(ish) research articles that might be of interest to those of you planning, running, and evaluating mentoring programs. Where these articles are publicly available, we have provided a link. For those that are not, you can likely get them through the journal collections of your local public library or any academic library you have access to. In most cases, article authors are also able to share single copies with folks who contact them. Please reach out to the NMRC if you have questions about how to access one of the articles mentioned below. NMRC Research Board members are noted in bold text and Associate Board members are noted in bold italics.

Historically underrepresented college students and natural mentoring relationships: A systematic review

– by *Lidia Y. Monjaras-Gaytan* & **Bernadette Sánchez**

Historically underrepresented college students experience barriers during college. One source of support that may help students manage these challenges is natural mentors. However, research on historically underrepresented college students' natural mentoring relationships is limited. The aim of this systematic review was to examine studies of historically underrepresented college students' natural mentoring relationships during college and to provide recommendations for future research. The research questions that guided the review were (a) What are the characteristics of these relationships? (b) What factors are associated with these relationships during college? and (c) Are the outcomes associated with having these relationships moderated by type of mentor? Examined studies demonstrated that natural mentors offer a variety of support in various aspects of students' lives. Relationships were linked to multiple benefits for this population, including psychological wellbeing, positive academic outcomes, improved self-concept, increased motivation, and development of interpersonal skills broadly. This review showed that there are still many gaps in the literature on the nuances of these relationships and the development of the relationships for historically underrepresented college students.

Relevance for practitioners: In the first systematic review of natural mentoring and historically underrepresented college students, several pathways are identified by which natural mentors can support this population of students. Historically underrepresented students were defined as those who are low-income, the first in their family to pursue a bachelor's degree (first-generation), and/or students of color (i.e., African American/ Black, Hispanic/Latinx, Pacific Islander, Native American, and East Asian). Though a small sample of studies were analyzed (only ten met inclusion criteria), their findings highlight that underrepresented students can benefit from natural mentoring, in both academic and psychological domains. One study noted that underrepresented students had fewer natural mentors compared to non-underrepresented students so, one area which youth-serving professionals may leverage support is helping students to cultivate and sustain a wide web of mentors so they can reap the benefits of natural mentoring relationships. The impact of natural mentoring on long-term educational outcomes for underrepresented students

NATIONAL
MENTORING
RESOURCE CENTER
A Program of OJJDP

RESEARCH INSIGHTS
FOR PRACTITIONERS

5

remains an area where more research is needed, and there are clear limitations to what mentoring can achieve considering the systemic barriers within higher education. However, this review details concrete examples of which types of natural mentor support may be beneficial given the barriers underrepresented students encounter in higher education, such as offering coping strategies for dealing with race-related stressors or, informational support by providing guidance on navigating academic institutions.

Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2023.106965

Spotlighting racism in schools: Teacher mentors and the mediating effect of school safety

– by Anna Flitner, **Samuel McQuillin, Mariah Kornbluh**, & Daria Thompson

Youth are more likely to succeed when they feel safe at school and have access to caring relationships with adults. Systemic racism interrupts access to these assets. Within schools, racially/ethnically minoritized youth encounter policies rooted in racism, leading to decreased perceptions of school safety. Having a teacher mentor may mitigate some of the harmful effects of systemic racism and discriminatory practices. Yet, teacher mentors may not be accessible to all students. In this study, the authors tested a putative explanatory hypothesis for differences between Black and white children's access to teacher mentors. Data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health were used. Linear regression models were used to predict access to teacher mentors, and a mediational analysis was conducted to determine the effect of school safety on the relationship between race and teacher mentor access. Results indicate that students from higher SES backgrounds and those with parents who have greater educational attainment are more likely to have a teacher mentor. Furthermore, Black students are less likely than white students to have a teacher mentor, and school safety mediates that relationship. The implications of this study suggest that challenging institutional racism and structures may improve perceptions of school safety and teacher mentor accessibility.

Relevance for practitioners: Teacher mentors provide critically important sources of natural mentoring for students and having access to this support is associated with benefits like higher educational attainment, income, and civic engagement. However, Black students often experience educational settings which reinforce systemic racism, discriminatory policies, and do not promote a sense of safety. The current study highlights the ripple effect that negative perceptions of school safety can have on forming natural mentoring relationships with teachers. Schools can prioritize safety and address gaps in access to teacher mentors through concerted efforts to assess and amend disciplinary policies that negatively – and disproportionately – affect BIPOC students, as well as investing in staff training and ongoing professional development in bias assessment, mentoring, and cultural humility. Schools can also facilitate opportunities for youth-initiated mentoring relationships whereby students identify trusted adults, either from the community or school personnel, to be their mentor.

Available at: https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12680

Initial perception of the mentoring role and related mentors' approach of autonomy support or control in formal youth mentoring relationships

– by Tereza Javornicky Brumovska & Gabriela Seidlova Malkova

Mentors' initial perceptions of the mentoring role in formal youth mentoring bonds; and the subsequent characteristics of autonomy support or autonomy control in mentoring interactions developed by mentors after 5 months of mentoring experience are discussed in this paper. The data is drawn from a longitudinal phenomenological study conducted in the Czech mentoring scheme between 2010 and 2017. In-depth semi-structured interviews were collected with 10 mentoring matches over 1 year of mentoring involvement. The results of Interpretive phenomenological analysis showed differences in mentors' initial perceptions of the role, and related autonomy-supportive or autonomy-controlling characteristics in mentors' approach. The benefits and risks of resulting autonomy support or control in mentoring interactions are discussed. The results argue for the theoretical conceptualization of a child-centered perspective in youth mentoring that aims at mentees' support of autonomy, active agency and empowerment, thus arguing for further in-depth exploration of natural mentoring principles in child-centered perspective, supporting approaches such as youth-initiated mentoring, and broadening the discussion on good evidence-based mentoring practice in the EU context.

Relevance for practitioners: In this study, mentors who perceived mentees and their families negatively and identified the mentor role as fulfilling an unmet need in their mentees' lives also reported the least child-centered approaches in their matches. These mentors often selected activities based on convenience or their own interests rather than the likes or interests of their mentee. As we might expect, mentees matched with these mentors reported low relationship satisfaction or stopped meeting with their mentor altogether. This study illustrates the individual attitudes or beliefs which contribute to poor relationship outcomes and subsequently, make someone a less desirable candidate to be a mentor, for example, viewing a family as incapable of meeting their child's needs or expressing intentions to change a mentee's behaviors. By assessing mentor's attitudes and beliefs during initial recruitment, programs can identify when a mentor may not be the best fit for their program or needs additional support and training. Programs can support mentor skill-development by addressing deficit-based thinking and guiding mentors toward more attuned, youth-centered approaches during interactions with mentees and families.

Available at: https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.23004

NATIONAL MENTORING RESOURCE CENTER
A Program of OJJDP

The benefits of participating in a culturally translated youth mentoring program and service-learning experience for Aotearoa New Zealand mentors

– by Kelsey L. Deane, Pat Bullen, Rachel Williamson-Dean, & Kiri Wilder

The aim of this article is to demonstrate "mentoring through service-learning" models can be powerful avenues to support the development of emerging adult practitioners, and are scalable to new global contexts when careful attention is paid to the local culture and evidence-based principles for mentoring and service-learning. The study presents outcome findings for mentors who participated in Campus Connections Aotearoa, a culturally translated version of a US-based service-learning experience and therapeutic youth mentoring program implemented in New Zealand, based on a mixed-method, pre-post evaluation survey involving 62 ethnically diverse mentors (81% female). A large, significant increase in mentoring self-efficacy and small to moderate significant increases for attunement to others, sociability and leadership, and problem-solving and perspective-taking were found. Open-ended survey responses revealed self-reported changes in both personal and professional growth. The discussion highlights the importance of theory and evidence-driven design decisions and an intensive evidence-informed training curriculum for mentoring-based service-learning programs.

Relevance for practitioners: One of the great challenges of evidence-based practice is whether the positive effects demonstrated in one context can be replicated in another. This examination of the Campus Connections program adapted for implementation in New Zealand did find similar mentor outcomes in both, personal and professional skill-building. The authors attribute some of these positive findings to thoughtful program design, for example, clearly defining the relationship between program components and their intended outcomes when developing a theory of change. This study offers a useful example of implementing an evidence-based program while integrating youth- and community-voice to ensure its relevance within local context.

Available at: https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.23005

Youth for Youth: Raising the voices of children of incarcerated parents and implications for policy and practice

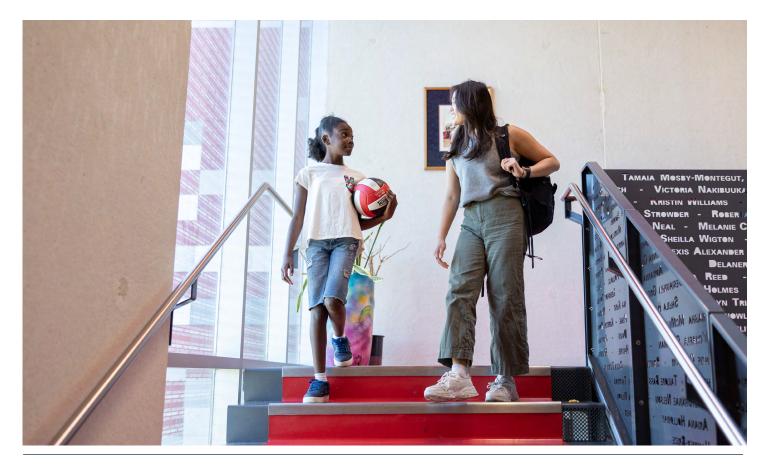– by Elizabeth Benninger, Megan Schmidt-Sane, Sara Massey, & Brinda Athreya

The aims of this study were (1) to explore the impact of having an incarcerated parent on youth (ages 10–18) wellbeing; and (2) to identify recommendations from the youth based on their needs which address the challenges of having an incarcerated parent and promote individual and community flourishing. We utilized a Youth Participatory Action Research approach, including semistructured interviews, focus group discussions, storytelling, and photovoice with 20 participants, ages 10–18. Data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis and organized into five thematic categories: (1) youths' perceptions of their communities; (2) incarcerations' impact on families and communities; (3) incarcerations' influence on mental health and flourishing; (4) incarceration as a solution for community

safety; and (5) addressing the impact of incarceration on children, families, and communities. Findings provide important implications for practice and policy with children of incarcerated parents and for promoting flourishing individuals and communities.

Relevance for practitioners: For programs or youth-serving professionals supporting children of incarcerated parents (COIP), this study includes insightful excerpts from youth about their direct experience and recommendations for addressing challenges and promoting wellbeing. Youth specifically identified a desire for informal mentors they could turn to for emotional support and emphasized the importance of having opportunities to engage in positive outlets as a coping strategy. Youth also reflected a need for additional community support, whether to relieve family financial strain or offer resources after a family member was incarcerated but were often reluctant to reveal this information for fear of being judged or stigmatized. Of note, youth who participated in this study demonstrated a strong sense of empathy for those with similar experiences. Youth with incarcerated parents may find opportunities to connect with peers with shared experience especially helpful as sources of emotional support.

Available at: https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.23014

NATIONAL
MENTORING
RESOURCE CENTER
A Program of OJJDP

New Blog on Relationship-Building Behaviors: An Antidote to Loneliness

Amanda Davis, Associate Board Member of the National Mentoring Resource Center, describes how mentors can help reduce the risk that comes with youth isolation and loneliness. By demonstrating relationship-building behaviors, like supporting youth autonomy, mentors can foster positive relationships with mentees and buffer against the impacts of loneliness. Read more at the link below!

Available at: https://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/blog/relationship-building-behaviors-an-antidote-to-loneliness/

ASK A RESEARCHER!

Each issue, we'll end the newsletter by answering a question that was sent to us or brought up in one of our NMRC Office Hours sessions. Below Drs. Kelly Stewart, David DuBois, Gabe Kuperminc, & Mike Garringer consider a common research question about the relevance of data over time.

Q: When does mentoring data start to lose its relevance? Can enough time pass that mentoring research findings are no longer relevant or useful?

A: As mentoring research has accumulated over the past several decades, questions arise as to whether older research findings might start to lose their relevance. One example to consider is the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) study. This large, nationwide study followed participants from adolescence through adulthood and contained questions about informal mentoring relationships. In an effort to provide programs with the best data-informed recommendations, studies continue to be published regularly on the effects of mentoring on Add Health study youth, most of whom are now well into their 30s and 40s. This allows us to learn how mentoring during childhood might influence the course of an entire lifespan.

The thing is, today's young people face a whole new set of circumstances compared to those in the Add Health study who were teens back in the 90s. The COVID-19 pandemic, the rise of social media, and other contemporary issues shape today's youth in unique ways.

These changes seem rapid and profound, yet when we look at the bigger picture, every decade has its own transformative elements that reshape the lives of young people. Keeping these generational differences in mind helps us to build arguments as to why specific findings may or may not generalize to today's youth.

It gets even more complicated when we want to understand how the effects of youth mentoring extend into adulthood. A limitation inherent to collecting long-term outcomes is that the longer the follow up, the more time has passed since the initial data collection. We must weigh this limitation against the value that long-term data provides while remembering that some key mentoring findings from the 1990s have already shown replication in today's time; see for example, Dr. David DuBois and Dr. Carla Herrera's recent newsletter contribution on the follow up of the Big Brothers Big Sisters trial.

In returning to the example of the Add Health data, DuBoius and Silverthorn found positive work and education outcomes for Add Health youth who were followed up with in the early 2000s when they were 18-26 years old. Those who reported mentors were more likely to complete high school, attend college, and have jobs. Considering the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the changing economy, can we expect mentors of today's teens to open the same doors for youth 6-7 years down the line? The answer is unclear, but asking these questions allows us to maximize what we can learn from existing data while also avoiding false expectations about what mentoring can achieve for today's kids.

Reference

DuBois, David L., and Naida Silverthorn. "Natural mentoring relationships and adolescent health: Evidence from a national study." American journal of public health 95, no. 3 (2005): 518-524.

NATIONAL
MENTORING
RESOURCE CENTER
A Program of OJJDP

NMRC ANNOUNCEMENTS

Upcoming Webinars

- **Navigating the Digital World: Mentoring Strategies to Combat Cyberbullying**
  Join our panel of youth, subject matter experts, and mentors for an engaging discussion where we delve into the ever-evolving landscape of online interactions. We will explore mentoring techniques that equip mentors and mentees with the tools to recognize the effects of cyberbullying, how mentoring programs can support this process, and ultimately, how to empower youth to be intentional about their online engagement. Our expert speakers will share practical strategies, lived experience, and cutting-edge research to foster a safe and inclusive online environment for and with young people.
  August 22 at 1:00-2:30 PM EST

  https://mentoring-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_TotWhzd7R524wJWtRXxvkg

- **The Credible Messenger Model: A Transformative Approach to Mentoring**
  Credible messenger mentors are individuals who share lived experience with the youth they are mentoring, traditionally those impacted by the juvenile-justice system. Join our webinar to learn more about this innovative, community-based, and justice-centered model. Pioneers of the movement will discuss credible messenger mentoring's history, and how they see this model evolving and fitting into the broader mentoring landscape. We will explore what distinguishes credible messenger mentoring from other mentoring models, alongside how mentoring practitioners can incorporate it into their own programming.
  September 26 at 1:00-2:30 PM EST

  https://mentoring-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_xwrNnm85R_WJnz0-WLyWnw

NATIONAL
MENTORING
RESOURCE CENTER
A Program of OJJDP