MENTORING FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN: WHY IT MATTERS NOW MORE THAN EVER

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We become who we are and realize our full potential in and through strong supportive relationships with people who care about who we are and what happens to us.
**WHAT IS A MENTOR?**

“an experienced and trusted advisor or guide” (OED)

“mentor-mother-sister-friend”

Oprah’s description of her mentor, Maya Angelou

Formal and informal

Within and outside our natural networks
MENTORING MATTERS FOR YOUTH

Outcomes Associated with Mentoring Relationships

- High School Completion
- College Enrollment
- Working at least Part-Time
- Not in Gang
- Not Hurt Other in Fight
- Not Engage in High Risk-Taking
- High Self-Esteem
- Life Satisfaction
- High Level of Physical Activity
- Birth Control Use

Source: DuBois & Silverthorn (2005); DuBois et al. (2011)

Can make things better and prevent them from getting worse

- Broad and flexible approach
  - Across ages
  - Multiple formats (one-to-one, group, peer) and program type (school, community)
  - Natural and formal
MENTORING MATTERS FOR ADULTS

Career
- Climb faster
- More satisfied with careers and more likely to expect career success
- Salary, bonuses, total compensation higher

At all life stages, mentors can offer
- Personal support
- Academic or career support
- Role modeling and “possible selves”

(Murphy & Kram, 2014; Kao et al., 2014)
Original Mentor was in Homer’s Odyssey

Teacher and protector of Odysseus’ son Telemachus
WHY NOW MORE THAN EVER?

Growing economic disparity

Collapse of working class and emergence of new upper class

Between 1979 and 2005, American household income growth per year:

- Bottom fifth - $900
- Middle fifth - $8,700
- Top 1% - $745,000

Between 1980 and 2012

- Earnings for college graduates rose between 20% and 56%
- Earnings for high school grads fell 11%; For drop-outs 22%

(Putnam, 2015)
Increasing class-based segregation
- Neighborhoods - more families live in uniformly affluent or uniformly poor neighborhoods
- Education – children increasingly likely to be attending separate and unequal schools
- Removes some “stepping stones to upward mobility” – college going classmates or middle class neighbors
- Decreases exposure of upper middle class to lives of poor families and opportunity gap

Achievement gap
- Differences in math and reading test scores between high- and low-income families roughly 30-40% larger among children born in 2001 than among those born 25 yrs earlier

Activity gap
- Affluent families significantly increased investment of money and time in children in past 15 yrs
  - Affluent families spend 9x more on enrichment activities
  - Participation rose among affluent youth and fell among low-income youth
- Consistent involvement associated with host of positive outcomes
  - Higher GPA, lower drop-out, better work habits, more psychological resilience, etc.

(Putnam, 2015)
CONTINUING INTO ADULTHOOD

Educational attainment
- High school completion rate – about 80%
- Most (66%) immediately enroll in college
- But wealthy much more likely to complete
  - 99% by age 24 (up from 55% in 1970) compared to 20% among lowest income bracket (no change since 1970)

Greater need for college education

Revolving door work environment
- Typical worker’s job tenure about 4 years since 1996

Continued gender disparities in occupational outcomes
- Women hold 19.2% of S&P 500 board seats in the United States
- Women paid 78 percent of what men paid

(AAUW, 2015; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015; Catalyst, 2014; Murphy & Kram, 2014; National Center for Education Statistics; Pew Research Center; U Penn Educational Opportunity Center)
DEVELOPMENTAL NETWORK

Necessary for success in today’s marketplace

Network of mentors with varied backgrounds, skills, perspectives
  ▪ Supports your personal development and career advancement
  ▪ Focus is on you and your development

Informal mentors
  ▪ Benefits are greater
  ▪ Boundaryless careers – can no longer rely on institutional mentors

(Murphy & Kram, 2014)
BUT NOT ENOUGH YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE MENTORS

- Percentage of youth without a “go to” adult has been stable and may even be increasing
- ~1 in 3 youth in U.S. reach adulthood without having had a mentoring relationship (structured or informal)
- 42% of 8-21 year-olds reported wishing they had more caring adults to whom they could turn for help

Sources: Bruce & Bridgeland (2014); DuBois & Karcher (2014)
MENTOR GAP

Affluent youth get more and better informal mentoring

Gap starts in elementary school and widens into high school

Affluent youth

- Two to three times more likely to have a mentor
- Wider range of informal mentors – more connections with adults outside family

Low-income youth want mentors

- Nearly twice as likely as affluent youth to say at some point they wanted but did not have one

(Putnam, 2014)
HOW MENTORING WORKS

Promotes resiliency - one good relationship with an adult, not necessarily a parent, is associated with greater psychological health

“somebody who’s crazy about that child”
- Bronfenbrenner

Role modeling and identification

Social support
- Instrumental
- Emotional

Promotes development of soft skills
- Emotion regulation
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Problem-solving and critical thinking

Social capital – bonding and bridging

Concerted cultivation

(Lareau, 2003; Rhodes, 2002)
POWER OF ROLE MODELING

Women whose mothers worked outside the home more likely to:
  ▪ Complete more years of education
  ▪ Have jobs themselves
  ▪ Hold supervisory responsibility
  ▪ Earn higher wages (23% more)

Sons spent more time (7 ½ hrs/week) on child care and housework

“There are very few things … that have such a clear effect on gender inequality as being raised by a working mother”

(McGinn, 2015)
QUALITY MATTERS: YOUTH MENTORING

Continuous
- 1 year or more
- School-based – continue into 2nd year

Consistent

Connected
- Shared interests (doubles effect size)
- Youth feels “close” to mentor; sees mentor as significant adult

Collaborative
- Developmental or youth driven
- Structure and support
HIGH QUALITY RELATIONSHIPS

Enduring

Warm and supportive emotional connections
- Authenticity
- Empathy
- Positive regard

Developmentally appropriate structure and support

Supportive of mentees’ interests and initiative

Scaffold and propel mentee’s development

(Spencer & Rhodes, 2014)
SUPPORTIVE CONNECTIONS: POSITIVE REGARD

“She is...a bright light. She really is, I mean, .... she’s got a good heart. She knows right and wrong. Although she doesn’t always follow through. But I mean, heck, who didn’t do that when they were a teenager, you know? ....but as far as like ... like her ... her core ... like I think everybody has a core, you know?”

Sophie, a mentor

“She (mentor) just like, tells me not to give up and to like, try my hardest and I guess ...she believes in me. And it just makes me feel more confident, to do better.”

Marie, a mentee

(Spencer, 2006)
“he s[aid] that I can call him at any time. Well, to me, I’m ... kinda like a shy boy, so I don’t wanna, you know, call him? .... ‘cause, you know, he’s in college, and I don’t want to call him durin’ his college, durin’ his school, or, where ... he is, I don’t wanna call him so that, ... like, he was to get mad.”

*Steven, a mentee*
“I’d talk to him on Monday and he’d say oh, I can't wait for Saturday. He just really hated school.”

Wolfgang, mentor

“when we’d be talking, he’d say like ‘how are you doing in school?’ And I’d say ‘not so good, blah, blah.’ And then go on like, ‘why don’t you’ ...or like ‘well, you should do this.’ And ‘want to come over and do’... like that.”

Maurice, mentee

(Spencer, 2006)
“I have this closet in my room, a big one....I want to have it like, locked, so I have to be locked in to do homework. Cause that way I have to. You know what I mean, I can’t get up to watch TV or something. Cause that way, I’m in my room with all my books and stuff, just sitting there like, it’s worse than just doing my work. Since I can’t do anything else. ... And that’s why when I go over to Wolfgang’s house, I have to do my work. I go there to do it. So it’s not like my own home, so I can’t just be like, I'm in the middle of my work and like, oh, Wolfgang, I'm just going to do this now. I can’t do that ... that’s why it helps me to do my work there.

Maurice, a mentee

(Spencer, 2002)
SCAFFOLDING AND PROPELLING DEVELOPMENT

“I have said to her over and over again. You don't ever know if it sinks in, she's like I can't do that. I'm like it's not that you can't do it it's you don't know how to do it. Let's figure out how to do it. ... so it's sort of like you know, maybe before she didn't know she could do it.”

Jules, mentor

“Well, I don't think I'd be as ...I don't think ... (I) would have as big of an ego as I do now. I don't think I would have a lot of self confidence ... because she has taught me to go out and just do things as best as you can, no matter what happens. Cause before I used to be really afraid.”

Leigh, mentee

(Spencer, 2002)
“I do still have like, attitude problems at school, but it’s not as bad. Like I can get an attitude, and...then calm down and get back to my work. .... I’m kinda learning to like, let it go. It’s like, it’s little, it’s not a big thing. [Sophie’s] helping me on that. Like she’s just tells me, ‘You know, don’t get mad, just let it go. You know, don’t let any little thing mess up your day, just keep going.’ You know? So I’m...practicing on that.”

*Shadow, a mentee*
Mentoring relationships embedded within larger familial, community, and cultural contexts – for both mentors and youth
MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS ARE REAL RELATIONSHIPS

When they go well, make all the difference
Do not always go well
Some people are better at them than others
Mentors tend not to ask for help – until it is too late
Mentoring relationships end
  ▪ How they end matters
  ▪ Most people are bad at saying goodbye
THE BOTTOM LINE

We all need lots of mentors - people who see and know us and can offer

- Support
- Information
- Guidance
- Connections (social capital)
- Challenge
- Role modeling

Need to close the mentoring gap

- Connect youth with formal mentors who go the distance
- Strengthen existing ties - youth initiated mentoring
- Teach young people importance of cultivating mentors
BE A MENTOR!

Greater job and life satisfaction
Greater meaning in work and lives
Benefit from mutual learning with mentees
THANK YOU!

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