

The Intentional Mentor: Strategies and Guidelines for the Practice of Mentoring

W. Brad Johnson
United States Naval Academy

How can faculty in professional psychology programs become more intentional and effective mentors? Many psychology graduate students are never mentored, and very few psychologists have ever received training in the practice of mentoring. This article briefly summarizes the nature of mentoring, the prevalence of mentoring in psychology, primary obstacles to mentoring, and some ethical concerns unique to mentoring. The article provides several strategies to enhance mentoring and guidelines for the profession, departments of psychology, and individual psychologists who serve as mentors. This article is designed to help readers take a more deliberate approach to the practice of mentoring.

Our system of higher education, though officially committed to the fostering of intellectual and personal development of students, provides mentoring that is generally limited in quantity and poor in quality. (Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1978, p. 334)

Are psychologists equipped to mentor? Do most psychologists who develop long-term helping relationships with graduate students and junior colleagues consider mentoring a distinct area of professional practice? Although mentoring relationships clearly benefit those mentored, the mentors themselves, and the profession of psychology (Bogat & Redner, 1985; Clark, Harden, & Johnson, 2000), and although psychologists are increasingly called upon to mentor junior colleagues (H. C. Ellis, 1992; Hardy, 1994; Murray, 1997), relatively few psychologists ever receive training or supervision in the art and science of mentoring. Graduate school faculty, pressed with demands for research, teaching, and committee work, seldom initiate mentor relationships (*mentorships*; Clark et al., 2000; Cronan-Hillix, Davidson, Cronan-Hillix, & Gensheimer, 1986) and rarely consider methods of explicitly structuring and managing those that exist (Johnson & Nelson, 1999). Further, many psychologists may implicitly assume that mentoring “just happens,” whereas others hold widely divergent views about what mentoring actually means.

In this article, I encourage a deliberate transition in our profession’s conceptualization of mentoring—from secondary or collateral duty to intentional, professional activity. This will require adoption of a framework that casts mentoring as a distinct area of professional practice requiring intentional preparation and careful

application. I present a brief review of the literature on the nature of mentoring and the prevalence of mentoring in the field of psychology. Recent publications from psychology are emphasized, with secondary attention to key research from the fields of management and education. I highlight essential obstacles to mentoring and ethical concerns specific to mentorships, and I offer strategies for enhancing intentional mentoring at organizational, departmental, and individual levels. My primary purpose is to offer some preliminary practice guidelines for psychologists who mentor. I predict that as more psychologists become intentional mentors, substantial benefits will accrue to mentors, protégés, and the broader profession of psychology.

A Mentorship Primer

Toward a Definition of Mentoring

Mentor was an Ithacan noble in Homer’s *Odyssey*. A wise counselor to his friend Ulysses, Mentor was entrusted with the care, education, and protection of Ulysses’ son, Telemachus. Although modern writers often note the poor definitional clarity surrounding mentorships (Bogat & Redner, 1985; Merriam, 1983), most agree that the term *mentor* generally indicates teacher, adviser, sponsor, counselor, and role model (Jacobi, 1991; Kram, 1985; Levinson et al., 1978). Merriam (1983) described mentoring as “a powerful emotional interaction between an older and younger person, in a relationship in which the older mentor is trusted, loving, and experienced in the guidance of the younger” (p. 162), and Kram (1985) wrote that the mentor “supports, guides, and counsels a young adult as he or she accomplishes mastery of the adult world or the world of work” (p. 2).

For the purposes of this article, the following definition, gleaned from recent research on mentorships in the field of psychology, is offered. Mentoring is a personal relationship in which a more experienced (usually older) faculty member or professional acts as a guide, role model, teacher, and sponsor of a less experienced (usually younger) graduate student or junior professional. A mentor provides the protégé with knowledge, advice, challenge, counsel, and support in the protégé’s pursuit of becoming a full member of a particular profession (Clark et al., 2000; Johnson, Koch, Fallow, & Huwe, 2000). Mentorship connotes a unique and dis-

W. BRAD JOHNSON received his PhD in clinical psychology from Fuller Theological Seminary. He is an assistant professor in the Department of Leadership, Ethics and Law at the United States Naval Academy and a faculty associate in the Graduate School of Business and Education at Johns Hopkins University.

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CORRESPONDENCE CONCERNING THIS ARTICLE should be addressed to W. Brad Johnson, Department of Leadership, Ethics, and Law, United States Naval Academy, Luce Hall, Stop 7B, Annapolis, Maryland 21402. E-mail: johnsonb@usna.edu

tinctive personal relationship. Mentorship may incorporate a wide range of roles (e.g., teaching, advising, supervising, counseling, friendship), yet the whole is clearly more than the sum of these parts.

Finally, in this article I address the mentorship form referred to by Russell and Adams (1997) as the “primary” mentorship. Primary mentorships are enduring and bonded relationships between a single mentor and a protégé that often last for several years. Strong mentorships begun in graduate school fit this description. Although psychologists might also serve as important secondary mentors—engaged in mentorships that are less intense, less comprehensive, and of shorter duration—or as tertiary mentors—providing one or more mentor functions during a circumscribed period—these mentoring forms are not the current focus of this article.

Essential Functions of the Mentor

There are several distinct yet interwoven functions provided by mentors to protégés. Kram (1985) noted that these functions cluster within two primary domains: the career and the psychosocial. Career functions are typically focused on career development and include aspects of the mentorship that enhance “learning the ropes” and preparing for advancement. Career functions include sponsorship, exposure and visibility, coaching, protection, provision of challenging assignments, and transmission of applied professional ethics (Kitchener, 1992; Kram, 1985). Psychosocial functions enhance the protégé’s sense of competence, identity, and work-role effectiveness. Psychosocial functions include role modeling, acceptance and confirmation, counseling, and friendship (mutuality). This distinction in mentor functions has received considerable theoretical and empirical support (Kram, 1985; Levinson et al., 1978; Swerdlick & Bardon, 1988; Wilde & Schau, 1991), and skillful mentors seamlessly blend these functions in work with protégés (Clark et al., 2000; Kram, 1985).

Formation of the Mentor Relationship

In general, informal mentorships (those that develop spontaneously, without formal assignment by a third party) are evaluated by both mentors and protégés as being more effective and meaningful than formal (assigned) mentorships (Burke, 1984; Fagenson-Eland, Marks, & Amendola, 1997; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Protégés in informal relationships receive more career and psychosocial functions from mentors and report greater effect from, and satisfaction with, the mentorship. It appears that formally assigned mentorships result in less identification, less relational comfort, less motivation for mentoring, and ultimately less communication and interaction (Fagenson-Eland et al., 1997). Most agree that mentorships in business or graduate school should be facilitated rather than assigned (Kram, 1985; Russell & Adams, 1997) and that the most enduring and effective relationships are based on common contributors to relational attraction (e.g., shared interests, similarity, frequent contact, and enjoyment of interactions). Finally, the most successful graduate school mentorships are characterized by shared assumptions and expectations (on the part of mentor and protégé) about the form and function of the relationship.

Characteristics of Ideal Mentors

Literature on mentoring indicates that effective mentors (those highly rated in student surveys) possess specific personality characteristics and interpersonal traits (Blackburn, Cameron, & Chapman, 1981; Clark et al., 2000; Cronan-Hillix et al., 1986; Gilbert, 1985; Sanders & Wong, 1985). In terms of personality, desirable mentors are intelligent, caring, and appropriately humorous. They are flexible, empathic, and patient. Like good psychotherapists, good mentors are interpersonally supportive, encouraging, and poised. They appear to exude “emotional intelligence” (Goleman, 1995). In addition to demonstrating these qualities, highly rated mentors are ethical (Kitchener, 1992), psychologically well-adjusted (Cronan-Hillix et al., 1986), intentional role models (Gilbert, 1985), and well-known as scholars and professionals (Blackburn et al., 1981; Sanders & Wong, 1985). In essence, excellent mentors are kind, healthy, and competent.

The Benefits of Mentoring

What are the benefits of being mentored? After reviewing mentoring outcome literature in management and education, Russell and Adams (1997) concluded that “the benefits to the protégé can be so valuable that identification with a mentor should be considered a major developmental task of the early career” (p. 3). At the predoctoral level, benefits to mentored graduate students include development of professional skills, enhancement of confidence and professional identity, scholarly productivity, enhanced networking, dissertation success, and satisfaction with one’s doctoral program (Clark et al., 2000; Johnson, Koch, et al., 2000; Mellott, Arden, & Cho, 1997). One of the most important benefits to protégés is what Levinson et al. (1978) referred to as support, encouragement, and blessing on the student’s journey to “realization of the dream” (p. 98). That is, a good mentor discerns a protégé’s personal and vocational dream, endorses this as realistic, and offers an environment conducive to facilitating this dream. Postdoctoral benefits include increased income, more rapid promotion, career “eminence,” willingness to mentor others, and increased career satisfaction and achievement (Fagenson, 1989; Fagenson-Eland et al., 1997; Roche, 1979; Russell & Adams, 1997).

Mentors are also likely to benefit substantially from mentoring. Mentors describe reaping extrinsic rewards, such as accelerated research productivity, greater networking, and enhanced professional recognition, when protégés perform well (Ragins & Scandura, 1994; Russell & Adams, 1997). Indeed, well-known psychologists memorialized in the *American Psychologist* are typically described as excellent teachers and mentors (Kinnier, Metha, Buki, & Rawa, 1994). Important intrinsic benefits include enhanced career satisfaction, rejuvenation of creative energy from collaboration with protégés, and a sense of generativity (Levinson et al., 1978).

How Prevalent Is Mentoring in Psychology?

Research on the prevalence of graduate school mentorships in the field of psychology confirms that between one half and two thirds of doctoral students are mentored by faculty (Atkinson, Casas, & Neville, 1994; Clark et al., 2000; Cronan-Hillix et al.,

1986; Johnson, Koch, et al., 2000; Kirchner, 1969; Mintz, Bartels, & Rideout, 1995; Swerdlik & Bardon, 1988). Since 1945, clinical psychology doctoral students have been significantly less likely (53%) than nonclinical (experimental) doctoral students (69%) to be mentored (Johnson, Koch, et al., 2000), and among recent clinical psychology graduates, PsyDs (56%) are significantly less likely than PhDs (73%) to be mentored (Clark et al., 2000).

Those psychologists who report not having a graduate school mentor express regret and typically report that the inability to find a suitable mentor or the lack of faculty interest in mentoring is the primary reason for not being mentored (Clark et al., 2000; Cronan-Hillix et al., 1986). Psychologists who are mentored give overwhelmingly positive assessments of the experience, are significantly more satisfied with their doctoral programs, are significantly more likely to mentor others themselves, and describe mentoring as significantly more important for the profession than those not mentored. When psychologists are not mentored during graduate school—and perhaps during their early career development—concerns arise about the extent to which they are personally and professionally prepared to function confidently, competently, and ethically (Johnson & Nelson, 1999; Kitchener, 1992).

Several authors have hypothesized that women have less access to mentorships than men (Bolton, 1980; Gilbert & Rossman, 1992). Although research on the frequency or pervasiveness of mentoring indicates that male and female psychology graduate students are equally likely to report a mentorship, it is possible that women face unique challenges in securing and managing a mentorship. For example, women may face stereotypes (e.g., that women are less committed to careers in the field) and concerns that mentorships will become—or will be perceived as becoming—sexualized (Bolton, 1980). In addition, women are at a significant disadvantage when seeking same-gender mentorships because most psychology graduate students are women, and most senior faculty are men (Huntley, Schneider, & Aronson, 2000).

Obstacles to Mentoring

Organizational Obstacles

There may be several organizational or cultural obstacles to mentoring students in the field of psychology. These include systems of promotion and tenure, as well as university accounting systems that reward faculty exclusively for funded research and publications, typically at the expense of teaching and mentoring (Belar, 1998; Folse, 1991). Other academy-wide obstacles include recent trends toward downsizing in the number of tenure-track faculty positions and the growing practice of hiring part-time instructors.

The advent of professional psychology training has been accompanied by increasing student–faculty ratios and a decline in emphasis on research as a primary context of student–faculty interaction. In addition, professional graduate programs are often shorter in duration than traditional PhD programs. Faculty in professional programs have more students to advise, less time to get to know them, and less opportunity for collaboration on scholarly activities.

A final organizational obstacle to mentoring in psychology is the discrepancy between rates of mentoring reported by graduate students and those reported by program faculty. Although clinical

graduate students report that between 50% and 65% are mentored (Clark et al., 2000; Cronan-Hillix et al., 1986), directors of training of programs approved by the American Psychological Association (APA) estimate that 82% of graduate students are mentored (Dickinson & Johnson, 2000). Why the disparity? It is possible that program leaders assume that students with advisors are engaged in helpful mentorships. This assumption, if erroneous, would help explain why the profession at large has not devoted more attention to mentoring in graduate education.

Departmental (Local) Obstacles

Several obstacles to graduate school mentorships occur primarily at the level of the local graduate department. For example, formation of supportive mentorships is less likely to occur when programs implicitly or explicitly foster a culture of competition between students—for instance, suggesting that not all those admitted to a doctoral program will “survive” beyond the master’s degree. Such an approach discourages faculty from making early investments in relationships with students. When psychology graduate students are unmentored, they generally attribute this to the faculty’s lack of time and interest (Clark et al., 2000).

An additional local obstacle is the finding that few training programs intentionally reward faculty mentoring activities. Although 41% of programs offer weight toward promotion, fewer offer reduced class loads (14%) or financial compensation (5%) to excellent mentors (Dickinson & Johnson, 2000). Finally, many graduate programs have tremendous difficulty attracting and keeping female and minority faculty members; consequently, same-gender or same-race mentors are not available to many students. Although more women than ever are obtaining doctorates in psychology, they continue to face some gender-specific obstacles in forming mentorships and have significantly fewer opportunities than their male counterparts to work with a same-gender mentor (Bolton, 1980; Huntley et al., 2000). Similarly, minority psychologists are often actively pursued as mentors by both minority-group and European American students, resulting in burdensome mentoring responsibilities, less opportunity for scholarship, and ultimately, burn-out (Atkinson et al., 1994).

Individual (Relational) Obstacles

Certain obstacles to the formation and development of mentorship are rooted in the person of the mentor. Not all psychologists make good mentors. Some faculty members evidence personality traits and behavior patterns that render them neutral—or worse, corrosive—in their effect on students. For example, psychology graduate students describe “bad” mentors as aloof, critical, demeaning, indifferent, controlling, or pathologic (Cronan-Hillix et al., 1986). Many of the same interpersonal skills and personality features that promote excellent clinical work also predict success as a mentor.

Another personal obstacle to optimum mentoring is the common human propensity for self-disturbance through irrational cognitions and demanding beliefs regarding one’s performance as a mentor (Johnson, Huwe, & Lucas, 2000). For example, even excellent mentors may hold pernicious beliefs such as the following: (a) I must be successful with all of my protégés all of the time; (b) I have to be greatly loved and respected by all of my protégés;

(c) because I have invested so much as a mentor, my protégés should be equally hard working, equally high achieving, and always eager to follow my recommendations; and (d) my protégés must never leave or disappoint me. These beliefs can cause dysfunction for the mentor and the mentorship.

It is a common phenomenon that faculty mentors are most inclined to mentor students who remind them of themselves (Blackburn et al., 1981). That is, faculty view as most promising and successful those protégés whose interests and career paths are most similar to their own. This tendency raises concerns about the extent to which graduate students actually enjoy equal access to mentorships. Finally, graduate students and faculty mentors may at times harbor discrepant assumptions about mentoring, including incongruent expectations about the role of the mentor. Such discrepancies, particularly when unprocessed, often lead to mentorship dissatisfaction and dysfunction.

Mentorship-Specific Ethical Concerns

Relationships between graduate students and faculty have long been recognized as fertile soil for ethical dilemmas (APA, 1992; Biaggio, Paget, & Chenoweth, 1997; Blevins-Knabe, 1992; Kitchener, 1992; Pope & Vetter, 1992). Unlike client–therapist relationships, faculty–student relationships are characterized by numerous multiple and overlapping roles (e.g., instructor, evaluator, research supervisor, and adviser). When a faculty–student relationship becomes a mentorship, these ethical concerns are heightened for a variety of reasons (Johnson & Nelson, 1999). Mentor relationships are long-term, complex, and multifaceted. They often form gradually and informally. Further, formation may hinge on “chemistry” or attraction (e.g., shared interests, proximity, perceived similarity). Mentorships are characterized by mutuality (e.g., reciprocity in self-disclosure), depth, caring, and emotional bonding (Hardy, 1994; Kram, 1985; Torrance, 1984). Finally, mentorships often exist in perpetuity; it is common for mentors to continue providing some mentor functions (e.g., encouragement, support, and career guidance) long after the protégé has moved on and the relationship has lessened in intensity.

Although graduate students themselves rate mutuality and comprehensiveness as two of the most important factors in good mentorships (Wilde & Schau, 1991), and although many mentor functions (e.g., counseling, acceptance, friendship) appear inherently prone to increase intimacy (Kram, 1985), current and proposed ethical guidelines offer very little in the way of explicit guidance for managing mentorships (APA, 1992, 2001). Further, current ethical decision-making strategies relevant to avoiding harmful multiple relationships appear to be of limited use. For example, Gottlieb (1993) recommended that psychologists avoid entering into multiple roles with others if a significant power imbalance exists, the relationship is of long duration, or there is no clear termination point to the relationship. Of course, mentorships are naturally long-term, inherently power imbalanced, and often exist in perpetuity. In many ways, mentorships are “multiple” from the outset—that is, they involve several roles and dimensions.

Psychologists should consider two approaches to maximizing ethical outcomes and avoiding harm in relationships with protégés. First, Blevins-Knabe (1992) recommended that graduate faculty consider the following questions relative to relationships with students (protégés): (a) Is the professor role negatively compro-

mised? (b) Is the professor exploiting the student? (c) Is the professor increasing the probability of being exploited? (d) Is the professor’s behavior interfering with the professional roles of other faculty? Although quite broad, these questions may help focus a psychologist’s scrutiny of the effects a mentorship has on his or her role, the protégé, and the larger community. Second, Johnson and Nelson (1999) suggested applying the ethical code guidelines (APA, 1992) relevant to therapeutic relationships to mentor relationships. Using this framework, psychologists would give attention to concerns such as structuring the relationship, providing informed consent, avoiding all sexual intimacies with current or former protégés, and giving careful attention to interruption and termination of mentoring. Although imperfect, these approaches offer some preliminary guidance for ethical management of mentorships.

Strategies for the Practice of Mentoring

Organizational Strategies

The APA and other national psychology organizations should consider several policy-based strategies for increasing the prevalence and quality of mentoring in the profession of psychology. First, professional organizations can allocate more attention and resources to the science and practice of mentoring by establishing awards for outstanding mentors (the APA and several of its divisions have already taken the lead in this regard) and by recognizing doctoral programs that distinguish themselves by fostering mentorships. Organizations can sponsor research on mentoring, and more important, they can sponsor continuing education for psychologists to provide explicit training in the professional conduct of mentorships.

The APA should also consider the merits of incorporating an assessment of mentoring in the accreditation process for doctoral-training programs and internship-training sites. Because excellent mentoring represents one of the most important features of graduate education (Ellis, 1992), it makes sense that accrediting bodies should incorporate explicit evaluation of mentoring (e.g., prevalence, quality, outcomes) in training programs. Currently, Domain E (Student–Faculty Relations) of the APA accreditation guidelines (APA, 2000) notes only that student–faculty interactions should be collegial and that faculty should serve as role models and “engage in actions” (p. 12) to promote student development. The addition of greater clarity regarding appropriate and desired functions of mentors would be useful.

Finally, professional organizations can assist in development of specific professional practice guidelines for psychologists who mentor. Because many psychologists had no mentor in graduate school, and because mentoring is rarely taught as an explicit or distinct area of professional activity, there is a need for both strategic practice recommendations and ethical guidelines unique to forming, structuring, and managing mentorships. For example, psychologists who mentor others should intentionally structure the relationship (i.e., openly discuss the relationship’s anticipated contours and course, including frequency of contact), avoid exploitation of the protégé (including more subtle emotional and academic exploitation), and interrupt or terminate mentorships in a manner that minimizes harm to the protégé (Johnson & Nelson, 1999).

Departmental Strategies

Graduate programs in professional psychology should consider strategies for creating a departmental culture of mentoring. In this facilitated-mentoring environment, the formation of student–faculty mentorships would be encouraged and supported without being required or formally assigned. In this culture, faculty mentoring of students would be both valued and rewarded. Ideally, initiatives for enhancing mentoring would emanate from faculty leaders. Some salient strategies for facilitating mentoring within a program include the following.

Make mentoring potential a criteria in faculty hiring. Although many advertisements for core graduate faculty positions mention student mentoring as an important job component, few programs explicitly evaluate this dimension of a candidate's performance. Research clearly indicates that not all psychologists are well suited to the mentor role (Clark et al., 2000; Cronan-Hillix et al., 1986). Graduate programs would be well served by carefully assessing the mentoring experience and track record of job candidates. This may be achieved through behaviorally based interviewing and contact with some of the candidate's former graduate students.

Prepare faculty for the mentor role. New faculty cannot be expected to fully understand the form and function of mentorships. Graduate programs should consider methods for intentionally preparing faculty for their role as mentor to graduate students (Bigelow & Johnson, 2001). These methods might include a formal orientation with senior faculty mentors, workshops relevant to mentoring, and ongoing supervision of mentorships (by seasoned faculty leaders) during the pretenure phase of employment. At the least, educational components of orientation should include examples of successful mentorships, mentor functions (Kram, 1985), and strategies for handling ethical dilemmas or conflicts in the mentor role.

Explicitly assess and reward faculty mentoring. After selecting promising faculty mentors and providing mentoring orientation and supervision, graduate programs should seek innovative methods for evaluating and reinforcing mentoring behavior. Such efforts should be positively framed and may involve student-rating data (both objective and narrative) and faculty peer ratings. Reinforcements for excellent mentoring might include annual awards, weight in promotion and tenure decisions, credit in course load allocation, and various salary increments. As an example, graduate students in the psychology department at the University of Southern California initiated an annual anonymous assessment of all program faculty mentors (Cesa & Fraser, 1989). Rating data were made available to all faculty and graduate students each year, and students offered an annual award to an excellent faculty mentor. Not surprisingly, faculty performance in the mentor role increased significantly.

Create training-model-specific mediums for mentoring. Although the traditional mentoring paradigm in graduate education is that of the faculty–student dyad working intensively on scholarly/research endeavors over a period of several years, contemporary training models in professional psychology require new approaches to mentorship facilitation (Belar, 1998; Ward & Johnson, 2001). Graduate programs must tailor approaches to mentoring to their unique missions and cultures. One promising medium for mentoring in larger professional programs is the vertical team

model (Hughes et al., 1993). Using this approach, faculty lead research or clinically oriented (depending on program training model) weekly team meetings in order to teach, model, and supervise student research or clinical work in the faculty member's area of expertise. Vertical teams consist of a small number of graduate students who are representative of the various year cohorts in a doctoral program and who share a faculty leader's research or clinical interests. Team meetings are designed to foster peer interaction as well as modeling and supervision by a faculty exemplar. Vertical teams create desirable conditions for mentorship formation, expeditious dissertation completion, and emphasis on either research or clinical pursuits (Hughes et al., 1993; Ward & Johnson, 2001).

Prepare graduate students for the protégé role. Graduate students are often unfamiliar with mentor relationships and may lack both an appreciation of the benefits of mentoring and an understanding of the mechanics of mentorship initiation and maintenance (Johnson & Huwe, in press). Mentorships are reciprocal collegial relationships that require professionalism and ethical behavior by graduate students. New graduate students would benefit from explicit preparation for the protégé role. This should include an introduction to the personality and behavioral features of graduate students who are successful in securing a mentorship (Green & Bauer, 1995; Johnson & Huwe, in press). For example, excellent protégés communicate clearly, work hard, demonstrate loyalty, and accept new challenges.

Diligently assess mentoring-relevant outcomes. Although an extensive body of mentoring-outcome literature has accumulated in the field of management (Burke, 1984; Fagenson, 1989; Kram, 1985; Noe, 1988; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Roche, 1979; Russell & Adams, 1997; Torrance, 1984), we know relatively little about how mentorships benefit graduate students in psychology. Preliminary research indicates that graduate students who are mentored are more satisfied with their program (Clark et al., 2000; Cronan-Hillix et al., 1986), yet we know little about more tangible (immediate and long-term) mentoring outcomes. For example, graduate departments might assess the correlation between primary mentorships and variables such as time to dissertation completion; personal health ratings; coauthorship on papers and articles; self-ratings of professional confidence; faculty ratings of competence; time to graduation; time to licensure; quality of internship placement; and early career income, productivity, and satisfaction.

Individual Strategies: Guidelines for the Practice of Mentoring

According to Levinson et al. (1978),

The mentor relationship is one of the most complex, and developmentally important, a [person] can have in early adulthood. . . . No word currently in use is adequate to convey the nature of the relationship we have in mind here. . . . Mentoring is defined not in terms of formal roles but in terms of the character of the relationship and functions it serves. (pp. 97–98)

The following case study serves as an example of a successful mentorship: An associate professor in a clinical psychology doctoral program, "Dr. Guide" was approached by "Tim," a first-year graduate student, about initiating a mentor relationship. Dr. Guide was an excellent teacher and a productive scholar; however, she

was also quite selective with respect to committing to mentorships. Recognizing the finite nature of her time and resources, as well as the importance of compatibility between mentor and protégé, she told Tim that she would not be able to accept a new protégé until the following year (when one of her current protégés graduated) and that she required a year of formal advising to evaluate a potential match in scholarly interest, career objectives, and personality.

After a year, Dr. Guide determined that Tim was hard working, capable, sincerely interested in her research, and able to contribute constructively to her scholarly projects. She agreed to mentor Tim and scheduled a meeting to discuss mutual expectations for the relationship—including anticipated duration, her policy on confidentiality in mentorships, frequency of contact, and cross-gender concerns. For example, she elicited agreement from Tim that both would work to maintain good professional boundaries. Dr. Guide further solicited from Tim a description of his “ideal” career trajectory, with emphasis on his early career dream (a faculty position in medical school or clinical graduate program). Dr. Guide began directing Tim toward important professional opportunities, including teaching and research assistantships, coauthorship on articles and conference papers, and top-notch clinical practicum placements. She introduced him to colleagues at conferences and included him as a cotherapist, coteacher, and coresearcher on different occasions so that she could clearly model her approach to professional activities. Moreover, Dr. Guide was encouraging and supportive of Tim. Although honest in her feedback, she communicated a vision of Tim’s competence and potential that markedly bolstered his self-perception and subsequent performance.

Toward the end of Tim’s graduate work, he independently had an article accepted by a prestigious psychology journal. When she found herself responding coolly to this news, she realized that Tim’s increasing independence and pending graduation were difficult for her. She took the initiative in processing this with Tim and warmly congratulated him. She wrote excellent letters of recommendation for him. When Tim departed the program, the two continued to collaborate at times and enjoyed a continuing friendship.

What can individual psychologists do to become excellent mentors? Outstanding mentors are typically experienced, confident, and competent professionals who are vitally interested in facilitating the personal and professional development of one or more well-selected protégés. They understand the essential tasks of mentoring (O’Neil & Wrightsman, 2001) and attempt to offer protégés both career and psychosocial mentoring (Kram, 1985). Excellent mentors create opportunities for protégés, allow them to work unimpeded, and set high performance standards that stimulate motivation (Noe, 1988). At the same time, they are patient, accepting, competent, and prone to sharing power and disclosing their thoughts and feelings (Hardy, 1994). This section offers some salient practice strategies and ethical considerations for use by psychologists who mentor graduate students or other junior professionals.

Be selective. Good mentors recognize that the time and resources they may allocate to mentoring are finite (Ridley, 2000), and they limit the number of protégés they actively mentor. Before selecting graduate student advisees, research assistants, or clinical supervisees, they consider the potential for a mentoring relation-

ship—including essential matching variables such as shared interests, personality compatibility, and professional synergy. They are kind but clear in declining to commit to mentorships with juniors whom they view as poorly matched or for whom they have inadequate resources.

Clarify expectations. Effective mentors are explicit when it comes to defining and clarifying their own expectations and those of protégés. Prior to committing to a mentorship, psychologists clarify their expectations regarding how the relationship will look and what it will incorporate. This includes some discussion of expected mentor functions (e.g., support, encouragement, research collaboration, creation of opportunities), degree of mutuality, and range of appropriate contexts for interaction (Kram, 1985; O’Neil & Wrightsman, 2001). Wise mentors revisit these issues as the relationship unfolds and conduct ongoing evaluations of the health and value of the mentorship.

Know and affirm your protégés. The effective mentor discovers avenues for “blessing” a protégé’s career and life aspirations—that is, acknowledging what Levinson et al. (1978) called the “dream”: “The mentor nourishes a dream in the student and sets the student into creative flight, tempering idealism with the wisdom of experience” (Davis, Litle, & Thornton, 1997, p. 61). Of course, a mentor can only bless what he or she has seen. Excellent mentors are intentional students of their protégés; they watch their protégés carefully to discern their unique talents, inclinations, and interests. A true mentor sees what the protégé can become and confidently affirms this vision, long before the protégé “arrives” as professional. The mentor is quick to affirm the protégés efforts and achievements and is tolerant in the face of imperfection (Noe, 1988).

Consider the developmental needs of protégés. Seasoned mentors recognize that graduate students are commonly anxious, insecure, and dependent (Bruss & Kopala, 1993). They feel incompetent—like imposters who will soon be revealed. They may be prone to use the mentor in various (often unconscious) ways to fulfill unmet needs and achieve greater personal and professional maturity (Mehlman & Glickauf-Hughes, 1994). Mentors understand that protégés may upset themselves by taking life too seriously, demanding perfection, or catastrophizing events during the course of training (A. Ellis, 1977; Johnson, Huwe, & Lucas, 2000). In the face of these developmental trials and disturbances, good mentors exude patience and provide unconditional acceptance.

Engage in intentional modeling. Intentional mentors move beyond inadvertent or circumstantial modeling, and instead are overtly invitational, asking their protégés to watch them perform specific professional tasks (e.g., teaching, clinical work, research, supervision) and encouraging them to try these activities as well. Excellent mentors appreciate the fact that modeling offers several advantages to protégés. Modeling allows direct demonstration of many behaviors specific to the profession, and this often produces faster learning than direct experience. Finally, many complex professional behaviors (e.g., grant writing, specific therapy interventions) can only be produced via the influence of models (Bolton, 1980; Bruss & Kopala, 1993). Good mentors intentionally model such characteristics as honesty, forthrightness, and ethical practice (Biaggio et al., 1997).

Balance advocacy with professional requirements. Although a key component of good mentoring is advocacy and protection of protégé (Kram, 1985), psychologists who mentor must balance this

function with other professional obligations. When serving as mentors, psychologists must strike a balance between strong advocacy for the protégé and the ethical obligation to protect the public from incompetent or unethical junior professionals (Biaggio et al., 1997). Although they are tirelessly affirming advocates, skillful mentors are attentive to performance problems or unprofessional conduct in protégés, and they provide honest feedback and recommend corrective measures—including termination—if necessary.

Attend to issues of gender. Although most professional psychology graduate students are now women, most faculty—particularly those of the senior ranks—continue to be men. Functionally, this means that women have fewer options for same-gender mentorships, both in graduate school and in their early careers. Although women are mentored at a rate equivalent to that of men and report significant satisfaction with their mentorships (Clark et al., 2000), mentors should be alert to gender differences in professional identity formation (Gilbert, 1985; Gilbert & Rossman, 1992; Kram, 1985; McGowen & Hart, 1990). For example, in comparison to their male counterparts, women protégés may prefer a more relational focus, contextual decision making, and a mentor who models egalitarian values and blending of personal and professional roles (Gilbert, 1985; McGowen & Hart, 1990).

Attend to issues of race and culture. A pernicious myth surrounding the mentoring of ethnic minority graduate students is that minority students can only be mentored by minority faculty (Brown, Davis, & McClendon, 1999). In fact, 73% of mentored minority-group professional psychology students are mentored by a White professor (Atkinson, Neville, & Casas, 1991) and report mentorship satisfaction equal to that reported by students who work with same-race mentors. Because minority faculty remain grossly underrepresented in most academic fields (Brinson & Kottler, 1993), it is essential that nonminority faculty actively recruit and intentionally mentor ethnic minority students. In 1991, African American, Hispanic, American Indian, and Asian American faculty totaled only 12.3% of the full-time professors in higher education in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 1995).

At times, minority group students may benefit from secondary or tertiary mentors (Russell & Adams, 1997), particularly when these students find few options for same-race, same-culture, or same-gender primary mentors. For example, APA's Division 35 (Psychology of Women) offers a mentoring network for female students. Similarly, the Association of Black Psychologists offers tertiary mentoring of graduate students by professional members. Although tertiary mentorships can prove beneficial to many graduate students, primary reliance on mentors external to one's graduate program (Thomas, 1993) can create a sense of disengagement from the program and leave a student at a distinct disadvantage with respect to assistantships, research opportunities, and strong letters of recommendation.

Psychologists who mentor across cultures should have appropriate attitudes and competencies. These include (a) genuine concern for the experiences and welfare of minority group students, (b) diligent pursuit of cultural sensitivity—including investment of time learning about the unique cultural heritage of their protégés, and (c) appreciation of each protégé's uniqueness within his or her culture (APA, 1993; Brinson & Kottler, 1993; Brown et al., 1999).

Model personal health and self-awareness. Psychologists who mentor should demonstrate such traits as self-care, self-awareness, tolerance of fallibility, and transparency. Excellent mentors demonstrate appreciation for their own strengths and weaknesses, and they model unconditional self-acceptance (A. Ellis, 1977) while working actively to dispute irrational demands or evaluative beliefs (Johnson, Huwe, & Lucas, 2000). They strive for excellence without demanding perfection, and they do not require adulation or approval from protégés. Ideal mentors evidence some degree of humanness, spontaneity, and humor (O'Neil & Wrightsman, 2001). Finally, mentors use appropriate self-disclosure—particularly in relation to their shortcomings—as a way of offering protégés a model for coping with imperfection (A. Ellis, 1983).

Remain vigilant to conflict or dysfunction. Excellent mentors understand that not all mentorships will be successful. They accept that in spite of their best efforts and attention, they will be poorly suited to mentor certain students and junior colleagues. They also understand that conflict and change are inevitable in relationships and that mentorships will sometimes produce disagreement, a strain in roles, and even grief (Johnson, Huwe, & Lucas, 2000; Johnson & Nelson, 1999; Levinson et al., 1978; O'Neil & Wrightsman, 2001). They give special attention to mentorships that become conflictual or dysfunctional; and they attempt to resolve these concerns while remaining sensitive to the protégé's best interests. They accept transitions and terminations in mentorships and acknowledge awareness of loss and feelings of sadness without sabotaging protégé independence.

Avoid exploitation. Characterized by intimacy, mutuality, and involving multiple contexts for interaction and a wide range of roles, mentorships may occasionally lead to exploitation. Although mentors who become emotionally enmeshed or prematurely collegial with protégés may risk being exploited, the primary concern is exploitation of the protégé. Exploitation may run the gamut from overt sexual harassment to more subtle and insidious emotional or scholarly exploitation. Although mentorships are often "multiple" relationships by nature, they need not necessarily cause impairment in the psychologist's objectivity or cause harm or exploitation to the protégé (APA, 2001; Johnson & Nelson, 1999).

Summary

Literature from psychology and other fields consistently demonstrates that mentoring is beneficial personally and professionally to students and junior colleagues. Psychology graduate students who enjoy mentorships during training are more satisfied with the experience and more confident and successful as new professionals. Professional organizations, psychology training programs, and individual psychologists should address current obstacles to mentoring and consider strategies for enhancing both the prevalence and effectiveness of mentoring in graduate training and in the broader profession.

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