Mentoring 101:
What we’ve learned about school-based mentoring in San Antonio

San Antonio Mentoring Forum, 2008

Michael J. Karcher, Ed.D., Ph.D.
University of Texas at San Antonio
Principal Investigator of the Communities in Schools Study of Mentoring in the Learning Environment (SMILE)

www.utsasmile.org

In memory of a fantastic mentor
Alberto Mijangos
Kenny Karcher

Catch and Release Friends:
Meet Ron and Denver

• Ron, a poor white boy turned rich art dealer in Dallas, befriends Denver, an old homeless black man from Louisiana.
• Autobiographical story, “Same kind of different as me”

Part I: Siblings, Friends, and other Crazy People in Kids’ Lives

One key goal of program-based mentors should be to help youth learn how to recruit those people in the world who are “crazy about them.” Having had a mentor who the youth felt was “crazy about me” the youth should be more likely to look for other, similar folks outside their families, knowing now that such folks exist. There need to be these “crazy” people outside the kids’ family and neighborhood, and specifically in their schools and the work world.

Urie Bronfenbrenner, the famous developmental psychologist, when asked at a US Senate meeting what his 40 years of research reveals about the key ingredients of successful youth development, replied:

“Someone’s gotta be crazy about the kid.”
These "crazy" people can help bridge the family and non-family worlds, which can be especially important for youth in ethnically homogeneous and disenfranchised communities.

Given a strong reliance on family self-sufficiency and separate home/school roles, Latino/a youth may be most likely to enter into mentoring relationships in schools where teachers refer them.

Part II: Promoting Connectedness:
(a) results from social support (e.g., mentor),
(b) leads to feelings of relatedness to others (e.g., teachers) and belonging (e.g., at school).
In response to these feelings, youth connect through greater activity in and more positive feelings towards the people in those places.

---

Study of Mentoring in the Learning Environment

Begun, in 2003, SMILE is the 1st large-scale, multisite, randomized study of school-based mentoring.
Followed 550 youth (½ mentees; ½ comparison) across 20 elementary, middle and high schools for two years.
The only SBM study to include either a large numbers of Latino mentees/mentors, or high school-aged mentees.
Mentors were college students, business employees, and adult volunteers (half Latino).

---

Extending Rhodes' (2005) mediation model to SBM

Mentees Feel
(a) Empathy, Praise, & Attention from her Mentor;
(b) that she "Matters" to her Mentor; (c) is Valued by Mentor

SMILE study found Essential Ingredients to effective SBM as well in friendships

Study of Mentoring in the Learning Environment

Conducted through Communities In Schools of San Antonio, so it can tell us about AMIGO: Adding Mentoring for Individuals Getting Other Services (e.g., tutoring, counseling)

Key question: For kids already receiving services commonly available in schools, who benefits most from receiving a mentor in addition?
Key outcome measures

1. Measure of Adolescent Connectedness (Karcher, 2003): Youth, parent, teacher versions
2. Self-Esteem Questionnaire (DuBois, 1999)
3. Social Skills Rating Scale (Gresham & Elliott, 1991) Youth, parent, teacher versions
4. Grades (Math and Reading) and Attendance
5. Mattering, Hope, and Support Scales
6. Connors' Behavior Rating Scale (Connors, 1985; Parent and teacher versions)

Outcomes: Mentoring improved self-esteem, connectedness, & social skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex of Boys’ mentors</th>
<th>Elementary School</th>
<th>Middle School</th>
<th>High School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male &amp; Female Mentors</td>
<td>Greatly improved</td>
<td>No change</td>
<td>Some got worse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Mentors</td>
<td>No change</td>
<td>“mas o menos”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same Sex Mentors</td>
<td>Some change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, some groups benefited more

For which Latinos did SBM AMIGOS work best? Elementary Boys

After being mentored
Elementary School Latinos reported more
Connectedness to school and to culturally different peers,
Social skills: Empathy and cooperation
Hopefulness

Part III: Toward a new definition of what a school-based mentor (SBM) is

Just as psychologists are not doctors, mentors are not tutors. But just how they are different may be unclear to some Latino mentors and mentees (as it is to is for many Anglo mentors and mentees).

It may be especially important to “train” or orient Latino mentees (and mentors) to this “crazy person” change process model.

The mentoring model, viewing mentors as “relationship coaches”, is one that may not be immediately clear to those from communities with historically different parenting and healing methods.

Are Mentors Friends or Fixers?

- Friends share histories, discuss hopes and fears, but mostly they have fun.
- Fixers—counselors, social workers etc.—assume a one-up position: I can help you with your problems.
- Do we want mentors to prevent the worst in people from emerging, or help pull the best out of people?

We’re your friends, we’re your friends, ‘til the bitter end.

When you’re at alone, who comes around, to pluck you up, when you are down…

And when you’re outside looking in whose there to open the door? That’s what mentors/friends are for.

And when your lost, in dire need, whose at your side at lightning speed? We’re friends with every creature coming down the pike, in fact, we’ve never met a mentee that we didn’t like…That’s what mentors R4
How the field has viewed activities

Styles & Morrow’s describe
Prescriptive (directed, heavy
handed) vs. Developmental
(relationship-based, youth focused)

The Hamiltons’ Instrumental (goal-
oriented) vs. Psychosocial

Journal of Community Psychology

Mentors: Always Developmental

• Mentoring is not tutoring, though they are
not mutually exclusive.
• In a developmental approach, although a
curriculum or other structural guide can be
used, the main goal is to provide empathy,
friendship and attention to the child and to
establish a caring relationship with him/her.
• There is good theory to suggest providing
these experiences promotes ambition,
develops character, fosters connectedness.

What is Theory?

• It can organize diverse pieces of
information in to a coherent whole
• It has predictive power & avoids
unnecessary complexity
• Combines explanatory power with
elegance
• It has practical implications
• In sum, it helps us understand what
beforehand was confusing

My favorite developmental theory:

Kohut’s Self-Psychology

Ambition develops through
early experiences of feeling
valued, active (+), & loved

Goals, ideals, & valuation follow
from identifying w/ those seen as
strong, consistent, calm, and good

Skills & talents derive from the
ambition to achieve goals

Mentors trained to provide what
Kohut says youth need

• Human needs: Empathy, praise, & attention
from others (promotes self-esteem); Someone
to idealize, identify with, & model (promotes
connectedness)
• Program structure 1: A predictable & safe
environment, where praise & punishment are
clear, expectable, and consistent; structure 2:
Opportunities to succeed; Someone to see it.
(promotes skill development)

“Empathy + praise + attention =
Feeling valued by the Mentor:

A critical ingredient to self-development but often in
in short supply in high school SBM matches

Elementary school boys

Mentee feels valued

Boys: Blue

Girls: Magenta

High school boys
Part IV: It does matter what you do! What the mentors did affected whether the kids felt valued or not. Enter… *Mentor Activity Logs*

After each visit, mentors completed an Activity Log to note what they did & talked about with their mentees.

**12 Focus Codes--Key code A to L**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrumental conversations</th>
<th>Developmental conversations</th>
<th>Activities: Inst. &amp; developmental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic (talk) (A)</td>
<td>Casual conversation (E)</td>
<td>Tutoring/Homework (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior (B)</td>
<td>Social issues (F)</td>
<td>Sports or athletic (J)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance &amp; Stay-in-School (C)</td>
<td>Relationships (G)</td>
<td>Creative activities (K)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future (D)</td>
<td>Listening &amp; Learning (H)</td>
<td>Indoor games (L)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grouping Activities**

- **Academic discussion** about kid’s behavior, attendance, dropping out, and importance of future; Tutoring/Homework
- **Discussion of social issues and relationships**, casual discussion, playing sports, games, creative activities

Generally "Instrumental" or goal-oriented activities. (Instruments to leverage change in the mentee)

Generally "Developmental" activities that strengthen the mentor-mentee relationship and promote youth development

**SMILE: Developmental Activities** (games, sports, crafts) During the Match by Grade (Boys are Navy; Girls are Magenta)

**SMILE: Instrumental Discussion** Focus During the Match by Grade Percent of time in discussions of academics, behavior, attendance:

**SMILE: Actions speak louder than words.** Developmental vs. Instrumental Activities on Outcomes

Some HELPED and some HURT MALE MENTEES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrumental conversations</th>
<th>Developmental conversations</th>
<th>Activities: Inst. &amp; developmental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academics (A)</td>
<td>Casual conversation (E)</td>
<td>Tutoring/Homework (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior (B)</td>
<td>Social issues (F)</td>
<td>Sports or athletic (J)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance &amp; Stay-in-School (C)</td>
<td>Relationships (G)</td>
<td>Creative activities (K)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future (D)</td>
<td>Listening &amp; Learning (H)</td>
<td>Indoor games (L)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SMILE:**

- Study of Mentoring in the Learning Environment
- www.utsasmile.org

Funded by the W. T. Grant Foundation
Michael Karcher, Ed.D., Ph.D.
Michael.karcher@utsa.edu
Do no harm: When mentoring can result in disconnection

High School Latinos mentees reported more disconnection from teachers compared to non-mentored boys after being “mentored.” Why? In High School:
1. Fewer games available, less free/play space.
2. More pressure to help youth academically
Both resulted in more goal-oriented, academically focused interactions, which may be “harmful.”

The relationship between being told what to do (left), and feeling valued (right)

Blue = boys; Magenta = girls

Part V: Friendship or Fear: Who are you, What you want from me?

• For the younger boys, whose mentors—men and women, Latino and Anglo—were playful and fun with their mentees, the mentors’ purpose was likely quite clear.
• They played and spent more time getting to know each about others’ world—indirectly conveying interest, respect, and a sense of “true friendship.” This genuineness is key.

Mentoring boys: A developmental connectedness perspective on SBM

Interpretation 1: Younger youth are allowed to have more fun (present > future focus), because Elementary mentors are more playful and social.
Interpretation 2: The absence of opportunities to “have fun” with a mentor in High School may interact with heightened machismo/bravado (need to appear strong) to make older boys less open to “help”.
Implication: Target mentors to younger Latinos unless training and school support are available to fully counteract these cultural and developmental factors. Train mentors to make mentoring reciprocal & real.

Fears lead to Failure: When mentors try to fix their mentees

• The older boys were unable to have much fun, and (perhaps for this reason) their conversations turned to ways the youth could be better.
• Emphasizing weakness is likely not a good approach for Latino boys especially.
• In the absence of gyms, games, and encouragement from staff and teachers to be playful, mentors need to work extra hard to convey respect, interest, and reciprocity.

What (activities) to do when?

Developmental activities convey to youth that they really “matter” to their mentors
Instrumental activities (talking about grades, problems at school, underperformance, or ways to “buck up”) immediately seem to “turn off” youth
Once basic rapport and concern is established (using developmental talk and activities), youth may view mentors’ help with school work as a sign of caring. But first, get “crazy.”
But don't be "Liaise Faire" or only crazy forever. Once it is reciprocal--you know me--then make it real, and do some hard work.

Some research suggests over the long term a "support only" approach is ineffective. So, the suggestion: 1st do 2-3 months of mostly developmental activities (lots of listening and learning, and activities); then consider doing instrumental activities, but only ones suggested by youth.

Summary: What makes a friend?

Friendship is like money, easier made than kept.

Colette, French Novelist

No one is completely unhappy at the failure of his best friend.

Groucho Marx, U.S. Comedian

Have no friend not equal to yourself.

Confucius, Chinese Philosopher

The only way to have a friend is to be one.

R. W. Emerson, U.S. Poet

Friends are to be feared, not so much for what they make us do as for what they keep us from doing.

Acknowledgements

W. T. Grant Foundation

SMILE staff: Debby Gil-Hernandez, Chichi Allen, Molly Gomez, Laura Roy-Carlson, Kristi Benne

The study was conducted through the Communities In Schools of San Antonio agency and would not have succeeded without the support of Patrick McDaniel, Nancy Reed, Jessica Weaver, the Case Managers and Cluster Leaders. Ed Connor assisted with data management. Bob Frasier and Ross Trevino recruited mentors. David DuBois mentored me and the project.

Website:

www.schoolbasedmentoring.com

Contact:

michael.karcher@utsa.edu