

The Power of the Mentor Experience

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Overview

Mentoring as a “full circle” cycle

The science behind the model: Social contact theory

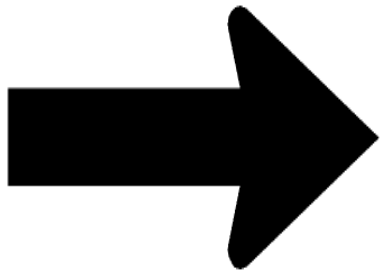
Beyond benevolence: From support to friendship

Related research

Our study on social/moral development

Mentoring as a “full-circle” cycle

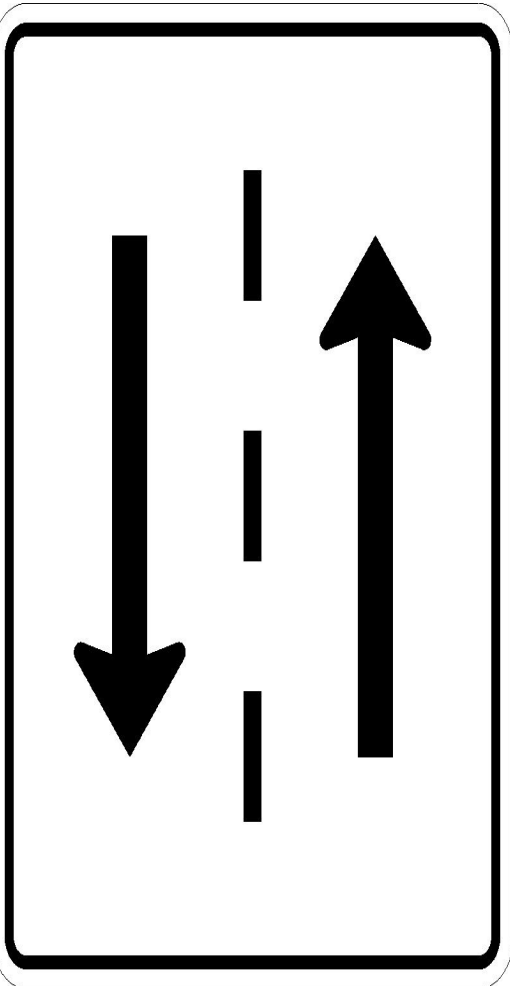
**ONE
WAY**



Benefits for mentees

- support for transition to college
- increased access to campus resources
- academic support (e.g., study skills, tutoring)
- time management
- greater integration into campus life
- support for independent living (e.g., cooking)
- success in the workplace

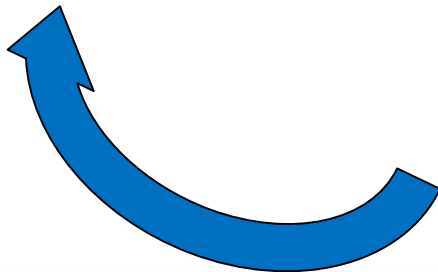
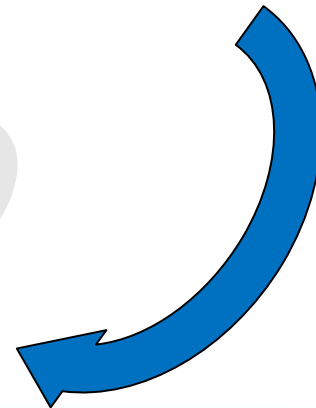
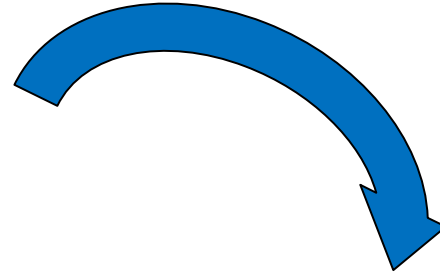
Mentoring as a “full-circle” cycle



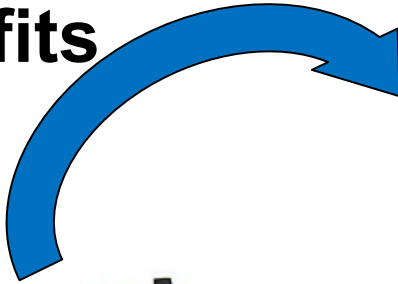
Benefits for mentors

- enhanced social/communication skills
- knowledge of and access to essential campus resources
- clearer understanding and enhancement of academic and professional goals
- expansion of leadership abilities
- increased mastery of field or domain
- new professional opportunities

Full-Circle Benefits



Full-Circle Benefits



Full-circle Benefits for all

By moving beyond benevolence,

- we erode antiquated and inappropriate views about disability
- mentors perceive individuals with ID as equals
- understand unique contributions and strengths
- take these views into the community
- allows for genuine change in education, employment,
and independent living

Why move beyond benevolence?

Evidence from social contact theory



Negative stereotypes and biases are pervasive in our society, particularly with respect to disability.

Why move beyond benevolence?

Evidence from social contact theory



Even among advocates, these biases can persist and influence perception and behavior in subtle ways.

(Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995)

Demo

Stereotypes and prejudices

- for any group –
- can lead to negative outcomes

Low expectations

Inequities in educational opportunities

Discrimination in the workplace

Lower wages



Stereotypes and prejudices

- for any group –**
- can lead to negative outcomes**

Diminished social relations

Dehumanization of individuals

Increases in violence



How can we reduce stereotypes and biases?

Social Contact Theory: Positive contact between different groups of people can reduce negative expectations, stereotyping, and discriminatory behaviors.

However, **contact alone is insufficient.**

How can we reduce stereotypes and biases?

Contact alone is insufficient.

- Individuals should share equal status
- People need a common goal
- Intergroup cooperation
- Authority support

(e.g., Allport, 1954; Devine & O'Brien, 2007; Hughes et al., 2002; Tripp et al., 1995)

Social contact improves racial relations

Involvement in an interracial group activity reduces automatic racial bias

(e.g., Van Bavel & Cunningham, 2009).

Interracial contact early in life increases the likelihood of racially diverse social groups, friendships, religious congregations, and marriages

(e.g., Ellison & Powers, 1994; Emerson et al., 2002; Sigelman et al., 1996).

Interracial contact increases comfort with and preference for interracial relationships and environments

(e.g., Emerson, Kimbro, & Yancey, 2002)

Social contact improves disability relations

Inclusive experiences debunk myths and stereotypes, and foster friendships and social interactions.

(e.g., Bedini, 2000; Devine & Lashua, 2002; Kalyvas & Reid, 2003)

Adolescents who participated on an inclusive sports team developed more positive attitudes about disability, and reported a stronger desire for friendship with a person with an intellectual disability. (Castagno, 2001)

Social contact improves disability relations

Teens who participated in inclusive activities that featured common interests and reciprocal relationships had positive perceptions of disability and a high degree of social acceptance.

(Wilhite, Devine, & Goldberg, 1999)

Nearly all children without disabilities who participated in an inclusive summer camp indicated that they would like to “hang out with” a friend with an intellectual disability.

(Siperstein, Glick, & Parker, 2009)

Social contact improves disability relations

Best Buddies Study (Hardman & Clark, 2006)
data from College Students

- 80% reported they enjoyed the experience and would repeat it
- 77% would support inclusive education for their own children
- Vast majority would support a person with ID living in their community
- 80% reported a more positive attitude about disability and challenges faced by individuals with an intellectual disability
- 90% would recommend the experience to a friend

Social contact improves disability relations

Best Buddies Study: Limitations

- Buddies fell short with respect to contact:
Only 1 of 3 College students interacted with a buddy at least once a week
- Nearly half of Buddies reported they had problems seeing their College Buddy on a regular basis
- Only 63% of individuals with intellectual disabilities reported the friendship had enhanced their lives

Mentoring at the College of Charleston

Academic mentors: traditional college students who provide academic support for students in the REACH Program

Social mentors: friends who engage in and encourage appropriate college activities

Weekend assistant: traditional college student who facilitates a variety of weekend events for students, mentors, and friends

Graduate assistant: graduate student(s) who assist students with transitioning to college and skills associated with independent living. Lives in an inclusive residential setting with students.

All REACH mentors

Beyond benevolence: From support to friendship

A mentor is....

- Friend and ally
- Role model
- Social companion
- Study partner
- Outlet/escape from stress
- Connector/facilitator
- Co-Planner

A mentor is not....

- Surrogate parent
- Flawless or infallible idol
- An ATM or lending institution
- Answer key
- Professional counselor/therapist
- Dictator/Cruise director
- Social worker

Beyond benevolence: From support to friendship

A mentee is....

Peer
Individual
Partner
Friend
Collaborator

A mentee is not....

Child
Stereotype
Charity
Project
Client

All REACH mentors

Commit to 4+ hours/ week with mentee

Maintain frequent correspondence with REACH Director

Attend regular mentor meetings to discuss success and failures, and share ideas for improvement

Mentors and mentees collaborate

- Living with roommate
- Finding activities, clubs, hobbies
- Making personal decisions
- Academic challenges
- Breaking problem habits
- Connecting with new friends
- Balancing academics and social life
- Managing stress
- Communicating with professors



What is the impact of mentorship?

We explored whether mentorship is associated with increased personal development, social maturity, moral development and independence.

Measures

Stress Related Growth Scale (SRGS; Park, Cohen, & Murch, 1996)

Personal Development

I learned to cope better with uncertainty.

I learned to take more responsibility for what I do.

Social Maturity

I learned to respect other's feelings and beliefs.

I became more accepting of others.

Moral/Spiritual Growth

I developed or increased my faith.

I learned to find more meaning in life.

Measures

Level of Differentiation of Self Scale (LDSS; Haber, 1984)

Independence

I am capable of helping myself when I am in a crisis.

I do not find group pressure hard to resist.

I make decisions based on my own set of values and beliefs.

Measures

Participants

Mentors (n=28)

Traditional students at the College of Charleston who served as a social, academic, or residential mentor in the REACH Program

Traditional CofC students (No Contact Group) (n=91)

Traditional students at the College of Charleston who neither served as a mentor nor had any regular contact with students in the REACH Program

Measures

Methods

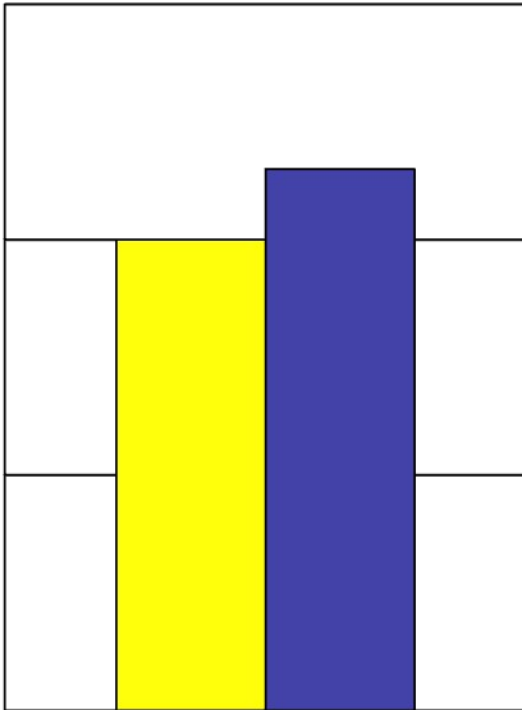
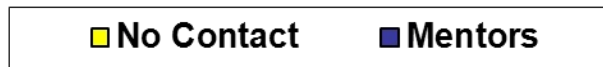
All participants were invited to participate by receiving an online invitation, and those who elected to participate completed our survey online. Responses were confidential and anonymous, and participation was entirely voluntary. Participants received nominal compensation (\$10) for their participation, or participated as one way of receiving course credit.

IMPACT for Mentors

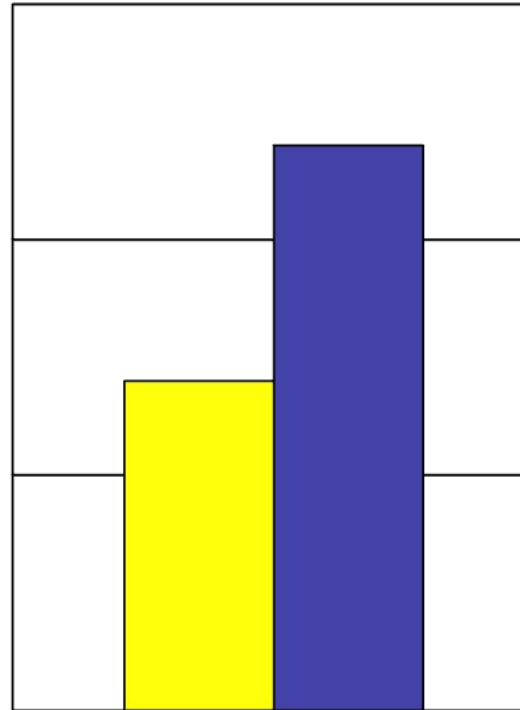
Personal Development: I learned to be a more confident person

Social Maturity: I learned to respect others' feelings and beliefs

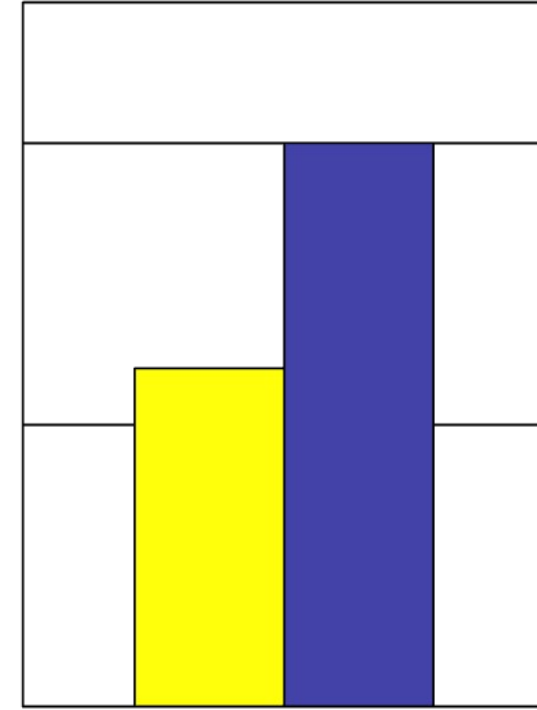
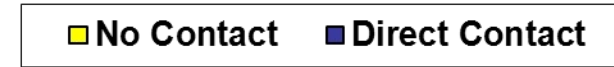
Moral/Spiritual Growth: I changed my life goals for the better



Personal Development

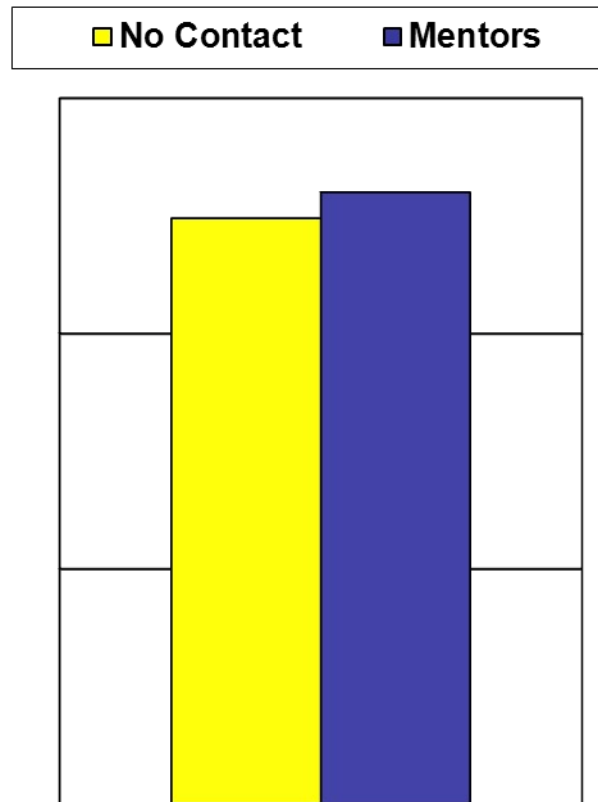


Social Maturity



Moral/Spiritual Growth

**Independence: I do not find group pressure hard to resist.
I am capable of helping myself in a crisis.**



Summary of Results

Relative to college students who do not interact with students with ID, the REACH mentors showed reliably **higher social maturity** and **spiritual/moral growth**.

- reported more meaningful relationships with others
- had a stronger sense of community
- wanted to have an impact on the world
- reported a greater understanding of how to help others
- were able to appreciate the strengths of others
- reported an increase in their own faith

Limitations

Data reflect an association between mentorship and social maturity/moral development

Not necessarily causal

Future work will include pre and post assessments

What about “casual” mentorship?

Second study used pre and post test assessments of traditional college students in an inclusive psychology course.

Students with and without disabilities learned course material and completed a service learning project together.

Did the experience impact their views on diversity?

MGUDS SURVEY: ARE YOU OPEN TO DIVERSITY?

I attend events where I might get to know people from different racial backgrounds.

I feel comfortable getting to know people from different countries.

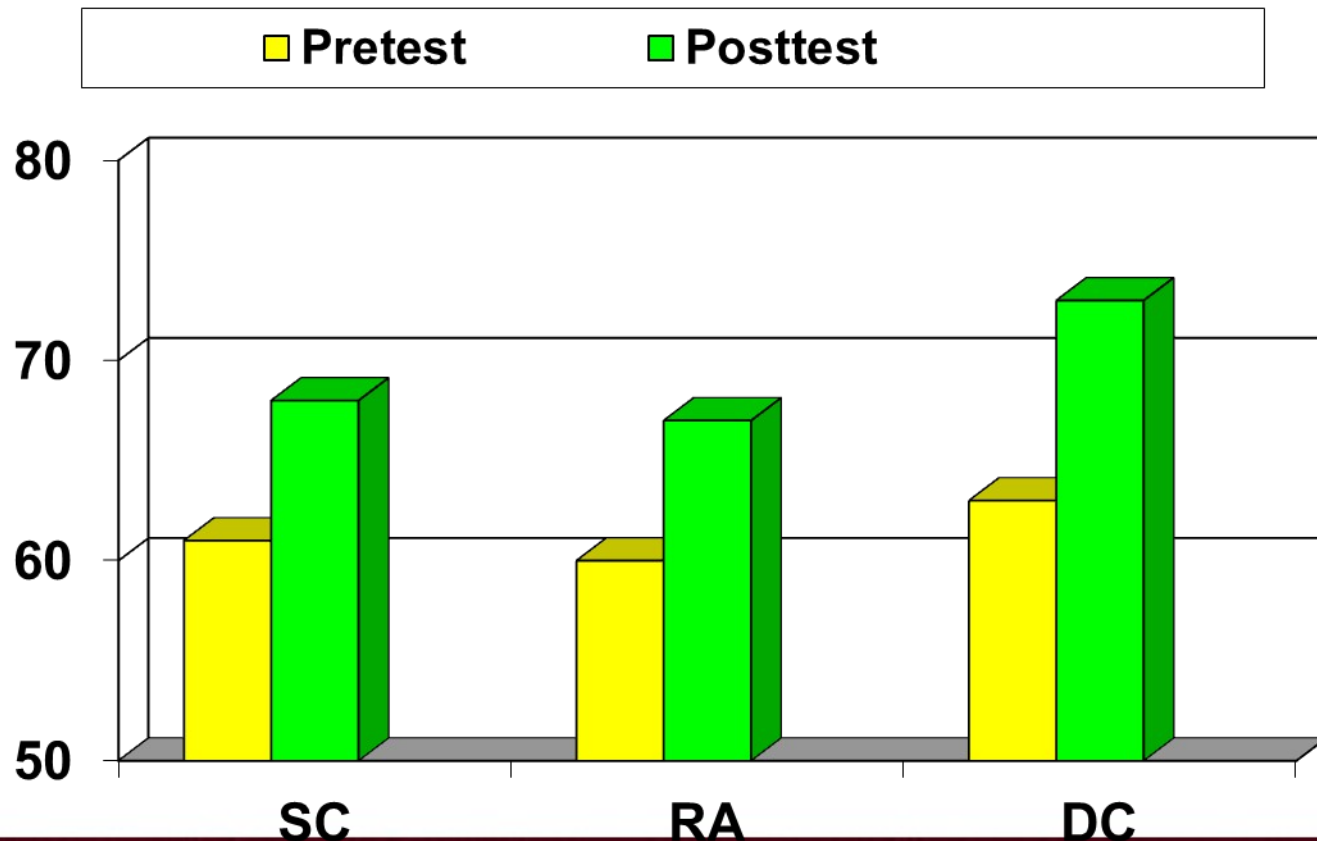
People with disabilities can teach me things I could not learn elsewhere.

Knowing how a person differs from me greatly enhances our friendship.

Sense of Connection: Degree of comfort with diverse individuals

Relativistic Appreciation: Ability to appreciate differences and have them affect your own outlook on life

Diversity of Contact: Level of interaction and willingness to be with diverse people



Total Score on Openness to Diversity



Comments from the course...

“I learned that when properly educated, people can have a better and more mature understanding of their lives and others. People begin to accept others with disabilities NOT because it is the nice thing to do. We are all human, and our differences bring us together.”

Comments from the course...

“I had never really understood the power of a single word (retard) before, and had generally considered the editing of one’s language to be an extreme desire to be politically correct. Now I understand how one word can be so painful and dehumanizing.”

Comments from the course...

“Stereotypes occur when we label a class of people. Those with disabilities should not be classified as anything other than human.”

Comments from the course...

“I learned that there are many ways to view a disability. Some people might have a disability and you will never know it. Others, it will be obvious, but that is not a reason to label them. This project helped me to cope with my own disability. I am who I am regardless of what others may think of me or call me.”

Conclusions

Our findings are consistent with other studies examining the impact of direct, interactive contact with individuals with ID

Mentorship was associated with greater social and moral development. Mentors were able to appreciate the unique strengths of others, had a greater understanding of how to help others, and reported more meaningful relationships with others.

Conclusions

Even indirect contact proved successful in promoting more positive attitudes toward diversity.

Students enrolled in an inclusive course showed an increase openness to diversity in general – including race, gender, disability, ethnicity, and religious affiliation.

Full-Circle Benefits

