MENTORING FOR FIRST-GENERATION IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE YOUTH

National Mentoring Resource Center Population Review

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December 2016

Summary

This review examines research on mentoring for first-generation immigrant and refugee youth (FG-IRY) and is organized around four aspects of mentoring for these youth—its documented effectiveness, factors conditioning effectiveness, intervening processes for linking mentoring to outcomes, and the extent of reach and engagement and the quality of implementation of mentoring programs for FG-IRY. The research reviewed, although limited in scope, provides the basis for some preliminary conclusions about mentoring as provided to this population of youth. These include evidence that:

1. Both formal and informal mentoring may be beneficial for facilitating acculturation and social integration to the new country and promoting academic and school engagement among FG-IRY.

2. Benefits of mentoring for FG-IRY may accrue, in part, as a result of mentoring facilitating their acculturation, social integration, and school success, wherein mentors act as cultural and system translators and interpreters.

3. School-based mentoring programs that address the specific needs of FG-IRY have the potential to promote academic success and integration into the new culture through relationships with teachers, school personnel, and peers.

4. Both same- and cross-cultural mentoring relationships can be beneficial for FG-IRY, although mentor training and cultural competence of mentors may influence the quality of mentoring relationships.

Other noteworthy possibilities have been discussed in the reviewed literature as important for fully realizing the potential benefits of mentoring for FG-IRY, for increasing youth engagement in mentoring programs, and for facilitating the quality implementation and long-term sustainability of such programs. These include fostering a positive ethnic identity and sense of school belonging, a family-oriented approach that also supports the mentee's family, and close collaboration between community leaders, schools, and families of FG-IRY. These factors, however, have not been investigated in research.

A commentary attached to this review discusses implications of the review's findings for practice and other recommendations. It is proposed that when designing and implementing mentoring services to support FG-IRY and, often by extension, their families, practitioners should carefully consider the nuanced needs and specific cultural backgrounds of the mentees and families they wish to serve. Practitioners are also encouraged to carefully weigh the potential implications of whether mentors in a program will be required to be bilingual or bicultural and whether they will be adults or peers.

INTRODUCTION

The population of immigrant-origin youth[i] is projected to account for one-third of US children by 2050[1] and represents the fastest growing group of American children.[2] The developmental outcomes and integration into the country of resettlement of IRY[ii] has been of increasing concern as research suggests many linguistic, educational, developmental, economic, and cultural gaps that these individuals face and have to overcome to function as productive adults.[3, 4]

First-generation immigrant[iii] and refugee[iv] youth in particular face a range of contextual challenges involved with adjusting to a new culture while trying to retain one's heritage culture.[3, 5] Acculturative stress (strains/stressors associated with the acculturative process) is a common experience for FG-IRY, including language problems, discrimination, differences in acculturation with parents[6, 7] and peer issues.[7] Research also points to a contribution of acculturative stress to greater likelihood of depressive symptoms;[8] problem behaviors;[6] school outcomes, such as lower sense of school belonging (e.g., Vinokurov, et al.[7]); and academic underachievement (e.g., DeGarmo & Martinez[9]) among FG-IRY. Refugee youth are more likely to experience discontinuity in education and mental health problems, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), due to exposure to war, long-term persecution, and loss of family members in their native country.[10] Another group within FG-IRY that merits special attention are undocumented youth who experience high levels of stress, feelings of anger, and hopelessness due to the often insurmountable barriers imposed by their illegal status.[11]

In addition, many FG-IRY face difficult living situations after migration in schools and communities that lack the resources to support them.[5] Almost 28% live below the poverty threshold[12] and those living in high-poverty areas are also exposed to violence at a much higher rate and attend

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[i] Immigrant-origin youth are defined as those children and adolescents under age eighteen who are either foreign-born or US-born to immigrant parents.

[ii] IRY are immigrant and refugee youth who could be first, second, or plus generation. FG-IRY are specifically first-generation immigrant and refugee youth only. When discussing studies that don't specify the generational status of immigrant and refugee youth, the term IRY is used.

[iii] First-generation immigrant children are those who were born outside the United States, and second-generation (and plus) immigrants are those who were born within the United States or its territories.

[iv] Refugees flee their countries of origin for fear of persecution due to race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

underfunded schools.[4] Thus, FG-IRY arrive in the country of resettlement frequently having experienced difficult circumstances and often continuing to face new challenges as they navigate a different culture and lifestyle. On the other hand, findings of some studies suggest an "immigrant paradox," where immigrants in these studies had better outcomes on indicators of academic and psychosocial well-being than their US-born counterparts despite a lower socioeconomic status.[13,14] For example, when compared to their US-born peers, immigrant adolescents had better grades[13] and fewer psychological and health problems.[14] This phenomena has been explained as "immigrant optimism;"[15] immigrant youth come to the United States with high hopes and aspirations for their future, and a clear understanding that hard work, schooling, and academic achievement are their ladder to upward social mobility. However, a study from Europe found partial support for this phenomenon as there was an immigrant paradox in terms of sociocultural adaptation (i.e., school adjustment and behavioral problems), but not in terms of psychological adaptation (i.e., self-esteem, life satisfaction, and psychological problems).[16] A five-year longitudinal study found that newly arrived Latino youths' narratives are imbued with optimism about their hard work, perseverance, ability to turn to others, and positively resolve difficulties in the first year of the study.[17] However, over the course of five years, those narratives shift to include a sense of hopelessness and the articulation of an inability to cross barriers such as poverty, a distance from adult sources of support in schools, and a steady disengagement from schools that are largely situated in segregated neighborhoods.

As scholars have articulated, immigration to a new country is not for the "faint of heart."[3] IRY vary greatly in risk and protective factors as well as access to resources that can promote positive adjustment in the country of resettlement. However, a recurrent theme in the literature on adjustment of IRY is the need for supportive adults. Thus, mentoring has the potential to support positive psychosocial development among IRY by promoting acculturation, social integration, and school adjustment in the new country.

This review focuses on mentoring for FG-IRY with respect to the following four questions:

1. What is the demonstrated effectiveness of mentoring for FG-IRY?

2. In what ways are the benefits of mentoring for FG-IRY likely to differ as a function of such considerations as the backgrounds and characteristics of the youth involved and the types of program practices being employed?

3. What intervening pathways or processes are likely to be most important in linking mentoring to outcomes for FG-IRY?

4. To what extent have efforts to provide mentoring to FG-IRY reached and engaged targeted youth, been implemented with high quality, and been adopted and sustained by host organizations and settings? What factors predict better reach, implementation, and adoption/sustainability?

For the purpose of this review, the term *first-generation immigrant and refugee youth* broadly refers to foreign-born youth with no US citizenship at birth. This population includes youth who are naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, refugees, and asylees,[v] and the unauthorized (or undocumented).[18] Therefore, FG-IRY in this review do not include US-born children of immigrant or refugee parents (second generation immigrants) or migrant workers. Furthermore, the term refugee youth in this review refers to both refugees and asylees. When describing the results of specific studies, this review utilizes the study authors' terminology for immigration status (e.g., newcomer, foreign-born, first-generation, refugee, or asylee) and other identifying labels such as the race, ethnicity, country of origin, and country of resettlement, so as to be consistent with the original source material. Considering the limited research on mentoring for FG-IRY in the United States, this review also includes evidence related to mentoring of FG-IRY in other countries that also receive a high volume of immigrant and refugee populations (e.g., Canada and Australia). However, the review is restricted to studies published since 2000, to reflect the contemporary sociopolitical contexts in countries of resettlement that may influence needs and outcomes of IRY.

Mentoring for First-Generation Immigrant and Refugee Youth refers to a broad array of "natural" or programmatic contexts in which mentoring activity takes place involving mentees that are first-generation immigrant or refugee youth and older, more experienced persons (mentors) acting in a nonprofessional capacity to provide supports that benefit one or more areas of the youths' development (see What is Mentoring for definitions of mentoring activity and programs). The setting, structure, and goals of mentoring for FG-IRY can take several forms and can occur in various contexts, such as group-mentoring in a school-based program to cross-age and/or one-on-one mentoring programs in refugee resettlement agencies or a community-based organization.

A search of the literature was conducted to identify journal articles, book chapters, and other documents that report findings relevant to one or more of the above mentioned questions. In order to be included in this review, as originally planned, at least 80% of the study sample had to be FG-IRY or, if the overall sample did not meet this requirement, a study had to report findings separately for the subgroup of FG-IRY. Considering the dearth of available research on mentoring for this population of youth, the inclusion criteria in a few instances were relaxed to permit consideration of findings from a small number of additional studies; these allowances are identified for the reader. This review of the literature identified 17 studies that address the role of social support and relationships in the lives of FG-IRY as relates to informal mentoring, formal mentoring programs, or program development and service delivery recommendations. The following sections review available research pertinent to each of the four organizing questions, in each case preceded by a brief background section.

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v   Refugees are generally outside of the United States when they are considered for resettlement, whereas asylum seekers submit their applications while they are physically present in or at a port of entry to the United States.

1. What Is the Demonstrated Effectiveness of Mentoring for First-Generation Immigrant and Refugee Youth?

BACKGROUND

The likely value of mentoring for FG-IRY is suggested by the wealth of evidence indicating that mentoring relationships, especially those characterized by closeness and continuity, promote resiliency and enhance psychological well-being among youth.[22] The greatest benefit from participating in mentoring programs, furthermore, appears to accrue to young people who come from backgrounds of environmental risk and disadvantage.[23] Besides the developmental tasks common to all youth, FG-IRY may face the additional challenges of learning a new language; adapting to the new educational, cultural, and social settings; and developing new sources of social support in their country of resettlement. Indeed, some of the main factors that have been indicated to negatively shape immigrant youths' health and well-being include pre- and post-migration trauma, such as separation from family; living in poverty; discontinuity in education,[19,20,21] acculturative stress, including relations with teachers and peers at school; intergenerational conflict with parents; low parental involvement in education,[6, 19, 21] and experiences and perceptions of discrimination, including anti-immigrant sentiments, politics, and policies.[19, 20] Given the above mentioned contextual risks for FG-IRY, there are three primary domains where mentoring may be especially instrumental in facilitating positive developmental outcomes among this group.

Acculturation to the new culture including English language acquisition. The changes in language, behavior, attitudes, and values that take place in immigrants when they enter a new country are referred to as the process of acculturation.[25] Among the various roles that a mentor can play in the life of immigrant and refugee youth, especially those who are newly settled, facilitating acculturation to the resettlement culture, offering opportunities for acquiring or improving English-language competency, and connecting youth to resources, such as public transportation, local library, and other youth programs may be especially critical.[21, 24] In a longitudinal mixed-method study of 385 newcomer immigrant youth to the United States from China, Central America, Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Mexico (The Longitudinal Immigrant Student Adaptation (LISA) Study[3]), a majority (56%) reported "learning English" as the main obstacle to getting ahead in the United States,[26] followed by discrimination and lack of resources. In a qualitative study in Canada, service providers with frequent contact with IRY involved in criminal and/or gang activity recommend mentoring programs with English-language and life skills training, career planning, and job readiness training as a protective factor for this group.[27] Such findings suggest that mentoring programs could prove beneficial for FG-IRY in part because they offer opportunities for gaining competency in the language of the new country and learning about its culture. This possibility fits with the idea that mentors may be able to serve as "cultural translators" for FG-IRY,[21] facilitating not just language learning but also acculturation to the behavioral and social norms of the new country's culture and, thus, their overall integration into it.

Academic performance, school engagement, and dropouts. Schools are the primary setting where first-generation immigrant and refugee students are exposed to the resettlement culture.[28] Schools serving immigrant populations tend to be affected by poverty, overcrowding, segregation, and under-

prepared teachers and school staff.[29] A survey study of 524 Latino sixth to twelfth graders from North Carolina (90% were first-generation) found that academic and interpersonal supports in the form of tutoring, mentoring, and after-school programs was most frequently reported by the youth as the kind of services that would prevent them from dropping out.[30] Similarly, in the LISA study, IRY youth reported the need for programs that could provide them help with schoolwork, written English-language acquisition and practice, and information on post-secondary educational opportunities.[30, 31] These identified needs further suggest the potential benefits of mentoring for FG-IRY given that it may provide an avenue through which they can form connections with caring adults that help them develop motivation and a sense of efficacy for academic tasks, as well as information about the American school and higher educational system and mechanisms of success within these institutions.

The potential benefits of mentoring for FG-IRY as related to school are also suggested by the role mentoring may play in developing the types of positive social relations with teachers and peers at school that research suggests can facilitate school engagement and a sense of belonging among IRY. Limited English competence and segregation in ESL classes inhibit opportunities for FG-IRY to form relations with teachers and peers at school, often leaving them with feelings of alienation, isolation, and marginalization.[32, 33] Development of positive relations with caring adults in schools, ESL and mainstream teachers, counselors, and school resource officers was also posited by service providers as a protective factor against criminal or gang involvement of IRY.[27]

Parent-child relationships and family dynamics. FG-IRY generally view family as an important resource in their lives that serves as a buffer against the stresses of migration and fosters resilience in them.[34] However, family separations and the busy lives of parents struggling to make ends meet are a recurrent concern in the literature.[4, 26] Furthermore, intergenerational conflict between parents and immigrant youth due to disparate rates of acculturation are often reported,[35] as children acculturate to the resettlement country's language and norms at a faster pace than their parents. "Acculturation gaps" or dissonance between parents and IRY are an area of concern because they are associated with adolescent adjustment, including depression, problem behaviors, and academic achievement.[26, 35] Mentors could prove helpful to FG-IRY in navigating these challenges, thus supporting their overall positive development.

Paradoxically, a child's relative faster mastery of the new language also frequently leads to them assuming adult-like responsibilities in the immigrant household, such as answering phones, helping parents apply for jobs and pay bills, and translating for parents (e.g., at the doctor's office and even at their parent-teacher meetings). This phenomenon has been termed as *culture brokering*[36] and is associated with higher adolescent reports of family conflict.[37, 38] Theoretically, mentoring relationships may serve as a resource to buffer the influence of culture brokering on family conflict.

Summary. Nurturing, supportive relationships may have special implications for FG-IRY who are acculturating to a new country, a new language, and a new educational context. The literature suggests that these youth are in critical need of reparative and protective relationships with nonparental adults and older peers who can serve as caring role models, cultural interpreters, and academic guides. In the abovementioned LISA study, the authors report that, "behind nearly every successful immigrant youth journey we found a mentor (e.g., from the church, the athletic team, or the local community center) who took a youngster under his or her wing. But in nearly every case these mentorship relationships started by accidental encounter. Thus, a much more coordinated

effort to link immigrant youth and families with caring and knowledgeable adults, service professionals, and mentors is essential" (p. 13).[26]

RESEARCH

Of the 17 studies reviewed, 6 specifically discussed evaluations of formal mentoring programs and 11 reported youth outcomes associated with informal mentoring. However, most of these studies have several design limitations, such as small sample sizes and low methodological rigor. For instance, none of the studies of formal mentoring programs had a well-matched comparison group that did not participate in the mentoring program. In the following section, notable findings from these studies are presented that are relevant for understanding the implications of mentoring relationships for FG-IRY. Table 1 provides summary information about all of the formal mentoring programs that were examined in the studies (n = 6), as well as study methodology and findings.

Formal mentoring. In an evaluation of an after-school mentoring program, 50 Latino high school students at risk for dropping out were paired with 20 mostly Caucasian college students.[39] Pre-post comparisons of mentees' attendance, GPA, subject-specific grades, and problem behavior from first trimester to third were done, but significant testing to identify reliable (as opposed to chance) patterns of change was not reported. With this important qualifier, there was an increase in mentees' GPA between their first and third trimester and the higher GPA was sustained from one year to the next. The subject-specific (Math and English) grades of mentees also improved, although analyses incorporating consideration of further time points of data indicated that these improvements were not always in a linear fashion. Furthermore, students failing all or most of their classes started to get passing grades and youth who stopped attending the program experienced a decline in grades. Additionally, results of qualitative analyses, based on youth interviews, direct observations, and reflective essays by youth, suggested that the benefits of the program for the first-generation immigrant Latino mentees centered on three factors: academic self-efficacy, camaraderie of their peers and mentors, and positive influence of mentors as role models who had their "lives together". The mentors also expressed satisfaction with improvement in the student mentees' grades and school participation, despite their mentees' individual struggles and difficulties.

A one-group pre-and post-test evaluation of a school-based peer mentoring program with 23 recently arrived Chinese immigrant students found support for the role of same-culture peers in mentoring relationships.[40] Each of four high school mentors was linguistically and culturally matched (and in some cases gender matched as well) with five to six Chinese immigrant high school mentees. Pre-post comparisons found that the newcomer Chinese immigrant mentees reported more feelings of trust and a stronger need for closeness with their same culture peers after participating in the program. However, mentees' scores on measures of academic, college, and career self-efficacy beliefs and social connectedness did not change significantly from pre- to post-program.

A qualitative dissertation study examined immigrant youths' experiences in a school-based cross-age peer mentoring program with nine newcomer students (who had been in United States for one year or less) and five middle school and high school students as mentors to help ease the transitions of newcomer immigrant students into US elementary schools and to foster a sense of attachment to their new schools.[43] This peer mentoring program hinged on the strategy of "accommodation

without assimilation."[vi] The findings indicate several observable changes in the newcomer mentees, such as a newfound desire to come to school, increased ability to make friends in the new school, increased self-confidence, and decreased traumatic memories of their transition. Mentees' parents commented that their children talked more in English after participating in the program. The peer mentors also reported experiencing changes, such as learning about the importance and benefits of helping others, increased self-confidence, and improvement in public speaking skills. All mentors and newcomers cited the relationships they formed as one of the most important benefits of participating in the program.

Naturally occurring mentoring. Several studies also report findings relevant to the potential importance of more naturally occurring forms of mentoring from family members, extended kin, and peers in the lives of FG-IRY.

A study of a subset of first-generation Latino youth from the LISA study (born in: Mexico = 76 and Central America = 63)[45] found that youths' subjective perceptions of support received from adults at school over three years was associated with their average self-reported engagement in behaviors instrumental in academic success (e.g., turning in homework, paying attention in class) over those three years. Another study based on the longitudinal LISA data that included 407 recently arrived (within five years) immigrant children further examined the role of relationships in mediating academic engagement and achievement.[vii,46] School-based supportive relationships with peers and adults were found to be the most robust of the individual factors predicting academic engagement. More specifically, reports of supportive relationships in school were associated with students making greater efforts in their schoolwork.

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Qualitative analyses in this study revealed two distinct yet overlapping types of relational support: tangible and emotional school-based support. Tangible support reflected the concrete and instrumental supports offered to students (such as help with homework) and emotional support was characterized by the emotional connections or feelings of support. In quantitative analyses the youth's reported level of emotional school-based support, but not tangible school-based support, was significantly related to school behavioral engagement (attending school, participating in class, and completing schoolwork—all of which were related to higher grades in this sample). The qualitative data, however, shed light on how both emotional and tangible school-based supports were experienced by the immigrant youth as being integral to their academic engagement and performance.

[vi]   That is, "the mentors strengthen and validate the newcomers' home culture while helping them navigate their new American cultural experiences" (p. 21).[44]
[vii]   By the fifth and final year of the study, the sample size was 309, with an attrition rate of just under 25% (on average, 5% annually). The fifth-year sample included 57 Central American, 72 Chinese, 60 Dominican, 50 Haitian, and 70 Mexican youth.

Further findings from this research indicated that adults in the community were another source of tangible and emotional support to immigrant youth.[46] Often these adults were conationals (i.e., from the same country as the youth), who made up an extended network of support for the children. Likewise, a mixed-method study of 47 Mexican origin youth in San Diego (almost half were first-generation) found that most of these youth reported older siblings or extended family members as informal mentors.[47] Similarly, a qualitative study examined the role of mentors in the lives of 12 refugee youth resettled in the United States from Bhutan, Iraq, and Burma (now Myanmar).[33] Results of this study suggested that mentors were able to play a substantial role in making sure the refugee youth stayed in high school, got good grades, and graduated by acting as "cultural and school system translators."

CONCLUSIONS

1. Available research suggests mentoring programs can serve as a useful form of support for FG-IRY, facilitating outcomes in the areas of acculturation (both language and behavioral), social integration, and academic performance; methodological limitations of studies, however, make this conclusion highly preliminary.

2. Supportive relationships with peers and adults have been linked in limited research to positive indicators and facilitators of school/academic engagement among FG-IRY, including effort and ability to form friendships with fellow students.

2. What Factors Condition or Influence the Effectiveness of Mentoring for FG-IRY?

BACKGROUND

There is tremendous diversity both among and within immigrants and refugees in the United States in terms of countries of origin and socioeconomic, linguistic, cultural, religious, and racial backgrounds. The development and adaptation of FG-IRY is likely to follow myriad trajectories depending on a combination of pre- and post-migration resources and contexts, such as their lives in their country of origin, educational level of parents, reasons for migration (e.g., refugees escaping political, religious, or ethnic persecution), immigration status (e.g., undocumented youth), the resources available to them post-migration, length of time in the country of resettlement, and attitudes and policies of the resettlement country towards immigrants.[5, 24] The potential for factors in several of these areas, including acculturation, social integration, academic performance, and school engagement, to possibly condition (i.e., influence the strength and/or direction) the effects of mentoring on FG-IRY already has been alluded in the previous section. The additional background for this portion of the review focuses on the theoretical potential for the effects of mentoring on FG-IRY to also be conditioned by mentee and mentor characteristics and programmatic features.

Mentee characteristics. There are two groups within the larger immigrant population that have unique circumstances that merit special attention in mentoring: undocumented youth and refugee youth. Estimates of undocumented children and young adults who have lived in the United States since childhood put them at about 2.1 million.[48] A qualitative study with about 250 undocumented

youth from Latino and Asian backgrounds in the United States found that most of these youth learned about their undocumented status as they entered adolescence, so the already stressful period of their lives was made tumultuous by them "learning to be illegal," that is, constantly living under the fear of deportation and not being able to pursue the American Dream due to their inability to vote, work legally, drive, or receive financial aid.[11] Furthermore, the stigma of their "illegal" status acted as a barrier to their access and participation in supportive social networks as they tried to keep it a secret to peers and potential mentors and advocates. However, undocumented youth who were able to maintain strong friendships or had caring adults (teachers, counselors, or other adult mentors) with whom they could talk openly about their struggles described less emotional distress and were much more likely to remain in school.[11]

There are reasons to believe that refugee children may be particularly vulnerable to poorer developmental and academic outcomes than children with immigrant parents who are not refugees, given that their parents—and possibly the children themselves—may have fled violence and persecution, often arriving in the United States with little to no economic resources, social networks, or understanding of the country's language and culture.[49] On average, the United States has been accepting 70,000 refugees per year since 2008.[50] Refugee youth might have experienced an extended break in their education and, thus, arrive with very basic academic skills and struggle to catch up, especially if they are placed in grades according to their age and not educational competence. A qualitative study with 12 recent high school graduate refugees found that these students struggled with adjusting to their new school system, felt marginalized, faced discrimination, and suffered low teacher expectations.[33] However, findings suggested that the refugee youth were able to beat the odds and graduate from high school owing to their resilience and help from mentors. In summary, undocumented and refugee youth are subgroups within FG-IRY that have special circumstances, which give rise to unique needs, and these differences have implications for mentoring. Theoretically, it could thus be the case that the effects of mentoring among undocumented and refugee youth are conditioned by how responsive the mentoring relationships are to their distinct needs and the specific challenges they experience.

> Refugee youth might have experienced an **extended break in their education** and, thus, **arrive with very basic academic skills** and **struggle to catch up**, especially if they are placed in grades according to their age and not educational competence.

There is also reason to expect that a mentee's length of residence in the country of resettlement could influence the effectiveness of mentoring for FG-IRY. Birman and Morland[24] provide a conceptual model of how mentoring may play a role in the acculturation process for youth. They discuss two types of mentoring: instrumental (support new language, culture, and school adjustment) and developmental (support to promote ethnic identity and biculturalism) mentoring. For newly arrived youth, instrumental mentoring may be more beneficial during the initial adjustment process, such as learning the new language and behavioral norms of the culture of resettlement as well as adjusting to the new school's context. Later generation youth and FG-IRY who have resided in the United States for a longer period of time would need developmental mentoring for support in negotiating and exploring their cultural identity and belonging.[24] Thus, there is the possibility that

the type of mentoring support provided to youth may depend on their generational status as well as length of residency.

Mentor characteristics. Another factor that may be related to differential benefits of mentoring for FG-IRY is the race, culture, or ethnicity of the mentor (for differences between these concepts see Sanchez et al.[51]). In general, available research indicates that young people do not need same-race or same-ethnicity mentors to benefit from mentoring.[51] The potential exists, in fact, for there to be some distinctive benefits to cross-race or cross-cultural mentoring ties for FG-IRY. In line with Putnam's concept of bridging social capital,[52, viii] pairing FG-IRY with mentors who are natives of the country of resettlement theoretically may accelerate the process of acculturation and integration of the youth and help them gain acceptance in the new culture. Consistent with this possibility, one research study described later in this review[53] reported findings suggesting that cross-race matches yielded some benefits for newly arrived African refugee youth in Australia through connecting them with in-country networks and providing opportunities for cross-cultural learning. On the other hand, second-generation mentors who are from the same ethnic background as the youth and who are biculturally adept could possibly be especially beneficial as they understand both cultures and the demands that post-migration adaptation puts on IRY. Such considerations suggest a potential for interactions among multiple intersecting factors to shape the benefits of mentoring for FG-IRY.

A related factor that could play a role in conditioning the effects of mentoring relationships for IRY in ways that enhance benefits for these youth is the cultural competence of their mentors. When applied to mentoring, it broadly involves applying the knowledge of the mentee's culture to strengthen the quality of the mentoring relationship and to make the activities and the program culturally appropriate to increase the likelihood of effectiveness of mentoring for positive youth outcomes (for more details see Sanchez et al.[51]). A qualitative study of 12 cross-race matches in a formal mentoring program found that relationships in which mentors (termed *Bridgers*) made efforts to get to know the mentees, their families, and cultures, and were respectful of their cultural differences, exhibited closeness and better relationship quality.[54] It could be that rather than same race/ethnicity/culture matching, culturally appropriate behavior by mentors combining cultural sensitivity, cultural empathy, and cultural competence is of more fundamental importance in shaping the benefits that FG-IRY experience in response to mentoring. However, again illustrating the potential for complex, interacting influences it is not difficult to imagine that the competency of the FG-IRY mentee in the resettlement country's language constrain relationship quality and benefits if the youth is not paired with a bilingual mentor.

Program settings and practices. For many FG-IRY, their first and closest introduction to the culture of their new home country is through schools. Findings from studies with Latin and Caribbean immigrant youth (two of which are described earlier in this review)[45, 55, 31] have suggested that negative experiences with adults at schools are relatively commonplace for these youth and can contribute to emotional and behavioral disengagement from school. Higher levels of teacher support are related consistently to multiple indices of diverse high school students' academic adjustment, such as grades, academic aspirations, and academic efficacy.[56] These considerations suggest the possibility that school-based mentoring programs, in which teachers or older peers serve as mentors

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viii   Putnam's concept of bridging social capital suggests that social networks between socially heterogeneous groups foster inclusivity and provide unique opportunities for exchange of information.

(cross-age mentoring), could be particularly important for newcomer immigrant students as they tackle issues such as potential feelings of social isolation in a new school context, learning how to meet new academic demands, and bridging the gap between home and school cultures.

Research highlights the importance of family networks among immigrant youth. However, as noted earlier in this review, an acculturation gap between parents and IRY[35] and the "adultification" of IRY due to culture brokering[37] for their families may lead to intergenerational conflicts and family problems. Such potential challenges created by post-migration adjustment and changes in family dynamics suggest that mentoring programs oriented toward "mentoring as a family strengthening strategy"[57] could theoretically be especially effective. Unlike traditional supportive adult-child mentee paring, this approach emphasizes working with the whole family to help them bridge the cultural gap with the outside world and within the family itself. Mentors are from similar cultural backgrounds or are bilingual (in the family's language) and, thus, can serve as "cultural and school system ambassadors or translators" for parents of IRY.

RESEARCH

In the research reviewed, most formal mentoring programs for IRY were school-based and targeted academic success and acculturation (cultural integration). Additionally, programs that utilized cross-cultural mentors offered them some sort of cultural competency training as part of their initial mentor training. None of the studies tested whether receiving cultural competency trainings made a difference to the mentoring relationship or the outcomes of mentees. However, the findings reported in several of these studies do address issues that are broadly relevant to the possible role of cultural factors and practices in conditioning the effects of mentoring on FG-IRY. A study of a school-based mentoring program with cross-cultural matches reported that most mentors were satisfied with the relationships they had developed with their mentees over time and felt that they had made strong connections across age, social class, and cultural differences.[39] Similarly, in an after-school program for diverse origin mentees, the Multicultural Youth Program (Rotich[44], see Table 1), mentors and mentees were matched by shared interests and talents, pre-match and cultural competency training was provided to all mentors to enhance their understanding of needs of diverse immigrant and refugee children, and mentors were required to even participate in interpreter training. Ongoing support was also provided to mentors in this program from professional staff or through mentor support groups.

Pre-match training for mentors was emphasized in another school-based cross-age mentoring program in which US-born children of immigrants were paired with newcomer immigrant youth,[43] and both mentors and mentees were of Latin American origin. The program had a mix of one-to-one and group peer mentoring activities. Mentors were trained before the program over a period of two weeks. Additionally, based on youth interviews and observations, the author concluded that "flexibility" in the implementation of the program was a contributor to its success. This flexibility was achieved by having both mentor and mentee input in the structure of the activities, letting the pairings happen naturally, allowing mentees to interact in a whole group setting so that they can form bonds with each other as well.

Similar themes of peer bonding, gaining cultural knowledge by listening to each other's backgrounds and family involvement were seen in a qualitative study of a mentoring program for immigrant

and US-born African-American youth in the upper Midwest.[58] The study found that youth mentees shared a preference for having multiple mentors as well as for getting to know each other, setting expectations early on, and reciprocity in the mentoring relationships. Additionally, the youth identified mentors whom they felt strengthened their relationships with their parents and guardians as more effective. This came in the form of mentors communicating things on behalf of a mentee and acting as a mediator—especially if there was an acculturation gap. Furthermore, the author discusses an interesting concept of "cultural intelligence" (similar to cultural competence) as a determinant of positive results in the mentoring relationships. The strategies of visiting a mentee's home and parents, spending time in a mentee's school, and listening were cited by the mentors as successful ways to gain cultural knowledge and to begin, or further develop, a mentoring relationship. Youth also discussed the importance of communication (in relation to the frequency of meetings) as a component of effective mentoring, with frequent communication being important in the commencement phase and less so in later phases.

An extensive qualitative study presented findings for what the researchers described as "culturally appropriate" mentoring programs for Horn of African refugee youth in Australia based on four different sources of data: interviews with several stakeholders of mentoring programs,[ix] focus groups with 33 Horn of African youth (16–25 years), policy analyses, and review of good practices in Australian and international research and practice literature.[53] Findings pointed toward several specific practices and concerns as being important when establishing mentoring programs for newly arrived refugee youth: a) mentor screening, matching based on gender (but not race or age), and cultural competency/awareness trainings; b) establishing clear expectations for mentoring relationships, incorporating relationship building activities, and ensuring mentee involvement in choice of activities; c) providing mentors with information about resources in the community such as English classes, trauma counseling, and other government supports for immigrants and refugees that they can pass on to mentees and their families; d) offering mentoring after other more intensive resettlement supports start to wane; e) providing one-to-one mentoring for educational success and readiness for employment; f) engaging families for facilitating consent for youths' participation and reducing risk of breakdown of mentoring relationships; g) avoiding having the mentor be seen as the parental "watchdog" (i.e., someone whose role is to monitor the child's behavior on behalf of the child's parents); and h) although matching on culture is not important for each pairing, having some staff and mentors from the same cultural background as the mentee in the program as a whole.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Theoretically, the special pre- and post-migration context and sociopolitical status of undocumented and refugee youth give rise to unique needs among these two groups within FG-IRY that could, in turn, have implications for the types of mentoring that are most beneficial for these youth; however, research addressing this possibility is lacking.

2. Some research suggests pre-mentoring relationship training, relationship building activities, setting clear expectations, mentee involvement in choice of activities, and family engagement

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[ix]   The stakeholders interviewed included three mentors, four designers/implementers of mentoring programs, four federal government policymakers, and two advocates from community-based organizations.

may enhance the likely benefits of mentoring for FG-IRY; however, the implications of these practices has neither been tested directly nor has it been the subject of in-depth investigation.

3. Both cross- and same-culture mentoring relationships show potential to promote positive acculturation and school-engagement-related outcomes among FG-IRY; the cultural understanding that same-culture mentors bring to the relationship and the cultural competency of cross-culture mentors each may be helpful in forging strong connections with FG-IRY.

4. Benefits of mentoring for FG-IRY may accrue in part as a result of mentors acting as cultural and system translators and interpreters for behavioral and institutional norms of the new country.

3. What Intervening Processes Are Most Important in Linking Mentoring to Outcomes for FG-IRY?

BACKGROUND

First-generation immigrant and refugee youth must bridge two cultures: one associated with the country that they left (and in the case of refugees and undocumented youth, one they cannot even return to) and one associated with the country in which they have just arrived and do not yet necessarily feel they "belong to." There are many changes that may take place in the youth and their contexts during this process of adjustment and adaptation in the new culture that could have long-lasting effects on their development. The sections below address how some of these individual and environmental changes can potentially be facilitated or supported in the context of a mentoring relationship and thus possibly serve as important pathways through which mentors promote positive youth development (PYD) outcomes for FG-IRY.

Changes in youth: Ethnic identity development and school belonging. A recurrent construct in the literature on IRY that might potentially mediate positive developmental outcomes among them in association with mentoring is the process of identity development and, specifically, ethnic identity development. In a study of a school-based internship program with five Chinese immigrant high school students, mentees described a search for their identity that also involved tension and conflict between Chinese and American cultural values.[41] The authors recommend attending to the complexity of multiple identities of IRY when creating school-based programs for them as these multiple identities of youth may complement or conflict each other depending on the context.[x] Furthermore, the developers of a mentoring program for Latino youth with cross-cultural matches (described under Question 1, Diversi & Meacham[39]) suggest that cultural differences generated stimulating and engaging exchanges between mentors and mentees, "functioning as dialectical process of gentle acculturation into each other's worldviews and this dialogue helped further the goal of development of a more bicultural identity for both mentees and mentors"[39] (p. 37). Rhodes's

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[x] For example, conforming to the values of not questioning the authority of adults will likely facilitate smooth relations with parents for Asian immigrant youth but may not serve them well in the context of an American high school classroom.

model of youth mentoring[xi] suggests that mentoring can promote positive youth outcomes through identity development, which is an important process during adolescence. Given that development of racial and ethnic identity is a significant part of the acculturation process for youth from immigrant families, it may be the case that relationships with mentors that engage them in experiences that offer opportunities to foster positive internalizations of self can positively influence the acculturation experience for these youth.[59]

Another potential intervening process, one that may be particularly salient in school-based mentoring programs and for promoting better school outcomes, is a heightened sense of school belonging in response to mentoring. Most IRY experience stressful events pre-, present-, and post-migration that can lead to increased anxiety and feelings of disconnect.[20] School-based mentoring programs, particularly those with a component of peer mentoring, may foster a sense of belonging in IRY through the attachments that the newcomers form to the mentors, the other newcomers, and other students or school personnel.[43] Factors found to be associated with student disaffection and lack of a sense of belonging are low socioeconomic status, living in a single-parent household, and being foreign-born.[60] Mentoring relationships can potentially contribute to PYD outcomes by building the IRY's sense of belonging and helping them form attachments to school.

School-based mentoring programs, particularly those with a component of peer mentoring, may **foster a sense of belonging** in IRY through the **attachments that the newcomers form** to the mentors, the other newcomers, and other students.

Of the studies reviewed, three talked about facilitating a sense of belonging in IRY in the context of mentoring programs but do not empirically examine the pathways through which mentoring may promote a sense of belonging to school in ways that then support other youth outcomes. All three studies examined experiences of immigrant youth in school-based mentoring programs with a mix of one-to-one and group mentoring activities. In the previously described mentoring program for Latino youth,[39] the study of the internship program for Chinese immigrants,[41] and the school-based mentoring program for elementary IRY with middle and high school students as mentors,[43] the youth emphasized that the camaraderie among peers that the program fostered was very important to them. They made comments such as, "It's like they are family" or "It's a safe place to talk about difficult experiences," to describe the attachments they had formed in the program. Related to this were developing feelings of empathy for each other and by mentors for mentees' pre- and post-migration traumas, struggles, and challenges. Similarly, in their review of mentoring for Horn of African refugees in Australia, Griffith and colleagues[53] recommend group mentoring as a potential mechanism for creating social support, a sense of belonging, and identity development in refugee youth.

Changes in context: Family relationships. Research on IRY suggests that family conflict appears to mediate the relation between acculturation gaps and adolescent adjustment.[35] In research with Asian-American college students, findings offered support for family conflict as an intervening

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[xi]   This model was first fully articulated in Rhodes's 2002 book *Stand by me: The risk and rewards of mentoring today's youth.*

process such that students in families with more acculturative dissonance experienced more conflict, which in turn was associated with worse psychological adjustment.[61] This finding suggests that mentoring relationships that are able to foster strong bonds between youth and family, potentially as facilitated by involvement of parents in the mentoring relationship or program (in the case of formal mentoring), may facilitate positive youth outcomes by ameliorating the adverse effects of family conflict that can arise stemming (at least in part) from acculturation gaps. Importantly, in this type of program, the mentor does not step in as a parental figure but serves more as a cultural ambassador.[62] Birman and Morland[24] propose a "family mentoring approach" that can be implemented in two ways: matching an adult mentor with a youth while including the family in the mentoring activities to ensure that mentoring does not increase the acculturation gap and helps the youth in developing a sense of pride in his/her native culture; or matching a mentor family with a mentee family, enabling both cross-age and cross-generational mentoring among the different family members. Furthermore, they recommend that "a focus on instrumental goals (like the new language or navigating institutions in the new country) can be particularly useful in helping build trust and reassuring the parents that their parenting practices and cultural values are not being questioned by the mentors"[24] (p. 366). Although research shows evidence of positive effects of mentoring on parent-child relationship quality even without an explicit emphasis on it (Rhodes & Grossman, 2000),[63] the focus in their proposed approach is to reduce family conflict that arises due to the acculturation gap between parents and children by supporting the parenting of immigrant and refugee parents without undercutting their role during the stressful post-migration adjustment process in the new country.

RESEARCH

In the research reviewed, no study reported findings directly testing processes through which mentoring may influence outcomes for FG-IRY. The study that arguably comes closest to this type of examination is a mixed methods evaluation of a mentoring project, Club Amigas,[64] that paired Latina college students with 37 Latina middle-school girls (immigration and generational status of mentees was not reported). In quantitative analyses, it was found that girls' reports of self-esteem, use of Spanish language, and positive Latina identity increased during the program and that their reported levels of self-esteem and Spanish-language use were associated positively with their Latina identity. In qualitative analyses of girls' responses to a survey question about what they found most beneficial, one of the three identified themes was Personal Development (reported by 38% of the girls), including (but not limited to) benefits pertaining to self-respect and self-awareness, which taken together with quantitative findings would be broadly consistent with the possibility of promotion of ethnic identity fostering broader gains in self-esteem for participating girls. However, no direct test of this type of process (i.e., referred to in quantitative research as a test of mediation) and the other qualitative themes of social and educational goals are less easily interpreted in this manner. Furthermore, there was a parent workshop component to the program that parents were reported to experience very positively. The findings of this study, therefore, also point to a potential for multiple processes to be important in fostering outcomes for FG-IRY in the context of mentoring, possibly with varying processes or intervening factors differentially important dependent on the outcome, and the inability to delineate and disentangle such pathways in the absence of direct examination by researchers.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Theory and the broader research literature suggests that facilitation of identity development, particularly ethnic identity development, and fostering a sense of belonging could be an important process through which mentoring can promote other desirable outcomes among FG-IRY, potentially and especially those who have been in the new country for relatively limited amounts of time; however, research examining this possibility is currently absent.

2. Mentoring may promote positive outcomes for FG-IRY by creating safe and resourceful spaces for them to develop, in particular by fostering supportive relationships with peers and adults within systems like school and the family; however, research examining this type of pathway of influence is lacking.

4. Have Mentoring Supports and Services Reached and Engaged FG-IRY, Been Implemented with High Quality, and Been Adopted and Sustained?

BACKGROUND

Consideration of the broader research literature on FG-IRY suggests several factors that could potentially act as barriers to participation of FG-IRY in mentoring programs. Of note are the significant role of religious institutions in the lives of immigrant youth[65] and that extracurricular activities often compete with familial obligations, such as working to support the family or providing childcare for siblings.[26,42] Another potential set of barriers of engagement of IRY and their families in mentoring is associated with cultural and linguistic differences. Extracurricular activities, potentially including mentoring, are seen as emphasizing autonomy, differentiation, and self-reliance, which might present conflicts to the collectivistic and group-oriented values of native cultures.[66,67] Cultural differences and priorities may also explain why some immigrant youth and their parents prefer a focus on academics in the after-school hours[65] and may socialize predominantly within their networks of culturally similar friends and family.[47]

Cultural differences and priorities may also explain why some immigrant youth and their parents **prefer a focus on academics in the after-school hours.**[65]

Community-family-school partnerships have been recommended for quality implementation and long-term sustenance of programs serving FG-IRY. This type of multilevel and multisystem partnership can be found in the research on mentoring for FG-IRY. For instance, the TEACH program (Camras[42], see Table 1) was a joint effort between a University, Latino families, a local Boys and Girls Club, and staff from the city's Housing Commission to create after-school programs for Latino youth. Likewise, the developer and implementer of the Multicultural Youth Program (Rotich[44], see Table 1) recommended that culturally sensitive service learning mentoring programs should involve all stakeholders (i.e., community leaders and religious leaders) and should develop activities that both embrace the cultural and linguistic values and preferences of the newcomer students and appreciate differences between their native and resettlement country's cultures. A recent study examined factors associated with sustainability across classroom-based, community/mentoring, family-focused prevention, and family treatment evidence-based programs

in Pennsylvania.[68] The study found that in general, sustained programs reported greater community coalition functioning, communication to key stakeholders, knowledge of the program's logic model, communication with the trainer or program developer, and sustainability planning. For community/mentoring programs (n = 21) specifically, communication with trainers, connection to a well-functioning coalition, and financial and alignment sustainability planning were particularly important.

RESEARCH

In terms of reach, a mixed-method study of 47 Mexican origin youth in San Diego (almost half were first generation) found that fewer than 10% reported having a nonfamilial adult in the community serving the role of an informal mentor.[47] Similarly, a qualitative study examining the role of mentors in the lives of 12 refugee youth resettled in the United States[33] found that none of the mentoring relationships were developed in the context of a formal mentoring program and that in most cases the mentorship began due to a chance encounter. In line with these findings, a recent nation-wide survey of 571 mentoring programs by MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership found that most programs reported only a small percentage of the youth they served were FG-IRY; more specifically, only 38 programs out of 571 indicated that over a quarter of their mentees were FG-IRY. Furthermore, a large number of programs (275) reported not even tracking this information.

One in-depth qualitative study of a school-based peer mentoring program offers some insights into programmatic barriers and implementation of a formal mentoring program for FG-IRY.[43] The planning and implementation of the peer mentoring program was done in collaboration with the student volunteer mentors, teachers, administrator, and counselors at the elementary school (site of the program). However, the researcher reported that written forms for participants and families were an impediment to their participation and not clearly understood even when translated into Spanish. In addition, communication to the parents in writing did not elicit the same response as a telephone call,—which seemed more effective in communicating about the program. It should be noted, however, that these appear to be informal observations rather than based on systematic collection and analysis of data. Likewise, Camras[42] collected data on reasons for dropout among mentees during the TEACH program (see Table 1) and found that the following were among those cited most often: inaccessibility of transport to get to and from the program and conflicts related to work demands and childcare responsibilities at home.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Several strategies for engaging FG-IRY in mentoring programs, including community-family-school partnerships and offering them at religious sites, have been proposed; however, research is lacking on the extent to which these strategies are being utilized and serve to increase engagement of this population of youth in mentoring supports and services.

2. Close collaboration between community leaders, schools, and families in mentoring programs and support services for FG-IRY has been argued to be important for increasing engagement as well as facilitating quality implementation and long-term sustainability; however, research addressing this possibility is lacking.

3. It appears that natural mentoring relationships are sources of instrumental and emotional support to FG-IRY, but that there is an unmet need for institutional and structural resources and mechanisms to facilitate the establishment and sustenance of these relationships.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

(Mike Garringer, MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership
and Ashmeet Oberoi, University of Miami)

Although this evidence review points to several areas where more research on mentoring FG-IRY is needed, there are several key takeaways from the existing evidence that practitioners can draw from when designing and implementing mentoring services to support these youth and, often by extension, their families.

1. ## CAREFULLY CONSIDER THE NUANCED NEEDS AND SPECIFIC CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS OF THE MENTEES AND FAMILIES YOU WISH TO SERVE.

This sentiment obviously applies to just about any mentoring program, but in the case of FG-IRY it may be absolutely critical for obtaining buy-in from youth and families and avoiding misunderstandings and communication breakdowns within the match. At a minimum, programs should spend some time investigating:

- **Cultural norms, gender dynamics, and family-related customs of the country of origin of the youth being served.** As noted in the review, some cultures have traditional helping roles for nonparent adults and extended social networks that are conceptually similar to the role of a "mentor" in Western societies. Many other cultures, however, may find the concept of an unfamiliar stranger spending time alone with a child or teaching a youth meaningful life lessons to be rather strange, if not an actual transgression or insult. For example, the research literature on mentoring Asian youth seems to suggest that peer mentoring may be more suitable for them than mentoring programs where they are paired with adult strangers, as collective coping cultural norms discourage sharing problems with a stranger outside the family.[41] Many immigrant cultures may rely on extended family or kinship networks for meeting the varying needs of youth and may find the concept of a mentor to be something unfamiliar. Programs likely will want to talk directly with parents to explain the nature and role of a mentor, the limits and boundaries established by the program, and the ways in which the mentor will honor their culture in their work to help ease any tensions around the relationship.

  There may be other culturally specific nuances that might help focus a mentoring program's work with FG-IRY, or serve as a barrier. Programs should note that, within a given culture, caring adults and social networks may support youth very differently based on the age of the child or their gender (for example, in some Latin American cultures girls may be offered more robust extended social networks than boys,[70] perhaps suggesting more need for mentors from the broader community to fill that void for boys from that culture, while perhaps also explaining a lack of interest from girls and their families for mentoring services). Other cultures may have strong cultural norms around gender interactions with the opposite sex, restricting who can serve as a mentor to a particular child. So be sure you understand the norms of the country and culture of origin of the youth and families you intend to serve via mentors.

- **Challenges faced in immigrants' country of origin.** There is an obvious world of difference between immigrating to the United States on a long-term work visa and doing so as a family fleeing violence or seeking political asylum after persecution in a foreign country. Programs likely will want to be cognizant of the circumstances that brought each mentee and their family to the United States and offer appropriate services in addition to mentoring accordingly, especially if there is a history of violence or trauma behind how this family came to your community.

- **Challenges faced here in the United States.** These challenges can range from needing help overcoming language barriers and figuring out how things work in terms of attending school or accessing other government services to more pressing concerns like dealing with the fallout of economic distress or community-level bigotry in their new home. Some immigrant families may have access to a robust local network of same-culture families and support services, whereas others may find themselves being very isolated from their own culture and struggling to build a sense of normalcy. Programs may want to spend time working with immigrant children and families to determine their particular needs in their new home on a case-by-case basis and not assume that all immigrant experiences are the same or are perceived uniformly.

> Programs may want to spend time working with immigrant children and families to **determine their particular needs in their new home on a case-by-case basis** and not assume that all immigrant experiences are the same or are perceived uniformly.

- **Issues related to immigration status, particularly for those who may be undocumented.** Undocumented youth and families may experience additional and unique challenges here in the United States, particularly in light of recent controversial political pressures around immigration and deportation. One study cited in this review[12] recommends that mentoring programs offer undocumented youth opportunities to discuss their status with mentors or other caring adults in an effort to counter the internalizations of the term "illegals," which implies that these youth do not belong in their new home and need to be punished for breaking the law. Such identity narratives, the authors speculate, can engender feelings of alienation among youth and can have a powerful effect on their self-esteem, motivation, sense of personal empowerment, and self-advocacy. They conclude:

> To that end, we recommend a guided facilitation that allows adolescents the ability to explore and give meaning to undocumented status while providing encouragement for the exploration of other key aspects of their identities. Particularly as these young people start leaving school without tangible options, signs like extreme isolation and concealment, and reported fears and anxieties about becoming adults are indicators that need to be rapidly identified by those involved in the lives of these youngsters, namely teachers, mentors, counselors, community organizers, and church members."[12]

2. THINK CAREFULLY ABOUT WHO SHOULD SERVE AS MENTORS.

There are several considerations that will come into play here, but perhaps none may be more critical than whether mentors in your program need to be bilingual or bicultural. Depending on the country of origin of the youth you serve, this may drastically limit who can be recruited to serve as a mentor in the program. Yet, selecting individuals who can speak the language and understand cultural differences may be extremely beneficial. As suggested in one of the studies cited in this review, "bicultural mentors can serve as role models in the challenging process of developing a bicultural identity, exemplifying the ways in which elements of the ethnic identity can be preserved and celebrated, even as features of the more mainstream culture of the United States are incorporated into youths' lives".[71]

Another key decision has to do with determining if your mentors should be adults or peers. If placing **adults** in this role, note that:

- **Adult mentors, especially if bicultural, may be more available to also help the mentees' parents and get the youth out of an uncomfortable role.** As noted in the review, FG-IRY often face an additional burden on top of their own personal challenges: that of being the one member of the household who best understands the language, norms, and systems of their new country, often requiring them to serve as a "culture broker" in various situations to help their parents navigate challenges. Research included in this review suggests that this culture-brokering role can be a tremendous source of stress on FG-IRY youth and create conflict in FG-IRY families. Adult mentors (especially those who know the family's native language) may be particularly well equipped to help take this pressure off their mentee, particularly in community-based programs that allow for direct mentor-parent interaction. Adult mentors may have the capacity to be critical to connecting parents to a larger community of families from their country of origin or to other opportunities in the community. In addition to potentially providing critical role modeling for the mentee, they may be able to relieve a lot of stress and role conflict for those families in which the youth is suddenly the interface with the larger community in their new home. Having noted these considerations, also keep in mind that the extent to which adults serving as mentors for FG-IRY can deliver on these possibilities or the types of practices that might make this most likely is not clear from the available research.

- **Targeting individuals with backgrounds doing international work or volunteer work where cross-cultural exchanges were common may lead to stronger relationships more quickly.** Having some experience working with diverse cultures can be a huge advantage for new mentors for FG-IRY. Individuals with a background as teachers of English may be particularly effective if they can be trained to embrace a mentoring role beyond their typical language instruction. Others with a history of working or volunteering abroad may be more open to the experience of working with a child and family of a very different culture and may be able to empathize more effectively with the pressures of being in a new and unfamiliar country. Some programs even recruit former mentees to come back and serve as a mentor. If mentor recruits do not have these types of backgrounds, cultural competency training or "shadowing"¾in which the mentor spends time with a trusted member of the mentee's community learning

the culture and settlement issues¾may help adult mentors be more effective in navigating boundaries and offering appropriate help. In fact, it's also worth noting that even Americans who have traveled abroad extensively might also benefit from this type of training or shadowing, especially if they seem prone to taking a somewhat "paternalistic" attitude toward people from other cultures. This is, unfortunately, a bit of a concern given America's standing in the world and the attitude that can engender in some of even our most well-meaning citizens.

- **Prospective mentors' attitudes about immigration policy and immigrants themselves should be taken into account.** Needless to say, the United States finds itself in the midst of a contentious debate about individuals and families coming here in search of a better life. It's vital that your mentors do not express views or attitudes about immigrants or immigration policy that may exacerbate feelings of not being welcome or increase the anxiety that many children already feel from the debate in the larger culture. Adult volunteers may come to your program for many good reasons, but still harbor views about this topic that could be harmful to the children and families you serve if expressed. Of course, it's also possible that the mentee's peers might also harbor negative feelings about immigrants, so don't assume that peers will inherently be free of these potentially harmful attitudes. But it is perhaps more likely that they will carry less anger, resentment, and extreme views about immigration than some adults on this particular issue, as American youth tend to generally be more liberal, tolerant, and open to diversity generally (as illustrated in studies like this one from Pew Research). Make sure that you are screening out applicants who may have political or moral views that would be a barrier to giving IRY the mentoring they need. As is likely already evident, the foregoing recommendations are made on the basis of appeal to core values (e.g., inclusiveness) that are assumed to be universal within the field of mentoring.

Peer mentors, on the other hand, may offer a whole different set of benefits and opportunities for FG-IRY. Taken as a whole, the research considered in this review seems to point to school as a particularly promising context for mentoring FG-IRY. Fellow classmates and peers may be able to be powerful supports in helping these youth feel welcome and "learn the ropes" of the one institution where they will spend considerable time throughout the year. Peer mentors, especially those in a school setting who may see a youth five days a week, may be able to:

- Help FG-IRY navigate school structures and practices.

- Introduce FG-IRY to social norms and support building a new social network of friends, both in school and out in the community.

- Help accelerate language acquisition and understanding of cultural nuances.

- Assist the mentee in conveying critical information about school to their parents.

- Act as an advocate or intermediary between the mentee and other adults, such as teachers, counselors, and administrators.

Regardless of whether your program uses adults or peers as mentors, make sure that they are committed to being a consistent presence in the life of their mentee. All mentoring matches can suffer from consistency issues, leaving youth and families wondering how committed the mentor is to supporting them. But these issues can be exacerbated when working with FG-IRY who may be relying on their mentor for critical help in navigating systems and institutions in their new home, as well as getting used to receiving support from a member of the community in this way. So make sure that mentors can commit to meeting with their mentees on a consistent and predictable schedule.

3.   IN MANY WAYS, SUCCESS IN SCHOOL SEEMS TO BE KEY TO HELPING FG-IRY THRIVE MORE GENERALLY IN THEIR NEW COUNTRY.

Many of the studies referenced in this review highlighted that mentors can be effective in helping FG-IRY find success in a critical institution in their new country: school. If mentors can get these youth to find success, or even just a baseline level of comfort, in school, that is likely to go a long way toward helping them feel welcome and comfortable in their community more generally. So whether it's peers showing them "the ropes" and helping them make friends, or adults coming into the school or home to emphasize academic success, think about how your program can help FG-IRY thrive in the classroom or plan for college (which, let's face it, is a complicated process that even native-born parents have trouble navigating for their child).

SELECT RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

- *From We to Me : A Curriculum on Working with Transitioning Youth from the Perspective of Culture* – This resource provides curriculum and handouts that can be used to train mentors (and others) to be more culturally "congruent" in working with FG-IRY.

- *Growing Up in a New Country: A Positive Youth Development Toolkit for Working with Refugees and Immigrants* – A fairly comprehensive guide for youth workers of all types that includes a special "toolbox" for mentoring FG-IRY. Published by Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services.

- *Mentoring Immigrant Youth: A Toolkit for Program Coordinators* – A toolkit on the topic published by MENTOR in 2009.

- *New Directions in Mentoring Refugee Youth* – A brief guide published recently by Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services.

The "Youth Mentoring" page of the Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services website offers many other resources that practitioners may find useful.

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