Annotated Bibliography
YOUTH MENTORING
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Pathways
to Education

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About Pathways to Education Canada
Pathways to Education is a national, charitable organization breaking the cycle of poverty through education. Its award-winning program is creating positive social change by supporting youth living in low-income communities to overcome barriers to education, graduate from high school, and build the foundation for a successful future. Through the collective power of partnerships, Pathways to Education's innovative program is preparing youth for tomorrow.

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Youth Mentoring

This annotated bibliography presents a plain language overview of seminal studies in the field of youth mentoring, excluding articles specifically about mentor-youth relationships. We define youth mentorship as any meaningful relationship between a youth and a caring non-parental adult, in which the adult has the youth's best interests at heart and helps to guide the youth academically, socially, behaviourally, and/or emotionally (Rhodes, 2002; Dubois et al., 2011).

The aim of this annotated bibliography is not to offer an exhaustive and comprehensive collection of all relevant studies. Instead, we present a modest introduction, designed for those seeking an overview of this complex topic, a refresher, or a resource upon which to build more detailed and nuanced knowledge.

This document was developed for professionals who contribute to the well-being and development of youth. This includes those who work directly with youth, such as mentors, educators, child and youth workers, social workers, and front-line staff in school-based and out-of-school youth programs. This resource will also be of interest those who work indirectly with or for youth: youth mentoring program managers, school administrators, or youth researchers.

This bibliography emerged from our own internal research on youth mentoring, conducted in the context of program measurement, improvement, and impact assessment efforts. It has helped Pathways to Education Canada better understand this complex field and translate our knowledge into effective programming for youth furthest from opportunities. We share it here in the hopes that it will have similar impact in other youth-serving programs.

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DuBois, D., & Karcher, M. (Eds.). (2013). *Handbook of youth mentoring, second edition.* **Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.**

Following the publication of the first edition in 2005, this book describes itself as "the only comprehensive synthesis of current theory, research, and practice in the field of youth mentoring." Each of the 36 chapters analyses a specific topic related to effective youth mentoring, and is written by leading experts in the field. Furthermore, each chapter has been reviewed by leading practitioners to ensure that this text can bridge the gap between research and practice. This publication contains highly useful information on many facets of youth mentoring, including mentoring relationships, cultural perspectives, programmatic considerations, and working with special populations.

DeWit, D. J., DuBois, D., Erdem, G., Larose, S., & Lipman, E. L. (2016). The role of program-supported mentoring relationships in promoting youth mental health, behavioral and developmental outcomes. *Prevention Science,* **17(5), 646–657.**

This study examines a) the association between different categories of youth mentoring status and aspects of youth health and social functioning, and b) the role of youth gender as a possible moderating factor. 859 youth between the ages of 6 and 17 from Big Brother Big Sisters one-to-one mentoring programs across Canada were surveyed before being paired with a mentor and then 18 months later, after a successful match. Aspects of youth health and social functioning were assessed using youth self-reports of behavioural problems, poor mental health, perceived social support, self-esteem, and coping strategies.

Results confirmed previous studies in showing that youth in mentoring relationships lasting longer than 12 months experienced health and social benefits compared to youth who did not receive mentoring. Also, there was an absence of benefits for youth in short-term dissolved relationships. Youth in dissolved long-term relationships did just as well as those in ongoing relationships. Gender differences varied by the category of mentoring status and the developmental outcome.

This study contributed to the literature by examining youth

mentoring status in more detail than simply mentored vs. non-mentored, and by being the first systemic study of youth gender as a potential moderator of the impact of mentoring on youth developmental outcomes. The authors discuss implications for programming, and make recommendations such as implementing more effective screening procedures to ensure long-term matches.

DeWit, D. J., Wells, S., Elton-Marshall, T., & George, J. (2017). Mentoring relationships and the mental health of Aboriginal youth in Canada. *The Journal of Primary Prevention,* **38(1-2), 49–66.**

This study compares the mentoring experiences and mental health and behavioural outcomes of 125 Aboriginal and 734 non-Aboriginal youth, as reported by parents or guardians before youth were matched with a mentor and at an 18-month follow-up. Participating youth, between the ages of 6 and 17, were recruited from Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programs across Canada. Five factors were used to compare mentoring relationship experiences: stability and longevity, mentor-youth similarities, relationship quality, frequency of weekly contact, and number of different activities.

Findings showed that, compared to non-Aboriginal youth, Aboriginal youth were less likely to be in a long-term continuous mentoring relationship. Aboriginal youth were also more likely to be in a long-term relationship ending in dissolution, to have been mentored by a female adult, and significantly more likely to report a high-quality mentoring relationship, regular weekly contact with their mentor, and monthly mentoring activities. Mentored Aboriginal youth had fewer emotional problems and less social anxiety compared to non-mentored Aboriginal youth. The results suggest that mentoring programs can effectively improve the well-being of Aboriginal youth.

DuBois, D. L., Portillo, N., Rhodes, J. E., Silverthorn, N., & Valentine, J. C. (2011). How effective are mentoring programs for youth? A systematic assessment of the evidence. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest,* **12(2), 57–91.**

This study is fundamental in exploring the effectiveness of youth mentoring. It offers a comprehensive meta-analysis, encompassing 73 evaluations of mentoring programs for children and adolescents published in the preceding decade. It concludes that mentoring

effectively helps youth to develop positively in behavioural, social, emotional, and academic domains, in terms of both prevention and promotion. This study has similar findings to another meta-analysis published in 2002 on the previous generation of mentoring programs (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002). However, it reports that the benefits of mentoring are modest.

The study also analyzed variability in program effectiveness and found that programs have been more effective when: a) participating youth live in contexts of risk and disadvantage, b) evaluation samples have included more male youth, c) there has been a good fit between the educational or occupational backgrounds of mentors and the goals of the program, d) mentors and youth were paired based on similarity of interests, and e) programs have been structured to support mentors in assuming teaching or advocacy roles with youth. Key concerns for policy to address and essential directions for future research are also discussed.

Farruggia, S. P., Bullen, P., Davidson, J., Dunphy, A., Solomon, F., & Collins, E. (2011). The effectiveness of youth mentoring programs in New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, 40(3), 52–70.

This systemic review of 26 studies aims to assess the effectiveness of youth mentoring programmes in New Zealand, identify the characteristics of effective programmes, and identify gaps in the literature and directions for future research. Most (88%) of the programs demonstrated effectiveness. However, the quality of research was varied. It was noted that programs directed towards psychological and interpersonal goals were more effective than programs focused on educational, behavioural, vocational, or cultural goals. Additionally, program characteristics which appeared to influence effectiveness included: dissemination, age of programme, history of evaluation, utilizing principles of best practice, program components, type of mentoring relationship, use of peers as mentors, level of structure, expected length of mentor-mentee relationship, socioeconomic status of youth, and researcher-practitioner relationship. The authors also provide recommendations for programs and policy makers.

Herrera, C., DuBois, D. & Grossman, J. (2013). *The role of risk: Mentoring experiences and outcomes for youth with varying risk profiles*. New York, NY: A Public/Private Ventures project distributed by MDRC.

This report describes a study which examined how the levels and types of risk that youth face influence their relationships with mentors, and the benefits they get from these relationships. The participants included 1,310 youth ranging in age from 8 to 15, from seven mentoring programs in the state of Washington. The study explored the backgrounds of the youth and the mentors, the mentor-youth relationship, the program supports offered, and the benefits to youth. It analyzed how these varied for youth according to differing profiles of risk. Youth were categorized into four risk profiles: youth high on environmental and individual risk, youth with low individual but high environmental risk, youth with high individual but low environmental risk, and youth relatively low on both types of risk.

The five key findings were as follows: a) programs were able to serve youth facing a wide range of challenges; b) youth with differing risk profiles had similar mentor-youth relationship quality and similar levels of benefits from program participation; c) the challenges reported by mentors and reasons for match termination varied according to youth risk profiles; d) the strongest program benefit was a decline in depressive symptoms, and e) mentors who received training and program support met more frequently with their mentees and reported higher-quality relationships. The authors also discuss implications for practitioners and funders.

Morgan, C., Sibthorp, J., & Tsethlikai, M. (2016). Fostering self-regulation skills in youth: Examining the effects of a mentoring curriculum in a summer recreation program. *Leisure Sciences,* 38(2), 161–178.

This study explored the effects of a mentoring program on the self-regulation skills of 64 youth participating in a summer recreation program. One site of an existing recreation program was selected to be the treatment group and was modified to include formal mentoring, and another site served as the comparison group. Self-regulation scores were collected before, during, and after the recreation program. Key findings were that mentored youth increased their self-regulation skills significantly more

than youth who only participated in the recreation program without mentoring, especially in terms of planning and organizing behaviours. Also, there was a much larger change measured in the second half of the program compared to the first half, potentially indicating a cumulative treatment effect. The authors conclude that recreation programs are well-positioned to incorporate formal mentoring in order to increase self-regulation skills in youth.

Rhodes, J. (2005). A model of youth mentoring. In D. DuBois & M. Karcher (Eds.), *Handbook of youth mentoring* (pp. 30–44). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

This book chapter presents an updated model of youth mentoring, which builds on a model proposed by Rhodes (2002). Together, these two publications present a foundational model of youth mentoring. First, this chapter provides an overview of the literature. It underscores the need for a better understanding of the processes in mentoring relationships that account for variability in youth outcomes. Next, the chapter discusses the youth mentoring model, which posits that a strong mentoring relationship with mutuality, trust, and empathy is the catalyst for various interrelated developmental processes. Along with the model, this chapter also presents preliminary findings supporting the pathways of influence. Finally, the chapter addresses implications of the model for future research and practice. Recommendations for research are to a) further investigate and refine the proposed model, and b) examine processes across different types of relationships and programmatic contexts. Recommendations for practice are as follows: Explore the use of multiple program strategies to target pathways to change in mentoring relationships; Create strong program infrastructures; Tap into pools of volunteers at lower risk for termination; Involve and engage parents.

Schwartz, S. E. O., & Rhodes, J. E. (2016). From treatment to empowerment: New approaches to youth mentoring. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 0, 1–8.

This paper is significant because it proposes a new framework of youth mentoring which represents a paradigm shift in how youth mentoring is understood. It critiques the foundational model of youth mentoring (Rhodes, 2002; 2005) as overemphasizing the importance of the mentor-youth relationship, and discusses the problematic practice of assigning individual mentors (who are

typically disconnected from mentees' communities) to youth living in under-resourced communities. The authors argue that more emphasis should be placed on the broader relational contexts in which mentor-youth relationships unfold. The new model expands the scope of mentoring interventions to include approaches that "teach youth to fish" (i.e. empower youth to identify and reach out to networks of potential supportive adults) and "stock the pond" (i.e. build on and cultivate informal supports). The paper also describes four examples of youth mentoring approaches that align with the new framework (Youth-Initiated Mentoring, The Connected Scholars Program, Network Engaged Mentoring, and Intentional Mentoring).

Suffrin, R. L., Todd, N. R., & Sánchez, B. (2016). An ecological perspective of mentor satisfaction with their youth mentoring relationships. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 44(5), 553–568.

This study views mentors as embedded in a social ecology of relationships. It examines 247 mentor relationships with their mentee, the mentee's family, and the mentoring organization, in order to determine how each of these relationships independently and interactively predict mentor satisfaction. Mentor demographic characteristics, such as mentor income and education and mentoring relationship duration, were included as control variables. Furthermore, mentors' perceived cultural competence was assessed. Results showed that higher perceived cultural competence, better relationship with the mentee's family, and greater satisfaction with the mentoring organization significantly predicted greater mentee satisfaction with the mentoring relationship, over and above demographic characteristics. Furthermore, mentors' relationships with the mentee's family and the mentoring organization interact in predicting mentor satisfaction. The findings imply that social ecology might serve as a direct or moderating factor in predicting mentor satisfaction. The authors also discuss limitations and implications for practice.

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