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Community – University Institute for Social Research

Mentoring In Saskatoon:
Toward a Meaningful Partnership

by Derek Tannis

Building Healthy Sustainable Communities

Community-University Institute for Social Research

CUISR is a partnership between a set of community-based organizations (including Saskatoon District Health, the City of Saskatoon, Quint Development Corporation, the Saskatoon Regional Intersectoral Committee on Human Services) and a large number of faculty and graduate students from the University of Saskatchewan. CUISR's mission is "to serve as a focal point for community-based research and to integrate the various social research needs and experiential knowledge of the community-based organizations with the technical expertise available at the University. It promotes, undertakes, and critically evaluates applied social research for community-based organizations, and serves as a data clearinghouse for applied and community-based social research. The overall goal of CUISR is to build the capacity of researchers, community-based organizations and citizenry to enhance community quality of life."

This mission is reflected in the following objectives: (1) to build capacity within CBOs to conduct their own applied social research and write grant proposals; (2) to serve as a conduit for the transfer of experientially-based knowledge from the community to the University classroom, and transfer technical expertise from the University to the community and CBOs; (3) to provide CBOs with assistance in the areas of survey sample design, estimation and data analysis, or, where necessary, to undertake survey research that is timely, accurate and reliable; (4) to serve as a central clearinghouse, or data warehouse, for community-based and applied social research findings; and (5) to allow members of the University and CBOs to access a broad range of data over a long time period.

As a starting point, CUISR has established three focused research modules in the areas of Community Health Determinants and Health Policy, Community Economic Development, and Quality of Life Indicators. The three-pronged research thrust underlying the proposed Institute is, in operational terms, highly integrated. The central questions in the three modules—community quality of life, health, and economy—are so interdependent that many of the projects and partners already span and work in more than one module. All of this research is focused on creating and maintaining healthy, sustainable communities.

Research is the driving force that cements the partnership between universities, CBOs, and government in acquiring, transferring, and applying knowledge in the form of policy and programs. Researchers within each of the modules examine these dimensions from their particular perspective, and the results are integrated at the level of the Institute, thus providing a rich, multi-faceted analysis of the common social and economic issues. The integrated results are then communicated to the Community and the University in a number of ways to ensure that research makes a difference in the development of services, implementation of policy, and lives of the people of Saskatoon and Saskatchewan.

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ABSTRACT

This report investigates three questions regarding volunteer mentoring programming in Saskatoon. First, it seeks the internal and external contributors and deterrents for successful mentoring programming as presented both in the literature in the field and as expressed by the five mentoring organizations in Saskatoon that participated in this study. Second, it examines the program descriptions, inputs, outputs, outcomes, and needs of these participating organizations. Third, considering these results, it asks what next steps these organizations might take as a group. Research was conducted in two phases, a project consultation phase and a questionnaire/reporting phase. Results from this research indicate that the volunteer mentoring community is comprehensive in reach, and diverse and innovative in terms of the program's scope. Considering both the literature review and the questionnaire responses, the main issues that surfaced were: the critical role of program diversity, quality, and integrity; the importance of inter- and intra-agency cooperation; a need for an effective communications strategy; the tension between valuing present community support and the persistent lack of sufficient volunteers and funding; the value of sound program evaluation practices; and the importance of considering the limitations of volunteer mentoring as an intervention strategy. The areas that emerged as beneficial for sharing of resources or expertise, future research, and/or joint action were: collaboration approaches and strategies and diversity issues; volunteer recruitment and training; mentor/mentee matching, screening, and support; and program evaluation and representation. A set of recommendations resulting from these findings is presented at the report's conclusion.

INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

Over the past two decades, the scope and reach of volunteer mentoring programs have expanded dramatically (Rhodes, 2002). In the United States, it is estimated that there are five million youth involved in a school- or community-based mentoring program (McLearn, Colasanot, Schoen, & Shapiro, 1999). In Canada, Big Brothers and Big Sisters report as having served 20,000 youth and children through their various programs, with an aim to reach 100,000 by 2013 (Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Canada, 2003). These numbers are consistent with findings in this report. Based alone on the five mentoring organizations in Saskatoon that participated in this research, approximately 1,200 children, youth, and families are directly involved in some sort of mentoring relationship, or in other alternative programs or assistance while they wait to be matched.

The value and role of mentoring in improving the lives of at-risk children, youth, and families are well documented in books and articles that survey the research done thus far on site- and community-based mentoring (Buckley & Zimmermann, 2003; Rhodes, 2002; Sipe, 1996). From the perspective of the most prominent researchers in the field, quality volunteer mentoring programs are considered a viable intervention strategy that results in a broad array of positive outcomes for mentees, from improved socialization to decreased alcohol use (Grossman & Johnson, 1998; Rhodes, 2002; Sipe, 2002). However, these findings are also tempered by meta-analytic studies and research conducted by many of the same researchers and which suggest only a moderate impact on the lives of youth and children (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002; Freedman, 1999). Neutral or harmful effects have been observed in cases where there is premature termination of a match or where program quality is low (Freedman, 1999; Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Rhodes & Roffman, 2002).

Considering these findings and the fact that volunteer mentoring programs continue to be demanded and expanded in Saskatoon, it is timely to examine this field more closely and investigate more systematically the needs and experiences of local mentoring organizations. Thus, the main goals of this project are to: (1) provide a forum for mentoring organizations in Saskatoon to work together collaboratively in order to find solutions and innovative strategies to ensure and augment individual and collective program quality and reach; and (2) provide recommendations and relevant research to assist in deciding what steps can be taken to build upon and strengthen the mentoring practices and outcomes in Saskatoon.

To achieve these goals, an action research plan was constructed to involve the participating mentoring organizations in the project description, research questions, and research report design. This process culminated in the research report's objectives: (1) to assess the internal and external contributors and deterrents to program success as described in the literature in the field, and as experienced by the participating mentoring organizations; (2) to assess program diversity, resources, inputs, and priorities for future research, training, and/or joint action; and (3) to analyze these two areas of investigation in relation to recommendations for future training, research, and/or action.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

This project's origins date back to 6 December 2001, when the Regional Intersectoral Committee and United Way of Saskatoon called together an informal meeting of mentoring organizations and funding agencies. This gathering helped open a discussion on shared experiences, issues, concerns, and needs in the volunteer mentoring community. A more formal meeting followed on 13 February 2002 at the Regional Intersectoral Committee office. Attendees included Catholic Family Services, Big Brothers of Saskatoon, and Volunteer Saskatoon. An agreement was reached that research should be undertaken, and possible researchers and research organizations were considered.

At a meeting held at the Village Lounge at the Saskatoon Community Services Village on 8 January 2003, Big Sisters Association of Saskatoon, Catholic Family Services, the Regional Intersectoral Committee, Big Brothers of Saskatoon, and Volunteer Saskatoon decided to pursue a Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR) research project, with Volunteer Saskatoon taking the lead and the United Way offering infrastructure assistance. In early 2003, Volunteer Saskatoon submitted an application to CUISR, which, after some revisions, was approved on 15 October 2003, and formally began in February 2004 after the hiring of a research intern.

A Note On Terms and Project Limits

Before proceeding, certain terms need to be defined and the limits of the research clarified. In particular, the phrase "internal and external contributors/deterrents to success" requires elaboration. The purpose of this project is not to assess the quality and effectiveness of the organizations that participated in this study, nor was it to analyze the value and impact of volunteer mentoring programs in general.[1] Although issues regarding quality assurance and overall indicators of program success are addressed in this report, this is not done as a means of specific or group program evaluation, nor is it done as a means to frame a general policy on mentoring programs in Saskatoon.

Along this same line, it is also important to note that the term "success" does not connote a fixed set of outcomes and impacts. Considering the different types of programs and the diversity of mentees involved in mentoring programs, success can range from improved academic performance to decreased drug use or improved relations with family. Furthermore, although these outcomes play a critical role in defining program success, in mentoring programs the levels of trust, commitment, and caring in mentor-mentee relationships are equally, if not more, important indicators of program quality (Rhodes, 2002).

As a final note, "contributors and deterrents to program success" are divided into two areas: internal contributors and deterrents to program success, meaning those that are programming related, administratively determined or generally within the influence of the organization; and external contributors and deterrents to program success, meaning those that are beyond the control of the organization, such as funding requirements and socio-economic realities of the community.

Literature Review

Considering that one of the main purposes of this project is to identify internal and external contributors and deterrents to program success, a broad range of studies were consulted to analyze different program recommendations spanning many program types and research foci.

INTERNAL CONTRIBUTORS TO SUCCESS

Internal contributors to success were the most comprehensively elaborated upon in the compiled research. The four main areas that emerged were: (1) an adherence to high standards and best practices; (2) a focus on fostering the conditions for relationship building; (3) priority on program flexibility and variation; and (4) providing realistic public relations and promotional materials.

Adherence to high standards and best practices

The best practices identified in the literature revolved around screening and matching, volunteer training and orientation, mentor-mentee support and supervision, and the importance of solid evaluation practices (Sipe, 1999, Buckley & Zimmermann, 2003; Freedman, 1999). One issue of particular note is that in order for these best practices to be in place, researchers also assert a need for access to ample resources (Rhodes & Roffman, 2002).

This review of standards and best practices attempts to integrate many of the different findings as per program diversity. However, one-to-one mentoring certainly dominates the literature. For example, many of the program recommendations are different for school-based mentoring programs, which seem to require less stringent screening, shorter training, and less supervision (Herrera, Sipe, & McClanahan, 2000).

Matching

In terms of successful strategies for mentor-mentee matching, perceived degrees of similarity and similar levels of extroversion (Madia & Lutz, 2004) and shared interests (DuBois, 2002; Herrera et al, 2000) have been shown to aid the formation of long-term relationships. In the U.S., matching by race has not been proven to be a determinant of a successful match, but similarities in socio-economic background, interests or past experiences, and the capacity of the mentor to empathize and relate to the mentee seem to be of greater importance (Jocovy, 2002; Rhodes, Reddy, Grossman, & Lee, 2002). However, this finding may not be completely transferable to the Saskatchewan context. Exploratory research conducted by Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Canada found that a majority of Aboriginal parents prefer that their child be in a same-race match, with an emphasis on safe-guarding cultural identity (Angus Reid Group, 1997). This finding resonates with Jocovy's (2002) concern that studies in cross-race matching have not addressed critical issues such as effects on cultural pride.

Volunteer orientation and training

In terms of volunteer orientation and training for one-to-one mentoring, research has indicated that more than six hours of training is optimal (Herrera et al, 2000), and that the

perceived quality of training directly affects a mentor's sense of efficacy, their perceived quality of a match, and its duration (Parra, DuBois, Neville, Pugh-Lilly, & Pavinelli, 2002). Areas noted for particular attention in training include issues involving matches with older and/or high-risk children and youth (Bauldry & Hartmann, 2004), cross-race matches (Jocovy, 2002), inexperienced mentors, and emphasis on bicultural competence (Barron-McKeagney & D'Souza, 2001; Blechman, 1992).

Consistent and responsive support and supervision

Along with orientation and training, consistent and responsive support and supervision have been identified as crucial to risk management (Buckley & Zimmermann, 2003), identifying mentors who have unrealistic expectations (Madia & Lutz, 2004), and helping mentors get over the beginning of the relationship where rewards may be few and the chances for early termination are at their highest (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; McMurray, 1993). One post-match training and support meeting per month is suggested as a benchmark (Herrera et al, 2000).

Solid evaluation procedures

Good evaluation procedures are highlighted as one of the key ingredients to sustained program success, both as a means of program development and reporting (Buckley & Zimmermann, 2003). Although pressure is often placed upon higher program "outputs" by funding and government agencies, quality over quantity is urged in evaluation, and therefore in all program practices (Freedman, 1999). Ultimately, good evaluation practices are considered to be beneficial to the field as a whole, such that meta-analyses of mentoring programs are able, ethically and empirically, to include a diversity of program types (DuBois et al, 2002).

Relationship building is fostered

Mentor-mentee relationships with sustained longevity, consistency, and closeness have been shown to be the most likely to achieve intended program outcomes (DuBois & Neville, 1997; Parra et al, 2002; Royse, 1998). As well, mentees who nominate their mentors as an important adult in their life are more likely to perceive their relationship positively and report perceived benefits (DuBois, Neville, Parra, & Pugh-Lilly, 2002). For one-to-one mentoring, a year or longer is the standard benchmark, with engagement in social activities and one-on-one meetings equalling more than ten hours per month (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). However, in the case of mentoring high-risk youth and families, even longer term relationships are urged because results are slower to emerge (Barron-McKeagney & D'Souza, 2001; Royse, 1998).

Agency-sponsored events and purposeful mentoring

Agency sponsored events and purposeful mentoring have been shown to be very help-ful in encouraging strong bonds between mentors and mentees (Herrera et al, 2000; Langhout, Rhodes, & Osborne, 2004). According to some researchers, the kind of events in which mentors and mentees participate together are even more important than the amount of time spent together (Herrera et al, 2000). In terms of creating partnerships between community organizations, highly structured events are also touted as a means of keeping the program focused (Grineski, 2003).

Relational model of mentoring

One question that is highly debated is the role of structure and goal-focused program-ming. In particular, it appears that female mentees favour more time spent talking with their mentors and sharing experiences in a safe, non-structured environment (Liang, Tracy, Taylor, & Williams, 2002; Schultz, 1999; Sullivan, 1996). A relational model of mentoring with girls and women is proposed, one that involves mutual engagement, authenticity and empowerment, and goes beyond the structural elements of mentoring (Liang et al, 2002). According to Sullivan (1996), across "all lines of race and ethnic-ity in this study, the character of meaningful relationships remains a constant: they are distinguished by a girls' feelings and experience; and by women's willingness to share their own experience as well" (246). At least one group of researchers, however, contrast the practice of relational, one-to-one mentoring with peer mentoring, arguing that having clear boundaries in the mentor-mentee relationship is also important for strengthening trust and respect (Langhout et al, 2004). They suggest that "adult mentors should be trained to be less like peers and more like good parents" (303).

Program flexibility and adaptability

Program flexibility and adaptability are two themes that are stressed in much of the literature on volunteer mentoring (Rhodes, 2002; Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray, & Fos-ter, 1998). The main concepts that emerge are: (1) program flexibility as a means of increasing program reach and addressing issues related to diversity; (2) looking at family mentoring as a means of expanding intervention effectiveness; and (3) the importance of community collaboration and multi-modal intervention in program innovation.

Extending reach and addressing diversity

School-based mentoring programs have been shown to reach youth who would other-wise not be served by one-to-one mentoring (Herrera, 1999), while schools have been promoted as safe places for women to form close ties with girls (Schultz, 1999). School-based mentoring has also proven to be much less expensive and can allow for more

cross-gender matching, as the average ratio of female to male volunteers is three to one (Herrera et al, 2000). On another note, church-based programs, or programs that recruit from religious congregations, have been shown to increase the ethnic and cultural diversity of volunteers (Bauldry & Hartmann, 2004). Group mentoring has also demonstrated a capacity to reach minority youth and recruit volunteers who are not necessarily inclined to be involved in one-on-one mentoring (Herrera, Vang, & Gale, 2002). In particular, group mentoring appears to have promising possibilities in Aboriginal communities (Angus Reid Group, 1997; Rhodes, 2002). Other kinds of mentoring programs that show promise are work-based and student sponsoring programs (Jaffe, 1999).

Family mentoring

Another issue that is increasingly being addressed is the need to investigate ways to provide assistance for at-risk families (e.g. aiding parenting issues and developing parenting skills (Blechman, 1992; Milne, Chalmers, Waldie, Darling, & Poulton, 2002). A mentoring approach that is integrated into the family setting in order to improve family relationships has also been piloted and studied with positive results (Barron-McKeagney & D'Souza, 2001). Considering the challenges of mentoring high-risk youth who are in a single parent family, it has been suggested that family mentoring strategies may be a more promising approach than mentoring the youth alone (Royse, 1998). Indeed, increasing the instances and opportunities for healthy natural mentoring in extended family environments is advocated as a larger goal for the field (Rhodes, 2002).

Community involvement

Since one-to-one volunteer mentors are not able to fully substitute for natural mentors, community support and inter-agency collaboration are seen as pre-requisite conditions for successful volunteer mentoring programs (Darling, Hamilton, Toyokawa, & Matsuda, 2002). Mentoring partnerships are also seen as a means of ensuring sustained programming (Rhodes, 2002). Increasing inter-agency coordination of sponsored events, and increasing the breadth of interventions available for individual children and youth are seen as a means of increasing the scope and impacts of mentoring programs (DuBois et al, 2002). In particular, there is a need to have access to a greater number of community resources when working with older, high risk youth (Bauldry & Hartmann, 2004; Milne et al, 2002). Community mentoring approaches are also seen as being promising for helping teenage mothers (Waller, Brown, & Whittle, 1999), and for children on the street, where shopkeepers and community-based city workers have been shown to serve an informal mentoring role (Basso, Graham, Pelech, DeYoung, & Cardney, 2004). One thought to keep in mind, however, is that such partnerships are considered a risk factor as much as a contributor to success because inter-agency partnerships need to be carefully thought out and monitored closely (Buckley & Zimmermann, 2003; Grineski, 2003).

Realistic public relations and promotional materials

Research in mentoring has concluded that quality volunteer mentoring programs comprehend the importance of presenting mentoring as a series of small successes rather than huge gains (Rhodes, 2002). This applies to accurately depicting mentoring in advertising campaigns (McMurray, 1993), developing training that stresses the gradual process of mentoring, and the importance of patience and perseverance (Langhout et al, 2004). Although mentoring has consistently demonstrated modest improvements in the lives of participants (Freedman, 1999; Rhodes, 2002), it is the small steps that matter to mentees and this needs to be stressed in order for mentors to gain a sense of accomplishment (DuBois, 2002). According to Rhodes (2002), providing potential volunteers a clear picture of mentoring can extend the reach of those who might be interested in such a role, and can also help volunteers "make better informed decisions about the necessary commitment, the challenges, and the possible disappointments" (80).

EXTERNAL CONTRIBUTORS TO SUCCESS

The main areas that emerged in the literature in relation to external contributors to success revolved around mentor and mentee characteristics, the mentee's family environment and socio-economic situation, and the high interest in and empirical evidence supporting mentoring.

Competent, caring, and consistent mentors

The mentoring approach taken is considered one of the most important external contributors to creating successful and satisfying mentoring experiences (Sipe, 1999). The kinds of qualities that have been shown to have a positive impact on the duration, perceived value, and outcomes of a mentor-mentee match are varied, and contingent on program type (as discussed earlier). In terms of one-on-one mentoring, mentors with a high rating of self-efficacy at the start of a match typically engage more consistently and successfully with their mentee (Parra et al, 2002). Older, more experienced adults with some life experience from which to draw (LoScioto, Rajala, Townsend, & Taylor, 1996) and mentors with backgrounds in the helping professions (DuBois, 2002) are considered the most reliable. However, it has also been shown that mentors who are single and between the ages of twenty-six and thirty years tend to have the least external pressures that interfere in developing one-to-one relationships (Rhodes, 2002).

Other mentor qualities that improve the chances of a successful match are: a multidimensional understanding of high-risk youth (Grineski, 2003); bicultural competence (Blechman, 1992); and mentors who are realistic, good listeners, respectful of boundaries, involve mentees in decision making, and sensitive to differences (Buckley & Zimmermann, 2003; Freedman, 1999). As has been previously discussed, group mentoring and

school-based mentoring open up the field in terms of mentor characteristics and allow for more cross-gender matching, including mentors who may not want to engage in an intense inter-personal relationship, and involve the business community, through their employees, to be actively involved in mentoring at-risk youth and children (Rhodes, 2002).

Supported, responsive mentees

The life history and situation of mentees is also an important external contributor to success. Mentees who are supported by their family and whose family feels involved in the match are more likely to stay committed and attain intended outcomes, such as academic improvement (Rhodes, Grossman, & Resch, 2000). In general, parental support is regarded as an important factor in predicting the level of ease with which the relation-ship will develop, and thus it is suggested that families be involved in the match through "regular feedback session[s] in which parents' perspectives and adolescents' needs and accomplishments are discussed" (Rhodes, 2002: 42). Another issue brought up in the literature is that the younger the mentee, the greater the chance for the mentoring to be successful, as younger mentees are typically more responsive (Herrera et al, 2002). For example, school-based mentoring starting in grade one is regarded as the best means of helping prevent later literacy problems (Ellis, Small-McGinley, & De Fabrizio, 2001).

High degree of interest mentoring

Much of the research concludes that interest in mentoring is currently very high, with particular with emphasis on the American context and the efforts of former Secretary of State Colin Powell (Freedman, 1999). However, interest in mentoring is also rising in other areas of the world, such as the United Kingdom, where it is regarded as a means of dealing with "social exclusion" (Colley, 2003). Approximately one million young people in the U.S. have a Big Brother or Big Sister (Rhodes, 2002), while in Canada there is awareness among certain minority groups and Aboriginal communities of Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Canada and its services (Angus Reid Group, 1997).

Empirical evidence supporting the value of mentoring

Interest in the study of mentoring programs is also on the rise, with high profile research demonstrating the overall effectiveness of quality mentoring programs. One landmark study is a Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America program evaluation that had very positive results (Grossman & Johnson, 1998). Outcomes of mentoring programs include a wide range of foci, from reductions in high school dropout rates to improvements in family relations (Buckley & Zimmermann, 2003). Sipe (2002) provides a good summary of the empirical evidence that supports mentoring:

Mentoring research over the past 15 years has generated important findings. First and foremost, the field now has definitive evidence of the positive benefits mentoring can produce for the youth being served by these programs. We have also learned that unrelated youth and adults can come together to form meaningful and satisfactory relationships but not without time and the right attitude. Not only does effective mentoring require an effort on the part of the volunteers, but programs, too, must provide the time and resources to adequately screen, train and support the mentors (258).

INTERNAL DETERRENTS TO SUCCESS

In many cases, the internal and external deterrents to success are the inverse of the internal and external contributors. Nevertheless, there are key differences, and even where there is overlap the subtleties of the message are important to capture for the overall purpose of this report. The key message throughout the literature is most dramatically and succinctly stated by Rhodes et al (2002) when they write that "the effectiveness of assigned mentors is dependent on adequate support," and thus "vulnerable children would be better left alone than placed in relationships that cannot be sustained" (154).

Ineffective and unbalanced mentoring approaches, as well as the misrepresentation of mentoring are the three main internal deterrents to success identified in the literature.

Ineffectual mentoring practices

Ineffectual mentoring practices mirror the importance stressed previously upon best practices. The basic understanding is that "programs without adequate screening, training and support tend to have relatively modest, if not neutral or negative, impacts" (Rhodes et al, 2002: 15). Numerous issues arise when programs are run without comprehensively addressing these program components: programs without proper supervision miss out on opportunities to intervene when matches face challenges and when mentors may need a boost in their sense of accomplishment (Madia & Lutz, 2004); ineffectually mentored students actually show a decrease in academic achievement (Sipe, 2002); programs with less than two hours of training have shown that mentors and mentees express the least amount of satisfaction with the program (Herrera et al, 2000); and, more generally, lacking these program components creates a greater likelihood that matches will terminate early (Rhodes, 2002), which can create negative outcomes on a youth's behaviour (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). Finally, programs without program evaluations incorporated into the "core" program are prone to inadequate program outcome assessments. For example, in programs that work with high-risk youth, there is a tendency for incomplete program

evaluations due to lost interest, participant mobility, and high mentee/mentor drop-out rates (Parra et al, 2002).

Unbalanced mentoring approach

The second main internal deterrent to success identified in the research is having an excessively rigid, slack, or unfocused program approach. In a study of an employability-focused mentoring program in the U.K., a top-down model of program outcome expectation created tensions in the mentor-mentee pairs and increased the possibility of the mentor or mentee sensing that their relationship was a failure (Colley, 2003). As mentioned earlier, instrumentalist mentoring approaches are also considered less appropriate when mentoring girls or women. Some intended outcomes may in fact maintain the status quo, which for girls in particular can be very problematic (Sullivan, 1996). On the other hand, evidence also indicates that programs with less structure tend to produce weaker results (Sipe, 2002), and that programs without clear behavioural boundaries can create a bad model for the mentee in terms of relationship expectations with his or her family (Langhout et al, 2004).

Program misrepresentation

Another major deterrent to program success is program misrepresentation, a practice that adversely affects both mentor and the mentee. Mentees need to be given a clear idea as to what a mentoring relationship will entail, that it is bond that takes time to develop and will not be easy at first. If this does not occur, mentees' expectations may be unmet and the relationship viewed unsatisfactorily (Buckley & Zimmermann, 2003). Furthermore, when an organization plays down the importance of commitment, perseverance, and consistency in mentoring relationships, it creates one of the main conditions for mentors to experience disillusionment or a sense of dissatisfaction, and may lead them to quit altogether (Madia & Lutz, 2004).

EXTERNAL DETERRENTS TO SUCCESS

The three main external deterrents to success that surfaced in the literature survey are inadequate resources, extreme social inequality and physical/sexual abuse, and insufficient research to address emerging issues.

Lack of infrastructure

The first of these inadequate resources was coupled with the problem of presenting mentoring as a means of solving all of society's ills. Freedman (1999) summarizes the problem as such:

> Fervour without infrastructure is dangerous at the program level because it leads to disappointed mentors and youths. … More disturbingly is the way fervour without infrastructure feeds the recurring appetite for voluntarist panaceas, idealized in isolation from institutions, proposed as quick, cheap and easy. As such, mentorship serves to distract attention from the deep-seated problems that cannot be simply marketed away (93).

Researchers see a pandemic obstacle in mentoring, namely that the excitement associated with the potential benefits of mentoring do not match the resources allocated, nor has the volunteer base proven to be large enough to deal with the increase in one-to-one matching programs and program objectives (Rhodes, 2002). The risk is that mentoring becomes a social policy in and of itself, such that employability and other instrumental outcome-focused interests take precedence over the necessary relational quality of volunteer mentoring programs (Colley, 2003). Furthermore, funders, policymakers, and local organizations are apt to support fledgling programs while simultaneously being opposed to supporting and increasing the capacity and reach of established ones (Grossman, 1999).

Lack of volunteers

A constant shortage of volunteers makes it difficult for programs to expand (Rhodes, 2002). An interesting note on volunteer development that characterizes the situation well is that mass media efforts at volunteer recruitment have typically resulted in having more mentees than potential mentors enlist in programs (Sipe, 2002). A scarcity of mentors creates waiting lists that often cannot be met, with some mentees exhibiting depression as a result (Royse, 1998), and a notable percentage dropping off the list before a space opens up (Buckley & Zimmermann, 2003). Even when matched, the volunteer hours are sometimes not enough, with two hours a week insufficient for some youth to form an influential relationship (DuBois, 2002). Even fifteen months of a mentoring relationship with a high-risk youth is often an inadequate amount of time to achieve positive results (Royse, 1998). Further difficulties include matching older, high-risk youth with willing mentors, challenges faced by older mentors in relating to youth culture, and the fact that women typically out-number men as volunteers by a factor of three to one (Bauldry & Hartmann, 2004). Most unpredictable of all external deterrents is that organizations ultimately cannot predetermine the commitment level and attitude of a volunteer to the program, nor can they foresee the kinds of life changes that a volunteer might go through that would cause them to quit (Buckley & Zimmermann, 2003; Grineski, 2003; Rhodes, 2002; Sipe, 2002).

Extreme poverty, family instability, and sexual/physical abuse

One of the major findings concerning early terminations in one-on-one mentoring relationships is that the mentees have often suffered sexual or physical abuse and are in vulnerable family and socio-economic environments (Rhodes, 2002). Overall, the average length of mentoring relationships involving high-risk youth is lower (Bauldry & Hartmann, 2004), and youth who are struggling with severe behavioural and social problems are the least likely to gain anything from a mentoring relationship, regardless of program quality or mentor approach (Grossman & Johnson, 1998). Family instability and mobility also cause disturbances in mentoring relationships, especially with single parent families, where "single parent families move around more than average, graduations and illnesses and parental remarriages influences adolescents' eligibility or present impediments to meetings on a regular basis" (Rhodes, 2002: 51). In a society where the poverty facing many youth is so deep-rooted, mentoring is not seen as a sufficient intervention on its own because it does not alleviate underlying problems, and often faces resistance from high-risk mentees (Royse, 1998).

Research limitations and inconsistencies

A final external deterrent to success deals with the inconsistency and limitations of the research conducted thus far. While some studies, like the Grossman and Tierney (1998) evaluation of Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America, have shown that mentoring programs are beneficial for youth, only modest gains have been shown in others (DuBois et al, 2002). Furthermore, with regards to high-risk youth, there is a paucity of evaluation, since the drop-out rate is so elevated (Royse, 1998). Further limitations include a lack of longitudinal studies and those investigating issues of diversity (Parra et al, 2002). As well, new programs such as group mentoring have not been sufficiently investigated to determine whether there are any significant long term impacts (Herrera et al, 2002). School-based mentoring has been shown to have effects limited only to the school calendar year (Aseltine, Dupre, & Lamlein, 2000). Many of the studies limit their focus to Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America, which has a high set of program standards (Rhodes et al, 2000). Even in the case of Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America, where best practices and program standards are implemented to a high degree, some studies have shown that a large percentage of mentees fail to achieve intended outcomes, with only 40% citing their mentor as being a significant adult in their lives (DuBois et al, 2002), or where 50% of relationships terminated prematurely and resulted in neutral or negative effects on the youth's behaviour (Rhodes et al, 2002). In a study of a multi-modal intervention program to reduce truancy with high-risk youth in New Zealand, mentoring did not seem to show any direct benefits, or at least was not identified as a major contributor to improving youth school attendance (Milne et al, 2002).

Ethical and policy conundrums

Ultimately, studies such as these raise important ethical and policy questions that researchers assert need to be considered because of the almost certain growth of mentoring programs. For example, Phillip and Hendry (2000) ask, "What is the impact of the introduction of an assigned mentor on a short-term basis to a young person who has experienced a succession of adults intervening in his/her life?" (222). Roth and Brooks-Gunn (1998) propose that more clarity be drawn around what constitutes youth development programming and how these can be incorporated into a broader categorization of youth intervention strategies. Rhodes et al (2002) state that "one major challenge for programs will be to more precisely match adolescents' needs and risks to the appropriate level and expense of the intervention" (152), as they feel that the context of the mentee's life is what should determine the type of mentoring program or intervention strategy employed. The biggest danger is to assume that mentoring alone can heal the wounds of an education system that failed the mentee, a history of poverty and neglect in social and economic policy, and/or a rupture in family and community (Rhodes et al, 2002). Sipe's (1996) statement is most concise in addressing this issue:

> Although there are youth whose lives have been dramatically and durably altered because of one experience, they are the exception. The vast majority of youth require a succession of effective experiences – be they 'natural' or 'programmatic'. The puzzle for social policy is to find out what an effective and cost-efficient threshold of experiences looks like (6).

METHODOLOGY

This project followed a participatory action research model, where the organizations that participated in this research were involved in framing the research questions, shaping the questionnaire, and providing feedback and elaboration on the research results. The research project went through two distinct phases, a project consultation stage and a questionnaire and reporting stage.

PROJECT CONSULTATION

The first phase consisted of two formal meetings and individual informal interviews with the research participant organizations (POs) at the time, Big Brothers of Saskatoon, Big Sisters Association of Saskatoon, Kids Not in School, United Way of Saskatoon, and Catholic Family Services. Time was also invested to seek out other possible partners and develop a preliminary literature review. This phase ran from February 2004 to June 2004. During that period it was decided that the research question needed to

be rephrased and that parameters for determining the organizations that would best be served by this research needed redefining. From this process, it was determined that the United Way of Saskatoon was out-of-scope as a PO because they were not directly involved in mentoring programming. Around the same time, Restorative Circles Initiative officially joined the project.

QUESTIONNAIRE AND REPORTING

The project's second phase began with a meeting at the Remai Board Room of the Saskatoon Community Services Village on 7 June 2004 to discuss the POs' common issues and interests. The research intern then developed a revised project description and a questionnaire for the POs. The questionnaire consisted of closed and open-ended questions on program description, resources and inputs, contributors and deterrents to success, and programming needs and priorities. The POs were invited to read through a draft of the questionnaire and provide ideas and suggestions for improvement. However, only one organization took up this invitation. After the questionnaire was completed, it was sent out by regular mail. At that point, the Saskatchewan Chapter of the Canadian Paraplegic Association joined the project, while Kids Not in School officially withdrew because they were no longer directly involved in mentoring programming.

Once the questionnaires were completed and the results compiled and analyzed, a meeting was held in the Mamawopiwin Room at the Saskatoon Community Services Village on 21 October 2004. This meeting served to review the research literature and questionnaire results, fill in gaps and address unclear responses, and agree upon an approach for presenting the results. A decision was reached to present the questionnaire findings with all the organizations as a single group. This was decided in order to provide a collective picture and perspective on volunteer mentorship programming in Saskatoon.

RESULTS

In accordance with the questionnaire's division, results will be presented as follows: program description; resources and inputs; contributors and deterrents to success; and program needs and priorities.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The POs ranged from experienced and established programs to emerging and pilot projects. Two of the five organizations had ten or more years experience in mentoring programming in Saskatoon, one had five to ten years experience, and two had one to three years experience. (One organization had a scheduled date of completion, 31 March 2005,

unless long-term funding was secured. Unfortunately, the organization was unable to find other sources of funding, and with their core funding not renewed, as of April they ceased their operations.) The POs work mostly in and around Saskatoon, with only one organization extending its services across the province. Four of the five organizations are connected to a local, provincial, or national organization, including: Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Canada; Family Services Saskatchewan and Family Service Canada; Canadian Paraplegic Association Saskatchewan Regional Office and National Office; and the King George School and Community Association.

Mentee demographics

The POs reported a combined total present client base of 982 mentees. At the time of the study, all organizations served with both female and male mentees, all served with Aboriginal mentees, all served with white mentees, and all served with youth thirteen years or older. Four organizations served with mentees who were disabled and four served visible minorities. Three organizations served with families, three worked with children thirteen years and under, and three served new immigrants and refugees. Only two of the organizations served with child and youth offenders, and only one served street-involved youth.

The POs reported that the three demographic segments that they are not adequately reaching are child and youth offenders, children under twelve years of age, and the Aboriginal community. Reasons for this were a lack of resources, specifically for funding or staff, and having few trained Aboriginal peer support helpers. One organization indicated that it might pursue a pilot project to reach child and youth offenders if there was funding. The breakdown of mentee demographics is provided in **Figure 1**.

Program diversity

The POs reported that they are presently running eight different mentoring programs, including one-to-one, group, family, and peer mentoring. Site location is varied, with almost 60% being community-based, including 10% being held in a community centre, approximately 25% having some component that is organization-based, and 10% being school-based. The length of the programs varied as well, with two lasting an unspecified amount of time, four being held for an unlimited length of time (two having a minimum of four to six months and the other two a one year minimum), one lasting from one to three years, and one lasting the school year.

Combining all the programs, 80-100% of the program outcomes were reported as being relational measures, including improved socialization, social and cultural enrichment, exposure to role models, and enhanced self-esteem. An improvement in the family living environment and a reduction in self-destructive behaviour were reported as outcome measures in 60% of the programs. The remaining instrumental measures,

**Figure 1. Mentee Demographics By Number of Organizations.**
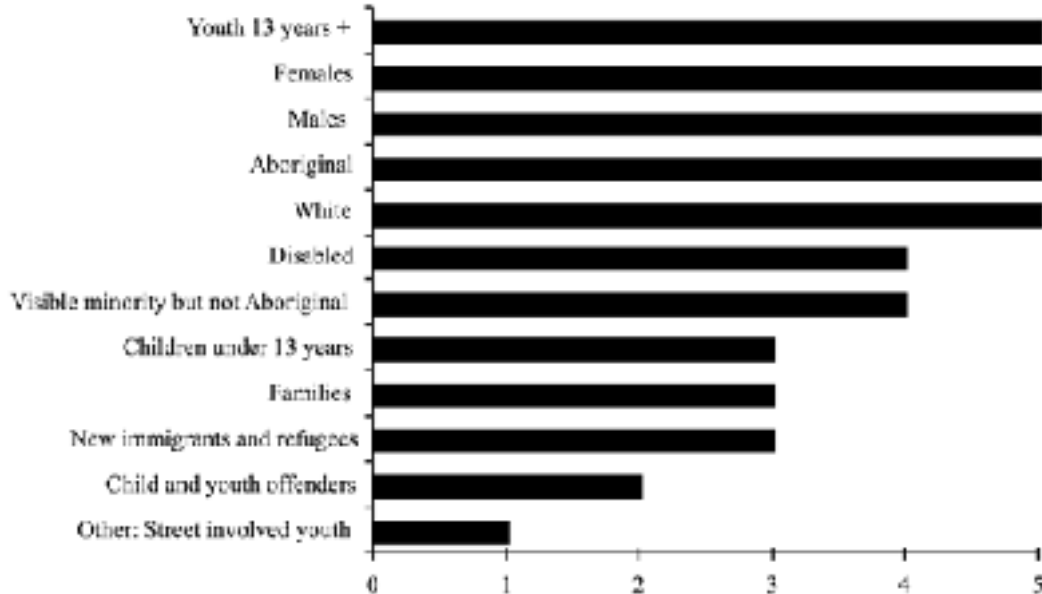
such as career success and employment assistance, drop-out prevention, and academic improvement were reported as outcomes in 50% of the programs. Only one of the eight programs noted that adjusting to disability issues was an explicit program outcome. These findings are presented in **Figure 2**.

An important finding was that program length, outcomes, and site were directly related to program type. One-to-one programs tended to cover a broader range of program outcomes, tended towards a longer program length, and were based at multiple sites. Family mentoring covered all possible program outcomes, had the most specified program lengths, and was based on the organization's premises and elsewhere within the community. Group mentoring programs were held at multiple sites, but tended to have lower program expectations and had shorter or unspecified program lengths. Finally, peer mentoring indicated the least variety of program outcomes, had an unspecified time commitment, and was exclusively community-based. However, the peer mentoring program also listed the specific program outcome of adjustment to disability issues.

Waiting lists and alternatives

All the programs reported having waiting lists for mentees who had been accepted by the program or who were waiting to be accepted. In all, 274 children, youth, or families were, at the time of the study, waiting to be matched with a mentor, 110 of these being children or youth who were waiting for acceptance into the program. According to statistics offered by three of the five POs, of these prospective mentees, 1-10% are likely

Figure 2. Program Outcomes By Percentage of All Programs Combined.
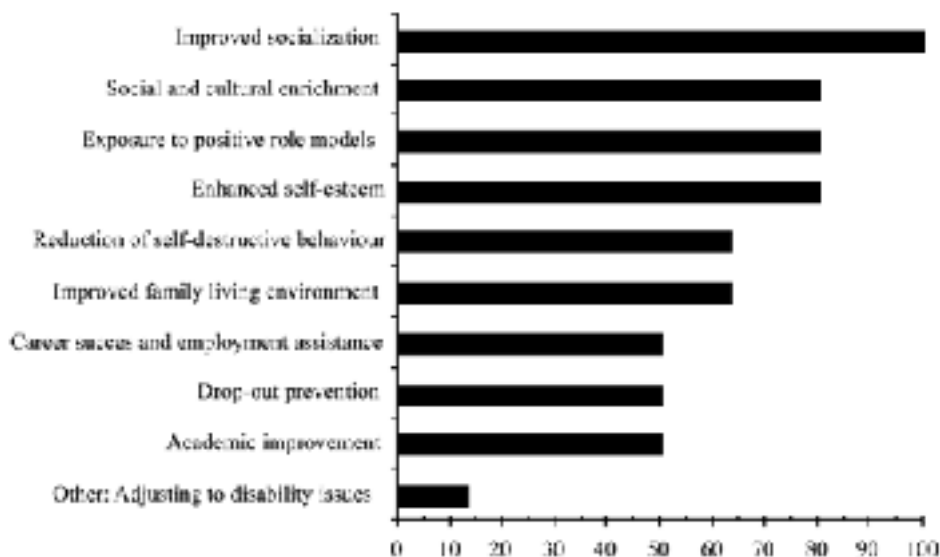
to drop out before being matched with a mentor. Two of the POs did not know, or were unable to answer, what percentage of their prospective mentees drop out before being matched.

All the programs offer alternatives for those on waiting lists, such as: one-on-one peer support/volunteer coordinator work with the prospective mentee, or help accessing resources in the community; free, monthly group meetings for those in the program or waiting for acceptance into the program; group training sessions for families, such as reading with younger children; and regular contact with the prospective mentee.

Early terminations

Of the three POs that could provide statistics on early terminations, it would appear that 1-10% of all matches are likely to terminate early. For the other two POs, providing statistics on this topic was not possible because they do not have a specified duration to make a match. These early terminations were explained as being due to a number of factors, including: the transience of mentees and some mentors; mentors who are no longer able to fulfill their commitment; cases where mentors and mentee do not connect well and there is no desire to work things out; and situations where youth are released from custody, relocated, on the run, or experiencing a change in circumstances.

Program evaluation

All POs indicated that program evaluation was incorporated into their programming in some manner. Only three of the five organizations have long-term impact assessment

tools, which is likely because they have been in operation for over five years. All POs use staff reports and anecdotal evidence in their evaluation practices. Eighty percent utilize pre-post questionnaires, spontaneous interviews, observations, and mentor reports. Sixty percent of the POs also integrate formal interviews, counsellor reports, and impact questionnaires into their evaluation practices. Forty percent include parent interviews and impact questionnaires.

RESOURCES AND INPUTS

The three major areas investigated in terms of program inputs included human and financial resources and intellectual resources/expertise. The POs reported having a combined volunteer base of 611 people, and a staff of eight people directly employed for mentoring programming. This is presented in **Figure 3**.

Figure 3. Number of Mentees In Program and On Waiting List, and Number of Programs, Mentors, and Staff.
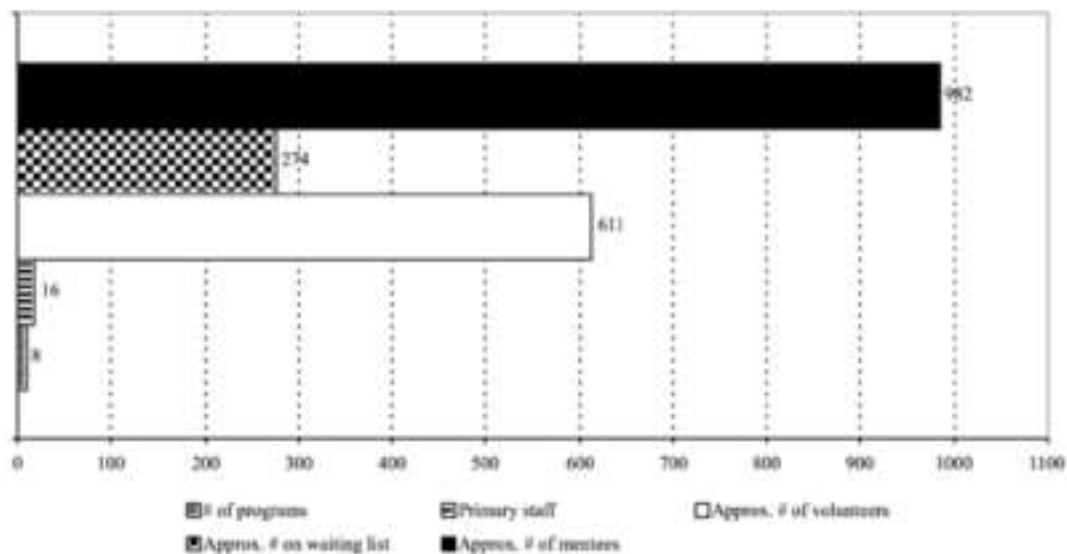
The total cost of all mentoring programming for POs came to $664,500. Half of this money (51%) comes from government sources, with the remainder raised through community foundations (22%) like United Way of Saskatoon; fundraising, including the business community (17%); private foundations (4%); endowment funds (4%); membership fees (1%); and incurring a budget deficit (1%). The breakdown of where this money comes from is presented in **Figure 4**.

**Figure 4. Sources of Funding, Approximate Figures for
All Organizations Combined.**

Private foundation Endowment funds

Deficit Government

Community foundation Fundraising (incl. business) and private donati

Membership
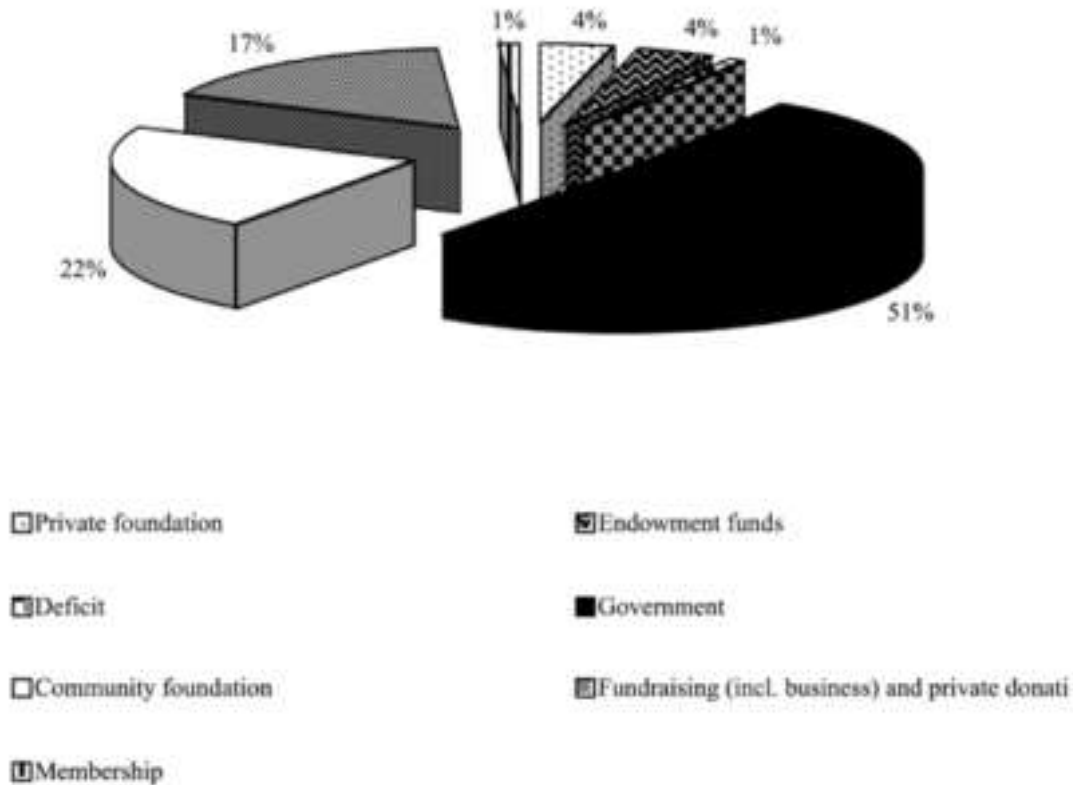
Distribution of funding sources differs for organizations depending on how long they have been in operation. Organizations that have been in operation for five years or more have a greater spread of funding, with less than 50% coming from government. Organizations that have been in operation from one to five years rely more heavily on government funding, but still tap a variety of funding sources.

From the questionnaire results, it appears that the POs have access to a substantial amount of intellectual resources and expertise. Most POs had in-house materials, staff, and access to external human resources for volunteer recruitment and screening, mentor-mentee matching, support and counselling, and mentor orientation and training. The greatest resources required of, or available to, organizations proved to be in the area of volunteer recruitment and screening, whereas their least resources were expertise in the area of fundraising and special events. The POs further indicated that they also had limited least in-house expertise in the areas of fundraising and professional development (see **Figure 5**).

Figure 5. In-House Resources and Expertise By Number of Internal Resources Available.
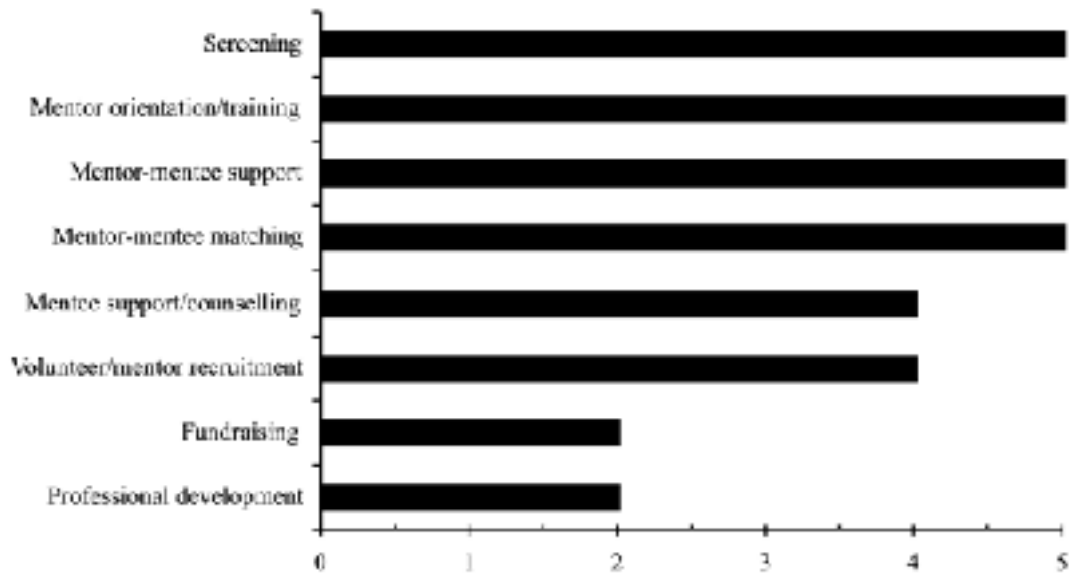
Most of the resources used were in-house or produced by a national organization to which the PO is affiliated. Videos, websites, pamphlets, books, in-house training materials, questionnaires, referral forms, and checklists, were the main audio-visual and text materials mentioned. The main sources of human and intellectual resources and expertise were staff, board members, former volunteers, caseworkers, various experts, and organizations from within the community (e.g. judges, community mediators, addictions counsellors, John Howard Society, and Saskatoon Health Region).

CONTRIBUTORS AND DETERRENTS TO SUCCESS

This section of the questionnaire was open-ended and main themes were drawn out from these comments. As with the literature review, contributors and deterrents to success are presented in terms of internal and external factors.

Internal contributors to success

Organizational flexibility and integrity, intra-agency commitment and cooperation, and having an effective communications strategy were the three main areas that emerged as internal contributors to success.

Program diversity, program quality, and integrity

The POs indicated that an important internal contributor to success was having diverse and responsible programming that was adapted to community needs. Ongoing, quality mentor intake and screening was highlighted as an example of flexible, quality programming. The POs also reported that having established expertise in the area of mentoring plays a role in program integrity, with staff dedication, professionalism, teamwork and support being central aspects of their success. POs mentioned that their staff had bachelor degrees in social work, pertinent training and experience with children's issues, and/or personal, relevant experience that related to the needs of clients (e.g. staff who work with clients who have disabilities have disabilities themselves).

Intra-agency commitment and cooperation

Intra-agency commitment and cooperation at the local and national levels were reported as internal contributors to success. At the local level, the POs reported that having their own organization recognize mentoring as a priority assists in making their programming successful. The POs also indicated that being part of a national association and having national program standards, manuals, personal support and affirmation, and the capacity for "Q&A" with member agencies makes it more possible for them to achieve program success.

Effective communications strategy

At least one PO mentioned that having an effective communications strategy was a contributor to their success. Examples given were a regular distribution of information on the program through a newsletter to members and the community at large, planning of group events that include the community-at-large, and regular contact with the media about upcoming events.

External contributors to success

Government, volunteer, and community support, and inter-agency cooperation were the two main themes that emerged as primary external contributors to success.

Government, volunteer, and community support

This theme included the importance of funding, volunteer involvement, and community advocacy. All POs indicated an appreciation for the financial support of government and the community-at-large. In particular, access to consistent funding that is not tied to specific programs was mentioned as a pertinent factor in program success. The role of volunteers was also reported as central to program reach, quality, and viability, with particular emphasis on volunteers who commit to being mentors and those who help

organize and run program events. A final comment was that community interaction is encouraged and volunteers and community members become advocates of the program through group events.

Inter-agency cooperation

Interest and referrals from other agencies and organizations were mentioned as external contributors that contribute to program success. Having an opportunity to collaborate with other organizations was also cited as a means of achieving and furthering program goals.

Internal deterrents to success

Staff turnover and stress, weak fundraising capacity, and mobility of volunteers and kids were the three main concerns expressed in relation to deterrents to program success.

Staff turnover and stress

With inadequate salaries and benefits, staff turnover is common in some POs. With a constant demand for mentoring and a feeling of frustration at not having enough time/ resources to fully meet community needs, staff often experience stress, which contributes to turnover.

Weak fundraising capacity

Not having a volunteer or staff fundraiser was mentioned as an internal deterrent to success. Combined with the previous deterrent, it would appear that balancing community demand with seeking funding continues to be a very challenging task for some POs.

Mobility of volunteers and mentees

One reality that POs say they face and that directly impedes program success relates to the transience of volunteers and mentees. Related to this may be a lack of leadership amongst volunteers.

External deterrents to success

The two main areas highlighted as external deterrents to success were financial strains and a lack of volunteers to meet community demand.

Financial strain

At the core of this deterrent to success is the issue of funding. However, this is not a one-dimensional problem. While community demand for programs increase, funding has

remained the same, and core funding for established programs with proven outcomes has been harder to secure. The time and energy expended to find funds drains program focus and ultimately ends up requiring more time spent on fundraising, which stretches staff workload. As well, while all mentoring organizations are working towards the same goals of improving the lives of children, youth, and families, they must compete against each other for funds. To elucidate the kinds of strains faced by the POs, one statement is most illustrative: "Our programs matched 23% more kids this past year, while funding decreased. A small reserve fund saw us through without cutting programs, but this is something we cannot continue. At some point, successful programs will have to be dropped unless funding is available to keep staff."

Lack of volunteers

POs find that today's fast-paced lifestyle has made it more difficult for people to volunteer their time, thereby contributing to longer waiting lists. One PO mentioned that not only is their waiting list long, but their intake into the program is stalled such that approximately forty referrals still have to be reviewed.

PROGRAM NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

This section used a rating scale of one to five, with a list of twelve different areas of program need, and based upon the level of benefit accorded to each area of programming need. The question asked was: "Which of the following areas do you think your organization could benefit from sharing resources/expertise with other mentoring organizations or by being offered training/educational seminars?"

Taken together, none of the areas listed were rated as being highly beneficial, and all areas of programming need fell between *beneficial* and *somewhat beneficial*. These results are shown in **Table 1**.

DISCUSSION

This report's findings appear very similar to the evolving landscape of mentoring research available to date. Questionnaire results showed that the Saskatoon mentoring community shares many similarities with the larger, "global" mentoring community in terms of program reach and scope, contributors and deterrents to success, and program needs. The results also revealed some gaps in terms of how programming contributors and deterrents were organized or delineated. This section of the report reviews these similarities and differences as a whole, incorporating the literature review and the findings from the questionnaire. These main themes are then addressed in relation to the expressed areas for future training, research, and/or action.

Table 1. Programming Needs.

BENEFICIAL
Collaboration approaches and strategies, volunteer/mentor screening practices, mentor/mentee matching practices *Rating = 4*
Diversity issues, program evaluation, volunteer/mentor recruitment practices *Rating= 3.8*
Volunteer/mentor training practices, mentor/mentee support *Rating = 3.6*
Risk management, fundraising *Rating = 3.4*
Conflict management and resolution, program diversification *Rating = 3.2*
SOMEWHAT BENEFICIAL

1 = Do not know/cannot answer this question
2 = Not at all beneficial
3 = Somewhat beneficial
4 = Beneficial
5 = Highly beneficial

Findings from the literature, the research process, and the questionnaire suggest that formal development of a mentoring partnership in Saskatoon should begin, akin to that which has developed amongst mentoring organizations in Edmonton (Leiren, 2001). What follows is an analysis that will endeavour to help frame such a partnership and thereby provide guidance for making such a venture a meaningful part of the volunteer mentoring community in Saskatoon and the province as a whole.

SIMILARITIES

The similarities found between the questionnaire results and the literature review fall along four main themes: (1) the critical role of program diversity, quality, and integrity; (2) the importance of inter- and intra-agency cooperation; (3) the tension between valuing present community/government support and the persistent lack of sufficient human and financial resources to meet community needs; and (4) the need for an effective communications strategy.

Critical role of program diversity, quality, and integrity

Research in the field of mentoring is unequivocal in its demonstration that program quality directly impacts its success. Best practices in mentoring consist of careful mentor screening, thorough mentor orientation and training, and sensitive and professional

mentor/mentee matching and support. Focusing upon relational measures for program outcomes is also suggested so that programming does not become driven by instrumental goals. These research findings were mirrored by the amount of resources that POs reported as expending on these best practices. The POs highlighted the role of having competent and effective staff, and they underlined the importance of adhering to program best practices as an internal contributor to success. As well, the POs listed relational indicators as the primary foci of their program outcomes.

Research in mentoring also demonstrates that program flexibility and diversity typifies the current state of mentoring, specifically in the American context and in the case of Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Canada. This finding was also similar for the five mentoring organizations that participated in this study. Taken altogether, the POs are running a unique and innovative spectrum of programs that reach a broad range of mentees. As a group, the organizations are running programs that are community- and site-based, including community centres, schools, and the organizations' premises. Their programs range from one-on-one and family-to-family mentoring to peer support and group mentoring, and each of these programs has a distinct set of program outcomes, from academic improvement to adjustment to disability issues. These programs also seek to reach children, youth, families, people with disabilities, immigrants, minorities, and Aboriginal peoples.

Importance of inter- and intra-agency cooperation

In the studies referred to in this report, cooperation and collaboration among different community partners are shown to be an effective strategy for program success. Similarly, the POs listed inter- and intra-agency cooperation as both an internal and external contributor to success, with emphasis on the value of receiving referrals from other organizations, having access to programming resources, and interacting with colleagues. The POs also chose training and/or shared expertise in collaboration approaches and strategies as one area that would be of the most benefit to them. A different but related issue is that professional development, along with fundraising, ranked among the areas that POs have the least available in-house resources. These are interesting findings, considering that the research found that inter-agency collaboration is both a risk factor and a contributor to success, and is thus considered an area where careful planning and documentation are crucial.

Tension between valuing present community support and the persistent lack of sufficient human and financial resources to meet community needs

Researchers in the field often begin their articles and texts describing the incredible number of volunteers, mentors, and organizations involved in mentoring programming. Various reasons for this interest are proposed, but, at the same time, various deficiencies

between expressed interest in mentoring and actual resource allocation are critiqued. The situation is presented as being precarious for mentoring organizations, where program quality is necessary in order for successful, and some might argue, ethical mentoring to take place. Thus, while mentoring is demonstrably one of the fastest growing at-risk child, youth, and family intervention strategies, researchers have also learned from studying a myriad of programs that the present resources are insufficient to meet the needs of communities in terms of both funding and volunteers.

The POs in this study also showed that this has also proven to be the case in Saskatoon. The POs clearly indicated that community support is the foundation of their program success, and that it is due to their funders, volunteers, and community advocates that their programs can continue. At the same time, however, the POs asserted that the stress, frustration, and incapacity to meet community needs is an internal deterrent to programming success, which is directly related to not having access to sufficient resources. They also listed these concerns as an external deterrent as funding is frozen at a certain level and often tied in with specific programs, rather than as core funding.

Interestingly, the POs recorded having the most intellectual resources/expertise in the area of volunteer recruitment and the least in fundraising. The time and energy to recruit new volunteers would appear to be a large task for the POs. Coupled with competition for funds and maintenance of program quality, internal staffing resources seem to be stretched to capacity. One further interesting finding was that while volunteer recruitment rated among the most beneficial areas for future training, research, and/or group action, fundraising ranked lowest. This might be linked to an assertion by one PO that volunteer mentoring organizations are competing for the same funds.

Need for an effective communications strategy

One common issue raised by researchers concerned the message that volunteer mentoring organizations present to the public. The message presented to volunteers, mentors, funders, and the general public should not emphasize grand "life-changing" stories, but rather focus on small steps and the importance of these improvements in the lives of the children, youth, and families involved in mentoring. Although there is evidence that mentoring can impact the life of mentees in dramatic ways, researchers are apt to stand by the most compelling evidence gathered thus far, that mentoring achieves moderate results.

In this context, researchers advocate a realistic presentation of mentoring as a means of both internally assuring greater program success and deterring some potential problems. If volunteers are clear about what to expect, with a grounded understanding of what mentoring entails, they are less likely to feel let down or frustrated, and more likely to feel that they can "fit into a mentor's shoes." For funders and the general public, the benefit of presenting a realistic image of mentoring is that it allows for a deeper

understanding of the mentoring process and for mentoring organizations to focus on the small steps through the crucial work of carefully screening, matching, and supervising mentors and mentees.

Having an effective communications strategy was mentioned by one PO as an internal contributor to success. The benefits of public outreach were varied, from program advocacy to providing events for prospective mentees on waiting lists. However, the POs as a group did not address the subtlety of what message should be presented to the public. The reason for this is hard to deduce, but may lie in the area of program evaluation and its role in programming. A program with a strong evaluation process will be better suited to report effectively to its membership, potential mentors and mentees, and to the community-at-large. Considering that the POs in this study have shown interest in further collaboration and in presenting their work in the field collectively, group representation of what they see as the role and value of mentoring would certainly need to be discussed in greater detail.

DIFFERENCES

Although there were many similarities between what was found in the literature and that which was reported through the questionnaire, gaps between the two also surfaced. Identifying these gaps is meant to provide another layer to this discussion and aid in constructing a complete set of recommendations for the POs. The two main differences that have been identified are: (1) the value of sound program evaluation practices; and (2) a recognition of mentoring's limits.

Value of sound program evaluation practices

According to the literature in the field, when conducted effectively, program evaluation is both an internal and external contributor to success. Researchers assert that programs with strong evaluation practices tend to have stronger programs overall, with quality program assurance built into the organization's operations. Evaluation practices that aim to present the "good, the bad, and the ugly" make a stronger case for the mentoring community as a whole than those that simply aim to present the rosiest picture possible. Objective meta-analysis of program evaluations has underscored the prevalence and negative impact of poorly developed evaluation practices on the mentoring field in general (Dubois et al, 2002). To a large extent it has been due to the willingness of Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America to open itself to academic scrutiny that both the value and limits of mentoring have been uncovered. It would appear that the aim of those organizations that have participated in academic studies has not been to prove the value of their programming, but rather to understand how to do their work better. Thus, ensuring that sound program evaluation practices are employed is not only a responsibility for an organization's own internal measurement of program quality and outcome

measurement, but is also a responsibility to the integrity of the mentoring community as a whole.

However, POs did not raise the issue of program evaluation practices in terms of contributors and deterrents to success, but they did list it as being one of the most beneficial areas to explore through further research or the sharing of expertise. This interest may be best understood in relation to the POs' reported program evaluation practices. This issue revealed a wide variation in the level of depth and rigour of program evaluations that POs employ. While 80% integrate pre- and post-questionnaires, mentor reports, observations, and spontaneous interviews, as a whole the only two shared evaluation practices were staff reports and anecdotal evidence. Although impact assessment was low, with only 60% having incorporated impact interviews and 40% having impact questionnaires, this could be explained by the fact that only three of the five POs have been in operation for more than five years.

Of note, however, more than one PO indicated that they could not trace early terminations in their one-on-one mentoring matches. This finding is especially problematic as one of the reasons given for not tracing early terminations was that there was no definite duration expected for the match. According to the literature in the field, early terminations tend to lead to neutral or harmful effects for mentees.

Recognition of mentoring's limits

From the beginning of this project to its end, new academic research in the field of mentoring has been released. One emerging trend of this research could be summed up in the title of a recent collection, *A critical view of youth mentoring* (Rhodes et al, 2002). This book's intent was not to dismiss the role or value of volunteer mentoring organizations, but rather to address the limitations of this intervention strategy, to look at new ways of increasing levels of program success, and to explore new approaches to the concept of mentoring. From the literature in the field and information provided by organizations involved in mentoring, there is an understanding that mentoring alone cannot solve the underlying problems faced by the children, youth, and families served by these organizations. One main concern is that the serious nature of some of the situations faced by high-risk children and youth may be far beyond the scope of a volunteer, one-on-one mentoring arrangement.

This perspective on mentoring differs from what was expressed by the POs, as illustrated by the absence of any mention of the limitations of volunteer mentoring, and the fact that the mobility of mentors and mentees was listed by one of the POs as an internal, rather than external, deterrent to success. This is worth noting because the main reasons given for early terminations have to do with issues related to the unstable situations faced by the mentees and to the realities of some youth who are dealing with severe behavioural problems or a criminal history. Since many of the POs are working

with, or have expressed interest in increasing their involvement with, street-involved and high-risk youth, this gap is worth exploring in greater depth, or, at the very least, merits clarification.

AREAS OF BENEFIT FOR SHARING

As shown in the results, the issues and areas identified by the POs as benefiting from either future research or the sharing of expertise covered all components of the mentoring process. In a real sense, this is very promising because it confers upon the group an openness to explore all aspects of best practices in the field of mentoring. Furthermore, collaboration approaches and strategies topped this list, making it quite evident that interest in working together towards common goals is a priority for the POs. Of particular note is that diversity issues and program evaluation made it as well into the top two levels of benefit for future research and/or sharing of resources and expertise. Interestingly, program diversification was lowest on the list, possibly explained because, as a group, program diversity already exists. The question may be how POs can better support and collaborate with one another to sustain and strengthen the current diversity of their present programming.

These findings are consistent with the overall research conducted for this report. Collaboration, diversity, best practices, program evaluation, and volunteer recruitment are issues of great importance to mentoring organizations. While researchers in mentoring are united in their endorsement of quality mentoring programming, there is also a clear recommendation to continue exploring avenues for program innovation and ways of collaborating with other mentoring organizations. In particular, Rhodes (2002) promotes the development of mentoring partnerships, such as those that have developed among state mentoring organizations in the U.S., as a means of creating the conditions necessary for sustainable and responsible mentoring programming.

From the wide spectrum of issues that were presented as possible areas for future research or shared expertise, the question that emerges is how to conceptualize them all into a plan of action. While the questionnaire did not directly ask the areas on which the POs would like to take joint action, it is this project's aim to provide suggestions to this effect. Thus, taking into consideration the interrelatedness of each of the programming areas listed as being of benefit for future research and/or sharing of expertise, and of the overarching role of collaboration and diversity in all programming areas, a holistic model for viewing these needs was developed (see **Figure 6**).

This model is meant to convey three specific messages concerning how the POs can work together and what steps could be taken in this evolving project. These messages are that: (1) investigating collaboration approaches and strategies and diversity issues are at the heart of this project and any future joint action; (2) the foundation of volunteer mentoring is made up of both the volunteer base and the quality of mentoring

organizations' volunteer training, mentor-mentee screening, matching, and support; and (3) sound program evaluation and realistic program representation are of interest to all POs and is something that requires shared responsibility, thoughtful discussion, and constructive, supportive collegial monitoring.

*Collaboration approaches and strategies/diversity issues*

This research project was an exercise in collaboration for the POs through both the research aims and the research process itself. The research also underscored some of the diversity that is part of the work and experience of the mentoring community in Saskatoon. This includes mentoring persons with disabilities, young girls and women, families, high-risk youth, persons of visible minority groups, new immigrants, and those in the Aboriginal community. Yet, the POs still listed collaboration approaches and strategies and diversity issues as important areas to look at for future research, training, and/or joint action. In this sense, this research project should be seen as just one brick in a foundation that POs are constructing for a meaningful mentoring partnership.

What this means is that before asking the aims of collaboration, questions of how to collaborate need to be further addressed. This could be done through training work-shops in different approaches to collaboration, or through facilitated sessions to work out, as a group, an appropriate collaboration process and strategy for the group. This also means that diversity issues need to be investigated intentionally and thoughtfully, and placed at the centre of discussions regarding future directions. In the very act of POs deciding to present themselves as a single united mentoring community, there is a tacit acknowledgement of communal interest, as well as an acceptance that this collaboration requires commitment. In the case of CUISR and Volunteer Saskatoon's involvement, some external mediation and collaboration with other community resources and exper-tise will be needed.

Mentor/mentee screening, matching, and support

The research compiled in this report asserts that program best practices determine the quality of volunteer mentoring programming. According to the research, these best practices are not static, but rather are in flux due to new program innovations such as group and school-based mentoring. Furthermore, best practices may be applied dif-ferently between the POs. This could explain why shared knowledge and expertise in these areas has surfaced as an avenue for future research, facilitation, or joint action. Considering that all POs indicated that most of their resources for these areas of pro-gramming are in-house, it would also appear that there is room for resource sharing and cross-referencing.

Figure 6. Areas of Benefit for Future Training/Seminars and/or Sharing of Expertise, Resources, and Knowledge.
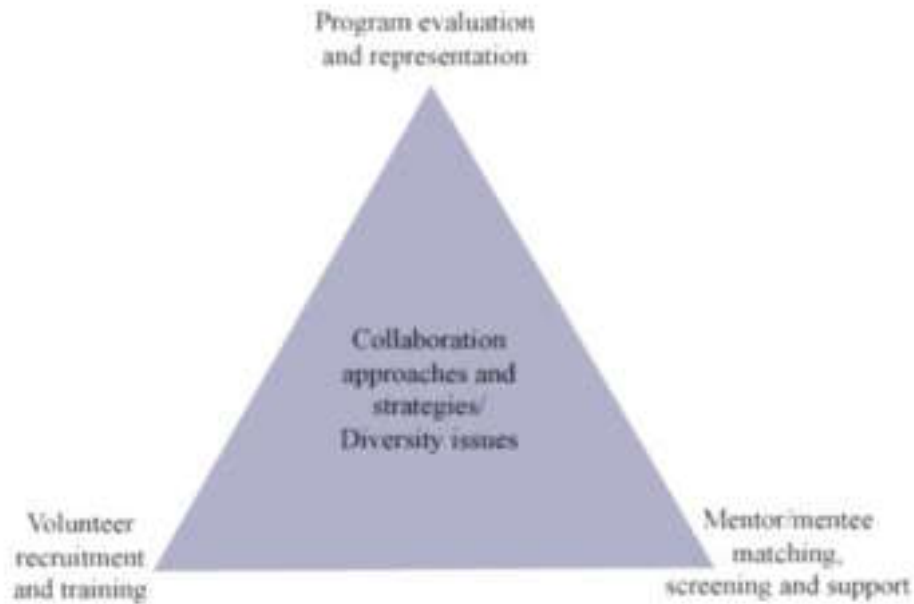
Volunteer recruitment and training

Volunteer recruitment has undoubtedly emerged as one of the major themes in this research project as it was listed as both an external deterrent to success and as one of the top listed areas of benefit for future research and/or sharing of resources and expertise. This area, in particular, also lends itself well to joint action. While volunteer training was only listed on the third level of benefit for future research and/or shared expertise and training, in the context of volunteer development some aspects of training might be considered a shared interest, and possibly, by sharing the task, a means for increasing institutional capacity. As with mentor/mentee screening, matching, and support, the POs indicated that most of their materials are in-house. Again, there may be room for resource sharing and cross-referencing.

Program evaluation and representation

In the literature, program evaluation is clearly marked as both an internal and external contributor to success. As discussed throughout this section, although the POs did not list evaluation as an internal or external contributor or deterrent to success, it was rated as one of the most important areas of benefit for future research and/or resource and knowledge sharing. Furthermore, the POs mentioned the importance of media and communications, and the literature stresses a need for a realistic presentation of mentoring,

program evaluation, and representation, which would therefore seem to be of central importance for future research and/or sharing of resources and knowledge.

With this in mind, it is not surprising that volunteer recruitment, mentor-mentee screening and matching, and program evaluation should be at the top of any list for future research and/or sharing of resources and expertise. If, for example, any group training or action takes place in the area of volunteer recruitment or screening, a shared message would need to be worked through. This would require of POs a richer understanding of the diversity of program outcomes across all programs and how these outcomes are assessed by each organization. In this context, addressing issues related to program evaluation is a means of strengthening one another's program and of working together to create the conditions for constructive and supportive inter-agency monitoring, feedback, and joint action.

RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the more remarkable results from this research project is that there are so many equally relevant recommendations that could be made. With the acute interest expressed by the POs to become more closely aligned in their work, and because they share a concern for the well-being of at-risk children, youth, and families in Saskatoon, there is certainly no shortage of issues to be addressed. While it is clear that the POs want to collaborate and be guided in such a collaboration, the question that still needs to be answered is, "To what end?" In reviewing the salient themes, issues, interests, and concerns that emerged in this research, certain key recommendations for future action and research can be made in order to provide, at the very least, preliminary suggestions or general guidance to help answer this question.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE TRAINING AND/OR ACTION

1. **Address the issue of collaboration and diversity through group training, facilitation, and/or adoption of partnership principles.**

This could be considered one of the starting points fir developing a formal mentoring partnership in Saskatoon. The training could be done in collaboration with Volunteer Saskatoon, and this session could be used to draft up a series of principles for a collaborative partnership, with careful attention paid to issues of diversity. Such a training or facilitation session, as well as the practical document produced from it, could also assist in guiding future collaborative efforts between organizations and setting down some of the foundational documents and services of a meaningful mentoring partnership.

2. Share resources and expertise in mentor/mentee screening, matching, and support.

This is another strong starting point because it would entail developing a better understanding of, and an opportunity to share and improve upon, one another's programs and practices. This could be a facilitated session as well, with findings organized and interpreted systematically. Furthermore, such a session could help discover further areas of common interest and concern, increase the level of inter-agency cooperation, and possibly even increase institutional capacity by cross-referencing materials, resources, or even procedures.

3. Work on a plan of action to address issues related to volunteer recruitment.

It would appear that one of the most important issues facing volunteer mentoring organizations in Saskatoon and across North America is a persistent lack of sufficient volunteers to contend with community needs. Sharing resources and expertise in this area would move the POs one step closer to building capacity, and could also be seen as a means of streamlining workload and thereby sharing the associated costs of volunteer recruitment. However, many other issues would also have to be considered. For example, as addressed previously, a plan of action around this program component would likely have to take into consideration issues related to program representation, volunteer screening practices, and program cross-referencing and referrals.

4. Increase number and type of organizations involved in the group.

If a formal mentoring partnership is to be established, one obvious step is to widen the reach and scope of the organizations involved. As mentioned in relation to the prevalence of community collaboration and program diversity in the literature, and as demonstrated by the local volunteer mentoring organizations that participated in this study, partnerships and programs need not focus solely on one-to-one community-based mentoring. Rather, trends suggest an integrated approach, integrating youth development programs in particular, and looking at sharing resources/expertise across domains and program foci. It is in everyone's best interest not to re-invent the wheel. Sharing infrastructure and expertise in various capacities and programming strengths is a means of ensuring sustainable volunteer mentoring programming in Saskatoon that continues to improve, adapt, and innovate.

5. Directly address issues related to program evaluation and program representation.

This is by no means the least important area for future training, research, and/or joint action, however, it may be one of the more contentious. The issue of evaluation relates

to program representation and is also indirectly linked to fundraising. Nevertheless, that program evaluation ranked so high in terms of benefit for future training and/or research is a good indicator of the depth of this emerging partnership. In terms of building upon inter-agency mutuality and trust, and seeking ways of developing a mentoring partnership that increases and sustains institutional capacity, this topic can be considered of equal importance to collaboration approaches and strategies and issues of diversity. A good start in this area might simply be a facilitated session by one of the POs on the types of evaluation practices used by their organization and another centered around the different types that are being, or could be, used by other organizations.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Aboriginal perspective on mentoring.

The literature in the field of mentoring makes little mention of Aboriginal communities. The only direct study that was found and related to the perspective of an Aboriginal community was one commissioned by Big Brothers and Sisters of Canada, *Ethnic Mentoring Study* (Angus Reid Group, 1997). This study contravened some research of the American situation, which found cross-race matching to not be a necessary factor in successful mentor-mentee relationships, particularly among Latino and African-American children and youth. At the same time, the study confirmed the hypothesis held by at least one prominent researcher that group mentoring might be more suitable in Aboriginal communities (Rhodes, 2002). Considering that all the POs stated that they work with the Aboriginal community, it is imperative that more research is done with Aboriginal mentors, mentees, parents, and community leaders.

2. Strategies to reach high-risk/street involved youth.

One group with whom the POs mentioned they work is high-risk youth. The literature in the field has thus far demonstrated that mentoring high-risk youth is a very challenging endeavour. Furthermore, children and youth who are facing extreme behavioural, emotional, or psychological difficulties are the least likely to gain many benefits from a one-to-one volunteer mentoring relationship. However, this does not preclude innovations and alternative, hybrid approaches, something that is not unknown to the POs in this study. In fact, one PO is presently piloting a unique, multi-modal approach to working with high-risk youth. Thus, one area for future study relates to mentoring high-risk youth in Saskatoon, so as to assess present interventions and make suggestions for program development and possible inter-agency collaboration strategies that span the spectrum of existing youth development programs.

3. Assessment of organization and program diversity.

The POs in this study presented a unique and varied collection of program types and outcomes. This could be seen as a defining feature of what appears to be a dynamic and innovative volunteer mentoring community in Saskatoon. For example, family-to-family mentoring is a field on which was difficult to find much research, but is nevertheless addressed in the research as an area for future exploration (i.e. program experimentation). That an established family-to-family mentoring program exists in Saskatoon and has played such a central role in this project is something that should not go unnoticed. Conducting a separate research study of that program would certainly be of benefit to the Saskatoon volunteer mentoring community and the field of volunteer mentoring as a whole.

Additionally, at least two POs reported that they were involved in group mentoring. This is a program type that is only just beginning to be studied, with mixed preliminary results that suggest more questions than they answer. Looking at programs that work specifically with urban girls is an area that would be of particular interest in Saskatoon, where the dangers of sexual exploitation are a known reality (MacDermott, 2004). Finally, peer mentoring with persons with disabilities is worth further study, with particular emphasis on how the peer mentoring relationship is framed within the organizational mission and context.

4. Looking at supporting natural mentoring as a broader mentoring strategy

Many researchers who are studying volunteer mentoring programs are psychologists, and thus, an underlying problem that they find with volunteer mentoring is that the intervention does not necessarily alleviate the source of many of the difficulties that at-risk children, youth, and families face. The basis for promoting volunteer mentoring as an intervention strategy is that having at least one positive, formative relationship with an important adult or respected peer has been shown to be a central reason why a child or youth is able to survive adverse circumstances (Freedman, 1999). This does not minimize the reality that engineering such a close relationship is a risky business, nor does it address the root cause of the problem that these children and youth face, namely that their own family and extended family are unable to act as natural mentors to their kin, or are unaware of the importance of rising to the occasion.

This theme of natural minority, advocated by some of the leading researchers and voices in the field, resonates as a larger mission for the volunteer mentoring community. This theme also informs new approaches to mentoring that try to replicate some of the salient features of natural mentoring relationships (DuBois et al, 2002). There are many critical questions to ask relating to this broader mission, questions that could, in fact, frame a larger action research strategy and vision for mentoring programming in Saskatoon.

Conclusion

This research drew from a body of research that spans over fifteen years, and from the experience and knowledge of five mentoring organizations in Saskatoon that have been in operation from between two and over twenty years. In this respect, this project has tried to bear witness to this community of dedicated researchers, professionals, volunteers, and mentees who have been involved in mentoring programs. Considering all the different stakeholders in volunteer mentoring, and the years of patience and perseverance that led to this project, it is not an understatement to assert that this research process was multi-layered. The full intent of the project was to present the report in a manner such that it would thread into the past, present, and future of volunteer mentoring programming in Saskatoon.

While some of the findings tended towards common-sense concepts associated with quality programming and the typical constraints of the volunteer, non-profit sector, efforts were taken to identify the particulars and unique features of these issues as they pertain to volunteer mentoring programming. This sector clearly merits the attention that it is receiving, both in terms of analyzing the results that it can achieve and assessing the conditions needed for such programs to succeed. As the subtleties of quality programming, inter-agency collaboration, and community support were elaborated on, the complexity and requisite integrity of this sector was revealed.

Though it may seem self-evident to state that volunteer mentoring programs need, for example, careful screening and matching, appropriate mentor training, and ongoing support, these best practices are conducted differently across organizations, and ultimately require adequate resources to be properly implemented. It is sufficient to say that agencies in many different sectors are facing financial strains and stretched volunteer capacity. However, in the case of volunteer mentoring programming, this is particularly problematic. Volunteer mentoring programs intimately affect the lives of children, youth, and families as they are brought together with strangers who will become their mentors, a bond that is laden with cultural, emotional, and psychological significance. In this context, attention to the details of mentoring programs and apportioning sufficient resources to them are the very pillars of formalized, volunteer mentoring programs.

Ultimately, the responsibility for provision of quality volunteer mentoring programming lies in three domains: (1) within the realm of the individual volunteer mentoring organizations; (2) within the scope of the funding organizations and community agencies that support the work of these individual organizations; and (3) as demonstrated by this project and the resulting research, among the community of volunteer mentoring practitioners and professionals as a whole who promote and sustain the quality and ethics of the field. This project has been an integration of the first two of these domains so as to nurture the third. Individual mentoring organizations in Saskatoon, with the assistance of funding and volunteer agencies, and with the guidance of a publicly funded, com-

munity-university research institute, have worked together to investigate and lay out the possible role of and direction for a mentoring partnership is Saskatoon.

Openness to being involved in research and engaging in program innovation has characterized the field of volunteer mentoring programming. It has also been shown to be the case for those organizations that were involved in this project. Engagement in this research process symbolized and crystallized the collective intent of the individual organizations to go beyond the boundaries of their programming concerns and interests and to establish a broader, more collaborative approach to volunteer mentoring programming in the city. Over the past year, it has been quite extraordinary to see how these organizations have come to highlight the areas that they wish to learn more about from each other and through research, as well as on what they want to work more closely together. It would appear that the essential ingredients that give meaning and life to volunteer mentoring relationships are the same principles that could aid the creation of a meaningful mentoring partnership in Saskatoon.

NOTES

[1] For more on the impacts and scope of volunteer mentoring, see: Rhodes, J. E. (2002). *Stand by me: The risks and rewards of mentoring today's youth.* Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press; and Buckley M. A., & Zimmerman, S. H. (2003). *Mentoring children and adolescents: A guide to the issues.* Westport, CT: Praeger. As well, Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) (www.ppv.org) offers many PDF files on mentoring research conducted by their organizations over the past fifteen years.

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