

## RESEARCH SUMMARY

# “Predictors of mentoring relationship quality: Investigation from the perspectives of youth and parent participants in Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada one-to-one mentoring programs”

What is this study about?

This study explored the “ingredients” of high-quality mentoring relationships in Canada. To do so, this study invited mentees and their parents to describe their mentoring relationships and explain why they felt like they were involved a high-quality mentoring relationship.

Where did the study take place?

This research study took place in Canada.

Who was involved in the study?

This study involved 335 mentees and 356 parents who were participating in one-to-one community-based mentoring programs. The participants were recruited from 20 different Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies across Canada. The average age of mentees in this study was 10 years old.

How was the study conducted?

The researchers used a national survey of Canadian Big Brother Big Sisters programs to collect their data. To begin, the researchers invited mentees and their parents to rate the overall quality of their mentoring relationship after 18 months in the relationship. While doing so, mentees and their parents were also invited to rate the quality of specific experiences within their relationships, such as the emotional support they received from their mentor or the support they received from the mentoring organization. This took place at both 6 and 12-months in the mentoring relationship. After collecting this information, the researchers performed regression analyses to understand which experiences best “predict” high-quality mentoring relationships.

What were the key findings?

This study discovered various experiences and/or “ingredients” that are linked to high-quality mentoring relationships.

**Mentee Experiences:** When mentees experienced the following, they were more likely to be involved in a high-quality mentoring relationship:

- Being successfully matched with their mentor without any significant challenges or delays;
- Feeling as though they shared important similarities and traits with their mentor;
- Receiving emotional engagement and support from their mentor;
- Being in a long-lasting relationship with their mentor; and

- Feeling as though their parents also had a good relationship with their mentor.

**Parent Experiences:** When parents experienced the following, their child was more likely to be involved in a high-quality mentoring relationship:

- Having their child matched with a mentor without any significant challenges or delays;
- Witnessing their child’s mentor maintain a long-lasting relationship with them; and
- Experiencing a high-quality connection with their child’s mentor.

**“Youth who reported high levels of emotional engagement were paired with mentors who adopted a developmental approach to mentoring that focus on building a strong emotional connection by responding flexibly to their needs and interests and creating an atmosphere of mutual trust that encouraged disclosure of personal and emotional issues” (p. 199-200).**

Why does this research matter?

Based on these findings, the researchers offered several recommendations for practice in terms of matching and training.

#### Matching

- Self-assess current matching procedures to determine if they are timely and successful.
- Explore opportunities for improving matching procedures so that mentees are matched in a timely and efficient manner.
- Ensure mentors and mentees are being matched according to shared similarities, interests, and traits.
- Help mentors and mentees recognize these similarities by verbalizing and celebrating them during the matching process.

#### Training

- Help mentors understand the importance of verbalizing the goals, values, and interests they share with their mentee during mentoring sessions.
- Help mentors build the skills to adopt a more *developmental* approach to mentoring (i.e., building a strong emotional connection that encourages mentees to safely disclose and discuss their emotions).
- Encourage mentors to build a strong connection with their mentee’s family (e.g., inviting mentors to visit with the family, say hello and engage in pleasantries while picking up their mentee, attending agency-sponsored social events that invite parents and mentors to get to know one another and form a stronger connection, etc.).

#### Reference

De Wit, D. J., DuBois, D. L., Erdem, G., Larose, S., & Lipman, E. L. (2020). Predictors of mentoring relationship quality: Investigation from the perspectives of youth and parent participants in Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada one-to-one mentoring programs. *Journal of Community Psychology, 48*(2), 192-208.