

# Co-constructing knowledge with youth: What high-school aged mentors say and do to support their mentee's autonomy, belonging, and competence

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# Land Acknowledgment

## **What I'm Reading...**

- Five Little Indians by Michelle Good
- The Inconvenient Indian by Thomas King

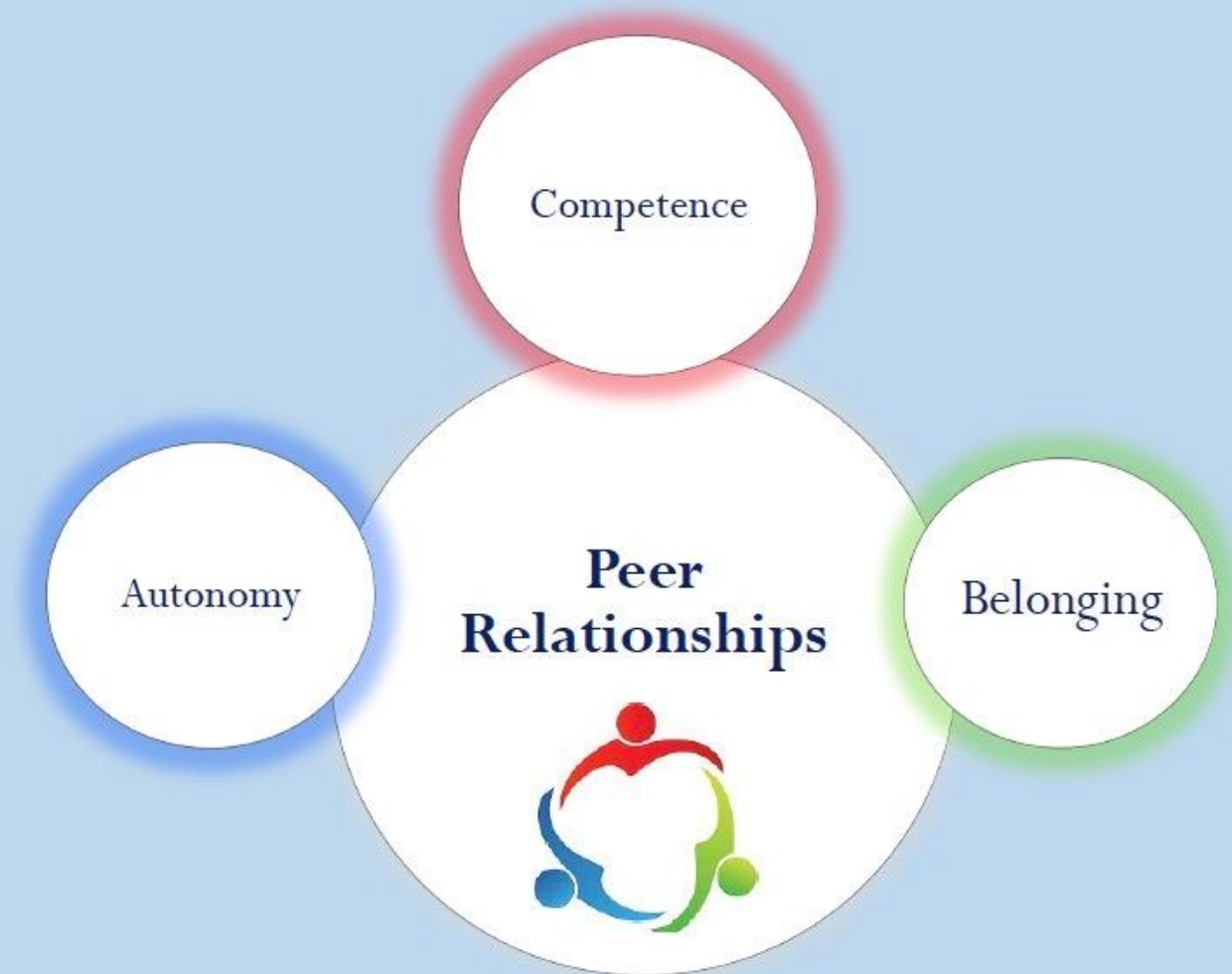
## **What I'm Doing...**

- Challenging inappropriate jokes <sup>1</sup>

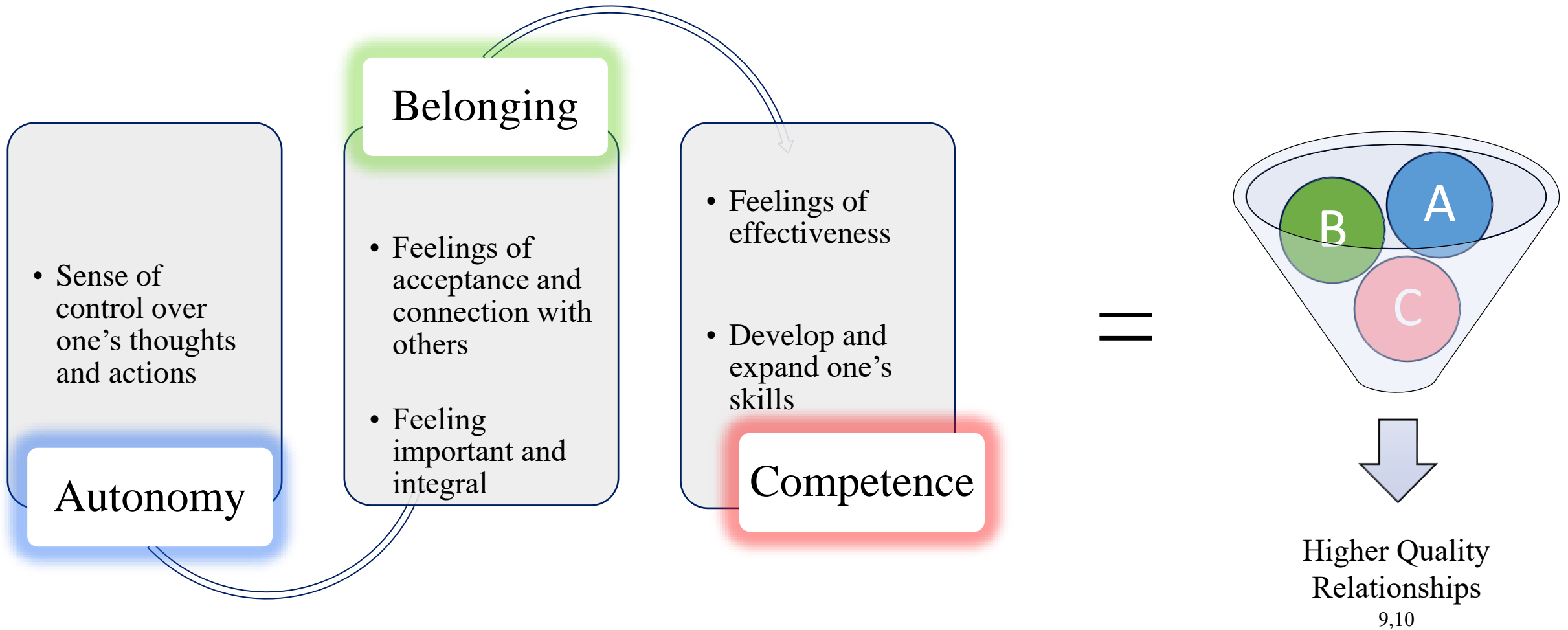
# Introduction

- Cross-age peer mentoring <sup>2,3</sup>
- A recent meta-analysis revealed a medium-sized effect size ( $g= 0.45$ ) <sup>4</sup>
- What are the ingredients of high-quality relationships? <sup>5-7</sup>
- Relationships Motivation Theory (RMT) <sup>8</sup>

# Relationships Motivation Theory (RMT)



# Relationships Motivation Theory (RMT)



# Research Goals

1. Demonstrate the capacity of high-school aged mentors
2. Capture what mentors *say* and *do* during mentoring sessions
3. Explore impact on relationships

# Mentoring Context and Research Design

## Context:

- After-school music program in Western Canada

## Research Design:

- Multiple Case Study <sup>11,12</sup>
  - 5 mentors (14-18 years of age) ( $M = 15.8$ ,  $SD = 1.48$ )
  - 5 mentees (8-12 years of age) ( $M = 9.6$ ,  $SD = 1.81$ )
  - In-Vivo Coding <sup>13-15</sup>
  - Provisional Coding <sup>13-15</sup>
  - Descriptive Statistics
1. Audio Recordings of Mentoring Sessions
  2. Weekly Mentoring Logs
  3. Individual Interviews



# Program Timeline

## **Before**

1. Mentor Skill-Building Sessions <sup>16</sup>
2. Group Hangout

## **During**

1. Mentoring Sessions 1-5 (Developmental Focus)
2. Mentoring Sessions 5-10 (Instrumental Focus)
3. Mentor Support Meetings <sup>16, 17</sup>

## **After**

1. Spring Recital
  2. Group Hangout
- 






# Skill-Building Session #1

## **Goals**

1. Introduce the concept of mentoring
2. Identify healthy mentoring behaviours
3. Clarify goals and expectations

## **Activities**

- ✓ Who Is My Mentor?
  - ✓ What Is a Mentor?
  - ✓ Program Overview Handout
  - ✓ Mentor Contract
- 

# Skill-Building Session #2

## Goals

1. Introduce the core concepts of RMT
2. Build capacity to support feelings of autonomy, belonging, and competence

## Activities

- ✓ Co-construct definitions
- ✓ Role-Playing Scenarios

## Skill-Building Session #2

- Autonomy is...  
... “when someone feels self-reliant and independent”
- Belonging is...  
... “when someone feels welcomed, loved, and accepted”
- Competence is...  
... “when someone feels effective and that they understand what they are doing”

## Skill-Building Session #2

- Autonomy is...

... “when someone feels acknowledged and in control of what they do and learn”

## Skill-Building Session #2

“While making music with your mentee, how do *you* think you could support their autonomy/belonging/competence? What could you *say* or *do*?”

“The Agreeable Mentee”



“The Lonely Mentee”



“The Discouraged Mentee”



# The ABC Companion

## THE ABC COMPANION

A brief field guide for supporting Autonomy, Belonging, and Competence (i.e., the ABC's). All strategies and statements were co-constructed with youth aged 10-18.

### AUTONOMY

"When someone feels acknowledged and in control of what they do and learn."

#### CONSIDER DOING THINGS LIKE...

- Providing meaningful choices
- Acknowledging your mentee's perspective
- Asking your mentee for their opinions/suggestions
- Inviting your mentee to make meaningful decisions
- Providing good reasons for your own decisions

#### CONSIDER SAYING THINGS LIKE...

- You always have a lot of good ideas, what do you think we should do?
- I'm curious about what you think about this?
- I'm ready to listen to some of your ideas
- You're so creative. I'm sure you can figure this out!
- Do you have anything you want to try or learn?

### BELONGING

"When someone feels welcomed, loved, and accepted."

#### CONSIDER DOING THINGS LIKE...

- Telling your mentee some things about yourself
- Inviting your mentee to talk about their day at school
- Showing your mentee that you're interested in them

#### CONSIDER SAYING THINGS LIKE...

- I'm so happy I'm your mentor!
- It's great you're here! I'm excited to work together!
- How was school?

### COMPETENCE

"When someone feels effective and that they understand what they are doing."

#### CONSIDER DOING THINGS LIKE...


- Providing effort-focused feedback
- Identifying your mentee's strengths
- Accepting your mentee's mistakes in a friendly way
- Encouraging your mentee

#### CONSIDER SAYING THINGS LIKE...

- You have improved so much since last week!
- Thanks for trying so hard!
- You're getting the hang of this!
- Don't be afraid to make mistakes
- Is there anything that you don't understand?



# Mentoring Sessions 1-5

- Learning Simple Rhythms
  - Primary focus on relationship development
- 


# Mentor Support Meetings

<p>1. What Did You Do Well On?</p> <p>What did you do well on in your meeting? What did you like about your meeting? What did you learn from your meeting? What did you enjoy about your meeting?</p>	<p>2. What Did You Learn?</p> <p>What did you learn from your meeting? What did you enjoy about your meeting? What did you like about your meeting? What did you learn from your meeting?</p> <p>Didn't work well.</p>
<p>3. What Will You Try?</p> <p>What will you try in your next meeting? What will you try in your next meeting? What will you try in your next meeting? What will you try in your next meeting?</p>	<p>4. What Will You Try?</p> <p>What will you try in your next meeting? What will you try in your next meeting? What will you try in your next meeting? What will you try in your next meeting?</p>





# Mentoring Sessions 5-10

- Mentors taught mentees specific rhythms
  - Rhythms synchronized into song
  - Professionally recorded
  - Spring concert
  - Final hangout
- 

# Research Goals

1. Demonstrate the capacity of high-school aged mentors
2. Capture what mentors *say* and *do* during mentoring sessions
3. Explore impact on relationships

# Results: Capacity of High-School Mentors

1. Capable of learning about RMT and developing the necessary skills to support autonomy, belonging, and competence.

Autonomy is...  
Belonging is...  
Competence is...



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## Results: What did mentors say and do?

1. Mentors successfully used language and strategies associated with autonomy, belonging, and competence satisfaction.

<b>Support Strategy</b>	<b>Consistency (%)</b>

# Results: What did mentors say and do?

## **Autonomy**

1. Difficulty balancing autonomy support with structure

## **Belonging**

1. Difficulty establishing early rapport
2. Demonstrating personal interest was a successful strategy

## **Competence**

1. Mentors reported as the easiest to support
2. Could have been supported more successfully to provide more effort-focused feedback

## Results: Impact on relationships?

“How happy are you with the way things went today between you and your mentor/mentee?”

Mentor Average: 3.65 ( $SD = 0.24$ )

Mentee Average: 4.52 ( $SD = 0.32$ )

- ✓ 4 out of 5 mentors reported that learning about RMT helped them develop and maintain positive relationships.

# Mentor Interviews

“I thought it was really neat, because when I babysit or hang out with younger kids, I never really thought about like competence and belonging and autonomy. I kind of just did it, but without really thinking about it very much. So it was cool having to think more about it and then knowing and learning how effective it is with the kids. You don’t really think much about how special and important that is for someone.”

“I found it helpful for mentors to prepare ourselves. I think that all three of them are very important [referring to autonomy, belonging, and competence]. I learned to be more aware when I talk to younger kids – don’t just talk to them, but ask their opinions and try to put a sense of belonging and competence into their life.”



# Mentee Interviews

“I was extremely happy because I had lots of choices. I had a lot of choices with the song.”

“She would tell me stuff! She was always kind, friendly, and happy.”

“I learned that I could do stuff that I never did before, like the violin. I never knew I could, so now I am happy that I can, and I know I can!”

# Practical Contribution

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# Practical Lessons Learned

## **Autonomy Support**

- ✓ Create more opportunities for shared learning and cooperation
- ✓ Be transparent about the importance of balancing autonomy with more structured goals <sup>18,19</sup>

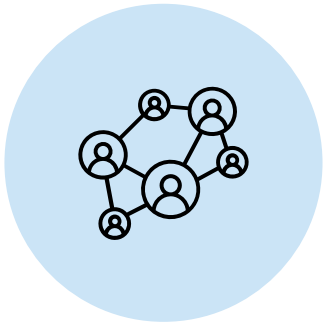
## **Belonging Support**

- ✓ Encourage mentors to discuss their mentee's interests at the earliest opportunity

## **Competence Support**

- ✓ Help mentors provide more effort-focused feedback <sup>20, 21</sup>

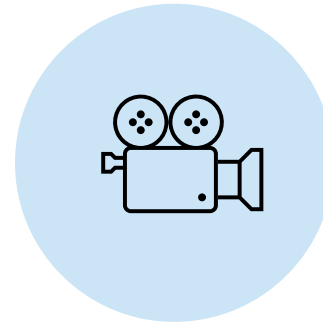
# Considerations and Future Directions



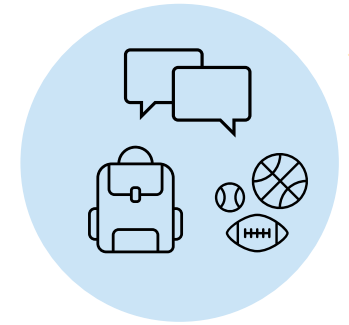
Increase sample size  
and diversity



More extensive  
mentor skill-building



Collect video  
recordings of mentoring  
sessions



Additional  
Contexts

The slide features a central white diamond shape with a thin white border, set against a light gray background. The background is decorated with four overlapping geometric shapes in the corners: a yellow diamond in the top-left, a blue diamond in the top-right, a blue diamond in the bottom-left, and a yellow diamond in the bottom-right. The text "Thank You" is centered within the white diamond.

Thank You

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