MENTORING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION

GLOBAL APPROACHES TO EMPOWERMENT

Edited by
Òscar Prieto-Flores and Jordi Feu

Mentoring Children and Young People for Social Inclusion

Mentoring Children and Young People for Social Inclusion critically analyses the challenges and possibilities of mentoring approaches to youth welfare and equality. It explores existing youth mentoring programmes targeted towards youth in care, immigrant, and refugee populations, and considers the extent to which these can aid social inclusion.

The book compiles works by scholars from different countries focused on how child and youth mentoring has been changing globally in recent years and how these changes are identified and approached in different contexts. The book seeks to address what empowering youth means in different socio-political contexts, how mentoring is approached by governments and NGOs, and how these approaches shape mentoring relationships. It provides insights on how mentoring can tackle structural inequalities and work towards child and youth empowerment.

This book will be of great interest for academics, scholars, and postgraduate students in the area of inclusive education and mentoring. It will also be useful reading for social workers, community developers, and practitioners working in NGOs, as well as for governments looking for innovative ways to generate interventions in the educational and social arena.

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Contributors

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Pat Dolan is a Joint Founder and Director of the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre at the National University of Ireland, Galway, and holds the prestigious UNESCO Chair in Children, Youth and Civic Engagement. The UNESCO Chair programme is built around core strands of research, teaching, policy advocacy, and practice and is underpinned by a range of national and international collaborations. Prof. Dolan has worked with and for families as a practitioner, service manager, and academic. He has published widely on empathy and civic engagement in children and youth, family support, reflective practice, youth mentoring, adolescent resilience, and social support. He is co-author of *A Guide to Youth Mentoring: Providing Effective Social Support* (Jessica Kingsley, 2012, with Bernadine Brady) and of *Mentoring Young People in Care and Leaving Care: Theory, Policy and Practice* (Routledge, 2020, with Bernadine Brady and Caroline McGregor).

Bernadette Sánchez is Professor of Community Psychology at DePaul University in Chicago, IL. She is an expert on the role of mentoring relationships in the positive development and education of urban, low-income adolescents of colour. Sánchez has authored literature reviews on the roles of race, ethnicity, and culture in youth mentoring for the leading scholarly handbook for youth mentoring, and she has over 50 publications and 120 presentations. She recently completed a Distinguished Fellowship Award with the William T. Grant Foundation. She has received funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Science Foundation (NSF), and local foundations for her mentoring research. Bernadette is a member of the Research Board for the National Mentoring Resource Center in the United States. She received her bachelor's degree in Psychology from Fairfield University, Fairfield, CT, and her master's and PhD degrees in Community and Prevention Research from the University of Illinois at Chicago, IL.

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C. Lynn Liao is a Research Associate with Davis Pier Consulting, working primarily in Pier Labs, a social policy and innovation laboratory. She graduated from DePaul University with a PhD in Community Psychology in 2017 and has worked in research, evaluation, planning, and policy roles in Canadian government departments. Her most recent policy areas of interest include social assistance programmes such as income assistance and employment programmes for persons experiencing poverty, and housing assistance and homelessness interventions. She is currently the Principal Investigator on a longitudinal mixed methods research project (2020–2023) funded by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) that will examine the role of housing subsidies in housing outcomes and quality of life for low-income households in Nova Scotia.

Christopher B. Keys is Professor Emeritus and former Chair of the Psychology Departments at DePaul University and the University of Illinois at Chicago, IL. Keys served as the Founding Associate Dean for Research in the College of Science and Health at DePaul and his research is focused on issues of empowerment among people with disabilities, especially people of colour. He co-edited the *Handbook of Community Psychology* and *Race, Culture and Disability Rehabilitation Science and Practice.* He recently co-authored the College Student Empowerment Scales for Racial/Ethnic Minorities in the *Journal of Community Psychology.* Keys has received the Distinguished Contribution to Theory and Research in Community Psychology Award from the Society for Community Research and Action. He has contributed about 150 peer-reviewed articles, chapters, and books and has presented his work on six continents.

Sarah Schwartz is Assistant Professor of Psychology at Suffolk University in Boston. She holds a doctorate in Clinical Psychology from the University of Massachusetts Boston and a master's degree in Education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Her research aims to develop, evaluate, and refine interventions that leverage the power of relationships to support the development of youth, with a particular emphasis on the role of mentoring relationships. She has published numerous articles and chapters on the topic and is the current recipient of a William T. Grant Foundation research grant to study an intervention designed to increase social capital and networks of support among first-generation college students.

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Ellis ter Beek is Director of treatment at Rosales Care. She obtained her PhD in forensic juvenile psychology from the University of Amsterdam in 2018, her research focused on treatment of juveniles with severe sexual problem behaviour. Since 1997 she has worked in Forensic Youth Care (FYC) and Secure Youth Care (SYC) institutions. She has many years of clinical expertise regarding juveniles with severely transgressive behaviour. Her personal area of interest is the comorbidity of psychiatric disorders, borderline intellectual functioning, and (forensic) behavioural problems in adolescents, focusing explicitly on the development of the juvenile in interaction with his/her context.

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Tereza Brumovska earned a PhD in Sociology (2017) from the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, School of Political Science and Sociology at National University of Ireland, Galway. Tereza has a long-standing research interest in the topic of mentoring phenomena and on children and young people, their lives, experiences and perspectives, and socio-ecological factors that impact on their positive development. She is especially interested in the youth mentoring relationships, role of mentors, and significant adults in positive development, and participatory research methods with children. Tereza currently works as a postdoctoral researcher at the NUI Galway in Ireland, exploring children's attitudes to science and scientists (CATSS Study, 2019–2020).

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Preface

During these first decades of the twenty-first century, there has been growing concern about increasing social inequalities in many contexts. The redistributive policies of national welfare states seem to fall short in responding to the new challenges we face and to the metamorphosis that our society is undergoing. In addition, existing political and social instability in many countries, and the rise of the far right and populism – in its various forms – make it more complex to address one of the most important challenges we have: for all children and young people to be able to realise their full potential with autonomy and a critical view of the world. Some media, state agencies, or politicians hinder this when the image they portray of certain children, young people, and their families seeking a better life in a new context is, rather, demonising and stigmatising.

During the 1980s and 1990s, mentoring for children and young people was proposed as a solution to improve their living conditions from a neoliberal perspective. The Reagan and Thatcher governments, and later others seeking a third way, called on the population as if, with cuts to the welfare state, organised citizens had a responsibility to help the poor out of poverty with a certain disinhibition of responsibility of the role of the state in this mission. From this neoliberal perspective, the mentor prototype is usually represented by a male, most often White and successful in the business world. This paternalistic view – still embedded in some programmes – aims to "save" children and young people from their context and to prevent them from eventually coming into contact with crime networks or turning down the "wrong" path. This model has been criticised lately in many contexts and there is considerable debate at the academic and social levels as to whether this is indeed the way to promote social inclusion and to support individuals and families in socially disadvantaged situations.

An example of this debate is found in the United Kingdom, where, in the late 1990s, mentoring was promoted by the Blair government to encourage the inclusion of young people who had dropped out of school. Colley (2003) critically emphasised that mentoring should not be based on an atomising approach that would focus only on a specific area (e.g. access to the labour market). Rather, she asserted that mentoring should be carried out from a more inclusive and

emancipatory perspective, which respects the needs of young people and fosters community relations that go beyond the more classical one-on-one mentoring.

The last three decades have seen a considerable increase in mentoring programmes, not only in Anglo-Saxon contexts but also in others where the welfare state and redistribution policies are more significant than those in the Anglo-Saxon countries (Denmark, Sweden, or Germany, e.g.). This growth could be attributed to the mimetic effect of extrapolating neoliberal policies or logic to other political regimes that have reduced public policy investment in recent years and have increased their public debt. However, we must be cautious and rigorous and not reduce the great diversity of existing approaches only to neoliberal logic. Schwartz and Rhodes (2016) emphasise that a paradigm shift in the approach of mentoring programmes is essential to move towards a more empowering logic facilitating the development of meaningful relationships chosen by the young people themselves. In this regard, mentoring programmes need to ensure stable relationships through good pairing, but must also seek to work on a number of skills for mentees to become more self-reliant and be able to identify adults around them that can give them support at crucial moments in their life trajectories.

The debate on how to empower our children and young people through various types of support is and will be increasingly relevant in our society. This book explores different theoretical and practical perspectives and analysis on how mentoring relationships can foster empowerment processes in our youth. For example, how these relationships can foster community development and encourage access to social capital and the autonomy of the child or young person. We understand that youth empowerment can be developed through accompaniment relationships that encourage joint reflection and dialogue on how society is structured and how to contribute to improving the present world (Freire, 1997). The various chapters of this book have also been written from the desire to contribute examples of how mentoring programmes can foster these processes, so that academics as well as students and practitioners can find some examples related to practice as well.

In the first chapter, Prieto-Flores et al. highlight the role that social capital can play in mentoring relationships and the need to take this perspective into account when working with youth. Generally, the study of mentoring has been done from a psychological and developmental perspective. Although this view has been interesting and necessary, the analysis of mentoring relationships also needs to contemplate a sociological perspective that complements the previous one. In this regard, the authors emphasise the potential of mentoring programmes to promote social capital and foster formal mentoring relationships that can also promote natural mentoring relationships – that is, those that may emerge without the intervention of a programme. In the next chapter, Brady and Dolan emphasise the relevance of the concept of "presence" (Baart, 2002) to understand quality youth mentoring relationships with children and young people. The "presence approach" means that the worker or volunteer is *there*