International Development, Community and Environment (IDCE)

5-2016

# Supporting Mentor Competency At African Community Education

Kelsey Renner
*Clark University*, krenner@clarku.edu

## Recommended Citation

Supporting Mentor Competency
At African Community Education

Kelsey Renner

May 2016

A Practitioner Paper

Submitted to the faculty of Clark University, Worcester,

Massachusetts, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts in the department of International Development,
Community, and Environment

And accepted on the recommendation of

Laurie Ross, Ph.D., Chief Instructor

# Abstract

Supporting Mentor Competency
At African Community Education

Kelsey Renner

This practitioner paper focuses on the African Community Education (ACE) Mentoring for Empowerment and Exchange (MEE) in Worcester, Massachusetts and its ability to develop mentor competency in their volunteer mentors. In order to be effective mentors to their mentees, mentors need to be given tools to develop their own personal sense of competency via programmatic support like check-ins and trainings. Using interviews with mentors, literature in the field of mentoring, and program data, recommendations are made for ways ACE MEE program staff can enhance their programmatic structures to promote mentor competency and therefore develop high quality matches that support the positive development of all youth involved in the ACE MEE program.

# ACADEMIC HISTORY

Name: Kelsey Elizabeth Renner                      Date: May 2016

Baccalaureate Degree: International Development and Social Change

Source: Clark University                      Date: May 2015

Occupation and Academic Connection since date of baccalaureate degree:

Highland Street Americorps Ambassador of Mentoring at African Community Education

# Contents

## Introduction

In August of 2015, I started serving as an Americorps member at African Community Education (ACE) in Worcester, Massachusetts. My job position was described as "capacity building". In more explicit terms, I am to serve forty hours a week as a team member for ACE's Mentoring for Empowerment and Exchange (MEE) program, developing systems and policies that would help strengthen the program and ensure sustainability. It quickly became clear that to build capacity in an African youth serving organization, you need to understand two parts on a very thoughtful level: the youth and the youth worker. In this case, the youth worker is the student's mentor. Thus came my question: What factors are necessary to increase mentor competency in mentoring programs serving African immigrant and refugee youth? There is a vast amount of research surrounding the topic of mentoring, but almost none of this research focuses specifically on African immigrant and refugee youth, affecting the quality of the services offered to them as they adjust to a new home and the mentors that serve them.

ACE is an African immigrant and refugee youth serving non-profit, offering a variety of academic and social programming to "assist African refugee and immigrant youth and families in achieving educational and social stability through access to academic support, leadership development, cultural expression and community outreach in Worcester MA" (ACEchildren.org, 2015).

In 2006, ACE was created as a small, informal tutoring program run by University of Massachusetts Medical students specifically for Liberian immigrant and refugee students. It quickly morphed into a larger organization, and programming available students served has rapidly increased. Watching this growth occur, ACE staff identified the need for one-on-one relationships for students that could help them create more focused bonds between a student and adult.

In 2012, ACE began MEE as a formal program to help facilitate these relationships. This program has been developed over the years in accordance with the Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring, the standardized guide of best practices for mentoring programs nationwide set in place by The National Mentoring Partnership. The overarching goal of ACE MEE is to help African youths to develop confidence and provide the tools necessary to succeed academically and personally. However, in order for that supportive relationship to exist and promote those goals, and result in positive outcomes for the student, mentors need access to their own supports to become confident in their abilities and engage with their mentee. The National Mentoring Partnership has identified training, monitoring, and program support as being part of the outline for best practices in order to help mentors participate to their full capabilities. In this question, mentor competency can be defined as a mentor's ability to engage and support their mentee.

I hypothesize that the factors necessary for mentor competency are adequate opportunity for pre-match and post-match trainings, ability to develop a strong sense of cultural competency, and consistent check in sessions throughout the duration of the match. Existing literature states that mentoring can have many positive effects on a child's development, "promoting improved self-esteem, improved academic performance, and less engagement in risky behaviors like drug or alcohol use" (Cavell et. al 2009, 2). Research also finds that for these benefits to be reached and maintained, programs must incorporate best practices that not only screen and train mentors, but provide ongoing support to help develop relationships and minimize the risk of early closure (Cavell et. al 2009, 2). The three factors identified are closely linked to the level of support program staff provides in order to examine how ACE MEE implements and expands upon best practices to help mentors develop in their role. From participant observation throughout my work in the ACE

MEE program, other staff and I have identified a need for support from program staff to help mentors develop their personal sense of competency as the progress in their match. In informal conversations we have had and with knowledge we've gained from formal mentoring best practices, program support is a reoccurring theme when it comes to the question: "What makes a good mentor?".

I will compare these factors to what mentors perceive as important to helping them build a high quality relationship to what supports the program currently has in place aligned with those factors. Ideally, the mentors' ability to grow and feel confident in their interactions in the mentee will help to provide a nurturing environment where the mentor is engaged and fills their role to the best of their abilities.

ACE MEE is a very small, grassroots program started as a way to better support ACE students who many need more one on one support than students enrolled in other ACE programming. It has grown every year, with a current goal of reaching 25 mentor and mentees by June 2016. I currently serve as the Highland Street Americorps Ambassador of Mentoring (AOM) at ACE. In this position, I recruit and train mentors, provide match support to all of our matches, and implement and develop the evaluation system for MEE. In this position, I have become acutely aware of the challenges of a position in an organization that has such a high turnover rate. While this service position gives me unique insight into how ACE MEE runs, it also is only a year-long commitment and four different people have served in the position, creating extremely high rates of turnover in such a new program. In the year I am there, though, I handle the program almost in its entirety and have to find a sustainable, efficient way to transfer that knowledge to a new person. In my first few months as the AOM, I have noticed this may cause inconsistencies with how the program operates, and therefore may detract from the quality of experience for mentors and

mentees. This is the catalyst for researching the levels of support for mentors and how ACE can strengthen their policies and procedures in this respect.

This being said, I also feel that as a new member of the team, I bring a different perspective to the program and see ACE from a different vantage point. Most of the staff at ACE have been there for five years or more and have seen the organizations expand greatly in the past years. The MEE program staff consists of myself and my supervisor, the program coordinator. I will use this newly acquired knowledge from being so engrained into the program to reflect on my experiences in order to help understand the strengths within the mentoring program and where there may be room for improvement.

This paper will use qualitative data from interviews with mentors, relevant program data, and participant observations to examine the experiences of mentors and their perceptions of support from the program. This data will help to inform the research as to how the current program structure of ACE MEE operates and form recommendations based on gaps in program implementation and support. Based on these findings, the paper will culminate in a list of recommendations regarding what programmatic structures are necessary to implement to improve mentor competency. The research will be able to provide significant recommendations for action to the ACE MEE program to help develop the program as it grows.

There are already a number of existing supports in place, but as the program enter its fourth year and seeks to increase its number of matches by almost 50%, a closer analysis of what does and does not work for mentors will help to strengthen the program in terms of the mentors' participation, and eventually the experience of the students. ACE's overall mission is to "assist African refugee and immigrant youth and families in achieving educational and social stability through access to academic support, leadership development, cultural expression and community

outreach", so by strengthening the capacity of the mentors providing direct service to youth, they will be one step closer to acting on that mission and improving the outcomes for students. Defining concepts:

1) Match/matches: a mentor and mentee who have been paired to work together in a mentoring relationship. (In this context, a mentor is considered a youth worker and therefore the terms maybe used interchangeably).

2) Match support: structures and practices that help mentors and mentees develop their relationship. This can be monthly checks in from program staff, support in choosing appropriate activities, or mediating conflict resolution with program staff.

3) Immigrant: a person who has settled permanently in a different country (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2015)

4) Refugee: a person who is forced to flee from country of origin due to persecution (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2015)

**Organizational Context**

In order to understand the MEE program at ACE, it is vital to understand the many layers of the organization and the program. This section will detail the current structure of the ACE MEE program as to better comprehend how mentors are supported currently by program staff.

African Community Education's (ACE) mission is to assist African refugee and immigrant youth and families in achieving educational and social stability through access to academic support, leadership development, cultural expression and community outreach in Worcester MA. Their vision is a community where African refugees and immigrant youth and families are empowered, self-sufficient and secure (ACEchildren.org, 2015).

The organization serves African youth in Worcester, Massachusetts. The city of Worcester is home to an estimated 37,970 immigrants, constituting 21% of the total population (Seven Hills Foundation 2015, i). African immigrants make up 8% of the state-wide immigrant population and 21% of Worcester's immigrant population, with these numbers steadily growing in recent years (2015, 8-9). The large concentration of African-born residents in Worcester creates a high demand for quality social services from providers like ACE. ACE focuses heavily on the assets African youth bring to mentoring relationships, like a sense of resiliency and their multilingualism for example, but need to make sure they're preparing their volunteer mentors to develop these assets to their fullest potential.

As the population of African immigrants and refugees in Worcester grew larger, two people with ties to the immigrant community themselves, Kaska Yawo and Olga Valdman decided something needed to be done to support the success of the youth populations. Founded in 2006, ACE originated as a small after school tutoring program for African immigrant and refugee youth. Kaska Yawo, current Executive Director, and Olga Valdman, current board member, founded ACE together after many discussions about the state of African immigrant and refugee youth and their struggle to actively participate in the U.S. school system. While ACE's students bring a wealth of diversity to the program with their different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, 100% of students identify as immigrant or refugee, and face related obstacles, as 85% qualify as low income and 100% as English language learners. Risk factors like these created the need for ACE to support these students in their adjustment to the United States.

Since 2006, ACE has grown to include a variety of youth programming for students in 5th-12th grade in after school time, including both academic and non-academic programming. Their programs include After School which focuses on homework assistance and tutoring, Saturday

Program which also offers academic instruction but in addition also has the "Express Yourself" program that gives space to students to explore youth issues. ACE also has a leadership program that acts as a catalyst for workforce development by having students work on group projects, hear from guest speakers, and develop work-related skills. In addition to programming for their students, ACE also offers Parent Outreach to help bridge the gap between the organization and families, aiming to encourage parental participation in the students' lives at ACE. They also offer ESOL and Citizenship classes for families.

ACE has a very small staff, both working full time and part time. They rely very heavily on the work of volunteers, interns, and national service members in their day to day operations. ACE also strives to have a team of staff and volunteers that reflect the population they serve as to better understand their needs. In FY14, ACE's staff was 54% African and their volunteers were 33% African. Many ACE student alumni end up working or volunteering when they age out of programming.

The MEE program, provides high-quality, one-on-one adult youth relationships for ACE students. The mentors provide help in many different areas and are able to tailor the time to what the student wants to work on or participate in. ACE's goals for the program are to improve self-esteem and mentee's attitude towards school as well as their goal-building abilities. This is measured through specific monitoring and evaluation tools, including pre and post self-esteem surveys, pre and post attitude towards school surveys, monthly check ins with the mentors and mentees, mentor feedback surveys, and exit interviews.

Out of all ACE programs, MEE is both one of the smallest and newest offerings. ACE MEE has served approximately 40 matches since its inception in 2012, and is currently serving 12 matches as of January 2016. However, since 2012, many matches have not met the required year-

long commitment agreed to by both mentors and mentees when they are matched and have resulted in early closure. As stated in the literature review, early match closure may result in negative outcomes for a mentee if they harbor feelings of abandonment from their mentor.

In the MEE program, mentors are recruited from the existing volunteer pool at ACE, relevant community organizations, or nearby colleges. Currently, mentors are accepted on a rolling basis and matched with mentees as they are screened and accepted into the program. Priority is given to mentors of African descent with previous youth work experience. Mentors must be at least 18 years old and commit to mentoring for an hour and a half a week for one year. The screening process for all mentors includes an application, interview, and background check. After fulfilling these aspects, they are given a two hour training that covers topics such as ACE's organizational structure, cultural competency, stages of a mentoring relationship, communication and boundaries with mentees, and resources for mentors. Out of current MEE mentors, 66% are mentors of color and 60% were previously involved with ACE, either in staff or volunteer capacities, before becoming a mentor.

Mentees are recruited from ACE programming. Students either inquire directly about joining the program or are referred by an ACE staff member who believes they would benefit from a mentoring relationship. Referrals are typically made when students are struggling with academics or have behavioral issues. Many times, due to shortage of volunteer mentors, prospective mentees are placed on a wait list until a suitable mentor becomes available that best meets their needs. Prioritization is decided based on age, time since arrived in the country, and time spent on the waiting list. For instance, as a new mentor becomes available, a mentee in high school who has been in the country for five months and on the wait list for two months would be given preference over a mentee who is in middle school and been in the country five years. Prospective mentees fill

out an application, interest survey, and complete an interview with a MEE program staff. Once this process is complete, they participate in an hour long training that covers topics such as the roles and expectations as an ACE mentee, communication and boundaries with their mentors, and activity ideas.

ACE's MEE program is a site-based mentoring program, where the matches meet on site at ACE's facility as opposed to at various places out in the community. In theory, this gives mentors and mentees the ability to engage more directly with program staff if they need support or questions arise. As stated, matches meet weekly during the school year for an hour and a half. How matches choose to spend their time together is largely up to them. However, program staff does provide ideas and options for activities and are always on site to provide match support. Since we are site-based, matches are free to use any resources within ACE's office and mentors are not required or encouraged to spend any of their own money when participating in activities with their mentee. However, due to liability, we are unable to offer the option for community-based mentoring that allows matches to meet off-site.

Goal setting is one of the largest aspects of what mentors and mentees work on in their time together. During their pre-match training, MEE program staff explains the concept of goal setting with mentors and ways to assist their mentees in achieving their goals. At the beginning of their match, matches are given a goal setting worksheet to help brainstorm what they may want to work on. Goals are chosen by the student, and therefore vary depending on the individual mentee. Many students decide to work on academic goals, like preparing for SAT or MCAS testing or dedicating time to homework in subjects they may be struggling in. Others use it as a way to become comfortable spending time with and talking to adults. In this case, the activities usually suit the child's interest, such as dancing, playing board games, or just talking. Quarterly, they

check in on this goal together using pre-made goal check in worksheets that help them evaluate to what extent they are working on that goal. In addition to the quarterly worksheets, they also have access to other goal setting tools, like goal ladders, but utilization of those resources is optional. Regardless of what goal is chosen, mentors and mentees work together to set steps to achieving the goal and discuss this goal with program staff during their monthly check-ins.

Check-ins are a large part of the match support and evaluation process for ACE MEE. Check-ins are facilitated by the Program Coordinator and AOM. When a match is paired, program staff completes bi-weekly check-ins for the first two months of their match. This check in includes sitting down with both the mentor and mentee to ask general questions about how the match is progressing, what they have been doing together, and if they have any concerns or need any other support. It also allows program staff to determine if the match should progress or if a mentor and mentee need to be re-matched. After the first two months, matches are checked in on a monthly basis. Questions for monthly check ins correlate with the development of the match, and as they have been paired together more longer, ask less generally about their weekly activities and rather focus more deeply on the quality of their relationship and goal setting. In addition to these scheduled check ins, mentors and mentees are always encouraged to approach program staff if concerns arise.

In addition to check ins, mentors and mentees also complete quarterly feedback specific to their goals together. The purpose of these feedback sheets are to help the match be intentional in their time together to make sure the mentee is achieving what they hoped to. These quarterly feedback sheets are kept with program staff and often referred to during monthly check ins.

The last area ACE MEE program staff provides support in is closure of a match. The program emphasizes the importance of a one year relationship, but in many of our matches, that

commitment is not met. The inclusion of a closure procedure into program policy is a benchmark standard for programs in adherence with the National Mentoring Partnership's Elements of Effective Practice, as it "affirms the contributions of the mentor and mentee, and offers them the opportunity to prepare for the closure and assess the experience" (National Mentoring Partnership 2015, 70). Whether or not a match is together for a year, best practice requires the facilitation of a closure meeting to formally end the match and explain the occurrence to the mentee. While mentors leave for many reasons outside of their control, like schedule changes or moving to a new location, one of the largest dangers of closure is the internalization of negative feelings by the mentee as they view their mentor as choosing to leave.

ACE program staff are present at the last meeting to do one final check in with both the mentor and mentee about their experience and explain that if they continue the relationship informally, there is no support from ACE moving forward. The closure meeting includes a separate exit interview with the mentor and mentee, an interview with the match together, completion of exit surveys, and signature on a match closure contract that releases ACE from any liability regarding future contact between the pair. This goal of this closure meeting is the mentor and mentee to realize all they have achieved together and the impact of their relationship, while simultaneously reassuring to the student that their mentor leaving is not their fault.

There are many layers to the mentoring relationship at ACE, but as exhibited, program staff are deeply involved in each step of the relationship. Because of this, it is important that they have a deep understanding of how to support mentors and offer high quality support systems.

## Literature Review

### *What is Mentoring?*

Mentoring is a growing field in the youth service industry, with over 2.5 million adults in the United States serving as volunteer mentors (Spencer 2006, 287). The sheer vastness of this industry provides a chance for many youth to build a supportive, engaging relationship with a non-familial adult. A mentor is typically defined as a "caring non-parental adult, neighbors, teachers, and afterschool staff, who provides young people with ongoing support and guidance, [and] play an important role in healthy development, particularly during adolescence" (Schwartz et. al 2013, 142). Mentoring relationships typically provide youth with outlets "for fun and escape from daily stresses, corrective emotional experiences that may generalize to and improve youths' other social relationships, and assistance with emotion regulation" (Rhodes et. al 2006, 692). Because these relationships offer a "more personal nature…[it] is believed to heighten their potential for positive influence on the youth's socioemotional, cognitive, and identity development" (Spencer 2007, 334). Mentoring is popularly employed as a strategy by youth service providers as a way to increase positive outcomes for at-risk youth. As an estimated 20% of youth do not have a caring adult figure in their lives, the presence of a mentor is seen as a way to mitigate the negative impact of this absence (Cavell et. al 2009, 1).

While this definition and its application maybe largely understood by most in the youth work field, the process of mentoring may be less universally understood. As Spencer points out, there are a multitude of factors that influence the success of a mentoring relationship and simply having a mentor is not enough to result in positive outcomes for the youth. Early match closure, which is defined as a match that ends before the recommended 12-month period, may even cause

negative impacts on the mentee, such as a decline in self-esteem and academic performance (Grossman et. al 2006, 206).

These consequences could be even more exacerbated when working with a more specific or at-risk population such as ACE does who have already experienced large amounts of trauma and conflict. Statistics show that at least 80% of immigrant youth have been separated from parents for either months or years, and make the migration process without their parents (Roffman et. al 2003, 94). For youth who do migrate to the United States with parents, they may still experience what Roffman calls "ambiguous loss". While one or both parents may be physically present, they may suffer from their own trauma related to conflict or migration that renders them emotionally unavailable to their child (Roffman et. al 2003, 95). Many immigrant and refugee youth also acculturate to their new environments faster than their parents, causing tension as children are perceived by their parents to disconnect from their home cultures. These factors make the sustained presence of an adult mentor even more important, as they can help provide supervision and guidance to children already coping with difficult relationships with adults.

### *Qualities of a Successful Mentoring Relationship*

Just like no two people are completely alike, neither are two mentoring relationships. There are many variables that may influence the quality of a match, such as the mentor's and mentee's personalities and attitudes as well as the influence of a site or community-based model on the match's engagement..

One of the most important considerations when pairing a mentor and a mentee together is the presence of common interests. The National Mentoring Partnership, the umbrella organization that develops and supports mentoring partnerships nationwide, includes matching mentors and

mentees together based on similar characteristics, such as shared hobbies, goals, and strengths, as one of their benchmarks for best practice in mentoring (National Mentoring Partnership 2015, 55). Sharing similar interests provides a basis for developing a relationship as the mentor and mentee learn about each other on a more intrinsic level.

The Search Institute has identified eight categories necessary for building healthy, developmental, youth-adult relationships. These categories include: support, empowerment, boundaries, expectations, commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity (Scales et. al 2001, 4). Within these categories, there are many healthy actions adults can help engage children in, such as guided decision making, resource provision, and encouragement for success in school and other forums.

The Search Institute surveyed a representative sample of 1,425 adults in the United States and interviewed a group of 100 adults on what social norms they think are important in developing supportive, non-familial youth-adult relationships. Through this survey, The Search Institute was able to identify a range of actions that the majority of adults found as critical, asset-building actions for youth. Actions included under the umbrella of these eight categories include a range of things, from having meaningful conversations, expecting respect for adults, encouraging success in school, teaching shared values, discussing personal values, teaching respect for cultural differences, guiding decision making, to giving financial guidance.

These categories and actions can be thought of within the framework of relational and instrumental dimensions of mentoring relationships. These two dimensions describe the way mentoring relationships operate, with "relational qualities involv[ing] how the youth and mentor experience or feel about their relationship, whereas instrumental qualities typically involve how the mentor may be helping the young person to pursue goals or personal growth" (Herrera et. al

2013, 26). By thinking of the extent to which these categories and actions are relational or instrumental, one can also examine the degree to which a mentoring relationship is facilitating youth-centered goals and "engaging in purposeful activities together [to] help deepen the relationship and make it more meaningful" (Herrera et. al 2013, 26).

### *Program Support for Mentors*

Programmatic support for mentors has been broadly identified by researchers as a key component to the success of a match. Best practices for youth mentoring defined by The National Mentoring Partnership identify ongoing monitoring and support from mentoring program staff broadly as "support matches through providing ongoing advice, problem-solving, training, and access to resources for the duration" (National Mentoring Partnership 2015, 60). In a study conducted by Big Brothers Big Sisters, the agency found that frequent contact between staff and mentors helped mentors in the early months of their mentoring relationship where they may struggle at first. This contact involved things like agency training, checking in with mentors, or recommending materials and activities to do with their mentee (Morrow et. al 1997, 107).

The importance of programmatic support is also echoed in research where a lack of support contributed to issues within the development of a match's relationship. Spencer found that in some cases a lack of program support leads to negative outcomes for the match and support is necessary "to identify when trouble is brewing and step in to provide assistance" (2007, 350). Another report, posed that "for mentors, the availability and accessibility of program staff, quality of training, and types of program events all may impact mentor's experience as a volunteer, and potentially their overall satisfaction with the mentoring organization" (Suffrin 2014, 12). While there are variations in what programmatic support may look like depending on the different match or program, there are some essential pieces that consistently support mentor's sense of competency.

One of these components is pre-match training. Pre-match training is training that takes place as part of the screening process before a mentor is matched with a mentee. Some topics covered in pre-match trainings may include roles of a mentor, activities to do with your mentee, demographic information about the youth served by the program, and program policies and procedures. While these trainings vary based on program, studies have found that there is a link between the quality of pre-match training and the mentor's perceived sense of efficacy in beginning their match (Herrera et. al 2013, 41). In Morrow's study of Big Brothers Big Sisters, research found that mentors attributed training to helping them resolve problems, understand youth development, and their ability to understand the program model at Big Brothers and their role in implementing it (Morrow et. al 1997, 110). This helps contribute to their overall success as they are able to gain a more critical understanding of what mentoring is and how to engage. Additional topics mentors have reported as a necessity for training and their success is support for how to work with higher-risk youth, a category which African immigrant youth may fall under based on their new levels of exposure to American culture and systems, and how to navigate social service systems (2013, 44).

Ongoing match support throughout the duration of the relationship has also been identified as necessary to the success of a match and the mentor's own competency. Match support is the program staff's engagement in checking in with and providing necessary resources to matches. In a study of seven mentoring programs across the United States, 90% reported contacting a match at least once a month for the first year to check-in and see if any extra support was necessary. Of mentors in these programs, 84% reported check-ins helping support them (Herrera et. al 2013, 44-45). This same study also suggested that programs that require mentors to provide one post-match training, that is a training after they have been paired with a mentee, they may be able to further

strengthen mentor's competency and positive outcomes for the match (Herrera et. al 2013, 45).

Herrera found that of matches receiving pre-match training and support for 70% of months they were matched or more, they typically lasted twelve months or more and reported a higher level of relationship quality than mentors who didn't receive this support (2013, 47). In a 2002 report by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, researchers synthesized the program evaluations of 10 different mentoring programs, and concluded that best practice for all included program support, stating involvement with staff "contributed to mentors rating their relationships as close and supportive; conversely, mentors in the least close and supportive relationships had no training after the match and less than monthly contact with program staff" (Jekielek et. al 2002, 33).

### *Mentoring African Immigrant Youth*

The assets of African immigrant and refugee youth are numerous, however, they also face very specific challenges related to things like discriminatory immigration policies, exclusion by peers, and high levels of poverty. Mentors to immigrant youth have many important roles to fulfill, such as providing information regarding "rules of engagement in the new society" and serving as "a source of emotional support" (Schmidt et. al 2006, 10). The National Mentoring Partnership has identified mentors to this subset of youth as being able to complement other positive adult forces, compensate for parental absence, bridge two cultures, and foster identity development (Rhodes et. al 2006, 3).

One of the actions identified by The Search Institute's studies on quality relationships was "respecting cultural differences", which is part of the broader ability of mentors to demonstrate cultural competency. Cultural competency can be defined as "knowledge and an understanding of external situational factors…as well as the skills to be able to interact with diverse groups in an empathic and culturally sensitive ways" (Suffrin 2014, 17). This is especially important for

mentors working with African immigrant youth due to their extreme differences in backgrounds and life experiences. A high level of cultural competency will enable mentors to respect and encourage the cultural differences their mentee may possess, instead of imposing their own cultural norms and values.

In many programs, including ACE, "most mentoring relationships cross class divides, and many youths of color in mentoring programs are matched with white mentors as these youth would remain on long waiting lists if matches were made solely on the basis of race" (Spencer 2006, 312). While studies show that same race matching may not be a decisive quality in the success of a match, cultural competency does "provide sensitive support, and openness to the nuances of cultural differences are the keys to building a trusting relationship" (Jucovy 2002, 4). Inability to train mentors in cultural competency or to do so on a superficial level, may affect other characteristics of the relationship, outside of just the ability to respect cultural differences. Mentors of different races state the importance of this, also. In a series of interviews with mentors at Big Brothers Big Sisters, Morrow found that many voiced a concern in "understanding their youth's culture and…value as a role model" (Morrow 1997, 93). However, when cultural competency training was present, mentors and mentees alike were able to bridge these differences and build strong relationships.

Therefore, the quality of their mentoring relationship is even more vital to provide necessary support. While there are many gaps in the research regarding what constitutes a high-quality mentoring relationship, it is clear that "a mentor's continuing presence and determination to make the best of circumstances can communicate to the youth that he or she is valued and that the relationship will endure", leading to achievement of goals and the fostering of a healthy relationship (Rhodes et. al 2006, 697).

This literature makes it clear that a strong level of programmatic support is necessary in order to help mentors engage with their mentee. When working with African immigrant and refugee youth, the amount of training, cultural competency development, and opportunities for check in staff may result in a more confident and supportive mentor. The systems and policies put in place by programs to help mentors work with their mentees should directly relate to some, if not all, of the categories identified by The Search Institute. These qualities also feed into the development of cultural competency, as many of them maybe differently applied to African immigrant and refugee students. For instance, the development of positive values and identity will be a different process for an immigrant or refugee student rather than a student who grew up in Worcester their entire life. Mentors need to understand the cultural nuances of this situation in relation to the experiences of their mentee. This well-roundedness can help them appreciate their mentee's strengths on a deeper level and provide them with more targeted guidance. Further, while having a list of general competencies for youth workers is a good guiding principle, it is also something that should be reviewed in the context of each program based on their structure and the youth they serve. This information has a valid application to mentoring if thoughtfully included in program design by the staff.

While there are many internal strengths a mentor may bring into a program and relationship, the sensitivity of building a one-on-one relationship is not to be underscored. The ability of the program to build upon their abilities through trainings, check-ins, and other match support procedures, can help solidify both the relational and instrumental aspects of a relationship.

**Methods**

*Procedure*

The question this research seeks to answer is: "What factors are necessary to increase mentor competency in mentoring programs serving African immigrant and refugee youth?". This question aims to develop stronger policies and procedures that will support mentors as they engage with their mentees, and increase the positive outcomes of those involved in the program. For this paper, the unit of analysis will be the mentors currently volunteering with ACE as well as ACE MEE program staff. Variables will include the mentor's previous youth work or mentoring experience and the length of their ACE MEE match, as both of these factors may affect their level of engagement. The research methodology will follow a deductive framework, first analyzing general structure and components of mentoring programs as detailed in the literature review, and then applying that information to the context of ACE MEE. This will require a thorough search and review of secondary sources including but not limited to academic literature regarding mentoring in general and mentoring African immigrant and refugee youth, best practices regarding mentoring African immigrant and refugee youth, and quantitative data regarding the status of African immigrants in Worcester, Massachusetts. This data helped to inform the framing of the research question and support the hypothesis. This research was applied to the organizational context of ACE and current status of the ACE MEE program.

I gathered primary data by holding 5 one-on-one interviews with ACE MEE staff and mentors to gain their insights and perspectives regarding their experiences in the program and inquire about what changes they would like to see in the program. Overall, four mentors were

interviewed. Mentors were chosen if they had spent over 6 months with their mentee, so that they had enough time within the program to develop a strong sense of how it operated and their own personal role. One staff was interviewed also to gain her perspective of the policies and procedures ACE currently has in place and what ideas she has for the program moving forward. This information is supplemented with my own participant observation from working as the Ambassador of Mentoring at ACE, while have been recording in daily journal entries. These observations are in regards to interactions with mentors and mentees, ACE staff, and other relevant situations regarding the program structure of ACE MEE.

Other primary data has come from program data related to matches collected over the years, such as attendance rates or match closure rate. These data were used to support claims made by mentors or staff in their interviews or my personal observations, giving me a representative sample of the parties involved in ACE MEE and therefore reflect the needs from a higher vantage point.

*Analysis*

Once collected, all qualitative data was transcribed line by line and coded thematically under one of the following categories:

- Cultural Competency
- Training
- General Program Support
- Personal experiences/strengths
- Connection to organization
- Motivation
- Other.

These categories were chosen based on a combination of literature themes, hypothesized factors, and themes that mentors and staff reiterated in their interviews.

All interviewees were assigned a code as either "Mentor" Or "Staff" followed by the number order in which they interviewed. This allowed me to easily identify recurring themes in

interviews addressed by the mentors and staff, which either supported or strayed from my hypothesis. For example, the first mentor I interviewed will be referred to in the findings as Mentor 1. The interview data was merged with my observation data and program data to see what themes and issues overlapped.

## *Limitations*

Limitations in this approach include the personal nature of the topic. Some of the questions I ask in interviews may require a high level of self-reflection and awareness from the mentor that they must be comfortable confiding in me. Their comfortability in answering is largely dependent on the relationships I have been able to build with them thus far in my role as AOM.

I also only interviewed four mentors, which constitutes roughly 33% of our mentor enrollment, but is generally a very small sample of mentors because ACE MEE is a relatively new and tiny program. While I approached other mentors for interviews, some declined due to scheduling conflicts. These four mentors also all identified as female, skewing gender representation in these conversations. Unfortunately, we only currently have one male mentor in the program and he has only been with his mentee for three months. Further, every mentor I interviewed has been involved in ACE in varying capacities outside of their mentoring relationship, and therefore may have a stronger ability to support themselves than a person new to the organization does. These factors may limit the variety of perspectives included in the paper and should be kept in mind.

Lastly, as I was unable to interview mentees, I am missing their perspective as to what a supportive mentor looks like from their experience. This information would be extremely valuable, but due to a difficulty in language barriers in obtaining parental consent for minors, I was unable to interview them for this research.

| Mentor Number | Match Length |
|---|---|
| 1 | 1 year |
| 2 | 2 years |
| 3 | 6 months |
| 4 | 6 months |
| | |

| Staff Number | Employment Capacity |
|---|---|
| 1 | Mentoring Coordinator, 4 years |

(All interviewees will be referred to by either "Mentor" or Staff" and their corresponding number.)

**Findings**

*Themes*

Regarding mentors' and staffs' experiences in and perceptions of the program and levels of support, a variety of themes emerged. These themes included: the importance of training perceived by staff and mentors, creating a mutualistic relationship between the mentor and mentee, developing a strong sense of cultural competency in mentors, and linkages between attendance and program support.

*Fostering a mutualistic relationship*

All four mentors were asked a question regarding what three qualities they believed were most essential to being an effective mentor to gauge their own intrinsic definitions of a competent mentor. Their answers were all very similar. Three said open-minded, three said honest or willing to share, and all four said reliable, available, or consistent. From a staff perspective, these qualities were largely the same. Staff 1 explicitly mentioned open-mindedness, openness to change, and patience. All provided qualities that suggested a mentor is as much there to learn as to teach, therefore fostering a mutualistic relationship rather than an authoritarian one.

23

Mentor 2 described open-mindedness in relation to mentoring as "being willing to learn and spread your horizons and be open to different stances that differ from your own". Mentor 1 cited open-mindedness as a way to not only help the mentee grow, but also as a method for developing their own relationship building skills, especially in relation to working with African immigrant and refugee youth, as it helps you understand your mentee's "experiences and lifestyle".

Honesty was also brought up as a relationship building skill and quality of an effective mentor. Mentor 2 discussed honesty from the standpoint that it was a tool for truly creating authentic change in her mentee's life. Mentors 1 and 4 echoed this sentiment, with Mentor 1 again relating the need for honesty back to the background of ACE students, saying:

*"Obviously me and my mentee come from different upbringing and just being honest, [about] how I was raised, [and] the opportunities I had. That's the best way to form a bond. You're different but being honest about those differences gets you to your most cohesive parts in a relationship."*

The last overlap in their answers about qualities contributing to being an effective mentor was about consistency and reliability, with all four mentors including this in their answers. Their definitions of what consistency constituted varied slightly, but generally meant that the mentor was constant in their attendance to weekly match meetings, engaged in sessions when they were present, and made themselves available outside of their match meetings to a degree, in terms of phone calls or e-mail. Mentor 3 discussed consistency as a way to prove your commitment to the relationship, discussing her perception of what it may mean to a mentee:

*"Especially with these kids, they haven't had consistency, with how they live and how they learned. So they haven't had either reliable people in their lives or consistency in a*

*large part of their lives. Knowing you'll be there. At some point, they can learn to trust*

*you better."*

Mentor 2 referenced a specific experience with her mentee early in their relationship regarding communication issues. At a scheduled meeting, her mentee told her he had encountered a problem outside of their meeting time but didn't want to bring it up to her when it occurred because he "didn't feel like [he] could call [her] because [she] was busy". This represents the way communication affects the development of a relationship and ability to engage. Mentor 4 and Staff 1 also both discussed the need for these qualities to come from within the mentor. Both mentioned that these qualities can be fostered in training to a degree, but also need to come naturally to mentors.

### *Differing importance of trainings to staff versus mentors*

As discussed in the literature review, training is an essential component to mentors' ability to engage with their mentee, especially when working with such an at-risk and specific population as African immigrants and refugees. When asked about their experience with pre-match training, interviewees had a range of answers that in general varied widely from the perception offered by the staff interview. According to post-training evaluations completed by mentors, most find the orientation useful but would like in-depth coverage on very mentoring specific issues, like the different stages of a mentoring relationship.

In general, the mentors acknowledged the importance of having some type of pre-match training but suggested that it's hard to train somebody in how to foster a one-one-one relationship with another person. Mentor 1 described her experience with the pre-match training as follows:

*Mentor training is hard, I know it's evolved, but it's a vague training. How can you train on a one on one relationship? You can give them the knowledge and the tools, and the resources, but, really, it's like this one on one relationship you have to figure it out on your own. For me, I learned how to communicate…but I had to figure out ways to talk to her. She's a middle school girl, she's still working on social skills, figuring out what she can be honest about or insecure talking about or feels safe talking about. There wasn't anything missing but that piece you can't add into a training. You have to navigate yourself.*

Mentor 2 echoed these sentiments, suggesting that while the training did offer her some important pieces of information, her competency as a mentor has largely been based on the development of her relationship with her mentee and her ability to know the best forms of communication and engagement for him as an individual.

Further calling the effectiveness of the training structure into question were responses from Mentor 3 and Mentor 4 where they posed that they had never been trained and rather were just offered a position as a mentor due to their prior involvement with ACE. Both participated in ACE's general volunteer training, but that lacks any information specific to mentorship. When asked about what support could be valuable for mentors, Mentor 4 mentioned receiving a booklet or training manual. When mentors participate in training, they do receive a training manual, but Mentor 4 did not as they were not a part of that training.

In the interview with Staff 1, the interviewee placed a much larger emphasis on the role pre-match training plays in developing mentor competency. She says that the presence of that orientation to the program can "really accent that mentors can definitely play a better role and figuring out a better way to guide [their mentee]". Staff 1 also expressed a desire to have MEE

program staff spend more time developing and evaluating the pre-match training, as well as developing new post-match trainings to implement for mentors.

### *Developing cultural competency*

Every interviewee acknowledged the importance of developing a strong sense of cultural competency as an ACE mentor. Staff 1 said that cultural competency is explicitly included in the pre-match training for mentors because it's necessary for working with this population of students. The four mentors described how this piece of the relationship is developed in part through training and also through getting to know their mentee as the relationship progresses. For instance, Mentor 2 and Mentor 4 both said they felt their cultural competency was a product of hearing their mentee talk about their experiences and personal stories. Mentor 4 said the chance to listen to her mentee discuss their life like this "gave [her] a more holistic perspective on the world". Mentor 3's discussion echoes this point, saying:

> \My cultural competency] came from my mentee, not the program itself. I went to events and enjoyed hearing the children's stories and drumming and eating the food. That's surface level, though. In my relationship, he talks about his experiences and I internalized the things he talks about and it makes me more culturally competent.

When asked how the program specifically has helped them to build their cultural competency, Mentor 3 mentioned different reading and resources she had been given pertaining to her mentee's religion, which she has learned is a large part of how her mentee identifies:

> Being here at ACE anyways always helps me read more and learn more about Africa and different nations and different ethnic groups. [I've learned more] in terms of affiliations with Islam which she identifies with. More about her culture.

27

She said this helps her discuss elements of Islam with her mentee and is something her mentee is now more comfortable opening up about. However, she also mentioned that she specifically asked for these resources when she felt like she needed them and observed this wasn't information given to all mentors. Mentor 4 also recommended that the program could build cultural competency by having mentors explore more African organizations and businesses in the Worcester community, like eating at some of the different restaurants or trying drumming at Crocodile River Music, a local African music non-profit.

### *"I missed my meeting, I feel like shit": Meeting consistency and match quality*

Mentors were asked to reflect on if they had experienced specific instances where they felt supported by program staff and if so, to describe those experiences. Mentor 1, Mentor 2, and Mentor 3 all discussed concerns they had related to meeting consistency with their mentee and how program staff is a crucial part of supporting them in making sure regular meetings were occurring. Since August 2015, weekly meeting attendance for all matches was highest in December with 66% and lowest in August when school was starting and many mentors and mentees alike were returning to their normal schedules after a summer break. In my role, I have observed feelings of frustration from both mentors and mentees if they show up to a scheduled meeting and the other doesn't.

Mentor 1 described how she had a hectic schedule and this caused her to miss some of their scheduled meetings and how this sometimes made her feel like a "bad mentor" and she felt unsure of how to explain to her mentee why she wasn't there. Mentor 3 was concerned that her mentee was missing too many meetings and it was affecting the quality of their relationship. Mentor 2 acknowledged that both she and her mentee have been at fault for missing meetings, especially early in their relationship because neither had developed a sense of accountability

28

towards each other yet, stating that missing a meeting made her "feel like shit". All three mentors said this is an area where support from program staff is necessary.

**<u>Recommendations</u>**

From listening to the mentors' candid discussions about their relationships and experiences in the program, it is clear that there are many complexities involved in building a mentoring relationship, and therefore the program support provided also will be complex. While different matches may have different needs based on their individual attitudes, personalities, and experiences, I have identified four areas of focus for ACE MEE to develop stronger support for their mentors, build their levels of competency, and lead them to a more positive, productive relationship. This research gave mentors a chance to discuss their perspectives of the program, and while I had my own hunches about what they would say, their responses went to very deep levels and touched on some important experiences I hadn't originally had in mind as being important to their competency. Without their input, my research would have not been as well-rounded and therefore, unable to recommend the most important program changes.

From my experience in the role of AOM, I had initially hypothesized that the factors necessary to help build mentor competency were: adequate opportunity for pre-match and post-match trainings, ability to develop a strong sense of cultural competency, and consistent check in sessions throughout the duration of the match. Training and cultural competency were both identified by mentors and staff as areas of potential focus, but, check in sessions were never explicitly mentioned. One area that was added was the importance of consistent attendance. Another finding that was brought up in every interview was the importance of the fostering a mutual, rather than authoritative, relationship. Based on these findings, as well as my observation and recommendations from expert literature, I have identified the following four areas of

recommendation for ACE MEE: Creating consistency in and expanding training opportunities, involving more cultural competency development in program structures, supporting matches in meeting their attendance requirements, and further research with ACE MEE mentees.

1. _**Consistency in and expansion of training opportunities**_

Training for mentors was revealed to be perceived differently by staff and mentors. Mentor 1 and 2 both could acknowledge that training is an important thing to participate in in theory, but were wary of how effective it actually was. Mentor 3 and Mentor 4 revealed they had never been trained at all. This illustrates a gap between the development and implementation of the pre-match training.

However, there were some concrete examples brought up where training seemed to have positively affected a mentor's ability to engage with and understand their mentee. For example, some of the training survey data mentioned that the training pieces on stages of a mentoring relationship helped to form their understanding of the relationship development process. This is consistent with the literature regarding pre-match training that found an effective training may help build a mentor's efficacy (Herrera 2013). These trainings can also be an opportunity for program staff to educate mentors more on the backgrounds of ACE students, expanding on their ability to help mentees navigate their new environments, as Rhodes discussed (Rhodes et. al 2006, 3).

Therefore, I recommend that ACE MEE develops their implementation of their current pre-match training and also creates frameworks for additional trainings to hold throughout the year for mentors. Currently, pre-match training aligns itself as closely as possible with the National Mentoring Partnership's 3rd edition of the Elements of Effective Practices. However, this best

practice guide was updated in late 2015 to a 4<sup>th</sup> edition and the training should be updated along with these changes in best practice.

Based on the mentors' repeated discussions of the importance of learning how to be a mentor directly from their experiences with their mentee, it is also important that the pre-match training fosters an honest discussion of relational and instrumental frameworks (Herrera et. al 2013). As Mentor 1 discussed in her interview, it would be impossible for one pre-match training session to teach a prospective mentor everything they need to know as they start their role as a mentor. One method from implementing this discussion may be to have a current mentor present at the training to discuss the different things they have worked on with their mentee, like goal setting, and how relational and instrumental approaches have influenced thee interactions. The inclusion of a current MEE mentor maybe able to help bridge the gap between training and practice, as it grounds the discussion more in experience than theory.

Herrera also posed that post-matched trainings may help develop a mentor's competency. If ACE MEE made post-match trainings available to mentors, it would give them opportunities to discuss their experiences and learn from other mentors as well as delve deeper into some of the topics from their initial pre-match training. I recommend that ACE MEE begins to develop a yearly training schedule for mentors based on their available time and resources, with input from mentors about what topics they would like to learn more about. This would give space for them to keep strengthening their sense of competency and ability to engage.

2. *Involving more cultural competency development measures*

Mentors echoed themes from the literature on mentoring African immigrant youth in terms of the importance of cultural competency in being able to support the growth of their mentee. As Spencer points out, cultural differences often contribute to "a feeling of dissimilarity between a

mentors and [mentees]", which can create a struggle when forming a relationship (Spencer 2007, 333). Currently, ACE MEE's pre-match training does include a section on cultural competency where cultural competency is defined and discussed in the context of ACE and mentors participate in an interactive activity to help understand their own experiences with cultural competency. However, since cultural competency is so crucial to the mentors' larger sense of competency, I recommend that ACE MEE tries to interweave it into more parts of their program. Three ways to do this include the creation of mentee-specific cultural competency packets, hosting cultural match activities, and distributing a cultural competency self-evaluation to mentors.

Mentor 3 discussed that one way she has helped to develop her ability to connect with her mentee across their cultural divides is by reading about Islam, her mentee's religion, and immersing herself in the larger African community in Worcester. This was a product of her own proactivity and there aren't currently any resources mentors receive to help them do this, necessarily. In line with the Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring, it is strongly suggested that "program staff member prepares mentor for the initial meeting after the match determination has been made" (MENTOR 2015, 55). ACE MEE program staff should develop match packets to give to mentors when they are initially matched that would help inform them of the cultural context their mentee is coming from. These could be edited for the individual mentor and mentee pair, and include information on country of origin, family background, religion, years in the country, and other information the mentor may not otherwise know.

ACE MEE can also try to make sure more of their monthly match activities help develop cultural competency by focusing them on specific and various parts of African cultures, like dance, art, or food. While some of this may only introduce the surface level aspects of culture

that Mentor 2 discussed when asked about her sense of cultural competency, it can also give matches a basis for finding common ground and starting larger discussions together.

Lastly, so that the program can understand how they helped mentors develop cultural competency, they should research and implement a cultural competency evaluation tool for mentors to take at the closure of their match. Not only will this help mentors to reflect on their experience in the program, it will also help ACE MEE make changes as necessary as they receive feedback and gauge what methods have and have not been effective for supporting cultural competency.

3. ***Focus on attendance***

From the interviews also arose a concern around meeting consistency and its adverse effect on a mentor's ability to support their mentee. While I hadn't mentioned this element as necessary to building mentor competency in the literature review or hypothesized factors that developed from my research question, three of the four mentors mentioned how important they find this and how linked it is to the support the program staff offers. In Spencer's research on the experience of mentors, she finds that the quality of the relationship is impacted by the frequency of contact between the match (Spencer 2007, 332).

As exhibited by low attendance rate data from the MEE program, this is a constant struggle for us. In line with the Elements of Effective Practice, we ask the mentor and mentee to commit to meeting once a week for an hour and a half. As program staff, I have noticed that when this doesn't happen, it wears on both the mentee and mentor in similar ways. As mentioned in findings, many times one party will show up for their scheduled match meeting, while the other won't. This lack of communication and feeling of wasted time leads to frustration towards program staff and feelings of apathy towards their participation in the program.

To address this issue, program staff at ACE MEE should make sure there is a set plan in place for when meetings are missed. For instance, if a mentee misses a certain number of meetings in a row or in a period of time, will the program staff at ACE MEE should make sure there is a set plan in place for when meetings are missed. For instance, if a mentee misses a certain number of meetings in a row or in a period of time, will they be suspended or let go from the program? When meetings are missed, program staff should work with Outreach workers at ACE to make sure families are being called and notified immediately that their child was not present for their scheduled meeting. It may also be useful to institute an excused absence policy so that mentees, and mentors, can be more proactive about telling program staff when and why they will miss a meeting, which will excuse them from being punished for missing a meeting if they have a valid reason. This policy can also be extended to mentors to ensure their consistent participation.

On the flip side of this, consistent attendance should be recognized and awarded. Ways to do this may include monthly awards for the match with best attendance, handwritten thank you cards to matches who increase their attendance, and recognition in publications like the monthly ACE newsletter. The most important part to making sure this occurs is that the policy and procedure for attendance is written out explicitly in the MEE policy and procedure handbook so all program staff can follow the same protocol.

ACE MEE may also want to begin research on the different benefits of site-based and community-based mentoring. Currently, ACE MEE doesn't not feel equipped to absorb the risk associated with matches meeting off-site. However, thorough research into this topic may discover that the benefits outweigh the risks. If mentors and mentees are able to meet in a variety

of places and have access to a wider variety of activities that community-based mentoring can offer, it may have a positive effect on attendance and therefore match quality.

### 4. *Further Research*

As mentioned in limitations, no ACE MEE mentees were interviewed for this research, largely due to inability to obtain informed consent from parents due to language barriers. However, including mentee perspectives on their experiences with their mentors to further examine what qualities define a competent mentor and what suggestions they may have for developing mentor competency. This maybe best done by holding a mentee focus group with an interested group of mentees, so they can share experiences with each other and engage with their peers in a dialogue on this topic, removing some of the potential intimidation in a one-on-one interview. Before implementing the above recommendations, completion of this research may help to create a fuller picture.

## Conclusion

When thoughtfully structured, the support a program offers to their mentors can prove to be invaluable. From my interviews, it is clear that while there is no one-size-fits all solution, mentors' do appreciate and require this sense of support to develop their competencies. The findings revealed that mentors' main concerns for being able to be an effective mentor revolve around growth in cultural competency, the usefulness of training opportunities offered, and frequency of their match meetings. While these findings stray from what I had originally hypothesized from my observations as AOM, they are consistent with the existing literature available on mentoring and supporting mentors. In terms of ACE MEE, this research may provide a valuable opportunity for staff to use this evidence, both from literature and their participants, to start creating more comprehensive structures that fit the needs both of themselves as program staff and mentors.

# APPENDIX

## Appendix A: Researcher Qualifications

I entered this position with approximately five years of experience in youth work, mainly in Worcester working with pre-teen age girls.

However, I also spent a semester coordinating a Girl's Club in Namibia at a local high school for a national non-profit called Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWENA). This experience in particular helped me to build my level of cultural competency when working with youth, but also led me to question my role as a white, American female youth worker in a Namibian school-based program. During my time in the Girl's Club, it became clearer that the way I interacted was largely shaped by my identity as a foreign student. As I reflected on the experience, it seemed to me that one possible way to mitigate this would be by strengthening the training in place for youth workers coming into the program so they could be better suited to work with the girls. Since my time in the program and country were temporary though, these weren't changes I could make.

Two years later, this position opened at ACE and I was extremely excited to work with another group of African students, and felt more equipped to do so in a city I understood on a deeper level and had more personal experiences in. My role as AOM has taken me out of the role of youth worker and into a role that allows me the authority to implement programmatic changes I didn't have the capacity to in previous organizations, like FAWENA. While there are some differences between a mentor's responsibilities and any other youth worker, the similarities in how they engage and support the child remain. As I observe and work in the program, it has only strengthened the beliefs I formed in Namibia that training is an essential part of strengthening our ability as youth workers and mentors to support the students, and as I settled into my role at ACE, began to identify areas for growth.

## **Appendix B: Mentor Training Outline**

- Welcome
- Organization Overview
  - About ACE
    - Mission and vision
    - Youth we serve
    - About student identity
- Program Overview
  - History of the mentoring program
  - Program goals
  - Program expectations
- Understanding Mentoring
  - Roles of a mentor
  - Expectations versus reality
  - Scenario activity
  - Positive youth development
  - Cultural competency discussion/activity
- Understanding Youth
  - Physiological development
  - Youth culture
  - Understanding trauma
- Stages of Relationship
  - Stages and what to expect
- Boundaries and Communication
  - Policy
- Transportation
  - Policy
- Activities
  - Recommendations, etc.
- Questions
- Next Steps

**REPORT ON ACTION OF
COMMITTEE ON RIGHTS OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN
RESEARCH AND TRAINING PROGRAMS**

**Investigator:**     **Kelsey Renner**
**Advisor:**          **Laurie Ross**
**Department:**       **IDCE**
**Project Title:**    **Supporting mentor competency at African community education**

This is to certify that the project identified above has been reviewed by the Committee appointed to review proposed research, training and related activities involving human subjects, which has considered specifically:
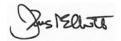
1.  the adequacy of protection of the rights and welfare of the subject involved;
2.  the risks and potential benefits to the subject of importance of the knowledge to be gained; and
3.  the adequacy and appropriateness of the methods used to secure informed consent.

Action date:        11/30/2015

The collective judgment of the Committee is that:
(x)        the study is **APPROVED** (Research **may** begin.)

Signature

*Chair, Human Subjects Committee*

# APPROVAL EXPIRATION DATE:   11/30/2016

*To renew this approval for an ongoing study to extend it beyond the expiration date, federal regulations require completion of a Continuing Review form indicating it is your project's "Annual Report". This form and an unstamped copy of the consent form should be submitted to humansubjects@clarku.edu **two weeks before** the expiration date above for IRB review and approval. The Continuing Review form is available at http://www.clarku.edu/offices/research/compliance/humsubj/index.cfm .*
***Please note if the Continuing Review form is not submitted for renewal of your IRB approval, the approval will lapse and under federal regulations no further work under that protocol may occur after the expiration date.***

**INVESTIGATOR RESPONSIBILITIES for all APPROVED research projects:**
1.  The Clark IRB requires that informed consent documents given to subjects participating in non-exempt research bear the approval stamp of the Clark IRB. The **stamped consent form document** is the only consent form that may be photocopied for distribution to study participants.
2.  Investigators must keep consent forms on file for the **three years** following the date of IRB approval. Faculty advisors are also obliged to keep, for three years, consent forms received from research projects undertaken by students.
3.  The investigator(s) must notify the IRB chair **immediately** of unanticipated problems that affect subject welfare.
4.  Any changes to this protocol must be submitted to the IRB for review **prior to being implemented.**
5.  Federal regulations require **continuing review** of all approved protocols. The Office of Sponsored Programs and Research (OSPR) will send the investigator(s) a Continuing Review form, which is due by or before the expiration date above. In order to ensure our continued compliance, we ask for your assistance by filling out this brief form and returning it to OSPR within **two weeks of receipt**. Indicate "Annual" if the study is ongoing or "Final" if the research has been completed. (Form is available at http://www.clarku.edu/offices/research/compliance/humsubj/index.cfm )

Clark University FWA 00000262

# Works Cited

Canadian Council for Refugees. *Talking about Refugees and Immigrants: A Glossary of Terms.*
    (1-2).

Cavell, T., DuBois, D., Karcher, M., Keller, T., Rhodes, J. (2009). *Strengthening Mentoring*
    *Opportunities for At-Risk Youth.* (1-4).

Grossman, J.B., Rhodes, J.E. (2002). The Test of Time: Predictors and Effects of Duration in
    Youth Mentoring. *American Journal of Community Psychology 30.2*. (199-219).

Herrera, C., DuBois, D. L., Baldwin Grossman, J. (2013). *The Role of Risk: Mentoring*
    *Experiences and Outcomes for Youth with Varying Risk Profiles.* Bill and Melinda Gates
    Foundation: (1-125).

Jekielek, S., Moore, K.A., Ph.D., Hair, E., Ph.D. (2002). *Mentoring Programs and Youth*
    *Development: A Synthesis.* Child Trends: (1-94).

Jucovy, L. (2002). *Same Race and Cross Race Matching.* Northwest Regional Educational
    Laboratory: (1-31).

Morrow, K.V., Styles, M.B. (1995). *Building Relationships with Youth in Program Settings: A*
    *Study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters.* (1-289).

Public Policy Center at Univeristy of Massachusetts Dartmouth, University of Massachusetts
    Donahue Institue. (2015). *The Foreign Born Population of Worcester, Massachusetts:*
    *Assessing the Challenges and Contributions of a Diverse Community.* Seven Hills
    Foundation. (1-59).

Rhodes, J.E., Spencer, R., Keller, T.E., Liang, B., Noam, G. (2006). A Model For The Influence
    of Mentoring Relationships on Youth Development. *Journal of Community Psychology 34.6*
    (691-707).

Spencer, R. (2006). Understanding the Mentoring Process Between Adolescents and Adults. *Youth*
    *and Society 37*. (287-313).

Spencer, R. (2007). "It's Not What I Expected": A Qualitative Study of Youth Mentoring

Relationship Failures. *Journal of Adolescent Research 22.4.* (331-354).

Schmidt, S., Morland, L., Rose, J. (2006). *Growing Up In a New Country: A Positive Youth Development Toolkit for Working with Refugees and Immigrants.* Bridging Refugee Youth and Children's Services. (1-53).

Suffrin, R. L. (2014). *The Role of Multicultural Competence, Privilege, Attributions, and Team Support in Predicting Positive Youth Mentor Outcomes.* DePaul University: (1-162).

The National Mentoring Partnership. (2009). *Mentoring Immigrant and Refugee Youth: A Toolkit for Program Coordinators.* (5-71).

The National Mentoring Partnership. (2015).*Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring.* Fourth Edition. (1-86).