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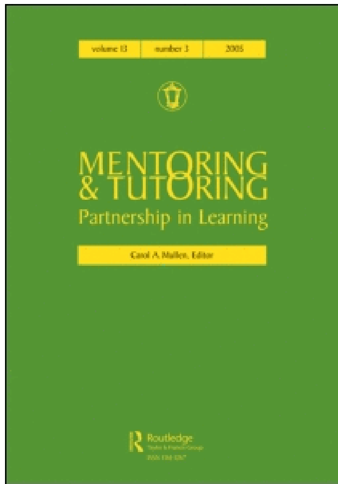

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Juggling the roles of parents, therapists, friends and teachers - a working model for an integrative conception of mentoring

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Juggling the roles of parents, therapists, friends and teachers – a working model for an integrative conception of mentoring

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Mentoring programs for youth have become increasingly popular interventions and are generally effective in promoting protégés' wellbeing and functioning. Building on recent efforts to understand the interpersonal mechanisms underlying mentoring relationships, the authors apply central concepts from attachment, social support and social learning theories and systematically compare the mentor's role with the roles of other caregivers (parent, therapist, friend, teacher). The authors highlight similarities and differences between mentoring and these roles, and discuss interpersonal dynamics specific to each relationship that can be enacted in mentoring. It is argued that the uniqueness of mentoring rests on mentors' ability flexibly to transverse these different roles to some degree, without embodying any. Consequently, the authors underscore the existence of different profiles of mentoring relationships and suggest that these might address diverse protégés' needs. This view serves to articulate specific recommendations for research and practice in light of protégé heterogeneity.

Keywords: mentoring relationship; social roles; protégés' heterogeneity; social support; attachment; role modeling

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Mentoring is commonly defined as a special dyadic relationship between non-professional, non-parental adults and their protégés. In this context, the aim of mentoring is to empower the youngsters' self and promote their personal and professional development (Freedman, 1993; Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & Mckee, 1978; McPartland & Nettles, 1991; Rhodes, Bogat, Roffman, Edelman, & Galasso, 2002). Youth who form close informal relationships with adult figures (e.g. coach, family, friend, neighbor) or professionals outside the family (e.g. teacher, doctor, therapist) demonstrate a variety of positive outcomes in such areas as completing high school, practicing physical activity and regularly using birth control (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005). This kind of relationship is naturally embedded in the young person's social web and it seems to fulfill a special role between parents and friends (Cavell, Meehan, Heffer, & Holladay, 2002; Klaw & Rhodes, 1995).

Because natural mentors are not always part of the social network of young children, organized mentoring programs were suggested and implemented to fill this gap, and interventions that match youth with organized mentors have become increasingly common in recent years (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). This kind of intervention involves volunteers or part-time paid adults who are paired with the protégés for a relatively short period of time and expresses the establishment's efforts to offer the youth a resource for development and social integration, which they otherwise lack in their natural social network (Gilligan, 1999;

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McPartland & Nettles, 1991; Mech, Pryde, & Rycraft, 1995). Studies examining organized programs of youth mentoring generally found that they provide an effective yet modest way to promote protégés' development in a range of emotional, behavioral, social and academic outcomes (see recent meta-analysis of 55 studies; DuBois, Holloway, Valentine & Cooper, 2002).

The quality of mentoring relationships has been suggested as the main vehicle that helps to promote youngster adjustment (Langhout, Rhodes, & Osborne, 2004; Parra, DuBois, Nevielle, Pugh-Lilly, & Povinelli, 2002; Rhodes, Reddy, Roffman, & Grossman, 2005). Consequently several scholars have sought to understand the interpersonal processes in the mentoring relationship through an analogy between the mentor's role and that of other caring figures. Cavell et al. (2002) and Gilligan (1999) pointed out that mentors occupy a unique place between that of a family member and that of a professional caregiver. Rhodes (1994) stated that mentors synthesize characteristics of a parent-child relationship and peer support, without being either parent or peer. DeJong (2004) studied the use of metaphors by protégés and mentors to learn about the mentoring process and found metaphors that liken mentors to friends and parents. Some protégés described their mentors as an 'older friend' or depicted themselves as their mentors' biological children. Keller (2005a) and Sipe (2005) showed that different mentoring programs emphasize different roles such as those of parent, friend or coach. Spencer and Rhodes (2005) addressed the implications of therapy for mentoring.

Building upon this work the authors offer an integrative and systematic discussion of the analogies between mentoring and other social roles such as parent, therapist, teacher and friend. As part of this discussion, the authors highlight the similarities and differences between mentoring and each of these roles, and underscore various interpersonal dynamics specific to each of these different relationships that can be modeled in mentoring. The authors argue that the mentor's role is not identical to that of parent, teacher, therapist or friend, but enables the mentor to adopt several elements from each. Mentoring is thus characterized by the flexibility to move among the various roles without embodying any. The authors also maintain that this flexibility enables the existence of different profiles of mentoring relationships that might specifically be geared to address diverse protégés' needs. The authors suggest that understanding the mentor's flexibility and the possibility of different mentoring profiles could be beneficial in more accurately formulating what can be expected from mentors in their work when different protégé needs require different types of support. This sort of formulation can assist program designers in constructing mentoring programs as well as in guiding and training mentors in their work.

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Mentoring and other types of relationships or roles

Parenting and mentoring

The mentor-protégé relationship is analogous to parent-child dynamics in many respects (Rhodes, Spencer, Keller, Liang, & Noam, 2006). Firstly, the dyadic structure of the mentoring relationship and the age difference between mentor and protégé suggest the parenting analogy. Ainsworth (1989), in her article on the development of emotional bonds beyond infancy, mentions the mentor as an attachment figure, other than parents, that children might adopt, and to whom they can relate in manner and function as to a parent. The mentor provides the child with an additional secure attachment relationship, specifically the experience of a secure base.

Secondly, a similar emotion that motivates individuals to assume responsibility for and undertake the care of others (Bell & Richard, 2002) is shown by both parents and mentors.

Both relationships have qualities of warmth, caring, support and trust (Hamilton & Darling, 1989; Rhodes et al., 2006). Care-giving and caring behaviors characterize both mentoring and parenting relationships alike. Using this analogy, Gilligan (1999) suggests that a caring mentoring relationship contains four types of parents' caring behavior: maintenance (meeting the child's development needs), protection (promoting the child's rights and protecting him or her from negative influences), compensating (offsetting deficits of inadequate parenthood), and preparation (teaching techniques and knowledge).

Thirdly, both kinds of relationship address protégés' developmental trajectory. Like parents, who are responsible for their children's development and progress, mentors are expected to promote a developmental change in their protégés, such as their acquisition of knowledge and values, learning skills, developing a sense of self-esteem and competence, examining alternative identities or growing into autonomous and caring adults (Hirsch, Mickus, & Boerger, 2002; LoSciuto, Rajala, Townsed, & Taylor, 1996). Freedman (1993) coined the term 'generativity' to express the mentor's desire and responsibility to pass on knowledge, values and culture to the younger generation.

In light of this similarity, numerous writers have suggested different psychological functions and practices usually characteristic of parents that can be implemented in mentoring. Levinson et al. (1978) compared mentors to Winnicott's (1971) transitional object and mentoring to 'good enough parenthood'. Specifically, mentors, like parents, offer a transitional space that can facilitate protégés' development in a relatively good 'holding environment'. In good enough mentoring the protégés should feel admiration, respect, appreciation, gratitude and love from the mentor (Levinson et al., 1978).

Others referred to the process of mirroring in mentoring (e.g. Hamilton and Darling, 1989). Although these authors do not directly liken mentoring to parenting, they suggest that one of the main transformational forces in mentoring occurs when protégés feel that their mentors see them as they really are, and grant them recognition. An experience of this nature expresses the mentor's faith in the protégé's ability to advance. The writers argue that this is a crucial experience for the protégé to feel trustworthy and to set the stage for change and development (Darling, Hamilton & Niego, 1994; Rhodes et al., 2006).

Mentors, like parents, serve as role models, either good and successful or negative. Protégés and children alike look up to their mentor or parent as someone whose actions and conduct they emulate, and whose status they wish to attain (Keller, 2005a; Rhodes et al., 2006; Yancey, 1998). Mentors can inspire protégés to do their best and motivate them to follow in their footsteps (Barron-McKeagney, Woody, & D'Souza 2001; Hamilton & Hamilton, 1992; Rhodes et al., 2006). The processes of idealization and identification operate in the parent-child relationship, just as they potentially operate in the mentor-protégé relationship. By both observing and imitating, protégés are able to internalize their mentors' more adequate attitudes and rules of behavior (Zagumny, 1993).

However, the correspondence between mentors and parents is not straightforward. Contrary to mentoring, the bond between parent and child is primary and intense, involving two biological behavioral systems (attachment and care-giving) that are based on deep emotional bonds, internal representations and very early connection (Bowlby, 1969; 1973). Mentoring rests mostly on the kindness of strangers (Freedman, 1993) and does not necessarily develop into an enduring attachment relationship. It focuses on limited objectives, is of shorter duration and is anchored to a contract that is limited in scope. The age difference between mentors and protégés is usually less than that between parents and children. Levinson et al. (1978) warn against too wide an age gap in mentoring, which might reproduce a parent-child relationship. The hierarchical structure is vaguer in mentoring than in parenting. Mentors are responsible for their protégés' emotional, social

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and academic development, but their practice includes aspects of friendship and their responsibility is not as encompassing as that of parents, as well as being limited in scope and objectives. This entire set of qualities may prevent children from developing an attachment relationship with mentors.

The uniqueness of a mentor-protégé relationship, when it reflects qualities of parenting, is manifested in the ability to balance the similarities and differences between the roles. The similar dyadic structure and the age difference encourage the protégé to seek closeness and warmth with the mentor as an adult figure, as well as a secure base in this relationship, while the differences help to minimize the complications that may arise from projections based on the typical parent-child relationship. As relationships with non-parental adults are typically less psychologically complex than the parent-child relationship, and the psychological distance between mentors and protégés is greater than that between parents and children, protégés can view their mentors with less emotional engagement rather than simply a reproduction of other authority figures (Hirsch et al., 2002).

Therapy and mentoring

Mentoring has been likened to therapy in many ways. Both are helping relationships that involve a caring authority figure and a 'client'. At the heart of each relationship is a human connection oriented to promoting the client's positive development, and both relationships are characterized by empathy, warmth and genuineness (Spencer & Rhodes, 2005; Stoke, 2003).

Mentors, like therapists, are concerned with resolving conflicts and painful experiences. In some relationships, mentors, like therapists, focus on emotional and psychological goals such as improving self-esteem and facilitating the protégé's ability to establish and remain in a relationship. In other cases, the mentoring relationship, like the therapeutic one, allows the protégé to experience a different kind of relationship in which caring, warmth and sensitivity prevail. These positive qualities may be partly or entirely absent from the protégé's previous network of relationships and their presence in the mentoring relationship can serve as a compensating and corrective experience (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Rhodes, Grossman, & Resch, 2000; Spencer & Rhodes, 2005).

Another similarity between mentors and therapists relates to the caregivers' tools and skills. Although mentors are non-professional adults who rely mostly on their goodwill, personality and intuition rather than on solid theoretical guidance, they usually display therapy skills such as sensitivity, active listening and empathy (Miller, 2002; Stoke, 2003). Mentors spontaneously use mutuality and self-disclosure techniques to achieve intimacy and trust and to function as role models. Therapists also use these techniques, but deliberately and professionally (Miller, 2002).

There are also differences between mentoring and therapy. The latter involves skilled professionals who use a wide range of theories and tools to help their clients overcome pathological and inadequate functioning, and develop their personalities. While therapists tend to focus on the pathological aspects and diagnosis, mentors act intuitively and, in most cases, emphasize protégés' strengths. The therapists' training process is long and rigorous, involving prolonged and close supervision, while mentors usually receive shorter preparation and guidance (Miller, 2002; Spencer & Rhodes, 2005).

The settings of the two relationships also differ. Mentoring assistance is offered in the context of mutual companionship and involves an array of social activities (Barrera & Bonds, 2005; Spencer & Rhodes, 2005), thus the setting is usually informal and less rigid. Protégés frequently contact their mentors between scheduled meetings, the times of which

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often change according to the protégés' needs. Mentors often need to invest considerable effort in defining the boundaries of their role, which is unclear to both parties. The therapy setting is more clear-cut; the relationship is more hierarchical, its boundaries harder to cross and it involves a monetary contract.

A therapist is generally expected to be non-judgmental and to adopt a stance of unconditional acceptance without preaching, while mentoring may sometimes involve adherence to and promotion of specific values and conduct (Hamilton & Darling, 1989; Keller, 2005a; Stoke, 2003). Such values and conduct include expectations that the protégé will do well at school, will not leave school before graduating, will be pro-social and not delinquent, etc.

In summary, mentoring and therapy are analogous relationships in three main aspects: both are helping relationships; both use specific therapy skills; and both involve corrective and compensating experiences. Mentoring and therapy differ in the setting of the relationship, the focus on protégés' strengths vs. pathology, and the loose supervision of the mentoring relationship. The strength of mentoring relationships, when they borrow aspects from therapeutic intervention, lies in the special combination of applying professional tools in a relatively loose setting outside of the therapy room.

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Friendship and mentoring

Mentors in organized mentoring programs are often described by their protégés as older friends (DeJong, 2004; Keller, 2005b). The comparison with friendship is quite natural as mentoring, like friendship, involves a similarly vast repertoire of supportive provisions such as companionship and play, guidance and instrumental assistance, and disclosure of intimate feelings. In their chapter on mentoring and social support, Barrera and Bonds (2005) recommend adopting Weiss' theory (1974) that describes five socio-emotional relational needs that may be met through structured mentor-youth activities. These include emotional integration, opportunity for nurturance, reassurance of worth, assistance and especially social integration (i.e. friendship). Through shared activities mentors can offer guidance, information, instruction and advice, as well as an important additional resource of tangible help.

Through encouragement and joining together mentors can strengthen and enlarge the young person's social network, satisfy the need to belong and reduce the sense of anxiety and loneliness. Through companionship and play mentors, like friends, enhance protégés' sense of belonging and decrease the feeling of loneliness (Klaw & Rhodes, 1995). Belonging is a fundamental human need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Josselson, 1992) and for this need to be satisfied one must believe that the other likes one and cares about one's welfare and. Through a mentoring relationship, which is characterized by qualities of mutuality, social integration and belonging, the protégé should feel loved and valued, part of a mutual network of communication and a wide social and cultural web. In this way, the protégé becomes part of the world, and the social world becomes part of him or her.

As in friendships, the similarity in interests and the mutual resonance in the mentoring relationship can serve the processes of identity formation. In mentoring relationships, as in friendships, the provision of information and guidance, and the protégés' sense of confidence in how they are seen by others, serves as validation. Protégés can examine social roles and identities, and attain a more consolidated and authentic sense of self.

Nevertheless, in certain respects there are significant differences between mentoring and friendship. First, the mentoring relationship is characterized by a hierarchical structure, according to which mentors are expected to assume the adult role and empower the protégé

and promote his or her growth. Friendship is usually characterized as a mutual relationship without specific desired developmental goals (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Hinde, 1996; von Salisch, 1996). Children befriend others for fun, whereas mentors have specific goals in mind in addition to simply having a good time together. Second, children often emphasize reciprocity in their friendships and expect some degree of equality. They usually choose friends of the same age, gender and social stratum, and with a similar outlook on life (Krappman, 1996; von Salisch, 1996). Mentors are invariably older than their protégés and usually do not expect reciprocation, nor do they maintain an equal relationship with their protégés. Designers of organized mentoring programs recommend matching mentors and protégés according to various characteristics (e.g. gender, ethnicity, language, shared background, interests, likelihood of personal compatibility and physical proximity) (Miller, 2002; Keller, 2005b), but this is rare in practice, and mentors and protégés do not necessarily share the same view of the world or have similar backgrounds and social status.

Another difference between dyadic organized mentoring and friendship is the limited duration of the former. Friendship can be long-term, its length depending on the satisfaction and desires of the parties and a variety of circumstances. Most organized mentoring programs limit the time frame of the relationship, which is not conditional on the desires and level of satisfaction of the parties involved. This time frame is usually known in advance, prior even to the start of the relationship.

In summary, mentoring and friendship are alike in that they provide similar support, promote a sense of belonging, reduce loneliness and enhance the sense of self identity. They differ, however, in their duration and the symmetry of their structure. Despite these differences, protégés may experience mentoring as a very special kind of friendship. The asymmetrical structure, combined with the mutuality and fun that characterize the relationship, can provide a secure and unique experience of friendship. In mentoring, without social pressure from peers, protégés may feel safe from teasing and ridicule while exploring new challenges. Additionally, the asymmetrical structure of mentoring, coupled with the mentor's higher social status, enables the mentoring relationship to operate as a social symbol and source of pride, as well as a sign that the protégé is not alone.

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Teaching and mentoring

A major part of the mentor's role is teaching, including tasks such as setting academic goals, transferring knowledge (Miller, 2002; Rhodes et al., 2006), helping with homework, practicing learning skills and preparing protégés for tests at school. Goodlad (1998) distinguished this kind of mentoring support, which he named tutoring, from other provisions. In fact, much research has investigated mentoring to promote academic achievement, which was deemed its chief goal (e.g. August, Realmuto, Hektner, & Bloomquist, 2001; Grossman & Tierney, 1998; Rhodes et al. 2000; Thompson & Kelly-Vance, 2001). Due to its effectiveness, Hamilton and Darling (1989) recommend the implementation of instrumental mentoring that focuses on definite goals such as promoting and teaching cognitive, behavioral and social skills, rather than psychological mentoring that concentrates on personality and emotional development. This recommendation emphasizes the facet of 'instrumental' teaching in the mentoring relationship (Darling, Hamilton, Toyokawa, & Matsuda, 2002; Rhodes et al., 2006).

Another major similarity between mentoring and teaching is the idea that the association between mentoring and teaching has its roots in traditional teaching, based on a dyadic mentoring relationship between teacher and pupil (Miller, 2002). This early teaching mode included instrumental aspects such as those above, as well as a dyadic emotional connection

in which the teacher, as mentor, took care of the development of the pupil's general socio-emotional capacities and personality as well as his or her skills. Even today, when teaching is largely not dyadic, conceptions of teaching incorporate emotional objectives besides academic achievements and underscore qualities of caring behavior, personal contact, and open communication (Ferreira & Bosworth, 2001; Goldstein & Lake, 2000; Pianta, 2000). These links between mentoring and teaching suggest that the former might offer a unique and an extensive way of teaching that combines academic, instrumental learning with a caring dyadic relationship.

Mentors do not function simply as improved versions of teachers – they differ in several respects. While teaching is mostly a one-to-group relationship and mentoring is usually a one-to-one relationship (contrary to teachers who mostly use formal teaching methods) mentors use both formal and informal teaching strategies (Hamilton & Darling, 1989; Miller, 2002) of mutual dialogue and friendship, and combine guidance with emotional rapport. Although teaching also involves caring qualities such as listening and warm communication, caring qualities are more extensive in mentoring and constitute an essential part of the relationship. During teaching, mentors reveal feelings and private experiences, play games and often talk about the learning process with their protégés. There is no process of grading and formal evaluation.

In summary, although mentoring can be compared to teaching in some respects (e.g. similar teaching acts, traditional dyadic structure of teaching, and caring behavior), it differs in others (e.g. structure of the relationship, informal mentoring qualities). Mentoring resembles tutoring in its teaching capacity but is a broader experience as it includes informal instruction, warmth, and caring behavior, and aims also for social and emotional outcomes. The informality, together with the caring attitude and positive emotional rapport, promote both academic achievement and positive social and emotional change.

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Summary and discussion

Overall, the four mentoring roles paint a diverse and rich picture of the relationship, highlighting the mentor's ability to meet various socio-emotional needs of the protégé usually provided by other figures while not substituting for any of them. For each of these roles the authors specified numerous facets that might be incorporated in the mentoring relationship. When taking on the role of a parental figure, mentors incorporate behaviors such as secure base, warmth, mirroring and role modeling. In the capacity of therapist the main activities are active listening, emotional identification and acceptance. As friends, the major emotional provisions offered by mentors are mutuality, companionship, advice and self-disclosure. As teachers, mentors assume teaching responsibilities such as formal and informal instruction, setting of academic goals and transfer of knowledge within the context of a dyadic caring relationship.

Three conceptual approaches: attachment, social support and social learning

The characteristics and the practices of each role as outlined above can also be illustrated by three major theoretical approaches: attachment theory, social support notions and social learning approaches. These approaches may serve as a conceptual base for, as well as emphasize the unique flexibility of, the mentor's role. The attachment theory underscores the central role of relationships in human development (Bowlby, 1969, 1973) and has been extensively applied to the mentoring relationship (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Spencer & Rhodes, 2005; Rhodes et al., 2006).

Attachment theory posits that beginning in infancy and continuing throughout life, one's mental health is intimately linked to relationships with attachment figures that afford emotional support and protection (Belsky & Cassidy, 1994; Bretherton, 1985; Bretherton & Munholland, 1999). Attachment figures, such as parents, therapists, and even teachers, who are viewed as 'stronger and wiser', instill a sense of security and provide a secure base from which to explore and a safe haven when in distress. Similarly, mentoring has been seen as involving a 'wiser and stronger' caring adult figure who has the capacity to provide a secure base; hence a compensating and corrective experience for youth who lack secure attachment relationships (Ainsworth, 1989; Rhodes et al., 2002; Rhodes et al., 2006).

Social support has also been implied as a conceptual framework within which to understand mentoring (Barrera & Bonds, 2005; Rhodes et al., 2006). Social support has been identified as a major resource buffering the association between stress and physical and psychological disorders. Socially deprived people may exhibit a variety of ill effects, such as maladjustments, health problems and behavioral or psychological pathology (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Davis, Morris, & Kraus, 1998; Larose & Bernier, 2001; Sarason, Pierce, Shearin, Sarason, Waltz, & Poppe, 1991). Interventions such as mentoring, which increase social support and its availability, are thus perceived as facilitating the ability to cope with stressful situations (for review see Leavy, 1983; Sandler, 1980) and preventing psychological problems (Lakey & Lutz, 1996).

Whereas attachment theory focuses mainly on distress situations (Goldberg, Grusec, & Jenkins, 1999a; 1999b) and, like the parental role, emphasizes mentors' protective behavior and provision of security, social support helps in a range of conditions, not only distress situations (Lakey & Lutz, 1996, Pierce, Sarason, Sarason, Joseph, & Henderson, 1996). When adopting the role of parent or friend, the mentor's behavior includes a variety of support provisions such as guidance, providing information, direct assistance with tasks, encouragement, advice and reassurance. It is not limited to reducing the sense of threat, which is emphasized in attachment theory. Social support is not equivalent to an attachment relationship. Aspects of protection and decreasing anxiety, which are central to attachment processes, may or may not be part of the mentoring relationship. This relationship is usually quite varied and covers a wide range of supportive behaviors in addition to those central to an attachment relationship.

The application of social learning approaches to mentoring is relevant when mentors provide training and teaching experiences to protégés who lack knowledge, as well as adequate social attitudes, values, beliefs and skills. Social learning approaches address the different ways in which individuals learn in social situations (Bandura, 1970, 1971). These include direct teaching as well as vicarious learning, which also includes learning through emulation. In this respect, mentors resemble teachers and parents in two major mechanisms. First, they provide cognitive and direct verbal instruction involving explanations, giving directions, and guidance (Cavell & Hughes, 2000; Hamilton & Darling, 1989; Keating, Tomishima, Foster, & Alessandri, 2002; Linnehan, 2001; Zagumny, 1993). By providing direct guidance and explicit instructions, mentors teach protégés required behaviors and skills such as how to befriend or how to implement learning strategies. They point out possibilities, set goals, make plans, demonstrate certain behaviors, provide information and evaluate protégés' learning behavior (Hamilton & Darling, 1989; Hamilton & Hamilton, 1992).

Second, social learning approaches emphasize vicarious learning. Mentors, like parents, therapists and teachers, are seen as role models and as examples for identification and idealization. Mentors who serve as role models can offer protégés a successful example for imitation. They might inspire protégés to do their best, and may motivate them to follow in their footsteps (Darling et al., 1994; Hirsch et al.; 2002; Rhodes et al., 2006).

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Variety of protégés' needs and mentoring programs

Elements from each theory appear in one form or another in the various roles; however, each role reflects somewhat different experiences and is therefore more suited to a specific and unique profile of protégés' needs. Different mentoring programs are designed for different types of protégés (e.g. teen mothers, foster children and under-privileged youth) and address different protégés' needs (e.g. behavioral problems, academic difficulties, loneliness and identity formation). Since protégés' socio-emotional needs vary widely, the quality and characteristics of the mentoring relationship should be equally diverse. Depending on the protégé's range of needs, the mentor may have to function flexibly and diversely: in one case more teacher than friend and, in another, friend rather than teacher.

For example, the role of a parental figure and a therapist are most relevant to youth who need corrective and compensating experiences, or who have experienced prior harmful relationships or a less than adequate parent-child relationship. Typical situations in which prior care was inadequate, for example, are youth in foster care or runaway children, or an absent or non-responsive parent. In mentoring relationships where the protégé's needs stem mostly from inadequate parental treatment and the mentor's main role is that of parent or therapist, caring emotions and care-giving behaviors such as secure base, warmth, mirroring, empathy, genuineness and role modeling comprise the inputs of the relationship. By offering an additional supportive and caring experience that can be integrated into the youngster's perception of attachment relations, mentoring can contribute to a renewed evaluation of the social network as more available and satisfactory, and of the self as worthy and loved. A more benevolent outlook may thereby be promoted in which others are perceived as available and trustworthy, and the self as lovable and worthy (Rhodes et al., 2000; Spencer & Rhodes, 2005; Rhodes et al., 2006). In such cases, mentoring relationships may be longer and are based mainly on the emotional quality of the relationship.

Youth who perceive their parents as unsuccessful, or lack a positive parental model (e.g. an absent father or overburdened mother) are most in need of a parental figure (a mentor) to act as an alternative role model for them to emulate (Leader, 2000; Rhodes et al., 1999; Rhodes et al., 2006). Mentors first served as role models early in the twentieth century when Big Brother Big Sister (BBBS) was implemented with teenage male offenders (DeJong, 2004). These youngsters were depicted as missing a father figure or an adequate male sex-typed adult for identification. Moreover, this usage was especially recommended when mentoring programs were directed at minority groups. Other writers maintain that youth who have enjoyed a good relationship with their parents and do not need a compensatory relationship are better able to use mentors as role models and guides when they need to acquire specific skills that their parents lack (Spencer & Rhodes, 2005).

In contrast, mentors who typically display friendship qualities may be especially relevant to lonely protégés, or those in stressful or high-risk situations, such as lonely children, new immigrants, ethnic minority children, children in families experiencing stress situations such as death or illness, pregnant schoolgirls and teenage mothers (Rhodes et al., 1999). In these cases, mentors provide support and companionship, and further the acquisition of social skills that are central in intimate relationships. This kind of mentoring intervention may be short and is geared to help the protégés overcome the particular stressful circumstances by providing them with a special secure experience of friendship and protective and buffering experiences. It is recommended that these mentoring programs include specific supportive interventions and activities based on similar values, attitudes,

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gender and ethnicity of mentor and protégé, leading to the formation of a friendship (Miller, 2002).

A mentoring relationship construed as teaching may serve as a very successful way to enhance academic functioning as it offers a constructive and effective learning experience. This kind of mentoring experience is mostly effective when directed to meet protégés' lack of knowledge and skills; for example when youth need help in the academic or social realm to promote their scholastic achievements or social skills and status.

Variety of mentors' rewards and mentoring relationships

Like protégés, mentors enter mentoring programs for a number of numerous reasons and incentives (Philip & Hendry, 2000). The ensuing different types of mentoring relationships may reflect these diverse motivations. For example mentors who adopt a parenting role may do so because they want to make a difference in the youngster's life as well as find an outlet for their own desire to nurture and care for someone. By developing caring parental relationship with protégés, mentors may experience new ways of having affectionate and meaningful giving relationships (Spencer, 2007). Furthermore, mentors may adopt parenting qualities in the mentoring relationship with the intention of making sense of and re-evaluating their own earlier life experiences, and in particular overcoming past difficult circumstances in their family of origin. Other motivations for adopting this type of relationship could be associated with mentors' desire to explore, or even practice, parenting in preparation for their own future roles as parents. Alternatively, mentors who do not have children of their own, or whose children are already independent or out of the nest may find the mentoring arena a suitable place to express their needs to nurture and take care of others in a parental manner.

Mentoring can also serve as a resource for cultural gain (Philip & Hendry, 2000). For example, through mentoring mentors learn first hand about other, mostly underprivileged, social classes and enrich their understanding and humanitarian perspective on cultural differences and socio-economical gaps. They can also learn about the role of cultural values and participants' backgrounds in shaping dyadic relationships (Spencer, 2007). Mentors who emphasize therapeutic qualities in their relationship might see the relationship as a means to acquire and develop psycho-social skills. Likewise, mentors who are training for a teaching career, might practice educational theories and pedagogic skills, highlighting teaching aspects in the relationship. Finally, mentors who underscore friendship components might do so in order to develop alternative kinds of relationships characterized by reciprocal and mutual qualities as a way to counter their own loneliness and lack of such relationships.

The four roles, the three theoretical approaches, and the heterogeneous needs of protégés are displayed in a figurative model (see Figure 1). The mentors' roles and the three conceptual theoretical bases are on the horizontal axis, where the intensity of the relationship steadily decreases. The parent's role is at the high end and the teacher's role at the low end, with the role of the friend occupying an intermediate position. The high end represents an intense relationship with strong emotional bonds, and protégés perhaps with more profound needs and in greater distress; the change required in their personality and behavior is more extreme and central. For example, change in the protégé's attachment organization is seen as more profound and deeper than change in skills or attitudes – the kind of outcome expected when the role of friend or teacher drives the mentoring intervention. In most cases the intensity of the relationship would thus be associated with more profound changes and longer duration of the intervention. These aspects should be considered when planning mentoring interventions.

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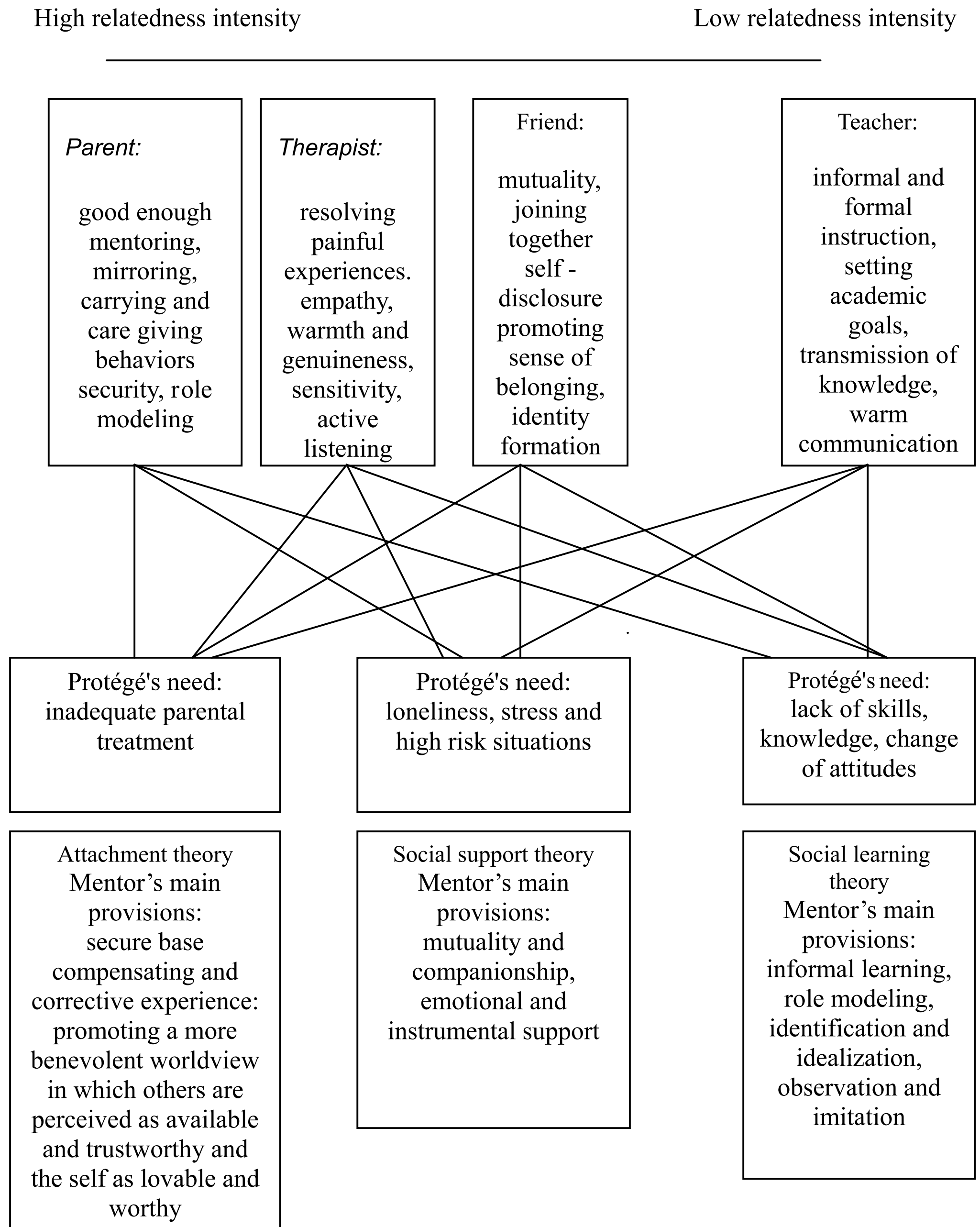

Figure 1. A systematic comparison among mentor's social roles.

The connections between the roles and the theories are situated on the model's vertical axis. Although each role is seen as reflecting to some extent the processes inherent in the three different conceptual frameworks, some roles rest on all the three theories while others rest on one primary theory to which the other theories are secondary. For example,

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in the capacity of a parent, the mentor can draw on all three conceptualizations when shaping his or her functioning. As a parental figure, the mentor serves as a secure base and a safe haven, provides instrumental and emotional support and companionship and acts as a role model and instructor. In a therapeutic capacity the mentor acts mainly to provide empathy and a corrective experience, drawing mostly on attachment and social support theories. As a friend the mentor may draw mainly on social support theory, whereas as a teacher the mentor engages mostly in actions that draw on the social learning and attachment concepts.

Mentors' flexibility

Although each role may reflect a distinct mentoring experience, it is suggested that the uniqueness of the mentoring relationship is rooted in the mentor's capacity to move freely in and out of these roles without embodying any of them, as well as to juggle the protégé's diverse set of emotional needs, or the phases of the mentoring relationship. For example, based on parenting, mentors display warmth, secure base, mirroring and role modeling. Based on the therapist's role, mentors can apply empathy, listening skills and a balance between spontaneous and reflective work. Mentors can borrow the qualities of companionship and mutuality from friendship; and from teaching they may adopt qualities of informal and formal communication that promote academic achievement and the setting of high standards of behavior that protégés can emulate.

Each protégé may need a custom-mix of these qualities in various combinations of roles. A teenage mother may need her mentor to be both a mother and a teacher, as she needs a sense of a secure base together with some teaching and training on how to tend her baby. An immigrant child may need her or his mentor mainly to serve as a friend and a teacher, because she or he needs support and not to feel alone, and has to learn how to behave in the new cultural context by emulating and direct instruction. The capacity of good mentors to move freely through the different roles is seen as a unique feature of mentoring, distinct from other helping professions or helping roles. Combining elements from each relationship enables the mentor to move across the various situations with relative freedom and flexibility, making it possible for mentors to meet the variety of protégés' socio-emotional needs effectively.

The notion of the importance of mentor flexibility was recently addressed by Sipe (2005). This author highlighted mentors' ability to embody one distinct role (e.g. good parent, learning facilitator, career guidance provider or social worker) while also offering various types of support depending on the protégés' needs and the situations in which the mentors found themselves. A similar suggestion was made by Rhodes (2005) and Rhodes et al. (2006), who claimed that the beauty in mentoring lies in the variety of shared moments and experiences, fun times and trying times, that form a relationship from which protégés can draw strength in moments of vulnerability or share victory in moments of achievement.

Empirically it has been found that mentors' flexibility in addressing and adjusting to protégés' needs is a key element for the latter's satisfaction with their mentoring relationship (Morrow & Style, 1995). Other evidence of the importance of flexibility is supplied by Hirsch (2005), who investigated the effectiveness of staff behaviors that helped youth develop positive identities in an after-school program (i.e. boys' and girls' clubs). Using qualitative methods, the researcher found that mentors who were involved in a diverse array of activities providing emotional support, guidance or teaching, and sponsorship or advocacy offered the most beneficial mentoring.

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Future directions

Recommendations for research

Several recommendations for research pertaining to the above model are suggested. First, the existence of different profiles of protégés' needs and how far these needs are best met by specific provisions can be explored. Second, based on the above model, studies addressing specific links between psychological provisions (e.g. role modeling, secure base, warmth, emotional and tangible support) and mentoring outcomes can be examined. Exploring the association between specific aspects of the mentor-protégé relationship, mentoring success and protégé functioning in different areas such as academic, emotional and social might have important implications for mentoring practitioners when training and guiding mentors in organized mentoring programs. In addition, following Keller's (2005b) description of the course of the mentoring relationship, which undergoes several phases (e.g. initiation, growth and maintenance, decline and dissolution); it is important to discover whether the different roles characterize these different stages. It is also important to seek out the most effective role for the mentor to enact in each phase. For instance, the voluntary nature of the mentoring relationship will presumably emphasize the importance of the parenting strategies more in order to ensure maintenance of the relationship, particularly at its outset.

This paper addresses mostly psychological perspectives on mentoring. It is, however, important also to explore the above model through a sociological lens, for example by considering the complexity of power dynamics within the mentoring relationship. This is particularly important when mentors and protégés differ in areas such as social class, race or gender. From this perspective, protégés' difficulties in improving their functioning, or mentors' inability to promote their protégés, might be attributed not only to inadequate emotional qualities, but also to a wider field of social hierarchies and interests that reflect the establishment's attempt to use mentoring as a sophisticated way to reproduce existing social structures, or, alternatively, the working class' ambivalence toward education (Colley, 2003). Furthermore, different cultures may view mentoring differently and emphasize different mentor roles. For example, Japanese, Chinese and American youth all emphasize aspects of role modeling but Japanese and Chinese youth further focus on instrumental aid, while American youth emphasize emotional support (Chen, Greenberger, Farruggia, Bush, & Dong, 2003; Darling et al., 2002). In cultures that sanction interconnectedness among their members (Mayseless & Scharf, 2003), protégés' dependency on mentors, which possibly reflects a parental focus, may be viewed positively and may not have negative ramifications, as might be the case in more individualistic cultures (Goldner & Mayseless, under review). Future research might be needed to shed more light on the specific power dynamics and power asymmetries in each type of relationship and the role of cultural expectations and cultural values in mentoring.

Finally, exploring the validity of the model for other types of mentoring (such as group mentoring, team mentoring, peer mentoring) and other contexts (such as school-based mentoring, after-school programs, vocational mentoring, training teachers and e–mentoring) is also recommended.

Recommendations for practice

The proposed model might also have practical applications for field practitioners. The first two recommendations relate to the variety of protégés' socio-emotional needs. First, it is important to identify protégés' difficulties prior to the start of the mentoring intervention and to match these with suitable mentors who can offer the proper help (i.e. the appropriate

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social role). Second, it is important to tailor a unique mentoring relationship to each protégé's needs. Using the analogy between the mentor's role and other social roles might facilitate the adaptation for mentors or mentoring program designers.

Some recommendations relevant to mentors' training are also suggested. In keeping with the model, training should focus on central emotional provisions with which mentors are expected to provide their protégés in critical periods of the mentoring such as the beginning or the termination of the relationship. Furthermore, during training it is also recommended to highlight the uniqueness of the flexibility of the mentor's role and the importance to transverse the various positions in order to promote protégés' functioning. One possible caveat of using this model in a pre-programmed and instrumental way is the possible interference with the spontaneity of the mentors, which might hamper the formation of authentic closeness and intimacy in the mentoring relationship. Nevertheless, some professional definition of the informal nature of mentoring could lead to maximizing mentoring effectiveness, particularly in short-term interventions.

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Summary

The current paper attempts to expand and deepen understanding of the mentor's role. By systematically comparing this role with that of other caregivers, applying central concepts from attachment, social support and social learning theories, and reviewing the different range of protégés socio-emotional needs, we have attempted to underscore the ability required of the mentor to juggle the roles of parent, therapist, friend and teacher; to borrow central elements from each without substituting for any role.

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