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## President's Message

By Shilah Scherweit, SASP President, Oklahoma State University

### Call for Nominations and Elections:

#### 2009 Student Affiliates in School Psychology (SASP) Executive Board

Greetings SASP Members! Please consider nominating a graduate student in school psychology for election to the 2009 SASP Executive Board.

#### Positions include:

President-Elect	Liaison Chair	Membership Chair
Communications Chair	Convention Chair	Diversity Affairs Chair
	Technology Chair	

Please see <http://saspweb.info> for a description of position duties. To nominate a student (**self-nominations are also accepted**) for a SASP Executive Board position please send the student's name, email address, graduate program and degree, and a 250 word candidate statement to [Shilah.scherweit@okstate.edu](mailto:Shilah.scherweit@okstate.edu).

Nominations Close: **November 1, 2008**

Candidate Statements Posted on <http://saspweb.info> and Voting Period Opens: **November 8, 2008**

Voting Period Closes and Election Results Announced: **December 1, 2008**

## SPECIAL TOPIC: The Mentorship Experience

### Mentoring in School Psychology

By Georgette Yetter, Ph.D., NCSP, Oklahoma State University

#### What is Mentoring?

Mentoring is essentially a helping, supportive professional relationship. Mentor relationships are multifaceted. Mentors take an interest in their protégés' long-term career success. They form a strong, trusting bond with them as growing scholars, professionals, and persons. They offer practical support by actively sponsoring their protégés, providing direction, and helping them network. Mentors also function as socializing agents by working

closely with their protégés and modeling professional behavior (Eshner, Grant-Vallone, & Marelich, 2002; Hammer, 2005).

Regrettably, there has not been much formal research on mentoring in graduate school, particularly in graduate psychology programs, and, there is a lack of consistency in how mentoring is defined in the literature. Some authors describe mentoring as equivalent to the academic advising and clinical supervision that is

required in graduate programs (Tenenbaum, Crosby, & Gliner, 2001). Others address mentoring as a type of formal, time-limited relationship between an established professional and a younger protégé. Still other writers understand mentoring to be a multidimensional professional relationship between a more experienced professional and a less experienced protégé, which grows over time and often spans many years (Clark, Harden, & (continued next page)

## SPECIAL TOPIC: The Mentorship Experience

### Mentoring in School Psychology

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Johnson, 2000; Kelly & Schweitzer, 1999). In the present article I will draw from the mentoring literature as it exists and supplement with my own views, based on personal experience and informal observations.

Mentoring relationships vary in their degree of formality. Formal mentorships are promoted through programs such as Preparing Future Faculty in Psychology. In formal mentorships, the mentor-protégé interactions are often structured and time limited, with scheduled meetings, agendas, and explicit goals for the duration of the mentoring relationship. Informal mentorships, on the other hand, grow over time out of close working relationships between, for example, a graduate student and his/her academic advisor or clinical supervisor, or a beginning student and a much more advanced graduate student. These less formal mentoring relationships may last for years and, like any long-term relationship, they change in quality over time, gradually becoming more collegial as the protégé grows. Both types of mentoring relationship are valuable and yield practical benefits as the mentor shares information, works closely with the protégé on specific projects, and models professional functioning.

Mentoring relationships also vary according to the difference in stature between mentor and protégé. Some mentors (for example, typically a student's academic advisor) are far more experienced than their protégés, and are in a

position to provide expert 'mastery modeling' of professional functioning. This type of 'traditional' mentor has been defined as a "personal relationship in which a more experienced (usually older) individual acts as a guide, role model, teacher, and sponsor of a less experienced (usually younger) protégé...Mentors oversee both the career and personal development of junior members of a profession, and at times engage in active promotion and sponsorship of protégés" (Johnson & Nelson, 1999, p. 190).

Other mentors, on the other hand (such as more advanced graduate students or recent degree recipients) may be just a little ahead of their student protégés in their professional development. These 'step-ahead' mentors are in a good position to demonstrate 'coping modeling.' Coping modeling can be at least as valuable to protégés as mastery modeling, in that it offers them the opportunity to see individuals much like themselves manage personal and professional challenges to their careers as they unfold over time.

A third level of mentor is the peer mentor. Peer mentors (for instance, fellow members of a student's entering class or cohort) are at the same level of experience as their protégés. Although peer mentors may not have any more expertise or knowledge than their protégés, they can offer invaluable support throughout graduate school. These relationships are great for affirming to students that 'yes, what you are going through really is difficult,' and for offering the opportunity to collaboratively brainstorm and problem-solve shared

challenges as they come up. (Eshner, Grant-Vallone, & Marelich, 2002). All these types of mentoring relationships can be very helpful, both professionally and personally. It is advisable that graduate students and early professionals seek mentoring at multiple levels – if possible, at all three.

Although many of the features of mentoring also are shared by academic advisors and/or clinical supervisors, in my view and in the understanding of many others in the field mentors go beyond advising and supervision per se. Whereas "traditional advisors and supervisors help the advisee/supervisee grow only to the extent required by their positions," mentors "proactively seek to enhance the protégé's development" (Atkinson, Neville, & Casas, 1991, p. 39).

#### *How Important is it to be Mentored?*

Insofar as mentor-protégé relations can be broad, deep, and long lasting, they are important for helping new professionals flourish (Ellis, 1992). Whether you aspire to a clinical or an academic vocation, it is well worth the time and effort to seek and develop a close professional relationship with a like-minded individual in your chosen area of specialty. A mentor is a guide, helps promote your career, and can be a kind of 'sounding board.' In Swerdlik and Bardon's (1988) investigation of traditional mentoring among school psychology practitioners, most school psychologists who had not been mentored regretted it. Those school psychologists who had not

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## SPECIAL TOPIC: The Mentorship Experience

### Making the Most of Your Mentor: How to Appreciate Any Kind of Supervisory Experience

By Jamie Zibulsky, University of California, Berkeley

During the (long and arduous) process of completing graduate school and becoming a credentialed school psychologist, each of us will have the opportunity to be mentored by many different professors and practitioners, all with their own distinct theoretical orientations, personalities, and skill sets. To develop our own array of counseling, consultation, teaching, and assessment skills, as well as to cultivate strong professional relationships as we begin our careers, it is essential to learn how to get the most out of each of these relationships.

Sometimes, a relationship with a mentor is formed and solidified so easily that reading an article on this topic may seem entirely unnecessary. For many of us, though, there have been times when conversations with our mentors left us confused, frustrated, or dejected. It is at those times when it becomes even more vital to reflect on the powerful relationship that you have with your mentor and realize that you have just learned something you can apply to your practice as a school psychologist.

Based on interactions that I have had or heard about in the course of my field placements and university-based supervision, I have culled together some of the more important lessons I have learned about how to develop and maintain a strong relationship with mentors and how to see the bright side of difficult situations.

*Starting off on the right foot.* Although you will likely begin completing work with or for your supervisor during your first day on the job, it will take you much longer than that to get to know his or her preferred style of communication and collaboration. Just as you don't assume that new friends are comfortable with the same things that your old friends are (i.e., you don't steal the first bite of someone's dessert until you are pretty sure he won't stab you with his fork, right?), don't assume that a new mentor has the same expectations of you that your last mentor did. Over time, you will slowly learn how your supervisor likes to receive information from you and what type of information he or she would like to receive. Maybe Supervisor A expects you to report in at the end of the day on every subtest you administered and each teacher you talked with in the hallways. Perhaps Supervisor B just wants to know if any huge problems arose. If you leave Supervisor B a two-page note at the end of the day chock-full of all the minutiae Supervisor A would want to know, she will feel overwhelmed. If you stick a Post-It note on Supervisor A's computer with the brief overview Supervisor B would want, he will wonder what you did all day.

To ensure that you are able to keep lines of communication open, actively try to determine how much information your mentor wants from you on a daily or weekly basis, in what format she wants the information (i.e., an email, an old-fashioned note, or a phone call), and why she asks for different types of informa-

tion. It is crucial that you are able to provide your supervisor with information that can help him or her support both you and other members of the school community.

At the same time, it's also essential to make sure that you are giving your mentor reminders and cues about the type of information and experiences you need to get the most out of your internship. Before you show up for your first day of work, gather together (1) all of the relevant assignments that you will be completing for your university during the course of the placement, (2) a list of all of the experiences you would like to have during the placement (e.g., assessing a child with multiple handicapping conditions, running a counseling group, presenting at a PTA meeting), and (3) all of the questions you have for your supervisor about the district, the school, and her own research and practice. Once you have gotten all of this information together, remember not to bring up all of these issues with your supervisor at the same time. Running through a long list of what you need and want during your first meeting with your mentor may not be the best approach to making sure that you get all of those things (unless, of course, you are invited to talk about all of the assignments you need to complete, the type of cases that you want to work on during the year, and any questions you have about your supervisor's professional growth – in which

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## Making the Most of Your Mentor: How to Appreciate Any Kind of Supervisory Experience

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case, you should seize the opportunity). However, knowing exactly what you do want to convey to your mentor during your first few weeks of work and keeping a written list of those issues is a good way to ensure that you will get a chance to bring each issue up over time and that you never end up tongue-tied when you get an opening. Each of these conversations is likely to come up naturally. Your supervisor will assign you your first assessment case and say, “We’re testing this kid because his teacher thinks he is on the autism spectrum. Do you feel comfortable taking it on?” This question provides you with a perfect opportunity to talk about your past assessment experiences and the new skills that you are hoping to build in the coming year.

Of course, it is also possible that this opportunity to talk about your needs won’t arise as easily as you hoped it would. Making your expectations clear at the beginning of the year will make life easier for you and your supervisor, so it is certainly within your rights (and, your responsibility) to set up a time to talk about these issues if they are not discussed otherwise. Your mentor will probably appreciate a reminder that you need to iron out these details of your placement if you say, “Before we get too far into the year, I was hoping I could show you the assignments I am supposed to complete this semester. I think that there are some cases coming up that would work well for the type of intervention plan I need to create and wanted to see if you thought they would be appropriate for me to work on.” You should not be afraid to tell your supervisor what you need to gain from this

experience, but also keep in mind that these conversations don’t all have to take place in the first week of school. Take some time to get to know your mentor and her communication style, and any conversation you need to have will go more smoothly.

*It’s the questions that you don’t ask that get you in trouble.* The reason that psychologists spend years working under supervision is because we have a tough job. As an intern and a student, you are not expected to know what to do in every situation that comes up. All too often, people are afraid to admit their doubts and mistakes – or even voice their questions – to their mentors. Knowing when to ask for help is one of the most fundamental skills you can learn while in graduate school. When you can’t decide how to proceed with a counseling case or how to interpret psychoeducational test data, take advantage of the support that your program provides for you and ask for help. It is a luxury to have supervision and absurd to feel embarrassed that you actually need the level of support that you are supposed to need. Don’t let yourself feel stupid for asking for help! Your supervisor won’t be surprised when you have questions; she’ll be dismayed if you don’t.

*You don’t need to love someone to learn from them.* Especially if you have been lucky enough to work with one of those wonderful supervisors who was responsive to your needs, up-to-date on current research, and exhibited unerring clinical judgment, it can be very nerve-racking to work with or for someone who has some obvious areas of weakness. Don’t assume that this person has nothing to teach you!

Always ask yourself:

- ◆ What skills and traits does your mentor possess that you admire?

How can you develop similar skills? How can you let your mentor know that you appreciate these qualities? It is all too easy to compare every practitioner that you come into contact with to your all-time favorite supervisor, but you will end up having a very limited view of what it means to be a good school psychologist. Instead of focusing on the negative traits you see in your supervisor, force yourself to highlight his or her best qualities and strongest skills. It may be that the areas this supervisor excels in are very different than those you have valued in the past. Now you can challenge yourself to develop an entirely new skill and take the opportunity to let your supervisor know how much you appreciate this aspect of his or her practice.

- ◆ What behaviors does your mentor engage in that you react to negatively? In the present moment, how can you respond to and perceive these behaviors differently? In the long run, what skills do you want to cultivate so that others do not perceive you that way? Unless you are going to write a behavior support plan for your supervisor, you have little control over the way that he or she acts. You do, however, have a good deal of control over the way that you respond to behaviors that make you angry or upset. Try to structure situations so that you get what you need. If it bothers you that you only get general feedback on your psychoeducational reports, try writing three
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## Mentoring Among Graduate Students: Fostering Relationships to Promote Academic and Personal Development

By Kristin E. Jones, Kathryn E. Woods, and Kristi L. Hofstadter, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

The student-mentoring program at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln (UNL) is an integral component of the school psychology program. The UNL SASP chapter created the mentorship program to assist incoming students with the changes and challenges that often accompany the transition to graduate school. Essentially, the program consists of pairing new students with current, more advanced students who serve as mentors. The mentoring relationship allows students familiar with the program to share experiences and advice, as well as program and community resources, with incoming students while also facilitating both social and professional connections with program faculty and students.

Kristi Hofstadter, SASP Vice-President, coordinates the mentorship program at UNL. Kristi believes that the mentorship program is an invaluable asset for UNL. She explains, "New students come from various regions of the country as well as the world, and providing them with a small, intimate social group tremendously aids the acclimation process." As program facilitator, Kristi provides incoming students with a description of the mentorship program, encouraging participation while allowing students to select their own degree of involvement.

While the process has varied across previous years, mentor-mentee groups are typically formed by pairing an incoming student with two student mentors, one mentor in his or her research group and one mentor from a different research group. This method of grouping mentors allows students to receive valuable, research- and advisor-specific information and advice to aid their graduate training. Matching students with a mentor who is not in their research group also provides students with a different perspective on the program and promotes relationships across re-

search groups. One of these mentors is typically from the second year cohort and the other mentor is usually in their fourth or fifth year in the program. Structuring the mentoring groups in this way enables students to form relationships with peers in varying stages

of their graduate careers and encourages students of different cohorts to share advice and experiences.

Incoming students are introduced to their mentors prior to the start of classes at an annual program welcome social. Mentors and mentees then decide on a time to meet for coffee or dinner to get to know each other. The SASP board also coordinates events throughout the year such as bowling, volleyball, and community service activities that provide opportunities for mentors and mentees to spend time with one another and become familiar with Lincoln and the activities available throughout the community.

While mentors often advise their

mentees on a variety of topics such as classes, which books to buy, practicum experiences, internship sites, how to get involved on campus and in Lincoln, and apartment living, they are also an important source of emotional support. Mentors can offer incoming students encouragement and guidance during those first exciting and challenging months. First year student, Kadie Petree agrees, "By having the mentors, it shows us that there are several people there to talk to when things get hard or overwhelming or just to see that other people have gotten through this stage in the process. I personally have found the mentoring process extremely helpful since I came from out of state and didn't know anyone prior to starting school."

Students' involvement and enthusiasm for the mentorship program at UNL demonstrates the importance of creating mentoring relationships for sharing advice, resources, and encouragement throughout graduate school. The UNL chapter of SASP hopes to continue to support the relationships created among incoming and experienced students to foster students' academic and personal development in graduate school and beyond, as students transition into their professional careers.

*"By having the mentors, it shows us that there are several people there to talk to when things get hard or overwhelming, or just to see that other people have gotten through the process"*

**Don't have a SASP Chapter at your school?**  
Find out more about beginning your school's Chapter! Email Shelley Hart  
[shart@education.ucsb.edu](mailto:shart@education.ucsb.edu)

## Spotlight on a SASP Chapter: Loyola University in Chicago

By Mary Satchwell, M.Ed., 2008 LASP President

Located just steps from Chicago's beautiful lake shore and the Magnificent Mile Shopping District you'll find the Loyola University Chicago School Psychology Program. One of seven NASP-approved programs in Illinois, the Loyola school psychology program is made up of approximately 20 Ph.D. and 75 Ed.S. students with 8 full time faculty members. Our tight-knit cohorts have grown even closer in recent years with the formation of Loyola's student group, the Loyola Association for School Psychology (LASP). Both Ph.D. and Ed.S. students have been involved in forming and running the LASP student group, which has been active since Spring 2007. LASP is currently in the process of becoming a SASP chapter and expanding our involvement with both the APA and NASP.

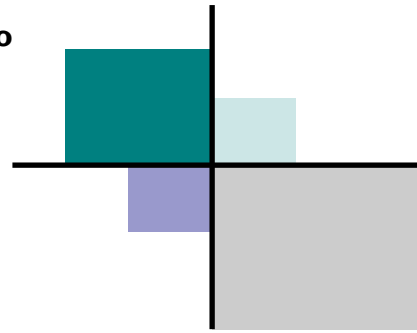
Founding student members of LASP aimed to organize a student group that would promote the field of school psychology in the Loyola and Chicago communities and build cohesiveness among students currently in the school psychology program. The main goals of the organization include fostering visibility of school psychology as a profession, fostering leadership within the profession of school psychology, providing an opportunity for students to interact socially, providing input/concerns to the academic program, and continuing Loyola University's commitment to social justice. In addition to functioning as a student organization and support network for current students, LASP has endeavored to engage members in

active service of socially just aims within their community as well as professional development opportunities in school psychology.

In order to promote student involvement in service, LASP members have participated in service-learning opportunities individually and in small groups with students in schools throughout the Chicago area. Service-learning experiences range from volunteering in classrooms and tutoring students to assisting with schoolwide positive behavior supports or academic benchmarking initiatives. Beginning in the 2008-2009 school year, students will also engage in service-learning within community agencies other than schools, such as violence prevention and victim advocacy networks. In the fall of 2008, LASP sponsored a school supply drive, during which members collected backpacks, notebooks, and art and school supplies for students at Jenner Elementary on Chicago's Near North Side and Overton Elementary in the Bronzeville neighborhood on the South Side of Chicago.

The main professional development provided by LASP is the mentorship program that connects current students to incoming students during the summer prior to their entry in the Loyola school psychology program. Student mentors provide guidance and support as well as valuable resources to their mentees throughout the entire length of the Ed.S. and Ph.D. programs of study.

LASP maintains a website with updated resources for students available online at [www.freewebs.com/lasponline](http://www.freewebs.com/lasponline). In addition, LASP mem



bers have attended and presented research at conventions for NASP, APA, ISPA (Illinois School Psychologists' Association), and Loyola's School of Education. LASP is sponsoring a Networking Event for students in November 2008, during School Psychology Awareness Week, in which students will speak with a panel of practicing school psychologists as well as have an opportunity to speak with Loyola school psychology alumni and local practitioners about working in schools in and around Chicago.

LASP has also provided students with the opportunity to interact socially and enjoy one another's company. Members have attended numerous social events planned throughout the school year to welcome new students, celebrate completion of major assignments, or to simply relax and enjoy all that Chicago has to offer. LASP may be a young student organization but it has a strong core of students engaged in supporting its aims of raising awareness of school psychology, promoting social justice, engaging in professional development, and improving student life at the Loyola University Chicago's school psychology program.

## IMPORTANT: SASP Membership Notice

By Shelley Hart, SASP Membership Chair, University of California, Santa Barbara

SASP membership has changed slightly in order to reflect the graduate student life. **Starting in 2009, our membership year will correspond more closely with school schedules, which means that SASP membership will be August through July.** In June of each year it will be important to renew your membership to continue to benefit from the organization's scholarships, awards, and publication opportunities. Membership forms can be located on the SASP website at: <http://www.saspweb.info/>. Remember, SASP membership is free to all graduate students; however, you are encouraged to also become a member of Division 16 (School Psychology) of APA. As a student, Division 16 membership is \$30 and information regarding the Division can be found at [www.indiana.edu/~div16/](http://www.indiana.edu/~div16/).

## 2008 SASP Mini-Convention Wrap Up

By Cindy Altman, SASP Mini-Convention Chair, Duquesne University

As Convention Chair of SASP, it pleases me greatly to report that this year's mini-convention was an overwhelming success! The event was held in the Division 16 Hospitality Suite on Sunday, August 17, 2008 as part of the larger annual conference of the American Psychological Association in Boston, MA. The mini-convention was well attended by both students and faculty in school psychology, so opportunities to network and meet front-runners in the field abounded. Attendees were also able to learn about research being conducted by their colleagues, and presenters were provided the opportunity to showcase their work in an informal, collegial atmosphere.

One of the highlights of the mini-convention was the keynote address, delivered by David Shriberg, Ph.D., currently an assistant professor of school psychology at Loyola University Chicago. Dr. Shriberg reflected on his experience with balancing early career and family obligations, discussing various pros and cons of an academic career for parents, and providing advice to those who seek to achieve a work-family balance in an academic context. He solicited participation throughout by inquiring of attendees' career aspirations and actively encouraging questions. What may have made Dr. Shriberg's presentation most noteworthy, however,

was that it was delivered at the tenth anniversary of SASP's mini-convention (which he had to inform the officers off!). Dr. Shriberg held numerous leadership positions within SASP as a graduate student, so he was extremely supportive of SASP's cause and eager to participate in mini-convention activities.

Another central component of the mini-convention this year was the student poster and paper presentations. Presentations addressed an array of topics within the field of school psychology, such as bullying, resiliency, and mindfulness in schools, as well as more traditional assessment and intervention-related issues. The quality of student presentations was exceptional, and all of the presenters did a wonderful job articulating their work to others and describing the relevance of their research to the practice of school psychology. The level of knowledge and professionalism demonstrated by this year's presenters surely reflected well on their training programs, as well as their own commitments to helping children and families.

I would be remiss if I concluded without thanking the many individuals whose combined efforts enabled the mini-convention to be a success. First, I would like to thank Dr. David Shriberg for willingly sharing his knowledge and insights through this

year's keynote address, and our primary student presenters for their thorough preparation and eagerness to share their work: Janell Hargrove Brooks, Joshua Felver-Gant, Leah Gillespie, Kristin Jones, Samuel Kim, David Parker, Leandra Parris, Meredith Lohr Petrucci, Kristin Rezzetano, and Rebecca Thompson. I am also indebted to my fellow members of the SASP board, especially Shilah Scherweit, for the ongoing support and input throughout the planning of the mini-convention.

I likewise wish to thank Cathy Fiorello, coordinator of the Division 16 Hospitality Suite, for ensuring that the details of the mini-convention were taken care of and that the event ran smoothly. My gratitude is extended to the Division 16 Executive Committee for their financial support of SASP's endeavors, making special mention of both Tanya Eckert (Treasurer) and Shane Jimerson (Vice President for Publications, Communications, and Convention Affairs), whose guidance I could not have done without. Lastly, I would like to express my appreciation to Drs. Tammy Hughes and Bonnie Nastasi, Division 16 President and President-Elect (respectively), for taking time out of their busy schedules to show  
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## Making the Most of Your Mentor: How to Appreciate Any Kind of Supervisory Experience

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specific questions in advance of talking to your supervisor, so that you can get the detailed response you desire. After your supervisor observes an IEP meeting that you run, ask her to tell you one thing you did well and one thing that you could have done better. If it makes you uncomfortable that your supervisor doesn't seem to take the time to consult with teachers, try to understand what parts of his job he is prioritizing and appreciate this model of service delivery. And when all else fails, remind yourself that learning what not to do is just as important as learning what to do. When you have the opportunity to mentor someone, you will draw on all of the experiences you've had – positive and negative – to figure out how to best support your intern.

Having the good fortune to model, shadow, and pick the brain of someone older and wiser should never be undervalued. Although the mentor-mentee relationships that develop organically may be easier to sustain, working at a relationship has great benefits as well. For the same reasons that we encourage teachers to have students work in groups, it is constructive for us to

learn to work with supervisors who have different approaches to therapy, intervention, and interpersonal communication.

*Keeping in touch.* By the end of your placement, your mentor will have dedicated many hours to supporting your professional growth. To let him know that you appreciated this support, it is a good idea to write a card expressing your gratitude and, if time and money permit, to give your mentor a small thank you gift. Your supervisor knows how much (or rather, how little) you get paid, so there is no reason to give an extravagant gift. But baking someone cookies or buying a paperback book that you think he would enjoy is a simple way to demonstrate that you did not take his support for granted.

As you move on in your career, it is very likely that you will want to get back in touch with your mentor. Perhaps you will be working on a difficult case that you think she could shed some light on, or you will need a recommendation letter for a job, or you will forget the name of a great therapeutic game that he used. Contacting your past supervisor is infinitely less awkward

if you have maintained periodic contact with him or her after your placement ended, and staying in touch increases the likelihood that you will get a prompt and friendly reply to your request. When you read an article that you think your past mentor would enjoy, forward on the link or send a copy in the mail. Pick a time of year to send out cards to colleagues (maybe the winter holidays or the end of the school year) and be sure to update your old supervisor on your new experiences and challenges, making sure to mention how your work with her informs your current thinking.

The relationships you build throughout graduate school are the relationships you will enter the work force with when you graduate. Think of your mentor as someone who will teach you a great deal about the practice of school psychology and who will remain an associate of yours for a long time to come. The more work you are willing to do to make the relationship successful, the more you will benefit from the experience.

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## 2008 SASP Mini-Convention Wrap Up

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their support for SASP by attending the mini-convention.

I have very much enjoyed all aspects of my duties as SASP Convention Chair, and hope that all who attended the recent mini-convention found it as enriching an experience as I did. I believe that it is truly a worthwhile tradition, one that I hope continues for many years to come. Thank you SASP members, for allowing me to continue serving you in this capacity!





## Mentoring in School Psychology

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been mentored in their graduate training or early professional life also were less satisfied with their careers than were psychologists who had been mentored.

Mentoring by a faculty member may be especially helpful for developing careers in academia. In a recent poll, doctoral school psychologists with academic careers cited two factors as having the biggest impact on their choice of career tracks. One of these factors was their relationships with their academic advisors. The other experience they cited as having a substantial impact was the opportunity to observe faculty members modeling leadership roles. Note that both of these activities – having a close professional relationship and observing expert modeling of professional functioning – are key aspects of traditional mentoring. By contrast, in this study psychologists who pursued practitioner careers cited their internship and practicum experiences as most formative, and rated mentoring by program faculty as far less important (Shapiro & Blom-Hoffman, 2004).

### *How Prevalent is Mentoring in Graduate Psychology Programs?*

Many psychology graduate programs carry out policies to encourage supportive relationships for students. For instance, many programs pair new students with peer mentors from among the more advanced students in their programs and assign new students to temporary academic advisors. Some training programs also require students to participate in faculty research or grant activities, which can serve as excellent entry into the socializing unit of the faculty member's research team. Student membership in graduate student organizations, both in their university's graduate training program and through national organizations such as Student Affiliates in School Psy-

chology (SASP), also can provide excellent peer support, information, and opportunity to network and engage in professional leadership activities. After graduation, service in professional organizations at the state and national levels is an excellent way to continue to network and to enhance one's visibility.

Although the presence of a faculty mentor system has been proposed as evidence of high quality in a graduate psychology program (Ellis, 1992), formal mentoring programs are not part of many training programs. Two reasons for this have been put forth. For one, the scientist-practitioner and practitioner-scholar training models set forth at the Boulder and Vail conferences in professional psychology do not explicitly emphasize mentoring. A second reason has to do with the standards for accreditation that are set forth by the American Psychological Association and the National Association of School Psychologists. A given graduate program's education and training requirements is to a considerable extent influenced by the requirements set forth by the major accrediting bodies, and neither the APA nor the NASP requires psychology programs to submit evidence of mentoring effectiveness in their documentation for program accreditation (Clark, Harden, & Johnson, 2000; Ellis, 1992; National Association of School Psychologists, 2000).

The limited evidence available suggests that mentoring may be more readily available for students at their graduate program sites (their university campus) than at their predoctoral internship training sites (hospital, school, etc.; Swerdlik & Bardon, 1988). Although the reasons for this are not clear, it may be that the higher likelihood of close professional relationships developing on campus is attributable to the ex-

tended duration of time during which students are in residence at their graduate programs, relative to the 1-year internship. Moreover, mentoring appears to be more prevalent in Ph.D. than in Psy.D. programs. It has been noted that Ph.D. programs commonly offer smaller student-to-faculty ratios compared with Psy.D. training programs, which may make it easier for students and faculty in Ph.D. programs to develop closer relationships (Johnson & Nelson, 1999).

Regarding traditional mentorships, Swerdlik and Bardon's (1988) poll of mostly non-doctoral school psychologists about their early professional mentoring experiences showed that nearly one in five reported not having received any mentoring over the course of their careers. One third of the participants reported having had one mentor, and the rest endorsed two or more mentors. However, it should be noted that these results are 20 years old, and they may no longer reflect the prevalence of mentoring in our field. According to more recent research in clinical psychology doctoral programs, 66% of graduates reported that they had a mentor during their doctoral training, and 43% reported having had multiple faculty mentors (Clark, Harden, & Johnson, 2000).

### *Develop a System of Mentors*

Since obtaining my Ph.D. five years ago (as of this writing), I have become increasingly aware of how crucial it is for graduate students to develop a network of support at a variety of levels, beginning in graduate school. I cannot emphasize enough how important it is to develop meaningful relationships with peers and to get to know one or more advanced students, not only to help one navigate through gradu-

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ate school, but also to facilitate the transition into professional life. That said, it is also most beneficial to have a strong mentor in the traditional sense. It is a truism that new professionals who are supported by established members of their professional communities find it easier to gain entry into their chosen professional niches. Empirical evidence suggests that doctoral students in psychology who receive traditional mentoring are more satisfied than their peers with their graduate training (Clark, Harden, & Johnson, 2000). Keep your eyes open for opportunities to connect with a variety of individuals at different levels.

Be aware that not everyone would make a suitable mentor for you. While often, students' academic advisors or clinical supervisors are interested in mentoring them, not all faculty members or clinical supervisors will be willing to invest the time and effort to promote a particular student. There is a significant element of choice, both on the part of the potential mentor and protégé (Johnson & Nelson, 1999). If neither your academic advisor nor your clinical supervisor(s) have taken a special interest in your professional development despite repeated attempts to connect with them, you would do well to seek the support you need from others.

First, identify your own professional goals and personal needs that impinge on your professional future. If your primary career goals are academic, a good strategy would be to identify faculty members who have taken a special interest in you. If you are primarily practice-oriented, you may prefer to seek a mentor from among your clinical supervisors. Either way, look for an individual who engages in ethical practice, is

willing to make him/herself available to work with you, and with whom you share a common interest. If you are not currently working closely with this person, consider offering to embark on a specific project together. As you work together, you will get to know each other better professionally and mutually explore how well you work together.

The two most important attributes to look for in a potential mentor are caring and competence. Among school psychologists who received professional mentoring, the mentor characteristics they valued most highly were (in order), supportiveness, knowledgeableness, intelligence, care, and encouragement (Swerdlik & Bardon, 1988). Note that three of these top five descriptors had to do with warmth and support. These descriptors also closely coincide with those cited by doctoral students in clinical psychology regarding desirable characteristics for professional mentors (Clark, Harden, & Johnson, 2000).

Another important factor to consider in a potential mentor is the person's philosophical or theoretical orientation -- it should be fairly consistent with yours. You are far less likely to 'hit it off' with an individual whose views are very divergent from yours.

Graduate students very often need to be proactive in securing a traditional mentor. Clark, Harden, and Johnson (2000) found that in clinical psychology, among doctoral students who were protégés in a mentoring relationship with a faculty member, nearly half (43%) of the protégés had initiated their mentoring relationships. Another one third (35%) of protégés indicated that their relationship with their mentor grew by mutual consensus, and 14% stated that their mentor had been assigned by a third party. By contrast, only 8% of protégés reported that their men-

tor had initiated their mentoring relationship. Moreover, 40% of the protégés indicated that their relationships with their mentors had lasted longer than four years.

It is especially important for female graduate students to take note of the importance of taking initiative in seeking and forming a professional relationship with a mentor. Research has shown that in professional settings, including psychology, females are more reluctant to advocate for themselves as assertively as males, accounting for much of the gender disparity in professional outcomes (Babcock & Laschever, 2003). *Impact of Gender, Race, Ethnicity, Age, and Other Individual Differences*

Recent findings regarding the impact of gender on the likelihood of being mentored are mixed. One study indicated that female graduate students in professional psychology were much less likely to receive mentoring (Johnson et al., 1999); however a different investigation found that females were equally likely to be mentored (Clark, Harden, & Johnson, 2000). If, in fact, females are less likely to receive mentoring support, the reasons are not clear. Although it is possible that a substantial proportion of faculty members hold discriminatory attitudes against female students, another potential explanation is that female students do not exert as much initiative in developing relationships with potential mentors. This possibility seems especially salient, given the persistent findings with regard to females' lower levels of self-advocacy in professional settings, as mentioned above.

One aspect related to gender and mentoring that is clear, however, is that among graduate students who

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have received traditional mentoring, the mentors' gender was not related to students' satisfaction with their mentoring relationship. Female protégés with male mentors were just as happy with their mentoring experiences as those with female mentors. The best predictor of protégé satisfaction with the mentor relationship is consistency in attitudes and in philosophical and/or theoretical orientation between mentor and protégé.

Whereas female graduate students in professional psychology may be less likely to receive traditional mentoring than the average graduate student, racial and ethnic minority students may, in fact, be *more* likely to be mentored by faculty in their graduate programs (Atkinson, Neville, & Casas, 1991). Interestingly, ethnic minority graduate students, particularly African Americans, also are far more likely than Caucasians to engage in peer mentoring by actively mentoring their fellow students (Kelly & Schweitzer, 1999).

Racial and ethnic similarity with the mentor is often a salient factor for students from racial or ethnic minority groups, who may believe that racial and ethnic similarity will predict similarity in values with their mentors. Although this may facilitate the initial development of trust and bonding, retrospective reports indicate that the degree of ethnic and racial match between mentors and their protégés was not related to protégés' overall satisfaction with their mentors in clinical, counseling, and school psychology (Atkinson, Neville, & Casas, 1991; Eshner, Grant-Vallone, & Marelich, 2002; McGregor, 2005).

Unfortunately, no published information is available regarding the prevalence of graduate student mentoring in relation to the protégé's age or with respect to disability status, sexual orientation, or other demo-

graphic characteristics (Johnson & Nelson, 1999).

With respect to age differences, there is, unfortunately, an absence of empirical findings addressing mentoring for nontraditional graduate students in psychology. However, a synthesis of student and faculty comments based on informal interviews at one major university concluded that after having been away from school for an extended period, nontraditional students sometimes feel less sure of their own skills and competencies and they may perceive that their professors regard them as less promising than younger students. Older students may be less inclined to interact socially with the younger members of their graduate program cohorts, and therefore may be less likely to receive peer support. They also may feel somewhat awkward interacting with younger professors, who may hold somewhat different views and values due to generational differences (University of Michigan, 2006). Because of these attitudes and perceptions, nontraditional students may be especially reluctant to approach faculty to seek traditional mentoring relationships. Nevertheless, older students should seek out faculty and/or supervisors with whom they feel comfortable as potential mentors.

Given these findings, it is evident that regardless of your gender, ethnicity, race, or age, you would be well advised to identify potential mentors from among faculty members who share your philosophical outlook and values. There is no evidence that any type of demographic similarity increases protégés' long-term satisfaction with their mentor relationships. *How to Benefit from Mentoring*

How can all this information be useful? Putting it all together, I propose the following tips for graduate students in school psychology:

(1) Develop and maintain a collegial stance with others in your graduate program, students, faculty, and supervisors. Be open to building and maintaining multiple relationships at a variety of levels. Also look for support from individuals outside the university. You will receive far better total support from a variety of individuals than you ever could from a single 'perfect' mentor.

(2) Make yourself visible. Join organizations and volunteer for leadership positions. Attend conferences. Seek out venues to present your work. Students who project self-confidence are more likely to be viewed positively. Becoming involved as a student leader gives you the opportunity to receive support from students at other levels and even from other programs, thereby widening your professional network.

(3) Take primary responsibility for your own education and training. Sure, you need to adhere to your program's requirements, but as school psychologists in training, there is a plethora of future career options open to you. As you progress through graduate school, you will formulate and refine your career goals. Take initiative in seeking out training experiences that will be valuable for getting to where you think you want to go. Ask for opportunities. Faculty and trainers like students who are proactive and energetic.

(4) Identify one or more faculty members in school psychology and also perhaps in nearby fields with whom you share some professional interests or a similar outlook. Try to become involved with these faculty member on collaborative research or other projects. If you are clinically oriented, approach a clinical-

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cal supervisor or other clinician and try to do some work together. Be open to others regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity, age, or other demographic characteristics, because the degree of demographic match does not predict long-term satisfaction with mentors.

(5) When working with your mentor, be receptive to his or her constructive feedback. Maintaining an openness to change is crucial, especially in psychology.

(6) Take your mentor's advice and act on it. Let him or her know that you did and how it worked out. Work diligently and communicate often.

(7) Show your mentor that you appreciate him or her. Thank your mentor for taking the time and energy to 'go the extra mile' for you.

### Summary

Mentoring is a kind of 'enriched professional parenting.' Mentoring is a key ingredient in the development of successful stu-

dents that unfortunately is not discussed in the school psychology literature as often as it merits. By providing both emotional and practical support, mentoring relationships are invaluable for helping budding professionals focus and propel themselves forward in their careers. Rather than seeking the 'perfect mentor,' students should seek support from multiple individuals at various levels, including peers. A (traditional expert) mentor is much more than simply a student's academic advisor or clinical supervisor; a mentor shows that s/he cares about the protégé's professional development to the extent that s/he is willing to promote the protégé actively and invest time and effort beyond fulfilling mandatory training requirements. Students invest a great deal of time and effort in their graduate studies; they should be prepared to take the initiative to pursue this additional, and potentially very valuable, support.



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