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

Ben Dantzer, Ph.D. Candidate

Faculty of Education, University of British Columbia

Land Acknowledgment

What I'm Reading…

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

**What I'm Doing…**

- Challenging inappropriate jokes [1]

Introduction

- Cross-age peer mentoring [2, 3]

- A recent meta-analysis revealed a medium-sized effect size ($g = 0.45$) [4]

- What are the ingredients of high-quality relationships? [5-7]

- Relationships Motivation Theory (RMT) [8]

Relationships Motivation Theory (RMT)
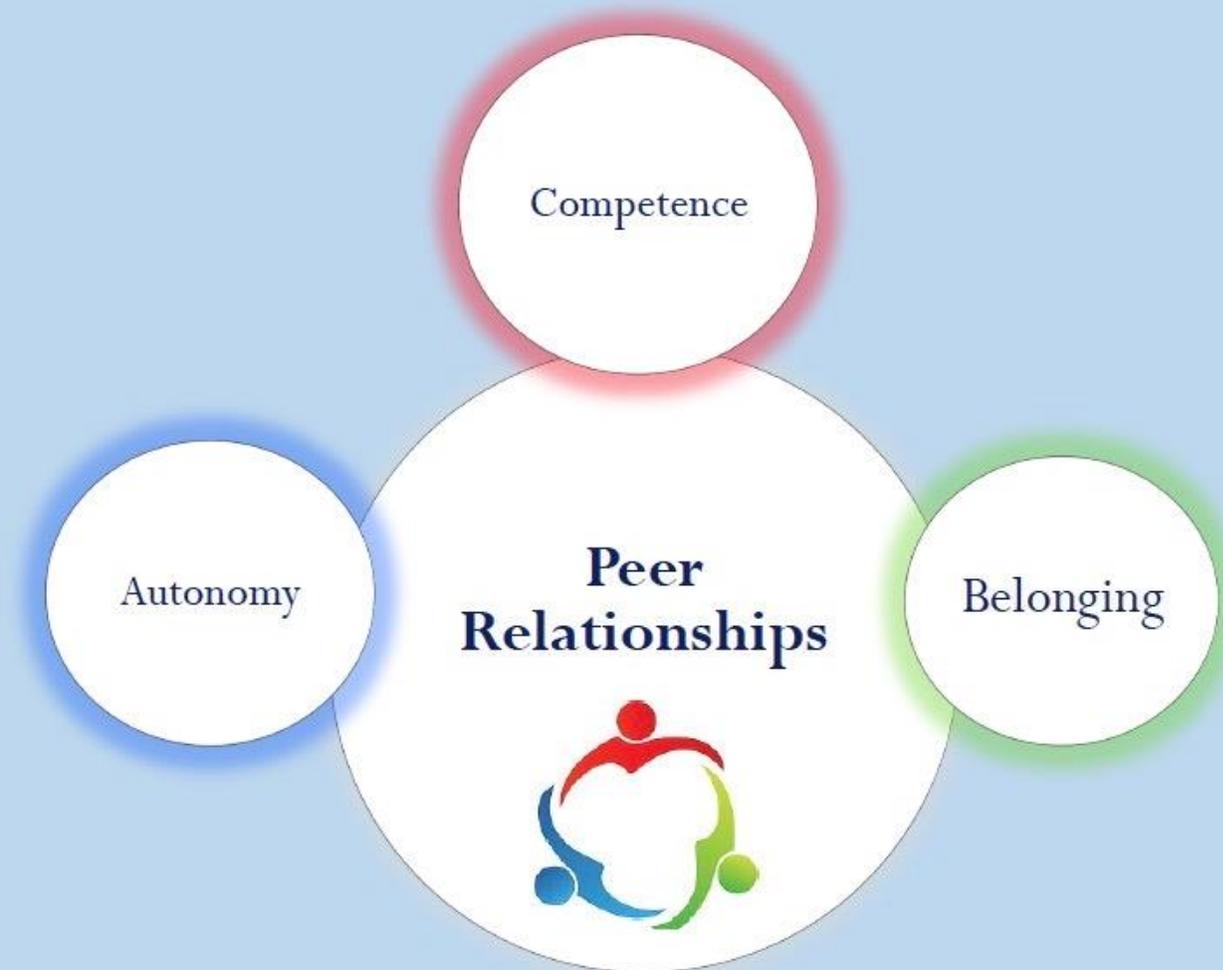
Relationships Motivation Theory (RMT)
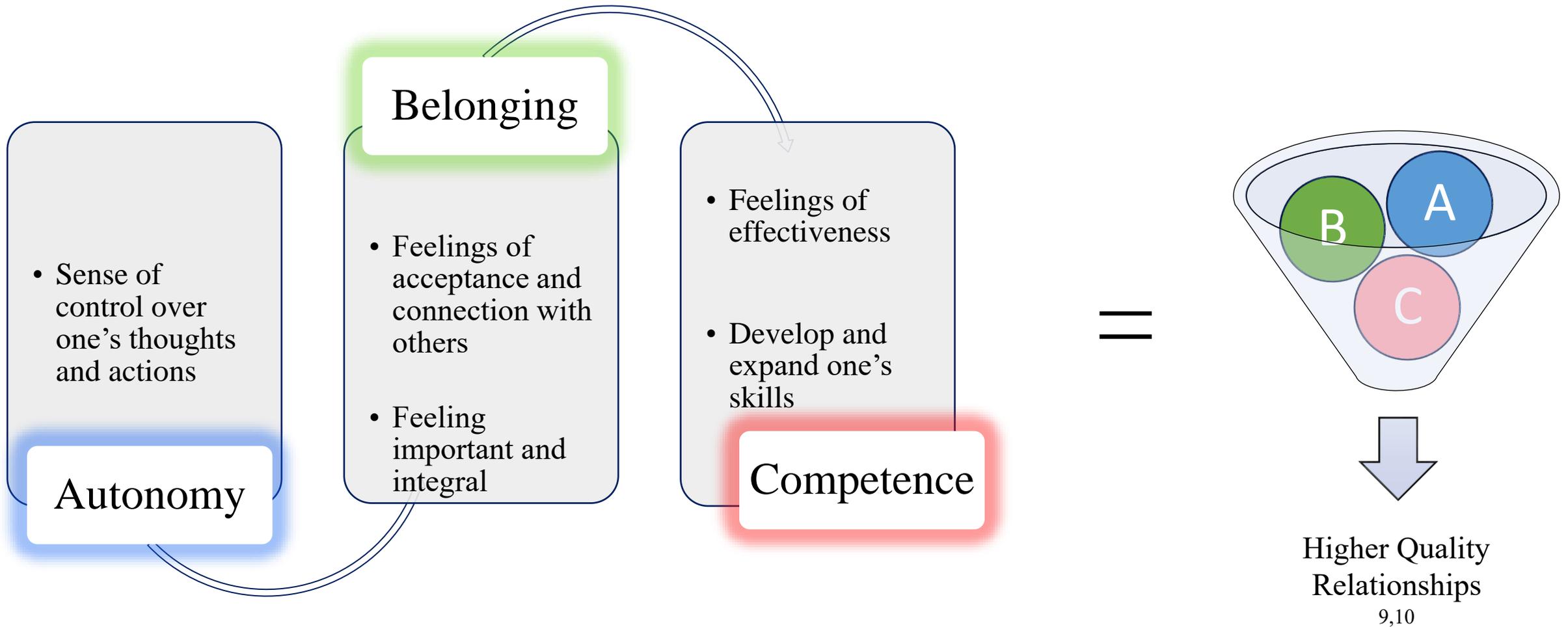
Autonomy
- Sense of control over one's thoughts and actions

Belonging
- Feelings of acceptance and connection with others
- Feeling important and integral

Competence
- Feelings of effectiveness
- Develop and expand one's skills

=

Higher Quality Relationships
9,10

Research Goals

1. Demonstrate the capacity of high-school aged mentors

2. Capture what mentors *say* and *do* during mentoring sessions

3. Explore impact on relationships

Mentoring Context and Research Design

Context:
- After-school music program in Western Canada

Research Design:
- Multiple Case Study [11,12]

- 5 mentors (14-18 years of age) (M = 15.8, SD = 1.48)
- 5 mentees (8-12 years of age) (M = 9.6, SD = 1.81)

1. Audio Recordings of Mentoring Sessions
2. Weekly Mentoring Logs
3. Individual Interviews

- In-Vivo Coding [13-15]

- Provisional Coding [13-15]

- Descriptive Statistics

Program Timeline

Before

1. Mentor Skill-Building Sessions [16]
2. Group Hangout

During

1. Mentoring Sessions 1-5 (Developmental Focus)
2. Mentoring Sessions 5-10 (Instrumental Focus)
3. Mentor Support Meetings [16, 17]

After

1. Spring Recital
2. Group Hangout

Skill-Building Session #1

Goals

1. Introduce the concept of mentoring

2. Identify healthy mentoring behaviours

3. Clarify goals and expectations

Activities

✓ Who Is My Mentor?

✓ What Is a Mentor?

✓ Program Overview Handout

✓ Mentor Contract

Skill-Building Session #2

Goals

1. Introduce the core concepts of RMT

2. Build capacity to support feelings of autonomy, belonging, and competence

Activities

✓ Co-construct definitions

✓ Role-Playing Scenarios

Skill-Building Session #2

- Autonomy is…   … "when someone feels self-reliant and independent"

- Belonging is…   … "when someone feels welcomed, loved, and accepted"

- Competence is…   … "when someone feels effective and that they understand what they are doing"

Skill-Building Session #2

- Autonomy is… … "when someone feels acknowledged and in control of what they do and learn"

Skill-Building Session #2

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

"The Agreeable Mentee"

"The Lonely Mentee"

"The Discouraged Mentee"

The ABC Companion

THE ABC COMPANION

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

AUTONOMY

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

CONSIDER DOING THINGS LIKE...

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

CONSIDER SAYING THINGS LIKE...

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

BELONGING

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

CONSIDER DOING THINGS LIKE...

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

CONSIDER SAYING THINGS LIKE...

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

COMPETENCE

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

CONSIDER DOING THINGS LIKE...

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

CONSIDER SAYING THINGS LIKE...

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

Mentoring Sessions 1-5

- Learning Simple Rhythms

- Primary focus on relationship development

Mentor Support Meetings

Mentoring Sessions 5-10

- Mentors taught mentees specific rhythms

- Rhythms synchronized into song

- Professionally recorded

- Spring concert

- Final hangout

Research Goals

1. Demonstrate the capacity of high-school aged mentors

2. Capture what mentors *say* and *do* during mentoring sessions

3. Explore impact on relationships

Results: Capacity of High-School Mentors

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

Autonomy is…

Belonging is…

Competence is…

Results: What did mentors say and do?

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

Support Strategy	Consistency (%)

Results: What did mentors say and do?

Autonomy

1. Difficulty balancing autonomy support with structure

Belonging

1. Difficulty establishing early rapport

2. Demonstrating personal interest was a successful strategy

Competence

1. Mentors reported as the easiest to support

2. Could have been supported more successfully to provide more effort-focused feedback

Results: Impact on relationships?

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

Mentor Average: 3.65 ($SD = 0.24$)

Mentee Average: 4.52 ($SD = 0.32$)

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

Mentor Interviews

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

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

Mentee Interviews

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

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

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

Practical Contribution

THE ABC
COMPANION

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

AUTONOMY

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

CONSIDER DOING THINGS LIKE...

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

CONSIDER SAYING THINGS LIKE...

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

BELONGING

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

CONSIDER DOING THINGS LIKE...

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

CONSIDER SAYING THINGS LIKE...

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

COMPETENCE

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

CONSIDER DOING THINGS LIKE...

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

CONSIDER SAYING THINGS LIKE...

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

Practical Lessons Learned

Autonomy Support

✓ Create more opportunities for shared learning and cooperation

✓ Be transparent about the importance of balancing autonomy with more structured goals [18,19]

Belonging Support

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

Competence Support

✓ Help mentors provide more effort-focused feedback [20, 21]

# Considerations and Future Directions

Increase sample size and diversity

More extensive mentor skill-building
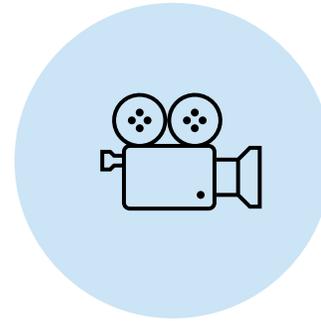
Collect video recordings of mentoring sessions
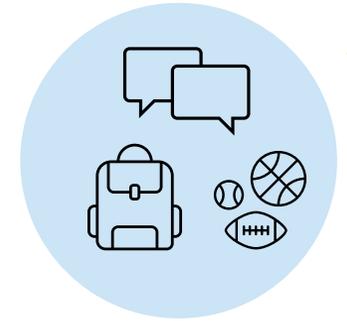
Additional Contexts

Thank You

References

1. Vaswani, M., & Esses, V. M. (2021). Discrimination Experienced by Immigrants, Visible Minorities, and Indigenous Peoples in London and Middlesex. Retrieved on February 28th, 2022 from https://london.ca/sites/default/files/2021-09/Report%20on%20Experiences%20of%20Discrimination%20in%20London-Middlesex.pdf

2. Karcher, M.J. 2005. "Cross-age Peer Mentoring." In *Handbook of Youth Mentoring*, edited by D.

3. L. DuBois and M.J. Karcher, 266–285. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Karcher, M. J. 2007. "Cross-age Peer Mentoring." *Youth Mentoring: Research in Action* 1 (7): 3017.

4. Burton, S., Raposa, E. B., Poon, C. Y., Stams, G. J. J., & Rhodes, J. (2021). Cross-age peer mentoring for youth: A meta-analysis. *American Journal of Community Psychology*.

5. Deutsch, N. L., and R. Spencer. 2009. "Capturing the Magic: Assessing the Quality of Youth Mentoring Relationships." In *New Directions for Youth Development*, 2009 (121):47-70. Wiley Online Library: https://doi.org/10.1002/yd.296

6. Rhodes, J. E., A. Bogat, J. Roffman, P. Edelman, and L. Galasso. 2002. "Youth Mentoring in Perspective: Introduction to Special Issue." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 30: 149–155.

7. Rhodes, J. E., R. Spencer, T. Keller, B. Liang, and G. Noam. 2006. "A Model for the Influence of Mentoring Relationships on Youth Development." *Journal of Community Psychology* 34: 691–707.

8. Ryan, R. M., and E. L. Deci. 2017. *Self-determination Theory: Basic Psychological Needs in Motivation Development and Wellness*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

9. Henneberger, A. K., N. L. Deutsch, E.C. Lawrence, and A. Sovik-Johnston. 2013. "The Young Women Leaders Program: A Mentoring Program Targeted toward Adolescent Girls." *School Mental Health* 5 (3): 132–143.

10. Simoes, F., and M. Alarcao. 2014. "Promoting Well-Being in School-Based Mentoring through Basic Psychological Needs Support: Does It Really Count?" *Journal of Happiness Studies* 15: 407–424.

11. Stake, R. E. 2005. "Qualitative Case Studies." In *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, 443–466. 3rd ed. ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

12. Yin, R. K. 2003. *Case Study Research, Design and Methods*. Vol. 5. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

13. Saldana, J. 2009. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

14. Saldana, J., and M. Omasta. 2017. *Qualitative Research: Analyzing Life*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

15. Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2020). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (Fourth ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE.

16. MENTOR (2015). Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring. Retrieved on February 28th, 2022 from https://www.mentoring.org/resource/elements-of-effective-practice-for-mentoring/

17. DuBois, D. L., Holloway, B. E., Valentine, J. C., & Cooper, H. (2002). Effectiveness of mentoringprograms for youth: A meta-analytic review. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 30, 157–197.

References

18. M. D. Lyons, S. D. McQuillin, and L. J. Henderson, "Finding the Sweet Spot: Investigating the Effects of Relationship Closeness and Instrumental Activities in School-Based Mentoring," American Journal of Community Psychology 63, no. 1–2 (2018): 1–11.

19. M. J. Karcher, C. Herrera, and K. Hansen, " 'I Dunno, What Do You Wanna Do?': Testing a Framework to Guide Mentor Training and Activity Selection," New Directions for Youth Development 2010, no. 126 (2010): 51–69; S. D. McQuillin et al., "Strengthening and Expanding Child Services in Low Resource Communities: The Role of Task-Shifting and Just-in-Time Training," American Journal of Community Psychology 63, no. 3–4 (2019): 1–11; Spencer, "Understanding the Mentoring Process between Adolescents and Adults."

20. Dweck, C. S. 2000. *Self-theories: Their Role in Motivation, Personality and Development*. Philadelphia, PA: Taylor & Francis.

21. Droe, K., and L. 2012. "Effect of Verbal Praise on Achievement Goal Orientation, Motivation, and Performance Attribution." *Journal of Music Teacher Education* 23 (1): 63–78.