

Mentoring in the Waterfowl Profession: Challenges and Opportunities



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Mentoring

- What is mentoring?
- Definition (review in Amelink 2008):
 - a series of **meaningful interactions** between a more experienced person and a protégé (mentee)
 - **consistent interest in success/progress of mentee**



Mentoring takes many “shapes”

- Two primary forms:
 - Career → focus only on professional development
 - Helping build resume
 - Providing networking
 - Psychosocial/Interpersonal Support → focus on sense of self and even empowerment
 - Build confidence
 - Self reflection
- Can be both!



1st step in mentoring

- What did all of you do with your mentee at the Monday workshop?
- What are the goals? Deliverables? Expectations of the relationship?
- Challenge you: Using a metaphor – what does your ideal mentor-mentee relationship look like?



Types of Mentoring Relationships

- **Transmission Framework** (Storrs et al. 2008)
 - Mentees often envision this approach more than mentors
 - **Characteristics:**
 - Assumption that mentors are custodians of academic and professional expertise that is “transmitted” to mentee
 - Perception that only mentee gains from relationship
 - Power resides with mentor because of their experience



Types of Mentoring Relationships

- **Transmission Framework** (Storrs et al. 2008)
 - Mama bird and baby chick metaphor (parent-child)
 - Mama bird nurtures, provides food, shelter, protection
 - Imparts wisdom chick needs to know
 - Fledging = independence gained as a result of mentoring



Types of Mentoring Relationships

- **Interdependent Framework** (Storrs et al. 2008)

- Envisioned by mentors more than mentees
- Characteristics
 - Working collectively toward a common goal (or goals)
 - Equal and reciprocal relationship

- Double kayaking (team approach)

- More challenging than solo paddling
- It takes practice to synchronize but the outcomes are different than if you “do it alone” (new sites, stops, and help paddling the rapids)

- Canoe

- Stern (back) – controls direction
- Bow (front) – adds power and momentum



Challenges: Females in a male-dominated field

- Carnival Fun House (Storrs et al. 2008)
 - Gates welcome all but...
 - Limited access on rides (e.g., too short)
 - Women feel like they “sneak past the security officers”
 - Loneliness, outcast, chilly climate
 - Mirrors in fun house reflect this outcast image to all
- Women need support so they feel like they **genuinely** belong and are welcomed!



Challenges

- Cross-gender mentoring relationships common but complicated
 - Hugely successful
 - Needed!
- But...
 - Need to find areas of identity overlap (something in common?)
 - Experiences/obstacles are different (e.g., loneliness, hobbies like hunting, raising children)
 - Perception of more transmission than interdependent relationship
 - Male mentors often are challenged by things like providing constructive criticism
 - Women don't need rescued → disempowering



Opportunities

- Mentors need to establish clear goals & understand mentee's needs
 - Reflective
 - Consider where/when you meet
 - Generational gaps and cross-gender challenges (dinner, drinks vs coffee shop, etc...)
 - Length of mentoring relationship (longer = better)



Opportunities

- Women need to see other women in STEM
 - But there are a limited number of female mentors
 - Be good examples but not all the mentoring can fall on women
 - Require male mentors
 - Tips/Advice
 - *Athena Rising: How and Why Men Should Mentor Women* (Johnson and Smith 2016)
 - *Challenges and Supports for Women Conservation Leaders* (Jones and Solomon 2019, *Conservation Science and Practice*)



What are women looking for in mentors?

- “I am a student and the outcome of a mentoring relationship I seek is to have a long lasting (positive) relationship with my mentor. I want to be able to discuss **career/life choices** with my mentor **years after** I have been under their supervision”
- “...a relationship that allows for **continuous growth** is the perfect outcome”
- Women often report a desire for mentoring that **integrates career and interpersonal needs** (Johnson and Smith 2016).
 - Mentor who “gets it” and “truly honors it”

What are women looking for in mentors?

- **Connections/networking**...I am super appreciative of the connections they can provide me and the introductions they can make. Those are invaluable in this field and would be tough to make without mentors.
- **Feedback**... I constantly want to know how I'm doing relative to my peers and I think mentors often have a good perspective on this.
 - They **LISTEN** and give constructive **feedback**
- **Reassurance**. It's nice to know you have someone on your side when field work is miserable or you're struggling with a tough analysis.

What does success look like?

- **Passionate** about gaining/distributing knowledge
- **Compassionate** and **understanding**
- Always **honest** ...being **flexible**, and **adapting** to new methods ...
- **Encouraging** and **supportive**
- **Encourage collaboration**
- They **don't allow for toxic situations/relationships** to form
- They are **self aware** and realize when mentees are stressed/stuck/unable to regroup on their own and **employ assistance** when needed.
- They realize that **mental health** is important and burn outs are real/detrimental
- They encourage a **balanced life** and try to **lead by example**

What does successful mentoring look like?

- Descriptions include (Amelink 2008, Johnson and Smith 2016):
 - Welcoming, communicating, trusting, accepting, **affirming**, forgiving, reframing, letting go, rejoicing, balancing, focusing, gracing
- Good mentors:
 - Open doors, find opportunities, challenge mentees to grow, do it regardless of gender!



Mentees

- Mentees have responsibilities in relationship
- Patience, understanding (mentors are learning too)
- Clear expectations that are communicated
- Realistic expectations of availability and what mentor can do for them
- Consider multiple mentors and even peer mentos



What will you do with your mentor/mentee at this conference?

- Challenge you:
 - Create a metaphor – what do you want this relationship to look like?
 - What are your goals?
 - What kind of mentoring are you seeking (mentee)?
 - What kind of mentor are you (mentor)?
 - Decide what are reasonable meeting expectations (how often can/should you meet).
 - Are you providing same opportunities to your mentees?



Thank You

- Organizers of Symposium
- Feedback from students and members of organizing committee
- All of our mentors and mentees
- All of you for being here!

