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Johnson, W. B. (2007). *On Being a Mentor: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

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W. Brad Johnson (2007) describes that the purpose of his book *On Being a Mentor* is to guide faculty who are preparing for their first student relationships and to assist any other faculty member who seeks to hone and refine their mentoring abilities. Johnson defines mentoring, identifies effective mentoring strategies, examines the unique issues and challenges of mentoring, and addresses how to manage dysfunctional mentoring relationships. Johnson argues that of all the professional activities of the academic life, mentoring is the most rewarding. In fact, Daniel Levinson (1978), who first contributed to a growing interest in mentoring, argued that the mentor relationship is the most important relationship in a person's young adult development. Research has shown that those who are mentored have more opportunities and success in their careers than those who are not. A good example is the number of U.S. Nobel laureates who were mentored by older Nobel laureates (more than half).

The term mentoring has been used to cover a wide range of relationships from advising and supervising to a more meaningful and bonded relationship between an older and younger person. Johnson admits there is no formal operational definition, but there are significant descriptions in the literature of the mentoring relationship itself. Daniel Levinson (1978) described mentoring as where the mentor acts as a teacher, sponsor, host or guide, and welcomes a new person into the social or occupational circumstance and teaches the young person the values, customs, resources and personal dynamics found in the organization. Kram (1985) describes that a mentor guides a young adult as he or she develops mastery of the workplace. Blackwell (1989) states that mentoring is the process where a person of superior rank guides, instructs and counsels the intellectual and/or career pursuits of the protégé. The protégé is influenced by the personal standards and ethics of the mentor, and becomes more visible in the mentor's network of colleagues. Collins (1994) describes that mentoring is an interpersonal relationship between two people who are at different stages of their careers, with the mentor facilitating the professional development of the protégé. Whatever the description, some common features seem to be a part of the mentor relationship:

They are enduring, personal relationships
They are reciprocal relationships
Mentors demonstrate more achievement and experience than the protégé
Mentors provide career assistance
Mentors provide social and emotional support
Mentors serve as models
Mentoring can result in identity transformation
Mentorships are a safe harbor for self-exploration

Mentorships are extremely beneficial, but all too infrequent (Johnson, p. 22).

In spite of the importance of mentor relationships, Levinson (1978) found there was both a lack of quantity and quality of these types of relationships in the academic setting. This is in part due to the institutional tendency to discourage supportive behavior and reward faculty for other kinds of behavior, such as research and publishing. Mentoring is rarely taught and often not rewarded. This is unfortunate, argues the author, because the benefits of mentoring are reaped by students, junior faculty, senior faculty and the institution itself. Mentorships are so important that scholars like Weil

argue that departments and faculty have a "moral responsibility to devise a system of roles and structures to meet students' needs for mentoring" (Johnson, 2007, p. 5). According to Johnson, mentoring can increase academic performance, productivity, income levels and rate of promotion, career status, career satisfaction and reduce stress and role conflicts in the lives of protégés'. Those who have mentored cite benefits as well, including personal satisfaction and fulfillment, creative synergy and professional rejuvenation, networking, motivation to remain current, friendship and support and a reputation of talent development. Organizations that foster mentoring often have more productive employees, more organizational commitment, reduced turnover and more loyalty from both faculty and alumni. Johnson explains that research also shows that "mentoring begets mentoring" (p. 13). Those who have positive experiences based on mentoring relationships are more likely to become mentors themselves.

Johnson identifies some of the obstacles that reduce the number of mentoring relationships found on college/university campuses. One is an organizational obstacle where the systems of promotion and tenure rarely count mentoring as a factor of evaluation. Even in organizations that tout learning environments and personal mentoring, their criteria for promotion does not support this claim. In most colleges and universities, advancement is based primarily on research and publication, with teaching taking a secondary, but important role. Another organizational obstacle is the number of part-time faculty on campuses who are not as able to offer strong mentoring relationships to students. Departments in colleges can also create obstacles to mentoring. For example, in many graduate programs, there is so much competition, the environment is not conducive to mentoring. Only after weathering the pressure of the first courses and stresses of a graduate program is a student likely to find the support of a mentor available. "Sadly, by the time these students garner support form a faculty advisor, they are often beyond the stage during which mentoring may be most helpful" (p. 16). Another obstacle, of course, is that not all professors have the personalities or qualities to develop a successful mentoring relationship, for whatever reason.

A true and effective mentoring relationship is transformational, according to Johnson. The mentor inspires the student/protégé, reveals new ways of understanding, "and motivates one to transcend who one is to become…" (p. 25). Johnson adds lengthy examples of mentoring relationships to highlight certain sections of the book. He describes the functions of a mentor in detail and shows how someone can become a more effective mentor. He includes case studies to examine different issues that are relevant in the mentoring relationship. Throughout the book, Johnson cites hundreds of studies and publications that address the many aspects of mentoring he discusses, validating many of his claims through a plethora of academic references, examples and case studies. He describes the pitfalls and even myths of mentoring, including obstacles based on race or sex, and some of the reasons why negative mentoring relationships are experienced. For example, when someone is obviously being mentored, other students might alienate and reject that student out of jealousy. If the relationship is between two members of the opposite sex, sexual involvement is usually assumed. All throughout the book, Johnson is very persuasive in showing why mentoring is invaluable and highlights the need for most universities and colleges to emphasize the mentoring relationship much more than currently is done. This book is an excellent contribution to university administrators and faculty who hold the key to a much more fulfilling and promising experience for students. I would recommend the book to anyone hoping to become an educator, whether through the classroom experience or through administering an educational facility. Johnson convinces the reader not only of the importance of mentoring to the student's future, but to the future of the academic experience in general and the great benefits that could be accrued if only mentoring was taken more seriously at both the faculty and organizational levels.