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An Evaluation of Factors Leading to Mentor Satisfaction

By

Shannon Martin

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

In

Clinical Psychology

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Mankato, Minnesota

May 2011

An Evaluation of Factors Leading to Mentor Satisfaction

Shannon Martin

This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the thesis committee.

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# An Evaluation of Factors Leading to Mentor Satisfaction

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May 2011

This study assessed for factors related to mentor satisfaction. Eighty-one youth mentors were surveyed to evaluate for the effect of training, agency support, and confidence on mentor satisfaction. Linear regressions showed that greater perceived training and confidence significantly predicted greater mentor confidence, and agency support marginally supported this relationship. These findings show the need for agencies to provide initial training, ongoing support, and to ensure their mentors are confident in their abilities to be a mentor to guarantee that their mentors are satisfied.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The benefits of mentoring have been well documented in the literature. Rhodes (2002) states that the areas in which mentors can influence their mentees are by improving social skills, cognitive skills, emotional well-being, and can give the mentee positive attention as well serving as a role model. Mentoring can be beneficial at many points in a person's life. The literature is divided into three categories: youth mentoring, academic mentoring, and workplace mentoring (Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2008). As each of these categories has their own intricacies, this paper will focus on youth mentoring.

Youth mentoring is defined as relationships between older mentors who provide support, encouragement, and care to younger mentees (Eby, Rhodes, & Allen, 2007). The purpose of these relationships is to provide support to youth who may be lacking positive adult relationships in their lives. The role of mentors is to model good behavior and be a source of information and guidance to their youth mentee. While such relationships may form spontaneously either at school or within the community, much of the focus of current investigation is the matching of youth and adult mentors through formalized programs (Keller, 2007). The author states that naturally forming mentoring relationships are more difficult to monitor, and researchers are unable to collect baseline data prior to the start of the relationship.

Formal youth mentoring programs are managed by an outside source, such as a community supported program. The formalized institution is responsible for matching a

youth and mentor, providing training and support to the mentor, and monitoring the matched pairs. The level of support and training can vary from program to program, even though these are factors that lead to successful relationships between mentor and mentee (Miller, 2007).

Research suggests that structured programs with established guidelines often result in better outcomes for the youth. Outcomes from mentoring relationships are more beneficial when mentors have ongoing support available from the matching agency, ongoing mentor training, and a specified amount of contact frequencies (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002). Rhodes, Grossman, & Roffman (2002) found that mentoring programs without training and periodic supervision achieve modest effects at best.

Mentoring is currently receiving increased attention in the media; however, there is a lack of peer reviewed research on the topic (Rhodes, 2002). Eby et al. (2008) caution policy makers not to overestimate the benefits of mentoring, as there are many factors that go into a beneficial mentoring relationship, which if not met, can lead to negative outcomes.

Mentoring seems to provide benefits to both the mentor and mentee; however, this may be based on speculation rather than fact (Rhodes, 2002). While improvements in cognitive skills, social skills, self worth, and decreases in misbehavior and conduct can be seen, the effects of a mentoring relationship can actually harm a mentee's self worth (Rhodes; De Wit et al., 2007). This is especially true when the relationship lasts less than six months, as the benefits of a mentoring relationship appear to accumulate over time (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Rhodes; Rhodes et al., 2002). Miller (2007) states that a



minimum commitment of six months should be made, although 12 months is optimal for positive mentoring outcomes.

DuBois and Neville (1997) found that mentors who reported spending more time with their mentee felt more emotionally close, and reported better relationship outcomes. De Wit et al. (2007) found that in an evaluation of the United State's largest mentoring program, the Big Brother/Big Sister program, youth did not significantly improve in areas such as substance use, conduct, aggression, and misbehavior at school in the short term. They hypothesized that this comes with time and that the most important thing a mentor can do is model a stable long-term healthy relationship to the youth.

### **The Brother Sister Program**

The Brother Sister program is managed by the Y of Mankato, Minnesota with support of the United Way (and not part of the Big Brother/Big Sister Program). The program is currently comprised of about 145 adult mentors and 170 mentees, which is an increase from 130 mentees in 2009. The program suggests that mentors spend two to three hours a week with their mentee. As there are increasing numbers of mentees, some mentors spend time with more than one youth, or spend time at weekly events for unmatched youth. Though the program requires mentors to make at least a nine month commitment to the program, identifying factors to ensure longer-term commitment to the program and mentor satisfaction is important (Ojanpa, 2010).

There is, therefore, the need to evaluate the factors that lead to mentor retention and satisfaction within the literature. Deutsche and Spencer (2009) state that evaluations of the mentoring process need to occur on two distinct aspects: the mentoring relationship itself and the mentoring program. While there is much literature on the effects of

mentoring relationships on the mentees, there has been minimal focus on the mentors themselves and how the mentoring program can best benefit them.

### **Training**

Miller (2007) states that effective training procedures are a best practice principle for effective mentoring programs. Parra, DuBois, Neville, Pugh-Lilly, and Povinelli (2002) noted that even a minimal amount of training led to better relationship outcomes. Mentors develop their ideas and expectations of the mentoring process during the training period, which are later related to successful mentoring outcomes (MENTOR, 2009). It is through training that mentors learn about their target group and become familiar with the procedures of the matching agency. Mentor familiarity with the matching agency allows them to approach agency staff for future support if problems with the match are to arise (Miller, 2007).

Weinberger (2005) suggest that training should begin before the mentor is matched with the mentee to discuss general program policies, before getting into specifics. This ensures that the mentors are familiar with all policies, and are comfortable with the program itself before meeting with their mentee. Other topics such as confidentiality, suspected abuse, boundaries between mentor and mentee, and gift giving should also be addressed.

Training should not end when the mentor is matched. Research has shown that ongoing training is linked to positive outcomes for the youth mentees (DuBois et al., 2002). Stukas and Tanti (2005) state that training that focuses on the actual mentoring experience, and that is ongoing, is an important factor in mentor retention. Herrera, Sipe, and McClanahan (2000) found that mentors build the most close and supportive

relationships with their mentees if they receive more than six hours of training. They also found that mentors who receive two hours of training or less form the least close relationships with their mentees.

Deutsch and Spencer (2009) state that follow up from the matching agency is imperative in positive outcomes. They state that with regular follow up and support small problems can be kept from becoming larger scale problems that may lead to the end of a relationship and help guide mentors who are struggling in their relationship. Spencer (2007) cautioned that agency support needs to happen in moderation; too little or too much involvement can lead to detrimental effects on the mentoring relationship. This support is especially important in the beginning of a match when mentor and mentee are familiarizing themselves with one another (Miller, 2007).

### **Agency Support**

Matching agencies that are responsive to the ongoing needs of their mentors are more likely to have higher mentor retention and satisfaction (Stukas & Tanti, 2005). Mentors in these programs also report longer relationships with their mentee. This support can come not only from the matching agency, but also through support groups of mentors. These groups can serve to create a social network of mentors to discuss issues, goals, and clarify expectations.

Weinberger (2005) stresses that ongoing support from the matching agency is critical to the success of the mentoring relationship. The author suggests that maintaining close contact with the pair during the first two weeks of a match is important, and then monthly contact is sufficient. Herrera et al. (2000) state that matching agencies should have at least monthly contact with their mentors to ensure that mentors form close and

supportive relationships with their mentees. The authors found that mentors who receive more support from the matching agency spend more time per month with their mentee, therefore building closer and more satisfying relationships.

Stukas and Tanti (2005) hypothesize that ongoing support for the matching agency allows mentors to continue to build skills needed to have a close relationships with their mentees, ending in greater mentor satisfaction. This ongoing support also allows the agency to monitor any goals the mentor has identified and assist them in reaching them; thus, leading to mentors who are more satisfied in their relationships (Snyder, Clary, & Stukas, 2000).

### **Confidence**

Rice and Brown (1990) recognized the importance of confidence in one's mentoring abilities. Bandura (1980) defined self-efficacy as the judged ability one has to complete a given task. He found that people will not do well on tasks they believe surpass their level of competence. Conversely, he found that people will spend more time and energy on those tasks that they feel confident completing.

Parra et al. (2002) reported that mentors who had higher self-reported efficacy ratings spent more time with their mentee and reported having closer and better relationships with their mentees. Confidence can be built through initial or ongoing training for those mentors who may initially state a low level of confidence in their abilities to become a youth mentor (Parra et al.). Confidence in the mentoring relationship can lead to increased time spent with a mentee and, therefore, more satisfaction with the relationship.

Karcher, Nakkula, and Harris (2005) found that a mentor's perceived self-efficacy and motivation are extremely important variables, especially in the beginning of a match. They found that self-efficacy and motivation mediated the relationship between risk status and favorable mentoring outcomes. They stated that mentors with higher self-efficacy at the beginning of the match were better at making their mentee feel supported and important throughout the relationship.

### **Hypotheses**

Based on past research indicating a link between training, support, and confidence and mentor satisfaction, the hypotheses of this study are threefold. First, mentors who perceive higher quality of training from the Brother/Sister program will be more satisfied in the relationship with their mentee. Second, higher perceived support from the Brother/Sister staff will lead to greater mentor satisfaction. Third, mentors who feel more confident in their mentoring abilities will feel greater satisfaction overall with the relationship with their mentee.

## CHAPTER II

### METHODS

#### **Participants**

Eighty-one mentors participated in the study. The ethnic composition of the sample was 90.1% non-Latino Caucasian, 1.2% Multi-racial, 2.5% Asian/Pacific Islander, 2.5% African American, and 1.2% American Indian. Census data from the US Census Bureau for the Mankato, Minnesota area served as a comparison point (US Census Bureau, 2009). Chi squared analysis showed the sample was representative of the ethnic composition of the population from which it was drawn,  $\chi^2(4) = 4.75, ns$ . The average age of the participants was 30.34 ( $SD = 12.94$ , range = 19-70). In the sample, 14.8% graduated from high school or earned their GED, 11.1% had an Associate's Degree, 56.8% had a Bachelor's Degree, 12.3% had a Master's Degree, and 3.7% earned a Doctoral Degree. Census data for the Mankato Minnesota area was reviewed, and the sample was more educated than the general population from which it was drawn,  $\chi^2(3) = 68.75, p < .001$ .

#### **Procedures**

Data collection was conducted in three waves as part of a larger program evaluation of the Brother Sister Program, at six month intervals. At each time, the Y gave an updated list of mentors to be contacted. Each mentor was given a unique identification number that remained the same throughout the data collection process. Though some mentors returned surveys at more than one time, this research was only interested in unique responders from each time, so each mentor was only included in the study the first time he or she responded, although some mentors did not respond until

after they had been contacted more than once. All mentors entering the program undergo the same orientation and are provided the same amount of training. As some mentors have been part of the program for a longer period of time than others, some mentors may have received more support over the length of their involvement with the Brother Sister program.

Time one surveys were completed at a group mentoring Y event in a mid-sized Midwestern town. Mentors were approached and asked if they would like to participate in the study, and those who agreed were given a survey to return by the end of the event. Surveys were then mailed out to all mentors who did not fill out a survey at the event, along with a stamped envelope, to be returned by mail. Thirty-six out of 99 mentors completed the survey, for a response rate of 36.4%. Ten of these surveys were completed in person at the Y events, and the other 26 surveys were collected via mail.

Time two data collection was done online, per the request of the Y. The mentors were contacted via email, with a note requesting their participation in the study. The email contained a link that directed the mentors to the survey on Survey Monkey©. There were a small number ( $N = 2$ ) of mentors for which we did not have email addresses. These mentors were mailed a letter containing the same information that was in the email, and information on how to access the online survey. Seventeen out of 93 mentors completed the survey, for an overall response rate of 18.28%. Of the seventeen mentors who completed the survey, eight were repeat responders, bringing the number of participants with usable data for time two to nine. All surveys collected were from mentors who were contacted by email.

Time three data collection was done in an identical manner to time two. All surveys were sent by email, except for a small number of mentors who were contacted by mail (N = 4). Initially we received 33 responses out of 98, for a response rate of 33.67%. Of the mentors who responded, 32 had been contacted by email and one was contacted by mail, and all responses were collected online.

In effort to increase our response rate for time three, we followed up with non responders with telephone contact. The 65 mentors who had not initially completed the survey were called and asked if they had received the survey, and if they would like to participate in the study. They were given the option to be emailed a link to the survey, mailed a hard copy, or if they wanted to complete the survey over the phone. 52 out of 98 mentors completed the survey, for an overall response rate of 53.06%. Of the 52 mentors who completed the survey, 15 were repeat responders, bringing the number of participants with usable data from time three to 37. The three data collection periods yielded a final sample size of 81.

### **Measure**

The first part of the survey consisted of 33 questions that were created to gather demographic information and information about the mentoring relationship. The relevant literature was reviewed to identify common factors related to mentor retention and satisfaction as well as factors that have been noted to impact the mentoring relationship on the mentee. Similar to studies in the mentoring literature, this part of the survey was a non standardized measure, and created specifically for our purposes (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005). Questions were asked about how much training and ongoing support the mentor felt they received from the Brother/Sister staff, their previous experience in



helping roles, and their perceived level of competence as a mentor. Other information was gathered about how often the mentor and mentee met, what sorts of activities they engaged in, areas in which they believe their mentee has improved over the course of their relationship, and how long they planned on being a mentor.

Three questions from this section of the survey will be used in analysis as our independent variables. They include: “How would you rate the quality of the training to be a Brother/Sister that you have received,” “How would you rate the quality of support you’ve received from the Brother/Sister program staff,” and “How comfortable do you feel about your abilities as a Big Brother/Sister.” These three factors have been identified by other groups and have been assessed for using similar, non standardized measures (DuBois & Neville, 1997; Grossman, 2005; Parra et al., 2002).

The rest of the survey included items from the Network of Relationships Inventory (NRI), which consists of 33, five-point scale questions (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). The questions fit into 11 subscales including: reliable alliance, enhancement of worth, instrumental help, companionship, affection, intimacy, relative power of the child and the other, conflict, satisfaction, nurturance, and punishment. Each subscale consists of three questions, and scale scores are found by summing the responses of the three corresponding items. Furman and Buhrmester found the internal consistency of these scales to be good, with a Cronbach’s Alpha = .80. In another study, Furman and Buhrmester (1992) found that the NRI yielded a Cronbach’s Alpha = .81.

The satisfaction subscale of the NRI will be used in analyses. The three questions that make up the subscale are as follows: “How satisfied are you with your relationship with your little,” “how happy are you with the way things are between you and your

little,” and “how good is your relationship with your little.” Reliability of this subscale was good, with a Cronbach’s Alpha = .92.

The NRI is a unique measure, as the user can change the question to fit the nature of the relationship they are trying to measure. This measure can be used to examine many types of relations such as familial relationships, friendships, or in this case, mentoring relationships. Goldner and Mayseless (2009) used the NRI to look at closeness and unrealistic expectations in mentoring relationships between college-aged mentors and their elementary-aged mentees. Cavell, Elledge, Malcolm, Faith, and Hughes (2009) also used the NRI to measure supportive mentoring relationships and mentoring conflict between second and third grade mentees and their college-aged mentors. It has been used by over 900 individuals and has been translated into different languages for use with different cultures (Furman & Buhrmester, 2009).

## CHAPTER III

## RESULTS

Because I wanted to look at the ability of several predictor variables (training, support, and confidence) to predict a criterion variable (satisfaction), linear regressions were used to see the effect of training, support, and confidence on mentor satisfaction, illustrated in Table 1. The assumption of normality was not met with data based on results of a Shapiro Wilk test, and all data is negatively skewed suggesting the results be interpreted with extreme caution. For the quality of training a mentor received, we found that our model was significant,  $F(1, 72) = 5.10, p < .05, R^2 = .07$ . We found this relationship to explain 7% of the variability in responding in the data. The relationship was consistent with our hypothesis such that greater training lead to greater mentor satisfaction. The relationship between mentor satisfaction and perceived support approached significance,  $F(1, 73) = 3.91, p = .05, R^2 = .05$ . Though it was not statistically significant, the relationship was in the predicted direction. Lastly, mentor satisfaction was significantly predicted by a mentor's confidence in their abilities,  $F(1, 73) = 7.21, p < .01, R^2 = .09$ . The stated relationship showed that those with greater confidence in their mentoring abilities were more satisfied, as expected. Descriptive statistics and frequencies of responses have also been calculated for training (Table 2), support (Table 3), and confidence (Table 3).

## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION

The results indicate training and confidence lead to higher levels of mentor satisfaction, and agency support marginally supports this relationship. These results are consistent with past research, which found that all three variables are important when predicting mentor satisfaction.

The support of our hypotheses shows the importance of support, training, and confidence to create mentor satisfaction and beneficial mentoring outcomes. Mentoring agencies should be aware of these findings and ensure that all mentors are receiving initial training, ongoing support, and that they feel confident entering the mentoring relationships. This is important as not only do mentoring programs have difficulty recruiting adequate numbers of mentors, but they also face challenges retaining those who volunteer (Stukas & Tanti, 2005). While the link between satisfaction and retention needs to be further explored, the current literature does support this relationship (DuBois et al., 2002; Herrera et al., 2000; Stukas & Tanti).

DuBoise et al. (2002) state in their meta-analysis that while a large number of agencies are providing initial training, few provide ongoing support. Our results indicate that ongoing support does marginally lead to increased satisfaction, so the failure to provide an adequate level of support may be an area in which agencies could improve.

Self-efficacy is an area that is less explored in the mentoring literature, but has implications for successful relationships as we found it is related to greater mentor satisfaction. Parra et al. (2002) found that mentor confidence lead to greater perceived

mentoring outcomes and time spent with a mentee. This finding speaks to the need for mentoring training and ongoing support by the agency (Parra et al.; Rice & Brown, 1990). Initial training may include an overview of the agency, what is expected of mentors, and skill building. This will ensure that mentors are confident going into the relationship. Ongoing support will provide a time for mentors to ask questions or solve problems they may not be confident in doing so on their own, allowing for the relationship to continue successfully.

The varied nature of data collection over the three times proved to be a limitation of the study. The variability between collecting data in person, through the mail, and over the internet may have affected responding to the survey. While our response rate was consistent with past research, it was not until time three that responses were received from at least half of the mentors. More efforts could have been made earlier in data collection (such as the follow up telephone contact at time three) to increase our response rates. More intensive efforts were not made earlier as per the mentoring agencies preferences and concerns about coercing participants, but the changes in data collection procedures appeased the mentoring agency and the still relatively low response rate and non-intrusive follow-up suggests that it is unlikely participants were coerced. While significant results were found, the effect sizes were small, and our data was not normally distributed; hence these results should be interpreted with extreme caution and the study should be repeated with a larger sample, which would hopefully be more normally distributed. In addition, the sample was non-diverse and our results may not generalize to other samples that are not predominantly non-Latino Caucasian; however, this is consistent with the ethnic composition of the population from which this sample came.

While this study found significant relationships between support, training, confidence, and satisfaction, this study examined perceived levels of each variable. No information was gathered on how much actual training a mentor received or how often they were contacted by the agency. Future research should assess if there is an ideal amount of each of these variables to lead to the greatest mentor satisfaction possible. It may also be beneficial to assess for *what kinds* of training or support are most beneficial to creating ideal mentoring outcomes.

The link between mentor retention and satisfaction should also be explored. Gathering data about the longevity of each mentor's participation in the program should be compared to their reported satisfaction. Additionally, future studies should take quality of the mentor relationship, and how many mentees each mentor had over their entire participation in the program. If a mentor was placed with a mentee they did not form a strong bond with initially, this may affect their satisfaction. It may be beneficial to gather information about how long a mentor has been involved with the program, and how long they have been meeting with each of their mentees, if they have had more than one.

Future studies could focus on the effect that student status has on mentor retention. Many mentors in the program were of college age, and are only participating in the program while they are attending classes at a local university. An analysis of factors that bring mentors back to the program after semester or summer breaks would be worthwhile.

As each mentor was assigned a unique identification number, future research could focus on longitudinal data of those mentors who responded at more than one time.

Qualitative interviewing of the mentor and their mentee could identify common factors of successful relationships, mentor retention, and satisfaction.

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Table 1

*Predictors of Mentor Satisfaction*

Variable	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>	F	95% CI
Training	.26*	.07	5.10*	[.08, 1.31]
Support	.23	.05	3.91	[-.01, 1.22]
Confidence	.30**	.09	7.21**	[.31, 2.10]

*Note.* N = 81. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 2

*Responses to How Would You Rate the Quality of Training to be a Brother/Sister That You Have Received*

Training	<i>N</i>
Very Poor	1
Poor	3
Adequate	21
Good	30
Excellent	19

*Note.*  $N = 74$ ,  $M = 3.85$ ,  $SD = .90$

Table 3

*Responses to How Would You Rate the Quality of Support You've Received from the Brother/Sister Program Staff*

Support	<i>N</i>
Poor	4
Adequate	16
Good	24
Excellent	31

*Note.*  $N = 75$ ,  $M = 4.09$ ,  $SD = .92$

Table 4

*Responses to How Comfortable do you Feel about Your Abilities as a Brother/Sister*

Confidence	<i>N</i>
Some	6
Quite a bit	40
Very much	29

*Note.*  $N = 75$ ,  $M = 4.31$ ,  $SD = .62$