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Abstract

Community mentoring programs target at-risk youth with the aim of providing them with a positive, stable adult presence in their lives. Relationship quality of the mentors and mentees has been linked to multiple external factors and youth outcomes. This study investigated mentor-mentee relationship quality (i.e., youth's perceived trust in his or her mentor) and the associations between the amount of time the pair spent together per week, parents' level of involvement in planning activities between their child and their mentor, and youth's improvement in commitment to learning. The correlations between trust and time, and between trust and commitment to learning were non-significant. Due to limited parental responses, parental involvement was analyzed qualitatively. Poor response rates limited the analyses. Other limitations of the study and future directions are discussed.

There are approximately 13.3 million at-risk children in the United States. These youth are characterized by a higher risk of school drop-out, alcohol and drug abuse, sexual promiscuity, teen pregnancy, crime, and violence (Children's Defense Fund, 2008). The National At-Risk Education Network (2011) defines at-risk youth as students who are experiencing a mismatch between their circumstances and their needs. For example, children may be at-risk for school drop-out if their school does not provide adequate academic and/or social resources to meet their full potential. Children may also qualify as socially and/or developmentally at-risk if they lack stable and positive support from parents or other adults in their lives. Community mentoring programs target at-risk youth by fostering a personal relationship between a child and an adult. This relationship aims to strengthen the mentee's social and academic skills and other personal characteristics that may help prevent youth from engaging in a destructive lifestyle. Mentoring provides at-risk youth with a caring role model with whom they can share personal concerns, accomplishments, interests, activities and from whom they can seek guidance and encouragement. For at-risk youth, mentors may be the only sources of consistent positive interpersonal support in their lives (Barron-McKeagney, Woody, & D'Souza, 2001). Effective mentoring relationships are based on trust, which mentors can foster through a consistent and dependable presence in their mentees' lives. Trust is also established through cooperation with the mentees' parents and it can lead to improved positive academic performance by the mentee.

DuBois and Karcher (2005) illustrate the definition of a mentor through three characteristics that should be offered within a the mentor-mentee relationship: A mentor

(1) represents someone with greater experience or wisdom than their mentee, (2) offers guidance or instruction that is intended to facilitate the growth and development of their mentee, and (3) facilitates an emotional bond between himself or herself and the mentee, the hallmark of which is a sense of trust.

Research in this area suggests that youth receive multi-faceted benefits from mentoring relationships spanning multiple domains of functioning. Youth mentoring has been associated with positive social functioning and improvement in interpersonal behaviors with peers (Converse & Lignugaris/Kraft, 2008; Goldner & Mayseless, 2009) as well as with adults (Thomson & Zand, 2010; Zand et al., 2009). In addition, participants in the Big Brother/Big Sister (BBBS) mentoring program in one particular community experienced a drop in social anxiety symptoms measured by fear of negative peer evaluation and generalized social distress (De Wit et al., 2007).

Mentoring has also been associated with improvements in academic functioning (i.e., grades) and academic competence (Goldner & Mayseless, 2009; Larose, Chaloux, Monaghan, & Tarabulsy, 2010; Thompson & Kelly-Vance, 2001) as well as behavioral improvements in academic settings, such as fewer office referrals and pro-social classroom participation (Dappen & Isernhagen, 2006). In other realms, youth mentoring has demonstrated benefits regarding emotional problems (De Wit et al., 2007) and positive life skills development (Zand et al., 2009).

The emotional support by adults and social engagement that mentoring facilitates has been found to be an integral component of the positive social development of children and adolescents (Head, 2010; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). In addition,

connectedness to adults who are not one's parent has been shown to be beneficial, especially for adolescents (Grossman & Bulle, 2006). Thus, a positive relationship with a non-parental adult such as a mentor should be expected to benefit a child's development.

Trust and the Mentoring Relationship

Research has identified trust as a key component in the facilitation of a quality relationship between mentors and mentees and in the likelihood for positive outcomes in youths' academic confidence and performance (Dappen & Isernhagen, 2006; DuBois & Karcher, 2005; Morrow & Styles, 1995; Wang, Tomlinson, & Noe, 2010). In an evaluation of a statewide youth mentoring program, respondents (i.e., teachers, parents, mentors, and student mentees) reported mentoring dynamics and behavior changes in students on 5-point Likert scales. The item "shows trust toward you" was rated highest overall on this scale, for both the urban and rural groups being measured. Student mentees also indicated trust-related components as valuable in open-ended responses, suggesting that trust is a key component to mentoring success across both urban and rural demographics (Dappen & Isernhagen, 2006).

Mentors who are effective at developing trust and establishing friendship with their mentees represent a consistent and dependable presence in their youth's life. They interact with the child on a regular basis so they can come to depend on communication and one-on-one time with their mentor. Additionally, effective mentors take responsibility for keeping their relationship alive by initiating contact with the youth and ensuring scheduled meetings rather than relying on the youth or youth's parent to facilitate interaction (Sipe, 2002).

Frequency of Contact and Trust

Building trust in a mentoring relationship occurs in the "growth and maintenance" phase of the relationship, which can exist for the entire duration of the relationship (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). This trust-building phase includes developing an agreement about the nature of the relationship (e.g., types of conversation topics, routines of behavior, types of support that will be provided, how conflict will be managed). This phase also includes self-disclosure by the mentor and the youth as well as providing social and emotional support for the mentee. The simplest, and arguably the most effective, way to facilitate trust-based engagements like self-disclosure and individual support is by building a relationship upon a foundation of talking and listening one-on-one. Mentors who have been viewed more positively by youth tend to engage in a higher percentage of talking with and listening to their mentees during their time together compared to mentors who reported negative relationship outcomes (Converse & Lignugaris/Kraft, 2009).

For the mentor to foster these behaviors and attitudes and for the "growth and maintenance" phase to be successful (i.e., youth develops trust in the mentor and their relationship), mentors must also remain a consistent and dependable presence in the youth's life (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). Abandonment by a mentor (i.e., the mentor failing to show up to scheduled meetings or infrequent or inconsistent contact) plays a primary role in youth's dissatisfaction with a mentoring program and disillusionment with the relationship (Spencer, 2007). Of the mentor-youth matches who actively adopted

this trust-building approach, 90% met on a regular and consistent basis, indicating a high correlation between trust and frequent mentor-youth contact (Morrow & Styles, 1995).

Studies have suggested that a positive view of mentors by their mentees correlates with higher frequency and length of mentoring sessions as well as the content of sessions; that is, time spent between mentor and mentee tend to be of a higher quality when the mentoring relationship is perceived as positive (Pedersen, Woolum, Gagne, & Coleman, 2009; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). For example, Rhodes and DuBois (2008) suggested that a positive mentoring relationship built upon mutual trust and empathy includes activities like tutoring, educational outings, and peer-based activities, mixed with activities that the youth identifies as fun and valuable. These activities foster social-emotional development, cognitive development, and identity development. Regarding the frequency of mentored sessions, Converse and Lignugaris/Kraft (2009), in an evaluation of a school-based mentoring program for at-risk youth ages 13 to 15, found a relationship between the amount of time mentor and youth spent together and the perceived quality of that relationship. Children in the program were interviewed about their experiences, answering questions about their mentors' levels of engagement, activities they participated in together, and important facets of their relationship. Mentors were then dichotomized into a "positively-viewed" group or a "negatively-viewed" group based on the number of positive and negative statements said about them by their mentees. Results indicated that mentors who were positively regarded by their mentees met an average of 15.3 times over an 18-week period, whereas mentors who were negatively regarded met an average of 3.8 times in the same 18-week period. Hence, sufficient time spent between

mentor and youth is a crucial factor in the development of positive perceptions of the mentor and in the development of an effective mentoring relationship.

Mentor-Parent Communication and Trust

Effective mentors are more likely to engage in frequent interactions and positive relationships with mentees' families. Overall, they are better acquainted with the mentee's families (Sipe, 2002). Mentoring programs that involve parents and encourage parent participation have shown greater success in shaping youth outcomes.

Parent or guardian engagement in the mentor-youth relationship may be a strong influence on the health of that relationship (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). For example, parents who are actively engaged in helping plan or facilitate activities are most likely encouraging frequent contact between their child and the child's mentor. Similarly, a collaborative relationship between parents and mentors and a shared responsibility for the child would be expected also to be linked to better mentee outcomes. Parents and mentors who regularly speak with their youth's mentor, either in person or on the phone, are more likely to trust the mentor, and in turn, model a trusting foundation from which the youth can build the relationship as well.

Barron-McKeagney and colleagues (2001), in an evaluation of The Family Mentoring Project for Latino youth, found that children whose mothers were involved in their mentoring activities also saw improvements in social skills and externalizing behavior problems. In contrast, negative family interference has been found to be one of six main contributing factors to poor mentoring relationships and even early termination of mentoring relationships (Spencer, 2007). Mentees are more likely to perceive the

relationship as disconnected if their parents express discontent with the relationship. Therefore, parental involvement is another key component in effectual mentoring relationships.

Trust and Academic Improvements

At-risk youth who perceive a sense of bonding and trust from their mentors demonstrate improvement in academic performance and academic confidence. Researchers have analyzed academic performance and confidence through a variety of measures including school attitude (i.e., school connectedness, peer connectedness) and frequency of office referrals (Converse & Lignugaris/Kraft, 2009). Analyses of the effectiveness of the Big Brother/Big Sister (BBBS) program in particular has suggested that participation in the program improves youths' academic functioning through quality of relationships with teachers, attachment to school, and academic achievement (i.e., grades; De Wit et al., 2007).

Similarly, Larose, Chaloux, Monaghan, and Tarabulsy (2010) found that academically at-risk college students who reportedly formed a respectful and friendly bond with their mentors were more likely than a control group to improve on measures of academic competence and school persistence and increase their classroom participation and disposition to seek help from teachers. Similarly, in an evaluation of the BBBS program by Thompson and Kelly-Vance (2001), at-risk youth who were paired with a mentor improved in academic performance, as measured by math scores and reading scores on the Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement Brief Form and the Kaufman Brief Intelligence Test, more dramatically than control youth who did not have a mentor.

Grossman and Bulle (2006) also found, in their review of mentoring programs, that quality of the mentor-youth relationship positively impacts youth's academic outcomes. Students with high-quality relationships with their mentors experienced significant reductions in school absences and better school attitudes and behaviors.

Hypotheses

Trust is a highly researched component to the mentor-youth bond and evaluations of mentoring programs have suggested that trust is a key factor to successful youth outcomes. Therefore, it is important to evaluate the factors related to trust in the mentor-youth relationship. Research has demonstrated strong associations between trust and youth engagement and participation in the program, parent participation in the mentor-youth relationship, and academic improvements. In light of this, the current evaluation proposes three hypotheses.

1. Youth's trust in his or her mentor will correlate with the amount of time spent together per week.
2. Youth's trust in his or her mentor will correlate with the extent to which parents are involved in their child's and his or her mentor's relationship.
3. Youth's trust in his or her mentor will correlate with reports of mentees' improvements in commitment to learning.

Methods

The Brother/Sister Program is a community-based youth mentoring program that pairs children ages 6 to 14 one-on-one with an adult mentor. The program, which is affiliated with The Y, serves at-risk youth and their mentors in a small metropolitan area

in Midwestern United States. The mentors commit to spending two to three hours a week with their mentees for at least nine months, or one school year (The Y, 2011).

Procedure

The Brother/Sister Program was evaluated over eighteen months, during which data was collected at three separate times. Initially, researchers attended a mentoring event at The Y and asked mentors, mentee youth, and mentees' parents to complete surveys. Mentors expressed concern that the surveys took time away from their mentees; procedures were then changed so that surveys were mailed to all mentors and youth families explaining that research was being conducted to help The Y learn how to improve the Brother/Sister Program and asking them to complete and return the enclosed survey (consent forms were to be returned in separate envelopes). The response rate was low and the cost was high, so the survey methodology was changed again.

Emails were sent to all mentors and mentees' parents using the same text as the letter and included links to the same survey that had been mailed, which was administered through Survey Monkey. Parents received links to two surveys – one for the parent to complete and one for the mentee to complete. Parents consented to the study and provided consent for their children to participate in the study through checking a box on the online survey. Only a small portion of surveys were completed after the first request. Parents and mentors who did not complete the surveys the first time were contacted by phone and reminded about the opportunity to fill them out. A second email with links to the surveys was sent to participants if they wished.

Participants

Responses from participants at times 1, 2, and 3 were combined for the analysis. A total of 120 unique participants – parents, children, and mentors – completed the survey out of approximately 300 total possible participants (i.e., approximately 100 youth, 100 mentors, and 100 parents). Thirty-one parents, all women, and 81 mentors, filled out the survey. Mentors ranged in age from 19 to 70 and represented varying education levels. There was one mentor with less than a high school diploma or GED, 12 mentors with a high school education or GED, 9 mentors with a two-year Associates degree, 46 with a Bachelor's degree, 10 with a Master's, and three mentors had doctoral degrees. The majority of mentors, 73, were Caucasian, two were Asian American, two were African American, one was American Indian, one reported being multiracial, and two mentors did not report ethnicity.

Eight children, ranging in age from 8 to 17, completed the survey. Half of the mentees reported their ethnicities as Caucasian, one was Latino, two reported as mixed race, and one reported as "other." Gender was not reported. Tables 1 and 2 indicate mentor and youth demographic information.

Table 1
Mentor Demographics

Degree	Sample %	*N*	Population %
Less than H.S. diploma or GED	1.2%	1	
H.S. diploma or GED	14.8%	12	
Associate's degree	11.1%	9	
Bachelor's degree	56.8%	46	33.1%
Master's degree	12.3%	10	
Doctoral degree	3.7%	3	

Ethnicity			
Caucasian	90.1%	73	89.9%
Asian American	2.5%	2	2.8%
African American	2.5%	2	4.0%
American Indian	1.2%	1	0.3%
Multiracial	1.2%	1	2.1%
Not reported	2.5%	2	

**Bachelor's degree or higher*

Table 2
Youth Demographics

Age	Sample %	*N*	Population %
8	12.5%	1	
10	25.0%	2	
11	50.0%	4	
17	12.5%	1	
Ethnicity			
Caucasian	50.0%	4	89.9%
Latino	12.5%	1	2.9%
Mixed Race	25.0%	2	2.1%
Other	12.5%	1	

Measures

The surveys asked parents, children, and mentors demographic questions including age, gender, and ethnicity. Mentors were also asked to report their education level. The mentors and mentees completed the Networks of Relationships Inventory (NRI) in regard to the mentoring relationship (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). The NRI was developed as a measure of children's perceptions of the characteristics of their relationships based on a theory of social provisions. It consists of 30 questions that assess 10 relationship qualities: (a) reliable alliance, (b) enhancement of worth, (c) instrumental help or guidance, (d) companionship, (e) affection, (f) intimacy, (g) relative power of the

child and other, (h) conflict, (i) satisfaction, and (j) importance of the relationship. Furman and Buhrmester (1985) used the NRI to measure children's perceptions of these qualities in their social relationships with a mother or step-mother, father or step-father, grandparent, older brother, younger brother, older sister, younger sister, best friend, and teacher. The questionnaire designed for the Brother/Sister Program evaluation addressed youth perceptions of these qualities in their relationships with mentors.

Trust between the youth and his or her mentor was measured through three child survey questions from the NRI: "How much do you tell your Big everything?", "How much do you share your secrets and private feelings with your Big?" and "How much do you talk to your Big about things you don't want others to know?" The youth's responded to these questions on a 1 to 5 scale: 1 – little or none, 2 – somewhat, 3 – very much, 4 – extremely much, and 5 – the most. The scores for these questions were averaged to compute a "trust" variable that was used for the analyses. Similarly, the parents' reports of their children's improvements in commitment to learning was rated on a scale of 0 to 4: 0 – none, 1 – little, 2 – some, 3 – much, and 4 – very much.

Psychometric analyses revealed that internal consistencies of scaled scores were satisfactory ($\alpha = .80$). Other analyses revealed reliability for the child scales ($\alpha = .88–.92$) and mentor scales ($\alpha = .91–.94$) as good to excellent (Cavell, Elledge, Malcolm, Faith, & Hughes, 2009). Strong intercorrelations between measures of positive relationship qualities ($r = .46$, $p < .001$) and negative relationship qualities ($r = .34$, $p < .001$) have also been found (Banny, Heilbron, Ames, & Prinstein, 2011). Respondents rated their answers on a five-point scale.

Additional questions for the survey were developed by reviewing the youth mentoring literature to determine characteristics of mentor-mentee relationships that would be relevant for a survey designed for the Brother/Sister Program. The number of hours per week that mentors and mentees spend in-person, on the phone, or online together was asked of parents, mentors, and mentees. Respondents rated the time spent together as a 1 (1-2 hours together per week), 2 (3-6 hour per week), or 3 (6 or more hours per week). Parents were asked how they were involved in planning activities between youth and mentor and how much has the youth improved in their commitment to learning.

Results

A Pearson correlation was run to determine the association between youths' trust in his or her mentor and the amount of time spent between mentors and mentees per week. The correlation indicated a non-significant association between the two variables ($r = .23$, $p = .71$). The analysis also yielded a non-significant correlation between trust and parents' reports of their children's improvement in commitment to learning ($r = .56$, $p = .19$). The evaluation of trust and parental involvement in the mentor-mentee relationship required responses from parents to the open-ended question, “How are you involved in planning activities with your youth and his/her mentor?” Seven parents responded to this question; however, only one parent responded whose child also completed the survey. Because the relationship between parental involvement and trust could not be analyzed statistically, and because the conclusions – although non-significant – from the analyses

should be taken with caution due to such few data points used in the correlation, results of each participant are also presented individually.

Participant 1

In this match, the mentor was 21 years old and the child was 11 years old. The mentee rated, on average, a trust in his/her mentor as 1.57 out of 5. Taking into account the mentor, child, and parent reports, this match scored an average of 1.25 on time spent together, meaning, overall the respondents reported this match spending 1 to 2 hours together per week. Finally, the parent reported a 4 – very much improved – in their child's improvement in commitment to learning.

Participant 4

The mentor in this match was also 21 years old. The child was 8 years old and rated low trust in his/her mentor (1.00 out of 5). The child, mentor and parent reported that the mentor and mentee spent, on average, 3 to 6 hours per week together. And the parent rated their child's improvement in commitment to learning at a 2 – some improvement.

Participant 83

The mentor was 34 years old and the youth was 10 years old. This match yielded similar responses to Participant 4. He/she also reported a low level of trust in the mentor (1.00). On average, the dyad spent 1 to 2 hours per week together and the parent also rated the child a 2 on improvement in commitment to learning.

Participant 125

The mentor in this dyad was older than average at 56 years. The child was 10 years old and also rated his/her trust in the mentor at 1.00. The pair spent, on average, 1 to 2 hours per week together and the parent reported her child's improvement in academic commitment as a 4 – very much improved.

Participant 161

The mentor was 27 years old while the child was 10 years old. He/she reported trust in the mentor somewhat higher than the other seven mentees (3.25). The participants reported an average time score as 1.67, indicating that the pair spent, on average, spent 3 to 6 hours per week together. The parent reported that her child improved "very much" in his/her commitment to learning throughout the mentoring relationship, with a rating of 4. The parent of this youth was the only matched parent who completed the question regarding her involvement in the mentoring relationship. She reported a low level of involvement in planning activities: "Not much because I don't speak English. I let my daughter tell her mentor to go with her Big Sister to the library and ask her for advice on homework."

Participant 101

For this match, the youth's mentor did not complete the survey, so the trust rating was obtained from the child and the academic improvement rating was obtained from the parent, but the amount of time spent between mentor and youth was calculated using only youth and parent reports. The child's age was not reported. Trust was rated at 1.00 and the amount of time spent together (1 to 2 hours per week) and academic improvement (1.00) were rated similarly low.

Participant 74

The mentor in this match also did not complete the survey. The child's age was not reported. Both trust (2.00) and academic improvement (3 – much improvement) were rated slightly higher than most of this group's ratings in these categories. The child and parent reported the mentor-mentee pair spending 1 to 2 hours per week together.

Table 3
Individual Brother-Sister Survey Results

Participant ID	Child Age	Mentor Age	Trust	Hours/week Score	Academic Improvement	Parental Involvement
161	10	27	3.25	1.67	4	Not much because I don't speak English. I let my daughter tell her mentor to go with her Big Sister to the library and ask her for advice on homework.
74	n/a	n/a	2	1	3	n/a
1	11	21	1.57	1.25	5	n/a
125	11	56	1.5	1	4	n/a
4	8	21	1	2	2	n/a
83	10	34	1	1	2	n/a
101	n/a	n/a	1	1	1	n/a

Discussion

Table 3 presents all participants' responses and is arranged by decreasing level of trust. The correlations evaluating the relationship between the children's trust in their mentors and the amount of time spent together and their improvement in commitment to learning both yielded non-significant results. One explanation for these non-significant correlations is that, at least in this sample, a relationship did not exist between trust and time spent together and academic improvement. The other important contributor to the null results is the lack of power in the analyses due to small sample size. Furthermore, there was limited variability in responses. Five of the seven participants rated trust in their mentor as 1 to 1.57 indicating that, most of the time, youth shared secrets and feelings and talked to their mentor about personal topics very little or not at all. On average, pairs spent between one and two hours per week together either in-person, on the phone, or online.

Because of the small sample size, making accurate inferences from this sample is impossible. For this reason, individual responses were reported in a case study format in addition to the statistics meant to display individual results that may better represent individual participants. The relationship between time together and reported trust varied. Participant 161, who reported the highest level of trust in his/her mentor (i.e., $M = 3.25$), also yielded the second highest amount of time spent together (i.e., a score of 1.67 or, on average, 3 to 6 hours per week). On the contrast, Participant 4 reported the most time together (i.e., a score of 2 or 3 to 6 hours per week) but reported a low level of trust (i.e., $M = 1$)

One factor that was not accounted for in this analysis was a breakdown of how much time mentors spent with their mentees within each separate medium (i.e., in person, on the phone, or online). Participants were only asked to report their total contact in any of these capacities. Arguably, in-person contact may provide more opportunities to foster a greater sense of trust than communicating over the phone or online. Knowing how each pair spent their time together would allow us to more fully analyze the results.

Parent-reported improvement in academic commitment maximized the range, spanning from 1 to 5. Participants 1, 125, 161, and 74, who yielded the greatest academic improvements, also reported the highest level of trust in their mentors. These results give the best support for the hypotheses out of any in this study. It is plausible that, if the sample size were larger, significant results could be found in support of the hypothesis that trust is associated with academic improvement.

The way in which trust was measured may have influenced these results. Participants were not explicitly asked to report how much they trusted their mentors; therefore, trust, in this study, can only be referenced as a measurement of the extent to which mentees talked to their mentors, and shared with their mentors secrets, thoughts, feelings, and other things they would not want others to know. These three separate questions may be indicative of trust, but by asking about trust directly, responses may have been more salient and more variable.

Unfortunately, the number of comments received in response to the parent's level of involvement in the mentoring relationship made it impossible to evaluate this variable statistically. The one response from the parent of participant 161 indicated little

involvement in the planning of activities and interactions between her child and the child's mentor. Nevertheless, this participant reported the highest trust rating in the sample (3.25). This countered the expectation from the literature that more parental participation in their child's relationships would increase the likelihood that the child would also report a greater degree of trust in his/her mentor. These results may be explained by the demographic uniqueness of the parent. She reported not speaking English, which caused difficulty communicating with the mentor. This language barrier likely accounted for the discrepancy in trust and parental involvement.

Limitations

There were a number of limitations in this study. Throughout the study, data collection was a challenge. Repeated attempts through email and phone calls were made to obtain as many responses as possible. Yet, the primary and arguably most detrimental limitation was the small sample size. A total of approximately 300 individuals (children, parents, and mentors) are involved in the Brother/Sister program, but only 120 participants completed the survey. A much greater number of mentors completed the survey than mentees or parents. This is possibly due to the level of priority the Brother/Sister program took for mentors compared to the parents. Parents may have been too busy to place a lengthy survey high on their priority list. Perhaps, also, mentors – more so than parents – saw the importance and value in completing the survey for research and programmatic purposes, and therefore, were more likely to take the time to complete it.

Unfortunately, responses from the group who were most necessary for these analyses, the mentees, were also the most difficult to obtain. A total of eight children completed the survey; however, of these, only five children matched up with their mentors and parent who also completed the survey. Therefore, for the trust-time analysis (n = 5) and trust-academic improvement analysis (n = 7), the small sample size greatly impacted the strength of the correlation.

Another factor that limited the results of this study was the lack of variability in responses. The limited number of participants made it challenging to obtain a varied sample. For example, three out of seven participants reported an average trust rating of 1.00 while four of the seven reported spending an average of 1.00 hour per week together.

The demographics of the area in which data were collected may have also been a limitation. Data were collected in a small metropolitan area in the Midwest, and the Brother-Sister Program was evaluated on the extent to which it met the needs and affected the outcomes of at-risk youth. This sample may not have presented as socioeconomically or academically at-risk compared to populations in larger urban areas, which could have contributed to the lack of variability in the data and lack of potency to the intervention. Youth mentoring programs are meant to provide a positive and stable adult presence in the life of a child or adolescent who otherwise lacks this type of support. If children in the Brother-Sister Program in this area have already been receiving at least some teacher or parent support, their commitment to learning may have started out high with less need for improvement, for example. A low rating in academic

improvement suggests a of lack of change in this area, but it is difficult to know whether the low rating is indicative of stable low academic commitment or stable high academic commitment.

Data were collected longitudinally at three separate time points; however, to maximize the number of participants, the data was not analyzed longitudinally. Participants 1, 74, and 125 only completed the survey at Time 1 while participants 83 and 161 completed the survey at Times 1 and 2. Because of these discrepancies, the responses collected may not be as accurate of representations as they could have been if all responses had spanned the duration of the mentoring relationship. It is likely that a sense of trust would have grown throughout the mentoring relationship as the pair spent more and more time together. Therefore, trust ratings may have been higher if all participants had completed the survey at Time 3 as well.

Another significant limitation to this study was the lack of responses to the parental involvement question. Only 7 of the 20 parents who completed the survey responded to this question. It appears that participants are more likely to respond to scaled questions than open-ended questions. In future surveys, posing this question in a scaled format as well providing an opportunity for an open-ended response may improve response rates.

Future Research

The first improvement that future studies could make is implementing strategies to increase response rates. Researchers could offer a small monetary or similarly valued compensation for participation. Researchers could also change the approach to obtaining

participation from youth. For this study, parent and child surveys were emailed together to the parents, making it the parents' responsibility to have their child fill out the survey online. This may have been unrealistic to expect busy parents to corral busy children into completing a 10-minute survey. Whether due to time constraints, forgetfulness, or the low priority of this survey, it may have been a difficult task for parents to complete the survey in addition to organizing their children to complete it as well. One solution to this challenge is to send the child's survey link to their mentors. Mentors' response rates were much higher than parents and children, indicating that they may have had more time to fill it out or that it was a higher priority. In any case, asking mentors rather than parents to be responsible for having their mentee take the survey may produce stronger response rates.

In future studies, it may be beneficial to obtain more concrete measures of academic improvement such as the child's grades or teacher reports of the child's behavior, involvement, and/or attitude in the classroom.

This study analyzed time spent together in person, on the phone, and online, as a combined variable. Future studies could analyze these three types of mentor-mentee contact separately and compare them. A comparison could help determine if differences exist in mentee outcomes and reports as a function of not only the amount of contact he/she had with a mentor but also the type of contact and mediums used for contact.

The current study evaluated mentor-mentee relationship quality and its associations with other factors of the relationship and youth outcomes – in this case, parent-reported improvements in commitment to learning. These results and analyses

were hindered due to the lack of responses from parents and children. Researchers received a substantial response rate from mentors, however, and future research could use input from these mentors regarding the program, its procedures, and relationships with their mentees and the parents. Future program evaluations of the Brother/Sister program or other similar community mentoring programs could benefit from understanding the mentor perspective of the program's procedures for recruiting, matching, and supporting their volunteers.

The limitations in this study prevented the development of strong conclusions of the role of trust in mentoring; however, previous literature and potential emerging relationships such as the pattern between trust and improvements in academic commitment suggest that more research in youth mentoring relationship quality is necessary and has potential to yield significant results. With improvements in the data collection procedures and measures, results could help maximize the benefits mentoring provides at-risk youth.

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