

## Developmental Mentoring Match Characteristics: Correspondence between Mentors' and Mentees' Assessments of Relationship Quality

Michael J. Karcher,<sup>3</sup> Michael J. Nakkula,<sup>1</sup> and John Harris<sup>2</sup>

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*Understanding the factors that contribute to high-quality mentoring relationships is critical to developing and sustaining effective mentoring programs. In study 1, sixty-three adolescent mentors, from two high schools, were surveyed four to six weeks after being matched with elementary-age mentees. Hierarchical regression models revealed that mentees' academic and behavioral risk status, parental involvement, and program quality all explained variance in mentor-perceived relationship quality, but none remained significant predictors after mentors' self-efficacy, motivations for self-enhancement, and assessments of their mentees' support seeking behaviors were accounted for. Study 2 cross-validates the regression model in study 1 and examines the concurrent validity and predictive validity of a measure of mentoring match characteristics using mid-year and end-of-year assessments from mentees and mentors.*

*Editors' Strategic Implications: The focus on mentors' initial impressions of their mentees and the relationship represents a novel contribution to the study of relationship formation and persistence. The authors provide a promising strategy – and descriptions of specific measures – to help programs study relationships that endure or terminate. Coordinators will benefit from the knowledge that if mentors feel efficacious and if the mentoring relationship is strong, mentors are more likely to persist.*

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**KEY WORDS:** mentoring; mentor; relationship; at-risk; youth development.

<sup>1</sup>Harvard Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA.

<sup>2</sup>Applied Research Consulting, Burke, VA.

<sup>3</sup>Address correspondence to Michael J. Karcher, 501 West Durango Blvd., Office 4.314, College of Education and Human Development, University of Texas, San Antonio, TX 78207; e-mail: mkarcher@utsa.edu.

Mentoring is a dyadic psychosocial intervention in which an older individual is brought into a close relationship with a younger person in order to provide support, guidance, and opportunities for social and academic development (Freedman, 1993; Rhodes, 1994). Mentoring has become a popular prevention approach for working both with students who are and are not at risk for developmental and academic problems (Blum & Jones, 1993; Diem, 1991). In recent years, mentoring has been used to prevent or address a number of risks that threaten youths' development, including academic underachievement (Borman & Colson, 1984; Blum & Jones, 1993; Rhodes, Grossman, & Resch, 2000) and substance use (Aseltine, Dupre, & Lamlein, 2000; LoSciuto, Rajala, Townsend, & Taylor, 1996), yet the ways in which mentor and mentee characteristics contribute to effective, long-lasting relationships has only recently begun to receive attention (see DuBois & Neville, 1997; DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002).

Many mentoring programs target "at-risk" youth, but the ways in which mentees' risk level influences mentors' initial perceptions of the mentoring relationship has not been examined. Understanding the impact that a mentee's risk status has on his or her mentor's initial perceptions of their mentoring relationship is important because many mentors terminate their relationships very early in the match. Perhaps the greatest barrier to the widespread and effective use of mentoring in communities and schools is that as many as fifty percent of matches terminate within the first or second month, often with the mentor feeling frustrated and ineffective (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; U.S. Department of Education, 1996). Little research has examined how mentors' initial perceptions of their relationships and of their mentees' risk status contributes to their perceptions of relationship quality.

Identifying characteristics of mentors that contribute to the effectiveness of mentoring also will be critical to understanding the impact of this prevention approach. Rhodes (2002) suggests that "evaluations that try to determine specific mentor characteristics that lead to the longest-duration relationships could have immediate and practical benefits for youth" (p. 6). For example, mentors who do not feel efficacious early in the relationship because they do not perceive their mentor-mentee relationship to be strong, positive, or effective are less likely to persist in the match. Therefore, understanding how mentors' initial perceptions of the quality of their relationships are affected by unique mentee and mentor characteristics is critical to sustaining effective mentoring relationships.

Most research has examined the outcomes of mentoring in terms of reductions in risk taking or gains in achievement (e.g., Grossman & Tierney, 1998), thus neglecting attention to participant characteristics. These studies document the overall effects of mentoring but rarely explain how and for whom such changes occur. One way to better understand the factors predicting effective mentoring is to examine relationship processes, particularly the characteristics of the mentor-mentee match that contribute to the mentors' perceptions of relationship quality (Bainer & Didham, 1994; DuBois & Neville, 1997). The goal of the current study

was to examine relationship, child, parent, and program factors that contribute to mentors' perceptions of mentor-mentee match quality.

### **Using Mentoring Match Characteristics to Explain Perceived Relationship Quality**

Several factors have been found to affect both the quality of the mentoring relationship and program outcomes (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Sipe, 2000). Program components, including the training and supervision of mentors, have been found to directly affect mentor retention and mentee-related outcomes (DuBois et al., 2002). Parental involvement also has been shown to contribute positively to mentoring processes and outcomes (DuBois et al., 2002; Karcher, Davis, & Powell, 2002; Rhodes, Grossman, & Resch, 2000). Finally, both the mentors' self-efficacy as a mentor and the degree to which the mentees' seek support from their mentors (e.g., to address personal and academic problems) also have been found to affect the quality of the mentoring relationship (DuBois & Neville, 1997; Freedman, 1993; Morrow & Styles, 1995). However, researchers have not examined all of these characteristics simultaneously. To our knowledge, no research has examined the relative roles of program quality, parental involvement, mentor self-efficacy, and mentee support seeking on the perceived quality of the mentoring relationship; nor has the influence of mentees' risk status/disposition on mentors' perceptions of the mentoring relationship been examined vis-à-vis these other characteristics. Therefore, it remains unknown which of these characteristics, both individually and in combination with other variables, has the greatest impact on how mentors perceive the mentoring relationship.

The lack of research on the perceived quality of mentoring relationships is particularly pronounced and especially important in the area of cross-age mentoring conducted by adolescent mentors in schools. The relationship processes in youth-with-child, cross-age mentoring (hereafter called developmental mentoring based on Karcher, 1999; Noll, 1997) has received little attention. Developmental mentoring is intended to facilitate the social and academic development of both child mentees and adolescent mentors. Given prior research on its effectiveness for the mentees (Karcher, et al. 2002; Noll, 1997; Wright & Borland, 1992), it is important to examine the adolescent mentors' experiences of the mentoring relationship, because these experiences likely influence the degree to which developmental mentoring benefits them (Karcher & Lindwall, 2003). Yet the literature on adolescents' experiences within such youth development programs is only recently receiving serious attention (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Stukas, Clary, & Snyder, 2000).

Based on the literature on adult volunteers, there appears to be an interaction between volunteer goals and their volunteering experience on the perceived benefits of volunteering (Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Copeland, Stukas, Hangen, & Miene,

1998). That is, the goals that volunteers have for volunteering, in conjunction with the program's ability to help volunteers achieve those goals, are vitally important to program success and to volunteer persistence (Cameron-Jones & Hara, 1995; Clary & Orenstein, 1991). Certainly, a mentor's motivations may be affected by the mentee's risk status. Research suggests that mentors' perception of the quality of the mentoring relationship with a child may be a function of the difficulties presented in mentoring a particular child (Blechman, 1992; Blocher, 1993; Slicker & Palmer, 1993). Those mentors who seek to feel good about themselves and to feel as if they are making a positive contribution to the world through mentoring may feel less successful with a challenging mentee. However, mentors' motivations and initial experience of self-efficacy (i.e., their belief they will be successful with their mentees) may overshadow the child's risk status in terms of explaining mentors' perceptions of relationship quality.

Indeed, the mentoring literature reveals that the child's disposition is but one of several mentoring match characteristics that contribute to the quality of the mentor-mentee relationship. Identifying which mentoring match characteristics or combinations of them contribute most to mentors' perceptions of relationship quality could help mentoring program coordinators to more effectively facilitate lasting and successful mentoring relationships.

The primary goal of the present study was to examine the relationships between each of these five characteristics (mentor self-efficacy, program quality, parental involvement, mentee support seeking, mentee disposition/risk status) and mentors' perceptions of relationship quality. A second goal was to examine the effect of mentors' perceptions of their mentees' risk status relative to other match characteristics that are more amenable to program control, such as program training and supervision. The final goal was to examine the properties of reliability and validity of a measure of mentoring match characteristics. We hypothesized that, (a) consistent with prior research, all five characteristics will be significantly related through univariate correlations to the perceived quality of mentoring relationships. (b) The more proximal mentor and mentee characteristics will explain greater variance in relationship quality than will either mentees' risk status or the distal contributions of mentors' perceptions of program quality or of parental involvement. (c) Mentors' perceptions of their self-efficacy and of relationship quality in the initial stages of their relationship (first two months) will predict their mentees' subsequent reports of experiencing empathy, praise, and attention from their mentors and of feeling that they matter to their mentors.

## **Method: Study 1**

### *Design*

Zero-order and partial correlations as well as hierarchical linear regression were used to explain variance in the perceived quality of the mentoring relationship

from the five match characteristics. Relationships were examined first separately with simple correlations and then in combination using hierarchical linear regression (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). To account for differences in mentors' initial desire for self-development, a measure of this specific volunteer motivation was included in the analyses.

### *Sample*

*Mentors.* The study included 63 high-school-age-mentors from two schools, one rural public ( $n = 33$ ) and one urban private ( $n = 30$ ) school. Fully informed written parental consent and youth assent forms were obtained prior to the study. The mentors were predominantly Caucasian (79%). The eight percent Hispanic, eight percent African American, and five percent Asian American mentors were from the private high school. All of the adolescent mentors had committed to working with a mentee for the full academic year after school or on weekends in a large group format. The mentors in both the rural public school program and the urban private school program were approximately 70% female. The socioeconomic status of the mentors ranged from working-class to upper-income brackets, with more of the mentors in the private school being from upper income families than in the rural school.

*Mentees.* Both to prevent deviancy training (Dishion, McCord, & Poulin, 1999) and to ensure sufficient variation in mentees' dispositional characteristics (e.g., risk for problem behaviors), a balance of high- and low-risk children were sought for the mentee groups. Teachers of students in grades 4 and 5 were asked to assess the risk status of their students in three domains of risk: family (e.g., poverty, abuse, divorce), academic (e.g., poor grades, attendance, motivation), and social/behavioral (e.g., poor social skills, few friends, behavioral/emotional problems). Using a nine-item checklist, each child's homeroom teacher rated the child on a 1-to-5 scale in terms of these three risk groups (nine-item coefficient alpha = .70). Based on item distribution and range, students for whom teachers assessed a majority of risks (e.g., a mean score of 3 or more on at least one category of risk) were identified as *high risk*. Youth whom teachers rated 2 or lower on all risk categories were identified as *low risk*. These categories were only used to stratify the sample. Forty-two percent of the mentees were identified as being at low risk and fifty-eight as being at high risk. Mentors were not told the teachers' risk ratings of their mentees. The mentors' assessments of their mentees' risk status/disposition were derived from their own experiences. In study 1, the mentors' assessment of mentees' risk status was based on the "Mentee Disposition" scale of the Match Characteristics Questionnaire.

The sixty-three mentees were from families ranging from low to middle socioeconomic status (SES). Approximately half were from working class families. The mentee samples in both sites were approximately 60% male. Approximately half of the 13 Hispanic and 10 African American mentees worked with same race mentors in the private school, and the Caucasian mentees worked with Caucasian mentors.

### *Measures*

*Match Characteristics Questionnaire (MCQ, Version 1.1; Harris & Nakkula, 1999).* This 29-item questionnaire assesses six mentor-reported characteristics of the mentor-mentee match that have been shown to relate to mentoring outcomes. These 29 items were identified through a factor analysis of 65 pilot items. The mentor-perceived Self-Efficacy scale ( $\alpha = .70$ ) is composed of four items including “I feel like I am having a positive effect on my mentee” and “It is hard to tell whether my mentee is getting anything out of the mentoring” (reverse scored). The Mentee Disposition scale ( $\alpha = .82$ ) measures characteristics of the child beyond his or her behavior in the mentoring relationship. It includes seven items such as “My mentee has good friends,” “My mentee has a pretty difficult life at home” (reverse scored), and “My mentee receives or has been referred for professional psychological help” (reverse scored). The Mentee Support Seeking scale ( $\alpha = .91$ ) includes four items that measure the degree to which the mentees use their mentors for support regarding friendship problems, school, and other concerns. For example, “My mentee talks with me when she or he is upset about family matters.” The Program Quality scale ( $\alpha = .92$ ) includes seven items about the amount of training mentors receive, the clarity of program goals, and the guidance/supervision provided to mentors by the program. The Mentee Parental Involvement scale ( $\alpha = .83$ ) includes three questions asking how involved, supportive, and influential the mentee’s parents are to their child’s participation. The Mentoring Relationship Quality scale ( $\alpha = .76$ ), used as the criterion variable in this study, includes seven items measuring the quality of the mentor-mentee relationship. Items include “My mentee and I trust each other” and “I feel close with my mentee.” The measure uses a six-point, Likert-type response scale which ranges from (1) not true at all to (6) very true. There are four reverse-scored items.

*Volunteer Function Inventory (VFI; Clary et al., 1998).* The Enhancement Scale of the Volunteer Function Inventory was used to measure the degree to which the mentors were participating as mentors in order to grow personally and to have a positive, developmental experience for themselves. This variable was included to capture the degree to which the mentors were motivated a priori to have a positive experience (i.e., to rate their mentor-mentee relationship more highly) regardless of their actual interactions with their mentees. The reliability of this six-item scale was good ( $\alpha = .86$ ).

### *Procedures*

*Developmental mentoring program.* Mentees and mentors self-selected each other after a six-hour Saturday orientation, with 85% of mentees receiving their first or second choice. Mentoring was conducted in a group format once weekly after school for two hours in the library, gym, and cafeteria of the school for the

rural youth, and once a month on Saturdays for seven hours at the urban private school. In both settings the dyads spent half of their time interacting around structured academic or social development activities and half engaged in free play activities and sports.

*Consent.* Informed, active consent was obtained from all mentors' and mentees' parents.

*Assessment procedures.* The Volunteer Function Inventory was administered to mentors at their orientation to the program, and the Match Characteristic Questionnaire was administered to the mentor to complete between four to six weeks after the initial matching occurred. This allowed the rural dyads to have met four times or more after school and for the urban dyads to have met on two day-long weekend mentoring events prior to the mentors' ratings.

## Results

The results of the correlational analyses suggested that all five of the mentor match characteristics as well as the mentees' disposition (or mentor-perceived risk status) were related to the perceived quality of the mentoring relationship. However, findings from the regression analyses revealed that the relationship between the mentees' disposition and relationship quality was mediated by mentor characteristics. The mentors' motivation and self-efficacy fully mediated the correlation between mentees' disposition and the quality of the mentoring relationship. In addition, mentees' support-seeking behavior was a much better predictor of perceived relationship quality than mentees' risk status/disposition. Once mentees' support seeking, mentors' desire to have a good experience, and the mentors' self-efficacy were included in the regression model, neither program quality, parental involvement, nor mentee risk status/disposition contributed significantly to the mentors' perceptions of the quality of the mentoring relationship.

*Hypothesis 1: Program, Family, Mentor, and Mentee Characteristics Each Will Contribute to the Mentors' Perceptions of the Quality of the Mentoring Relationship.*

The first set of correlational analyses were conducted to test the relationship between the mentors' perceptions of relationship quality and the five match characteristics. As presented in Table I, all five variables were significantly and positively related to the mentors' perceptions of relationship quality. The mentees' support seeking was most strongly related to the perceived quality of the mentoring relationship. In addition, both the mentors' efficacy and their perceptions of relationship quality were related to the child's risk status suggesting mentors' self-efficacy may mediate the relationship between mentees' risk status and mentors' perceptions of relationship quality. Mentors of youth with fewer risk behaviors or factors felt more efficacious and reported higher relationship quality.

**Table I.** Zero-Order and Partial Correlations Between Match Characteristics, Mentoring Relationship Quality, and Mentor Motivation for Self-Enhancement Four to Six Weeks After Match ( $n = 63$ )

Scales	Mentor match characteristics					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Relationship quality	—	.35*	.35*	.32*	.62****	.38**
2. Program quality	.34*	—	.37*	.04	.37*	-.03
3. Parental involvement	.34*	.40*	—	.09	.29 <sup>†</sup>	.06
4. Mentee disposition	.31*	.09	.15	—	.16	.64****
5. Mentee support seeking	.60****	.39**	.33 <sup>†</sup>	.20	—	.14
6. Mentor efficacy	.36**	.03	.13	.66****	.19	—
7. Mentor motivation	-.01	.20	.25	.23	.20	.30*

*Note.* Zero-order correlations are below the diagonal; partial correlations with motivation removed are above the diagonal.

<sup>†</sup> $p < .10$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\*\* $p < .001$ .

The mentors' motivation to have a positive experience was not significantly related through univariate correlations to their perceptions of the quality of their mentoring relationship (see Table I), but did correlate with the measure of self-efficacy as a mentor four to six weeks after being matched. There also were small but nonsignificant relationships between Mentor Motivation and the other predictor variables. Therefore, partial correlations between the match characteristics and relationship quality were recalculated, controlling for motivation level. The partial correlations (above the diagonal in Table I) remained largely the same. These findings suggest only that initial motivations (assessed before the match) may have contributed to or influenced mentors' perceptions of their own self-efficacy as mentors at four to six weeks.

*Hypothesis 2: Mentee and Mentor Match Characteristics Will Better Explain Perceived Relationship Quality Than Will Mentees' Risk Status, Program Quality, or Parental Involvement.*

To test the relative impact of the five match characteristics on perceived relationship quality, hierarchical linear regression models were analyzed using three blocks of variables. The first block included only the distal, contextual variables (program quality and parental involvement), the second added mentee characteristics (support-seeking tendency and disposition), and the third included mentor characteristics (self-efficacy and motivation)(see Table II). In the first block, when program quality and parental involvement were entered into the model, program quality was a better predictor of relationship quality than was parental involvement. The second block revealed that after the effects of mentees' support seeking were taken into account neither parental involvement, program quality, nor mentees' disposition remained useful predictors (at the .05 level of significance). When all six variables were entered in the model simultaneously, mentors' characteristics (self-efficacy and motivation) and mentees' support seeking best explained mentors' perceptions of relationship quality. Forty-eight percent of the variance in mentor-perceived relationship quality was explained by the final model.



**Table II.** Least Squares Hierarchical Regression Analyses Explaining Mentoring Relationship Quality as a Function of Match Characteristics Four to Six Weeks After Match

Block ( <i>df</i> )	Quality of mentoring relationship					$\Delta F$
	$R^2$	$\beta$	$F$	$t$	$\Delta R^2$	
Block 1 (2, 60)	.15		5.58**			
Program quality		.21		2.17*		
Parental involvement		.12		1.68†		
Block 2 (4, 58)	.41		10.29***		.26	12.80***
Program quality		.08		.88		
Parental involvement		.06		.98		
Mentee support seeking		.25		4.32***		
Mentee disposition		.16		1.86†		
Block 3 (6, 56)	.48		8.69***		.07	3.63*
Program quality		.10		1.26		
Parental involvement		.07		1.12		
Mentee support seekin		.25		4.45***		
Mentee disposition		.03		.31		
Mentor efficacy		.25		2.08*		
Mentor motivation		-.10		-2.04*		

† $p < .10$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .  $\Delta$  = Change in.

A closer examination of beta coefficients in Table II reveals that the trend towards mentors with less at-risk mentees (i.e., high Disposition scores) having better quality relationships is virtually eliminated by adding mentor characteristics to the equation. In the third block, in which mentors' efficacy and mentors' motivation were entered, the relationship trend ( $p = .07$ ) between mentees' disposition and relationship quality was greatly diminished (beta coefficient dropped from .16 to .03). This suggests that mentors' self-efficacy mediated the relationship between mentees' risk status and mentors' perceptions of the quality of the mentoring relationship (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

Finally, a comparison of the relationship between mentor motivation and relationship quality in Tables I and II suggests that motivation, in conjunction with other variables, made a unique contribution to relationship quality. That is, there was a unique aspect of relationship quality that was explained by mentors' initial motivation for self-enhancement that was not captured by the contextual and mentee characteristics nor by mentors' self-efficacy. Because this relationship was negative, it appears that, once program factors and mentors' self-efficacy were accounted for, mentors who were highly driven by a need for self-enhancement reported less positive perceptions of relationship quality (regardless of the mentee's risk status).

**Method: Study 2**

The purpose of study two was to examine the properties of reliability and validity of the Match Characteristics Questionnaire used in Study 1 and to

cross-validate the regression model estimates from Study 1. To reexamine the internal consistency of the measure, the mentors from one school completed the survey again in the late spring, after a period of 6 months. To estimate concurrent validity, mentees also completed two measures that assessed relationship quality, specifically their experience of the match and the support they received from their mentors at the second and sixth month of mentoring.

### Design

Zero-order and partial correlations as well as hierarchical linear regression were used to cross-validate the regression model from Study 1 and to provide concurrent and predictive validity estimates of the MCQ subscales. Relationships were examined first separately with simple correlations and then in combination using hierarchical linear regression (Tables III and IV).

### Sample

*Mentors.* The study included 33 high-school-age mentors from a rural public school in the Midwest. The mentors were Caucasian. There were 23 females.

*Mentees.* Of the 33 mentees, 14 were female, and all were from families ranging from low to middle socio-economic status. Recruitment and randomization were described in Study 1.

### Measures

*Match Characteristics Questionnaire (MCQ, Version 1.1; Harris & Nakkula, 1999).* See Study 1 for description of subscales. Cronbach's alpha reliability estimates for the 33 rural mentors were: Mentor Perceived Self-Efficacy scale

**Table III.** Zero-Order and Partial Correlations Between Match Characteristics, Mentoring Relationship Quality, and Mentor Motivation for Self-Enhancement Four to Six Months into Match ( $n = 33$ )

Scales	Mentor match characteristics					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Relationship quality	—	.70***	-.10	.65***	.64***	.71***
2. Program quality	.72***	—	-.06	.51**	.46*	.62***
3. Parental involvement	.05	.05	—	-.04	.04	-.28
4. Mentee disposition	.61***	.45*	.06	—	.20	.63***
5. Mentee support seeking	.63***	.45*	.06	.17	—	.19
6. Mentor efficacy	.70***	.61***	.08	.52**	.17	—
7. Mentor motivation	.30	.19	.41*	.03	.10	.47*

*Note.* Zero-order correlations are below the diagonal; partial correlations with motivation removed are above the diagonal.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**Table IV.** Least Squares Hierarchical Regression Analyses Explaining Mentoring Relationship Quality as a Function of Match Characteristics at Six Months into Match ( $n = 33$ )

Block ( <i>df</i> )	Quality of mentoring relationship					
	$R^2$	$\beta$	$F$	$t$	$\Delta R^2$	$\Delta F$
Block 1 (24,2)	.52		12.74***			
Program quality		.72		5.05****		
Parental involvement		.02		.10		
Block 2 (22,4)	.74		15.88****		.23	9.72***
Program quality		.33		2.40*		
Parental involvement		-.01		-.05		
Mentee support seeking		.40		3.28****		
Mentee disposition		.39		3.09***		
Block 3 (20,6)	.83		16.38****		.09	5.22**
Program quality		.13		.99		
Parental involvement		.00		.02		
Mentee support seeking		.43		4.14****		
Mentee disposition		.24		1.97†		
Mentor efficacy		.41		2.54*		
Mentor motivation		.02		.15		

† $p < .10$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .005$ . \*\*\*\* $p < .001$ .  $\Delta$  = Change in.

( $\alpha = .73$ ); The Mentee Disposition scale ( $\alpha = .72$ ) (note the item “My mentee receives or has been referred for professional psychological help” was not included because of concerns raised by school administration); The Mentee Support Seeking scale ( $\alpha = .87$ ); The Program Quality scale ( $\alpha = .75$ ); The Mentee Parental Involvement scale ( $\alpha = .76$ ); and The Relationship Quality scale ( $\alpha = .87$ ).

*Volunteer Function Inventory (VFI; Clary et al., 1998)*. The inter-item consistency of the Enhancement Scale of the Volunteer Function Inventory was good ( $\alpha = .78$ ).

*Mentee Mentoring Evaluation* (Karcher, 1999). This mentoring evaluation checklist was developed to reflect the degree to which mentees experienced empathy, praise, and attention (EPA) from their mentors. The 12-item scale is based on Kohut’s (1971) transmutational internalization hypothesis that suggests that EPA must be provided by a significant person in the youth’s life for the youth to develop (1) positive self-esteem through the internalization of EPA and (2) new skills and attitudes through the internalization of those qualities experienced in the relationship. This self-report checklist demonstrated good reliability ( $\alpha = .81$ ).

*Mentee Mattering Survey (Marshall, 2001)*. Mattering, a form of social identity, is the psychological tendency to view the self as significant to others. Based on the Perceived Mattering scale (Marshall, 2001), which was developed to assess how much youth feel they matter to their mothers, fathers, friends, and other important individuals, the Mentee Mattering Survey includes all eight items translated from Marshall (2001). It demonstrated high internal consistency ( $\alpha = .93$ ). Items include “I am important to my mentor,” “I am missed by my mentor when I miss mentoring,” and “I matter to my mentor.”

## Results

The regression model from Study 1 was conducted with data from only the rural mentors at the end of the school year because data from the private school were not available. Hierarchical regression was conducted using the same three blocks as in Study 1. The results in Table IV illustrate that the final model replicated with only two differences at the end of the year: (a) the mentors' motivation for self enhancement was no longer a significant predictor of relationship quality and (b) there was a stronger trend toward a relationship between disposition and both mentees' disposition and perceived relationship quality. That is, at the end of the year, mentors' self-efficacy did not mediate as much of the relationship between disposition and relationship quality as at the start of the year.

There was evidence of concurrent validity for the Mentee Disposition, Mentor's Self-Efficacy Scale, and Relationship Quality scales. Table V demonstrates that the mentors' assessment of mentees' risk status/disposition was significantly related to teacher's ratings of the mentees' social risk status. There also were trends toward relationships between disposition and both academic and interpersonal risk status as well, but there was insufficient statistical power to achieve statistical significance. Table VI demonstrates that mentors' initial (but not end-of-year) ratings of Mentor Self-efficacy were positively related to both mentees' experience of empathy, praise, and attention from their mentors early in the year (EPA1) and mentees feeling that they mattered to their mentors at the end of the year. Moderate in size but non-significant relationships between disposition and both mentors' initial and end-of-year assessments of Relationship Quality and mentees' experience of empathy, praise, and attention provide qualified evidence of the convergent and discriminant validity of the Relationship Quality scales: (a) initial Relationship Quality ratings correlated more strongly with mentees' early assessments of empathy, praise, and attention than with end-of-year EPA assessments; (b) end-of-year

**Table V.** Correlations Illustrating Relationships Between Teacher-Rated Mentee Risk Status at Start of Program and Mentor-Rated Disposition at Start of Year and at 6 Months ( $n = 28$ )

	Risk ratings by teachers			MCQ1_DIS
	Social	Academic	Interpersonal	
Academic risk	.28**			
Interpersonal risk	.32***	.68***		
MCQ1_DIS	-.72*	-.14	-.61 <sup>†</sup>	
MCQ2_DIS	-.39	-.58 <sup>†</sup>	-.48	.20

*Notes.* Zero-order correlations are below the diagonal; MCQ1\_DIS = Match Characteristics Questionnaire assessment at start of year; MCQ2\_DIS = Match Characteristics Questionnaire assessment at 6 months.

<sup>†</sup> $p < .10$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .005$ .

**Table VI.** Correlations Between Mentor and Mentee Assessments of Mentor Effectiveness and Relationship Quality at Start of the Year and After Six Months of Mentoring (*n* = 31)

	Mentee assessments			Mentor assessments			
	Mattering	EPA1	EPA2	Rel. Qual. 1	Rel. Qual. 2	Mentor Eff. 1	Mentor Eff. 2
Empathy, Praise & Attention (starting)	.48*	(.87)					
Empathy, Praise & Attention (6 mos.)	.56**	.51**	(.81)				
Relationship Quality 1 (starting)	-.04	.30	-.02	(.76)			
Relationship Quality 2 (6 mos.)	-.09	.04	.28	.01	(.87)		
Mentor Self-Efficacy 1 (starting)	.52*	.45*	.24	.45*	-.10	(.70)	
Mentor Self-Efficacy 2 (6 mos.)	-.03	.04	.24	.15	.71***	.04	(.90)

Notes. Rel. Qual. = Relationship Quality; Mentor Eff. = Mentor’s Self-Efficacy; Mattering = Mentor Mattering Scale. EPA = Empathy, Praise, & Attention assessment.

\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001.

Relationship Quality ratings correlated more strongly with mentees’ six-month assessments of empathy, praise, and attention than with their initial ratings of EPA.

### DISCUSSION

The findings from this study suggest that, although zero-order and partial correlations confirm that several factors make separate contributions to the mentors’ perceptions of the quality of their mentoring relationships, neither the disposition (risk status) of the child, the amount of parental involvement in the match, nor the mentors’ experiences of program structure and support contributed significantly to mentors’ perceptions of relationship quality once mentee support seeking and mentor self-efficacy were accounted for. The adolescent mentors’ perceptions of mentor-mentee relationship quality were mainly a function of their mentees’ openness to seeking support from their mentors and the mentors’ initial feelings of self-efficacy. Motivations were important early but not later in the match. Early in the match, mentors’ motivations for self-enhancement predicted lower ratings of relationship quality, but by the end of the year, mentors’ motivation was no longer significantly related to relationship quality. Correlations also revealed that the mentors’ motivation to have a positive self-enhancing experience was positively related to how efficacious they reported feeling as mentors but negatively related to their perceptions of relationship quality.

Results from regression analyses revealed that mentors' motivation for self-enhancement was negatively related to initial perceptions of relationship quality, suggesting that, regardless of the risk status/disposition of the mentee, mentors who initially mentored for the purpose of self-enhancement, relative to their mentoring peers, tended to rate their mentor-mentee relationships less positively. After six months of mentoring, the mentors' motivations no longer contributed to relationship quality, suggesting early assessments of mentors' motivations may play an important role in determining early assessments of relationship quality and early satisfaction among mentors. Given this possibility, future studies should examine whether mentors with stronger motivation for self-enhancement are at higher risk for premature match termination.

The results suggest cross-age peer mentoring may be equally useful as a primary and secondary preventative intervention, because mentee risk status was not a significant predictor of relationship quality once other factors were accounted for. The hypothesis that child risk status would be less important than other match characteristics, namely the mentees' use of the mentor as a source of support, was supported by the regression analyses. The most important predictor of relationship quality was the mentors' interpretation of their mentees' openness to seeking out the mentors' support regarding family, school, and personal concerns. In addition, mentees' support seeking was not significantly related to their risk status/disposition suggesting these were not simply proxy variables for one another. High-risk youth were not less likely to use their mentors for emotional support.

After accounting for how the mentors felt about being mentors (motivation and self-efficacy), their mentees' risk status no longer contributed to the mentors' perceptions of the quality of their mentor-mentee relationship. The mediation of the relationship between mentee risk status and relationship quality by the mentors' own self-efficacy was especially strong at the start of the match. This suggests it is critically important to continually assess and monitor the mentors' motivation and promote their self-efficacy, because the attitudes mentors initially bring to their mentor-mentee relationships can be potentially more threatening to the relationship than the child's risk-status. Regardless of the child's risk status—whether mentoring is conducted as a primary or secondary intervention—mentors with a strong desire for self-enhancement are likely to feel discouraged early in the relationship. However, over time the mentees' disposition may play a larger role in shaping the nature of the mentee-mentor relationship than the mentors' initial motivations. Thus, later in the relationship, more attention may need to be paid to the contributions of the child's disposition to the quality of the match.

An important implication of these findings for school counselors and prevention program coordinators is that *less* emphasis may be needed on preparing mentors for the mentees' risk status, and *more* effort should be invested in promoting their efficacy as mentors and in helping mentees seek their support. Efforts should be made to regularly assess mentors' efficacy and to help them create relationship

conditions in which their mentees will actively seek support from them. Although the relationship (see Table I) between mentee risk status and mentors' efficacy suggests that the greater the mentees' risk status the lower the mentors' efficacy is likely to be at the onset of the relationship, the initial regression model (see Table II) suggests that regardless of the child's risk status, mentors whose self-efficacy can be enhanced may experience or perceive increased relationship quality. Similarly, the mentees' experience of empathy, praise, and attention and of feeling that they matter to their mentors were predicted from mentors' initial self-efficacy. This suggests that mentors who feel more efficacious early in the match were indeed better at helping their mentees feel supported and important. Therefore, mentors to high-risk youth likely will be more effective when provided regular supervision and guidance in the form of structure, support, praise, and encouragement—all factors found to enhance self-efficacy—regardless of the mentors' perceptions of the importance of such program support.

The findings from this study reinforce the finding that to be effective programs should structure in regular opportunities for supervision and provide ongoing training for the mentors (DuBois et al., 2002). From the mentors' perspective, both program quality (i.e., supervision, training, guidance) and parent involvement do indeed make significant independent contributions to the mentor-mentee relationship. This concurs with DuBois et al. who suggest that ongoing program supervision is critical to program success. Program and parental factors, however, should be considered enabling rather than determining factors. That is, parental involvement and program quality likely contribute to relationship quality by facilitating positive mentor and mentee interactions, but it appears that mentee and mentor characteristics are the primary determinants of the mentor-perceived quality of the relationship at the start of a match. This supports DuBois and Neville's (1997) assessment that mentors' experiences play a significant role in the overall processes and quality of the mentoring that occurs within a program. In the present study, mentors who initially were motivated by a desire for self-enhancement through mentoring reported less positive relationships regardless of the risk status of the child. Although supervisors could focus on preparing mentors to deal with challenging mentees, as is commonly done in mentor training, they might be better off helping would-be mentors reflect on their motivations and embrace less self-interested goals. Simply helping mentors to become more other-centered in their orientation to mentoring may help prevent self-interested disillusionment, which can occur when matches become particularly challenging and less personally gratifying than mentors anticipated. However, the results from data collected six months into the match suggest motivations may change over time and become less important contributors to mentors' perceptions of relationship quality.

The study has a number of limitations, the first of which is that this program focuses on high school mentors who may experience and approach mentoring differently than adult mentors. For example, adult mentors rarely mentor in groups,

yet our experience has been that high school mentors enjoy being with peers when working with their mentees. Experiences of parental involvement also are likely to differ between adult and teen mentors. Parents are more likely to consider adult mentors as peers, and may engage, rely, and interact with them differently. Adult mentors likely have more contact with their mentees' families than did the high school mentors in this study. These findings, therefore, should not be generalized directly to adult, community-based mentors. We suggest, however, that future research on such adult-youth mentoring examine whether similar contributions are made by program, parental, mentee, and mentor characteristics to the mentors' perceptions of relationship quality.

Another limitation is that the outcome measure in Study 1, like that of DuBois and Neville (1997), was mentors' perceptions of relationship quality rather than a measure of the program's effect on mentees. However, Study 2 revealed that mentor self-efficacy predicted mentees' experiences of the match. Similarly, the mentors' initial assessments of their mentees' risk status were based only on what the mentors had learned about their mentees through interactions with them rather than based on teacher or parent report. Yet the sizable relationships between the mentors' and teachers' assessments of risk suggest mentors are quick to size up their mentees' disposition and may do so relatively accurately. More objective assessments of relationship quality or mentee change, as well as of mentee risk status might generate different results, although such assessments would then not reflect the mentors' unique experience. These findings are quite subjective in that they reveal more about the mentors' experience than about objective mentee outcomes. Therefore, future studies should examine the relationship between mentors' assessments of relationship quality and objective measures of mentees' outcomes as well as mentors' actual persistence. Such research could serve to help clarify the usefulness of mentors' initial perceptions of relationship quality in predicting both mentee outcomes and mentor retention or premature departure. As discussed above, mentors' premature departure from their matches constitutes one of the greatest risks to the use of mentoring as a developmental and preventive intervention.

Finally, the sample size was modest because, while data was available at the start of the year from youth in the two developmental mentoring programs, data was only available from one of these schools after six months. Thus, the sample size in Study 2 did not permit sufficient statistical power to examine the role played by mentee risk status on mentors' experience across different types of mentors (e.g., older vs. younger; same vs. different sex). For example, our experience with adolescent mentors suggests that those male mentees identified by teachers as at high family, academic, or social risk are more challenging for female than for male mentors, yet this study did not provide sufficient statistical power to test this hypothesis. Similarly, examining the effects of mentors' expectations or other reasons for mentoring might shed light on which mentors are most likely to benefit from mentoring and which to quit prematurely.



Despite the limitations of this study, it appears much can be learned by program coordinators about the nature of the mentoring relationship by ascertaining from the mentors how much their mentees utilize them for support and the degree to which the mentors feel efficacious in their work. This may be particularly important in the supervision of mentors working with children deemed to have dispositions making them less likely to seek support from their mentors. Based on this study and prior research (Bainer & Didham, 1994) we would suggest that rather than focusing on children's adult-rated risk status, prevention and mentoring program coordinators might be better off focusing on the ways in which they can encourage mentees to seek support from their mentors and ways that they can promote mentors' efficacy and realistic expectations even when the mentors are working with more challenging youth.

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