Mentoring Relationships: A Mixed Methods Approach to Understanding Relationship Growth, Challenges, and Supportive Factors

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Approval of the Dissertation Committee

This dissertation proposal ("Mentoring Relationships: A Mixed Methods Approach to Understanding Relationship Growth, Challenges, and Supportive Factors") has been approved by the Graduate Faculty of the Curry School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Project Overview

Mentoring is a popular intervention for underserved youth, with over five million youth involved in programs nationwide (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). Given the wide appeal and implementation, careful attention should be paid to training mentors to engage effectively with mentored youth. Currently, research has shown mixed effects of mentoring. Some studies have shown positive effects across a number of domains for mentored youth while others have shown null to negative effects (Dubois & Karcher, 2005; DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn & Valentine, 2011).

Formal youth mentoring relationships exist between youth and unrelated adults or older peers, and are intended to benefit youth development by providing guidance and support. Rhodes (2002) considers the relationship to be the "active ingredient" of mentoring and asserts that any positive effects of mentoring occur only through the establishment of a close bond. Quantitative research has supported this theory, with a consistent positive association between relationship quality and duration, and outcomes for youth (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). For example, Bayer, Grossman, and DuBois (2015) found that longer-lasting relationships were linked to better outcomes, while Lyons and McQuillin (2018) found a positive correlation between relationship quality and mentee outcomes. Of interest, Lyons and McQuillin (2018) found that the association between relationship quality and outcomes decelerated as relationship quality increased, suggesting reduced benefits after a minimum level of "closeness" had been reached. Additionally, both of these studies found that mentoring relationships that ended prematurely or were emotionally distant not only did not benefit youth, but were associated with harmful effects (Bayer et al., 2015; Lyons & McQuillin, 2018). The potential to cause harm should be of

particular concern to mentoring researchers and programmers, especially given the fact that nearly half of all mentoring relationships are terminated prematurely (Spencer, 2007).

Despite the importance of the mentoring relationship, the field lacks both an understanding of how relationships are formed over time as well as a cohesive framework to train and retain mentors. In terms of mentoring relationship formation, researchers have used qualitative methods to propose stages of relationships and trajectories of growth. Keller's (2005) theoretical model posited that mentors and mentees progress through the following five stages in the course of a formal mentoring relationship: (1) contemplation, (2) initiation, (3) growth and maintenance, (4) decline and dissolution, and (5) redefinition. He hypothesized that how mentors handled different phases was important for the relationship quality: for example, not pressuring mentees to open up in the initiation phase and preparing for the decline. However, this model remains theoretical in nature and no known empirical research has examined the validity.

Pryce and Keller (2012) used a mixed-methods approach to examine mentoring relationship formation over time. In one of the only studies to attempt this, they examined relationship growth in 26 mentor-mentee dyads. Findings indicated four patterns of mentoring relationship development: (1) progressive, (2) plateaued, (3) stagnant, and (4) breakthrough. Progressive relationships were characterized by steady positive growth over time. Plateaued relationships showed initial positive growth that gave way to no growth or decline over time. Stagnant relationships had consistently low quality and little to no growth, while breakthrough relationships had a low quality period in the beginning but increased in quality after time. Findings indicated more positive interactions and lower conflict in progressive relationships when compared to the other growth patterns. While limited by sample size and research methods,

this study provides initial evidence that mentoring relationship growth trajectories vary by individual dyads

Given the importance of promoting high-quality relationships, researchers have worked to understand best practices for mentors and mentoring programs. Current guidelines for mentor training emphasize the importance of ongoing training and support for mentors, which has been positively linked to mentee outcomes, relationship quality, and mentor retention (Kupersmidt & Rhodes, 2014; McQuillin, Straight, Saeki, 2015; Miller, 2007). Further, research suggests that the most successful mentors are attuned to their mentees' needs, are collaborative, and work as a team with their mentee towards a shared focus (Karcher, Herrara & Hansen, 2010; Miller, 2007; Rhodes & Lowe 2008; Pryce, 2012; Weiler, Chesmore, Pryce, Haddock & Rhodes, 2017).

However, there is a lack of synthesis of this knowledge into clear, widely applicable training tools for mentors. This may be due to the popularity of mentoring as an intervention for youth, which has led to the development of a great number of programs with unique structures, goals, and populations. Not only does this have implications for preparing mentors to work well with youth, the lack of standardized training and practices limits researchers' ability to make inferences about mentoring programs' effects (2018).

One attempt to create a set of mentoring best practices comes in the form of a training tool called The Five Mentoring Competencies (5MCs) (Lawrence et al., 2007). The competencies are a synthesis of current research on youth-adult interactions and positive youth development theory. They are intended to provide mentors with a framework for developing effective relationships and navigating relationship challenges. Further, the competencies are meant to be user-friendly and broadly applicable.

The purpose of the proposed dissertation is to investigate mentoring relationship formation with an eye towards informing mentor training. Taking a mixed-methods approach, this dissertation seeks first to establish the potential usefulness of a framework for mentor training, the Five Mentoring Competencies (5MCs), in promoting relationship growth and overcoming challenges. Then, this dissertation examines common patterns of relationship development over time and their relationships to mentee outcomes. Finally, these two ideas are integrated in a final study designed to determine how different relationship development patterns are linked to use relationship processes, including challenges and competency use. The individual manuscripts are described below.

All data from this study is derived from the Young Women Leaders Program (YWLP). YWLP is a formal school-based mentoring program that matches college women mentors with middle school girls for one academic year. Mentoring comprises both a group and a one-on-one component. All mentor-mentee dyads from a particular school meet weekly for a two-hour mentoring group led by a college woman or graduate student facilitator. These groups are driven by a curriculum designed to promote self-esteem and leadership skills. In addition to the group meetings, individual mentor-mentee dyads are expected to spend four hours a month engaged in one-on-one activities.

As part of the program, mentors participate in a year-long class on adolescent development and mentor best practices. They are also required to attend a weekly meeting with the other mentors in their group and their facilitator. In this meeting they discuss plans for the upcoming week and relationship challenges. Mentors apply to participate in the program and mentees are identified by their guidance counselors and nominated for the program.

Manuscript One. This study took a qualitative approach to examining the potential usefulness of the 5MCs as a framework for mentor training. Participants in the study were college women mentors in YWLP in the 2017-2018 cohort. As part of a mid-year class assignment, mentors were asked to reflect on their relationships with their mentee including their use of the 5MCs.

These reflections were de-identified and uploaded to Dedoose, an online software for qualitative and mixed-methods analysis. Using a process of inductive and deductive coding, reflections were coded for salient themes, including common challenges as identified by Spencer (2007) and the 5MCs. To enhance validity, 30% of the reflections were randomly selected and double coded by a second researcher. The two researchers met and reconciled codes at the beginning, middle, and end of the coding process.

Overall, findings suggest that the 5MCs is a useful framework for mentor training. Mentors described using the competencies both to grow their relationships and to navigate common challenges. Further, patterns emerged suggesting that specific competencies were best suited to specific relationship needs. All mentors discussed facing one or more of the common relationship challenges put forth by Spencer (2007) and using competencies to overcome them. This study is limited by the unique nature of YWLP and the relatively small sample size. Further, data were not originally intended for research purposes and were collected halfway through the mentoring relationship.

The paper “A Qualitative Analysis of the Utility of a Competency Framework for Mentor Training” was accepted to be presented as a poster at the National Association of School

Psychologists 2020 convention. It is currently under review after being resubmitted to *Journal of Mentoring and Tutoring Partnerships in Learning* in February, 2019, with minor revisions.

Manuscript Two. This study examines the development of formal youth mentoring relationships over time in a sample of female mentors. Participants were mentors in YWLP in the 2017-2018 cohort. Weekly ratings of relationship quality on a scale of 1-5, with "1 "being not so great 5 being great," were obtained from mentors. This study is the first known attempt to measure and analyze relationship quality at this degree of frequency. These data were analyzed to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the typical pattern of mentoring relationship satisfaction, as reported by mentors over the course of one academic year?
2. Are there meaningful individual differences in the patterns of relationship satisfaction, as reported by mentors over the course of the academic year?
3. Are individual differences in patterns of relationship satisfaction, as reported by mentors, correlated with mentee outcomes?
    a. Does the intercept of the relationship (satisfaction at the start of the relationship) predict mentee relationship satisfaction or peer self-esteem scores?
    b. Does the slope of the relationship over time predict mentee relationship satisfaction or change in peer self-esteem?
    c. Does the interaction of the relationship starting point and slope predict mentee relationship satisfaction or change in peer self-esteem?

The mean relationship quality (RQ) (on a scale of 1-5) was 4.18 with a standard deviation of 0.86 and a range of 1-5. This suggests overall high levels and stable relationship quality across the year. On average, RQ increased from 4 to 4.42 over the course of the study. Given the significant variation among individuals, multilevel modelling was used to analyze relationship quality over time. Three models were estimated, an unconditional model (Model 1); a random-intercept, fixed-slope model (Model 2); and a random-intercept, random-slopes model (Model 3). Estimates of model fit were compared and Model 3 was determined to be the best fit for the data. This suggests significant individual variation in relationship development over time in both starting point and slope. Neither the intercept, slope, nor their interactions were associated with mentee outcomes in terms of mentee relationship satisfaction or peer self esteem. This study is a first step towards better understanding the developmental pattern of mentoring relationships as measured by mentor reports of relationship strength, and motivates further research on trajectories of relationship development . Limitations of the research design include inability to make causal claims, small sample size, and lack of generalizability. This paper was submitted and is under review in the journal *Children and Youth Services Review.*

Manuscript Three. The study uses mixed methods to incorporate and expand upon findings from manuscripts one and two by answering the following questions:

1. What different types of relationship trajectories are observed in the sample?
    a. How do these support or differ from trajectories found by Pryce and Keller (2012)?

2. Are there differences in the ways in which mentors with varying trajectories of relationship quality across time (e.g., progressive, regressive, and stable) write about experiences in their mentoring relationships?
    a. Are there differences in the ways mentors with varying relationship trajectories write about relationship processes including challenges and mentor practices, in both type and frequency?

This study has implications for mentor programmers seeking to improve the quality of relationships in their programs.

Participants were college women mentors in the 2017-2018 cohort. Quantitative data will include the weekly relationship quality scores measured on a scale of one to five, with "1 "being not so great 5 being great." Qualitative data were composed of mid-year mentor reflections on their relationship and use of the 5MCs.

Individual plots of mentor satisfaction over the year were created for each dyad. These plots were sorted into the following categories by a team of researchers: (1) progressive, (2) stable-high, (3) dip and recovery, (4) stable-low, (5) regressive. Mentor reflections were coded for relationship processes including relationship challenges and the use of the 5MCs. Then, application of codes was compared across these five categories. Findings support and expand upon Pryce and Keller's (2012) work, suggesting the existence of unique trajectories of mentoring relationships. Furthermore, patterns of code application differed between groups, suggesting that mentors may apply different skills, or face different challenges depending on these groups. While a first step, these findings could inform mentor training and motivate further inquiry. This manuscript is being prepared for submission to *Journal of Community Psychology.*

Conclusion

The three studies that comprise this dissertation contribute to a better understanding both of mentoring relationship formation over time and of factors that support growth. They are linked by their focus on mentoring relationship development and mentor training. This dissertation was designed with the explicit goal of informing mentor training with the hopes of leading to higher quality, longer-lasting relationships and better outcomes for youth.

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Abstracts

Manuscript One:

This study takes a qualitative approach to determining the potential usefulness of a competencies framework for mentor training. Participants were 37 college women mentoring middle school girls as part of a school-based mentoring program. Mentors were trained using a competencies model designed to help them navigate the nuances and challenges of forming a relationship with an unknown youth. As the first step in empirically evaluating the effectiveness of this approach, this study examines if and how mentors made use of this training in their relationships with their mentees. Findings suggest that mentors applied the competencies approach in order to develop stronger relationships and overcome mentoring challenges.

Key Words: mentoring, mentor training, relationship challenge, positive youth development

Manuscript Two:

The current study examines the development of formal youth mentoring relationships over time in a sample of female mentors. While benefits of youth mentoring have been shown across a variety of domains, research suggests that qualities of the mentoring relationship, including duration and satisfaction, are instrumental in determining mentee outcomes. Despite the central role of the relationship in mentoring, there is a paucity of research examining how mentoring relationships develop over time. Mentors were participants in a school-based mentoring program that is curriculum driven and includes both a group and a one-on-one component. Weekly reports of relationship satisfaction were collected from mentors. Multilevel modelling was used to analyze relationship quality over time. Relationship development was best modeled by a random-effects, random-slopes model. Satisfaction generally started high and grew slightly over the academic year. Neither intercept, nor slope nor their interactions were associated with mentee outcomes in terms of mentee relationship satisfaction or peer self-esteem. This study is a first step towards understanding the developmental pattern of mentoring relationships as measured by mentor reports of relationship strength. Results from this study provide important information to aid in mentor training and to advance the mentoring field. Limitations of the research design include inability to make causal claims, small sample size, and lack of generalizability.

Key Words: mentoring, relationship development, adolescence, school-based mentoring

Manuscript Three:

The proposed study integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine how qualities of the mentoring relationship are linked to different mentoring relationship trajectories. Using quantitative and qualitative methods, mentor reports of relationship quality are plotted over time and different growth patterns identified: (1) progressive, (2) stable-high, (3) dip and recovery, (4) stable-low and (5) regressive. Mentors reflections were qualitatively coded for relationship processes including challenges and use of mentoring competencies. Comparisons of code application were made between different growth profiles. All mentors wrote about using mentoring competencies and facing relationship challenges. However, there was differential use of competencies and challenges between groups. This research adds to the current literature on mentoring factors of positive and negative mentoring relationships and informs mentoring programmers.

Key Words: mentoring, mentor relationship, relationship challenge, positive youth development

Manuscript One

A Qualitative Analysis of the Utility of a Competencies Framework for Mentor Training

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Resubmitted with minor revisions, *Journal of Mentoring and Tutoring*

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Abstract

This study takes a qualitative approach to determining the potential usefulness of a competencies framework for mentor training. Participants were 37 college women mentoring middle school girls as part of a school-based mentoring program. Mentors were trained using a competencies model designed to help them navigate the nuances and challenges of forming a relationship with an unknown youth. As the first step in empirically evaluating the effectiveness of this approach, this study examines if and how mentors made use of this training in their relationships with their mentees. Findings suggest that mentors applied the competencies approach in order to develop stronger relationships and overcome mentoring challenges.

Key Words: mentoring, mentor training, relationship challenge, positive youth development

A Qualitative Analysis of the Utility of a Competencies Framework for Mentor Training

Formal youth mentoring programs serve nearly five million youth nationwide and operate under the assumption that a close, caring relationship with a responsible adult can act as a growth and healing experience for youth (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). However, research on the effectiveness of youth mentoring has consistently shown mixed results (Dubois & Karcher, 2005; DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn & Valentine, 2011). Variability in relationship quality and duration may explain these differences in youth outcomes; longer-lasting, closer relationships are related to more positive outcomes for mentees, while shorter, more emotionally distant relationships are related to neutral or negative outcomes (Dubois & Karcher, 2005). Yet, mentors experience difficulty forming close and lasting relationships with their mentees, as evidenced by the finding that nearly half of all mentoring relationships terminate in less than three months (Rhodes, 2002).

As a result, researchers and practitioners have outlined elements of effective mentoring practice related to how programs can best support, retain, and train mentors, as well as identified specific skills and behaviors of effective mentors (MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, 2015). However, there have been few successful attempts to synthesize this knowledge into a set of widely applicable, empirically driven standards or practices for mentors across programs (Resources for Mentoring Programs). One way this knowledge has been organized and taught to mentors is through the use of a model that outlines five broad mentoring competencies (5MCs) (Lawrence et al., 2017). The 5MCs were created out of a positive youth development theoretical framework and designed to distill current research on effective mentor-mentee interactions into a

user-friendly framework for mentors. However, this organizing structure has not been empirically validated for its applicability and utility. The current study is the first to examine the use and relevance of these 5MCs in an after-school mentoring program for middle school girls. Gaining a better understanding of how the 5MCs are used has the potential to advance the mentoring field towards the creation of research-based guidelines for adults mentoring youth. The first step in this process is to determine if and how mentors understand and use these competencies.

Review of the Literature

Mentoring Relationship Quality

Rhodes (2002) argued that the close emotional bond between mentor and mentee acts as the 'active ingredient' of a successful mentoring relationship. Empirical studies of mentee outcomes have validated this notion, with higher quality relationships linked to better mentee outcomes (Dubois & Karcher, 2005). In a recent study, Lyons and McQuillin (2018) found an overall positive relationship between mentee outcomes and relationship quality that decelerated as relationship quality increased. In their study, low-quality relationships were specifically concerning as they were linked to a number of harmful effects for youth (Lyons & McQuillin, 2018). In terms of relationship duration, a number of studies have found that longer-lasting relationships are related to positive outcomes for mentees, while shorter relationships are related to neutral or negative outcomes (Bayer, Grossman & Dubois, 2015; Dubois & Karcher, 2005). However, sustaining quality relationships remains difficult and nearly half of all mentoring dyads part prematurely (Rhodes, 2002). This suggests the need for a better understanding of, and response to, the challenges of forming high-quality mentor-mentee relationships.

Threats to Mentoring Relationships

In response to early findings linking relationship duration to youth outcomes, Spencer (2007) conducted a qualitative study to better understand why so many relationships fail; an in-depth look at unsuccessful relationships identified six factors that contributed to premature relationship termination: (a) mentor or mentee abandonment, (b) perceived lack of mentee motivation, (c) unfulfilled expectations, (d) deficiencies in mentor relationship skills, (e) interference from the mentee's family, and (f) inadequate mentoring agency support.

Findings indicate that while some relationship endings are inevitable, others may be avoided if appropriately understood and addressed. Increased program support could help mentors gain awareness of these potential challenges and tackle them if they arise. For example, Spencer (2007) found that mentors often enter the relationship with unrealistic expectations, of which they may or may not be aware. A mentoring program could help mentors understand their unspoken expectations and work to calibrate them to a more realistic level. In addition, mentors could be taught relationship skills, strategies for engaging families, and how to persevere in relationships even when mentees appear disinterested. Spencer's (2007) research suggests that mentoring relationships face certain common challenges and points to the need for comprehensive mentor training in addressing these challenges.

Mentor Training

Current research and guidelines for mentor training can be thought of at both the program and individual level. At the program level, findings indicate that ongoing mentor training and support improves mentor retention, relationship quality, and mentee outcomes (Kupersmidt & Rhodes, 2014; McQuillin, Straight & Saeki, 2015; Miller, 2007). At the individual level, the most successful mentoring relationships are collaborative, youth-centric partnerships with a

shared purpose (Karcher, Herrara & Hansen, 2010; Miller, 2007; Rhodes & Lowe 2008). Mentors in these relationships are able to flexibly identify and meet youth needs (Pryce, 2012; Weiler, Chesmore, Pryce, Haddock & Rhodes, 2017).

Research has identified the need for consistent mentor training and support, as well as characteristics and behaviors of successful mentors. However, there has been little synthesis of this knowledge into training tools for mentors. For example, Kupersmidt and Rhodes (2014) provide a checklist of areas that mentor training should address, but do not provide significant detail on how to instruct mentors. McQuillin, Lyons, Clayton, and Anderson (2018) note that the current lack of prescribed practices in mentoring programs limits researchers' ability to make inferences about mentoring program effects. This gap may be explained in part by the rapid development of a great deal of mentoring programs targeting different populations and outcomes; program heterogeneity makes it difficult to create a set of guidelines that are applicable across organizations.

The Five Mentoring Competencies (5MCs)

The 5MCs were developed out of a positive youth development (PYD) (Lerner, Napolitano, Boyd, Mueller & Callina 2013) theoretical framework, which maintains that focusing on a youth's individual strengths and assets, rather than their deficits, is essential for positive development. It is hypothesized that mentors who possess an understanding of the 5MCs can use this PYD approach with their mentees to successfully respond to challenges in their relationships in a way that promotes stronger, longer-lasting bonds. The 5MCs are (a) positive attitude (*zest*), (b) collaboration (*teamwork)*, (c) empathy and attunement (*heart*), (d) initiative and perseverance (*grit*), (e) mentoring knowledge (*brains*)

In addition to their theoretical basis in PYD, the 5MCs are based in current literature on effective adult-youth interactions. Zest encourages mentors to approach their relationships enthusiastically and believe in the potential of all youth. It is informed by Dweck's (2006) concept of the growth mindset, PYD (Lerner et al., 2013), and research establishing the importance of teacher enthusiasm for student engagement in the classroom (Kunter, Frenzel, Nagy, Baumert & Pekrun, 2011). Teamwork instructs mentors to treat their mentees as an equal partner. It draws from Rhodes' (2002) work on the importance of mutuality in mentoring relationships and motivational interviewing techniques (Naar-King & Suarez, 2011). Heart focuses on the importance of a mentor's ability to understand and appreciate differences as well as demonstrate empathy for and attunement with a mentee (Lawrence, 2017; Rhodes, 2002; Pryce, 2012). Grit is defined by Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, and Kelly (2007) as the ability to sustain interest and effort toward a long-term goal. In the 5MCs framework, grit is the ability to apply creative problem solving to challenges in the mentoring relationship and/or the youth's life (Lawrence, 2017). Brains refers to a mentor's understanding of youth development and mentoring best practices in order to establish appropriate developmental expectations and relationship skills (Lawrence, 2017; Strauch, 2003; Spencer, 2007).

In YWLP, the 5MCs are taught to mentors during a didactic course and described in a handbook given to each mentor at the beginning of the program. The YWLP handbook describes how mentors should apply these competencies across different aspects of the program as shown in Table 1.

This Study

This study examines if and how mentors used the mentoring competencies in the first three months of their relationships with their mentees. Particular attention is paid to how mentors engaged the 5MCs to overcome the mentoring relationship challenges described by Spencer (2007) and to form quality relationships. This study was designed as a first step towards determining the utility of the 5MCs as a training tool for mentors.

Research Questions

1. In what ways, if at all, do mentors write about using the 5MCs to work towards a closer, more meaningful relationship with their mentees and overcome challenges?
2. Are there patterns in the ways that mentors write about using the 5MCs for different mentoring challenges (e.g., do certain competencies appear to be seen as best aligned with certain challenges, such as heart with cultural differences)?

Methods

The Young Women Leaders Program (YWLP)

YWLP is a combined group and one-on-one mentoring program that is school-based and curriculum-driven. College women mentors are paired with seventh- and eighth-grade girls for a year of mentoring focused on boosting the self-esteem and leadership skills of both groups. College women interested in becoming mentors submit a written application and are interviewed by program staff. Guidance counselors refer middle school girls to the program after identifying them as being at social, emotional, or academic risk but not receiving other types of intervention services. Parental consent and student assent is obtained before referred girls are paired with college women mentors.

As part of the program, all mentor and mentee pairs from a particular school (about 6-10) meet together after school for two hours per week in a group led by a college woman or graduate student facilitator. The group curriculum addresses salient issues facing adolescent girls (e.g., romantic relationships, body image, bullying), includes group activities designed to develop participants' leadership skills, self-esteem, and connections with each other (e.g., leadership projects, goal setting), and also provides for dedicated one-on-one time (e.g., "sister time"). Additionally, mentors and mentees are expected to spend four hours a month engaging in one-on-one time with each other outside of group sessions. Training and support for the mentors occurs through a required three-credit course in the fall that includes didactics on mentoring best practices and theory and research on adolescent development (one hour/week). Mentors learn about the 5MCs in this class. In addition, mentors participate in a peer supervision meeting with other mentors in their group led by the group facilitator (one hour/week) during which they review the group curriculum for the week and problem-solve any issues in the group. In the spring, mentors take a one-credit course that includes their one-hour weekly peer supervision meetings.

Participants

Out of a total possible pool of 48 college women, 37 were included in the study because they had submitted an electronic version of the mentoring reflection assignment. In the overall group of 48 (excluding four mentors who did not provide complete demographic information), mentors ranged in age from 18-24, with an average age of 20 years old, and were ethnically and racially diverse: 31 percent Black/African American, 49 percent White/Caucasian, 7 percent Hispanic/Latinx, 7 percent Mixed Race, and 5 percent Asian or Asian American. Mentors were 8

percent in their first year of college, 40 percent in their second, 42 percent in their third, and 10 percent in their fourth. In the analytic sample of 37, mentors ranged in age from 18-24, with an average age of 20 years old, and were 18 percent Black/African American, 53 percent White/Caucasian, 3 percent Hispanic/Latinx, 18 percent Mixed Race, and 6 percent Asian or Asian American. About 6 percent of mentors were in their first year of college, 44 percent in their second, 38 percent in their third, and 11 percent in their fourth year.

Methods

At the end of the first semester, mentors wrote a five- to six-page reflection as part of their class requirements. They were prompted to write a paper that:

> Integrates the course material covered this semester about mentoring and the critical issues facing adolescent girls with their application to your [mentee] and your mentoring relationship. Provide a brief overview of your mentoring experience this semester and the mentoring competency that was most useful to you.

These reflections were collected, de-identified, and uploaded to Dedoose, an online software program for qualitative and mixed-methods data analysis. A combination of deductive and inductive coding was used to identify salient themes in the data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). An initial code tree was created including the five mentoring competencies and Spencer's (2007) mentoring challenges. Using this initial tree, the primary researcher read two transcripts and added additional codes that emerged from the reading. These codes were presented to a team of researchers who read a reflection together and added new codes. Then, the primary researcher applied these codes to the remaining reflections. A second researcher coded 30% of the

reflections and met with the primary researcher three times (beginning, middle, end) throughout the coding process to check understanding and reconcile coding.

Findings

In their reflections, mentors described using the competencies both to grow their relationship as well as to handle relationship challenges. While there was a great deal of overlap across the different competencies, patterns emerged in how mentors used specific competencies for specific purposes. Findings related to the utility of each of the 5MCs as a framework for promoting relationship growth and navigating relationship challenges are explored below.

Zest: Positive Attitude

About 70 percent of all mentors referenced using Zest in some way in their reflections. Mentors described using zest to show and model enthusiasm and engage around their mentees' interests as well as overcome perceived lack of mentee motivation.

Relationship Growth Particularly early on in the relationship, the use of zest seemed important in gaining mentee buy-in to the program and encouraging participation in the mentoring relationship and the group. Showing enthusiasm, or being "crazy about" their mentees, emerged as particularly important in early stages of the relationship and for mentees who were shy or reserved. As described by one mentor, "[My mentee] was so hesitant at first and really needed someone who was very enthusiastic to be around her and hear about her life."

In addition to showing their mentee that they were committed to and excited about the relationship, mentors specifically discussed using this enthusiasm to encourage active participation and engagement in group activities. Mentors felt that they could not expect their mentees to engage in group if they themselves did not: "I know that unless I show enthusiasm

and actively engage in group, I cannot expect [my mentee to] do the same." This idea of modeling participation emerged across a number of reflections and mentors saw it as particularly important for helping shy or reserved mentees open up. As one mentor reflected, "[my mentee] has become so much more participatory during group and always seems excited to talk to me during [one-on-one] time (…) I am so happy for her and also really feel that all my zest has paid off."

As two mentors noted, however, unchecked enthusiasm or zest could hinder relationship growth. Zest needs to be balanced with attunement and authenticity. Unrestricted, it has the potential to come across as disingenuous, as in the case of a mentor who noted that, "I would have to carefully apply zest and a positive attitude towards very specific situations and qualities. Otherwise, the positivity would have simply been rejected." Another mentor found that her enthusiasm was well received in the beginning of the relationship but that she overused this competency and failed to be attuned to her mentee's needs later on. Therefore, zest without attunement may be detrimental to relationships.

Mentors frequently described engaging in mentee interests, a key tenet of zest, as a means to growing their relationships. Mentors went to mentee sports practices, learned new skills with their mentees, and listened to their mentees' favorite music. For example, one mentor wrote, "the car rides were fun because I would let [my mentee] plug in her favorite music. I think [my mentee] liked a lot that I was interested in her music." In addition to bringing enthusiasm to the relationship as their mentee's "personal cheerleader," mentors also used zest to go outside their comfort zone in order to join in mentee interests.

> [My mentee] absolutely loves scary movies. I cannot stand them. This was the first time I had to try to relate to [my mentee] the best I could even though my tastes differ immensely. I caved and we ended up watching a scary movie together, which was not horrible and I was happy to experience something she enjoyed with her.

Relationship Challenges. In relation to mentor challenges, the use of zest was particularly important for mentors who were facing a perceived lack of motivation from their mentee. Whether that perceived lack of interest was expressed in relation to a reserved or disengaged mentee, or to a mentee who quit the program, mentors reported using this competency to stay engaged and not take things personally. In some cases the perceived lack of interest was relatively mild; mentees were simply less enthusiastic or communicative than their mentors had expected:

> I have come to terms that [my mentee] is a laid-back adolescent, who will not always be jumping for joy to spend time with me. Regardless, I need to be her own "personal cheerleader" and let her know that I am here and excited to grow our relationship.

However, in other cases mentees expressed open dislike of the program or their mentors. A mentor described how she relied heavily on zest when her mentee expressed wishing she had a different mentor. She used zest to not take this slight personally and to continue expressing excitement for her relationship.

One mentee abandoned her mentor by dropping out of the program altogether. In this case, the mentor described using zest in order to stay engaged with the program. Despite being hurt by her mentee's abandonment, she said this competency helped her stay positive:

"Throughout the entire experience, I tried to retain a zest and still actively participate in group, even when I did not have a [mentee] present."

Teamwork: Collaboration

Teamwork was coded in 8 percent of reflections. While mentors did not frequently name teamwork *explicitly* as a competency they drew on, mentors talked about using the skills of active listening, positive communication, and mutuality—key tenets of teamwork—to create safety in their relationships.

Relationship Growth. Nearly every mentor described a process of learning to see her mentee as an equal, rather than someone to be advised. They described this change as fostering a more effective relationship. For example, one mentor wrote, "I realized [my mentee] is a normal girl, she is mature, and she doesn't need to be treated like a baby she needs to be treated like a friend, things changed." As part of this process, mentors learned to "just listen" to their mentees, rather than give advice. Active listening skills were consistently reported as important in connecting with mentees. Instances of teamwork were frequently coded together with heart, and one mentor explained the importance of balancing the two:

> It took me a while to realize that my over-readiness to turn the conversation back on her may have cost us opportunities to connect. Or worse, my tendency to be tight-lipped may have led [my mentee] to doubt that I want an authentic relationship with her. So I am working on opening up more about myself when she asks and letting her be a friend of mine, too.

As seen with zest, competencies unchecked by attunement may be detrimental to relationship growth. In this relationship, active listening came easily. However, the mentor realized that her mentee was craving mutual sharing as well.

Some mentors also used teamwork to help mentees set and reach goals. Mentors described the importance of being a team member or "co-participant," rather than authority figure, in helping mentees achieve goals. In addition, mentors invoked the family members and interests of their mentees in order to collaborate on mentee goals. When mentors discussed future relationship goals, nearly all referred to some element of teamwork.

Relationship Challenges. Teamwork was frequently coded when mentors described deficiencies in their own relationship skills and unmet expectations. Many mentors came into the relationship with developmentally unrealistic expectations of their mentees; for example, expecting their mentee to open up right away, or expecting that they would be "helping" or "fixing" their mentee. When their mentees were reserved, or did not need their help, mentors turned to the teamwork competency to accept that their role was to be a partner and "just listen." I originally thought that my relationship with [my mentee] would be centered on grit:

> I would be solving all of her problems and she would be forever grateful. I soon came to learn that our relationship would be more centered on the "teamwork" mentoring competency, as I strive to be the best listener and supporter I can.

Teamwork was also frequently noted when mentors found themselves in particularly challenging situations. In these cases the mentor collaborated with program staff and other mentors for support. They used teamwork to engage mentees' parents and other mentors to solve logistical and transportation challenges. The unique nature of YWLP as a combined group and

one-on-one program may have provided additional opportunities for teamwork between mentors. Mentors used teamwork both when their mentees needed more of them than they were prepared to give and when they appeared to need less. In both cases, defining their role as listener and supporter was essential.

> There are so many stories that I only hear incomprehensible parts of, so I always have a vague sense that something is wrong but never any idea of how to handle it (…) I also have to remind myself that I am not here to "fix" her nor to solve their familial issues. I am here to be her friend (…)

Heart: Empathy and Attunement

Mentors frequently named heart as one of the most important mentoring competencies and it was coded in 92 percent of the reflections. Mentors wrote about using heart to let mentees set the pace of the relationship and to maintain empathy for mentees when they were challenging.

Relationship Growth. To grow their relationships, mentors noted the importance of letting the relationship develop at the mentee's pace, attending to/understanding mentee needs, and being empathic. Using heart, especially at the beginning of the relationship, appeared to be important to not rushing mentees to open up. As one mentor reflected, "I took my time in allowing [my mentee] to open up and gain comfortability with me; I didn't want to jump headfirst into this by asking hard-hitting and inquisitive questions to an undoubtedly vulnerable seventh grader." In addition, mentors noted that the more they tried to understand their mentees' "worlds," the more the mentees were willing to open up.

Mentors also frequently discussed the importance of learning and prioritizing mentees' relationship needs. Often, mentors found that what their mentee needed was somebody to listen and support them. As in teamwork, which was frequently coded with heart, mentors had to learn to be an active listener to support their mentee, "She needs someone to talk to and I am always there just to listen." Across accounts this act of listening was seen as being "empathetic" to their mentee, and many mentors felt that their ability to do this was one of their strengths.

Relationship Challenges. Heart was most frequently coded when mentors were facing cultural differences and perceived mentee lack of motivation. Both challenges often included lack of mentee communication with the mentor.

The heart mentoring competency, as expected, seemed particularly important for navigating cultural differences, including race, socio-economic-status, and country of origin. Mentors employed heart to understand their mentees' perspectives:

> [My Mentee] and I come from incredibly different backgrounds and have contrasting passions, so empathy was required to see things from her point of view. Empathy allowed me to see beyond my own understandings. This mentoring competency was crucial for me to appreciate all of [my mentee's] cultural and ideological differences, even when they contradicted my own.

In addition to contrasting viewpoints, white mentors with mentees of color used this competency when they were not able to relate to their mentees' experiences. Part of this was simply the act of accepting that, "being matched with a black mentee as a white mentor (…) there are some thoughts, feelings, problems and questions (…) that I am not able to resonate with." White mentors accepted that they could not provide all the support that their mentees might need in this

area and some encouraged their mentees to seek out role models, or other mentors of color in their mentoring group, in addition to trying to learn more about their mentees' experiences.

Mentors frequently wrote about heart together with perceived lack of mentee motivation. When mentors felt that their mentees were rejecting them, they used empathy to try to understand their point of view rather than become frustrated:

> (…) heart seems to be what has gotten my relationship to where it is today (…) Heart is what is most needed when [my mentee refuses to hang out with me. I have to empathize when she makes excuses about being tired or needing to clean her room. I need to understand and remember that I would have rather hung with my peers in my free time.

Mentors also tried to understand their mentee's needs and correct attunement issues in order to increase mentee interest. One mentor described taking a "trial and error" approach to figure out what her mentee's needs were and become more attuned. For another mentor, this took the form of understanding that her mentee may not need her to be there in the way she had hoped: "[my mentee] is dismissive during our [one-on-one] time (...) this is no mentor's ideal situation, I have learned to adjust my approach to best meet [my mentee's] needs."

In addition, while this did not occur frequently, mentors noted that this competency was important in dealing with "difficult" or "rude" mentee actions. Two mentors employing this competency reacted with empathy and understanding rather than frustration and anger. As one mentor said about her mentee's "rude" comments, "since listening does not mean agreeing, I am able to broaden my perspective, potentially even understanding the sentiments or basis behind [my mentee's] actions or words." Trying to understand their mentees' points of view helped mentors not become frustrated with difficult mentees.

Grit: Initiative and Perseverance

Overall, mentors discussed using grit more in regard to relationship challenges than to growth, which is expected given the framing of this competency in mentor training. Grit was coded in 68 percent of the reflections. Interestingly, while grit received the fewest citations of all the competencies, when it was cited it was more often for an explicit rather than implicit use. Mentors used grit to be patient with shy mentees and to problem solve and stay in the relationship when things became difficult.

Relationship Growth. When mentors discussed grit as a factor in relationship development, it was most often in regard to helping mentees open up, especially in relation to shy or reserved youth. In the descriptions, patience and problem solving emerged as two key factors in breaking through the "shell" of shy mentees. As one mentor noted, she used grit to "strategize and break through [my mentee's] once shy interior. I had to problem solve several times and try various tactics of breaking the wall, but allowing it to still be at [her] pace as a mentee." Or, as another mentor wrote, "it took time and patience for us to finally have a modest and intriguing dialogue." In addition to patience, mentors described using the "initiative" component of the competency to work with shy mentees, "it was my responsibility as the [mentor] to institute a conversation that we both felt comfortable enough." In this way, the competency helped mentors remember that it was their job to reach out and engage their mentees in conversation.

Relationship Challenges. Overall, most instances of grit were coded in relation to mentoring challenges. Frequently, descriptions were broad and overarching, but highlighted the need for patience and "sticking with it" in difficult circumstances. Perceived lack of mentee

motivation and lack of communication were the mentoring challenges that were most frequently coded with grit. Similar to how mentors discussed working with shy mentees, mentors needed patience and persistence in reaching out to deal with mentees who seem disengaged with the program or were uncommunicative: Despite the rejection I receive from [my mentee], it is crucial that I do not give up on her (…).

The second most common challenge to which mentors reported applying grit involved logistical/transportation issues. Although not specifically named as a challenge in Spencer's (2007) article, transportation and logistical issues emerged as a common challenge in the YWLP sample, likely because many college student mentors have busy schedules and lack access to a car. In these cases, initiative and perseverance were frequently used to help mentors solve these logistical conflicts. For example, one mentee stopped coming to group meetings due to conflicts with her other activities. Her mentor took initiative to contact her mentee's mother and made a plan to begin driving her mentee to swim practice each week after group as a way to maintain their relationship.

Initiative and perseverance were mentioned across other challenges as well, including unmet expectations, family interference, and abandonment. One mentor, whose mentee's family initially disapproved of her as a mentor, described needing to rely heavily on initiative and perseverance. Using this competency, she talked to the family and slowly gained their support:

> I took what they told me to heart and worked hard to change their opinion of me, calling on teamwork and heart, but most heavily on grit (…) After staying dedicated and putting in the work for a couple of weeks, [my mentee's] parents did eventually acknowledge

that they felt better about the match and expressed appreciation for the continued effort that I had put in.

In cases of mentee abandonment and unmet expectations, the use of initiative and perseverance was described as the ability to not give up despite setbacks.

Brains: Mentoring Knowledge

Guidelines for the mentoring reflection stipulated that mentors needed to include citations from research on mentoring best practices. Therefore, instances of mentoring knowledge were coded in 100 percent of the reflections and in a variety of ways. Mentors applied theory and research to their relationships in order to find strategies for engaging with their mentees, to better understand mentee behavior, and, in combination with heart, to develop a deeper understanding of their own and their mentees' cultural values.

Relationship Growth. Mentors frequently noted using readings on engagement strategies and adolescent brain development to inform relationship growth with their mentee. In terms of engagement strategies, they noted active listening skills as well as the importance of Taffel's (2005) resource on engaging with teens in the beginning of a relationship. For example, one mentor said, "During our first [one-on-one] time, I remembered from the readings that I should not dive right in to trying to solve all of [my mentee's] problems. I had to first find [out] about her interests and her life (Taffel 2005)."

Similarly, mentors turned to research on adolescent brain development (Strauch, 2003) to better understand mentee risk taking and social concerns. This resource also helped mentors empathize and understand when mentees were unkind to them: "Because of the stages of

development in [my mentee's] brain, she wasn't thinking logically about how her actions and words would impact me."

Relationship Challenges. Using mentoring research to better understand mentee actions was important in facing mentoring challenges, specifically unmet expectations and cultural differences. Mentors frequently noted that they jumped into the relationship with unrealistic expectations about having a deep emotional bond with their mentee right away (Spencer, 2007). These mentors often referenced research on differences between mentor and mentee definitions of relationship closeness (Henderson, 2016), citing that mentor "modification of expectations in regards to closeness is key – many [mentees] view being close to their [mentors] in terms of time physically spent together, in contrast to feeling connected on a deeper level."

Discussion and Implications

Findings from this study suggest that issues around relationship growth as well as challenges are normative experiences for mentors and that the five mentoring competencies (5MCs) may be a useful framework to help college women mentoring adolescent girls navigate both. This represents a step forward in developing an empirically driven, user-friendly framework for instructing mentors in best practices. Additional research is needed to determine if the 5MCs could be applied to different mentoring programs. Of particular note may be their application to problem solving relationship challenges (Spencer, 2007). Every mentor in this study discussed facing at least one relationship challenge and the overwhelming majority (92 percent) referenced multiple. Yet, unlike other studies, which have reported high attrition rates for mentors (Rhodes, 2002; Spencer, 2007), no mentors in this program dropped out. This suggests that it is not the "if" of facing relational challenges, but the "how" of dealing with them

that determines mentor retention and relationship recovery. The 5MCs were designed to address the "how," and results from this study suggest they may act as a useful framework in instructing mentors in how to navigate mentoring relationships.

All of the mentors in this study described using multiple competencies in ways that were congruent with how the 5MCs were described in the mentoring handbook (Lawrence et al., 2017). Interestingly, the majority of the mentions of the 5MCs were not explicit, or in direct response to the assignment prompt, but rather implied through descriptions of using different tools and techniques associated with the 5MCs. This indicates that mentors were not simply citing the 5MCs to fulfill an assignment requirement, but that they were truly using them in relationships.

Each of the 5MCs was reflected across responses, and no single competency seemed to be significantly more useful than the others. While results suggest that mentors prioritized different competencies depending on the changing needs of their mentoring relationship, mentors used the heart competency most to identify and respond to these changing needs. Given the dynamic nature of relationships, this may be an important mentor skill in laying the groundwork for a successful relationship with youth mentees. This was particularly true for navigating a relationship with shy or reticent mentees as well as those who seemed disinterested, or blatantly rude. In this study, mentors who failed to use heart effectively, or were not attuned to their mentees' needs, applied other competencies in a way that they felt hindered relationship growth (e.g., they were overly enthusiastic in an attempt to use zest, or were too quick to turn the conversation back to their mentee in an attempt to use teamwork). The concept of heart as a

foundational competency is supported by Varga and Deutsch's (2016) finding that misattunement was the most important predictor of relationship dissatisfaction.

Using heart in combination with brains was often cited by mentors who reported having cultural differences with their mentees. This is of note since cross-cultural matches are common across formal mentoring programs, as mentors are largely upper-middle class and white and mentees are often lower-income youth of color (Spencer, 2007). Researchers and practitioners have expressed concern over the potential for these matches to act as a conduit for promoting white, middle-class values in youth (Spencer, 2007; Weiston-Serdan, 2017). Results from this study suggest that the combination of heart and brains (i.e., literature on race and class privilege [McIntosh, 2004] and critical mentoring [Weiston-Serdan, 2017]) may be a useful framework for mentors to navigate understanding their own biases in order to reduce the potential for harm in cross-race matches.

In terms of the other mentoring competencies, findings from this study suggest that it may be important for mentors to utilize zest during the early stages of the program to gain buy-in and engage youth around their interests, and when a mentee appears disinterested or at risk for ending the relationship. On the other hand, mentors who reported lacking relationship skills tended to cite teamwork as a way to learn active listening skills and engage their mentee as an equal. Teamwork also appeared particularly useful in relationships where mentors reported working with mentees who had complicated and overwhelming issues at home, including family interference in the relationship. In these instances, mentors called upon the mentoring program for support. Teamwork in the form of program support was also frequently cited for mentors who struggled with transportation issues. Mentors reported using grit to maintain patience and

problem solve across a number of mentoring challenges, including unmet expectations, family interference, and mentee abandonment.

The mentors in this study were college women with more limited life experience than that of most adults mentoring youth, so it is not surprising that they noted the utility of deepening their academic knowledge of the developmental needs of adolescents and specific strategies to engage them. Perhaps more applicable to mentoring programs that use older mentors, however, is the value mentors in this study placed on readings that helped them normalize *and* challenge their idealized expectations about the mentoring relationship. In particular, they found useful those readings that identified unrealistic (Spencer, 2007) and differing expectations about closeness in the mentoring relationship (Henderson, et al., 2016).

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has important limitations. Reflections used as data in this study were not originally intended for research purposes; rather, they were designed as a graded class assignment. This may have affected the way students' responded, given that they were asked to report on how competencies were useful to them and were aware that their papers would be graded by the creator of the competencies, possibly priming them to portray those competencies in a more positive light. Therefore, it is possible that competencies appear more useful than they truly were to mentors in day-to-day relationships. In an attempt to account for this possibility, transcripts were coded for both explicit and implicit mentions of competency use. In other words, competencies were coded when a mentor wrote about using one and referenced it by name (explicit) and when mentors wrote about participating in a behavior associated with a competency without naming it (implicit). The majority of coded instances were implicit (162

implicit vs. 77 explicit), which suggests that mentors were not only reflecting on competencies because they were instructed to do so, but also because they were in fact using competency skills across their relationships.

Although the findings of this paper suggest that the 5MCs could be a useful training component for a diverse set of mentoring programs, it is important to consider that participants in this study were unique in a number of ways. Unlike other mentoring programs, YWLP is all female, requires college-aged mentors to enroll in a semester-long course as well as commit to year-long weekly peer supervision meetings, and has both a group and one-on-one component. Therefore, it is possible that findings are unique to YWLP and would not apply to other mentoring programs.

A final limitation of this paper is the time of data collection. The mentoring reflections were written halfway through the mentoring program and about three months into the relationship. Therefore, findings may not reflect competency use across the entire mentoring relationship. Future papers will seek to expand the understanding of the competencies by examining reflections written at the end of the relationship and comparing those findings to the current study. In addition, the scope of the current study is not suited to making causal inferences and does not provide insight into how use of mentoring competencies may affect mentoring relationship development. Further research will seek to understand this relationship development by using a mixed-methods approach to examine how mentors with different mentor-mentee trajectories reflect on their relationships and the utility of the 5MCs.

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Table 1

Description of the 5MCs in Mentoring Program Handbook

Competency	Key Elements
Zest	● Believes in potential of all youth (growth v. fixed mindset) ● Engages mentee enthusiastically, including maintaining positive affect, seeking proximity, engaging in conversation, sharing in mentee interests ● Redirects negative interactions positively and does not take them personally
Teamwork	● Communicates warmly and regularly with mentee and mentee's family ● Is an active listener to mentee and members of her "team" ● Seeks to understand rather than advise ● Is reflective and nonjudgmental
Heart	● Seeks to understand and appreciate mentee and her world ● Is respectful of differences ● Is empathetic, attuned, and patient with mentee's concerns/challenges
Grit	● Uses critical problem solving to adapt to mentee needs ● Has a bias toward action and experimentation ● Perseveres in overcoming relationship challenges
Brains	● Appreciates nuances of adolescent development ● Uses best mentoring practices ● Understands and follows program guidelines

Manuscript Two

The Ups and Downs of Mentoring Relationship Formation: What to Expect

The authors whose names are listed immediately below certify that they have NO affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest (such a honoraria; educational grants; participation in speakers' bureaus; membership, employment, consultancies, stock ownership, or other equity interest; and expert testimony or patent-licensing arrangements), or non-financial interest (such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge or beliefs) in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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Abstract

The current study examines the development of formal youth mentoring relationships over time in a sample of female mentors. While benefits of youth mentoring have been shown across a variety of domains, research suggests that qualities of the mentoring relationship, including duration and satisfaction, are instrumental in determining mentee outcomes. Despite the central role of the relationship in mentoring, there is a paucity of research examining how mentoring relationships develop over time. Mentors were participants in a school-based mentoring program that is curriculum driven and includes both a group and a one-on-one component. Weekly reports of relationship satisfaction were collected from mentors. Multilevel modelling was used to analyze relationship quality over time. Relationship development was best modeled by a random-effects, random-slopes model. Satisfaction generally started high and grew slightly over the academic year. Neither intercept, nor slope nor their interactions were associated with mentee outcomes in terms of mentee relationship satisfaction or peer self-esteem. This study is a first step towards understanding the developmental pattern of mentoring relationships as measured by mentor reports of relationship strength. Results from this study provide important information to aid in mentor training and to advance the mentoring field. Limitations of the research design include inability to make causal claims, small sample size, and lack of generalizability.

Key Words: mentoring, relationship development, adolescence, school-based mentoring

The Ups and Downs of Mentoring Relationship Formation: What to Expect

Mentoring programs are designed to provide youth with additional sources of social support via relationships with caring adults. Currently, a great deal of research supports a connection between qualities of the mentoring relationship - including closeness, duration, stability, and satisfaction - and mentee outcomes (Cavell, Elledge, Malcolm, Faith & Hughes, 2009; DeWit, DuBois, Erdem, Larose & Lipman, 2016; DuBois & Karcher, 2005). Longer-lasting, closer relationships are related to positive outcomes for mentees, while shorter, more emotionally distant relationships are related to neutral or negative outcomes (DuBois & Karcher, 2005).

Despite the importance of the mentoring relationship for mentee outcomes, there is little research on the developmental trajectory of formal youth mentoring relationships over time, and researchers have not consistently measured relationship satisfaction at multiple time points throughout the mentoring relationship. Rather, inferences have generally been made based on one or two measurements of relationship quality. Developing a more nuanced understanding of growth patterns would allow mentors and mentoring programmers to understand normative development of a mentoring relationship. In turn, programmers could better anticipate and prepare for relationship difficulties, recognize signs of troubled relationships, and reassure mentors when they are experiencing normal “ups and downs.” Further, monitoring mentoring relationship quality may provide a way for programmers to dynamically respond to relationship needs and thus improve outcomes. The current study will examine the developmental trajectory of mentoring relationships from the perspectives of mentors in a sample of female mentors

involved in a year-long, formal, school-based mentoring program. To date, studies of mentoring relationship quality have relied on measurements from only one or two time points. This study is the only known attempt to capture mentoring relationship development at this degree of resolution.

Review of the Literature

Mentoring Relationships, Quality, and Outcomes

A mentoring relationship is typically described as a relationship between an unrelated adult or older peer mentor with a youth mentee in which the mentor is assumed to offer guidance and support (Karcher & Hansen, 2013). Rhodes (2002) proposed that mentoring relationships affect youth through three processes, by: (1) improving their social relationships and emotional functioning, (2) improving their cognitive skills through dialogue and listening, and (3) promoting positive identity development by presenting a role model and advocate in the person of the mentor. According to this model, mentors who influence improvement in more than one of these three areas are likely to have the greatest impact on their mentee.

Rhodes asserts that none of these processes can occur without the formation of a strong emotional bond between mentors and mentees. In fact, this bond is considered the "active ingredient" of a successful mentoring relationship. In this model, a strong bond characterized by trust, empathy, and mutuality allows mentors to act as "sounding boards" for mentees and provide "corrective emotional experiences" by modeling positive interactions that generalize across youths' close relationships (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008). Accordingly, mentees benefit directly from positive interactions with their mentors and also from improved relationships with others including family and peers. A number of empirical studies have supported the notion that

a strong bond between mentor and mentee is critical for positive youth outcomes; in an evaluation of Big Brothers Big Sisters America, a community-based mentoring program, outcomes for youth improved steadily as relationships lasted longer (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). Given these findings, variation in relationship quality and duration has often been conceptualized as a major driver of the mixed effect of mentoring on a number of outcomes, including academics, self-esteem, delinquency, and mental health (Rhodes & Dubois, 2008).

More recently, a number of researchers have pushed back on the notion that relationship quality is the sole driver in youth outcomes. Lyons, McQuillin, and Henderson (2018) found that the best outcomes for youth were achieved when development of a close relationship was balanced with the use of instrumental activities. Furthermore, Lyons and McQuillin (2018) found a positive correlation between relationship quality and mentee outcomes that decelerated as relationship quality increased. This suggests that benefits of closeness may decrease after a minimum degree of quality is achieved, and that other elements of the mentoring relationship may play a role in predicting youth outcomes.

Mentoring Relationship Formation

While the preeminent feature of youth mentoring relationships is the close relationship formed between mentor and mentee, little quantitative research has focused on how the mentoring relationship forms over time. In this section, I will orient the reader to the theoretical basis of mentoring relationship formation, including proposed stages of relationship formation and research on formation in related types of relationships.

Stages of the Mentoring Relationship. Keller (2005) developed a theoretical model of the stages of youth mentoring relationships in formal youth mentoring programs. He posited that

mentors and mentees progress through the following five stages in the course of their mentoring relationship: (1) contemplation, (2) initiation, (3) growth and maintenance, (4) decline and dissolution, and (5) redefinition. Keller's five stages followed from Kram (1983) and Chao's (1977) research on informal workplace mentoring relationships. Keller (2005) added the contemplation phase to the previously identified stages in order to tailor the model to formal youth mentoring relationships, which include a period of preparation before a pair has actually met.

The contemplation phase involves a period of anticipation and preparation for the mentoring relationship and varies in length based on the organizational structure of the mentoring program (Keller, 2005). The initiation phase involves the mentor and mentee getting acquainted with one another through reciprocal sharing. In this phase they may exchange views and assess their compatibility in a number of domains. The longest phase of the mentoring relationship is the growth and maintenance phase; in this phase, mentors and mentees build a predictable pattern of interaction through engagement in shared activities and conversation. The decline and dissolution phase refers to a lessening in the importance of the mentoring relationship and/or a termination of the relationship altogether. This phase varies greatly by dyad and program characteristics. The relationship may gradually decline and dissolve naturally, be ended abruptly by mentor/mentee termination, or be ended predictably through program requirements. These stages provide a useful framework for considering the growth of mentoring relationships over time and point to the importance of interactions at different stages of the relationship. However, there is limited understanding of the timing and sequencing of the development of mentoring relationships. A closer understanding of the trajectory of mentoring

relationship formation would allow programs to better support mentors and mentees and decrease the deleterious effects of the early termination of mentoring relationships.

Trajectories in mentoring relationship formation. Pryce and Keller (2012) conducted one of the few studies attempting to answer the question of how mentoring relationships develop over time. In their mixed-methods study of 26 volunteer mentors and mentees involved in a school-based mentoring program, they conducted observations and in-depth interviews with participants in order to determine how relationships developed over time. Pryce and Keller used data from the qualitative interviews to uncover four patterns of relationships in their study: (1) progressive, (2) plateaued, (3) stagnant, and (4) breakthrough. In progressive relationships, the relationship steadily grew in quality and closeness over time. Plateaued relationships looked quite similar to progressive relationships in the early stages but then growth in closeness either halted or declined. Stagnant relationships were characterized by a challenging initiation and a failure to grow over time. Finally, in the breakthrough category, a small number of relationships began with challenges and difficulty but reached a turning point at which the relationship shifted in a more positive direction. Additionally, Pryce and Keller found that dyads in the progressive relationships reported the most positive characterizations of their relationships in terms of high closeness and low conflict. Pryce and Keller's findings suggest that typologies of mentoring relationships might exist and be important in understanding and evaluating how mentors and mentees view their relationships.

Current Study

The current study examines mentoring relationship growth, as measured by mentors' reports of relationship satisfaction, over the course of the academic year. Drawing from

qualitative literature on relationship formation, this study takes a quantitative approach to measuring relationship growth over time. As a first step in this process, this study answers the following questions:

1) What is the typical pattern of mentoring relationship satisfaction, as reported by mentors over the course of one academic year?
2) Are there meaningful individual differences in the patterns of relationship satisfaction, as reported by mentors over the course of the academic year?
3) Are individual differences in patterns of relationship satisfaction, as reported by mentors, correlated with mentee outcomes?
    a) Does the intercept of the relationship (satisfaction at the start of the relationship) predict mentee relationship satisfaction or peer self-esteem scores?
    b) Does the slope of the relationship over time predict mentee relationship satisfaction or change in peer self-esteem?
    c) Does the interaction of the relationship starting point and slope predict mentee relationship satisfaction or change in peer self-esteem?

Methods

Data Collection

Data for the study were collected from participants in YWLP during 2017-2018. Mentors were asked to fill out a weekly online survey in which they rated their mentoring relationship satisfaction on a scale from one to five, with “1 being not so great 5 being great.” Mentees completed a paper survey in which they were asked about different aspects of their life including

how connected they felt to their mentor, school, and peers, and self-reported academic success at the end of the mentoring relationship.

Measures

Mentor Weekly Relationship Satisfaction. Mentors completed a weekly online survey in which they were asked, "how would you rate your relationship with your [mentee]? (1 being not so good and 5 being great)." Completion of the weekly survey was part of their class requirement. Only data from consented mentors was used in the study.

Youth Strength of Relationship Scale. Mentees were asked to complete a 15-item questionnaire in which they rated how much they agreed with a number of statements about their mentors. Statements included, "I wish my mentor was different" and "when something is bugging me, my mentor listens to me while I get it off my chest." These questions were designed to capture a broad range of experiences that mentees may have in relation to their mentors.

Youth Peer Self-Esteem Scale. Mentees' perceptions of their acceptance by peers was measured using the peer subscale of the DuBois, Felner, Brand, Phillips, and Ruby (1996) Self-Esteem Questionnaire. This brief (8-item) scale asked mentees to rate how much they agree or disagree with statements about their peer relationships, including "I am as popular with kids my own age as I want to be" and "I wish my friends liked me more than they do." This measure was chosen given the hypothesized connection between relationship quality and mentees' improved interactions with others, including peers.

The Young Women Leaders Program (YWLP)

YWLP is a school-based, curriculum-driven mentoring program that trains college women to work with seventh- and eighth-grade girls. College women interested in becoming

mentors submit a written application and are interviewed by program staff. Mentees, who are referred by their school counselors at the end of sixth grade, have been identified as being at some kind of social, emotional, or academic risk but not receiving other types of intervention services. Parental consent and student assent is obtained before referred girls are paired with a college woman mentor.

Once in the program, mentoring dyads are expected to spend time together one-on-one for four hours a month. Additionally, all mentees and mentors from a particular school, usually in groups of six to ten dyads, meet together after school for two hours per week in a group led by a college woman facilitator. The group curriculum addresses salient issues facing adolescent girls (e.g., body image and bullying), as well as including group activities designed to develop participants' leadership skills, self-esteem, and connections with each other (e.g., leadership projects and goal setting). Training and support for the mentors occurs through a required three-credit course in the fall that focuses on mentoring best practices and theory and research on adolescent development, and includes a one-hour weekly peer supervision meeting with the other mentors in the group. In the spring, mentors take a one-credit course that includes their one-hour weekly peer supervision meetings.

Participants

Mentors. College women (*N=48)* were students at a public university in central Virginia who applied to be mentors and consented to participate in the study. Mentors were recruited through fliers, which directed interested college women to apply to the program. Mentors were between 18 and 24 years of age with an average age of 20 years. Mentors were racially and ethnically diverse: 49 percent White, 31 percent Black or African American, 5 percent Asian or

Asian American, 13 percent Multiracial, 7 percent Hispanic or Latinx, and 7 percent other. About 8 percent were in their first year of college, 40 percent in their second, 42 percent in their third, and 10 percent in their fourth.

Mentees. Mentees were seventh- and eighth-grade female students (*N=31)* at public middle schools in central Virginia. Counselors referred students to YWLP because they had identified them as candidates who would benefit from a mentoring relationship. Mentees were between 12 and 15 years of age and 26 percent White, 42 percent Black or African American, 0 percent Asian or Asian American, 16 percent Multiracial, 13 percent Hispanic or Latinx, and .03 percent other. About 55 percent of mentees received free or reduced-price lunch.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using R-Studio (RStudio Team, 2015), including the associated packages: nlme (Pinheiro, Bates, DebRoy, Sarkar & R Core Team, 2018) and lme4 (Bates, Martin, Bolker & Walker, 2015). First, the raw data were plotted by graphing best fit lines of relationship satisfaction over time for each individual mentor and the best fit line for the entire data set (see Figure 1). Then, the raw data were analyzed for descriptive statistics including mean relationship quality and standard deviation.

Data then were standardized using the make.z function to increase interpretability of models. Using the standardized variables, three multilevel models were estimated. Each model is described in greater detail in the results. Maximum likelihood estimation was used to fit all three models. The intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC), coefficient of determination (R^2), and likelihood ratio tests were computed to compare the fit between models.

Using results from Model 3, slopes and intercepts of relationship satisfaction were calculated for each mentor. Two linear regressions were run to determine potential relationships between relationship characteristics and mentee outcomes. First, mentee relationship satisfaction was included as the outcome measure with the relationship satisfaction slope, intercept, and their interaction included as predictors. Then, the same regression was run including change in mentee peer self-esteem as the outcome.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Regression lines of individual mentor RQ over time compared to the regression line for overall sample RQ overtime were plotted; see Figure 1. This figure provides a visual representation of individual variation in RQ over time. The mean relationship quality (RQ) (on a scale of 1-5) was 4.19 with a standard deviation of 0.87 and a range of 1-5. This suggests overall high levels and stable relationship quality across the year. On average, RQ increased from 4 to 4.42 over the course of the study, with significant interrelationship variability.

Qualitatively, the data shows that while relationship quality was generally perceived as high over time, there were “dips” in relationship satisfaction over time for most mentors. In fact, approximately 92 percent of all mentors showed a period of decline in relationship satisfaction. Most of these dips were transient and relatively small, with only a small fraction of relationships showing declines in relationship satisfaction that never recovered.

Modeling

A sequential model fitting process was used to allow for the systematic variation of factors predicting relationship growth. Three models, an unconditional model (Model 1);a

random-intercept, fixed-slopes model (Model 2); and a slopes-intercept, random-slopes model (Model 3) were estimated. In each model, an additional factor was allowed to vary and comparisons were made to determine the most appropriate fit for the data. Multilevel modeling was used to account for nesting of repeated measures of relationship satisfaction, or quality, within an individual mentor over time. Model characteristics, parameter estimates, and associated statistics are presented in Table 1.

Model 1. The unconditional model, or the null model, was estimated to determine the degree of variability in relationship satisfaction between participants. Despite a fixed intercept estimate near the center (β = -0.002), the variability in intercepts across participants was substantially greater (σ = 0.73). The results provided an estimate of the percentage of variance explained across mentors defined in terms of an intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC). Results yielded an ICC of 0.53, indicating that 53 percent of the variance in RQ was explained by between-individual differences, while 47 percent was explained by within-individual differences.

Model 2. Model 2 built on Model 1 by adding a fixed effect associated with week (random-intercept, fixed-slope model). Compared to Model 1, Model 2 only yielded a slight improvement in model fit metrics (ICC = 0.53, r-squared = 0.53), likely due to the weak, though statistically, significant (p = 0.002) effect associated with week (β = 0.006). Given that the data are standardized, a 0.006 fixed effects implies a 0.006 standard deviation improvement in relationship quality each week.

Model 3. Model 3 included a random effect associated with week (random-intercept, random-slope model). Similar to Model 2, Model 3 returned a weak effect associated with week (β = 0.006) though with greater statistical significance (p = 2.2e-16). Model 3 had a lower ICC

(0.50) than Model 1 or Model 2 (0.53). Additionally, Model 3 had a higher r-squared value (0.60) than Model 1 (0.53) or Model 2 (0.53). Further, the residual variance dropped from 0.48 in Model 1 and Model 2 to 0.40 in Model 3, suggesting that about 17 percent of within-individual variation can be explained by time. Despite the weak fixed effect of week, the variability in the random effect for week, or slope across individuals, was substantially greater ($\sigma = 0.026$). Taken together, these data suggest that in general relationship quality improves modestly over time, but there is a high degree of variability associated both with where relationships start in terms of satisfaction and with how they change over time. Finally, it is worth noting that the r-squared even in Model 3 only achieved a value of 0.6, suggesting the existence of complex nonlinear relationships.

Strength of Relationship. See Table 2 for the regression equation and a complete list of outcomes. Mentee reports of relationship quality ranged from 27 to 73, with an average of 65.29 and a standard deviation of 9.74. Overall, results showed no significant correlation between mentor report of relationship satisfaction at the beginning of the relationship (intercept, $\boldsymbol{\beta} = -3.08$, $p = 0.32$), how reports of relationship satisfaction changed over time (slope, $\boldsymbol{\beta} = 142.61$, $p = 0.12$), or their interaction ($\boldsymbol{\beta} = 221.51$, $p = 0.17$) and mentee reports of their relationship's quality at the end of the relationship. This suggests that mentor perceptions of relationship satisfaction over the course of the mentoring program do not meaningfully relate to mentee reports of relationship satisfaction at the end of the program. Interestingly, further analysis showed no significant correlation between the average of a mentor's reports of relationship quality and their mentee's ratings of relationship quality ($\boldsymbol{\beta} = -0.002$, $p = 0.86$).

Peer Self-Esteem. See Table 2 for the regression equation and a complete list of outcomes. Peer Self-Esteem scores across mentees ranged from 11 to 32 with a mean 22.58 with a standard deviation of 5.59. Overall, results showed no significant correlation between mentor report of relationship satisfaction at the beginning of the relationship (intercept, $\beta = 2.31$, $p = 0.19$), how reports of relationship satisfaction changed over time (slope, $\beta = -44.26$, $p = 0.46$), or their interaction ($\beta = -86.76$, $p = 0.43$) and mentee reports of peer self-esteem at the end of the relationship. This suggests that mentor perceptions of relationship satisfaction over the course of the mentoring program do not meaningfully relate to mentee reports of peer self-esteem at the end of the program.

Discussion

Findings suggest that on average, relationship quality was relatively high and stable in this sample of mentors. On average, quality increased from about 4 to 4.42 over the academic year. However, further analysis showed a great deal of variability in relationship quality over time between individual mentors. Mentors' reports of relationship quality varied significantly in starting points and slopes across the study and were best described using a random-intercepts and random-slopes model. This model returned modest but statistically significant growth in relationship quality over time. This implies that there is a great deal of heterogeneity in mentor-mentee relationship growth as measured by mentor relationship satisfaction. The observed variability in trajectories of individual development motivates further investigation into qualities associated with patterns of relationship growth.

Results support the existence of individual patterns of relationship development, as proposed by Pryce and Keller (2012). Due to the small sample size, statistical validation of the

specific types set forth by Pryce and Keller, (1) progressive, (2) plateaued, (3) stagnant, and (4) breakthrough, was not possible. However, relationships that increased in quality over time (progressive), initially progressed and then remained stable (plateaued), failed to grow or declined over time (stagnant), or grew after a period of difficulty (breakthrough), among other distinctive patterns, were qualitatively observed; see Table 1. This is the first known study to use weekly quantitative data to add support to and expand upon Pryce's and Keller's (2012) theory of relationship growth patterns. Future papers will further examine these patterns using a mixed-method approach to determine factors associated with specific relationship trajectories.

No statistically significant correlations between mentor reports of relationship satisfaction, in terms of the slope, intercept, or the interaction of slope and intercept, and mentee outcomes (mentee relationship quality and peer self-esteem) were observed. Further, associations between these variables were small. This suggests that mentor perceptions of relationship quality may not be important in determining mentee outcomes. While initially unexpected, these findings further underscore the need for mentoring programmers to train mentors to expect "bumps" in their relationships and that these need not be harmful to the relationship overall or to youth outcomes. Further, findings indicated no significant correlation between mentee reports of relationship quality at the end of the relationship and the average relationship satisfaction reported by mentors across the year. This supports research pushing back on the notion that relationship quality is the key driver in predicting youth outcomes (Lyons, McQuillin & Henderson 2018; Lyons & McQuillin, 2018). It motivates expanding what is measured in monitoring mentoring relationships to increase effectiveness-- for example, monitoring the use of instrumental activities in addition to relationship quality. Interestingly, in this sample mentees

with the lowest relationship quality scores at the end of the relationship had mentors with mid- to high average levels of relationship satisfaction. This underscores the need for mentor trainers to educate mentors about the possibility that their own perceptions of relationships may not reflect youth perceptions.

Further, findings could help mentoring programs educate mentors about what to expect when entering a mentoring relationship. Unmet, unrealistic mentor expectations are associated with relationship failure (Spencer, 2007). Helping mentors set realistic expectations could prevent premature termination. For example, the majority of participants in this study showed relatively high relationship satisfaction that grew slightly over time. However, there was significant variability in both starting points and change over time. Mentors should be encouraged to focus on their individual relationship with an understanding that there are numerous patterns of relationship growth. They should be discouraged from comparing their relationships to others or to their expectations. Further, there were small dips in relationship quality over time even in many of the relationships that showed positive growth overall. Therefore, mentors might benefit from being primed to expect fluctuations in satisfaction with the relationship over time and coached to focus more on overall trends.

In addition, monitoring weekly relationship satisfaction can be useful in identifying potential relationship challenges before they become relationship failures. For example, mentoring programmers may intervene in relationships that show consistently low or decreasing quality. This, in conjunction with mentor education around typical growth patterns, could prevent premature termination and harmful relationships. In fact, in this sample, program staff did monitor weekly reports of relationship satisfaction and intervene when scores were low and

relationships were perceived as at risk. This may have accounted for the relatively high levels of relationship satisfaction seen in this study. Given the small sample size and the descriptive nature of this study, it remains a first step in understanding how mentoring relationships form over time. The variability in how individuals' relationships develop over time motivates investigation of qualities associated with patterns of relationship growth. This study provides a first step in a quantitative understanding of how mentoring relationships develop over time. Further investigation of how mentoring relationship trajectories are linked to mentor behaviors and mentee outcomes will allow for more targeted recommendations.

Limitations

The generalizability of this study is limited by the relatively small sample size, and the unique characteristics of the program studied. YWLP is a school-based, curriculum-driven program that is specifically geared towards college women and middle-school girls. Results may not generalize to other mentoring programs. In addition, outcome data was based on a very simple measure of relationship satisfaction (ratings from 1-5). This measure was not validated for reliability or validity and was designed for this study out of convenience. While there was variation in this measure on a weekly basis, it is unclear how sensitive this measure is to change over time. This brief, single-item measure was selected to allow for high-frequency data collection and reduce the burden on mentors.

In addition, relationship satisfaction was based entirely on mentor reports. A study including mentee perspectives on relationship satisfaction would provide more nuanced findings. Additionally, mentoring program staff intervened by checking in with mentors when low

relationship satisfaction scores were identified. Relationships may have developed differently if staff had not intervened in this way.

Finally, given that the data is based on a single score of "satisfaction," mentors may have felt pressure to report that they were satisfied with their relationships even if they were experiencing difficulties. Further, in the current study this score is used as a measure of relationship quality; however, it is possible for mentors to be highly satisfied in relationships that might not be of a high quality. Therefore, the current study cannot speak to specific aspects of relationship strength or quality over time. A more nuanced measure of relationship strength could provide a more complete representation. This would allow researchers to determine how different aspects of relationship strength change over time. For example, using a scale with multiple questions designed to examine different aspects of relationship quality would provide a more holistic view of relationship strength. Additionally, future research is needed to determine potential links between relationship quality over time and outcomes for mentors and mentees. Despite the stated limitations, this study provides a first step in measuring mentoring relationship quality over time.

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Tables and Figures

Figure 1.

Plot of regression lines for each individual participant and regression line for overall sample

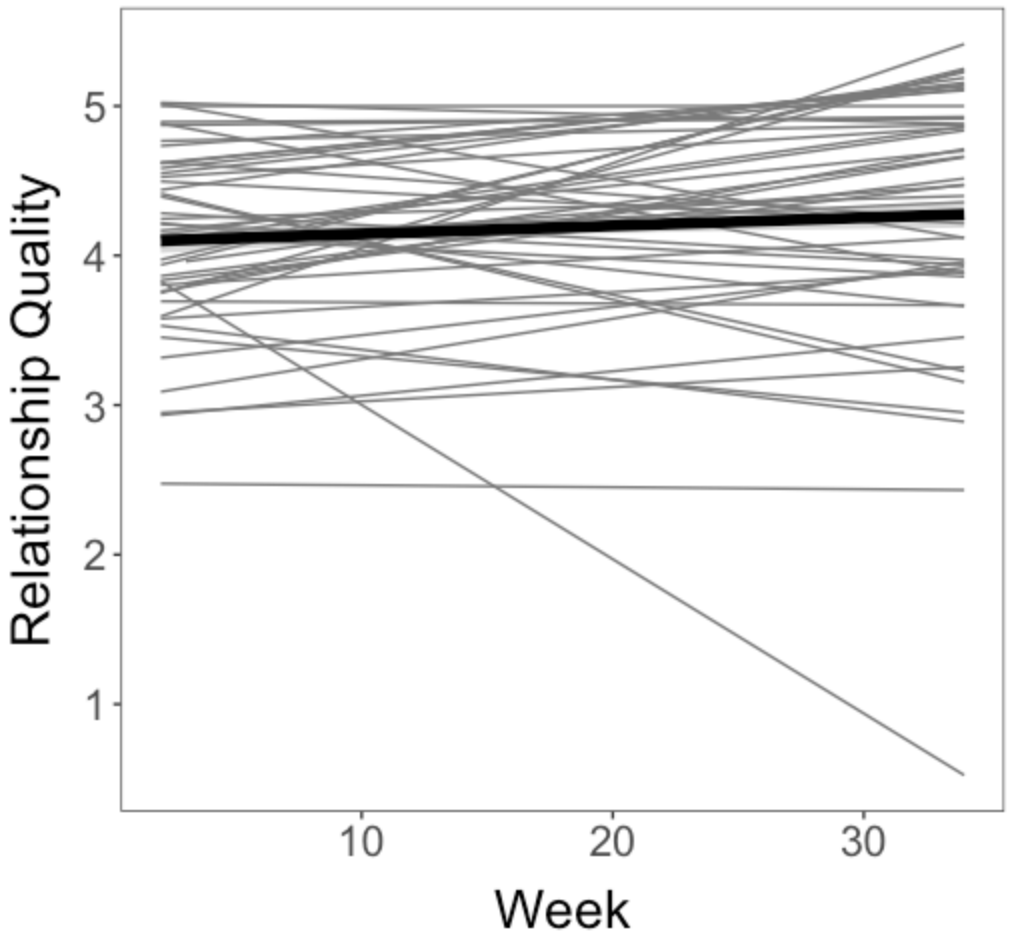

Table 1.

Characteristics and statistics for all multilevel models

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
		Model Characteristics	
Design	L1: $RQ_ij = \beta_{0j} + r_{ij}$ L2: $\beta 0_j = \gamma_{00} + u_{0j}$	L1: $RQ_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_{1j}week_{ij} + r_{ij}$ L2: $\beta 0_j = \gamma_{00} + u_{0j}$ L2: $\beta 1_j = \gamma_{10}$	L1: $RQ_ij = \beta_{0j} + \beta 1_j week_{ij} + r_{ij}$ L2: $\beta 0_j = \gamma_{00} + u_{0j}$ L2: $\beta 1_j = \gamma_{10} + u_{1j}$
Df	3	4	6
AIC	2255.6	2248.4	2145.9
BIC	2270.3	2268	2175.3
ICC	0.53	0.53	0.5
R^2	0.53	0.53	0.6
		Random Effects	
ID σ^2	0.53	0.53	0.4
ID σ	0.73	0.73	0.63
Week σ^2	--	--	0.0007
Week σ	--	--	0.026
Residual σ^2	0.48	0.48	0.4
Residual σ	0.69	0.69	0.63
		Fixed Effects	
Intercept Estimate	-0.002	-0.11	-0.11
Intercept SE	0.11	0.11	0.10
Intercept t value	-0.015	-0.98	-1.08

Week Estimate		0.006	0.006
Week SE		0.002	0.004
Week t value		3.049	1.45
	Likelihood-Ratio Test		
Log Likelihood	-1124.8	-1120.2	-1067
Deviance	2249.6	2240.4	2133.9
X^2		9.248	106.452
X Df		1	2
$P(>X^2)$		0.002	2.20E-16

Table 2.

Characteristics and statistics for linear regressions

	YSoR	Peer Self-Esteem
	Model Characteristics	
Design	$YSoR_{1j} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 intercept_i + \beta_2 slope_i + \beta_3 intercept_i * slope_i + \mathcal{E}$	$Peer_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 intercept_i + \beta_2 slope_i + \beta_3 intercept_i * slope_i + \mathcal{E}$
Min	-30.85	-11.69
1Q	-1.39	-2.64
Median	2.10	0.76
3Q	4.74	2.74
Max	14.76	9.81
	Coefficients	
Intercept (p-value)	-3.08 (0.32)	2.31 (0.19)
Slope (p-value)	142.61 (0.17)	-44.26 (0.46)
Intercept*Slope (p-value)	221.51 (0.24)	-86.76 (0.43)

Manuscript Three

A Mixed-Methods Approach to Understanding Trajectories of Mentoring Relationship Growth

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Author Note

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Abstract

The proposed study integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine mentors with different relationship trajectories reflect on their relationships. Using quantitative and qualitative methods, mentor reports of relationship quality are plotted over time and different growth patterns identified: (1) progressive, (2) stable-high, (3) dip and recovery, (4) stable-low and (5) regressive. Qualitative coding was used to identify patterns in mentors' descriptions of their relationship experiences - including both *what* mentors wrote about and *how* they wrote about it. Comparisons of code application were made between different growth profiles. ADD A FINAL SENTENCE -- MAKE IT MORE ABOUT PROMOTING YOUTH VOICE.

Key Words: mentoring, mentor relationship, relationship challenge, positive youth development

A Mixed-Methods Approach to Understanding Trajectories of Mentoring Relationship Growth

Formal youth mentoring is built on the assumption that supportive relationships with adults promotes effective youth development (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). Research has shown benefits across a number of domains for mentored youth, including academics, self-esteem, and delinquency (Cavell & Elledge, 2014, Lerner et al., 2014, Rhodes 2002). These encouraging findings have led to the rapid expansion of programs, with over five million youth involved nationwide (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014). However, not all mentoring interventions are created equal. An increasing amount of research has pushed back on the notion that mentoring is universally beneficial and found that mentoring has the potential to be harmful to youth (DuBois & Karcher, 2005). Qualities of the mentoring relationship - including closeness and duration - have often been linked to differential outcomes for youth. Lasting and high-quality relationships have been linked to positive outcomes for youth while more distant, shorter relationships have been linked to null or negative ones (DuBois & Karcher, 2005; DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn & Valentine, 2011).

Despite the central nature of the dyadic relationship in determining youth outcomes, there is little consensus among researchers and programmers on prescribed practices for mentors to create and sustain quality relationships over time. Guidelines for programs often do not include specifics on mentor behaviors (Kupersmidt & Rhodes, 2014) which limits researchers' ability to make inferences about what elements contribute to program effects (McQuillin, Lyons, Clayton, Anderson, 2018). Further, while relationships are inherently dynamic and developmental processes that occur and change over time, mentoring researchers have focused primarily on

single time-point measurements of relationship quality. This has left the mentoring world with limited understanding of the processes and patterns of mentoring relationship development - knowledge that would benefit programmers hoping to support positive relationship development.

This study used a mixed-methods approach to examine mentoring relationship development over time. Specifically, the study's aim was to uncover patterns of relationship development in a sample of mentors working with adolescent girls and to determine how these patterns may be related to relationship characteristics including use of mentoring best practices and relationship challenges. A better understanding of these factors can potentially increase programmers' ability to promote factors of positive relationship development while decreasing those associated with negative, or harmful, relationship patterns.

Review of the Literature

Mentoring Relationships.

Formal mentoring relationships are commonly defined as relationships between unrelated adults or older peers and youth with the explicit intent of benefitting the mentee (Karcher & Hansen, 2013). According to Rhode's (2002) model, a relationship characterized by mutuality, trust, and empathy is the essential pathway for mentee benefits, which occur through the following processes: (1) improving mentees' social relationships and emotional functioning, (2) improving mentees' cognitive skills through dialogue and listening, and (3) promoting mentees' positive identity development through mentors who serve as role models and advocates. Rhode's theory has been validated by quantitative findings indicating that closer, longer-lasting relationships have greater positive impacts on mentees than less close, shorter relationships (DuBois & Karcher, 2005).

Relationship Development. Keller (2005) proposed a theoretical model outlining five stages of a formal mentoring relationship - (1) contemplation, (2) initiation, (3) growth and maintenance, (4) decline and dissolution, and (5) redefinition - he argued that mentors' actions at each phase influenced relationship quality. For example, mentors should not push their mentees to open up too quickly in the initiation phase and should prepare mentees well in advance of the decline and dissolution phase. Research by Grossman and Rhodes (2002) provided empirical support for the notion that mentor-mentee characteristics and actions contribute to relationship development, for example relationship quality was related to premature termination. Taken together, these findings suggest that relational processes and mentor-mentee characteristics are important in predicting unique patterns of relationship development.

Despite the importance of the mentoring relationship in determining mentee outcomes, few researchers have quantitatively examined how these relationships develop over time. This limits the ability of programmers to identify and intervene in potentially struggling relationships and promote practices to build strong relationships. In one of the few studies that did investigate relationships over time, Pryce and Keller (2012) took a mixed-methods approach to understanding relationship trajectories in 26 mentor-mentee dyads. Researchers observed dyads over the course of the mentoring relationship, attending to what happened between pairs during the mentoring group. Additionally, mentors were interviewed about their expectations and factors that might affect relationship formation before and after the program. Finally, mentors completed measures about their relationships including closeness and satisfaction. Researchers identified four relationship types in their sample: (1) progressive, (2) plateaued, (3) stagnant, and (4) breakthrough. Each type was characterized by a different growth pattern. The quality of

progressive relationships grew steadily over time while plateaued relationships grew in the early stages only. Stagnant relationships showed no growth over time while breakthrough relationships ended positively after a challenging start to the relationship. Progressive relationships were characterized by the highest levels of closeness and lowest levels of conflict. Suggesting that important relationship processes may be reflected in different growth patterns.

While Pryce and Keller (2012) included frequent observations, mentor perceptions of the relationship were only collected twice. Therefore, implications about mentors' perceptions of their relationships changing over time is limited. Yet, research suggests that it is mentors' perceptions of relationships that can drive undesired outcomes including premature termination (Spencer, 2016). A more finely grained view of mentors' perceptions of relationship quality over time would allow researchers to better inform mentor training and attenuate expectations.

Relationship Processes

One explanation for differences in the patterns of relationship development are the differences in relational processes between dyads, including both mentor behaviors and relationship challenges. Below, common threats, or challenges, to successful mentoring relationships are discussed as are specific mentor behaviors that are believed to support relationship growth. While not a comprehensive list, these provide a framework for considering factors that influence relationship development.

Challenges. Spencer (2007) examined mentoring relationship "failures" in hopes of illuminating patterns of premature relationship termination. In her qualitative study, Spencer found a number of common threats to mentoring relationships that were associated with early termination. These included: (a) mentor or mentee abandonment, (b) perceived lack of mentee

motivation, (c) unfulfilled expectations, (d) deficiencies in mentor relationship skills, (e) interference from the mentee's family, (f) cultural differences, and (g) inadequate mentoring agency support. Her findings suggest that relationship failure is related to a set of common challenges. Further, her findings indicate the need for comprehensive training to prepare mentors to anticipate and navigate these potential challenges if and when they arise.

Mentor Practices. The current project is grounded in Positive Youth Development Theory (PYD), which views youth as assets in possession of unique strengths to be developed (Lerner, Napolitano, Boyd, Mueller & Callina 2013). It is hypothesized that mentors whose actions align with PYD will build the strongest relationships with their mentees, and be best equipped to respond to relationship challenges. Research has supported this, finding that mentors with the best relationships are collaborative, attuned to the mentee's needs, and have a shared purpose (Karcher, Herrara & Hansen, 2010; Pryce, 2012; Weiler, Chesmore, Pryce, Haddock & Rhodes, 2017). Highly effective mentors view their mentees as equal team members and work with their mentee rather than adopting a hierarchical approach to the relationship (Pryce, 2012). Furthermore, these mentors are able to utilize flexibility in identifying, prioritizing, and meeting their mentees' needs, while simultaneously listening to and respecting their mentees' voices in the process. One attempt to synthesize PYD theory and mentor best practices into a comprehensive framework is The Five Mentoring Competencies (5MCs) developed by Lawrence et al. (2017). The 5MCs, described in greater detail below, puts forth five widely applicable competencies to help mentors use effective skills from a PYD frame.

Present Study

The proposed study takes a mixed-methods approach to understanding patterns in

mentoring relationship development. In examining trajectories of mentoring relationship satisfaction over time and mentor reflections on their relationships, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What different types of relationship trajectories are observed in the sample?
    a. How do these support or differ from trajectories found by Pryce and Keller (2012)?
2. Are there differences in the ways in which mentors with varying trajectories of relationship quality across time (e.g., progressive, regressive, and stable) write about experiences in their mentoring relationships?
    a. Are there differences in the ways mentors with varying relationship trajectories write about relationship processes including challenges and mentor practices, in both type and frequency?

This study has implications for mentor programmers seeking to improve the quality of relationships in their programs.

Methods

The Young Women Leaders Program (YWLP)

YWLP is a formal school-based mentoring program in which college women are paired with local middle-school girls for one academic year of mentoring. When compared to other mentoring programs YWLP is unique in a number of ways. First, the program includes both group and one-on-one components. All dyads from a given school meet weekly after school for group mentoring led by a college woman or graduate student facilitator. These group meetings are curriculum based and focused on promoting leadership and self-esteem. Both group and

one-on-one activities are a part of weekly group meetings. Additionally, pairs are expected to spend four hours together each month outside of dedicated group time.

Second, mentors apply to be a part of the program and are chosen based on interviews with program staff and perceived fit with program values. All mentors are expected to enroll and complete a year-long weekly course on adolescent development and attend weekly facilitator-led meetings with other mentors in their group to plan activities and discuss challenges. Finally, middle-school girl mentees are chosen by guidance counselors after being identified as facing academic or social risk.

Participants

Data were collected from 48 college women mentors during the 2017-2018 academic year. In the overall group of 48 (excluding four mentors who did not provide complete demographic information), mentors ranged in age from 18-24, with an average age of 20 years old, and were ethnically and racially diverse: 31 percent Black/African American, 49 percent White/Caucasian, 7 percent Latinx, 7 percent Mixed Race, and 5 percent Asian or Asian American. Mentors were 8 percent in their first year of college, 40 percent in their second, 42 percent in their third, and 10 percent in their fourth.

Out of this pool, 37 college women participated in this study. In this sample, mentors ranged in age from 18-24, with an average age of 20 years old, and were 18 percent Black/African American, 53 percent White/Caucasian, 3 percent Latinx, 18 percent Mixed Race, and 6 percent Asian or Asian American. About 6 percent of mentors were in their first year of college, 44 percent in their second, 38 percent in their third year, and 11 percent in their fourth year.

Measures

Relationship Quality. Mentors completed a weekly online survey in which they were asked to rate their mentoring relationship satisfaction on a scale from one to five, with one being the worst and five being the best. Completion of this survey was part of their class requirement. Only data from mentors who provided consent to the research study were used for this study.

Relationship Processes. Mentors wrote a 5-6 page reflection on their relationships halfway through the academic year. These reflections, which were written as a class assignment, were compiled as qualitative data. Mentors were instructed to respond to the following prompt:

> Integrate the course material covered this semester about mentoring and the critical issues facing adolescent girls with their application to your [mentee] and your mentoring relationship. Provide a brief overview of your mentoring experience this semester and the mentoring competency that was most useful to you.

Only mentors who turned in their reflections electronically were included in the study

Relationship Challenges. In this study, relationship challenges were based on those outlined by Spencer (2007) that were found to be linked to relationship failure. These included: (a) mentor or mentee abandonment, (b) perceived lack of mentee motivation, (c) unfulfilled expectations, (d) deficiencies in mentor relationship skills, (e) interference from the mentee's family, (f) cultural differences, and (g) inadequate mentoring agency support. In addition, transportation and logistical difficulties were added by the primary researcher as scheduling and transportation (e.g., not having access to a car) was identified as a common difficulty in this particular sample.

Mentee or mentee abandonment was coded if a mentor or mentee ended the relationship prematurely. Perceived lack of mentee motivation referred to mentors believing that their mentees were disinterested in the program or the relationships. Any discussion of unmet or unrealistic expectations upon starting the relationship was coded as unfulfilled expectations. When mentors discussed lacking certain mentoring skills or competencies, deficiencies in mentor relationship skills were coded. Interference from the mentees family was coded when mentors discussed a lack of support, or active interference from members of their mentees' family. Finally, cultural differences was coded when mentors discussed differences between their identity and that of their mentee, for example race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion, or sexual orientation. No mentors in this study discussed lacking support from the program staff or agency.

Mentor Practices. The Five Mentoring Competencies (5MCs) distill PYD approaches into a broadly applicable framework for mentor best practices and were used to capture mentor use of mentoring strategies in this sample (Lawrence et al., 2017). The 5MCs integrate positive youth development theory and current literature on effective adult-youth interactions to create a set of five principles for mentors to utilize in building close relationships and navigating challenges (Lawrence et al., 2017). Each competency is associated with a single word to increase mentor retention. The competencies are as follows: (a) positive attitude (*zest*), (b) collaboration (*teamwork)*, (c) empathy and attunement (*heart*), (d) initiative and perseverance (*grit*), (e) mentoring knowledge (*brains*).

The 5MCs are taught with the intention of giving mentors a set of tools to call upon throughout their relationship. From Dweck's (2006) work on growth mindset, PYD (Lerner et

al., 2013), and research on teacher enthusiasm (Kunter, Frenzel, Nagy, Baumert & Pekrun, 2011), zest asks mentors to connect with enthusiasm and believe in the potential of all youth (Lawrence, 2017). Teamwork discourages a hierarchical approach to mentoring by encouraging mentors to treat mentees as equal partners in the relationship (Lawrence, 2017). Teamwork has roots in Rhodes' (2002) work on mutuality and uses techniques from motivational interviewing (Naar-King & Suarez, 2011). Drawn from the literature on mentor attunement (Rhodes, 2002; Pryce, 2012), heart focuses on mentors' ability to flexibly identify and respond to their mentees needs with empathy and respect for differences (Lawrence, 2017). Grit refers to a mentor's ability to overcome challenges through sustained effort and creative problem solving (Lawrence, 2017) and is informed by Duckworth, Peterson, Mathews, and Kelly's concept of grit. Finally, brains reflects a mentor's grasp of the current empirical and theoretical understanding of youth development and mentoring best practices (Lawrence, 2017).

Data Analysis.

Quantitative. Data were analyzed using R-Studio, including the associated packages: ggplot2. First, descriptive statistics including mean relationship quality and standard deviation were calculated. Then, relationship satisfaction by week was plotted for each individual mentor (see Figure 1), which provides an image of the variation in trajectories across participants.

Qualitative. Using these plots to visualize the data, the primary researcher created five categories which expand upon Keller's (2012) framework: (1) progressive, (2) stable high, (3) dip and recovery, (4) stable low, and (5) regressive. Progressive relationships showed a generally positive trend in relationship satisfaction across the academic year. Stable high relationshionships maintained high levels of satisfaction over time with little to no variation. Dip and recovery

relationships showed a period of significant decline in relationship satisfaction followed by an increase in relationship satisfaction that reached, at least, pre-decline levels. Stable low relationships maintained below average levels of relationship satisfaction. Finally, regressive relationships showed a decrease in relationship satisfaction over time.

After these categories were created, four other members of the research team were asked to sort each of the relationships using a multiple-choice question format through Google Forms. In this initial coding, there was an average of 84 percent agreement on categorization between researchers. The research team met to discuss plots with a less than 80 percent rate of agreement between researchers and reach a consensus about the classification.

The end-of-year reflections were de-identified and uploaded to Dedoose, an online platform for qualitative and mixed-methods data analysis. The primary researcher used a process of inductive and deductive coding for salient themes to analyze all transcripts (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). As stated above, reflections were previously coded for common relationship challenges derived from Spencer's (2007) work and for the use of mentoring competencies as described in Lawrence's (2017) training model. A second researcher coded 30 percent of the data and met with the primary researcher at the beginning, middle, and end stages of data analysis to reconcile differences in coding.

The primary researcher read each of the coded reflections and wrote a brief, one-paragraph, executive summary of the reflection. Additionally, the researcher made note of what challenges and competencies were cited as most important, and any additional themes. After this process, the reflections were identified based on the established categories. Finally,

comparisons were made based on application and frequency of codes and themes between the different groups.

Results

Quantitative.

Mean relationship quality (RQ) (on a scale of 1-5) was 4.19 with a standard deviation of 0.87 and a range of 1-5. This suggests overall high levels and stable relationship quality across the year. On average, RQ increased from 4 to 4.42 over the course of the study, with significant interrelationship variability. Each participant's relationship satisfaction growth curve was plotted over time, providing a visual representation of progression over time; see Figure 2.

Qualitative.

Across the complete sample, the most common relationship trajectory was stable-high, which accounted for about 38 percent of the 48 participants (n = 18). About 33 percent of the relationships were characterized as dip and recovery (n = 16), 13 percent stable-low (n = 6), 10 percent progressive, and 6 percent regressive (n = 3). Overall, qualitative coding aligned with quantitative findings, suggesting an overall pattern of stable-high satisfaction across relationships with a great deal of variation between mentors. Of the 37 participants for which qualitative reflections were available, stable-high and dip and recovery relationships were the most prevalent, each accounting for about 33 percent (n = 12). About 16 (n = 6) percent of the relationships were stable-low, 10 percent progressive (n = 4), and 8 percent regressive (n = 3).

All of the mentors in this study wrote about encountering at least one relationship challenge during the semester, and the great majority (92 percent) encountered multiple, underscoring the notion that mentoring is difficult and challenges are to be expected. Further, all

of the responses reflected use of the mentoring competencies consistent with their presentation in the mentoring handbook (Lawrence et al., 2017). Most of the time, mentors did not explicitly name these competencies, but gave examples of behaviors that reflected competency use. All of the 5MCs were reflected across responses, with no single competency cited at a significantly higher rate. However, it is important to note that mentors were explicitly instructed to discuss research and class material, a reflection of the mentoring knowledge competency. Therefore, patterns associated with this competency are not discussed. Results associated with each relationship category are presented below; see Table 2 for prevalence of code application across relationship types.

Stable-High.

5MCs. Mentors whose relationships were classified as stable-high were most likely to discuss using collaboration and empathy and attunement. Both of these competencies were coded in about 92 percent of reflections. The initiative and perseverance competency was present in 75 percent of reflections and positive attitude in approximately 67 percent. Mentors wrote about how these competencies had influenced the strength of their relationships: “our relationship would [not] have been as great if it was not for the empathy we have for each other.” Mentors in stable-high relationships described a well-developed ability to act as a supportive team member rather than advisor. These mentors were able to prioritize youth voice, and set aside their own expectations or desires for the relationship: “even when I really disagree with [mentee] and I cannot get through to her, I always try to remember to put her first and support her.”

Challenges. Difficulty with transportation and logistics (i.e., setting up meetings and/or communicating with mentees) was the most common challenge for mentors in the stable-high

group, occurring in about 58 percent of these relationships. For a mentor who described an otherwise effortless connection with her mentee, “lack of a car has probably been the biggest issue of the mentoring relationship.” However, these mentors discussed finding creative solutions to solving these types of logistical challenges by relying on help from other group members. It is notable that logistical/transportational challenges - rather than a difficulty in forming a connection - was the most prevalent challenge. Further, this challenge still only occured in slightly over half of these relationships. Lack of communication and lack of mentor relationship skills were the other two most common challenges, each prevalent in 50 percent of the relationships.

Progressive.

5MCs. All of the relationships that were categorized as progressive wrote about using collaboration in their relationships. Across the five types of relationships, this was the only type where collaboration was coded 100 percent of the time. Mentors treated their mentee as a partner in the relationship and prioritized youth-voice through active listening. In one mentor’s words, “I know [mentee] expected her [mentor] to treat her as an equal.” In addition to collaboration, empathy and attunement and positive attitude were coded in 100 percent of progressive relationships. Interestingly, both empathy and attunement and positive attitude were also coded in 100 percent of regressive relationships. Initiative and perseverance was coded in 50 percent of progressive relationships.

Challenges. Among progressive relationships, 100 percent discussed having transportation and logistical challenges. Mentors often relied on friends and other group members to coordinate transportation, and worried that their lack of flexibility would negatively

affect their mentee. Lack of communication between mentor and mentee and unfulfilled mentor expectations were coded in 75 percent of the relationships. In fact, across mentors in the progressive group a period of initial unrealized expectations of their mentee was described. Often, mentors expected more closeness and communication from their mentees. Importantly, this was followed by revised expectations and an appreciation for who their mentee turned out to be. For example, one mentor stated, "the notion that [mentee] would confide in me as if we were best friends, was extremely unrealistic. Despite this, I would not trade my [mentee] for the world; she is currently one of my greatest inspirations."

Dip and Recovery.

5MCs. Mentors in relationships that showed a pattern of decline in satisfaction followed by a recovery were most likely to write about using the competencies of collaboration and empathy and attunement; each was present in about 83 percent of the reflections. Mentors wrote about using these competencies to maintain engagement with their mentee, especially when this was difficult. For example, one mentor using the collaboration competency said, "I continuously asked her about things that really mattered to her, but her friends, interests, and family no longer seemed to be hot topics of conversation." Another mentor set a goal of increased attunement in order to improve her relationship with her mentee. Positive attitude was coded in approximately 58 percent of the relationships and initiative and perseverance in 50 percent.

Challenges. The most common challenge faced by mentors in this type of relationship was perceived lack of mentee motivation. At some point, about 67 percent of mentors in these relationships believed that their mentees were not excited about, or interested in, participating in the program or relationship. As this mentor described, after an initial period of instant

connection, her mentee pulled back from the relationship, "[mentee] stopped coming to group. In six weeks, [mentee] had only attended one group session." Or, as another mentor said, "steadily throughout the semester, her energy diminished, she became quiet, and lacked interest in the group and our relationship." For a third mentor, "working on maintaining [mentee's] interest in the program is, easily, my biggest focus."

Further, over half (about 58 percent) of these mentors cited having unmet expectations of their relationship. Often, mentors discussed coming into the relationship with idealized notions of an instant connection with their mentee. These mentors described a period of adjusting their expectations over time. One mentor stated that, despite warnings, "I still found myself building up this idealistic picture in my head (...) that notion could not have been further from the truth."

Stable-Low.

5MCs. Among stable-low relationships, empathy and attunement was coded 100 percent of the time. Often, mentors expressed needing to learn to understand and accept their mentees' behaviors and focus on their mentees' needs. Collaboration and initiative and perseverance were each coded in about 83 percent of the relationships. Initiative and perseverance was often cited as essential for mentors who were feeling discouraged about their relationships: "this has not been an easy process, as I have found myself constantly calling upon my sense of grit." Positive attitude was coded in about 67 percent of the relationships. Often, positive attitude was cited as a way mentors attempted, with mixed success, to not take hurtful or challenging behaviors of their mentees personally. As one mentor said, "I noticed that [mentee] tried to avoid spending time with me alone (...) I tried to brush it off and remind myself that this relationship was about her but it still hurt my feelings." Or, as another mentor said, "I have realized that one of my strengths

as a mentor is my ability to be [mentee's] "cheerleader" and to keep accepting whatever curveballs she throws at me (...) even though sometimes I feel upset."

Challenges. All of the mentors characterized as being in stable-low relationships discussed having unmet expectations. Of note, this is the only category in which this challenge was coded in 100 percent of the reflections. The other frequent challenges cited by mentors in stable-low relationships were logistical and transportation issues, perceived mentee lack of motivation, and cultural differences between mentor and mentee. Each of these occurred in about 67 percent of the relationships, respectively. Mentors described having difficulty communicating effectively with their mentees. One mentor wrote about the difficulty of her mentee not having access to a phone. Further, this mentor seemed to have difficulty adapting her own communication style to accommodate her mentee's situation: "[mentee] does not have a phone, so our only means of outside communication is through Facebook. I am not an active Facebook user, so I often do not get back to [mentee] until days later." Other mentors wrote about mentees who lacked interest in the program ("she appears as though she has no interest in confiding in me") or openly expressed dissatisfaction with their mentoring relationship (pretty early on in our relationship, [mentee] confided in me that she wished our facilitator was her big, which I tried not to take personally").

Regressive.

5MCs. Initiative and perseverance, empathy and attunement, and positive attitude were all coded in 100 percent of relationships categorized as regressive. Mentors discussed relying heavily on initiative and perseverance to push through relationship challenges: "I began doubting myself and was becoming very negative towards myself and the relationship (...) Grit, really

helped me persevere and deal with the situation." Further, positive attitude and heart seemed particularly important for staying positive and being understanding when mentees were challenging. For example, a mentor whose first mentee had dropped out and who was challenged by her second wrote:

> "Whenever either of my [mentees] would come back around, I had to push aside any emotions that I was feeling in the moment in order to let them know that I still appreciated and enjoyed being their [mentor]."

Or, as another mentor said, "sometimes I felt very hurt by the things that she said but had to remember to not take the hurt personally." Of note, collaboration was coded in only 67 percent of regressive relationships, which is at a significantly lower rate than in other categories.

Challenges. All mentors in the regressive category discussed having transportation or logistical problems connecting with their mentee. These difficulties occurred on both sides. One mentor wrote about feeling disappointed after her mentee cancelled plans shortly before they had agreed to hang out. Another wrote about not always being able to make time for her mentee when her mentee wanted: "I have had to tell my Little that I am unable to hang out when she asks me to. I can tell that this disappoints her." Lack of communication was present in 67 percent of the relationships. Of particular interest, this is the regressive was only relationship category in which the "mentor lacks relationship skills" code was never applied to any of the relationships.

Discussion

The majority of mentors in this sample reported generally high, stable levels of satisfaction across the relationship. However, there was significant variability between mentors in how relationship satisfaction changed over time. Supporting and expanding upon previous

qualitative findings (Pryce & Keller, 2005), this study identified five different "types" of relationships: stable-high, progressive, dip and recovery, stable-low, and regressive. Stable-high relationships were the most common type, followed by dip and recovery, progresive, stable-low, and regressive. Given the unique nature of this sample of mentors, generalizations about levels of satisfaction in different programs cannot be made. However, these findings provide quantitative support for the notion, as outlined by Pryce and Keller (2005), that mentor-mentee relationships develop differently across dyads.

Comparisons of mentoring competencies and challenges across the different relationship types suggest that there is wide application of the competencies across mentors. Further, all mentors faced challenges. However, some potentially salient differences between groups emerged. Particularly notable is the finding that no mentors whose relationships were categorized as regressive wrote about lacking relationship skills. While this was reasonably expected to be a group with relatively higher rates of mentors lacking relationship skills, it was the only category in which this code was not present, while mentors in stable-high relationships were the most likely to be coded as lacking relationship skills. This seemingly contradictory finding may be explained by a lack of mentor insight. It is possible that mentors in regressive relationships did not have the ability to identify, and compensate for, their own weaknesses. Mentors in stable-high relationships may have been more aware of their personal struggles and thus better able to. This may have contributed to declining relationship satisfaction. It follows that it is important to normalize the existence of skill deficits to mentors.

In addition, mentors in the regressive group were much less likely to use the collaboration competency than other groups, and were particularly lower in this regard than

mentors in stable-high and progressive relationships. Collaboration, which involves youth centrism, active listening, and partnering with mentees, may be particularly important to relationship satisfaction. Accordingly, it may be particularly important for mentors in regressive relationships to engage deliberately in collaborative actions. In contrast, 100 percent of the mentors in regressive relationships discussed using all of the other competencies. Perhaps, lack of collaboration between mentors and mentees is particularly detrimental to their mentoring relationships. Mentors in the regressive group did not, overall, face more or different challenges than occurred in other groups, with the exception of mentee abandonment.

Interestingly, mentors in stable-high relationships did not use as many competencies as mentors in progressive relationships. Mentors in stable-high relationships may have used fewer competencies because their relationships were inherently "easier" whereas mentors in progressive relationships may have felt the need to draw on competencies to improve their relationships over time. This is further supported by the finding that mentors in stable-high relationships tended to have less relationship challenges. In fact, the most common challenge among stable-high relationships was logistical and transportation issues, rather than a challenge more central to the mentoring connection. Of particular note, stable-high relationships had the lowest rate of cultural differences across relationship categories. Programmers should take care in helping mentors build authentic relationships across cultural differences.

Challenges were present across all mentoring relationships, suggesting that challenges are normative and do not predicate relationship failure. Helping mentors understand this may reduce mentor drop-out and improve outcomes for mentees. Of note, while unmet expectations occurred in all categories, it only occurred with 100 percent frequency in stable-low and regressive

relationships. This underscores Spencer's (2014) findings that mentor expectations of relationships need to be tempered and revised. Mentors in stable-high relationships had the lowest levels of unmet expectations, perhaps because they had inherently easier connections with their mentees. Mentors in progressive and dip and recovery relationships had high rates of unmet expectations and were often able to discuss a period of reflection and adjustment regarding their unrealistic notions of how the relationship should go.

Taken together, these findings provide evidence for the usefulness of the 5MCs as tools for mentors to overcome challenges and grow relationships. Further, programmers could use these findings to educate mentors on realistic expectations of relationships and perhaps target interventions for mentors in particularly struggling relationships. The relatively small and unique sample limits generalizability of findings, as does the reliance on mentor reports. However, as a first step this study motivates further investigation to provide more detailed insight into specific types of relationships.

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Tables and Figures

Table 1.

Description of the Five Mentoring Competencies

Competency	Key Elements
Zest	● Believes in potential of all youth (growth v. fixed mindset) ● Engages mentee enthusiastically, including maintaining positive affect, seeking proximity, engaging in conversation, sharing in mentee interests ● Redirects negative interactions positively and does not take them personally
Teamwork	● Communicates warmly and regularly with mentee and mentee's family ● Is an active listener to mentee and members of her "team" ● Seeks to understand rather than advise ● Is reflective and nonjudgmental
Heart	● Seeks to understand and appreciate mentee and her world ● Is respectful of differences ● Is empathetic, attuned, and patient with mentee's concerns/challenges
Grit	● Uses critical problem solving to adapt to mentee needs ● Has a bias toward action and experimentation ● Perseveres in overcoming relationship challenges
Brains	● Appreciates nuances of adolescent development ● Uses best mentoring practices ● Understands and follows program guidelines

Table 2.

Percentage of 5MCs and Challenges Present Across Groups

	Stable-High (*n = 12*)	Progressive (*n* = 4)	Dip & Recovery (*n = 12*)	Stable-Low (*n = 6*)	Regressive (*n* = 3)
Competency					
Teamwork	91.67% (*n* = 11)	100.00% (*n* = 4)	83.33% (*n* = 10)	83.33% (*n* = 5)	66.67% (*n* = 2)
Heart	91.67% (*n* = 11)	100.00% (*n* = 4)	83.33% (*n* = 10)	100.00% (*n = 6*)	100.00% (*n* = 3)
Grit	75.00% (*n* = 10)	50.00% (*n* = 2)	50.00% (*n = 6*)	83.33% (*n* = 5)	100.00% (*n* = 3)
Zest	66.67% (*n* = 8)	100.00% (*n* = 4)	58.33% (*n* = 7)	66.67% (*n* = 4)	100.00% (*n* = 3)
Challenge	Stable-High (*n = 12*)	Progressive (*n* = 4)	Dip & Recovery (*n = 12*)	Stable-Low (*n = 6*)	Regressive (*n* = 3)
Abandonment	0.00% (*n* = 0)	0.00% (*n* = 0)	0.00% (*n* = 0)	0.00% (*n* = 0)	33.33% (*n* = 1)
Cultural Differences	16.67% (*n* = 2)	50.00% (*n* = 2)	50.00% (*n* = 6)	66.67% (*n* = 4)	33.33% (*n* = 1)
Family Interference	8.33% (*n* = 1)	0.00% (*n* = 0)	8.33% (*n* = 1)	0.00% (*n* = 0)	0.00% (*n* = 0)
Lack Communication	50.00% (*n* = 6)	75.00% (*n* = 3)	50.00% (*n* = 6)	50.00% (*n* = 3)	66.67% (*n* = 2)

Challenge	Stable-High (*n = 12*)	Progressive (*n* = 4)	Dip & Recovery (*n = 12*)	Stable-Low (*n = 6*)	Regressive (*n* = 3)
Mentee Lack Motivation	25.00% (*n* = 3)	25.00% (*n* = 1)	50.00% (*n* = 6)	66.67% (*n* = 4)	33.33% (*n* = 1)
Mentor Lack Skills	50.00% (*n* = 6)	25.00% (*n* = 1)	25.00% (*n* = 3)	33.33% (*n* = 2)	0.00% (*n* = 0)
Unfulfilled Expectations	41.67% (*n* = 5)	75.00% (*n* = 3)	58.33% (*n* = 7)	100.00% (*n* = 6)	33.33% (*n* = 1)
Logistical Issues	58.33% (*n* = 7)	100.00% (*n* = 4)	25.00% (*n = 4*)	66.67% (*n* = 4)	100.00% (*n* = 3)

Figure 1.

Plot of regression lines for each individual participant and regression line for overall sample

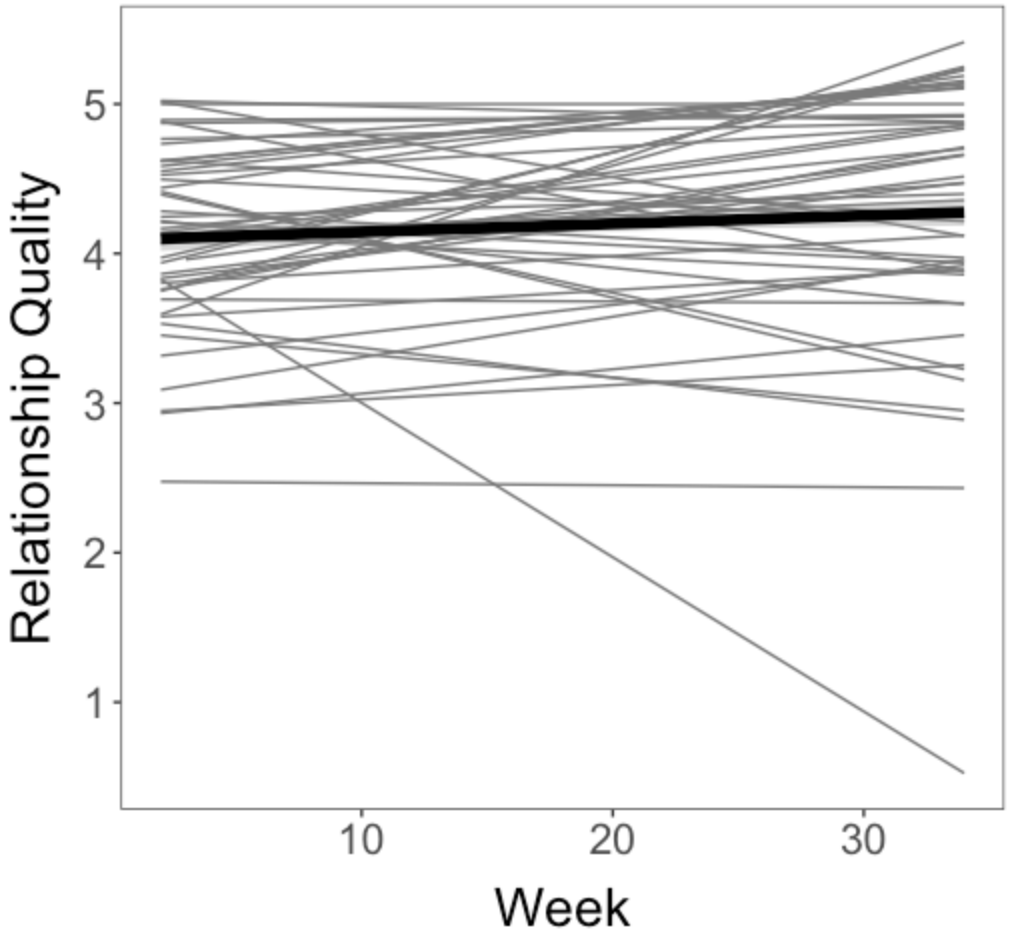
Relationship Quality
5
4
3
2
1
10
20
30
Week

Figure 2

Individual regression plots of relationship quality over time for each mentor