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THE EFFECTS OF BEING A MENTOR ON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS'
SELF-EFFICACY AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

by
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A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts in School Psychology Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
May 2, 2007

Approved by _____
Advisor

Date Approved _____

May 2, 2007

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ABSTRACT

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THE EFFECTS OF BEING A MENTOR ON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS'
SELF-EFFICACY AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS DEVELOPMENT
2006/07

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Masters of Arts in School Psychology

The outcome of mentoring programs on the child being mentored has been widely researched in recent years. However, little empirical research has been conducted to determine the effects that these relationships have on the person doing the mentoring. The purposes of this research was to investigate if becoming an adolescent mentor would (a) positively affect high students' feelings of self-efficacy and (b) affect their communication skills development. Thirteen high school students from Big Brothers Big Sisters School Based Mentoring Program participated in this study. A *t*-test for paired samples revealed no significant differences between the pre and post test scores on the General Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale or the Communication Skills Questionnaire. Best Practices for School Based and Adolescent Mentoring Programs, as well as implications for future research on their effects on the mentors are discussed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Introduction	1
	Need	1
	Purpose	1
	Hypothesis	2
	Theory/Background	2
	Definition of Terms	5
	Assumptions	6
	Limitations	6
	Summary	6
II.	Review of the Literature	7
	Introduction	7
	General Mentoring	7
	School Based Mentoring	10
	Adolescent Mentors and Volunteerism in Adolescence	13
	Summary	18
III.	Design	19
	Sample	19
	Materials	19
	Method	20
	Independent and Dependent Variables	21

	Summary	21
IV.	Results	23
	Introduction	23
	Results	23
	Summary	24
V.	Discussion	25
	Review of Results	25
	Limitations	26
	Conclusion	27
	Implications for Future Research	28
	List of References	29
	Appendix	33
	Appendix Communication Skills Questionnaire	34

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Need

Throughout the last two decades, mentoring has gained a tremendous amount of attention and support, due in part to the impact the research has shown mentoring has on at-risk children. Currently over 2.5 million youth receive mentoring services in the United States (Karcher, 2005). Some research has begun to look at the effects of being a mentor on the volunteer including: emotional satisfaction, psychological well-being and reputation growth (Day, 2006). However, much of this research is observationally based, and there is a need for more empirical research on the effects of becoming a mentor. There is also a need to offer the most information possible when recruiting mentors. This research could assist with increasing recruitment, which will allow more at-risk children to be matched and served.

On average, the cost of supporting the mentoring relationship is \$1,000 (Tierney, 1995). Many programs are funded solely through donations, making it difficult for new programs to survive long enough to have a real impact and grow into bigger programs. Programs who receive funding are often expected to show dramatic results in a short period of time, resulting in lost funding because many effects take longer to measure (Broussard, 2006). There is a need for more public funding and donations, making research on the effects to the mentor as well as the mentee crucial to the survival of these programs.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of being a mentor in a

school-based mentoring program on high school students. One of the elements examined was the level of self efficacy reported by the mentors. The second element was to determine if the communication skills of the mentors would be affected by participating in this program.

Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that high school students who became involved as a mentor to an elementary or middle school student would report an increased level of self-efficacy. It was also hypothesized that these students would develop stronger communication skills after participating in a school-based mentoring program.

Theory/Background

Mentoring began as early as 1200 B.C, when Odysseus appointed his friend Mentor to coach and counsel his son, Telemachus, when he left for the siege of Troy. During the Middle Ages, young men were apprenticed to master craftsmen in order to learn their trade (National Institute of Standards and Technology [NIST], n.d.). Since these times, the term mentor has been used to describe a relationship between an older, wiser person, and a younger person needing counsel, coaching or advice. This relationship enabled the mentor to assist in the development of a person both personally and/or professionally, and it gave the mentee the opportunity to confide in and learn from someone older and wiser (Nefstead, 1994).

In 1904, Big Brothers was started by Ernest Coulter, a court clerk who, after seeing more and more boys coming through the court system, set out to find volunteers to help. He realized that a caring adult influence could help these young men stay out of trouble. During that same time, the Ladies of Charity group began befriending females

who had come through the New York Children's court. That group later became known as the Catholic Big Sisters. In 1977, these two groups joined forces and became Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. Today, this organization operates in all fifty states and in thirty five countries (www.bbbs.org).

The mission of Big Brothers Big Sisters is to help children reach their potential through professionally supported, one-to-one relationships with mentors that have a measurable impact on youth (www.bbbs.org). In their school-based mentoring program, mentors and mentees, often referred to as Bigs and Littles, meet once a week for about an hour in a classroom, library or other set location. They spend time working on school work, reading, playing a game or one of many other activities. The mentors are high school students, and the mentees range from elementary to middle school age (www.bbbs.org).

Self-Efficacy is defined by Bandura as a judgment of "how well one can execute courses of action required to handle prospective situations (Bandura, as cited in Locke, 1984)." It is a key concept of social learning theory, which states that behavior, cognition and environment influence each other in a dynamic way (Gist, 1992). An individual's perceived self-efficacy regulates human functioning through cognitive, motivational, affective and decisional processes (Bandura, 2003). Cognitively, a person with high self-efficacy will have higher aspirations and commit themselves to meeting the challenges they set for themselves. If a person has the belief that they can meet their goals, their motivation to try will be greater. Bandura believes that the amount of stress a person undergoes in a difficult situation depends greatly on how well they perceive themselves to be able to handle it. A person's self-efficacy beliefs for that specific situation will

affect their emotional state. A person with low self-efficacy may become depressed due to their lack of belief in their abilities, which in turn will lead them away from making certain decisions and from the necessary supports to handle stress (Bandura, 1997). Perceived self-efficacy will impact the decisions a person makes at important points throughout the life span.

Self-Efficacy is reflective of past experiences, but it will also be part of the determination of what tasks a person chooses in the future. Various researchers argue whether self-efficacy is based solely on past experiences, or if it changes depending upon the type of circumstances in which a person is placed. Past successes and failures will undoubtedly affect the belief in ones capabilities in the future, however, that cannot be the sole factor. The level of self-efficacy an individual feels alters depending on how they perceive their ability to accomplish a new task. Certain tasks may cause a decrease in perceived self-efficacy, while others an increase. Perceived self-efficacy has been shown to effect goal setting, career choice, learning and achievement, performance at work and ability to adapt to new technology (Gist, 1992). Locke and Lent found that self-efficacy influences goal level and commitment to the goal, as well as a person's ability to continue to persevere in the face of adversity (as cited in Gist, 1992). Whether or not perceived self-efficacy can be altered due to specific experiences, like becoming a mentor, is something this research looks to discover.

Effective communication skills are pertinent for the development of interpersonal relationships with peers, family members and teachers. How well a person communicates can affect how others perceive them (Asher, as cited in Reed, 2003), and communicating effectively and appropriately in various situations is a pertinent part of socialization

(Nippold, as cited in Reed, 1999). Throughout adolescence, high school students are learning effective ways to communicate, including listening, oral and non verbal communication skills (Reed, 1999). Various programs have been implemented in the schools and the community to assist students in this process of learning and growing, including speech classes and communication skills training for families. Mentoring could be included in the list of programs schools are utilizing to foster development of communication skills in their students. In order to be an effective mentor, adolescents must be able to listen, get messages across effectively and display effective non verbal communication. This interaction with their mentee gives the high school students an opportunity to test their skills and adapt them appropriately.

Definition of Terms

1. Communication Skills- the set of skills that enables a person to convey information so that it is received and understood
2. Mentee- a child who has been identified as needing assistance or extra support, who is matched with an older person(mentor)
3. Mentor- a high school student or adult who volunteers to become involved in a relationship with a child who needs assistance or extra support
4. Mentoring- the pairing of an older person with a child who has been identified as needing assistance; it is a positive intervention that provides guidance, support, attention and caring over an extended period of time
5. School-based mentoring program- a mentoring program where a High School mentor meets one-to-one with an elementary or middle school mentee in a school setting, such as the classroom, school library or other

set location.

6. Self-efficacy- Bandura defined self-efficacy as the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations

Assumptions

In this research, it was assumed that all participants in the school-based mentoring programs became a mentor voluntarily and were not under any obligation to do so. It was also assumed that they were actively involved with their mentee and were present for the majority of the one hour sessions. Finally, it was assumed that the participants took the questionnaires seriously and answered them fully and honestly.

Limitations

A few limitations existed in this research and should be mentioned. This experiment focused only on school-based mentoring and cannot be generalized to community or more long term mentoring programs. This research study was conducted over a six week time period, limiting the results due to the short duration. Finally, all of the participants were from schools in Atlantic and Cape May counties, which may have limited the diversity of the sample.

Summary

Chapter II reviews the literature in the area of mentoring and its positive and negative effects. It also includes studies supporting and critiquing school based mentoring programs. Chapter III describes the design of the experiment and Chapter IV discusses the results. Chapter V discusses any conclusions that can be drawn from this research as well as suggestions for future research in the area of mentoring.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This research review begins with a discussion of general mentoring and its effects on both the mentee and the mentor; followed by a review of school based-mentoring. Adolescent mentors and programs utilizing adolescent mentors are then discussed. Information regarding the effects of volunteering, specifically in regards to adolescents will conclude the review of the literature in regards to the current study.

General Mentoring

Through the years, mentoring has been defined in many ways, and is defined differently depending upon the type of program or the individual. Broadly, mentoring is defined as a relationship between an individual with experience and another individual with less experience. In this relationship, the mentor, as well as the mentee can benefit from one another (Barton-Arwood, 2000). There are several different forms of mentoring, including the traditional approach, which is not usually founded by an organization and tends to occur naturally (Bennetts, 2003). Formal mentoring tends to be supported by an organization, such as Big Brothers Big Sisters and is a planned intervention. It can be in the form of community, school-based, individual or group and has been shown to provide many benefits to the children involved, including, but not limited to:

- improved attitude
- school performance and attendance
- a decrease in drug and alcohol use
- a decrease in violence

- improved peer and family relationships (Hall, 2003)

Mentoring tends to be most effective for children who have been labeled high-risk (Hall, 2003). This can mean that they are disadvantaged economically, that they are struggling academically or they show behavioral problems in school, among other reasons. Children with special needs or who are considered gifted have also benefited from having a mentor. In a study conducted by Beier et al, they found that adolescents who had adult mentors were less likely to carry a weapon, use drugs or tobacco, or have sex with more than one partner in the last six months. Other benefits cited in the literature include: development of emotional supports, improved self-esteem, an increased set of knowledge and skills, and an improved social network (Barton-Arwood, 2000). According to Lowenthal children who are recovering from a traumatic event can benefit from mentoring because the mentor can provide a sense of safety and nurturance (as cited in Day, 2006). If the mentor assists the child in developing coping strategies and skills for reframing their negative experiences, then maybe the child can rethink their experiences and become an active influence in his or her future. Mentoring can also provide advice and companionship, as well as a chance for different social activities that at-risk youth often do not find at home (Newman, as cited in Day, 2006).

The research designed to discover the effects of being a mentor is limited, but there has been some. Studies tend to show that mentors “perceive the experience of being identified as a mentor and the process of mentoring in highly positive terms (Philip and Hendry, as cited in Hall, 2003).” Mentoring can have an effect on the volunteer in several ways including: enabling them to make sense of their own past experiences, offering them an opportunity to learn from the realities of other people’s lives, having the

potential to develop relationships that are reciprocal and cross generational, and building psychosocial skills as “exceptional adults” who are able to offer support, challenge and a form of friendship (Hall, 2003).

The mentoring program at Windermere Boulevard School asked its volunteers to complete an evaluation form at the end of the match. These mentors stated that they enjoyed their experience and that they learned from their child. They stated that they better understand the issues children face today and have a new found respect for educators (Terry, 1999). Barton-Arwood et al (2000) reported that mentors showed increased self-esteem and social competence. They also reported that mentors gain experience through this relationship as well as a bond with the school environment. Mentors who have a learning disability or ADHD reported feeling more open to sharing their learning differences and more competent about their own abilities after mentoring a child with similar needs (Glomb, 2006). Yet another program reported that mentors felt that working with a group mentoring program have made them more outgoing and responsible, as well as more accepting of differences (Lampert, 2006). Finally, benefits to mentors can also include emotional satisfaction, psychological well-being and growth of their reputation (Day, 2006).

One of the criticisms of the current research on mentoring is that much of it is based on observations and there has not been many studies conducted in which standardized tests or surveys have been used to determine the effects that mentoring has on all involved. Another criticism has been that the reported benefits are often not measured for the amount of effect (Davies, 2005). We often do not know how much benefit the program is having, and sometimes it is not a large impact (Hall, 2003).

School Based Mentoring (SBM)

The first school-based mentoring program (SBM) was started by Dr. Susan Weinberger in Norwalk, Connecticut in the early 80s (Cutshall, 2001). Some of the benefits of offering mentoring in the schools include:

- a safe, supervised environment for the match to meet
- an easier way to recruit mentors
- an increase in the number of children who can be helped
- a decrease in costs, because SBM programs cost two to three times less than its community counterpart, as the school district shares the expense (Cutshall, 2001)

In the past, teachers often served as a support system for their students, especially those at risk of academic failure. Although this is still true today, the increased demand on teachers makes it difficult for them to have the time for students who need extra assistance (Davies, 2005). School based mentoring is an outlet for those students to receive the support they need to continue in school and be successful. A single, caring person can help make a difference as studies have shown that youth with mentors are 46 percent less likely to start using drugs, 27% percent less likely to use alcohol, 33 percent less likely to be violent and 52 percent less likely to skip school. Sixty five percent of children say they would like to connect with an older person they can trust and who will respect them (Cutshall, 2001).

Every school or community introduces a SBM program for different reasons, but the structure tends to be much the same. The programs take place in the schools, for approximately an hour a week. The match spends time working on school work and fun activities, such as games or crafts. There is often support and supervision offered during

every meeting and the goals for the match are well defined. Students who become part of the mentoring process are referred by their parent, teacher or counselor, and matches are made based on common interests and values, as well as the needs of the child. In the following paragraphs, an overview of various SBM programs will be discussed, including their goals and effects.

The School Based Mentoring Program through Big Brothers Big Sisters Association utilizes high school volunteers, as well as volunteers from area businesses who meet one-to-one with their “Little” in the classroom, library or other set location at the school. The meetings occur at a set time and are usually supervised by a Match Support Specialist who is there to make sure the match is going well and meeting goals. Of all children matched with a Big in school, the research has shown that 58% improved their school performance, 65% showed higher self-confidence levels, and 55% had a better attitude toward school (www.bbbs.org).

The Freshman Advisory Program, which was implemented at a Chicago-area high school, is designed to help first year high school students in their transition from middle school to high school. This is a group mentoring program where 10th through 12th grade students volunteer to work with freshman on developing academic and social skills. Approximately 5 mentors work with 30 freshmen and the goals of the program are to reduce first year failure rates and increase participation in extracurricular activities. In their first year they have seen their failure rate drop by 14% and their participation in activities increase by 5%. Staff at the school listed this program as one of the top five resources available to students (Lampert, 2006).

The Children’s Fund was established as part of the United Kingdom’s

government strategy to support 5-13 year olds who are at risk of being disadvantaged due to poverty and exclusion. They initiated a learning mentor program in the schools to improve these areas for children. A learning mentor focuses on the links between learning and mentoring. These mentors work with students who experience “barriers to learning,” which include behavioral problems, frequent absenteeism, bereavement, difficulties at home that then transfer to the school environment and study and organizational skills. The Department of Education and Skills in the UK evaluated this program and found that learning mentors had a positive effect on student’s self-esteem and abilities. They also showed an increase in motivation and improved behavior, as well as fewer days absent. The evaluation did not show a significant impact on academic achievement (Davies, 2005).

The My True Voice mentoring program was founded by Carnegie Mellon University and three inner city schools in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The program utilizes theatre education to teach students effective oral communication skills. The mentors are drama students from Carnegie Mellon who have completed the proper courses and training in implementing theatre skills to assist young children in developing necessary communication skills. The mentors meet with their students for an hour a week throughout an academic year, and their efforts are reinforced by classroom teachers. The program has assisted these children in gaining clear and effective communication skills that will be necessary when they enter the workforce. They also found that students gained a more diverse vocabulary and improved their spelling scores. Their attention spans increased and they showed improved listening skills after participating in this mentoring program (Shirer, 2005).

Mentoring programs have shown to be effective when the mentee is matched with someone with similar interests and values, and who have had similar experiences as the mentee. Studies show that this is an effective approach for mentoring children with learning disabilities, ADHD and those classified as gifted. In a program review by Glomb et al (2006) designed to match mentors with LDs or ADHD with children with similar needs showed positive outcomes. The match met in the schools for one hour per week and at the end of the program, teachers and parents reported significant improvements in homework completion and attitude toward school (Glomb, 2006). Goertzel and Goertzel, as well as other individuals involved in gifted education have long advocated for mentorships for students with exceptional potential (as cited in Pleiss, 1995). In a study by Torrance, the presence of a mentor affected the creative achievement and amount of education completed by gifted students (as cited in Bennetts, 2003). Mentoring is especially appropriate for gifted children who have very specific talents, who have special needs or who are underachieving; not to mention children whose schools do not offer programs for gifted children (Pleiss, 1995).

Mentoring has positive outcomes for the mentee, the mentor and the teachers. It assists children in displaying better work habits, improved performance and attendance, and provides mentors with a fresh perspective of their own work and a deeper sense of self understanding. Teachers reported having students who are happier, who are more likely to follow directions and who are less likely to act out and disrupt class after participating in a mentoring relationship (Cutshall, 2001).

Adolescent Mentors and Volunteerism in Adolescence

Some mentoring programs, like that of Big Brothers Big Sisters School Based

mentoring programs, recruit adolescents as volunteers. Mentoring offers them an opportunity to become involved and give back to their community. An adolescent mentor is an example of a successful young person, and their presence can serve as a role model who is close in age to the child and can relate to them in a different way than adults (Wright, 1992). While little research has been conducted on adolescent mentoring programs, what has shows that it can be a positive experience for both the mentor and the mentee.

In order for adolescent mentors to be successful and gain from their experience, several things need to be kept in mind. The mentors should be informed of the goals of the program, their particular duties and responsibilities and the needs and background of the child to whom they will be matched (Wright, 1992). Research has shown that in order for adolescents to rate their volunteering experience as positive; the activity needs to fulfill their expectations. If they struggle with a more difficult child and do not see any results, the chances they will continue to volunteer decreases, and adverse effects can occur (Karcher, 2003). Adolescents who report a high level of social interest are often more willing to take on the most difficult mentees, but they should be informed of the possible road blocks before beginning the relationship. The selection of the mentors, ongoing training and their pairing with a child are all important factors to consider when implementing a program utilizing adolescents as mentors. Although supervision is important, the relationship should be permitted to grow on its on, promoting independence, respect and mutual acceptance (Schmitt, 1975). Program coordinators and Match Support Specialists should ensure that the mentoring relationship has realistic goals, that the mentor is equipped for the task and that they have plenty of opportunities

to process and reflect on the mentoring process (Karcher, 2003).

In Ohio, a program was developed where high school seniors mentored elementary school students to improve their social behavior. These mentors were called “High School Helpers” and at the end of the program 11 of the 14 students showed significant improvement in their behavior ratings (Schmitt, 1975). In another program, High School Peer Mentors worked with students with special needs to teach communication and problem solving skills. In this program, volunteers worked in the classroom for twelve weeks on activities to develop these skills. At the end of the program, teachers reported that their students demonstrated improvements in self-concept, a growth in social skills, an increased understanding of differences among people and development of personal values. They also saw an increase in friendships, interpersonal acceptance and tolerance for others. At the end of the program, the peer mentors showed more confidence in leading the activities, an increase in self-esteem, self-control and problem solving (Dopp, 2004).

Sheehan, DiCara, LeBailly and Christoffel (1999), developed and tested a peer mentoring program designed to teach violence prevention, which showed that this form of program may be an important component for reducing youth violence. Children who had been part of the program showed a significant difference in their attitudes toward violence and may have avoided an increase in violent behavior, compared to a control group, whose behavior worsened. Research assistants noted a change in the adolescent mentors as well. They developed leadership abilities, learned skills that could be used for future employment and showed an increase in self-confidence.

Adolescent involvement in volunteer programs provides needed services to the

community, but it also increases psychological, social and intellectual growth in youth. Currently, 30 to 50 percent of adolescents report engaging in some form of volunteer work in the last year (Zaff, 2001). Studies have shown that the positive outcomes of volunteer service on adolescents occur when they are continually involved, for more than just a couple of hours a year (Niemi, 2000). There are several factors which influence adolescents that will be more likely to volunteer than others. Participants in volunteer work tend to be more active than nonvolunteers; they tend to have higher educational plans and grade point averages, higher academic self-esteem and a higher motivation toward school work (Johnson, 1998). In some studies, girls are more likely to volunteer than boys, but in a study by Raskoff and Sundeen, they found that boys volunteer just as often as girls (as cited in Niemi, 2000). Adolescents from two parent homes and whose parents volunteer were more likely to become involved, and students from families with a higher socioeconomic status were also more likely to volunteer (Johnson, 1998). According to Yates and Youniss, participants have a greater desire to help others and a greater sense of social responsibility. Hodgkinson and Weitzman found that altruism was the number one reason high school students gave for volunteering, with enjoying the work being the second highest reason stated (as cited in Yates, 1996). Often students who volunteer want to go on to college and feel that volunteering will increase their chances for acceptance into schools, as well as in obtaining future employment (Johnson, 1998).

Volunteering in adolescence can have a positive impact on the high school student. These effects include:

- Organizational and communication skills development

- Leadership skills development
- Learning to effectively work in teams
- Getting a jump on career goals by volunteering in an area of interest (Ezarik, 2003)

Studies have shown that volunteering as an adolescent elevates feelings of “citizen efficacy,” “civic inclusion” and “civic responsibility (Niemi, 2000)”. Research has shown that being a positive citizen as a youth increases the likelihood that they will have a strong work ethic as an adult, an increased chance of voting, and a reduced chance of teenage pregnancy and drug use (Zaff, 2001). Positive outcomes in self-concept and social reasoning have been reported, as well as the future intention to engage in volunteer service. Participation in activities has been associated with stronger attachment to parents, peers and school, as well as self-perceived strengths. Some studies support while others dispute the impact that volunteering has on the academic success of participants. Several studies found an increase in volunteer’s grade point average following service (Yates, 1996), while Johnson (1998) reported no such findings. Adolescent volunteers did not show an increase in tolerance for differences after volunteering according to Niemi (2000), but Riecken reported that undergraduates who volunteered with a disadvantaged community became less ethnocentric (as cited in Yates, 1996). Another study found that volunteering can lead to an increased knowledge and positive attitude toward the people served (Yates, 1996).

Consistently, volunteering has shown to help adolescents like themselves more and exhibit an increased sense of competence and efficacy. In a study by Cognition and Sprinthall, adolescents who volunteered to work with younger children indicated an

increase in self-confidence. Newmann and Rutter reported gains in self-competence among undergraduates who mentored at risk youth (as cited in Yates, 1996). Tierney and Branch also focused on undergraduates who participated as mentors, and reported an increased perception of social acceptance (as cited in Yates, 1996).

Summary

Research regarding mentoring, its various components and benefits has been growing over the last few decades. There has been much research on the effectiveness of programs and the best ways to implement programs, as well as the effects on the children being mentored. The minimal research available supports the idea that mentors also gain from being part of the mentoring process, and this study hopes to show that adolescents who participate in this relationship will show increased levels of self-efficacy, as well as improved listening and oral communication skills.

CHAPTER III: DESIGN

Sample

The sample for this research was volunteers from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Atlantic and Cape May counties School Based Mentoring Programs. The volunteers were both males and females from various high schools throughout both counties. A total of twenty Bigs participated in the pre-test for this research. Due to extenuating circumstances, only thirteen participated in the post-test. Of the thirteen mentors who participated in both the pre and post-tests, seven were age 18 and the other six participants were 17 years of age. The sample for this research would not be considered diverse, with 17 of the participants considering themselves White, and one Black. Ten of the participants were from programs located in Cape May County, while the other three volunteered for programs in Atlantic County.

Materials

To test the change in reported feelings of self-efficacy after participating in a mentoring relationship, the participants completed the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE), which was developed by Matthias Jerusalem and Raf Schwarzer. It was developed for use with the general adult population, which included adolescents. It is a Likert Scale questionnaire, which contains ten statements. Criterion-related validity has been documented for the GSE and reliability ranges from .76 to .96 depending upon the sample reviewed, with most reporting reliability in the high .80s.

Another Likert Scale was developed by the researcher and administered to determine growth in communication skills development. It consisted of ten statements

regarding oral, listening, and emotional communication skills, as well as assertiveness in communicating. As this questionnaire was developed by the researcher, validity and reliability is unknown.

Method

In February, the participants from Big Brothers Big Sisters were asked to complete both the General Self-Efficacy Scale and the Communication Skills Questionnaire (see Appendix). The questionnaire was administered during the first 15 minutes of the regularly scheduled meeting time for the matches at their particular school. Each participant was assigned an ID number for confidentiality purposes and completed the survey in the regular meeting location. Various meeting locations were used depending on the school, but included gymnasiums, libraries and cafeterias. The participants were handed the survey and a pen upon their arrival and were asked to sit at least 5 feet from the next participant so that they would not be distracted while they completed the questionnaires. Otherwise, they were permitted to sit anywhere in the meeting area in which they felt comfortable. The participants then returned the completed surveys to the researcher. Once all of the surveys were completed, the program continued as usual for the remainder of the meeting time. For the next six weeks, the participants and their mentees continued to meet for about an hour on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. The relationship between the mentors and mentees also continued to receive monthly match support from the researcher.

In late March, the participants were asked to complete both questionnaires once more. The process was the same as in the first administration, and took roughly twenty minutes during the regularly scheduled meeting times. The researcher then matched

these questionnaires with the questionnaires that had been completed six weeks prior. The data for each participant was compiled in order to examine their pre and post test responses. A *t*-test for paired samples was conducted to determine the effects of the mentoring program on the participants. A confidence level of .05 was used to determine if the results were significant.

Independent and Dependent Variables

For this research, the experimenter hypothesized that high school students who became involved as a mentor to an elementary or middle school student would report an increased level of self-efficacy. The experimenter also hypothesized that these students would develop stronger communication skills after participating in a school-based mentoring program. The dependent variables in this research were the reported feelings of self-efficacy, as well as the communication skills development. The independent variables were the participants' involvement as a mentor in a school based program. It was expected that there would be a significant difference in the mentors' feeling of self-efficacy at the pre-test than at the post test. The researcher also expected to find a significant difference between the communication skills responses reported at the pre-test than at the post-test.

Summary

Thirteen volunteers from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Atlantic and Cape May Counties completed the General Self-Efficacy Scale and a Communication Skills Questionnaire at the beginning of the experiment and again six weeks later. A *t*-test for paired samples was conducted to determine a significant difference between the reported feelings of self-efficacy at the pre-test than at the post-test. A *t*-test for paired samples

was also conducted to determine if there was a significant difference in the responses on the Communication Skills Questionnaire as well. The researcher expected to report a significant increase in the feelings of self-efficacy of the adolescent mentors. It was also expected that a significant difference would be reported on the Communication Skills Questionnaire, which examined the oral, listening, emotional and assertive communication skills in the adolescent mentors.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

Introduction

This study was designed to determine if becoming involved as an adolescent mentor would affect the self-efficacy and communication skills of high school students. It was hypothesized that volunteering to mentor would increase adolescent's self-reported feelings of self-efficacy. It was also hypothesized that the volunteers would develop stronger communication skills after participating in a school-based mentoring program.

Results

At the beginning of this study, twenty mentors were asked to complete the General Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale and a Communication Skills Questionnaire. After six weeks, they were asked to complete the two surveys once again. The scores were comprised from the responses to each of the ten questions, and each participant was given a pre and post test score for each questionnaire. Scores ranged from 10-40, with a score of 40 signifying a high level of self-efficacy. On the Communication Skills Questionnaire, a score of 10 signified strong communication skills. Of the twenty participants from the pre test, thirteen participated in the post tests. The researcher was able to use thirteen of the twenty participants in the analysis of the data.

The mean score on the pre-test for the General Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale was 33.23, with a standard deviation of 2.59. On the post test, the mean score was 33.92, with a standard deviation of 3.17. A *t*-test for paired samples indicated that there was no significant difference between the pre and post test scores for participants on the General

Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale, at the .05 level of significance.

A *t*-test for paired samples also indicated that there was not a significant difference between the participant's scores on the Communication Skills Questionnaire, based on a .05 level of significance. The mean score for the pre test was 16.15 with a standard deviation of 3.34. The post test revealed the same mean score of 16.15, with a standard deviation of 3.69.

Summary

For this research, two *t*-tests for paired samples were used to compare the pre and post test scores on the General Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale and a Communication Skills Questionnaire. The results showed no significant difference between the scores on the General Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale. The scores from the Communication Skills Questionnaire also did not reveal a statistically significant difference between the participants' pre and post test scores.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Review of Results

When comparing the pre and post-test scores for the General Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale, no statistically significant difference was reported. This finding does not support the hypothesis that adolescents who become involved as mentors would report an increase in feelings of self-efficacy. It could be possible that adolescents who choose to volunteer as mentors already have strong feelings of self-efficacy, so the program would not significantly increase these feelings.

When reviewing the data for the Communications Skills Questionnaire, there were no significant findings between the participants' pre and post-test scores. These results do not support the researcher's hypothesis that adolescents will develop stronger communication skills after volunteering as a mentor. This contradicts the study by Ezarik, which stated that volunteering in adolescence can have a positive effect on organizational and communication skills development (2003).

There may be several reasons for the insignificant findings in this research. The present research began after the mentoring programs had started and the mentor and mentee had been meeting for various amounts of time. One of the programs had been active for four months, while others had been running for between one and three months. If the pre-test had been given prior to the start of the programs, there would have been no previous contact between the mentor and mentee, so no possible effects due to the mentoring would have been included in the pre-test scores. For this research, some effect

may have already occurred by the time the pre-test was completed by the adolescent mentors. In addition, the post-test was given two months prior to the end of the mentoring programs, therefore not being able to measure the full effects that the program may have had on its volunteers.

The satisfaction level of the mentors with their mentoring relationship could also have contributed to the insignificant findings. Karcher explains that for volunteering to be viewed as positive by the adolescent, they need to feel that the activity fulfilled their expectations (2003). If the participants in this research were dissatisfied with their mentoring experience, they may not have felt any different about their perceived strengths, abilities and communication skills.

Limitations

The sample size was the first limitation in this study. Between 50 and 60 parental consent forms were distributed to mentors in school based programs in Atlantic and Cape May Counties. The research and responsibilities of the participant was explained in detail and the dates that the forms needed to be returned were clearly stated. However, only twenty mentors returned the forms. The researcher cannot speculate as to why only one third of the forms were returned, however, recruiting a lot more participants than needed in order to compensate for the unreturned consent forms could have increased the sample size. It may have also been beneficial to include more participants over the age of eighteen, thereby eliminating the need for parental consent forms.

A second limitation concerns the length of time between the pre and post-tests. Research on mentoring programs has shown that the longer the relationship continues, the more likely positive results will be reported. With only six weeks between the pre-

test and the post-test, it was unlikely that any significant effects could be measured. If the research had spanned the length of the mentoring program, the probability that there would have been a significant result would have increased.

With a pre and post-test design, utilizing a control group to compare with the experimental group would have made this study stronger. It could have controlled for factors like maturity, and would have been able to more strongly show that the impact on the participant was due to the participation in the mentoring program. The researcher was unable to include a control group in the present research due to inaccessibility to adolescents who were not part of mentoring programs, which is a limitation.

The Communication Skills Questionnaire used in this research was developed by the researcher. This is a limitation because there is no data available on the reliability or validity of the questionnaire. This makes it possible that the scale did not effectively measure communication skills development. It is also important to mention the lack of diversity in this study. The majority of the participants were female, with only two being male. Twelve of the thirteen mentors considered themselves White, and most resided in Cape May County.

Conclusion

The results of this research did not find a significant difference between the pre and post-test scores for either the General Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale or the Communication Skills Questionnaire. These results suggest that volunteering to be an adolescent mentor does not affect a high school student's feelings of self-efficacy or communication skills development. It is important to note that there were several limitations in this study, and that with more time; a significant effect may have been

reported.

Implications for Future Research

The majority of the known effects that mentoring has on its volunteers is observationally based, making further empirical research on this topic important. There have been numerous studies conducted on the effects that mentoring has on the mentee, but few on the effects to the mentor. It would be interesting to see the results if the study ran from the beginning to the end of the adolescent School Based Mentoring programs. It would also be interesting to study the effects of being an adult mentor in the school based program. The adult programs are often more independent and consist of more one on one time than the high school programs, and adults would be affected differently by this experience. It would be interesting to compare the results of the two programs due to the slightly different structures and characteristic differences of the volunteers. Finally, it would be interesting to expand the research to include the community based programs. Understanding the effects that volunteering can have on the mentor can assist agencies like Big Brothers Big Sisters in recruiting and supporting their volunteers and the mentoring relationship, so further research in this area is pertinent.

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APPENDIX

Communication Skills Questionnaire

Please circle your response to the following statements:

A. People don't understand what I am talking about.

1-not true at all 2-hardly true 3-moderately true 4-exactly true

B. I can explain myself clearly.

1-not true at all 2-hardly true 3-moderately true 4-exactly true

C. If I don't understand something in school, I am not afraid to ask for an additional explanation.

1-not true at all 2-hardly true 3-moderately true 4-exactly true

D. I won't express my opinion if I know that others think differently than I do.

1-not true at all 2-hardly true 3-moderately true 4-exactly true

E. I drift off when someone else is talking.

1-not true at all 2-hardly true 3-moderately true 4-exactly true

F. I find it difficult to listen intently to what others are saying.

1-not true at all 2-hardly true 3-moderately true 4-exactly true

G. I am not afraid to admit when I am wrong.

1-not true at all 2-hardly true 3-moderately true 4-exactly true

H. I tend to change the subject when the conversation turns to feelings.

1-not true at all 2-hardly true 3-moderately true 4-exactly true

I. I can't handle when people are angry with me.

1-not true at all 2-hardly true 3-moderately true 4-exactly true

J. I find what other people say interesting.

1-not true at all 2-hardly true 3-moderately true 4-exactly true

