



## The relationship between short-term mentoring benefits and long-term mentor outcomes

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### Abstract

Little is known about the short- and long-term benefits mentors gain from their mentoring relationships. This study examined the extent to which short-term proximal benefits reported by mentors (improved job performance, recognition by others, rewarding experience, and loyal base of support) predicted the long-term distal outcomes of mentor career success, work attitudes and behavioral intentions to mentor in the future. Mentors' reports of short-term mentoring benefits significantly predicted their work attitudes and their intentions to mentor again in the future, but were unrelated to their career success. Upon closer inspection, short-term *instrumental* mentor benefits (improved job performance, recognition by others) were more important in predicting mentor work attitudes, whereas short-term *relational* mentor benefits (rewarding experience, loyal base of support) were more important in predicting intentions to mentor in the future. Implications for mentoring theory, future research, and practice are discussed.

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## 1. Introduction

Traditionally, mentoring is defined as an interpersonal relationship between a less experienced individual (the protégé) and a more experienced individual (the mentor) where the goal is to advance the personal and professional development of the protégé (Kram, 1985). Much has been written about the short-term or proximal benefits of mentoring for protégés, specifically the receipt of career-related and psychosocial support (e.g. Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990). Research has also examined more long-term or distal benefits of mentoring for protégés, including work, career, and relationship outcomes, as well as objective indicators of career success such as salary and promotion (for a review see Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lima, & Lentz, 2004).

More recent theoretical perspectives on mentoring point to the importance of viewing mentoring as a mutually beneficial developmental relationship that provides learning, development and growth for both mentors and protégés (Fletcher & Ragins, *in press*; Ragins & Verbos, *in press*). Existing research supports this idea by finding that mentors can benefit from mentoring relationships, both in terms of proximal (short-term) benefits (i.e., benefits directly attributed to the relationship) and distal (long-term) outcomes (i.e., more peripheral career outcomes and work attitudes) (cf., review by Allen, *in press*). In terms of short-term benefits, existing studies have found that mentors report such benefits as personal satisfaction, organizational recognition, and the development of a base of support within the organization from developing relationships with protégés (e.g., Allen, Poteet, & Burroughs, 1997; Eby & Lockwood, 2005; Kram, 1985; Levinson, Darrow, Levinson, Klein, & McKee, 1978). In terms of long-term outcomes, two studies found that those who served as a mentor reported higher incomes (Allen, Lentz, & Day, *in press*; Collins, 1994) as well as faster promotion rates and stronger perceptions of career success (Allen et al., *in press*) than those lacking mentoring experience. However, only the Allen et al. study controlled for other variables that might explain differences in career success among mentors and non mentors such as gender, age, race, education, organizational tenure, and hours worked.

While existing studies provide important insight into the types of short-term benefits and long-term outcomes that may result from mentoring others, there is a lack of research that examines the links between mentors' reports of the immediate benefits of their mentorships and more long-term outcomes associated with career success and positive work attitudes. In fact, only two studies have even investigated the predictors of mentoring benefits for mentors. Allen and Eby (2003) found that perceived similarity between mentor and protégé related to mentors' reports of their learning and relationship quality after controlling for several relationship variables (e.g., relationship duration) and mentor variables (e.g., gender). Bozionelos (2004) focused on more long-term mentor benefits and found a significant association between mentors' perceptions of their career success and both the mentoring they *provided* to their protégés as well as the mentoring they *received* when they were protégés in a mentoring relationship (after controlling for various mentor characteristics such as age, educational attainment, and tenure).

While the empirical record is sparse, there is strong theoretical and empirical rationale to expect a relationship between short-term benefits and long-term outcomes. Specifically, traditional and emerging mentoring theory predicts mutual benefits in the mentoring relationship (Kram, 1985, 1996; Levinson et al., 1978; Ragins & Verbos, *in press*), and research on protégés has found a link between short-term benefits and long-term outcomes (see

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