The quality of youth’s mentoring relationships has been found to be related to positive academic outcomes (Dubois & Silverthorn, 2005; Holt et al., 2008). While most researchers examine the unique contributions of mentoring relationships characteristics, Hurd and Sellers (2013) argue for taking a person-centered approach to identify natural patterns of mentoring relationships characteristics and quality. The aims of the current study were to: 1) identify mentoring quality profiles based on characteristics of natural mentoring relationships, b) examine how mentor and youth demographic characteristics were related to the mentoring quality profiles, and 3) examine how the mentoring profiles were related to youth’s academic outcomes. Participants were 412 9th grade urban, low-income, Latina/o students who completed surveys. The majority (74%) reported at least one natural mentor in their lives, who were comprised of older siblings, extended family member, and non- familial adults. Using cluster analysis, we identified 3 mentoring quality profiles: 1) poor academic quality but with growth activities, 2) poor quality but frequent contact, and 3) high quality. A Chi-Square test found that male participants were less likely to have high quality mentoring relationships and more likely to be in the poor quality relationships profile or be in the non-mentored group. The three mentoring relationship profiles groups and non-mentored participants were compared on academic outcomes (i.e., intrinsic motivation, economic limitations and benefits of education, GPA). It was found that the four groups differed overall on these outcomes. Univariate tests showed differences on the groups on participants’ perceived economic limitations of education. The study reveals the importance of taking a within-group, person-centered approach to examining natural mentoring relationships. Implications and future directions are discussed.

Background Literature

Positive youth development (Zeldin et al., 2005), resiliency (Werner & Smith, 1982) and social capital theory (Coleman, 1988) have argued for a person-centered approach to identify natural patterns of mentoring relationships characteristics and quality. The aims of the current study were to: 1) identify mentoring quality profiles based on characteristics of natural mentoring relationships, b) examine how mentor and youth demographic characteristics were related to the mentoring quality profiles, and 3) examine how the mentoring profiles were related to youth’s academic outcomes. Participants were 412 9th grade urban, low-income, Latina/o students who completed surveys. The majority (74%) reported at least one natural mentor in their lives, who were comprised of older siblings, extended family member, and non-familial adults. Using cluster analysis, we identified 3 mentoring quality profiles: 1) poor academic quality but with growth activities, 2) poor quality but frequent contact, and 3) high quality. A Chi-Square test found that male participants were less likely to have high quality mentoring relationships and more likely to be in the poor quality relationships profile or be in the non-mentored group. The three mentoring relationship profiles groups and non-mentored participants were compared on academic outcomes (i.e., intrinsic motivation, economic limitations and benefits of education, GPA). It was found that the four groups differed overall on these outcomes. Univariate tests showed differences on the groups on participants’ perceived economic limitations of education. The study reveals the importance of taking a within-group, person-centered approach to examining natural mentoring relationships. Implications and future directions are discussed.

Research Questions & Hypothesis

- Is it hypothesized that Latina/o youth with higher quality mentoring profiles will have more positive academic outcomes compared to youth with poorer quality mentoring profiles and youth without mentors.

- What are the mentor and youth demographic characteristics of the different mentoring profiles?

- What are the mentoring profiles of Latina/o adolescents?

- Are there differences in academic outcomes comparing mentoring profiles?

- Is the relationship between mentoring profiles and academic outcomes mediated by intrinsic motivation or economic limitations of education?

- Do mentoring profiles differ by gender?

- Are there differences in mentoring outcomes by mentoring relationship profile?

- Are there differences in mentoring outcomes by mentoring relationship profile and economic limitations of education?

- Are there differences in mentoring outcomes by mentoring relationship profile and intrinsic motivation?

- How do mentoring profiles vary?

- Mentorship is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that includes characteristics such as frequency of contact with mentors, amount of time spent with mentors, benefits, and characteristics of the mentoring relationship (e.g., supportive and encouraging, high quality). These characteristics are hypothesized to be related to academic outcomes.

- The quality of the mentoring relationship is expected to be related to academic outcomes. The current study aims to identify mentoring quality profiles based on characteristics of natural mentoring relationships, examine how mentor and youth demographic characteristics were related to the mentoring quality profiles, and examine how the mentoring profiles were related to youth’s academic outcomes.

- The study reveals the importance of taking a within-group, person-centered approach to examining natural mentoring relationships. Implications and future directions are discussed.

- Limitations & Future Directions

- Limitations:
  - Sample size
  - Generalizability
  - Bias in self-report measures

- Future Directions:
  - Conduct follow-up study to replicate mentoring relationship profiles
  - Examine mentoring relationship profiles as a mediator between gender and academic performance
  - Conduct longitudinal study to examine whether mentoring relationship profiles predict later academic outcomes.

- Acknowledgments

This research was funded by a grant awarded to Bernadette Sánchez from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (1R03HD057343-01A2).