

Mentors' Roles in Basketball Coaching

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The purpose of this study was to identify the perceived effectiveness of roles played by basketball coaches' mentors. Specifically, the study assessed the degree to which protégés perceive their mentors to carry out specific mentor functions in basketball coaching. Any variance in the magnitude of these roles due to years of experience, education, and current coaching level of the protégés was also analyzed. The participants were high school and college head and assistant basketball coaches (N=83). Using the Coaches Mentor Role Instrument (CMRI) (Schempp, McCullick, Berger, White, & Elliott, 2014), data were collected at the 2013 National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC) annual convention held in conjunction with the NCAA Final Four Tournament. Potential participants were approached at the NABC convention, asked to complete informed consent and then the CMRI. Data analysis included descriptive statistics and regression analysis. Descriptive statistics found the mean for Career Development Functions was 4.12 (SD=0.67) and the mean for Psychosocial Support Functions was 4.32 (SD=0.58), indicating protégés scored their mentors as highly effective in both functions. Notably, mentors were scored highest in the roles of acceptor (M=4.57, SD=0.59), friend (M=4.56, SD=0.65) and challenger (M=4.35, D=0.76). Regression analysis revealed an inverse relationship between years of coaching experience and the protector role. Finally, coaches who maintained mentoring relationships for longer durations perceived their mentors more effective in both the Career Development and Psychosocial Support Functions. They also scored their mentors higher in the sponsor, promoter, role model, and counselor roles than those with shorter mentoring relationships.

KEY WORDS:

Mentoring is one of the oldest forms of professional development (Merriam, 1983). Originating from ancient Greek mythology, mentoring describes the education young Telemachus received through his relationship with

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Mentor—a wise and trusted tutor (Merriam, 1983). While there appears no universally operational definition of mentoring (Bloom, 2013; Cushion, 2006), for the purposes of this paper, mentoring describes the relationship between an experienced (mentor) and less experienced (protégé) person in a specific field with the expressed purpose of promoting professional development for the protégé.

The study of mentor relationships has been a popular topic of study in a wide-range of occupations (Dreher & Ash, 1990; Lee & Bush, 2003; Yayli, 2008). Specifically, mentoring has been shown to be a significant factor in the professional development of protégés in the nursing and business fields (Young & Cates, 2010). Mentoring relationships in nursing and corporate environments have consistently linked to increased career mobility and opportunities (Allen & Poteet, 1999; Dreher & Ash, 1990; Fagenson, 1989; Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000; Scandura, 1992). Further, numerous studies indicate a strong, direct correlation between mentoring and protégé work-related satisfaction and success (Baker, Hocevar, & Johnson, 2003; Campbell & Campbell, 2000; Galbraith, 2001; Hurst & Koplín-Baucum, 2003; Van Gyn & Ricks, 1997). Therefore, based on the findings in professional development, mentoring appears to be an effective organizational strategy for developing less experienced, or new, members in a profession (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004).

Despite the findings in the nursing and business sectors, which seemed to indicate the importance of mentoring, relatively little research has been conducted to analyze the role or impact of mentoring in sport coaching (Bloom, 2013; Jones, Harris & Miles, 2009). However, research into the development of coaches has acquired a new vigor in recent years (Potrac, Gilbert, & Denison, 2013). Findings from mentoring studies conducted on basketball, soccer, volleyball and Olympic team sport coaches highlight the importance of mentoring in coaching, thus suggesting the need for further research on coach mentor relationships (Bloom, Durand-Bush, Schinke, & Salmela, 1998; Koon-Teck, Bloom, Fairhurst, Paiement, & Ying Hwa, 2014; Narcotta, Petersen, & Johnson, 2009; White, Schempp, McCullick, Berger, & Elliott, 2014).

In one of the earliest studies of coach mentoring, Bloom and colleagues (1998) interviewed Olympic team coaches regarding their mentoring experiences. They discovered that the mentoring relationships resulted in these coaches acquiring knowledge that shaped their coaching style and philosophy and aided them in their career development. The mentors also benefited from the relationship by being challenged to refine their coaching and instructional methods. Koon-Teck and colleagues (2014), also found that the

mentoring of novice basketball coaches was a unique and positive learning experience for both mentors and protégés. Further, the participants believed coaches from any sport would benefit from a mentoring relationship. While investigating the influence of gender on mentor roles, Narcotta et al. (2009) found assistant women's soccer coaches perceived head coaches as mentors who provide both career-related and psychosocial functions. Further, they found that these roles were mediated by gender. They concluded that mentor functions were significant variables in a working relationship of a women's soccer coaching staff dyad, and therefore recommended further research into roles played by mentors in other sports. White et al., (2014) also investigated mentor roles, but in the sport of volleyball. The mentors and protégés in this study also reported finding the mentor relationship a positive learning experience, and similar to Narcotta et al. (2009) found gender to be a mediating variable in the roles mentors played. They further found mentor role differences based on continuation of relationship, current coaching level, and participation in a formal mentoring program. Like Narcotta, et al., (2009) they recommended further investigation of mentorship, specifically mentor roles, in other sports.

A comprehensive review of literature on mentoring in sport coaching by Jones, Harris and Miles (2009) advocated for the importance of further research into coach mentor relationships and its importance in the development of coaches. A possible explanation for this is because coaches actively seek advice from more experienced coaches, concerning their role, development, and understanding of the professional culture (Cushion, 2006; Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2004). Erickson, Bruner, MacDonald & Cote (2008) supported this belief with their study of 44 coaches from a variety of sports. They found that coaches believed mentorship would be a greatly beneficial source of knowledge. There appears a general consensus in the literature that mentoring is a necessary factor in the career development of coaches (Cushion, 2006; Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003; Erickson, Cote, & Fraser-Thomas, 2007; Gould, Giannini, Krane, & Hodge, 1990). According to Jones, et al. (2009):

Indeed, this would appear to be the next step; to generate empirical evidence regarding the current nature of mentoring in sports coaching in order to inform more meaningful coach education programmes. In developing such guides to practice, investigations should take account of the dilemmas and nuances of mentoring relationships so that superficial, one-dimensional accounts are avoided. Once such a level of understanding in relation to 'what goes on' has been established, better informed recommendations and concepts about mentoring can be developed. (p. 276)

The current study was designed to establish empirical evidence to address the question ‘what goes on’ in a coaching mentoring relationship. In doing so, this study will extend the line of inquiry into the roles and functions found in coach mentoring relationship and in a sport previously not studied. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to identify the perceived effectiveness of roles played by basketball coaches’ mentors. That is, this study assessed the perceptions of protégés as to the degree their mentors carried out specific mentor roles in basketball coaching. Any variance in the magnitude of these role perceptions due to protégé (a) coaching experience, (b) education level, (c) National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC) membership, and (d) duration and Continuation of the Mentoring Relationship were also Analyzed.

Method

PARTICIPANTS

Each year the NABC holds their national convention at the site of the national championship game for the NCAA Division I men’s basketball tournament. The NABC is comprised of nearly 5,000 high school and college coaches. For this study, 83 basketball coaches attending the 2013 NABC Annual Convention volunteered as the participants for this study. Criteria for participation were (a) assistant or head coaching experience and (b) ability to identify a current or former mentor.

The final pool of participants had coaching experience ranging from 1-42 years. On average, the participants were experienced coaches ($M= 12.24$, $SD= 11.78$). Over half of the participants had earned a graduate degree ($N= 51$). Four coaches held doctorates, three had specialist degrees, 43 earned master’s degrees, and 31 had received a bachelor’s degree. Sixty were current members of the NABC and 16 had been but were not active members of the association. Finally, the coaches reported being in a relationship with a mentor that ranged from 1-50 years ($M= 11.55$, $SD= 11.55$) in duration.

INSTRUMENT

After a search for an appropriate data collection instrument to address the research questions, it was determined that no instrument currently existed to specifically measure mentor roles in coaching. There was, however, a questionnaire that had been used in coaching research to assess the roles played by mentor coaches ([Narcotta, Petersen, & Johnson, 2009](#)). [Weaver and Chelladurai \(2002\)](#) used the same instrument to investigate mentor roles in athletic administrator mentoring. That questionnaire was the Mentor Role Instrument (MRI) ([Ragins & McFarlin, 1990](#)). In addition to research in sport, the MRI was previously used in business research ([Dickson, Kirkpatrick-Husk, Kendall, Longabaugh, Patel, & Scielzo, 2014](#)).

The MRI is a reliable and valid measure of mentoring based on Kram's (1985) theory and exclusively designed to investigate mentoring relationships in business organizations (Ragins & McFarlin, 1990). The instrument consists of 33 items to assess the degree to which protégés perceive their mentors to carry out 11 mentor roles in a professional business context. Three test items assess each function using a Likert Scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to seven (strongly agree). Internal consistencies based on Cronbach's alpha that ranged from .77 to .92 with a mean of .84. The mentor roles measured on the MRI were based on Kram's (1985) theory. Kram grouped mentor roles into two functions: a) Career Development and b) Psychosocial Support. The specific roles are summarized in Table I.

In an attempt to make the MRI appropriate for coaches, the investigators made minor modifications. In creating the Coach Mentor Role Instrument (CMRI), the MRI was modified by a) altering the directions, b) items, and c) role names to represent language appropriate to sport coaches. Research on rating scale lengths has found little discriminatory difference between 7- and 5-point rating scales (Colman, Norris, & Preston, 1997). The CMRI Likert scale was, therefore, reduced from a seven to a five-point scale. Further, the CMRI was reduced to 30 items, removing the *parenting* role used in the MRI, because the research in coaching did not support this construct as a factor in coach mentor relationships (Jones, Harris, & Miles, 2009).

Whenever a data collection instrument is modified, it poses a threat to the instrument's reliability and validity. Therefore, steps were taken to ensure that the CMRI remained a reliable and valid instrument for assessing protégés' perceptions of the roles played by their mentors. High school and University head coaches (N=30) from six different sports agreed to participate in validation study of the CMRI. The coaches completed the CMRI twice with a minimum of two weeks between each administration. After completing the CMRI for a second time, the coaches also completed the Scandura and Ragins' Multidimensional Mentorship Measure (SRMMM) (1993) to provide a measure for estimating construct validity. Castro &

TABLE I
CMRI Functions and Roles based on Kram's (1985) Mentor Functions Theory

Function Role	Definition
Career Functions	
<i>Sponsor</i>	displays public support for protégé (e.g., actively nominating protégé for promotions)
<i>Coach</i>	offers guidance by suggesting career goals and strategies for obtaining goals, information to increase protégé's professional knowledge.
<i>Protector</i> <i>Challenger</i>	minimizes damage done to protégé's reputation caused by the protégé's mistakes. training tasks and performance feedback intended to develop the protégé's skill and knowledge necessary for taking on difficult assignments later in career.
<i>Promoter</i>	creates work assignments requiring protégé to communicate and work alongside high-ranking professional members.
Psychosocial Support Functions	
<i>Friend</i> <i>Role Model</i>	interactions intended to support and encourage; builds openness and trust, exhibition of values, attitudes and behaviors necessary to perform professional tasks.
<i>Counselor</i>	helps with personal problems, anxieties and fears that may impact productivity at work.
<i>Accepter</i> <i>Socializer</i>	provides a sense of mutual support. comfortable engaging in activities outside the work setting.

Scandura (2004) used the SRMMM as a measure to estimate construct validity with the MRI and found that the correlation between MRI with 27 items (excluding social and parent mentor roles) and the SRMMM measure with 15 items was $r = .73$ ($p \leq .01$). CMRI revealed a test-retest reliability of 0.84 and a validity correlation of 0.90.

The CMRI (Schempp et al., 2014) was determined to be a valid and reliable measure of mentor functions in sport coaching. It therefore served as the data collection instrument for this study. The CMRI consisted of 30 Likert scale items and a demographic questionnaire pertaining to (a) coaching experience, (b) education level, (c) NABC membership, and (d) duration and continuation of the mentoring relationship.

PROCEDURE

The coaches were approached in the Exhibit area of the convention by one of the researchers and asked if they would be willing to participate in a study of mentoring in basketball coaching. If they agreed, the researcher determined if the coach met the participation criteria. Once the coaches were recruited, agreed to participate, and indicated that they had a mentor, they were asked to sign informed consent and complete the 30-item CMRI. It took approximately 15 minutes for the coaches to complete the survey. Participants were assigned numbers to protect their identity and for data organization purposes. An investigator remained present during administration to answer questions and to ensure the participant's ability to complete the instrument correctly. The investigators gained permission from the Director of the NABC to collect data from these basketball coaches at the convention in Atlanta, GA, the site of the 2013 NCAA Men's Division I Final Four basketball tournament. The investigators were provided a table in a highly trafficked area of the exhibit floor. The participants were approached from this location and asked if they would be willing to participate in a research study

DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of protégés regarding the degree their mentors carried out specific mentor roles in basketball coaching. A secondary purpose was to ascertain the extent to which these role perceptions may have been influenced by the protégé's (a) coaching experience, (b) education level, (c) National Association of Basketball Coaches (NABC) membership, and (d) duration and continuation of the mentoring relationship.

On the CMRI three test items represented each of the 10 mentor roles. The three items were added together to determine a composite mean score for each role for every participant. Descriptive statistics were then calculated for the two functions and the 10 mentor roles. In comparing the means and standard deviations, the mentor functions and roles perceived as most effective by the protégés were identified. The higher mean score, the greater the degree the protégé perceived the effectiveness of their mentor in fulfilling that role. The mean scores for each role were then compared to the demographic variables using linear regression analysis to determine any between role differences attributable to the variables of interest.

Results

This study endeavored to identify protégé perceptions of effectiveness in the functions and roles undertaken by their mentors in basketball coaching. Descriptive statistics identified the degree to which the protégés ($n=83$) perceived their mentors to undertake the two functions and 10 mentor roles measured by the CMRI (Table 2). The mean for the Career Function was 4.12 ($SD=0.67$) and the mean for the Psychosocial Function was 4.32 ($SD=0.58$), indicating protégés scored their mentors high on both Functions (i.e., 4.12 and 4.32 on a 5.0 scale, with 5 being the highest rating of effectiveness). This would suggest that the protégés considered their mentors to have performed both functions well. Of the two functions, the Psychosocial Function was scored slightly higher, indicating the mentors fulfilled the Psychosocial Function with slightly greater competence, but this difference does not appear to be practically significant.

Table II also provides descriptive statistics for the roles comprising each function. Notably, mentors were scored highest in the *acceptor* ($M=4.57$, $SD=0.59$) and *friend* ($M=4.56$, $SD=0.65$) roles of the Psychosocial Function and highest in the *challenger* ($M=4.35$, $SD=0.76$), *sponsor* ($M=4.22$, $SD=0.77$), and *coach* ($M=4.20$, $SD=0.75$) roles of the Career Function. More specifically, these high mean scores reflects a perception that protégés believed their mentors were more effective in their roles as *acceptors*, *friends*, and *challengers*.

The second research question asked if there were significant relationships between perceptions of effectiveness of mentoring functions/roles and a) coaching experience, b) education level, c) NABC membership, d) duration (of the mentoring relationship), and e) continuation (of mentoring relationship). To address this question, linear regression analyses were performed for each demographic and function/role. Only two demographic

TABLE II
Descriptive Statistics Of Functions And Roles ($N=83$)

Role	Career		Role	Psychosocial	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Challenger	4.35	.76	Acceptor	4.57	.59
Sponsor	4.22	.77	Friend	4.56	.65
Coach	4.20	.75	Role M.	4.39	.73
Promoter	4.14	.81	Counselor	4.20	.71
Protector	3.69	.81	Social	3.88	.89

Note. *M* = sample mean; *SD*= standard deviation

variables indicated significant differences between the functions and roles: a) coaching experience and b) duration of the mentoring relationship. In examining the descriptive statistics of these variables (Table 3), there appeared to be a large range in the years of experience as a head coach for the coaches in this study (range=0-42 years). While the average years of experience seemed to indicate this group of coaches was experienced ($M=12.24$ years), a $SD=11.78$ would again suggest that the experience of these coaches was diverse. Perhaps reflecting the diversity in experience, there was a large range in the duration of these mentor relationships as well (range=1-50 years).

The regression analyses identified several significant differences in the roles and functions that appear to be influenced by both coaching experience and the duration of the mentoring relationship. One role appears to be influenced by experience: *protector*. There was an inverse significant relationship $\alpha = .05$ level, between coaching experience and the *protector* role, $F(1, 73) = 4.14, p=.045$. That is, less experienced coaches reported their mentors as performing the *protector* role more effectively than was reported by the more experienced coaches.

Significant differences in both functions and four roles were found when duration of the relationship was the independent variable. Coaches who maintained their mentoring relationships for longer durations scored their mentors higher in both the Career [$F(1, 75) = 5.58, p=.021$] and Psychosocial [$F(1, 75) = 4.52, p=.037$] Functions than those with shorter mentoring relationships. Furthermore, coaches who maintained their mentoring relationships for longer durations rated their mentors higher in the *sponsor* [$F(1, 75) = 5.58, p=.021$], *promoter* [$F(1, 75) = 4.96, p=.029$], *role model* [$F(1, 75) = 5.15, p=.026$], and *counselor* [$F(1, 75) = 5.09, p=.027$] roles than those with shorter mentoring relationships.

Discussion

This study endeavored to identify the effectiveness of roles played by basketball coaches' mentors as perceived by their protégés. Descriptive sta-

TABLE III

Variable	N	M	SD	Range
Coaching Experience	74	12.24	11.78	0-42
Duration	76	11.55	11.55	1-50

Note. M = sample mean; SD= standard deviation.

tistics indicated that the coaches in this study found their mentors to be highly effective in both the Psychosocial and Career Functions with Psychosocial Functions being ranked slightly higher in effectiveness. Past research on protégé perceptions of mentor function effectiveness has produced mixed results.

In their study of 230 volleyball coaches, White et al. (2014), also found that the coaches perceived their mentors to perform both the Psychosocial and Career Functions with a high degree of effectiveness. They too found the Psychosocial Function to be rated slightly higher than the Career Function and similar to the current study the difference was not found to be significant. Weaver and Chelladurai (2002) examined mentor relationships of 494 mid-level administrators of athletic departments in Division I and III colleges. While the investigated population was different, the findings relative to mentor function perceptions were the same-both Functions rated highly effective, no significant difference between them.

In contrast, a study of 433 college soccer coaches by [Narcotta et al. \(2009\)](#) found that the Career Function was significantly more effective than Psychosocial Function in mentor relationships involving assistant women coaches. The male coaches in the study rated both mentor Functions high, but did not indicate one being superior to the other. The investigators believed these gender differences were due to the women coaches being in a male-dominated profession, and thus were in greater need of career advice and support. It should be noted that the coaches in the current study were all male. Given the current findings and previous research, it was concluded that both the Psychosocial and Career Functions of mentors were perceived to be effective factors in the mentoring relationship, but one factor was not

TABLE IV
Regression Analyses Of Demographics And Functions/Roles

Variables	M	SD	Beta	Sig.
Coaching Experience (N=74)				
<i>Protector</i>	3.68	.806	-.233	.045
Duration (N=76)				
Career	4.10	.684	.265	.021
<i>Sponsor</i>	4.18	.780	.251	.029
<i>Promoter</i>	4.09	.821	.294	.010
Psychosocial	4.30	.600	.240	.037
<i>Role Model</i>	4.39	.743	.255	.026
<i>Counselor</i>	4.19	.731	.254	.027

Note. M = sample mean; SD= standard deviation

significantly more effective than the other. This would suggest that for individuals with an interest in mentoring in coaching (e.g., protégés, mentors, administrators), attention be given to providing relevant and pertinent information to protégés in terms of both their career navigation and the necessary psychosocial support to assist in their professional development.

While the Psychosocial and Career Functions were perceived to be influential and nearly equal aspects of the mentor relationships of the coaches in this study, the results of this study further found significant differences in the effectiveness of the roles played by the mentors. The coaches reported that the roles of *acceptor* and *friend* in the Psychosocial Function were rated most highly effective, while the roles of *challenger* and *sponsor* were perceived to be most effective in the Career Function. The four roles that were rated most highly for effectiveness in a study of college soccer coaches were, in descending order: a) *acceptor*, b) *friend*, c) *sponsor*, and d) *challenger* (Narcotta et al., 2009). Volleyball coaches rated their mentors most effective on a) *friend*, b) *acceptor*, c) *role model* and d) *challenger* (White et al., 2014). The top four mentor roles perceived as most effective by athletic administrators were: a) *friend*, b) *acceptor*, c) *role model*, and *challenger* (Weaver & Chelladurai, 2002).

There appears to be conclusive consistency between previous research and the findings of the current study regarding protégés' perceptions of the most effective roles played by their mentors. Out of the eleven possible mentor roles, there were three mentor roles that were consistently rated as the most effective by coaches in three different sports as well as athletic administrators: a) *friend*, b) *acceptor*, and c) *challenger*. Perceiving one's mentor to fulfill the roles of *friend* and *acceptor* with a high degree of effectiveness, is not only a reflection on the quality of these mentoring relationships, but suggests the effectiveness of these relationships is dependent more on a deep personal connection between mentor and protégé rather than a strictly formal, professional relationship. A relationship steeped in friendship and acceptance has the potential to last a great deal longer than one without those qualities.

This is not to suggest an absence of professionalism in these mentoring relationships, as the role of *challenger* indicates that the mentors in these relationships were perceived to be highly effective in preparing protégés to meet their most severe and difficult future professional assignments. Perhaps it was when these coaches faced their greatest challenges, that their mentors' lessons proved most effective. Bloom and colleagues (1998) likewise found that mentors were often demanding of their coaching protégés, but in doing so provided them with valuable information and professional contacts.

Based on these findings, it may be suggested that professional organizations and others responsible for designing training and mentoring programs do so in such a way as to instruct mentors in a range of mentor skills, but with particular attention to developing protégé friendships, establish relationships of mutual support, and prepare protégés for challenging future professional tasks and assignments. Mentors need to be cognizant of the importance of the mentoring relationship and future challenges their protégés will meet. Teaching mentors to discuss how they deal with personal challenges and difficult situations may increase protégés' self-efficacy and identification with the mentor.

A second purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between the protégés' perceived effectiveness of their mentors' roles and a) coaching experience, b) education level, c) NABC membership, d) relationship duration, and e) relationship continuation. No significant relationships were found between perceived mentor effectiveness and education level, NABC membership or continuation of the relationship. This finding indicates that perceptions of mentor effectiveness are unaffected by protégés' other instructional experiences (i.e., education or professional association). This would suggest that a mentor relationship provides a unique development opportunity that may not necessarily be matched by other resources. Further, currently being in a mentor relationship did not influence, positively or negatively, perceptions of mentor effectiveness. This would suggest that the perceptions of effectiveness of a mentor remain stable after a mentoring relationship concludes.

Data analysis did, however, reveal significant relationships between perceived mentor role effectiveness and two factors. Coaching experience influenced perceptions of the *protector* role and mentor relationship duration was significantly related to perceptions of mentor roles *sponsor*, *promoter*, *role model* and *counselor*. Coaching experience and perceptions of the *protector* role effectiveness had an inverse relationship. Put another way, the less coaching experience by a protégé, the higher they scored the effectiveness of their mentor as a *protector*. One might speculate that mentors may be more prone to take the responsibility for mistakes made by less-experienced protégés versus those protégés with greater coaching experience. Protégés are also more likely to make more mistakes earlier in their careers, and thus look to their mentor for some level of protection against the consequences of their misjudgments and errors. It would, therefore, be helpful if those mentoring coaches early in their career were aware of the need by their protégés for a mentor to play the role of *protector* effectively.

Current findings indicated that coaches who maintained longer mentoring relationships regarded their mentors more highly in both the Psychoso-

cial and Career Functions than coaches with shorter mentoring relationships. Specifically, coaches, who maintained their mentoring relationships for longer durations, scored their mentors higher in the *sponsor*, *promoter*, *role model*, and *counselor* roles than those with shorter mentoring relationships. This finding may appear at conflict with the previous finding of no difference by a continued relationship on perceptions of role effectiveness. Simply put, perceptions of mentor role perceptions are not influenced by whether or not a protégé is currently in a mentor relationship, but perceptions of mentoring effectiveness are significantly and positively impacted by the length of the relationship—the longer, the greater the perceptions of mentor role effectiveness.

This finding is supported by mentoring theory, which reasons that psychosocial support requires a deep and committed relationship and, as such, may require sustained mentor-protégé interactions to develop (Kram, 1985). Likewise, high-quality relationships take time to develop, requiring repeated interactions over time (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000). The greater the frequency of mentor and protégé interaction, the greater the opportunity for the mentor to provide support to the protégé. A close, rewarding, and productive relationship requires getting to know one another and requires time. Logically then, a mentor relationship with greater duration would the mentor to perform the roles of *sponsor*, *promoter*, *role model*, and *counselor* to greater effect than one who experienced a shorter relationship.

A meta-analysis of mentoring functions completed by Dickson and colleagues (2014) contradict these findings. They found no consistently significant relationship between reported mentor functions and the duration of the relationship. The authors noted, however, that their sample was relatively small for a meta-analysis ($n=173$) and represented a diversity of programs, locations, populations, and purposes. While the findings of this study have theoretical and empirical support from previous literature on this point, it does not appear entirely conclusive. Additional research is, therefore, needed to better understand the influence of the mentoring relationship duration on protégé perceptions of mentor effectiveness.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

The findings of this study, combined with previous research offer some potential insights and suggestions for protégés, mentors, and those responsible for designing and conducting mentor programs for coaches. Perceptions of the individual mentor functions among coaches in this study are similar to

perceptions of mentors in other sports, with all coaches perceiving their mentors to be effective in both Psychosocial and Career Functions, and especially in the roles of *friend*, *acceptor*, and *challenger*. Mentoring for coaches appears to hold the promise for important occupational and career growth. Mentoring relationships have been successfully established in the business world and the preliminary research on coach mentoring has shown promising results (Weaver & Chelladurai, 2002).

Developing mentoring programs to educate coaches as potential mentors with the skills necessary for effective mentoring holds promise for increasing the quality and effectiveness of mentorship. To that end, schooling potential members in the importance of establishing relationships based on mutual acceptance, and that may lead to a long-term relationship steeped in friendship, is a good place to begin. Because the effectiveness of the mentor's roles appears to increase with time, mentors and protégés should enter into the relationship with at least a belief, if not an outright commitment, that the relationship will take time to develop and prosper. Organizations responsible for establishing and encouraging mentor programs should consider structuring the program to promote relationships that will endure.

Assisting potential mentors in devising tasks and activities to challenge protégés so as to better prepare them to meet the problems and impediments they will likely encounter later in their career is another area that should receive attention. Further, mentors should be made aware that the role of *protector* is one that appears to be especially valued by inexperienced coaches. A protégé's level education or professional association membership do Not, Based On The Research Available At This Time, appear to merit strong consideration in designing mentor programs.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

With the addition of this study, the research literature on mentoring and coaching appears limited. Given the potential for professional development, and the promising findings of this study and others, it appears future research is needed.

It may be of interest to study the correlation between winning percentage and career satisfaction of both the mentor and protégé in a mentoring relationship. Do coaches who receive and/or provide mentoring enjoy a more successful and satisfying career?

Would matching mentors and protégés on characteristics that will foster perceptions of similarity and friendship increase the quality and effectiveness

of the mentoring? These matching characteristics might include previous life experiences, values, personality, or interests.

Does the duration of a mentoring relationship impact the outcome of the relationship? Do mentors and protégés engaged in a longer relationship derive greater benefits, and if so, what benefits?

What is the impact of mentoring on a coach's career? As a result of mentoring, will a coach find greater success and satisfaction in their career?

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