

# AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF MENTOR SATISFACTION WITH THEIR YOUTH MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

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*Research shows the benefits of mentoring in promoting positive youth development. Yet less is known about mentors and what predicts mentor satisfaction. Such knowledge is vital to understanding how to recruit and retain adult mentors for youth. Thus, in the current study, we examine mentors as embedded in a social ecology of relationships, such as relationships with their mentee, mentee's family, and mentoring organization they volunteer with. We use data from 247 mentors to test how each of these relationships (mentor with the mentee, mentee's family, and mentoring organization) independently and interactively predict mentor satisfaction. Findings indicate that all relationships are unique predictors of mentor satisfaction, and that relationships with the mentee's family and mentors' mentoring organization interact in predicting mentor satisfaction. Overall, considering multiple relationships shows how various dimensions of the social ecology uniquely and interactively predict mentor satisfaction. Limitations and implications for mentoring practice are discussed. © 2016 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.*

Research shows youth mentoring is an important intervention strategy for promoting positive youth outcomes across social, behavioral, and academic domains (DuBois, Portillo,

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Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011; DuBois & Rhodes, 2006). To date, the youth mentoring literature mainly focuses on mentees, leaving a gap in understanding mentors and what predicts mentor satisfaction (Lankau & Scandura, 2002; Weiler, Zarich, Haddock, Krafchick, & Zimmerman, 2014). Understanding factors that promote mentor satisfaction is important because more satisfied mentors are shown to take more responsibility for sustaining their relationship with youth mentees (Sipe, 2002). This relationship duration is an important predictor of positive youth outcomes (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). Also, little research has focused on the larger social context in which the mentoring relationship is embedded (Spencer, Basualdo-Delmonico, & Lewis, 2011). Therefore, in the current study, we examine the social ecology of mentors to better understand how various relationships (i.e., with the mentee, the mentee's family, and the mentoring organization) promote mentor satisfaction.

### ***Theoretical Framework***

In the current study, we consider the larger social ecology surrounding mentors. Using Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework, we build on the existing mentoring literature that draws upon family systems, social network, ecological, and systems theory to explore how the mentoring dyad may be effected by other relationships and systems (Keller, 2005; Keller & Blakeslee, 2013). According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), individual development is influenced by individuals' interactions with others within their immediate settings (i.e., their microsystem). Applying Keller's (2005) systemic model of youth mentoring interventions, we examine three microsystemic factors that may predict mentor satisfaction: (a) mentors' perception of their multicultural competence in the mentoring relationship, (b) mentors' perception of their relationship with the youth's family, and (c) mentors' satisfaction with their mentoring organization. In general, applying this ecological framework provides a more holistic and nuanced understanding of factors that may shape mentor satisfaction.

### ***Ecological Factors and Mentor Satisfaction***

*Mentors' multicultural competence.* According to the youth mentoring literature, cultural sensitivity is essential (Maxwell & Connell, 2013; Sánchez, Colón-Torres, Feuer, Roundfield, & Berardi, 2014). In their study of mock mentoring relationships between faculty mentors and African American college students, Grant-Thompson and Atkinson (1997) showed that perceptions of mentors' cultural sensitivity played a positive role in students' perceptions of the mentor's credibility and effectiveness. This result highlights the importance of mentor cultural sensitivity, particularly in cross-cultural mentoring relationships. Moreover, Spencer's (2007) qualitative study revealed that some failed youth mentoring relationships were due to mentors who were unable to navigate cultural divides with their mentees. Clearly, cultural sensitivity is an important component of the mentor-mentee relationship.

In the current study, we use Sue and colleagues' (Sue et al., 1982; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992) cultural competence framework to examine how mentors' multicultural competence predicts their satisfaction with the mentoring relationship. Sue's framework divides cultural competence into three areas: (a) beliefs and attitudes/awareness related to minority or disadvantaged groups, (b) knowledge of one's own worldview, other cultural groups, and larger sociopolitical influences, and (c) skills, which include specific strategies for working with marginalized individuals and groups. Given previous research

showing mentors' cultural competence to be related to the quality of youth mentoring relationships, we hypothesize that mentors who perceive they are more multicultural competent will be more satisfied with their mentoring relationships.

*Mentors' relationships with their mentee's family.* Many mentors also have relationships with the mentee's family. Most mentoring literature focuses on the mentor–mentee dyad, and rarely explores the role of the family in mentoring relationships (Spencer & Basualdo-Delmonico, 2014; Taylor & Porcellini, 2013). Other research on youth (e.g., school, foster care) shows the importance of parents having a relationship with key adults in their child's life (e.g., teachers; Kemp, Marcenko, Hoagwood, & Vesneski, 2009; McKay et al., 2004). Healthy partnerships between adults in major facets of a youth's life (e.g., home and mentoring relationship) that foster trust, closeness, and communication can have a positive effect on youth (Iruka, Winn, Kingsley, & Orthodoxou, 2011; Nzinga-Johnson, Baker, & Aupperlee, 2009).

Moreover, researchers note the success of youth mentoring relationships is dependent on parental involvement (Keller & Blakeslee, 2013; Spencer & Basualdo-Delmonico, 2014). Also, DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, and Coopers' (2002) meta-analysis revealed that parental involvement was a key component of effective youth mentoring programs. However, researchers have yet to examine how a mentor's relationship with the youth's family may play a role in mentor satisfaction. Therefore, in this study, we test whether stronger mentor–family relationships are associated with greater mentor satisfaction with the mentoring relationship.

*Mentors' relationship with their mentoring organization.* We examine mentors' satisfaction with their mentoring agency as the final component of their microsystem. The mentoring agency plays a key role in helping mentors to navigate the complex relational system with their mentee (Keller & Blakeslee, 2013). The support that organizational staff members provide to mentors is crucial to sustaining the mentors in the mentoring program. DuBois and colleagues' (2002) meta-analysis shows positive mentoring outcomes associated with best practices of programs, such as monitoring implementation of the program and offering ongoing mentor training. Also, Weiler et al. (2014) found college student mentors reported supportive relationships with staff were integral in their role as mentors to youth involved in delinquency. Based on this literature, we hypothesize that greater satisfaction with mentors' mentoring organization will be associated with greater satisfaction with their mentoring relationship.

*Interaction among ecological factors.* A key component of ecological and systems theory is that microsystems interact in predicting individual outcomes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Keller, 2005; Keller & Blakeslee, 2013). Thus, the microsystem factors discussed previously may interact in predicting mentor satisfaction. For example, if mentors have a strong relationship with the mentee's family, then their relationship with their mentoring organization may not be as important in predicting mentor satisfaction. Likewise, in the absence of a strong family relationship, the potential effect of the relationship with their mentoring organization may be stronger, or more important. There may also be interesting interactions between mentors' perceptions of their multicultural competence and other microsystem relationships. Thus, exploring the interactions among microsystem factors may reveal under what conditions certain factors may be more or less important in predicting mentor satisfaction.

### *Present Study*

In the current study, we extend the youth mentoring literature by examining the mentor's social ecology of microsystem relationships (Rhodes et al., 2000). Based on the literature, we hypothesize that greater perception of one's multicultural competence, a stronger relationship with the family, and more satisfaction with the mentoring organization will be associated with greater mentor satisfaction with their mentoring relationship. Because of the dearth of literature on how microsystem variables may interact, we do not offer explicit hypotheses but do explore interactions among the microsystem variables in predicting mentor satisfaction with the mentoring relationship. To our knowledge, this is the first study to examine the association between mentors' perceived cultural competence and mentor satisfaction, as well as concurrently examining mentee family and mentor organization variables.

Also, research shows that mentor demographic characteristics such as mentor income and education, and mentoring relationship duration predict mentor satisfaction (and more generally volunteer satisfaction and retention; e.g., Lammers, 1991); as such, we include these factors as control variables (Davis, Hall, & Meyer, 2003; Spitz & MacKinnon, 1993). Overall, the current study extends mentoring research by examining different mentor microsystems to better understand factors that predict mentor satisfaction.

## **METHOD**

### *Participants*

Participants in this study comprised 247 mentors. To recruit participants, mentoring organizations were first identified from online searches using mentoring-related words (e.g., mentor, mentoring organization, mentoring program) and mentoring.org. Mentoring organizations were eligible for participation if they used adult (not peer) mentors working with youth aged 18 years and younger, and the mentors were volunteers and not paid.

Mentoring organizations were also recruited through snowballing and personal contacts. We attempted to contact all identified mentoring organizations that listed a current working e-mail or phone number. All identified mentoring organizations received an initial e-mail, directed to a program director, executive director, or other relevant contact, providing study information and instructions regarding how to forward the information to the adult mentors in their program. If there was no response from a mentoring organization, a follow-up e-mail was sent approximately 2 weeks later, followed by a phone call approximately 2 weeks after. Clicking the embedded link in the e-mail took the mentors directly to the study, where they could provide online consent, could complete the survey measures, and were thanked upon survey completion.

Of the 350 eligible mentoring organizations contacted, we had participants from 72 (21%) different mentoring organizations. On average, 3.86 mentors participated per mentoring organization (standard deviation [*SD*] = 4.72, range = 1–23). These 72 organizations were located in the Western ( $n = 38$ , 53%), Northeastern ( $n = 17$ , 24%), and Midwestern ( $n = 17$ , 24%) U.S. regions. We were unable to calculate the mentor response rate because we did not know how many mentors were on each mentoring organization's e-mail list.

Of the 247 mentors who participated, 169 mentors (68.1%) were women and 78 (31.5%) were men, and 1 (< 1%) mentor did not report their gender. Most mentors

self-identified as White (213, 85.9%), 33 (13.3%) as people of color (i.e., Black/African American, Latino/Hispanic, Asian, Multiracial), and 2 (< 1%) did not report their race or ethnicity. Mentors were from the Western (37.5%), Northeastern (34.7%), and Midwestern (27.4%) regions of the United States (1 mentor, < 1%, did not report). Mentors from the South were not included because not enough of them participated from this region. Mentors reported an average of 7.07 ( $SD = 5.47$ ) on the income scale, indicating an average annual income between \$55,001 and \$65,000. Mentors reported an average of 4.27 ( $SD = 1.54$ ) on the education scale, indicating an average education level obtained between a Bachelor's degree and some graduate education.

Mentors had volunteered an average of 3.28 years with their mentoring organization ( $SD = 3.60$ ). Almost all mentors (186, 75%) were in one-on-one mentoring relationships, while 16 mentors (6%) mentored as part of a team with other mentors (45 did not report, 18.1%). Although most mentors mentored only one mentee at a time, 41 (16.5%) mentors participated in group mentoring and had multiple mentees. For mentors' primary mentees, 101 (40.7%) were boys and 137 (55.2%) were girls (10 did not report, 4%), with an average mentee age of 12.58 years ( $SD = 3.56$ ). The ethnicity of the primary mentees is as follows: 103 (41.5%) were White/European American, 48 (19.4%) were Black/African American, 55 (22.2%) were Latino/Hispanic, 1 (< 1%) was Asian, 2 (< 1%) were Native American/Alaskan Native, 1 (< 1%) was Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, 27 (10.9%) were Multiracial, and 2 (< 1%) were Other. Thus, over half of the mentors identified mentoring youth of color (9 did not report, 3.6%).

### Measures

*Mentor satisfaction with mentee relationship.* To assess satisfaction with mentors' relationship with their mentees, we used the Mentor Satisfaction subscale of the Match Characteristics Questionnaire (MCQ Adult Version 2.0; Harris & Nakkula, 2003b). Mentors were asked to think about their mentees and respond to the questions "on average" (since mentors may have more than one mentee). This five-item measure uses a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 6 (*always*; e.g., "I feel frustrated or disappointed about how the match is going [*reverse coded*]").

Nakkula and Harris (2013) reported acceptable internal consistency estimates of .86. They also showed evidence for construct validity because mentor satisfaction was positively correlated with other aspects of the mentoring relationship, such as fun, sharing, and character development, and was also correlated in ways we would expect with other mentoring surveys (i.e., Youth Mentoring Survey: Harris & Nakkula, 2003a; Mentor Mattering Survey: Nakkula & Harris, 2010, 2013). Other research demonstrates adequate internal consistency ( $\alpha = .82$ ) and further support for validity because mentor satisfaction was inversely related to mentee disciplinary referrals (Holt, Bry, & Johnson, 2015). In the present study, the internal consistency was .84.

*Mentor multicultural competence.* We assessed mentors' self-reported multicultural competence, namely, mentors' perception of if and how their personal beliefs, attitudes, and skills help them work effectively with their mentee(s) from different life experiences and cultural backgrounds. To do so, we modified the 20-item Cross-Cultural Counseling Inventory-Revised (CCCI-R; Hernandez & LaFromboise, 1985; revised by LaFromboise, Coleman, & Hernandez, 1991).

Following Sue et al.'s (1992) well-established multicultural competence model of awareness, knowledge, and skill, the CCCI-R contains three subscales assessing

cross-cultural counseling skill (e.g., “At ease talking with client”), sociopolitical awareness (e.g., “Aware of how own values might affect client”), and cultural sensitivity (e.g., “Demonstrates knowledge about client’s culture”; LaFromboise et al., 1991). Clients rate their counselor on each item using a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). LaFromboise and colleagues (1991) provide support for the content validity of the CCCI-R because content experts indicated strong agreement about how well the items reflected the scale dimensions and psychometric evidence based on factor analysis and internal consistency estimates of .95 for the total scale.

In the current study, we modified the CCCI-R so that it could be applied to mentors’ perception of their multicultural competence. Other researchers had already modified the CCCI-R so that it could be applied to mentees; namely, Grant-Thompson and Atkinson (1997) modified the scale by replacing “counselor” with “mentor.” However, these authors did not report estimates of internal consistency. To assess mentors’ perceptions of their multicultural competence, we first dropped the following item because of poor conceptual fit: “Counselor has a clear understanding of counseling and therapy process.” Next, we changed the word “counselor” to “I,” and “client” to “mentee,” resulting in items such as, “I am aware of how my own values might affect my mentee(s).”

We conducted an exploratory factor analysis (analysis available upon request) and found a similar three-factor structure; however, similar to other research, we used the total scale score to assess general perceptions of multicultural competence (LaFromboise et al., 1991; Sue et al., 1992). In the present study, internal consistency for mentors’ perception of their multicultural competence scale was .89.

*Mentor–mentee family relationship.* We assessed the perceived relationship between the mentor and the mentee’s family with a six-item modified version of Barbarin’s (2000) The Teacher Report: Home-School Relationship (Nzinga-Johnson et al., 2009). The word “child” was replaced with the word “mentee” to modify the scale for use with mentors. Mentors were asked to think about their mentees and respond to the questions “on average” if they had more than one mentee. Items included overall satisfaction with the relationship with the mentee’s family, the emotional tone of the relationship, communication, agreement about issues affecting the mentee, feelings of being appreciated by the family, and cooperation.

Participants rated each of the six items (e.g., “How would you describe the emotional tone of the relationship you have with this mentee’s parents?”) on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*very cold and unfriendly*) to 4 (*very warm and friendly*; Barbarin, 2000; Nzinga-Johnson et al., 2009). The original scale had a seventh item that we dropped because it uses a 5-point scale. Overall, the six items were averaged so high scores reflect a more positive relationship. If mentors did not have a relationship with their mentee’s parents, they were instructed to select the lowest response choice. Research with the original scale shows adequate internal consistency ranging from .92 to .93, and .92 in other studies (Serpell & Mashburn, 2012). Research also shows evidence for construct validity because the scale is positively associated with youth social competence and frequency of parent–teacher phone and voluntary contacts and negatively associated with youth problem behavior and teacher–youth conflict (Serpell & Mashburn, 2012). In the current study, internal consistency for the six-item modified version of the scale was .91.

*Mentors’ satisfaction with their mentoring organization.* We used 15 items from the Organizational Support (e.g., clear goals and objectives) and Participation Efficacy (e.g., abilities to make a difference) subscales of the Volunteer Satisfaction Index to assess mentors’

**Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations for Study Variables**

| Variable  | 1    | 2    | 3    | 4    | 5     | 6     | 7    |
|---|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|------|
| 1. Satisfaction with the mentoring relationship | —    | .39* | .36* | .31* | -.01  | .17*  | .01  |
| 2. Satisfaction with the mentoring organization |      | —    | .21* | .27* | .04   | .10   | -.05 |
| 3. Relationship with mentee's family            |      |      | —    | .17* | -.14* | .13   | -.03 |
| 4. Cultural competence                          |      |      |      | —    | -.03  | .03   | .08  |
| 5. Income                                       |      |      |      |      | —     | -.00* | .22* |
| 6. Years volunteered                            |      |      |      |      |       | —     | .14* |
| 7. Education                                    |      |      |      |      |       |       | —    |
| Mean  | 4.64 | 6.01 | 3.40 | 5.16 | 7.07  | 3.28  | 4.27 |
| SD  | 0.83 | 0.90 | 0.75 | 0.50 | 5.47  | 3.60  | 1.54 |

Note. SD = standard deviation.

\* $p < .05$ .

satisfaction with their mentoring program and community organization running the program (Galindo-Kuhn & Guzley, 2002). Participants rated their responses on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*very dissatisfied*) to 7 (*very satisfied*). Participants first read the prompt: "Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following." We then used the Organizational Support subscale (10 items; e.g., "The availability of getting help when I need it") and the Participation Efficacy subscale (five items; e.g., "The amount of effort I put in as equaling the amount of change I influence"). Items from these two subscales were averaged to create a total score assessing overall satisfaction with the mentoring organization.

Galindo-Kuhn and Guzley (2002) show evidence for adequate internal consistency for the Organizational Support and Participation Efficacy subscales (.91 and .84, respectively); with other scholars showing further support (.91 and .81, respectively; Garner & Garner, 2011). Support for construct validity has been offered as Participation Efficacy is positively associated with one's intent to remain a volunteer (Galindo-Kuhn & Guzley, 2002) and both subscales correlate with volunteer motivation and retention (Garner & Garner, 2011). In the current study, internal consistency for Organizational Support and Participation Efficacy was .94 and .91, respectively, and .95 for the total scale.

*Mentor demographics.* Demographic characteristics of the mentor were assessed with standard questions regarding gender and race/ethnicity. Participants reported income on a 1 (lowest; below \$30,000) to 16 (highest; \$150,000+) scale and levels of education on a 1 (lowest; high school) to 6 (highest; graduate degree) scale. See Table 1 for descriptive statistics.

### **Analytic Strategy**

We used ordinary least squares regression to test how demographic (i.e., income, gender, education, years volunteered) and microsystem (i.e., mentors' perception of their cultural competence, relationship with their mentee's family, satisfaction with their mentoring organization) variables predicted satisfaction with the mentoring relationship (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). We standardized all predictor variables. As reported in Table 2, we examined mentor demographics as predictors of mentor satisfaction

**Table 2.** Models Predicting Mentor's Satisfaction With Mentoring Relationship

| Variable  | Model 1                    | Model 2                    | Model 3                      |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
|   | <i>b</i> * (SE) 95% CI     | <i>b</i> * (SE) 95% CI     | <i>b</i> * (SE) 95% CI       |
| Intercept                                       | 4.64* (0.06) [4.53, 4.75]  | 4.68* (0.05) [4.57, 4.78]  | 4.70* (0.05) [4.60, 4.81]    |
| Women <sup>a</sup>                              | -0.01 (0.06) [-0.12, 0.10] | -0.01 (0.05) [-0.11, 0.10] | -0.00 (0.05) [-0.11, 0.10]   |
| Income  | -0.01 (0.06) [-0.13, 0.11] | 0.02 (0.06) [-0.09, 0.13]  | 0.03 (0.06) [-0.08, 0.14]    |
| Education                                       | -0.01 (0.06) [-0.12, 0.11] | 0.03 (0.05) [-0.07, 0.13]  | 0.02 (0.05) [-0.08, 0.13]    |
| Years volunteered                               | 0.16* (0.06) [0.04, 0.27]  | 0.07 (0.05) [-0.04, 0.17]  | 0.06 (0.05) [-0.04, 0.16]    |
| Race <sup>b</sup>                               | -0.00 (0.06) [-0.12, 0.11] | -0.04 (0.05) [-0.15, 0.06] | -0.05 (0.05) [-0.16, 0.06]   |
| Mentor cultural competence                      | —                          | 0.19* (0.05) [0.08, 0.29]  | 0.18* (0.05) [0.08, 0.29]    |
| Mentor relationship with mentee's family        | —                          | 0.24* (0.05) [0.13, 0.34]  | 0.25* (0.05) [0.15, 0.36]    |
| Mentor satisfaction with mentoring organization | —                          | 0.16* (0.06) [0.05, 0.27]  | 0.14* (0.06) [0.03, 0.25]    |
| Family* satisfaction with organization          | —                          | —                          | -0.12* (0.05) [-0.22, -0.02] |

Note. SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval; family = mentor's relationship with mentee's family.

<sup>a</sup>Men = 0, Women = 1.

<sup>b</sup>White mentor = 0, Mentor of color = 1.

*b*\* = standardized regression coefficients.

\**p* < .05.

(Model 1). Next, we added microsystem variables to predict mentor satisfaction over and above demographics (Model 2). Finally, in three additional models, we tested each two-way interaction among microsystem variables and report the one significant interaction in Model 3. To interpret this significant interaction, we calculated simple slopes at one standard deviation above and below the mean and tested if each was significantly different from zero (Preacher, Curran, & Bauer, 2006).

## RESULTS

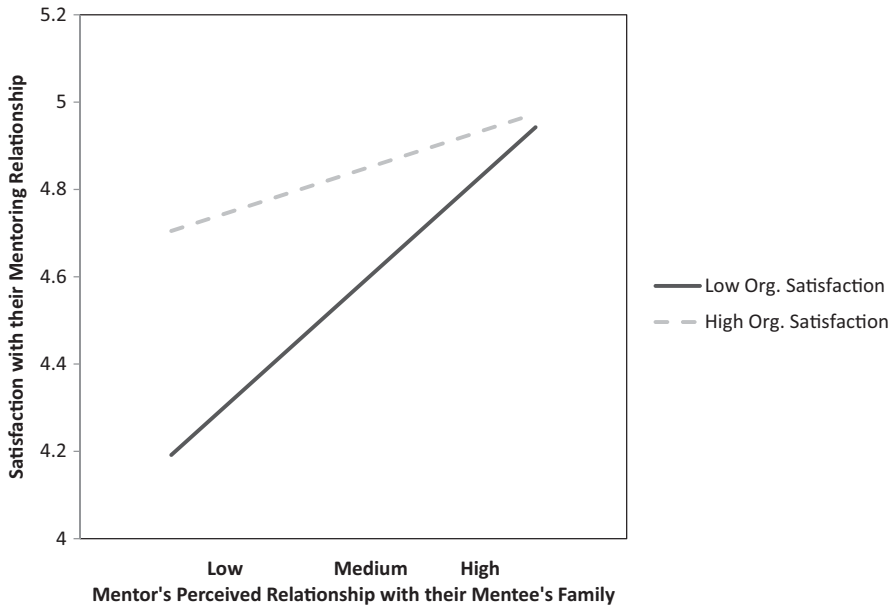
### Preliminary Analyses

Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among study variables are reported in Table 1. We also examined gender differences for study variables by conducting *t*-tests. We used a Bonferroni corrected *p*-value of .007 to control for Type I error for the seven preplanned gender comparisons. These analyses indicated no significant differences between men and women for any study variables. We conducted one-way analyses of variance with all continuous variables for geographic region to see if there were differences by region. No differences by region were found for any outcome or predictor variables. In addition, we examined residual plots to check the model assumptions for ordinary least squares regression (linearity, homoscedasticity of errors, etc.) and found that the data were adequate for ordinary least squares regression.

### Predicting Mentor Satisfaction With the Mentoring Relationship

As reported in Table 2, the demographic model (Model 1) shows that the number of years mentors had volunteered with their mentoring organization was a significant positive predictor of mentors' satisfaction with their mentoring relationship, over and above other demographic variables. No other demographic variables were significant predictors.





**Figure 1.** Predicting Mentor's Satisfaction With Mentoring Relationship

*Note.* Plot of significant interaction between (a) mentor satisfaction with organization and (b) mentor's relationship with mentee's family. Simple slopes were calculated at  $\pm 1$  SD around the mean. Low and high family are 1 SD below and above the mean of mentor relationship with mentee's family and medium family is at the mean.

Model 2 shows that each microsystem variable (i.e., perceived cultural competence, relationship with their mentee's family, and satisfaction with their mentoring organization) were each significant positive predictors of satisfaction with the mentoring relationship, even after controlling for the other demographic and microsystem variables in the model.

To examine how microsystem variables interacted in predicting mentoring satisfaction, we tested interactions between the three microsystems. We found that the first interaction between mentors' cultural competence and mentors' relationship with their mentee's family was not significant,  $b^* = -.01$ , standard error [SE] = .06,  $t(157) = -.11$ ,  $p = .91$ . The second interaction between mentors' cultural competence and satisfaction with their mentoring organization was also not significant,  $b^* = -.04$ ,  $SE = .06$ ,  $t(157) = -.69$ ,  $p = .49$ . However, as reported in Model 3 of Table 2, the interaction between mentors' relationship with their mentee's family and satisfaction with their mentoring organization was significant and negative.

To understand the nature of this significant interaction, we calculated simple slopes (at  $\pm 1$  SD) and tested if each simple slope was significantly different from zero (Preacher et al., 2006). The interaction is displayed in Figure 1. We used mentors' satisfaction with their mentoring organization as a moderating variable and found that at 1 standard deviation above the mean (higher satisfaction with the organization) the simple slope between family relationships and mentor satisfaction was positive and nonsignificant,  $b^* = .13$ ,  $SE = .07$ ,  $t(157) = 1.79$ ,  $p = .08$ . The simple slope at 1 standard deviation below the mean (lower satisfaction with the organization) was positive and significant,  $b^* = .38$ ,  $SE = .08$ ,  $t(157) = 4.46$ ,  $p < .001$ . As displayed in Figure 1, this shows that when the

mentor has a more positive relationship with the organization, then the mentor's relationship with the family has a weaker effect on mentor satisfaction.

## DISCUSSION

The current study adds to the youth mentoring literature by revealing how aspects of the mentor's microsystem predict mentor satisfaction. Reflecting trends in the youth mentoring literature, this shows the importance of considering the social ecology surrounding mentors to better understand mentor satisfaction (Keller, 2005; Keller & Blakeslee, 2013). Overall, results indicated that (a) higher perceived cultural competence, (b) better relationships with the mentee's family, and (c) greater satisfaction with the mentoring organization significantly predicted greater satisfaction with the mentor's mentoring relationship, over and above demographic characteristics. We also tested interactions between microsystem predictors; we found a significant interaction between mentors' relationship with their mentee's family and mentoring organization in predicting mentors' satisfaction with their mentoring relationship.

These findings are relevant to ecological theory as they show that a particular microsystem may be more or less important in predicting an outcome depending on the nature of other microsystem relationships. Thus, social ecology may serve as a direct or moderating factor in predicting mentor satisfaction. Findings are now discussed with a focus on limitations and implications for mentoring practice.

### *Mentors' Cultural Competence*

Mentors enter their mentoring relationships with their own set of values, assumptions, and cultural frameworks, which provide mentors with a lens through which to interpret and respond to their mentee. Because many adult mentors are paired with mentees from different racial, cultural, and/or socioeconomic backgrounds, it becomes important for mentors to focus on and improve their cultural competence (Sánchez et al., 2014). The current study further supports this assertion in that we found that greater mentor cultural competence was positively associated with mentors' satisfaction with their mentoring relationship. This finding is important because it advocates for mentors to not only better understand their own backgrounds and biases, but also learn about and gain exposure to members of groups different from themselves. Future research should examine how to increase such multicultural competence in mentors, perhaps by examining how mentoring within a team of diverse others may provide a place for growth in multicultural competence.

### *Mentors' Relationship With Their Mentee's Family*

The positive association between mentors' relationship with their mentee's family and satisfaction with their mentoring relationship supports Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model in that relationships from one microsystem (i.e., family) may shape satisfaction with relationships in another microsystem (i.e., with the mentee). This implies that mentors may need to be aware of other individuals and systems that shape their mentee's life and consider how such systems affect their mentoring relationship. Particularly in mentoring relationships with racial, cultural, and/or linguistic differences, it becomes even more crucial for mentors to build a relationship with their mentee's parents or caregivers

(Spencer & Basualdo-Delmonico, 2014). Overall, as mentors work to connect with their mentees, it may be necessary to have the mentee's parents informed and onboard to help support the development of the mentoring relationship. Also, it may be relevant to explore how the relationship between the mentor and their mentee's other microsystems (e.g., teachers) may be important predictors of mentors' satisfaction with their mentoring relationship and other important mentoring outcomes.

It may be worthwhile to examine if the positive association between mentors' relationship with their mentee's family and satisfaction with the mentoring relationship still holds true if mentors become "too close" to their mentee's family (e.g., attempt to mentor the family as a whole). The mentoring literature suggests that in these cases, mentors may overstep their role (e.g., providing financial support, mentoring their mentee's siblings, putting the needs of the family over the needs of the mentee), which may blur the boundaries as the child's mentor (Spencer, Basualdo-Delmonico, & Lewis, 2011). Future research would benefit from greater specificity in how the relationship with the family is conceptualized and assessed to better capture this nuance.

### *Mentors' Satisfaction With Their Mentoring Organization*

The findings from the current study further support the importance of mentors' satisfaction with their mentoring organization because this was associated with greater satisfaction with their mentoring relationship. This finding concurs with and extends the general volunteering literature that shows an association between volunteer job satisfaction and continued volunteerism (Galindo-Kuhn & Guzley, 2002) by focusing on mentors as one particular type of volunteer. This finding is notable for mentoring organizations because their staff, training, and other programming may directly affect the mentoring relationship. A more nuanced understanding of which of these aspects carries the most weight in predicting the mentor's satisfaction of the relationship (e.g., satisfaction with staff responsiveness, mentor training) may be helpful so that mentoring programs can direct their time and resources.

### *Exploring the Interaction Between Mentor Microsystem Variables*

As noted by ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and the mentoring literature (Keller, 2005; Keller & Blakeslee, 2013), relationships do not necessarily occur in isolation but rather as part of a larger social system. A particular strength of the current study is the examination of multiple aspects of the mentor's microsystem and interactions among these different domains. We found a significant interaction between mentors' relationship with their mentee's family and satisfaction with their mentoring organization in predicting mentors' satisfaction with their mentoring relationship. This interaction revealed that satisfaction with the mentoring organization moderated the association between family relationship and mentor satisfaction.

In particular, the association between mentors' satisfaction with their mentoring relationship and mentors' relationship with their mentee's family was stronger for those who were less satisfied with their mentoring organization. Thus, the relationship with the family may be particularly important in the context of a mentor who has a weaker relationship with their mentoring organization. Another implication from this interaction (see Figure 1) is that the mentoring organization may be more important in promoting mentor satisfaction when the relationship with the family is absent or weak. This shows

the importance of examining the interplay between these two facets of mentors' social ecology in predicting mentor satisfaction.

### ***Limitations***

Although findings extend an understanding of mentor satisfaction, they are not without limitations. First, although mentors were recruited from across the United States, the sample is not random or representative and caution should be made in generalizing beyond the specific sample. Also, we focused primarily on one-on-one mentoring relationships with adult mentors and youth mentees, thus results may not generalize to group, team, or peer mentoring relationships. Second, some mentors had multiple mentees, and therefore their responses are considered "on average" for their mentees. Third, because of the nature of the research questions, we needed to modify preexisting scales. Future research should validate these modified scales with other samples of mentors.

In addition, we used scales that assessed mentors' perceptions (e.g., mentors' perceived cultural competence), rather than objective assessments. This is important to note because individuals' level of cultural competence may affect their self-perceptions of their own cultural competence. For example, mentors with overall lower cultural competence may not fully understand the scope of what it means to be a culturally competent mentor and may overrate their level of cultural competence. Conversely, mentors who are more culturally competent may see themselves as always striving to become more culturally competent and may underrate their perceived level of cultural competence. Future research should triangulate data from mentors' self-report with information from mentees or program staff.

Fourth, because of the nature of the data collection strategies, there may be differences among the types of organizations and mentors who chose to participate in the study. Also, future research should collect information about the mentoring organization itself, such as its purpose, focus, and history. Last, because of the cross-sectional design of the study, causality cannot be established; rather, associations between relevant variables were explored.

### ***Directions for Future Research***

First, future research should attempt to replicate these findings with different types of one-on-one mentoring matches (i.e., mentors and mentee matches similar or dissimilar across race, class, gender, socioeconomic status). Future research may explore homogenous versus nonhomogenous teams of multiple mentors, and how these similarities and differences may interact with the mentor's cultural competence in predicting their relationship satisfaction. Second, there are many types of mentoring programs with different structures and program requirements (e.g., school-based versus community-based programs; Karcher, Kuperminc, Portwood, Sipe, & Taylor, 2006). Thus, future research should explore how mentoring program type may predict mentor satisfaction or may moderate other associations.

Third, longitudinal research is needed to understand the critical components that contribute to how mentor satisfaction develops over time and how microsystems co-evolve over time in shaping the mentoring relationship. Last, future research may benefit from incorporating other aspects of mentors' microsystems to better understand how other dimensions of social ecology matter in shaping mentor satisfaction.

### *Implications for Mentoring Practice*

Findings from the current study have direct implications for mentoring practice. Many of the factors that affect mentors' satisfaction with their mentoring relationship are within the control of a mentoring organization. For example, results show the importance of developing cultural competence training for mentors (Sánchez et al., 2014). Types of training, to name just a few, are as follows: raising awareness about multiple forms of privilege; facilitating discussions on the mentor's own cultural background, values, and assumptions; and facilitating awareness training regarding cultural norms and practices of the mentees and their families, as well as societal constraints that mentees may face. Mentors may also benefit from ongoing training that focuses on a more nuanced understanding of the assets and needs of the home, schools, and communities in which mentees are immersed. Offering such cultural competence training throughout the duration of the mentoring relationship may help to promote the continuous development of the mentor's multicultural competence and apply learning to new issues that arise in the relationship.

In addition, it may be important for mentoring programs to (a) integrate strategies for communication and (b) foster relationship building with the mentee's parents and/or caregivers. Research documents the importance of mentors being on the same page with families regarding expectations and being consistent with the families' values (Meissen & Lounsbury, 1981; Sipe, 2002; Spencer, 2007). When mentors feel they are not on the same page with the mentee's family, mentors may feel as if they are crossing boundaries with the mentee without parental support or approval (Bernhard, Lefebvre, Kilbride, Chud, & Lange, 1988). This may inadvertently stir up mixed feelings about the mentor's race and privilege, which may be exacerbated when dissimilarities between social class and perceived level of privilege are present (Bernhard et al., 1988). Therefore, mentoring organizations may benefit from explicitly clarifying the mentor's role so that both mentors and parents are on the same page with the program's expectations.

### *Conclusion*

In summary, the current study provides initial insight into the importance of considering mentors' social ecology to understand mentor satisfaction with the mentoring relationship. As noted by other research, mentor satisfaction is an important outcome that predicts mentor retention and mentors taking more responsibility for sustaining the mentoring relationship (Sipe, 2002). This is important because relationship duration predicts positive outcomes for the mentee (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). Moreover, the current study expands the mentoring literature by focusing specifically on the mentor's perspective (Weiler et al., 2014) and examining the mentor's social ecology. Overall, it is our hope that future research and practice will help to further improve mentor satisfaction, which ultimately may benefit the positive mentee development.

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