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# Fostering Affective Commitment and Work Engagement Through Mentoring

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FOSTERING AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT AND WORK ENGAGEMENT  
THROUGH MENTORING

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Psychology

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

by

Luis Portillo Sánchez

August 2013

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The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Thesis Titled  
FOSTERING AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT AND WORK ENGAGEMENT  
THROUGH MENTORING

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August 2013

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## ABSTRACT

### FOSTERING AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT AND WORK ENGAGEMENT THROUGH MENTORING

by Luis Portillo Sánchez

Past research on mentoring has focused primarily on the benefits that protégées and mentors derive from their mentoring relationships. However, little research has been devoted to revealing the ways in which mentoring can benefit organizations. To address this void, a sample of 124 protégées was used to investigate the relationships between satisfaction with a mentor, affective commitment (AC), and work engagement. Perceived organizational support (POS) was hypothesized as the mediator of the aforementioned relationships. Further, in order to identify the factors contributing to satisfaction with the mentor, this study examined the relationship between satisfaction with the mentor and mentorship type and two protégée characteristics: motivation to learn and proactive personality. The findings suggested that satisfaction with the mentor affected protégée levels of AC and work engagement and that the mechanism underlying these relationships was POS. That is, POS was found to mediate the relationship between satisfaction with the mentor, AC, and work engagement. Surprisingly, mentorship type was not a contributing factor to satisfaction with the mentor. Among the protégée characteristics investigated, motivation to learn was positively related to satisfaction with the mentor whether the mentoring relationship was formal or informal.

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## Introduction

Mentoring refers to the process whereby a senior employee, acting as a mentor, facilitates the intellectual and personal development, as well as the career advancement, of a less experienced employee (i.e., protégée; Raabe & Beehr, 2003). Mentoring relationships can emerge spontaneously (termed *informal mentoring relationships*) or due to organizational initiatives (termed *formal mentoring relationships*; Ally & Eby, 2003). However, for both formal and informal mentoring relationships, the organizational context in which they take place is crucial to their development and effectiveness. Mentoring relationships are likely to thrive in those organizations whose cultures support learning and development, whose norms emphasize collaboration over competition, and whose reward systems acknowledge employee development (Kram, 1985; Wanberg, Welsh, & Heezlett, 2003).

Organizational initiatives aimed at generating mentoring relationships are commonly known as formal mentoring programs (Chao, 2009; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). In the last 30 years, organizations have been offering formal mentoring programs to their employees with the intent of socializing newcomers, attracting talented jobseekers, increasing job satisfaction, enhancing diversity within the management ranks, and reducing turnover intentions (Allen & O'Brien, 2007; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Spitzmüller et al., 2008; Willems & Smet, 2007). Typically, organizations that are leaders in their respective marketplaces, such as Bank of America®, Marriot International®, and Charles Schwab®, have formal mentoring programs in place (Allen, Eby, & Lentz, 2006).

Carrying out a formal mentoring program entails the investment of myriad organizational resources. Financial efforts are needed for program implementation and coordination (Armstrong, Allison, & Hayes, 2002). Additionally, formal mentoring programs often require dedication from organizational members with highly regarded experience to serve as mentors (Baugh & Fagenson-Eland, 2007). These are examples of resources needed in order for formal mentoring programs to be developed and carried out effectively. It does not come as a surprise that, as numerous scholars claim, there is a need for research aiming at providing tips to maximize the return on investment of these resource-consuming interventions (e.g., Raabe & Beehr, 2003; Wanberg, Kammeyer-Mueller, & Marchese, 2006).

Evidence suggests that organizations aim at replicating certain characteristics of informal mentoring when devising formal mentoring programs driven by the notion that informal mentoring relationships lead to better outcomes than do formal ones. For example, they use software applications as well as other matching techniques to assign protégés to mentors so that the resulting dyads will resemble certain features that are typically present in informal mentoring relationships (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). With the intent of producing knowledge that would permit the betterment of matching processes, numerous studies have investigated demographic characteristics of mentors and their protégés such as ethnicity, gender, and background similarity (e.g., Ensher & Murphy, 1997; Scandura & Williams, 2001; Turban, Dougherty, & Lee, 2002). Nonetheless, again, it has not been ascertained whether such features nurture mentoring relationships from which organizations can derive benefits (Allen et al., 2006).

Organizations can benefit from those initiatives that instill desired attitudes and behaviors in their employees. Ragins, Cotton, and Miller (2000) found that quality of the mentoring relationship was related to employee job and career attitudes. Specifically, these researchers found that satisfaction with the mentor had a stronger impact on employee attitudes than did mentorship type (formal vs. informal). In the light of these findings one can infer that satisfaction with the mentor is a key factor to take into account when determining the impact of mentoring relationships on employee attitudes. Thus, in this study, the relationships between satisfaction with the mentor, affective commitment (AC), and work engagement are examined.

Second, this study is an attempt to disentangle the underlying mechanisms through which satisfaction with the mentor is related to AC and work engagement. Specifically, perceived organizational support (POS) is hypothesized as a mediator between satisfaction with the mentor and AC and work engagement, respectively. According to organizational support theory, employees who perceive organizational support tend to feel indebted to their organizations, and, as consequence, they will try to eliminate this psychological debt by finding ways of contributing to the success of their respective companies (Settoon, Bennett, & Liden, 1996). Third, in the present study, the influence of mentorship type on satisfaction with the mentor is investigated. Fourth, its scope widens to include other factors that might contribute to increased satisfaction with the mentor so that formal mentoring programs can be enhanced. For this purpose, the impact of protégée motivation to learn and protégée proactivity on satisfaction with the mentor above and beyond mentorship type was examined. Protégée motivation to learn

and protégée proactivity were proposed to enhance communicational processes between protégées and their mentors, positively influencing the quality of the mentoring relationship according to mentoring enactment theory (Kalbfleisch, 2002).

### **Satisfaction with Mentor, Affective Commitment, and Work Engagement**

According to Allen et al. (2006), the quality of the mentoring relationship is the most important outcome concerning formal mentoring programs. Past research has suggested that protégée satisfaction with the mentor can be considered a good indicator of both the quality of the mentoring relationship and its effectiveness (Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Ragins et al., 2000). As a consequence, investigating to what extent protégées are satisfied with their mentors can produce valuable insights on how to design effective formal mentoring programs. Ragins et al. (2000) found satisfaction with the mentor to be associated with career and job attitudes; satisfaction with the mentor was positively related to career commitment, job satisfaction, satisfaction with opportunities for promotion, organizational commitment, and organizational-based self-esteem, and negatively related to intentions to quit. Given its relationships with organizational commitment and job satisfaction, in the present study, satisfaction with the mentor was assumed to be associated with both AC and work engagement.

**Affective commitment (AC).** Affective commitment is the affective component of organizational commitment and is defined as an employee's level of organizational identification as well as feelings of attachment to and high degree of involvement in the organization (Allen & Mayer, 1990). In addition to AC, organizational commitment (OC) comprises two other forms of commitment: continuance and normative

commitment. Importantly, among the three forms of OC, AC is the strongest predictor of outcomes of interest to organizations such as turnover intentions, absenteeism, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky 2002). Furthermore, AC is the only form of OC that may exert a positive influence on employee well being as a result of being negatively related to both stress and work-family conflict (Meyer et al., 2002). In sum, organizations and employees may benefit from organizational initiatives that can positively influence employee levels of AC.

Mentoring is a vehicle through which AC can be positively influenced. Mentoring can be appraised by protégés as a positive or a negative experience (Eby, Butts, Lockwood, & Simon, 2004). Consequently, the direction and strength of the relationship between mentoring and AC are likely to be affected by the quality of mentoring. Payne and Huffman (2005) conducted a longitudinal study over a two-year period that revealed that mentoring was positively associated with AC at the end of the study. Another study conducted in the public accounting arena offered evidence of positive links between mentoring and the three forms of OC, with AC being most strongly related to mentoring (Stallworth, 2003). Thus, one might expect that protégées who are more satisfied with their mentors exhibit higher levels of AC than those who are less satisfied.

*Hypothesis 1: Satisfaction with mentor will predict AC.*

**Work engagement** refers to a positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind and can be best delineated by its three components: vigor, dedication, and absorption



(Schaufeli, Martínez, Marques-Pinto, Salanova, & Bakker, 2002). According to Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova (2006), vigor refers to exuberant levels of energy and mental resilience when facing job tasks. Individuals with vigor do not hesitate to invest a great deal of effort in their works and they maintain such investment even when difficulties arise. Dedication refers to showing a high level of involvement in one's work whereby one obtains a sense of significance, inspiration, and pride. Lastly, these researchers defined absorption as being fully focused and immersed in one's work. Individuals who reach such a state feel a high degree of plenitude when working, remaining oblivious to the passing of time. It is also important to note that, although work engagement is considered a state of mind, extant research revealed that work engagement is a stable construct (Mauno, Kinnunen, & Ruokolainen, 2007). In other words, work engagement can also be defined as a positive persistent work state (Saks & Rotman, 2006).

Work engagement deserves attention from organizations because it has been linked to increased job performance. Recently, Christian, Garza, and Slaughter (2011) conducted a meta-analysis that revealed that work engagement was positively related to both task performance and contextual performance (i.e., performance in areas not directly related to one's assigned tasks). Thus, organizations should show interest in those initiatives that foster work engagement. Researchers investigating antecedents of work engagement have focused primarily on job resources and job demands, and their findings indicated that job resources were more strongly related to work engagement than were job demands (e.g., Mauno et al., 2007).

Mentors are likely to be perceived as one of many job resources by their protégées. Mentors can serve as role models, coaches, advisers, and protectors for their protégées (Kram, 1985). When performing these roles, they tend to provide advice, clues, and feedback on how to navigate and succeed within the organization. Due to the positive and strong relationship between job resources and work engagement (Mauno et al., 2007), it should be expected that protégées who are more satisfied with their mentors will exhibit higher levels of work engagement than will protégées who are less satisfied.

*Hypothesis 2: Satisfaction with mentor will predict work engagement.*

### **Organizational Support Theory and Perceived Organizational Support (POS)**

Unearthing the mechanisms through which mentoring affects AC and work engagement will permit the design of formal mentoring programs in ways that their return on investment is maximized. POS may very well be one of those mechanisms. Levinson (1965) noted that employees attribute humanlike characteristics to organizations as a result of being the recipient of actions performed by organizational agents. When attributing humanlike characteristics to organizations, employees take into consideration two distinct intents. On the one hand, employees may think that organizational agents perform certain actions moved by personal motives (i.e., personal intent). On the other hand, employees may think that *the organization's way of doing things* encourages organizational agents to exhibit certain behaviors (i.e., organization's intent). This latter intent is key to the developing of POS. Levinson concluded that when employees perceive the organization's intent underlying the actions of the organizational agents, POS emerges.

Mentoring may affect AC and work engagement through POS. The attribution of humanlike characteristics to a given organization in the form of POS is likely to occur, for instance, when there are policies, norms, and a culture in place that encourages the organizational agents' behaviors towards employees (Levinson, 1965). Because effective mentoring, formal or informal, is most likely to take place in those organizations whose norms, policies (e.g., reward systems), and cultures foster developmental relationships (Kram, 1985), it is reasonable to infer that mentoring can generate POS. Further, extant research has linked POS to AC and work engagement. For example, Rhoades, Eisenberger, and Armeli (2001) conducted a three-year longitudinal study and concluded that POS led to AC. Additionally, Saks and Rotman (2006) found POS to be a good predictor of both AC and work engagement.

By the same token, satisfaction with the mentor is likely to be positively related to POS. Rhoades et al. (2001) argued that POS is engendered by both favorable and unfavorable actions that have employees as recipients. Only when employees are the target of favorable actions, will they, by the virtue of the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), tend to exhibit attitudes and behaviors that somehow contribute to the accomplishment of the goals of the organization (e.g., AC, work engagement). In this way, they attempt to repay the organization for the treatment received (Settoon et al., 1996). Therefore, it is plausible that the quality of the mentoring received can influence protégée POS, and in turn, its outcomes. Stated differently, those protégés who are more satisfied with their mentors may perceive more organizational support than those who are less satisfied, and, as a result, they feel more affectively committed to their organizations

and more engaged in their jobs. In essence, in the present study, it is hypothesized that POS mediates the relationships between satisfaction with mentor and AC and work engagement, respectively.

*Hypothesis 3:* POS mediates the positive relationship between satisfaction with mentor and AC.

*Hypothesis 4:* POS mediates the positive relationship between satisfaction with mentor and work engagement.

In addition to determining the mechanisms underlying the relationships between satisfaction with mentor and AC and work engagement, identifying the factors that predict satisfaction with the mentor is key to the enhancement of formal mentoring programs. To determine such factors, these are some of the questions that need to be addressed: What aspects of the mentoring relationship are related to satisfaction with mentor? Are protégées in informal mentoring relationships more satisfied with their mentors than are those in formal ones? What protégée characteristics can account for satisfaction with mentor above and beyond mentorship type?

### **Formal and Informal Mentoring: A Brief Literature Review**

Formal and informal mentoring relationships differ in the way they are enacted, in the amount of time they tend to last, and in the extent to which they are salient to organizational members. In addition to protégées and mentors, formal mentoring involves efforts from other members of the organization overseeing the program. Also, it is presumed that informal mentoring relationships last longer than formal ones, which typically endure from six months to a year (Allen & Eby, 2003).

One characteristic of mentoring relationships that deserves special attention is their visibility or organizational exposure. Formal relationships receive more organizational exposure than do informal mentoring relationships. Because formal mentoring relationships are overseen by program coordinators, they are more visible than informal mentoring relationships, which uniquely gravitate toward the expectations of the members of the dyad (Chao, 2009). This organizational exposure may augment the risk perceived by formal mentors when providing their protégés with projects of importance to the organization. Due to such visibility, formal mentors may be more likely than informal mentors to expect that their own competency will be linked to their respective protégées' performance. Pondering the salience of this linkage and its associated risk, formal mentors may be more reluctant than informal mentors to strengthen their relationships with their protégées by entrusting them with relevant assignments.

Researchers have typically measured the various functions fulfilled by mentors in order to compare formal with informal mentoring. Kram (1985) made a distinction between two types of mentoring functions: career and psychosocial functions. Adopting Kram's taxonomy, two studies that investigated the differences in the provision of mentoring functions due to type of mentorship showed that mentors in informal mentoring relationships provided more career-related mentoring than mentors in formal ones (Allen, Day, & Lenz, 2005; Chao, Waltz, & Gardner, 1992). Moreover, Scandura and Williams (2001) discovered that informal mentors provided more career-related mentoring and psychological-related mentoring when compared to formal ones.

An alternative approach to measuring mentoring functions in order to identify differences between formal and informal mentoring is measuring the quality of the relationship. Given that a higher provision of mentoring functions is more likely to stem from informal mentoring relationships than from formal ones, it is conceivable that the quality of the relationship may be related to mentorship type. Nonetheless, mixed findings indicate that the significance of the relationship between mentorship type and quality of mentoring depends on the construct used or the member of the dyad surveyed to pinpoint quality of mentoring. For example, Allen and Eby (2003) investigated mentor perceptions about the quality of their mentoring relationships and found no difference in mentoring quality between formal and informal relationships. However, Ragins et al. (2000) found that the quality of the relationship, expressed as satisfaction with the mentor, significantly correlated with mentorship type such that informal protégés were more satisfied with their mentors than were formal protégées. According to these findings, in the present study, it is proposed that type of mentoring predicts satisfaction with the mentor. Specifically:

*Hypothesis 5:* Informally mentored protégés will be more satisfied with their mentors than will formally mentored protégées.

### **Mentoring Enactment Theory, Protégée Motivation to Learn, and Protégée Proactivity**

Enhancing formal mentoring programs is paramount for a significant number of organizations. Numerous organizations launching formal mentoring programs do not typically consider informal mentoring as a viable alternative to formal mentoring because

some formal mentoring programs are devised to accomplish certain goals that are not likely to be met without organizational intervention (Baugh & Fagenson-Eland, 2007; Forret, Turban, & Dougherty, 1996). For example, a given organization may want to promote training on leadership skills among those employees for whom management foresees promotions. These organizations are most interested in improving formal mentoring programs. To enhance formal mentoring programs, it would be of importance to determine what factors account for satisfaction with the mentor above and beyond mentorship type. For example, there might be some specific protégée characteristics that enable protégées to successfully participate in mentoring relationships.

According to mentoring enactment theory, communication is vital to the enactment, maintenance, and repair of mentoring relationships (Kalbfleisch, 2002). In this sense, mentoring enactment theory postulates that mentoring relationships do not differ from friendships; for the successful development of these relationships, communicating appropriate relational expectations is vital. Moreover, it is important to note that mentoring enactment theory usually places the burden of communication efforts to initiate, maintain, and repair mentoring relationships on the protégée.

Kalbfleisch (1997) suggested two primary reasons as to why protégées should be the ones responsible for exerting communicative efforts to initiate, maintain, and repair mentoring relationships. First, mentors are usually either experienced individuals in the upper ranks of organizations or supervisors of their protégées. This has two consequences. First, mentors are most likely to have more relational and professional power than do their protégées, and the number of employees who are prepared to serve as

mentors is smaller than the number of employees who need a mentor (Kalbfleisch & Davies, 1993). Second, protégées tend to accrue more benefits from the mentoring relationship than do mentors (Kram, 1985). Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that the protégée is expected to be the member of the dyad to initiate, secure, and develop a mentoring relationship. Within the theoretical framework provided by mentoring enactment theory, in the current study, it is purported that two protégée characteristics, protégée motivation to learn and protégée proactivity, foster effective mentoring.

**Protégée motivation to learn.** There is research evidence indicating that mentors value protégées who are motivated to learn. Allen (2004) conducted two studies on protégée selection and found that the protégée characteristic that mentors valued the most was motivation to learn. Moreover, mentors preferred protégée motivation to learn over ability. Allen also inferred that mentors may perceive motivation to learn as an indicator of effort and thus easier to communicate than other attributes that are not readily observable such as ability. Therefore, protégées who are high on motivation to learn may be able to communicate favorable expectations about the future development of the mentoring relationship to mentors.

Protégées with high motivation to learn may develop communication strategies that facilitate their mentors' involvement in the relationship as well as their efficiency in providing mentoring. For instance, protégées who are motivated to learn may effectively maintain and direct conversations about themes in which their mentors are subject-matter experts. They will likely invest time and effort in learning their mentors' duties and in becoming knowledgeable about work-related topics. In essence, when consulting with



their mentors, they are equipped to communicate appropriate relational expectations (i.e., the main tenet of mentoring enactment theory) by asking informed questions. As a result, mentors are likely to derive a sense of fulfillment by providing guidance on those issues that have been articulated properly by their protégés.

In contrast, protégées with low motivation to learn are much less likely to communicate appropriate relational expectations; as a result, ineffective communication is bound to take place. They tend to be uninformed about organizational and work-related topics when meeting their mentors. Qualitative research revealed that some formal mentors became frustrated with their mentoring relationships because they were unclear as to how to help their protégées (Eby & Lockwood, 2005).

In summary, protégés who are high on motivation to learn are likely to ask informed questions and, in doing so, they communicate appropriate relational expectations. Because of this, they are bound to receive useful and accurate advice from their mentors. Consequently, protégés with high motivation to learn are more likely to feel satisfied with their mentors than are protégées with low motivation to learn.

*Hypothesis 6:* Protégée motivation to learn will predict satisfaction with mentor above and beyond mentorship type.

**Protégée proactivity.** Chao (2009) conducted a qualitative study on mentoring and found that most participants underscored the need to be assertive and proactive in their mentoring relationships. Likewise, Turban and Dougherty (1994) found that those protégées who acted as proactive agents by initiating mentoring relationships positively influenced the amount of mentoring received.

According to the definition of proactivity, individuals who exhibit proactive behaviors tend to initiate change rather than merely react to events. Mentors may be drawn to protégées who are proactive because they are likely to address possible problems in their mentoring relationships before they grow in magnitude. In other words, mentors may expect proactive protégées to promptly communicate to maintain their mentoring relationships. Moreover, if issues are communicated before they develop any further, chances are better that they will be solved in an effective manner, and, as a consequence, satisfaction with the relationship will increase for both protégée and mentor. In contrast, reactive protégées may tend to address problems once they have become almost unbearable and more difficult and unpleasant to overcome. Ignoring emerging issues in a mentoring relationship impedes effective communication and may eventually result in an unsatisfying mentoring relationship.

In short, proactive protégées tend to actively communicate with their mentors on emerging issues that may be detrimental to the relationship if left unaddressed. By addressing these issues, proactive protégées foster common understanding in their mentoring relationships. As a result, appropriate relational expectations are likely to be communicated, which, according to mentoring enactment theory, is vital for the successful development of mentoring relationships (Kalbfleisch, 2002). Consequently, proactive protégées are more likely to be satisfied with their mentor than are reactive protégées.

*Hypothesis 7: Protégée proactivity will predict satisfaction with mentor, above and beyond mentorship type.*

## **Purpose of the Current Study**

An increasing number of organizations carry out formal mentoring programs to socialize newcomers, attract talented jobseekers, increase job satisfaction, enhance diversity within the management ranks, and reduce turnover intentions (Allen & O'Brien, 2007; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Spitzmüller et al., 2008; Willems & Smet, 2007). However, scant research has been devoted to investigating the relationship between mentoring and affective commitment (e.g., Payne & Huffman, 2005) or the relationship between mentoring and work engagement.

Organizations implementing formal mentoring programs typically match protégées and mentors in a way that the resulting dyads replicate those demographic attributes usually present among informal mentoring relationships (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Consequently, numerous studies have investigated demographic aspects of mentoring relationships such as ethnicity, gender, and background similarity (e.g., Ensher & Murphy, 1997; Scandura & Williams, 2001; Turban et al., 2002). Nevertheless, few studies have addressed non-demographic characteristics such as motivation to learn and proactive personality that may nurture high-quality developmental relationships (e.g., Allen, 2004).

Data were collected to examine the relationships between satisfaction with mentor, AC, and work engagement. Further, POS was tested as the mediator of the relationships between satisfaction with mentor and AC and work engagement, respectively. Being cognizant of the underlying mechanisms that permit mentoring to positively influence employee's desirable attitudes and states should warrant

organizational actions directed at maximizing the return on investment in formal mentoring programs. Additionally, it was examined whether informally mentored protégées were more satisfied with their mentors than were formally mentored protégées. Finally, to produce recommendations on the selection of protégées for formal programs, dual protégée characteristics, motivation to learn, and proactive personality characteristics were tested to predict satisfaction with mentor, above and beyond mentorship type (i.e., formal vs. informal mentoring).

## Method

### Participants

Participants were professional and personal contacts of the researcher recruited via Facebook®, e-mail, and LinkedIn® users who had access to the study questionnaire through their memberships in professional LinkedIn® groups. Although 192 individuals attempted to participate in the study by clicking on a link leading to an online survey hosted on Qualtrics®, the final sample consisted of 124 individuals. Potential participants were eliminated because of substantial missing data (e.g., data on dependent variables). Because this study was intended to examine the relationships between mentoring, AC, and work engagement, participation in the online survey was limited to protégées employed by organizations in which their mentors worked or had worked with them throughout the life of their self-reported mentoring relationships (i.e., the study inclusion criteria).

Table 1 displays demographic information of the sample. The average age of the sample was 35.95 years old ( $SD = 9.15$ ). The majority of the protégées were under 42 years old (78.5%), among them 36.4% were between 22 to 31 years old and 42.1% were between 32 to 41 years old. Most of the protégées were female (58.9%). The majority of the protégées were White (62.1%) followed by Hispanic or Latino (14.5%), Asian or Asian American (12.9%), Black or African American (2.4%), and Native American (0.8%). Only 9 participants (7.3%) reported a different ethnic background. The industries in which protégées worked included: education (27.4%), technology (22.6%), health (17.7%), consulting (6.5%), and finance (2.4%). A variety of industries was

reported and included under the label “other” (23.4%). Lastly, 94.4% of the protégées held at least a bachelor degree: bachelor degree (31.5%), master degree (48.4%), and doctoral degree (14.5%).

Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics for Participant Demographics*

Variables	n	%
Age	( <i>M</i> = 35.95 years old)	( <i>SD</i> = 9.15)
22-31	44	36.4
32-41	51	42.1
42-51	20	16.5
52-63	6	5.0
Gender		
Male	51	41.1
Female	73	58.9
Ethnic Background		
White/Caucasian Non Hispanic Origin	77	62.1
Hispanic/Latino	18	14.5
Black/African American	3	2.4
Asian/Asian American	16	12.9
Native American/American Indian	1	0.8
Other	9	7.3
Industry		
Technology	28	22.6
Education	34	27.4
Health	22	17.7
Finance	3	2.4
Consulting	8	6.5
Other	29	23.4
Highest Education Level Completed		
High school	1	0.8
Some college	2	1.6
Associate of arts	4	3.2
College graduate	39	31.5
Master degree	60	48.4
Doctoral degree	18	14.5

Table 2 displays the characteristics of the self-reported mentoring relationships. Within the instructions, participants were informed about the basic difference between formal and informal mentoring relationships. Formal mentoring relationships are developed with organizational assistance. In contrast, informal mentoring relationships are developed spontaneously. Whereas 62.9% of protégées reported involvement in informal mentoring relationships, the remaining 37.1% reported involvement in formal mentoring relationships. Examination of demographic characteristics of both members of the dyads yielded 88 same-gender relationships (71.0%) and 76 mentoring relationships in which their respective members shared ethnic background (61.3%). For the majority of the mentoring relationships reported (59.7%), the mentor was also supervisor of his or her protégée throughout or at some point of their relationship. The average length of the relationship was 2.7 years ( $SD = 3.06$ ) and the most frequent relationship in terms of length lasted 2 years (25%). Finally, 81 protégées (65.3%) reported a current mentoring relationship, whereas 43 (34.7%) reported a mentoring relationship experienced in the past. The time passed since the past relationships reported concluded was on average 2.1 years ( $SD = 4.25$ ).

Table 2

*Demographic Information Regarding Mentoring Relationships*

Variables	n	%
Mentorship type		
Formal relationships	46	37.1
Informal relationships	78	62.9
Gender composition		
Same gender	88	71.0
Cross gender	36	29.0
Ethnic background composition		
Similar ethnicity	76	61.3
Different ethnicity	48	38.7
Mentor's supervisory status		
Supervisory relationships	74	59.7
Non-supervisory relationships	50	40.3
Length		
Less than a year	34	27.4
Between 1 and 3 years	61	49.2
More than 3 years	29	23.4
Present versus past relationships		
Past relationships	43	34.7
Present relationships	81	65.3
Past relationships (n = 43):		
How long ago the relationship was	( <i>M</i> = 2.1years)	( <i>SD</i> = 4.25)

**Procedure**

The present study was approved by the SJSU Institutional Review Board. Subsequently, a brief description of the study consisting of information on its most relevant variables and the time needed to complete the study's questionnaire, which could be accessed by clicking on an accompanying link, was posted on various professional groups on LinkedIn® and Facebook®. In addition, e-mails including such description were sent to professional and personal contacts of the researcher. These e-mail recipients



were encouraged to share with their contacts the link leading to the on-line survey. The online survey was hosted on Qualtrics®.

When participants clicked on the link to the survey, they were presented with the study inclusion criteria mentioned above and with an agreement to participate in the present research. This agreement informed the participants about several aspects pertaining to study participation. For example, it informed participants that participation was voluntary and anonymous and assured them that their responses would be kept confidential. A final note read: By completing the survey it is implied that you have read and understood the above information and that you agree to participate in the study. Potential participants who did not agree to participate closed the browser (see Appendix).

Lastly, it is important to mention that participants were instructed to report only their most recent mentoring relationships and to focus solely on the person mentoring them in those relationships. After these instructions, participants were provided with the respective definitions of various key terms: mentor, formal mentoring programs, formal mentoring, and informal mentoring and completed the survey (see Appendix).

## **Measures**

**Mentorship type.** Participants indicated the type of mentoring relationship in which they were currently or had been most recently involved: Formal, which was automatically assigned by Qualtrics® the code “1”, or informal, which was assigned the code “2”.

The remaining six variables included in this subsection were measured using a 7-point Likert-type response format. Responses for all the scales, with the exception of the

scale used to measure work engagement, ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Thus, participants indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement. The scores of their respective items were summed and then averaged. For each scale, high scores indicate a high degree of the construct being measured. For all inferential analyses, alpha was set to .05.

**Satisfaction with mentor.** A 4-item scale devised by Ragins and Cotton (1999) was used to measure the extent to which a protégée was satisfied with his or her mentor. Sample items include: “My mentor is someone I am satisfied with” and “My mentor has been effective in his or her role.” The coefficient alpha for this study’s sample was .93. Although the sample mean was relatively high at 5.96, it was similar to that obtained in another study where the scale was used ( $M = 5.95$ ; Ragins et al. 2000).

**Affective organizational commitment.** A 6-item scale devised by Rhoades et al. (2001) was used to measure the extent to which a protégée was affectively committed to his or her organization. Sample items include: “I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization” and “I am proud to tell others I work at my organization.” The coefficient alpha for this study’s sample was .90.

**Perceived organizational support.** A 7-item scale devised by Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, and Lynch (1997) was used to measure protégées’ perceptions on organizational support. Sample items include: “My organization will forgive an honest mistake on my part” and “My organization strongly considers my goals and values.” The coefficient alpha for this study’s sample was .92.

**Motivation to learn.** A 7-item scale devised by Noe and Smith (1986) was used to measure protégée motivation to learn. Although the original scale used a 5-point Likert-type response format, it was transformed into a 7-point Likert-type response scale to ensure consistency with the other scales compiled in the study questionnaire and described herein. Sample items include: “I would like to improve my skills” and “I try to learn as much as I can from my organization.” The coefficient alpha for this study’s sample was .79.

**Proactive personality.** A 17-item scale devised by Bateman and Crant (1993) was used to measure protégée proactivity. Sample items include: “Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change” and “I am always looking for better ways to do things.” The coefficient alpha for this study’s sample was .91.

**Work engagement.** A 9-item scale designed by Schaufeli et al. (2006) was used to measure how engaged a protégée was in his or her work. For this scale in particular, item responses ranged from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*). Sample items include: “My job inspires me” and “At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.” The coefficient alpha for this study’s sample was .92.

### **Control Variables**

Five variables that are theoretically linked to mentoring outcomes and or their relationships with AC and work engagement were considered as potential control variables: gender and ethnic composition of the dyad, relationship length, supervisory status of mentor, and mentor success (e.g., Darling, Bogat, Cavell, Murphy, & Sánchez, 2006; Sosik & Godshalk , 2005). In addition, because time may have a profound impact

on the way people relive and assess their memories, *immediacy of the relationship* and *time passed since a past relationship ended* were measured and considered as potential control variables.

**Gender composition.** Dummy coding was used to identify gender composition in mentoring relationships. A code of “0” was assigned to same-gender relationships, whereas a code of “1” was assigned to cross-gender relationships. Past research has investigated the importance of the role of gender in mentoring outcomes (Sosik & Godshalk, 2000, 2005; Turban et al., 2002).

**Ethnic composition.** Dummy coding was used to differentiate those dyads formed by members who shared the same ethnic background (“0”) from those whose members did not share the same ethnic background (“1”). Ample research has investigated the association between individual differences in ethnicity and mentoring fit (e.g., Darling et al., 2006).

**Relationship length.** Ragins et al. (2000) asserted that length of the relationship should be considered a control variable when comparing formal with informal mentoring. It was measured in months.

**Immediacy of the relationship.** Dummy coding was used to differentiate those protégés who reported a past mentoring relationship (“0”) from those who reported a present relationship (“1”).

**Time passed since the relationship ended.** Those protégées who reported a past relationship also indicated the time that had passed since their relationships had ended. It was measured in months.

**Supervisory status of mentor.** Dummy coding was used to differentiate those protégés who reported that their mentors were at some point of their mentoring relationships also their supervisors (“0”) from those protégées who were never under the supervision of their mentors (“1”). Payne and Huffman (2005) found the relationship between mentoring and affective commitment to be moderated by the supervisory status of the mentor. In addition, past research has directly associated supervisor support with work engagement and AC (Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti, & Xanthopoulou, 2007; Rhoades et al., 2001).

**Mentor success.** When presented with an item that stated “The members of your organization perceive your mentor as being:”, participants chose between seven possible responses ranging from 1 (*very unsuccessful*) to 7 (*very successful*). Tonidandel, Avery, and McKensy (2007) found that the more successful a mentor was, the better his or her protégée performed.

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics

Table 3 describes the means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations for the variables studied. Overall, participants (i.e., protégées) reported high values for those variables that were measured with a 7-point scale. For example, protégées were engaged in their work ( $M = 5.23$ ,  $SD = .96$ ) and affectively committed to their organization ( $M = 5.33$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ). They also appeared to be satisfied with their mentors ( $M = 5.96$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ) who, overall, were deemed to be successful organizational members ( $M = 6.19$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ). In addition, protégées perceived themselves as being motivated to learn ( $M = 6.07$ ,  $SD = .72$ ) and proactive ( $M = 5.46$ ,  $SD = .75$ ). Overall, they perceived that their organizations supported them ( $M = 4.87$ ,  $SD = 1.21$ ).

Table 3

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among Variables*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Gender composition	.29	.46	-													
2. Ethnic composition	.39	.49	.04	-												
3. Relationship length	2.69	3.07	-.05	-.03	-											
4. Immediacy	.65	.48	.06	.06	-.04	-										
5. Time passed	2.05	4.25	-.02	-.06	.04	-.68***	-									
6. Supervisory status	.40	.49	.05	-.06	-.12	-.13	.02	-								
7. Mentor success	6.19	1.02	.02	.02	.00	.08	-.05	-.09	-							
8. Satisfaction with mentor	5.96	1.19	-.04	-.05	-.01	.22*	.19*	.04	.33***	(.93)						
9. AC	5.33	1.27	-.05	-.07	.04	.19*	.15	-.08	.25**	.30**	(.90)					
10. Work engagement	5.23	.96	-.06	-.07	-.11	-.01	-.06	-.11	.17	.27**	.56***	(.92)				
11. Motivation to learn	6.07	.72	-.05	.04	-.22	-.15	.05	-.12	.10	.36***	.38***	.48***	(.79)			
12. Proactive personality	5.46	.75	-.05	.13	-.12	-.07	-.02	-.10	-.01	.27**	.24**	.48***	.49***	(.91)		
13. POS	4.87	1.21	-.12	-.02	.04	.08	-.07	-.17	.18*	.33***	.61***	.45***	.26**	.22*	(.92)	
14. Mentorship type	1.63	.48	-.01	-.28**	.20*	-.03	-.05	.02	-.03	.15	-.11	-.06	-.04	.07	.01	-

Note.  $N = 124$ , \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$  (two-tailed); Same-gender dyads = 0, Cross-gender dyads = 1;

Same ethnic background = 0, Different ethnic background = 1; Past relationship = 0, Present relationship = 1; Supervisory relationship = 0,

Non-supervisory relationship = 1; Formal mentoring = 1, Informal mentoring = 2.

Values on the diagonal are coefficient alphas.

### **Inter-correlations Among the Variables Studied**

As can be seen in Table 3, the only three potential control variables that presented significant correlations with at least one of the dependent variables (i.e., satisfaction with mentor, affective commitment, work engagement, and POS) were immediacy of the relationship (present versus past relationship), time passed since a past relationship ended, and mentor success. Only these three variables were taken into consideration in the first step of all hierarchical regression analyses conducted in the present study. The control variable that most strongly correlated with the dependent variables was mentor success. The more protégées perceived their mentors to be successful, the more affectively committed with their organizations ( $r(122) = .25, p = .006$ , two-tailed,  $R^2 = .06$ ) and the more satisfied with their mentors ( $r(122) = .33, p < .001$ , two-tailed,  $R^2 = .11$ ) they were. Also, mentor success was positively associated with POS ( $r(122) = .18, p = .048$ , two-tailed,  $R^2 = .03$ ).

It is important to note the positive and strong bivariate correlation between work engagement and AC ( $r(122) = .56, p < .001$ , two-tailed,  $R^2 = .31$ ). In the same vein, motivation to learn was strongly and positively associated with work engagement ( $r(122) = .48, p < .001$ , two-tailed,  $R^2 = .23$ ), proactive personality ( $r(122) = .48, p < .001$ , two-tailed,  $R^2 = .23$ ), and POS ( $r(122) = .45, p < .001$ , two-tailed,  $R^2 = .20$ ). Similar in importance was the bivariate positive correlation between proactive personality and work engagement ( $r(122) = .49, p < .001$ , two-tailed,  $R^2 = .24$ ). Interestingly, the two variables most strongly linked to POS, AC ( $r(122) = .61, p < .001$ , two-tailed,  $R^2 = .37$ ) and work



engagement ( $r(122) = .45, p < .001$ , two-tailed,  $R^2 = .20$ ), were the dependent variables for the two distinct mediation models in which POS was purported to be the mediator.

Surprisingly, mentorship type was not significantly related to satisfaction with mentor ( $r(122) = .15, p = .093$ , two-tailed,  $R^2 = .02$ ) but it was related to ethnic composition ( $r(122) = -.28, p = .002$ , two-tailed,  $R^2 = .08$ ) and relationship length ( $r(122) = .20, p = .030$ , two-tailed,  $R^2 = .04$ ). These associations suggest that although formal mentoring relationships do not tend to last as long as informal ones, they are more inclusive given that they are more likely to be formed by members from different ethnic background than are informal ones.

#### **AC and Work Engagement: Testing the Effect of Satisfaction with Mentor**

Two hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted: one aiming at testing the effect of satisfaction with mentor on AC and the other aiming at testing the effect of satisfaction with mentor on work engagement. For both analyses, immediacy of the relationship (present vs. past relationship), time passed since a past relationship ended, and mentor success were controlled and thus entered in the first step.

**Predicting AC.** Hypothesis 1 proposed that satisfaction with mentor would predict AC. As displayed in Table 4, overall, the model including the control variables mentioned above and satisfaction with mentor significantly related to AC and accounted for 14% of its variation ( $R = .37, R^2 = .14, R^2_{adj} = .11, F(4,118) = 4.82, p = .001$ ). The control variables accounted for 11% of the variation in AC ( $R^2 = .11, R^2_{adj} = .09, F(3,119) = 4.95, p = .003$ ). Among them, mentor success contributed uniquely to the model and thus it was significantly related to AC ( $\beta = 0.26, t(120) = 3.05, p = .003$ , two-

tailed) such that those protégées who perceived their mentors to be more successful were more affectively committed to their organizations.

Table 4

*Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Results of the Effects of Satisfaction with Mentor on Affective Commitment*

Variable	r	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	R <sup>2</sup>	sr <sup>2</sup>	Tolerance
First Step:						
Immediacy	-.19*	-.21			.03	.54
Time passed	.15	.03			.00	.55
Mentor success	.25**	.26**			.07	.99
			.11**	.11**		
Second Step:						
Satisfaction with mentor	.30**	.19*			.03	.83
			.03*	.14**		

Note. \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$  (two-tailed); Listwise deletion method has been employed  $N = 124$ , this method only considers those participants who yielded scores on all of the predictors and dependent variables considered; The reported Betas values ( $\beta$ s) and sr<sup>2</sup> are those that were generated at the step of entry.

In the second step, satisfaction with mentor was entered. It was found to significantly predict AC. Precisely, satisfaction with mentor accounted for an additional 3% of the variance in AC ( $\Delta R^2 = .03$ ,  $\Delta F(1,118) = 4.06$ ,  $p = .046$ ). Consequently, satisfaction with mentor was significantly related to AC ( $\beta = 0.19$ ,  $t(119) = 2.02$ ,  $p = .046$ , two-tailed) such that the more satisfied a protégée was with her or his mentor, the

more affectively committed she or he was to her or his organization. These results supported Hypothesis 1.

**Predicting work engagement.** Hypothesis 2 posited that satisfaction with mentor would predict work engagement. As can be seen in Table 5, overall, the model including the control variables mentioned above and satisfaction with mentor significantly related to work engagement and accounted for 9% of its variation ( $R = .30$ ,  $R^2 = .09$ ,  $R^2_{adj} = .06$ ,  $F(4,118) = 2.94$ ,  $p = .023$ ). Conversely, the control variables only accounted for 4% of the variation in work engagement and did not contribute significantly to the model ( $R^2 = .04$ ,  $R^2_{adj} = .01$ ,  $F(3,119) = 1.57$ ,  $p = .199$ ).

Table 5

*Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Results of the Effects of Satisfaction with Mentor on Work Engagement*

Variable	r	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$R^2$	$sr^2$	Tolerance
First Step:						
Immediacy	-.01	-.12			.01	.54
Time passed	-.06	-.13			.01	.55
Mentor success	.17	.17			.03	.99
			.04	.04		
Second Step:						
Satisfaction with mentor	.30**	.25*			.05	.83
			.05*	.09*		

Note. \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$  (two-tailed); Listwise deletion method has been employed  $N = 124$ ; The reported Betas values ( $\beta$ s) and  $sr^2$  are those that were generated at the step of entry.

In the second step satisfaction with mentor was entered. It was found to contribute significantly to the model; it accounted for an additional 5% of the variation in work engagement ( $\Delta R^2 = .05$ ,  $\Delta F(1,118) = 6.80$ ,  $p = .010$ ). More precisely, satisfaction with mentor was significantly related to work engagement ( $\beta = 0.25$ ,  $t(119) = 2.61$ ,  $p = .010$ , two-tailed), such that the more satisfied a protégée was with his or her mentor, the more engaged he or she was in his or her work. These results supported Hypothesis 2.

### **AC and Work Engagement: Testing POS as a Mediator**

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to test the relation between satisfaction with mentor and AC with POS as a hypothesized mediator (Hypothesis 3) and to test the relation between satisfaction with mentor and work engagement with POS as a hypothesized mediator (Hypothesis 4). For these analyses immediacy of the relationship (present vs. past relationship), time passed since a past relationships ended, and mentor success were controlled for.

Baron and Kenny (1986) delineated four paths (a, b, c, and c') representing the four conditions to be met to establish mediation (see Figure 1): (a) the predictor variable must be related to the dependent variable (path c); (b) the predictor variable must be associated with the mediator (path a); (c) when the criterion variable is regressed on the predictor and mediator variables, the mediator must predict the criterion variable; and (d) the previously significant relationship between the predictor and the criterion variable is attenuated after controlling for the mediator (path c').

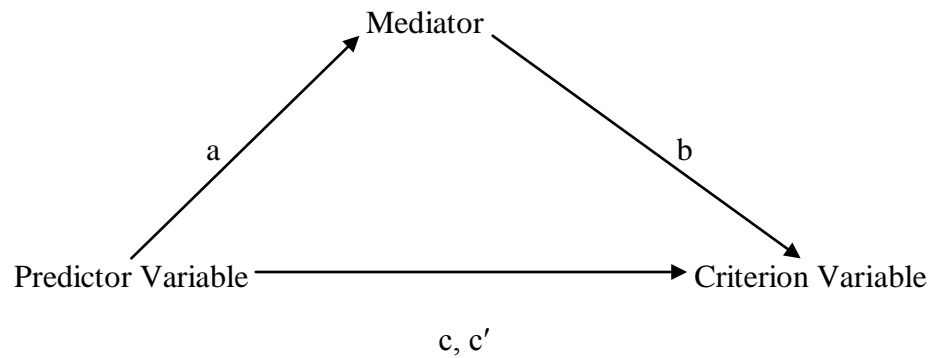


Figure 1: Baron and Kenny's (1986) Mediation Model

Because the correlation between the independent variable and the mediator results in multicollinearity, thereby reducing power when the dependent variable is regressed simultaneously on both predictor and mediator, the size of unstandardized regression coefficient of the independent variable in path  $c'$  should be compared with that of its homologous coefficient in Path  $c$ . Full mediation should be established only when the coefficient of the independent variable pertaining to Path  $c'$  is both non-significant and smaller.

Table 6 presents the unstandardized regression coefficients, their standard errors, and  $p$  values for the mediation models tested. For the satisfaction with mentor-POS-AC mediation model, all the conditions discussed by Baron and Kenny (1986) were met (see Figure 2). Satisfaction with mentor was positively related to AC ( $b = 0.20$ ,  $t(119) = 2.02$ ,  $p = .046$ , two-tailed) in Path  $c$ , and to POS ( $b = 0.33$ ,  $t(119) = 3.50$ ,  $p = .001$ , two-tailed) in Path  $a$ . Also, POS was positively associated with AC ( $b = 0.62$ ,  $t(119) = 7.96$ ,  $p < .001$ , two-tailed) in Path  $b$ . Lastly, the relationship between satisfaction with mentor and AC became non-significant after controlling for POS in Path  $c'$  ( $b = -0.01$ ,  $t(118) = -.07$ ,  $p =$

.941, two-tailed). By comparing Path c with Path c', it can be noted that the unstandardized regression coefficient of satisfaction with mentor has been reduced dramatically. Hence, these results show that protégées who were satisfied with their mentors perceived that their respective organizations supported them, which in turn, related to higher AC. Stated differently, POS fully mediated the positive relationship between satisfaction with mentor and AC. These results supported Hypothesis 3.

Table 6.

*Results for the Mediation Effects of POS on the Relationships Between Satisfaction with Mentor and Affective Commitment and Work Engagement*

Model Tested	Path a	Path b	Path c	Path c'
Satisfaction with mentor-POS-AC	.33** (.09)	.62*** (.08)	.20* (.10)	-.01 (.09)
Satisfaction with mentor-POS-Work engagement	.33** (.09)	.31*** (.07)	.20* (.08)	-.10 (.08)

Note. This table displays unstandardized regression coefficients with standard errors. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$  (two-tailed).

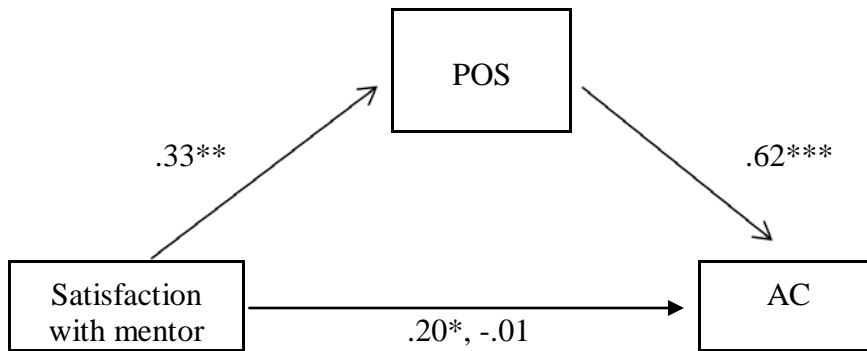


Figure 2. The Mediated Role of Perceived Organizational Support for Satisfaction with Mentor on Affective Commitment. Note.  $*p < .05$ ,  $**p < .01$ ,  $***p < .001$  (two-tailed).

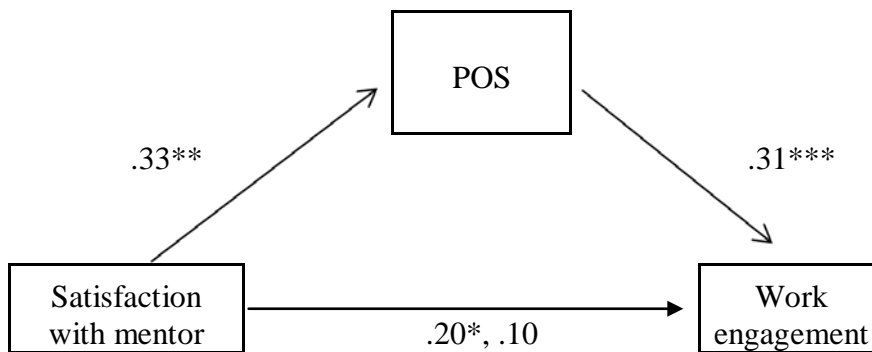


Figure 3. The Mediated Role of Perceived Organizational Support for Satisfaction with Mentor on Work Engagement. Note.  $*p < .05$ ,  $**p < .01$ ,  $***p < .001$  (two-tailed).

For the satisfaction with mentor-POS-work engagement mediation model, all conditions discussed by Baron and Kenny (1986) were also met (see Figure 3). Satisfaction with mentor was positively related to work engagement ( $b = 0.20$ ,  $t(119) = 2.61$ ,  $p = .010$ , two-tailed) in Path c, and to POS ( $b = 0.33$ ,  $t(119) = 3.50$ ,  $p = .001$ , two-

tailed) in Path a. Furthermore, POS was positively associated with work engagement ( $b = 0.31, t(119) = 4.42, p < .001$ , two-tailed) in Path b. Lastly, the relationship between satisfaction with mentor and work engagement became non-significant after controlling for POS in Path c' ( $b = 0.10, t(118) = 1.32, p = .191$ , two-tailed). By comparing Path c with Path c', it can be noted that the unstandardized regression coefficient of satisfaction with mentor has been reduced notably. Thus, results indicated that protégées who were satisfied with their mentors perceived that their organizations supported them, which in turn, related to higher levels of work engagement. In other words, POS fully mediated the positive relationship between satisfaction with mentor and work engagement. These results supported Hypothesis 4.

### **Predicting Satisfaction with Mentor**

A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to test Hypotheses 5, 6, and 7 (see Table 7). In the first step, immediacy of the relationship (present vs. past relationship), time passed since the past relationships ended, and mentor success were controlled for. Overall the model including the control variables, mentorship type, motivation to learn and proactive personality accounted for 30% of the variation in satisfaction with mentor ( $R = .55, R^2 = .30, R^2_{adj} = .26, F(6,116) = 8.26, p < .001$ ). The block formed by the control variables accounted for 17% of the variation in satisfaction with mentor ( $R^2 = .17, R^2_{adj} = .15, F(3,110) = 8.30, p < .001$ ). However, only mentor success was significantly related to satisfaction with mentor ( $\beta = 0.35, t(120) = 4.14, p < .001$ , two-tailed) such that the more successful protégées perceived their respective mentors to be, the more satisfied they were with them.



Table 7

*Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Results of the Effects of Mentorship Type, Motivation to Learn, and Proactive Personality on Satisfaction with Mentor*

Variable	r	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$R^2$	$sr^2$	Tolerance
First Step:						
Immediacy	-.22*	-.22			.03	.54
Time passed	-.19*	.06			.00	.55
Mentor success	.33***	.35***			.12	.99
			.17***	.17***		
Second Step:						
Mentorship type	.15	.15			.03	.99
			.02	.19***		
Third Step:						
Motivation to learn	.36***	.24*			.05	.73
Proactive personality	.27**	.14			.02	.75
			.11***	.30***		

Note. \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  \*\*\* $p < .001$  (two-tailed); Listwise deletion method has been employed  $N = 124$ ; The reported Betas values ( $\beta$ s) and  $sr^2$  are those that were generated at the step of entry.

**The direct effect of mentorship type.** Hypothesis 5 proposed that informally mentored protégées would be more satisfied with their mentors than would formally mentored protégées. To test Hypothesis 5, mentorship type was entered in the second step. Surprisingly, albeit in line with its Pearson correlation with the dependent variable ( $r(122) = .15, p = .093$ , two-tailed,  $R^2 = .02$ ), it did not contribute significantly to explaining additional variation in satisfaction with mentor ( $\Delta R^2 = .02, \Delta F(1,118) = 3.15$ ,

$p = .079$ ). As a consequence, mentorship type was not found to predict satisfaction with mentor ( $\beta = 0.15$ ,  $t(119) = 1.77$ ,  $p = .079$ , two-tailed). In other words, informally mentored protégées did not significantly differ from formally mentored protégées in regards to satisfaction with mentor. Hypothesis 5 was not supported by these data.

#### **The additional effects of motivation to learn and proactive personality.**

Hypothesis 6 posited that protégée motivation to learn would predict satisfaction with mentor above and beyond mentorship type. Hypothesis 7 proposed that protégée proactivity would predict satisfaction with mentor above and beyond mentorship type. To test Hypotheses 6 and 7, motivation to learn and proactive personality were entered in the third step. As a block, they significantly contributed to the model and explained an additional 11% of the variation in satisfaction with mentor ( $\Delta R^2 = .11$ ,  $\Delta F(2,116) = 8.66$ ,  $p < .001$ ). However, only motivation to learn contributed uniquely to the model by significantly predicting satisfaction with mentor above and beyond mentorship type ( $\beta = 0.24$ ,  $t(117) = 2.58$ ,  $p = .011$ , two-tailed) such that the more motivated to learn a protégée was, the more satisfied she or he was with her or his mentor. This finding supported Hypothesis 6. Conversely, proactive personality did not uniquely contribute to the model and was found to be non-significant ( $\beta = 0.14$ ,  $t(117) = 1.59$ ,  $p = .115$ , two-tailed). Hypothesis 7 was not supported by these data.

#### **Summary of the Results**

Hypotheses 1 and 2 were supported. Satisfaction with mentor was positively related to and predicted both AC and work engagement. Protégées who were more satisfied with their mentors were, in turn, more affectively committed to their

organizations and more engaged in their jobs. Hypotheses 3 and 4 were supported. POS mediated the positive relationship between satisfaction with mentor and AC and the positive relationship between satisfaction with mentor and work engagement. Hypothesis 5 was not supported. That is, informally mentored individuals were not found to be more satisfied with their mentors than were formally mentored individuals. Whereas Hypothesis 6 was supported given that protégée motivation to learn predicted satisfaction with mentor above and beyond mentorship type, Hypothesis 7 was not supported given that protégée proactivity failed to predict satisfaction with mentor after controlling for mentorship type.

## Discussion

Organizations have been launching formal mentoring programs to achieve certain organizational goals such as socializing newcomers, increasing job satisfaction, and reducing turnover intentions (Allen & O'Brien, 2007; Spitzmüller et al., 2008; Willems & Smet, 2007). However, these programs can engender other beneficial outcomes that should not be overlooked. For example, mentoring may positively influence employee levels of affective commitment (e.g., Stallworth, 2003) and work engagement. Furthermore, when implementing these programs, organizations have typically tried to replicate informal relationships by focusing on the prevailing demographic communalities between informal partners (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Nonetheless, little attention has been devoted to the non-demographic characteristics of the members of the resulting dyads.

The purpose of the present study was twofold. First, it examined the relationships among satisfaction with the mentor, affective commitment, and work engagement. Specifically, the study proposed that satisfaction with the mentor would predict both affective commitment and work engagement and that the mechanism underlying these relationships would be perceived organizational support. Second, the present study posited that informal mentoring would be more positively related to satisfaction with the mentor than would formal mentoring. Additionally, it hypothesized that two non-demographic protégée characteristics, protégée motivation to learn and protégée proactivity, would predict satisfaction with the mentor above and beyond mentorship type.

Hypotheses 1 and 2 stated that satisfaction with the mentor would be related to affective commitment and work engagement, respectively. Results for these hypotheses showed that protégées who were more satisfied with their mentors were more likely to exhibit higher levels of affective commitment and work engagement. The findings concerning the positive relationship between satisfaction with the mentor and affective commitment are somewhat consistent with those of Payne and Huffman (2005). These researchers conducted a longitudinal study over a two-year period that revealed that mentoring was positively associated with affective commitment. In addition, the present study showed that there was a positive relationship between satisfaction with the mentor and work engagement. This finding might indicate that a mentor is likely to be considered as a protégée's job resource. Mentors provide protégées with emotional support and career advice (Kram, 1985). Past research has shown a positive association between job resources (e.g., feedback and supervisory coaching) and work engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Hypotheses 3 and 4 stated that perceived organizational support would mediate the relationship between satisfaction with the mentor and affective commitment and the relationship between satisfaction with the mentor and work engagement, respectively. Mediation analyses indicated that perceived organizational support fully mediated the relationship between satisfaction with the mentor and affective commitment and work engagement. These results indicate that the more satisfied protégées are with their mentors, the more they perceive that their organizations care about them, which in turn, leads to more affective commitment and work engagement. Researchers have previously

underscored the importance of providing organizational support to employees in order to derive benefits from organizational initiatives. Correspondingly, Rhoades et al. (2001) conducted a longitudinal study and found that perceived organizational support mediated the relationships between organizational rewards, procedural justice, supervisor support, and affective commitment and that perceived organizational support most likely led to affective commitment.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that informally mentored protégées would be more satisfied with their mentors than would formally mentored protégées. Contrary to the expectation, no significant difference between informal and formal protégées concerning satisfaction with the mentor was found. Although researchers have frequently alluded to the notion that protégées prefer informal to formal mentoring (e.g., Baugh, & Fagenson-Eland, 2007), there are few studies whose results suggest that such preference is contingent on contextual factors. For instance, Sosik, Lee, and Bouquillon (2005) found effectiveness of mentorship type to be dependent on the type of industry in which organizations operate. They demonstrated that protégés who worked in the technology industry preferred formal over informal relationships. These researchers argued that in a fast-paced environment, formal mentoring relationships facilitated more career development, role modeling, and organizational commitment than did informal mentoring relationships. It is plausible that a relatively large percentage of protégées working in technology firms in this sample might have negated the effect of the type of mentorship on satisfaction with the mentor. Also, it is possible that the current study's sample size was too small to detect a significant relationship.

Lastly, it is important to note that the majority of the surveyed protégées had undergone graduate education. Individuals with graduate education are likely to have been formally mentored by their advisors throughout their academic undertakings. Having experienced these formal mentoring relationships, they probably were more able to form accurate expectations about the protégée role than were those employees entering their first mentoring relationship. Accurate expectations about the protégée role may affect satisfaction with the mentor positively.

Hypothesis 6 purported that protégée motivation to learn would predict satisfaction with the mentor above and beyond mentorship type. Results showed that protégée motivation to learn exerted a main effect on satisfaction with the mentor, independent of mentorship type. In other words, this finding revealed that for both formal and informal mentoring relationships, protégée motivation to learn is a non-demographic protégée characteristic that is likely to increase satisfaction with the mentor. This interpretation is consistent with previous findings that show motivation as the protégée characteristic most valued among mentors (Allen, 2004). It is reasonable to expect that those mentors who are paired with protégées with high motivation to learn are more involved in their mentoring relationships and thereby deliver better mentoring than those mentors who are paired with protégés with low motivation to learn. Stated differently, protégée motivation to learn may improve the quality of mentoring, which in turn, may affect satisfaction with the mentor.

Lastly, Hypothesis 7 posited that protégée proactivity would predict satisfaction with the mentor above and beyond mentorship type. Although protégée proactivity was

positively related to satisfaction with the mentor, the current study's results indicated that it did not contribute to the model after controlling for mentorship type and being entered along with motivation to learn. Apparently, this finding does not align with those produced through qualitative research involving accounts in which members of mentoring dyads emphasized the importance of having been paired with proactive individuals (Chao, 2009). However, those accounts were not based on self-perceptions of proactive personality. It is plausible that protégée self-perceptions of proactive personality differ from those formed by mentors. Likewise, it is also very likely that protégée self-perceptions of motivation to learn partially account for those interpretations of proactive personality held by mentors. Finally, this study may not have had the statistical power necessary to detect this relationship.

### **Theoretical and Practical Implications**

The results of the present study revealed that perceived organizational support might be necessary if organizations expect mentoring relationships to boost levels of work engagement and affective commitment. Therefore, this study demonstrates that the theoretical framework provided by organizational support theory is applicable to the mentoring realm. Stated differently, this framework renders a theoretical foundation for the generation of models linking satisfaction with the mentor to employee states and job attitudes through perceived organizational support. In addition, on the basis of mentoring enactment theory the present study opened an avenue for the investigation of those competencies (e.g., motivation to learn) that enable protégées to communicate



appropriate relational expectations to their mentors, and thereby, positively affect the quality of the mentoring received.

From a practical standpoint at least two pieces of advice for organizations can be made from the study findings. First, on the basis of the findings of this study it is imperative that organizations aiming at promoting affective commitment and work engagement among their employees through mentoring provide the protégées with organizational support. According to Chao (2009), commitment to formal mentoring programs is strengthened by organizational support. In this way, in addition to offering organizational support in any of its numerous forms, organizations should provide the types of support that is most readily associated with mentoring. In order to provide this specific support, organizations should (a) nurture cultures that foster learning and development, (b) establish norms emphasizing collaboration over competition, and (c) implement reward systems that acknowledge employee development (Kram, 1985; Wanberg et al., 2003). Thus, organizations should: (a) allocate sufficient organizational resources and time for the development of mentoring relationships; (b) promote a collaborative environment that encourages employees to share knowledge as a means to facilitate, stimulate, and acquire professional growth; and (c) publicly reward both mentors for developing others and protégées for the achievements and accomplishments derived from their mentoring relationships.

Second, because selecting “the ideal protégés” will likely influence the successful development of the resulting formal mentoring relationships, program administrators should select those individuals who are motivated to learn. To this effect, program

administrators could distribute questionnaires enclosing a valid instrument to measure motivation to learn among the candidates for the programs. In addition, having evaluations from other sources will reduce shared common variance. For instance, performance reviews conducted by managers and supervisors could include evaluations on motivation to learn.

### **Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research**

The present study contributed to the literature on mentoring by examining the relationships between mentoring and affective commitment and work engagement with the focus on the construct satisfaction with the mentor. More specifically, the present study examined the mechanism underlying the relationships between satisfaction with the mentor and affective commitment and work engagement. Lastly, in addition to taking into account certain demographic characteristics of the members of the dyads and features of the mentoring relationships, the current study focused on the main effect of mentorship type and the additional effects of protégée non-demographic characteristics on satisfaction with the mentor. The present study showed that protégée motivation to learn is positively related to satisfaction with the mentor. More importantly, it showed that the effect of satisfaction with the mentor on affective commitment and work engagement is not direct, but rather indirect through perceived organizational support. To the author's knowledge, this is the first study that has examined a potential reason why satisfaction with the mentor is positively related to affective commitment and work engagement.

The results of the present study should be viewed, nevertheless, in light of its limitations. First, the data collected were correlational; hence, causal inferences cannot be made. Second, all participants of the study were protégées, which might have resulted in shared method variance. However, two characteristics of the present investigation might have mitigated the presence of common method biases. First, although the measurement of some constructs consisted of self-reported data (e.g., protégée motivation to learn), two key constructs involved evaluation of others as opposed to self-evaluations: perceived organizational support and satisfaction with the mentor. Second, two techniques for controlling common method biases suggested by P. M. Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and N. P. Podsakoff (2003) were taken into account in the design of the present study: respondent anonymity was guaranteed and the study scales yielded sound psychometric properties.

However, given the limitations mentioned above, future research endeavors may very well entail (a) conducting longitudinal studies to examine the relationships between the study variables in order to have a solid ground for causal statements; (b) collecting data from both mentors and protégées to avoid shared method variance; and (c) investigating the relationships between mentoring and affective commitment and work engagement with the focus on satisfaction with the protégée to determine how mentoring affects mentor levels of affective commitment and work engagement.

## **Conclusion**

Mentoring will continue to take place in organizations as a means to pass on knowledge from more experienced to less experienced employees. Moreover, mentoring

can render additional benefits to organizations such as high levels of affective commitment and work engagement among protégées. Based on the present study's findings, organizations that offer organizational support by allotting the necessary time for effective mentoring, by nurturing a collaborative environment in which mentoring relationships can thrive, and by rewarding mentors and protégées in their accomplishments, are likely to increase protégée levels of affective commitment and work engagement. Also, formal mentoring program administrators should select protégées who are motivated to learn so that the likelihood of fostering successful mentoring relationships will increase.

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## Appendix

### The Study's Questionnaire

#### Inclusion Criteria

To participate in this study, participants must meet the following criteria:

- 1) Must currently be employed.
- 2) Must have or have had a mentor at the organization they are currently working for.

#### Agreement to Participate in Research

- Responsible Investigator: Luis Portillo Sánchez
- Title of Study: Mentoring, Affective Commitment, and Work Engagement
- You will be asked to complete an online survey asking about your most recent mentoring relationship experience for which you are or were the individual being mentored. You will also be asked to provide demographic information, your preferences for interacting in the work environment, and details about the way you perceive your organization and your own work.
- There are no anticipated risks for participation in the survey research. Chance of harm or discomfort is no greater than would be encountered in daily life. No discernible benefits are expected other than those that might be gained from helping us understand ways in which mentoring relationships can be enhanced and become more efficient.
- Although the results of this study may be published, no identifying information will be included. This online survey is anonymous, so feel free to be candid and be yourself. You are not required to supply any identifying information (e.g., your name).
- There will be no compensation for participation in this study.
- Questions about this research may be addressed to Luis Portillo Sánchez, telephone number\_, e-mail address\_.
- Complaints about the research may be presented to Dr. Ronald Rogers, Psychology Department Chair, telephone number\_, e-mail address\_.
- Questions about a research subjects' rights, or research-related injury may be presented to Pamela Stacks, Ph.D., Associate Vice President, Graduate Studies and Research, at telephone number\_.
- No service of any kind, to which you are otherwise entitled, will be lost or jeopardized if you choose not to participate in the study.
- Your consent is being given voluntarily. You may refuse to participate in the entire study or in any part of the study. You have the right to not answer questions you do not wish to answer. If you decide to participate in the study, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative effect on your relations with San Jose State University. Please print a copy of this form for your own records.

- By completing the survey (i.e., totally or partially) it is implied that you have read and understood the above information, and that you have agreed to participate in this study.
- If you agree to participate in the study, click the " >>" button in the bottom, right corner to begin the survey, otherwise you may close the browser.

#### Questionnaire Instructions

- Your **mentor** must work or have worked for your organization when mentoring you.
- You may have had a few mentors at your organization; however, when answering the questions below your focus should be placed on **your most recent mentoring relationship**.

A **mentor** is generally defined as a higher-ranking, influential individual in your work environment. Mentors have advanced experience and knowledge and are committed to providing upward mobility and support for your career.

In order to assist individuals in their development and advancement, some organizations have established **formal mentoring programs**, where protégées and mentors are linked in some way. This may be accomplished by assigning mentors to protégées or by just providing formal opportunities aimed at developing the relationship.

- **Formal mentoring** relationships: They are developed with **organizational assistance**.

#### Demographics:

- About You and Your Mentor:
  - Select the type of mentoring relationship in which you are currently or were most recently involved (Formal vs. Informal):
  - Your age:
  - Your gender:
  - Select your ethnicity (White/Caucasian/Non-Hispanic Origin, Hispanic/Latino, Black/African American, Asian/Asian American, Native American/American Indian, Other:\_):
  - Your mentor's gender:
  - Select your mentor's ethnicity (White/Caucasian/Non-Hispanic Origin, Hispanic/Latino, Black/African American, Asian/Asian American, Native American/American Indian, Other:\_ , I don't know):

- Select the closest industry to which you work in (Technology, Education, Health, Finance, Consulting, Hospitality, Retail, and Other\_):
  - If you currently have a mentor, he or she has been mentoring you for (Years\_, Months\_, Presently, I do not have a mentor but I had one in the past):
  - Your past mentor mentored you for (Years:\_, Months:\_):
  - If you, for the purpose of this survey, are describing a mentoring relationship that you held in the past, how long ago was this relationship? (Years\_, Months)
  - Select your highest level of education (High School Graduate, Some College Education, Associate of Arts (AA), College Graduate (i.e., BA, BS), Training/Vocational School, Master Degree (i.e., MA, MS) or equivalent, Doctoral Degree (PhD) or equivalent):
- About Your Mentor:  
Although you may be referring to a past mentoring relationship, for readability, most items are phrased in the present tense. Please provide the response that best represents your perceptions about the statements presented.
    - Is your mentor also your supervisor? (No, At some point of our mentoring relationship, my mentor was also my supervisor, Yes)
    - The members of your organization perceive your mentor as being (Very Unsuccessful, Unsuccessful, Somewhat Unsuccessful, Neither Unsuccessful Nor Successful, Somewhat Successful, Successful, Very Successful):

#### Questionnaire Measures

##### Satisfaction with Mentor:

My mentor is someone I am satisfied with.

My mentor has been effective in his/her role.

My mentor fails to meet my needs.

My mentor disappoints me.

##### Affective Organizational Commitment (AC):

I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.

I feel personally attached to my work organization.

I am proud to tell others I work at my organization.

Working at my organization has a great deal of personal meaning to me.

I would be happy to work in my organization until I retire.

I really feel that problems faced by my organization are also my problems.

Work Engagement:

At work, I feel bursting with energy.

My job inspires me.

When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.

I feel happy when I am working intensely.

I get carried away when I am working.

I am immersed in my work.

I am proud of the work that I do.

At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.

I am enthusiastic about my job.

Perceived Organizational Support (POS):

My organization really cares about my well-being.

My organization strongly considers my goals and values.

My organization shows little concern for me.

My organization cares about my opinions.

My organization is willing to help me if I need a special favor.

Help is available from my organization when I have a problem.

My organization will forgive an honest mistake on my part.

If given the opportunity, my organization will take advantage of me.

Motivation to Learn:

I try to learn as much as I can from my organization.

I am willing to invest effort in order to improve job skills and competencies.

I believe that I tend to learn more from working at my organization than others.

I am usually motivated to learn the skills emphasized in training.

I would like to improve my skills.

I am willing to exert effort at my organization to improve my skills.

Participating in training is not a high priority for me.

Proactive Personality:

I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life.

I feel driven to make a difference in my community and maybe the world.

I tend to let others take the initiative to start new projects.

Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change.

I enjoy facing and overcoming obstacles to my ideas.

Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality.

If I see something I don't like, I fix it.

No matter what the odds, if I believe in something, I will make it happen.

I love being a champion for ideas, even against others' opposition.

I excel at identifying opportunities.

I am always looking for better ways of doing things.

If I believe in an idea, no obstacle will prevent me from making it happen.

I love to challenge the status quo.

When I have a problem, I tackle it head-on.  
I am great at turning problems into opportunities.  
I can spot a good opportunity long before others can.  
If I see someone in trouble, I help out in any way I can.