



Impact of Mentoring on Mentors: Blugold Beginnings

Khue Yang & Lissa Martinez Greer



Background

The concept of mentoring is over a century old deriving and expanding from various professional and education fields and backgrounds. At the notion of mentoring evolved and definitions were altered, the general concept of mentoring involved a caring and supportive relationship between a youth and a non-parental adult who promoted overall positive adolescent development (Keller, Liang, Noam, Rhodes, & Spencer, 2006).

Mentoring has become one of the most popular social interventions in American society (Dubois & Karcher, 2005). There were more than 5,000 reported programs for youth in the United States serving an estimated three million young people (Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, and Valentine, 2011). Youth mentor programs gained awareness through research and were commonly used as an intervention technique for disadvantaged youth nationwide in the U.S. Research examples range from secondary, post-secondary, teachers in training, graduate student mentoring and peer mentoring.

There have been limited studies conducted specifically on the impact or benefit of participating as a mentor for youth that focused on the perspective of the mentor. One well-known national research study on youth mentoring was conducted in 1995: An impact study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters. This study identified areas of strength and weakness to the field of youth mentoring programs. It was identified that mentor training significantly influenced the success or failure of mentor experiences in addition to longevity of the mentor and mentee relationship (Dubois & Neville, 1997).

A different form of mentoring is being conducted through college access programs. College access programs have been developed over the last 20 years to help students gain knowledge and get a feeling of what college education is like. (Klopott & Martinez, 2004; Krashen, 2005). The Blugold Beginnings program works with local schools to provide a comprehensive college connection for fifth graders through high school seniors.

The purpose of this research is to explore the impact of mentoring on college students focusing on the following topics: racial attitudes, skill development and career path. This mentoring program is supervised by the Student Affairs Division at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire where student development is a primary goal. The results of the study contributed to the program's annual review report, program evaluation and fulfillment of the institutions mission.

UWEC's mission statement: to foster in one another creativity, critical insight, empathy, and intellectual courage, the hallmarks of a transformative liberal education and the foundation for active citizenship and lifelong inquiry (UWEC mission statement, 2012).

Discussion

Researchers on this project failed to find overall significant results for the group of students who had taken both the pre-assessment and the post-assessment. These findings were reflected in the quantitative results for all three variables: racial attitudes, skill development and career path. Although quantitative results were insignificant, qualitative data results suggest the mentor experience did have an impact for these three variables.

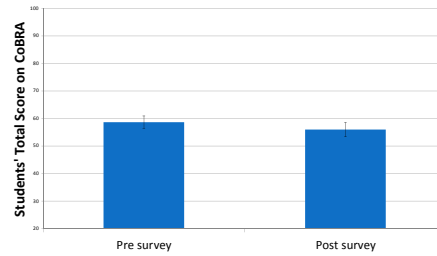
The post survey revealed qualitative data that identified the majority of college student's skill development (70 percent) and career path decisions (70 percent) were influenced by their experience serving as a mentor with the Blugold Beginnings program. Fifty-nine percent of mentor post survey responses identified their racial attitudes as being influenced by the mentor experience. The overall quantitative score for the assessment of racial attitudes portion of the survey utilizing the Color Blind Racial Attitudes Scale reported no statistically significant findings but was approaching statistical significance (M=2.70, SD=8.00, t(32)=1.937, p=.06). The overall quantitative score for the assessment of skills portion of the survey utilizing the Service Experience Survey reported no statistically significant findings (M=43, SD=11.53, t(36)=.23, p=.82).

One limitation was the sample size of the mentor participants. One hundred and ten students were given the choice to take the survey. Sixty-six students completed the pre survey but only 37 students completed both the pre and post survey. All pre surveys were matched to post surveys using student id numbers collected within the confidential survey. Only successfully completed pre and post survey result were used for data collection. Another limitation was the timing of when the college students completed the survey, majority of them had already completed multiple training sessions and were exposed to situations that tested their racial attitudes, skill development, and career path inquiry. This experience prior to completing the survey may have influenced results.

Although the findings in this study were not significant, the Blugold Beginnings Program will still serve as a means of providing college students to mentor students from K-12 grade students in helping them with their academics and college access. The research conducted on the mentor experience will inform the Blugold Beginnings program of its influence on student learning and shape future program training content for mentors on the topics of racial attitudes, skill development and career path selection. This information will also inform the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire of the Program's effort to contribute to the institution's mission by providing an influential learning experience.

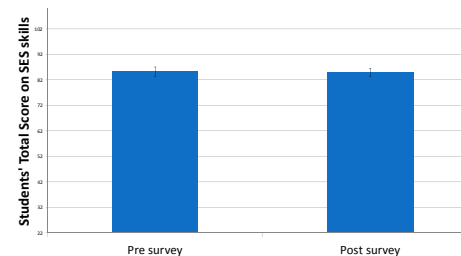
Quantitative Results

Color Blind Racial Attitudes Scale



Among mentors who completed both surveys (N=33), participants overall did not significantly change on measures of their racial attitudes from the pre survey (M=58.61, SD=12.96) to the post survey (M=55.91, SD=14.83), t(32)=-1.94, p=.062.

Service Experience Survey: Skill Evaluation



Among mentors who completed both surveys (N=37), participants did not significantly change on measures of their skill development from the pre survey (M=85.22, SD=10.93) to the post survey (M=84.78, SD=9.63), t(36)=.23, p=.821.

Method

Blugold Beginnings College Participants

A total of 110 UW-Eau Claire students served as mentors fall semester, 2012, and were invited to participate in the study. Sixty-six students completed the pre survey in the first three weeks of mentoring and were invited to complete the post survey the last three weeks of fall semester mentoring. Thirty-seven students completed both the pre and post surveys and those results were used for the research.

The Mentor Experience

Mentors were required to attend training that reviewed mentor expectations, adolescent development, program curriculum, relationship development, advising tips, and role-playing mentor scenarios. Mentor sessions included meeting with fifth-twelfth grade mentees a minimum of twice a week during or after school. During sessions, they assisted their mentees with homework and discussed the contents in the Blugold Beginnings College and Career Readiness Workbook. Mentors and mentees covered one of twenty-seven topics per week (including study skills, test taking tips, building a resume, organization skills, requirements for post-secondary education, and standardized tests). Mentees then completed a worksheet that encouraged students to incorporate the skill for that week into their own lives.

Instruments

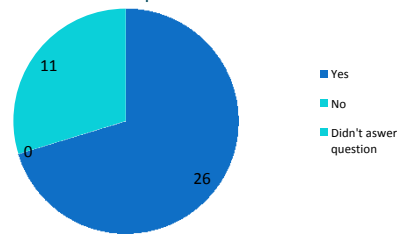
A pre survey and a post survey were created to assess three variables over one semester: racial attitudes, skill development, and career interest. The pre and post surveys were generated using both qualitative and quantitative questions from the Color Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (Browne, Duran, Lee, Lily, Neville, 2008) and the Service Experience Survey (Eyler & Giles, 1999). The Color Blind Racial Attitudes Scale consisted of 20 self-reporting descriptions about race, ethnicity, and privilege in the U.S. using a Likert Scale, one to six. One being "strongly disagree" to six being "strongly agree." Three examples included:

- "Everyone who works hard, no matter what race they are, has an equal chance to become rich."
 - "Race plays a major role in the type of social services such as type of health care or day care that people receive in the U.S."
 - "Racial and ethnic minorities do not have the same opportunities as white people in the U.S."
- A list of 22 self-reporting descriptions on skills and activities was assessed in the Service Experience Survey using a Likert Scale from one to five. One being "much worse than most" to five being "much better than most." Three examples included:

- "Ability to compromise"
 - "Empathetic to all points of view"
 - "Tolerant of people who are different from me"
- In the post survey, three qualitative questions to support the quantitative surveys were asked to assess student's skills, career path, and opinion on underrepresented students. These questions were:
1. "How do you think serving as a mentor has enhanced your skills beyond the list above, if any?"
 2. "How do you think serving as a mentor has influenced your career path, if any?"
 3. "How do you think serving as a mentor has influenced your opinion of underrepresented populations, if any?"

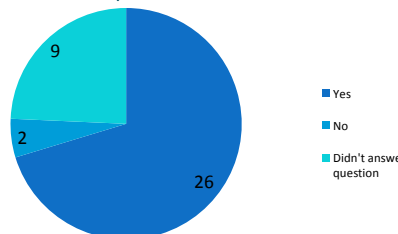
Qualitative Results

Impact on skills



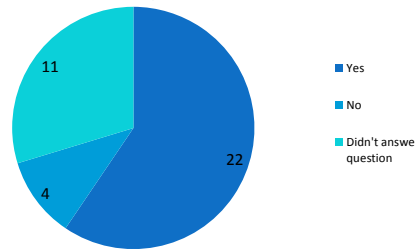
Out of the 37 participants, 26 of them said mentoring had an impact on their skills, 0 said there was no impact, and 11 did not answer the question.

Impact on Career Path



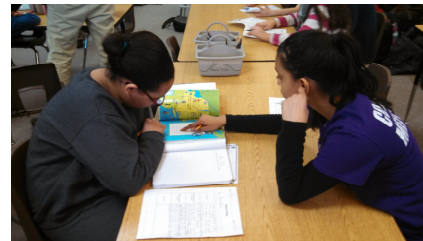
Out of the 37 participants, 26 of them said mentoring had an impact on their career path, 2 said there was no impact, and 9 did not answer the question.

Impact on opinion on underrepresented students



Out of the 37 participants, 22 of them said mentoring had an impact on their opinion on underrepresented students, 4 said there was no impact, and 11 did not answer the question.

Blugold Beginnings Mentor in Action



Blugold Beginnings mentor helping Manz Elementary fifth grader with homework afterschool. Right: Blugold Beginnings mentor, Left: Blugold Beginnings mentee.

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