ABSTRACT

Zachary M. Love. WORKPLACE MENTORING: THE ROLES OF HUMOR STYLE AGREEMENT, HUMOR FREQUENCY, AND POSITIVE MENTOR HUMOR STYLE. (Under the direction of Dr. Mark Bowler) Department of Psychology, April 2013.

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the roles of humor style agreement, humor frequency, and positive mentor humor style in workplace mentoring relationships. The author hypothesizes that the aforementioned humor variables contribute to mentoring satisfaction, which subsequently affects four work-related outcomes including: (1) Job satisfaction, (2) affective commitment, (3) work stress, and (4) turnover intentions. Path analysis was used to test a series of nine hypotheses in order to determine the fit of the hypothesized model ($N = 54$). The results of the path analysis revealed significantly positive path coefficients for all three humor variables on mentoring satisfaction (H1, H2, and H3), mentoring satisfaction on affective commitment and job satisfaction (H4 and H5), and job satisfaction on affective commitment (H6). Additionally, the results revealed significantly negative path coefficients for affective commitment on turnover intentions (H7). The remaining two hypothesized negative paths including job satisfaction on turnover intentions (H8) and work stress on job satisfaction (H9) were not statistically significant. Several fit indices were employed including RMSEA (0.00), SRMR (0.06), CFI (1.00), and TLI (1.01), which unanimously indicated excellent fit of the model with the data. The implications of the study include: (1) The precedent for humor variables as antecedents of mentoring satisfaction, (2) the support for humor as an important work-related variable, and (3) increased knowledge regarding the effectiveness of workplace mentoring.

WORKPLACE MENTORING: THE ROLES OF HUMOR STYLE AGREEMENT, HUMOR

FREQUENCY, AND POSITIVE MENTOR HUMOR STYLE

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Introduction

In order to engender growth and sustainability, large organizations across the United States devote a considerable amount of money, time, and effort to developing their employees (Aguinis & Kraiger, 2009). Subsequently, it is important for executives of organizations to recognize the value of investing in their new employees, with the absence of that investment potentially leading to costly organizational problems such as decreased job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment (Lee & Bruvold, 2003), as well as increased turnover (Holton, 2001). In order to effectively curb such staff-related problems, large organizations often implement new employee development programs, in an attempt to decrease turnover rates while increasing such job-related attitudes as job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Slattery, Selvarajan, & Anderson, 2008).

One prominent method of achieving such goals is employee mentoring (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004; Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & Dubois, 2008; Holton, 2001). Mentoring is an influential developmentally-oriented relationship between a younger or less experienced individual, the protégé, and an older more experienced individual, the mentor, (Kram, 1985). Morton-Cooper and Palmer (2000) describe mentoring as a dynamic relationship in which personal characteristics, philosophies, and priorities interact to influence the nature and direction of a partnership embedded in sharing, encouraging, and supporting elements. Moreover, they note that this relationship occurs in a number of different contexts, such as academia, communities, and organizations, but for the purposes of this paper, the application of mentoring will focus on the organizational environment.

Numerous variables, such as personality (Turban & Lee, 2007; Wanberg, Kammayer-Mueller, & Marchese, 2006), human capital (Dreher & Ash, 1990; Fagenson, 1989), and deep-

level similarity (Eby et al., 2013) have been shown to directly impact the overall success of mentoring relationships. However, humor has not been examined in the context of mentoring despite the fact that previous research has established the importance of humor in similar relationships such as superior-subordinate (Decker, 1987; Decker & Rotondo, 2001), teacher-student (Bryant, Crane, Comisky, & Zillman, 1980; Wanzer & Frymier, 1999), and leader-follower (Gkorezis, Hatzithomas, & Petridou, 2011; Vecchio, Justin, & Pearce, 2009).

The premise for examining the relationship between humor and mentoring is centered on the importance of early relationship building, similarity, and relationship satisfaction between the mentor and protégé. Subsequently, in order to evaluate the impact of humor on the quality of mentoring relationships, the present study operationalized humor in three ways: (1) Humor style agreement, (2) humor frequency, and (3) positive humor style. Thus, the purpose of the current study was to investigate a hypothesized model of organizational mentoring that incorporates humor style agreement, humor frequency, and positive humor style as important variables in successful mentoring relationships. The model tests a series of hypotheses regarding how the aforementioned humor variables relate to mentoring satisfaction, as well as four subsequent work-related outcomes including (1) Job satisfaction, (2) affective commitment, (3) work stress, and (4) turnover intentions.

Mentoring

The theoretical beginnings of mentoring can be traced back to Levinson (1986), Erikson (1950), and Maslow (1943), whose work on human development and psychosocial development laid the framework for the mentoring process. Central to their theories is the notion that relationships outside of one's family, including mentors, play a crucial role in human development (Eby, Rhodes, & Allen, 2007). Levinson and his colleagues identified mentoring as

an important developmental milestone, whereby the mentor acts as a guide, teacher, counselor, and skill developer who "facilitates the realization of the *dream*" (Levinson, 1986, p. 371). The dream in this sense is the conceptual vision that one has about the future of his or her life or career.

Furthermore, Erikson's (1950) Theory of Psychosocial Development maintains that individuals traverse through a series of conflicts resulting in an adaptive or maladaptive adjustment. Moreover, this theory suggests that our relationships with others are so profound that they impact our ability to adapt throughout the life cycle. Most relevant to mentoring is the application of Erikson's theory to early, middle, late adulthood and the crises that occur within each developmental period. Erikson noted that adults undergo crises such as intimacy versus isolation, generativity versus stagnation, and integrity versus despair which help explain the need for close relationships, such as mentoring.

Additionally, the universal and fundamental need to form and maintain positive relationships with others serves a prominent role in Maslow's (1943) theory of human needs. After progressing through physiological and safety needs, Maslow maintained that individuals must satisfy the need for love and belonging (Maslow, 1970). According to Maslow, individuals cannot satisfy the higher order needs of esteem and self-actualization until they have successfully navigated love and belongingness needs. Effective mentoring relationships are expected to fulfill belongingness needs though sustained interactions, high quality connections, and authentic concern (Allen & Eby, 2007).

Mentoring Phases

Following the human development groundwork formulated by Levinson and Erikson, seminal research by Kram (1983) revealed the vast influence of mentoring on employees'

personal and professional development, thus extending the research associated with mentoring into the organizational context. Specifically, Kram identified a series of four specific phases which are: (1) Initiation, (2) cultivation maintenance, (3) separation, and (4) redefinition. The *initiation* phase consists of the protégé longing for an older individual to notice him or her, to provide guidance and support, as well as developmental opportunities. This phase establishes initial admiration and respect for the older individual, whereas the younger individual begins to feel cared for and supported. The *cultivation maintenance* phase typically lasts between two and five years and is marked by the mentor providing career and psychosocial support behaviors to the protégé. During this phase, the mentor and protégé develop a working relationship and rapport with each other. The *separation* phase is achieved after roughly two to five years when the protégé becomes independent in the relationship, and the mentor has successfully developed the protégé. This phase is accompanied by structural and psychological changes (i.e., less guidance and/or anxiety) due to the turmoil surrounding the changing dynamic of the relationship. The final stage of *redefinition* marks the proverbial end to the mentor relationship and usually results in a friendship between the mentor and protégé. Ideally, the two parties stay in contact with continued support and guidance.

Instrumental Support versus Psychosocial Support

Kram (1985) differentiated between two primary types of mentor support behaviors in the cultivation phase: (1) Instrumental support and (2) psychosocial support. These mentoring support behaviors, often referred to as "mentoring functions" are aspects of the developmental relationship that enhance both individuals' growth and advancement. *Instrumental support* relates to the mentor behaviors that facilitate protégé goal attainment, such as providing task-related assistance, sponsorship, exposure, visibility, and coaching (Jacobi, 1991; Kram, 1985).

These types of behaviors are geared towards the professional development of the protégé and are highly related to the organizational mission. Moreover, instrumental support behaviors serve to develop younger talent and develop support among younger employees (Kram & Bragar, 1992).

Sponsorship is the most common instrumental support behavior, as it involves the preparation of an individual for upward mobility and promotions (Eby et al., 2007). For example, a mentor may speak to a superior in an organization about having the protégé fill an open position with more responsibility. The exposure and visibility function involves assigning responsibilities that allow lower-level employees to develop relationships with vital members or the organization (Jacobi, 1991). A mentor can provide exposure and visibility by placing the protégé in charge of a new initiative in an organization that will afford the protégé an opportunity to work with other employees. Finally, coaching prepares the protégés to navigate the corporate world effectively by teaching them strategies to accomplish work objectives and achieving career aspirations (Kram, 1985). Mentors can implement coaching strategies by helping the protégé set specific goals for a work-related task.

The other primary type of mentoring behaviors are categorized as *psychosocial support*. Kram (1985) suggested that this type of support enhances the protégé's sense of competence, identity, and effectiveness. Psychosocial support behaviors include providing encouragement, acceptance, confirmation, counseling, role-modeling, and friendship (Eby et al., 2007). Although, these functions may serve a "softer" role in the mentoring process, they are also important to the development of the protégé. Moreover, unlike instrumental support, psychosocial support depends more on the interpersonal relationship between the mentor and protégé, and facilitate both personal and emotional development (Noe, 1988).

With regard to psychosocial support, role-modeling is the most frequently observed behavior and is perpetuated by the extent to which the protégé sees the mentor as an object of admiration, emulation, and respect (Eby et al., 2007). Essentially, the mentor acts as a desirable example and the protégé identifies with the mentor either consciously or unconsciously. Noe (1988) defined the acceptance and confirmation function as unconditional positive regard, support, and encouragement. For example, after the protégé unsuccessfully attempts to complete a task, a mentor could console the protégé with words of encouragement and positive regard. Next, counseling is the psychosocial support behavior that allows the protégé to express personal and emotional distress to the mentor (Noe, 1988). A protégé may come to the mentor with anxiety about a difficult task, and the mentor could talk through the anxiety with the protégé to find the source of the concern. Finally, friendship is the psychosocial support behavior that results from a successful relationship whereby mutual liking and understanding flourish between the mentor and protégé (Kram, 1985). The protégé begins to see the mentor as more of a peer than an authority figure, thus enabling a genuine friendship to flourish between the two individuals.

Formal versus Informal Mentoring

The research on mentoring accounts for two types of mentoring programs: (1) Informal and (2) formal. Informal mentoring and formal mentoring differ with respect to initiation of the relationship, structure surrounding the relationship, and other aspects of the relationship, such as motivation (Ragins, 1997a). Informal relationships are those that develop spontaneously based on mutual attraction, liking, and perceived interpersonal comfort (Kram, 1985; Ragins, 1997a). Furthermore, informal mentoring relationships tend to be more successful in the workplace due to the voluntary nature of the relationship. The mentor is typically more willing to engage in

mentoring behaviors and receives such benefits as personal satisfaction, building social networks, and learning from the protégé (Dougherty, Turban, & Haggard, 2007). On the other hand, the protégé in informal mentoring is probably achievement motivated and willing to learn and seek out the mentoring relationship. Research examining relationship formality generally concludes that informal relationships are associated with greater mentoring support and higher relationship quality, especially with respect to psychosocial support behaviors (Eby et al., 2013).

In contrast, formal mentoring relationships are typically engendered via matching by a third party (e.g., management; Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezlett, 2003). Formal mentoring is based on pairing mentors and protégés based on a range of characteristics that position the relationship for success (e.g., work experience and rapport; Kram, 1983). Moreover, the individuals may not meet each other until after the match has been made (Allen, Eby, & Lentz, 2006). As these relationships are not naturally occurring, the dynamics of the relationship are different. For example, formal mentoring relationships tend to be of shorter duration and often involve written contracts with specific goals and timelines (Ragins, 1997a). Additionally, in these programs, organizations play a role in facilitating mentoring relationships by providing some level of structure, guidelines, policies, and assistance for starting, maintaining, and ending mentor-protégé relationships (Finkelstein & Poteet, 2007). Subsequently, instrumental support is typically emphasized in mentoring relationships by the organization more so than psychosocial support. Thus, formal mentoring relationships experience different strengths than informal mentoring relationships, such as increased career support behaviors due to a focus on the professional development of the protégé.

Antecedents of Mentoring Quality

There are a wide range of variables that are regarded as antecedents for mentoring support and relationship quality (Eby et al., 2013). The individual-level antecedents of specific relevance include demographic characteristics (e.g., Bogat & Liang, 2005; Blake-Beard, Murrell, & Thomas, 2007; O'Brien, Biga, Kessler, & Allen, 2010; Ragins, 1997a, 1997b; Wanberg et al., 2003), personality (e.g., Turban & Lee, 2007; Wanberg, Kammayer-Mueller, & Marchese, 2006), human capital (e.g., Dreher & Ash, 1990; Fagenson, 1989; Olian, Carroll, & Giannantonio, 1993), and relationship attributes (Eby et al., 2013). Here, we briefly review the literature on demographic characteristics, personality, human capital, and relationship attributes as antecedents of mentoring quality.

Demographic Characteristics. The most commonly examined demographic characteristics involved in successful mentoring relationships are the gender and race of both the protégé and the mentor. Gender has emerged as a prominent factor in the research of mentoring relationships with one of the main findings being that, regardless of the sex of the mentor, female protégés receive less instrumental support and more psychosocial report, whereas male protégés receive more instrumental support and less psychosocial support (Bogat & Liang, 2005; O'Brien et al., 2010). Additionally, regardless of the sex of the protégé, female mentors typically provide less instrumental support and more psychosocial support, whereas male mentors provide more instrumental support and less psychosocial support (Blake-Beard et al., 2007; Wanberg et al., 2003).

While the research on gender has yielded relatively substantial findings, the literature on race and mentoring regarding access, quality, and outcomes demonstrates considerable ambiguity (Blake-Beard et al., 2007). While some research suggests African-Americans have

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difficulty gaining access to mentors (Catalyst, 2001; Dreher, Cox, & Taylor, 1996; Thomas, 1990), other research maintains that there is no race-based difference in access (Blake-Beard, 1999; Koberg, Boss, Chappell, & Ringer, 1994). Furthermore, minority protégés may receive less instrumental support than majority protégés (Wanberg et al., 2003). With respect to mentor race, the research suggests that mentors who are racial minorities might be less able to provide instrumental support than those who are members of the majority group (Ragins, 1997b). In terms of mentoring outcomes and race, the research is unclear; whereas some research suggests African-Americans may not receive as substantial mentoring benefits as Caucasians (Thomas & Gabarro, 1999), other studies suggest the impact of race on mentoring outcomes is inconclusive (Blake-Beard et al., 2007).

Personality. A limited body of research has examined the relationship between personality and mentoring quality (Turban & Lee, 2007; Wu, Foo, & Turban, 2008). The Five Factor Model has been used to determine which personality traits are associated with mentoring quality (Allen, Poteet, Russell, & Dobbins, 1997; Fagenson, 1989, 1992). For example, emotional stability, agreeableness, and extroversion are linked with the reception of mentoring support (Bozionelos, 2004; Niehoff, 2006; Wu et al., 2008). Furthermore, willingness to learn, honesty, confidence, ability, and competence are noted to be desirable protégé characteristics (Allen, Poteet, Burroughs, & Susan, 1997; Olian et al., 1993). Although mentor attributes have been largely unstudied, there is evidence that suggest competence, patience, and ability to understand others are effective mentor attributes (Allen & Poteet, 1999).

Human Capital. A third antecedent that has been studied as a primary factor in mentoring quality and support is human capital, which is defined as a function of the time, effort, and money invested by both mentors and protégés in pursuit of their own development (Becker,

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1975). Mentor human capital includes years of education, highest degree obtained, previous work experience, and protégé's perception of mentor's influence (Eby et al., 2013). Specifically, it follows that the more human capital that the mentor has to offer, the more likely the protégé is to perceive higher mentoring quality and support (Allen et al., 1997). Eby et al. (2013) suggested that protégé human capital includes years of education, highest degree obtained, prior work experience, and training experience. Moreover, it appears that the protégés with more human capital are more likely to receive higher mentoring quality and support (Olian et al., 1993).

Relationship Attributes. The final antecedent associated with mentoring support and quality is relationship attributes, which are clustered into two groups with the first group consisting of deep-level similarity (DLS), surface-level similarity (SLS), and experiential similarity (ES; Eby et al., 2013). Deep-level similarity (DLS) is the similarity between mentors and protégés with respect to attitudes, beliefs, values, and other personal characteristics like personality, whereas SLS refers to characteristics such as race and gender (Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998). The final type of similarity is experiential similarity which refers to experience-based factors such as educational level, functional area, departmental affiliation, job tenure, and geographic location (Eby et al., 2013). The research has demonstrated a profound correlation between DLS and the effects received from mentoring, whereas SLS and ES show weaker and more inconsistent effects on mentoring (Sanchez & Colon, 2005). This suggests that regardless of superficial attributes such as race, the similarity of more fundamental aspects of our being are more strongly related to the effectiveness of mentoring.

The second cluster of relationship attributes of relevance to mentoring includes relationship formality, interaction frequency, and relationship length (Eby et al., 2013). Relationship formality refers to the distinction between formal and informal mentoring, which is

described in an aforementioned paragraph. Research has demonstrated consistently more positive

associations between informal mentoring and mentoring support behaviors than formal

mentoring (Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992). Specifically, Chao et al. (1992) found that the degree

of structure imposed on formal workplace mentoring may constrain interaction patterns between

mentor and protégé, when compared to informal workplace mentoring where mentors may feel

less inhibited in terms of when and how they interact with protégés. Of additional interest is

interaction frequency which refers to the frequency of communication, number of contacts per

month, and amount of time spent with mentor (Eby et al., 2013). In order for a protégé to

develop a strong and effective relationship with his or her mentor, frequent interpersonal

interaction is necessary (Lankau & Scandura, 2002). It follows that the less amount of time spent

with the mentor, the more difficult it is for the protégé to develop a positive relationship with the

mentor. Furthermore, interaction frequency functions as a mediator between protégé and mentor

reports of program characteristics, as well as career functions, psychosocial functions, role-

modeling, and mentor quality (Allen et al., 2004). Additionally, some aspects of experiential

similarity such as being in the same departmental, geographic location, or organization facilitate

mentor-protégé interaction, thus increasing the likelihood that a high quality relationship will

develop between the mentor and protégé. Finally, the length of the relationship between the

protégé and mentor is predictably influential on mentoring support and quality. Mentoring

relationships are time-bound in the sense that early in the relationship there is the greatest

opportunity for leaning and development (Kram, 1985). As such, as the relationship progresses,

Kram (1985) proposed that the protégé's reliance on the mentor is reduced and the relationship

runs its natural course, with the end result being protégé independence from the mentor.

However, in the workplace, mentors may provide more career support behaviors and discrete

advice, thus making workplace mentoring less dependent on building a long-term relationship (Eby et al., 2013).

Consequences of Mentoring

The outcomes associated with mentoring have been divided into three categories which include: (1) Attitudinal, (2) behavioral, and (3) health-related outcomes (Eby et al., 2013). Of the myriad of *attitudinal* outcomes, the two most pertinent to the current study are situational satisfaction and sense of affiliation. Situational satisfaction refers to positive or negative evaluations of a particular context, experience, or situation (Allen et al., 2004). This defines whether or not the mentoring support and quality caused the protégé to develop more positive attitudes toward his or her work role or organization. Research suggests that protégés who report more mentoring support and higher relationship quality have a more positive attitude toward the organization and are more satisfied with the role that they occupy (Chao et al., 1992). Similarly, sense of affiliation is the degree to which the protégé is psychologically attached to the context in which the relationship is embedded (Allen & Eby, 2007). As a result of mentoring, the protégé may have increased feelings of pride or affiliation with the organization for which they work. Eby et al. (2013) determined that protégés who report higher mentoring support and higher quality relationships also report increased satisfaction and sense of affiliation with the organization.

Two commonly examined *behavioral* outcomes of mentoring are the learning/socialization of the protégé and turnover intentions. The learning and socialization of the protégé includes such factors as access to information, organizational socialization, work-role socialization, personal growth, work knowledge (Eby et al. 2013). Mullen (1994) stated that mentorship operates as a mechanism for information exchange and knowledge acquisition.

Furthermore, mentors serve as the experienced models of behavior for their protégés, providing them with the governing rules regarding behavior in the organization (Bolton, 1980). Additionally, the mentor's ability to provide resources and social networking opportunities allows for the protégé's socialization into the work culture (Dreher & Ash, 1990).

Mentoring may also a profound effect on the turnover intentions of the protégé (Wanberg et al., 2003). Turnover intention refers to the intent to leave one's job, organization, or career and is most likely attributed to poor job satisfaction. Both the psychosocial and career support behaviors may decrease turnover intentions, but it is the career functions such as visibility, promotions, and pay raises that increase the protégé's embeddedness in the organization and decrease the likelihood of turnover intentions (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski, & Erez, 2001). Moreover, Scandura (1992) suggested that the impact of psychosocial support behaviors on job-related attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction and affective commitment) may also have a distal effect on protégé turnover intentions.

The last outcome associated with mentoring is *health-related* outcomes, for which the pertinent outcomes are protégé strain and self-efficacy. Protégé strain denotes both psychological (e.g., depressed mood, burnout, overall stress) and physical (e.g., psychosomatic health complaints) strain as a result of work (Eby et al. 2013). Eby et al. (2008) found a small negative relationship between instrumental support and strain with the counseling and empathy associated with psychosocial support behaviors also functioning to reduce protégé strain (Kram, 1985). Furthermore, mentoring has been shown to be positively associated with self-efficacy through both instrumental and psychosocial functions, but self-efficacy is most strongly related to psychosocial functions (Eby et al., 2013). This finding is intuitive as Kram (1985) suggested that it is through psychosocial support that a mentor helps the protégé develop a sense of competence,

confidence, and self-esteem. Additionally, self-efficacy perceptions are formed from task accomplishment (e.g., mentor coaches for tasks), positive feedback (e.g., mentor provides acceptance and confirmation), and emotional experiences (e.g., mentor provides counseling and support; Bearman, Blake-Beard, Hunt, & Crosby, 2007). Mentors may also impact self-efficacy by challenging protégé negative self-views (Rhodes, 2002), which can increase protégé self-confidence (Johnson, 2007).

Mentoring Summary

Overall, the foundation for mentoring consists of the research by Levinson (1986), Erikson (1950), and Maslow (1943), which established the importance of mentoring in the context of human development. Kram (1985) pioneered the field of organizational mentoring by researching the stages of mentoring relationships and the types of mentor support behaviors (e.g., instrumental and psychosocial functions). More recent additions to the mentoring literature include the distinction between formal and informal mentoring, as well as the antecedents and consequences of successful mentoring relationships. The primary antecedents of interest are (1) demographic characteristics, (2) human capital, and (3) relationship attributes, with deep-level similarity recognized as the most powerful predictor of a successful mentoring relationship. Overall, the literature on mentoring is relatively inconclusive and incomplete regarding the antecedents and correlates of successful mentoring relationships. Furthermore, the relevant consequences include (1) attitudinal, (2) behavioral, and (3) health-related, which are all dependent on mentor support and relationship quality. It is clear that the outcomes associated with mentoring have produced the most strong and consistent findings regarding mentoring relationships.

Humor

Psychological research defines humor as a broad, multi-faceted construct that may include characteristics of a stimulus (e.g., jokes), cognitive processes (e.g., perceiving and appreciating humor), or behavioral responses by the individual (e.g., laughing; Martin, 2000). Furthermore, a "sense of humor" has been conceptualized as a social skill (Martineau, 1972), a behavioral response (e.g., amusement; Ruch & Hehl, 1998) an enduring personality trait (e.g., sense of humor; Ruch, 1998), a cognitive ability (Martin, 2000), a perspective or attitude about life (Svebak, 1996), and a coping strategy or defense mechanism (Lefcourt & Martin, 1986). Moreover, Martin (2003) distinguished between four humor styles: (1) Affiliative (e.g., engaging in humor to promote social cohesiveness), (2) self-enhancing (e.g., using humor as a coping mechanism), (3) self-defeating (e.g., being funny at one's own expense), and (4) aggressive (e.g., teasing and ridiculing others). Affiliative and self-enhancing humor styles are considered adaptive styles that are correlated with high self-esteem, optimism, and intimacy, whereas the self-defeating and aggressive humor styles are considered maladaptive styles that are correlated with neuroticism, depression, and low relationship satisfaction (Kazarian & Martin, 2006). Although there is little consensus over the conceptualization, subsequent measurement, and effects of humor researchers have made strides in finding empirical support for physiological, psychological, and social benefits of humor (Mesmer-Magnus, Glew, & Viswesvaran, 2012).

Humor can yield such physiological outcomes as increases in immunoglobulin A (which fights off disease), increased heart rate, reduced pain, and relaxed muscles (Moran & Massam, 1999). Furthermore, positive psychologists maintain that humor contributes to psychological health by reducing stress and tension, while also enhancing social support, thus making individuals with a greater sense of humor more socially competent and desirable (Bell, McGhee,

& Duffey, 1986). It follows that those with a greater sense of humor experience more positive interpersonal relationships, especially in the case of new encounters. Research on initial encounters of strangers has shown a profound effect of humor on feelings of closeness (Fraley & Aron, 2004). Thus, it is evident that humor plays an integral role in not only relationship maintenance, but also in the early stages of relationship formation.

The positive effects of humor on interpersonal relationships are well-documented in domains such as the workplace, educational settings, and leader-follower relationships. For example, in the workplace, humor serves as a catalyst for relationship building and increasing productivity by reducing tension, relieving frustration, facilitating information transfer and communication (Duncan, 1982). Research demonstrates that subordinates have been found to report higher job satisfaction and rate supervisors better when the supervisors are perceived as having greater senses of humor (Decker, 1987). In addition to superior-subordinate relationships, humor research has demonstrated positive findings for specific workplace interactions such as patient-provider, principal-teacher, and co-worker relationships. The use of humor in these relationships has demonstrated better communication due to de-emphasized power disparities, as well as increased satisfaction and rapport (Sala, Krupat, & Roter, 2002; Scholl, 2007). Similarly, the research on humor in educational settings has provided positive findings for teacher-student relationships. Teachers that use humor are more likely to be rated more positively by students, have better relationships with students, and experience higher student performance and attentiveness (Bryant et al., 1980; Wanzer & Frymier, 1999).

An additional domain that has demonstrated positive findings concerning the use of humor is the leader-follower relationship. Humor has been characterized as an effective trait and skill of leaders, which makes the exchange between the leader and followers more positive and

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less tense (Decker & Rotondo, 2001). Barbour (1998) identified four functions of humor that relate to humor's potential as a leadership tool including: (1) Facilitating learning, (2) helping change behavior, (3) promoting increased creativity, and (4) helping followers feel less threatened by change. Moreover, leaders that exhibit a positive style of humor are not only more likely to attract followers, but also to psychologically empower their followers (Gkorezis et al., 2011; Vecchio et al., 2009). Another study of leader humor found that humor positively moderated the relationship between some leadership styles (e.g., transformational) and individual and unit performance (Avolio, Howell, & Sosik, 1999). In summation, the benefits of humor as seen in workplace interactions, education settings, and leader-follower relationships provide the framework for the application of humor to mentoring relationships.

Mentoring and Humor

The three relevant avenues for humor's impact on mentoring relationships include (1) humor style agreement, (2) humor frequency, and (3) positive humor style. In this case, humor style agreement refers to the extent to which the mentor and protégé report similarity in their ratings of each other with respect to positive humor. Previous research on humor style agreement provides evidence that an apparent similarity of sense of humor during early interactions deduced by finding the same jokes funny, leads to positive impressions and interpersonal attraction (Cann & Calhoun, 2001). Furthermore, positive humor style similarity contributes to relationship satisfaction and maintenance (Alberts, Yoshimura, Rabby, & Loschiavo, 2005; Driver & Gottman, 2004). Thus, if congruence exists between the protégé's rating of the mentor's positive humor and the mentor's rating of the protégé's positive humor, then it is reasonable to assert that both individuals share the underlying dimension of positive humor or negative humor. Alternatively, if the mentor rates the protégé as high in positive humor, but the

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protégé rates the mentor as low in positive humor, or vice versa, the low agreement would indicate that both individuals do not share the underlying dimension of positive humor. Furthermore, humor style agreement may contribute to deep-level similarity, which is regarded as a powerful antecedent of successful mentoring relationships by Eby et al. (2013). Thus, humor style agreement can be examined as an antecedent of successful mentoring relationships with effects on mentoring quality.

Furthermore, humor frequency is simply the self-reported perception of the prevalence of humor shared in the relationship, as reported by the protégé. Humor research supports a positive linear model for the relationship between humor frequency and positive outcomes in the aforementioned similar relationships including superior-subordinate, teacher-student, and leader-follower (Bryant et al., 1980; Decker, 1987; Decker & Rotondo, 2001; Gkorezis et al., 2011; Vecchio et al., 2009; Wanzer & Frymier, 1999). That is, the more frequently humor was experienced in these relationships, the more positive the outcomes were for subordinates, students, and followers. Essentially, this model states that humor frequency incrementally strengthens the relationship by building similarity, rapport, etc. In order to assess how humor frequency functions in mentoring relationships, it is important to examine its unique effect on mentoring satisfaction exclusive of humor style agreement, as well as the third humor variable which is positive mentor humor style.

The notion of positive mentor humor style is founded upon Decker and Rotondo's (2001) research on positive humor in organizations. As previously mentioned, Decker and Rotondo (2001) reported that positive humor may be used by managers as an informal mechanism to communicate with subordinates, resulting in increased subordinate satisfaction. In their study, Decker and Rotondo (2001) developed a scale for assessing positive supervisor humor, which

assesses the judicious use of humor by supervisors. Additionally, several studies have applied the notion of positive and negative humor styles to two other relationships comparable to the mentor-protégé relationship, including teacher-student, and leader-follower (Bryant et al., 1980; Gkorezis et al., 2011; Vecchio et al., 2009; Wanzer & Frymier, 1999). Due to the similarity of the qualities of these relationships (i.e., power distance and roles), it is reasonable to ascribe the application of positive versus negative humor styles to the mentor-protégé relationship. Moreover, mentors serve as catalysts for the social systems within an organization, functioning as sources of knowledge having the potential to use positive humor in dyadic relationships with protégés. Thus, it is expected that the outcomes associated with mentors and protégés exhibiting positive humor styles will be superior to those with negative humor styles.

The Present Study

The current study aimed to synthesize the research on mentoring and humor by examining a model for successful mentoring relationships that incorporates positive humor style, humor style agreement, and humor frequency. The current study fills this gap in the literature on the premise that humor style agreement, and humor frequency not only facilitate the establishment of relationships, but they also contribute to similarity between the mentor and protégé. Furthermore, the current humor research documents the importance of positive humor in similar relationships such as teacher-student, manager-subordinate, and leader-follower, but not the mentor-protégé relationship (Bryant et al., 1980; Decker, 1987; Decker & Rotondo, 2001; Gkorezis et al., 2011; Vecchio et al., 2009; Wanzer & Frymier, 1999). Having a mentor or protégé that has a positive humor style and uses positive humor should lead to relationship satisfaction, as it does in the similar, aforementioned dyadic relationships.

The research on the antecedents of successful mentoring relationships maintains that deep-level similarity between the mentor and protégé is the most powerful predictor of the effects received from mentoring (Eby et al., 2013). This relationship between deep-level similarity and mentoring outcomes provides the foundation for introducing humor style agreement and humor frequency to the mentoring research. Specifically, if the mentor and protégé have similar humor styles and use humor frequently, then the protégé should experience more positive outcomes from the mentoring relationship. Furthermore, there is empirical evidence that suggests the quality of the mentoring relationship and protégé satisfaction with the mentoring relationship are more important than the mere existence of mentorship (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000). It follows that mentoring satisfaction is an acceptable measure of successful mentoring relationships.

Hypothesis 1: Humor style agreement between the mentor and protégé will be positively related to protégé mentoring satisfaction (see Figure 1).

Hypothesis 2: Humor frequency will be positively related to protégé mentoring satisfaction.

Similarly, researchers have identified humor as an important facet of relationship building and relationship maintenance in other similar relationships such as teacher-student, manager-subordinate, and leader-follower (Bryant et al., 1980; Decker, 1987; Decker & Rotondo, 2001; Gkorezis et al., 2011; Vecchio et al., 2009; Wanzer & Frymier, 1999). The effect of humor in the aforementioned relationships depends on the humor style (i.e., positive or negative) of the teacher, manager, and leader, respectively. Thus, the importance of the positive humor style of the mentor is founded upon the research in these similar relationships. If the

mentor exhibits a positive humor style, then the protégé should report more positive outcomes than those with a mentor demonstrating a negative humor style.

Hypothesis 3: Positive mentor humor style will be positively related to protégé mentoring satisfaction.

Moreover, mentors function as representatives and socializing agents of the organization from whom protégés receive knowledge about the values and goals of the organization and receive support from mentors (Payne & Huffman, 2005). Furthermore, empirical evidence has supported the notion that mentoring has an "impact on affective reactions to the workplace" (Allen et al., 2004). Wanberg et al. (2003) found that mentoring engenders increased affective organizational commitment. Another positive affective reaction likely resulting from mentoring is increased job satisfaction (Chao et al., 1992; Eby et al., 2008). Two possible explanations for these relationships are that protégés are more likely to have the resources to cope with stress and they have positive role models in their mentors, which may translate into positive work attitudes (Scandura, 1997). Accordingly, the protégés that are more satisfied with their mentoring relationships should report higher affective organizational commitment and job satisfaction than those that are not satisfied with their mentoring relationship.

Hypothesis 4: Mentoring satisfaction will be positively related to protégé affective organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 5: Mentoring satisfaction will be positively related to protégé job satisfaction.

The remaining hypotheses and their corresponding paths in the model concern the work-related variables including job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment, work stress, and turnover intentions. The interrelationships among these variables have been thoroughly

supported by the literature. First, a strong positive association has been demonstrated between job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment, whereby job satisfaction precedes affective organizational commitment (Kittinger, Walker, Cope, & Wuensch, 2009). Second, research purports the strong negative correlation between affective organizational commitment and turnover intentions (Vandenberghe & Bentein, 2009). Third, there is extensive empirical evidence that job satisfaction is negatively related to turnover intentions (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000). Last, empirical evidence exists supporting the notion that job satisfaction is negatively affected by work stress (Spector & Jex, 1998).Work stress was included in the model to examine how it might interact with and explain additional variance in job satisfaction above and beyond the effect of mentoring satisfaction.

 Hypothesis 6: Job satisfaction will be positively related to affective organizational commitment.

 Hypothesis 7: Affective organizational commitment will be negatively related to turnover intentions.

 Hypothesis 8: Job satisfaction will be negatively related to turnover intentions

 Hypothesis 9: Work stress will be negatively related to job satisfaction.

<center>**Methods**</center>

Participants

 The participants for the current study consisted of 54 direct-care staff protégés and their corresponding mentors in formal mentoring relationships at a large state psychiatric hospital. Of the 54 protégés, 36 (67%) were younger than 40 years old and 26 (48%) were male. Furthermore, 44 (81%) protégés were African-American, while the remaining 10 (19%) were

Caucasian. The majority of protégés (48%) and mentors (96%) had worked at the hospital for more than 24 months.

Procedure

In the recruitment phase, the mentoring research committee handed out flyers, published an article in the hospital newsletter, and sent out a broadcast email to all staff describing the study. Following the recruitment phase, the committee composed 450 packets including an instruction sheet, consent form, and all study measures, which were subsequently distributed to the direct-care staff. The packets were returned to the researchers via internal hospital mail delivery in sealed envelopes. Although the survey was confidential, the participants were asked to identify their mentor or protégé for matching purposes. All names were coded upon being matched and all identifying information was discarded to preserve anonymity.

Measures

Job Satisfaction. The 6-item Global Job Satisfaction scale (GJS), modified by Pond and Geyer (1991), was used to measure job satisfaction (see Appendix B). Responses to this measure are provided using a 5-point scale, with different scale points for each of the six questions. Sample items include, "How does this job compare with your ideal job?" and "In general, how much do you like your job?" Potential scores may range from 6 to 30, with higher scores indicating greater global job satisfaction. The coefficient alpha for the GJS was .88.

Affective Organizational Commitment. The 8-item Affective Organizational Commitment Scale (Allen & Meyer, 1990) was used to measure affective organizational commitment (see Appendix B). Responses to this measure are provided using a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*). Four items are reverse-scored, indicated by an asterisk. Sample items include, "I really feel as if this organization's problems

are my own" and "This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me." Potential scores may range from 7 to 56, with higher scores indicating greater affective organizational commitment. The coefficient alpha for the AOCS was .86.

Work Stress. The 8-item Stress in General Revised scale (SIG-R), developed by Yankelevich, Broadfoot, J. Gillespie, M. Gillespie, & Guidroz (2011), was used to measure work stress (see Appendix B). Responses to this measure are provided using a 3-point scale including 1 (*Yes*) to 2 (*No*) and 3 (*Not sure*). One item is reverse-scored, indicated by an asterisk. Respondents were asked to indicate whether or not items describe their job situation. Sample items include, "demanding", "pressured" and "overwhelming". The values for "Yes", "No", and "Not sure" were re-coded as "1", "0", and "0", respectively. Scores may range from 0 to 8, with a higher score indicating a greater work stress level. The coefficient alpha for the SIG-R was .83.

Turnover Intention. Turnover intention was evaluated using a one-item measure. Responses are provided using a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (*Very Unlikely*) to 7 (*Very Likely*). The item reads, "All in all, how likely is it that you will try to find a new job within the next 12 months?" Research indicates that turnover intention can be reliably measured with a single item.

Humor Frequency. Humor frequency was evaluated with a one-item measure. Responses are provided using a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (*Never)* to 5 (*Very Often*). The item reads, "How often is humor used in your mentoring relationship?"

Mentor Humor Scale. The 5-item Positive Mentor Humor Scale was adapted from the Positive Supervisor Humor Scale developed by Decker and Rotondo (2001) and was used to measure mentor/protégé positive humor style (see Appendix B). Responses to this measure are provided using a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (*Totally Disagree*) to 7 (*Totally Agree*). Sample items include "My mentor/protégé has a good sense of humor" and "My mentor/protégé

communicates with humor." The 5 items are summed to obtain a total score, ranging from 5-35, with a greater score indicating a more positive humor style. The PMHS reported excellent internal consistency with a coefficient alpha of .95.

Mentoring Satisfaction. Mentoring satisfaction was evaluated with a one-item measure. The measure is scored on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (*Very Dissatisfied)* to 7 (*Very Satisfied*). The item reads, "How satisfied are you with your mentoring relationship?"

Data Analysis

After screening the data for missing values and employing list-wise deletion, the final sample consisted of 54 protégés and their corresponding mentors. Following the data screening, an agreement score between mentors and protégés was calculated on the positive humor style scale using the $r_{WG(J)}$ index created by James, Demaree, and Wolf (1984; 1993) for humor style agreement. Thus, the agreement score represented the degree to which similarity existed in the ratings of each other's positive humor style, ranging from 0 to 1, with 1 indicating perfect humor style agreement. Descriptive statistics (i.e., means and standard deviations) and correlations were computed for all study variables (i.e., turnover intentions, affective commitment, job satisfaction, work stress, mentoring satisfaction, humor style agreement, humor frequency, and positive mentor humor style). Descriptive statistics and correlations were also computed for the demographic variables (i.e., age, sex, race, and tenure), which were controlled for in all analyses.

The statistical program, Mplus, was used to test the hypothesized path model. All variables were imputed into the model with specifications to test the fit of the model with the data. The continuous, dependent variables included turnover, affective commitment, job satisfaction, and mentoring satisfaction. The independent variables entered into the model were work stress, humor style agreement, humor frequency, and positive mentor humor style. The

Mplus program runs a series of sequential multiple regressions for each step in the model to calculate path estimates, standard errors, *t*-values, and probability values for each path in the model. The sequential multiple regressions included the following: (1) Affective commitment and job satisfaction predicting turnover intentions, (2) job satisfaction and mentoring satisfaction predicting affective commitment, (3) work stress and mentoring satisfaction predicting job satisfaction, and (4) humor style agreement, humor frequency, and positive mentor humor style predicting mentoring satisfaction.

In addition to path coefficients and their associated probability values, explained variance and residual variance statistics were computed for each dependent variable in the model (i.e., turnover, affective commitment, job satisfaction, and mentoring satisfaction). Furthermore, in order to test the fit of the model with the data, several fit indices were calculated within the Mplus program. In addition to the chi-square "goodness of fit" test, four model fit indices were used including the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and Tucker Lewis Index (TLI). The RMSEA serves as an absolute measure of fit related to the residuals in the model. Acceptable model fit is demonstrated by a RMSEA value less than 0.06 (Hu & Bentler, 1998). The next absolute measure of fit used was the SRMR, which measures the standardized difference between the observed and expected correlation. A value less than 0.08 is generally considered a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1998). The CFI is an incremental measure of fit based on the chi-square-degrees of freedom ratio, adjusted for sample size and the number of parameters. A CFI value of 0.90 or greater indicates acceptable fit of the model (Hu & Bentler, 1998). The final fit index used to test the model fit was the TLI, which is another incremental measure of fit

that is highly correlated with the CFI (Hu & Bentler, 1998). A .05 criterion of statistical significance was employed for all statistical procedures.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Descriptive statistics (i.e., means and standard deviations) and correlations for the current study variables in the path analysis are presented in Table 1. The four demographic variables (i.e., age, sex, race, and gender), which are typically considered weak and inconsistent antecedents of successful mentoring relationships (Eby et al., 2013), were relatively unrelated to each other and the study variables. Specifically, sex was not significantly correlated with any other variable.

Test of Hypotheses

Table 2 provides the decomposition of effects from the Mplus analysis of the hypothesized path model. This table reports the standardized parameter estimate of the effects (i.e., path coefficient), standard errors, and t statistics for all tested effects, as well as the R^2 (i.e., explained variance) values for the four dependent variables in the model (i.e., turnover intentions, affective commitment, job satisfaction, and mentoring satisfaction). The path model was tested as follows: Affective commitment and job satisfaction would influence turnover directly; job satisfaction and mentoring satisfaction would influence affective commitment directly; work stress and mentoring satisfaction would influence job satisfaction directly; positive humor style agreement, humor frequency, and positive mentor humor style would influence mentoring satisfaction directly.

Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 all related to the overall mentoring satisfaction. Specifically, Hypothesis 1 proposed that higher agreement between mentor and protégé ratings of each other's

humor style would lead to increased mentoring satisfaction. As noted in Figure 2, the results of the path analysis indicate that humor style agreement had a significantly positive relationship with mentoring satisfaction ($\beta = .42$, $t = 4.44$, $p < .001$). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported, as the greater the agreement between protégé and mentor ratings of one another's humor style, the greater the protégé's satisfaction with the mentoring relationship. Similarly, Hypothesis 2 proposed that higher levels of mentor humor usage (i.e., higher humor frequency) would be related to increased mentoring satisfaction. The results of the path analysis suggested that humor frequency was significantly and positively related to mentoring satisfaction ($\beta = .39$, $t = 3.95$, $p < .001$). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was supported by the path analysis.

Finally, Hypothesis 3 proposed that the more protégés perceived their mentor utilizing a positive humor style, the more satisfied they would be with the mentoring relationship. The results of the path analysis indicate that positive mentor humor style had a significant positive relationship with mentoring satisfaction ($\beta = .83$, $t = 7.64$, $p < .001$). Thus, support was found for Hypothesis 3. Taken together, the three humor variables were able to account for 73 percent of the variance in mentoring satisfaction.

Hypotheses 4 and 5 both related to the outcomes of mentoring satisfaction. Specifically, Hypothesis 4 proposed that higher levels of mentoring satisfaction would be related to increased affective organizational commitment. The path analysis supported this hypothesis, indicating that mentoring satisfaction had a significant, positive relationship with affective organizational commitment ($\beta = .20$, $t = 1.99$, $p < .05$).

Furthermore, Hypothesis 5 proposed that higher levels of mentoring satisfaction would be related to increased job satisfaction. The path analysis also supported this hypothesis, indicating

that protégés who were more satisfied with their mentoring relationship were significantly more satisfied with their job ($\beta = .46$, $t = 4.55$, $p < .001$).

Hypothesis 6 proposed that higher job satisfaction would be related to increased affective organizational commitment. The path analysis provided support for Hypothesis 6, indicating that job satisfaction had a significantly positive relationship with affective commitment ($\beta = .51$, $t = 4.64$, $p < .001$). Collectively, mentoring satisfaction and job satisfaction explained 49 percent of the variance in affective organizational commitment.

Hypotheses 7 and 8 both related to protégé turnover intentions. Specifically, Hypothesis 7 proposed that affective organizational commitment would be negatively related to turnover intentions. The results of the path analysis provide strong support for Hypothesis 7, with affective organizational commitment significantly and negatively related to turnover intentions ($\beta = -.53$, $t = -4.09$, $p < .001$).

Moreover, Hypothesis 8 proposed that job satisfaction would also be negatively related to turnover intentions. The results of the path analysis did not provide support for Hypothesis 8, with no significant relationship found between job satisfaction and turnover intentions ($\beta = -.22$, $t = -1.18$, $p = .07$). Collectively, affective organizational commitment and job satisfaction were able to explain 51 percent of the variance in turnover intentions.

Finally, Hypothesis 9 proposed that work stress would have a direct negative effect on job satisfaction. The results of the path analysis did not provide support for Hypothesis 9, with no significant relationship found between work stress and job satisfaction ($\beta = -.21$, $t = -1.81$, $p = .07$). Taken together, work stress and mentoring satisfaction accounted for 36 percent of the variance in job satisfaction. Overall, the final model (see Figure 2) demonstrated a good fit to the data. Specifically, it demonstrated a non-significant chi-square, $\chi^2(13, N = 54) = 12.33$, $p = .50$,

indicating that there was no meaningful difference between the observed and expected covariance matrices. Furthermore, this model demonstrated an acceptable RMSEA, SRMR, CFI, and TLI (0.00, 0.06, 1.00, and 1.01 respectively.

Discussion

There is a substantial amount of knowledge regarding what makes mentoring relationships successful and the impact of mentoring on work-related outcomes (Eby et al., 2013). However, research to date has not examined the role humor plays in mentoring relationships and the subsequent work-related outcomes. Humor has been associated with a variety of positive outcomes in similar relationships such as superior-subordinate, teacher-student, and leader-follower dyads (Bryant et al., 1980; Decker, 1987; Decker & Rotondo, 2001; Gkorezis et al., 2011; Vecchio et al., 2009; Wanzer & Frymier, 1999). By integrating humor with mentoring, we believe that a unique contribution was made to both the mentoring and humor literature.

The results indicated that positive humor style agreement, humor frequency, and positive mentor humor style were positively related to mentoring satisfaction. Additionally, mentoring satisfaction exhibited direct, positive effects on both affective organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Finally, support was found for two of the four remaining paths involving the work-related variables. Namely, we found a direct, positive effect for job satisfaction on affective organizational commitment and affective organizational commitment demonstrated a direct, negative effect on turnover intentions. Interestingly, no support was found for the hypothesized effect of job satisfaction on turnover intentions or the effect of work stress on job satisfaction, although both paths approached statistical significance. It is likely that the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intentions was mediated by affective

commitment, as research has demonstrated support for the notion that job satisfaction precedes affective commitment (Kittinger, Walker, Cope, & Wuensch, 2009). Furthermore, the unsupported relationship between work stress and job satisfaction was likely due to the use of a relatively untested and nonspecific measure for work stress. Nonetheless, the collective analysis of model fit suggested that the hypothesized model fit the data extraordinarily well.

Implications

The results of the current study have several implications related to humor, successful mentoring relationships, and work-related outcomes. The first major implication of the current study is the precedent that has been set for humor as an antecedent of successful mentoring relationships. Although Eby et al. (2013) suggested a variety of plausible antecedents of successful mentoring relationships (i.e., demographic characteristics, personality variables, human capital, and relationship attributes), researchers are still not certain as to what variables unequivocally account for success in these relationships. The current study determined that humor may be a novel and noteworthy variable for consideration as an antecedent of mentoring satisfaction. Positive humor likely facilitates interpersonal attraction and represents a facet of deep-level similarity, which are noted by Eby et al. (2013) to be important determinants of successful mentoring relationships.

Moreover, the results suggest that the mentor-protégé dyad represents a new relationship that touts the importance of positive humor. Previous research has established the importance of positive humor in similar relational dyads such as the superior-subordinate (Decker, 1987; Decker & Rotondo, 2001), teacher-student (Bryant, Crane, Comisky, & Zillman, 1980; Wanzer & Frymier, 1999), and leader-follower (Gkorezis, Hatzithomas, & Petridou, 2011; Vecchio, Justin, & Pearce, 2009). Our research proposed that mentors likely function comparably to

superiors, teachers, and leaders with respect to power dynamics, roles, and support. Indeed, it appears that the use of positive humor by mentors results in similar relationship satisfaction with regard to protégés as it does for the aforementioned subordinates, students, and followers. Thus, positive humor appears to be a transportable construct that has great impact in a variety of relationships.

In addition, the current study expanded humor theory by examining humor frequency and humor style agreement as operationalizations of humor. To date, no research has tested the association between humor frequency and relationship satisfaction. Our research provides support for a positive, linear model of humor frequency, whereby higher frequency of humor use was related to increased relationship satisfaction. Also, the current study provided an original humor operationalization through humor style agreement based on other-ratings of positive humor. We found that the mentors and protégés who shared similar ratings about each other regarding positive humor style demonstrated higher mentoring satisfaction. Thus, the findings of the current study suggest that organizations may choose employees that frequently use positive humor in the workplace to serve as mentors for new members. Additionally, organizations may elect to examine a new employee's sense of humor to match that individual with a mentor in order to achieve greater mentoring quality.

Another implication of the current study involves the evidence for a relationship between humor and work-related outcomes. Previous research has demonstrated that positive humor reduces tension, relieves frustration, and facilitates information transfer and communication in the workplace (Duncan, 1982); however, there is a paucity of research regarding humor and work-related attitudes and outcomes. The results suggest that humor impacts the success of mentoring relationships which subsequently affects a protégé's job satisfaction, affective

commitment, and ultimately turnover. Due to its relative importance in successful mentoring relationships, humor may be a valuable predictor of the aforementioned work-related outcomes. Therefore, this research provides support for the incorporation of humor in selection processes and cultural initiatives in order to improve the quality of the workforce. Employers may use an assessment of positive humor style for job applicants, or develop cultural initiatives aimed at increasing positive humor in the workplace.

The final practical implication of this research relies on the increased knowledge regarding the effectiveness of workplace mentoring. Past research has supported the notion that mentoring contributes to increased affective organizational commitment and job satisfaction, as well as decreased turnover intentions (Eby et al., 2013). The current study reproduced these findings, indicating that mentoring is an effective method for engendering positive work attitudes. Furthermore, the current study indicates that the attitudinal outcomes related to mentoring (i.e., affective organizational commitment and job satisfaction) may be more proximal outcomes of mentoring satisfaction than turnover intentions. Indeed, job-related attitudes have been supported as determinants of turnover intentions with regard to mentoring outcomes (Scandura, 1992). Given the supported relationship between mentoring satisfaction and work-related outcomes, the implementation and continual evaluation of organizational mentoring programs is pivotal for success of the organization and its employees.

Study Limitations

Although the current study found several statistically significant paths in the model, three study limitations are associated with this research. First, the study was cross-sectional which suggests that there is potential for the data to be influenced by method variance associated with the measurement method. The cross-sectional nature of the study also implies that any

causational attributions made using the current data should be made with caution. However, the path analytical method which involves sequential multiple regression, combined with empirical evidence for the causational nature of the study variables provides a relatively sound basis for making causal attributions with the results of the current study.

The second limitation of the current study was that all variables were measured using a self-report survey. Self-reported information regarding measures of mentoring satisfaction or other work-related outcomes may be subject to response distortions, such as the social desirability bias or other demand characteristics related to the study. This is of particular concern for measuring job-related attitudes and evaluations of mentors, as participants might have felt pressured to respond in a socially desirable way. However, participants were informed that all identifying information would be coded in such a way as to preserve the anonymity of the data collected in the survey.

An additional limitation of the current study relates to the generalizability of the findings. First, the effects of humor on successful mentoring relationships may be more relevant in certain industries such as human service. Specifically, individuals employed in these types of fields may rely on humor as a coping mechanism more so than other types of employees. Also, these employees may also value interpersonal humor more than individuals in business-oriented occupations. However, previous research on humor has established the importance of humor in other workplace domains, thus providing some support for the notion that humor may be valuable in different industries.

Future Research

In light of the aforementioned study limitations, the current study offers several avenues for future research. First, future endeavors should use a longitudinal design to examine the

stability of the path model across time. This methodology would allow future researchers to match mentors and protégés based on the positive humor style of the mentor, as well as control for humor style agreement among mentoring pairs. Additionally, a longitudinal design would allow researchers to track mentoring pairs from the onset of the relationship, noting the differences in humor frequency, mentoring satisfaction, and other work-related variables across time.

The second avenue for future research consists of testing the current path model in a variety of other industries such as private businesses. As previously mentioned, humor may be specifically relevant for mentoring in human service positions, but not in other types of profit-driven occupations. Testing the current model in other industries will determine the relative importance of humor for successful mentoring relationships within other types of workplaces. Another method of determining the relative importance of humor in successful mentoring relationships would be to incorporate measure of psychosocial and career support (Kram, 1985) in the current model. The inclusion of these types of support in the model could determine how much variance humor accounts for in successful mentoring relationships above and beyond the perceived level of instrumental and psychosocial support provided by the mentor.

A fourth valuable addition to the model would be the application of Martin's (2003) typology of humor styles (i.e., affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive, and self-defeating). Future research should use these styles to compute an agreement score for each humor style, which would provide more information regarding how agreement between the mentors and protégés with respect to various humor styles contributes to successful mentoring relationships. Specifically, high agreement between the mentors and protégés on the positive humor styles (i.e.,

affiliative and self-enhancing) may result in different mentoring outcomes than high agreement on the negative humor styles (i.e., aggressive and self-defeating).

The final avenue for future research involves the use of objective outcomes of successful mentoring relationships in the current model. It will be important to determine whether or not humor in mentoring relationships has distal outcomes on actual turnover or productivity. This line of research would benefit both the humor and mentoring literature. Currently, the research on outcomes of mentoring primarily focuses on attitudinal work outcomes, and could benefit from the examination of more objective work outcomes of successful mentoring relationships.

Conclusions

The current study advances both the humor and mentoring literature by examining the role of humor style agreement, humor frequency, and positive mentor humor style in workplace mentoring relationships. Specifically, humor should be recognized as an important antecedent of successful mentoring relationships. Mentors that exhibit frequent use of positive humor may be viewed by protégés more positively, thus engendering satisfaction with the relationship and increased job attitudinal outcomes. Additionally, the results of this study unequivocally assert that humor is a variable of interest in organizations with important implications for work-related outcomes. Thus, organizations may choose incorporate humor into selection procedures and/or training initiatives for applicants and employees, respectively. Finally, the current research demonstrates the power of successful mentoring on work-related outcomes. Thus, it is important that researchers continue to investigate the impact of humor in the workplace.

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Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Zero-Order Correlations of Variables in the Path Analysis (*N* = 54)

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. TI	2.74	1.42	--											
2. AC	37.41	7.46	-.69***	--										
3. JS	22.67	4.51	-.60***	.68***	--									
4. WS	4.57	2.41	.28*	-.31*	-.36**	--								
5. MS	5.43	1.61	-.44**	.55***	.58***	-.30*	--							
6. HAS	0.97	0.04	.23	-.23	-.26	.18	-.15	--						
7. HF	3.44	0.88	-.36**	.34*	.39**	-.06	.66***	-.33*	--					
8. PMHS	27.39	5.80	-.50***	.56***	.64***	-.35**	.75***	-.54***	.59***	--				
9. Age	2.09	1.01	-.09	.03	.22	-.22	.04	-.03	-.09	.10	--			
10. Sex	1.51	0.51	.07	-.06	-.12	.05	-.11	-.24	-.18	.08	.13	--		
11. Race	4.19	0.39	-.12	.07	.08	.06	.29*	.01	.47***	.17	-.28*	-.11	--	
12. Tenure	5.31	2.01	.35**	-.19	-.13	-.05	-.13	.03	-.21	-.11	.48***	.11	-.27	--

Note. TI = turnover intentions; AC = affective commitment, JS = job satisfaction; WS = work stress; MS = mentoring satisfaction; HAS = humor style agreement; HF; humor frequency; PMHS = positive mentor humor style. * *p* < .05 ** *p* < .01 *** *p* < .00

Table 2

Decomposition of Effects From the Path Analysis

Effect	(Intercept) Standardized Estimate	SE	t	R^2
TI	(0.03)			.51***
on AC	-.53	.130	-4.09***	
on JS	-.22	.120	-1.18	
AC	(-0.12)			.49***
on JS	.51	.109	4.64***	
on MS	.20	.098	1.99*	
JS	(0.05)			.36***
on WS	-.21	.118	-1.81	
on MS	.46	.102	4.55***	
MS	(-0.05)			.73***
on HF	.39	.098	3.95***	
on PMHS	.83	.108	7.64***	
on HSA	.42	.094	4.44***	

Note. TI = turnover intentions; AC = affective commitment, JS = job satisfaction; WS = work stress; MS = mentoring satisfaction; HAS = humor style agreement; HF; humor frequency; PMHS = positive mentor humor style

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$
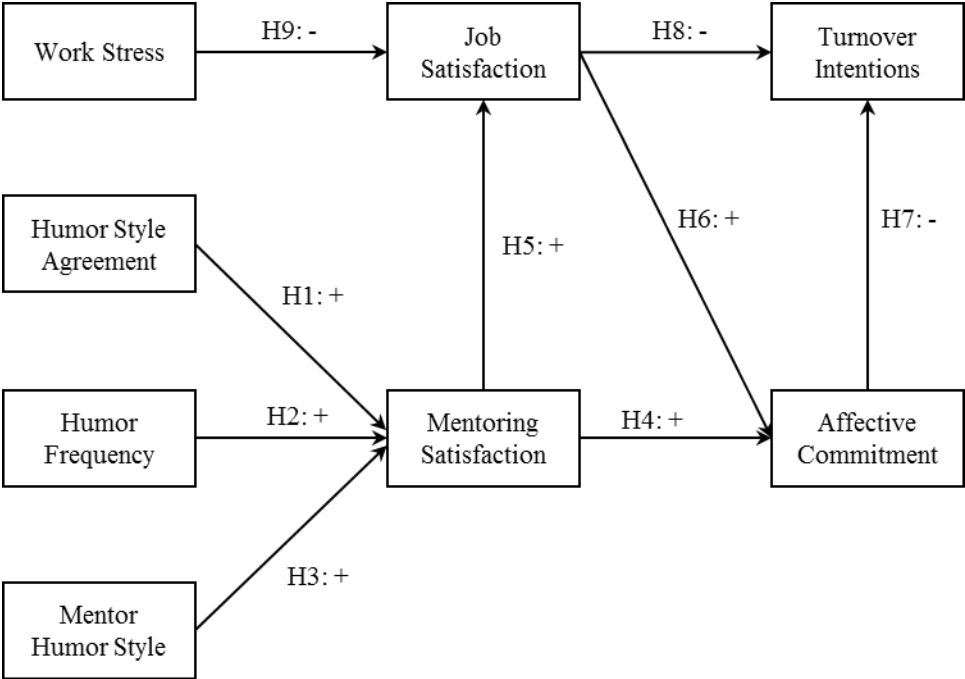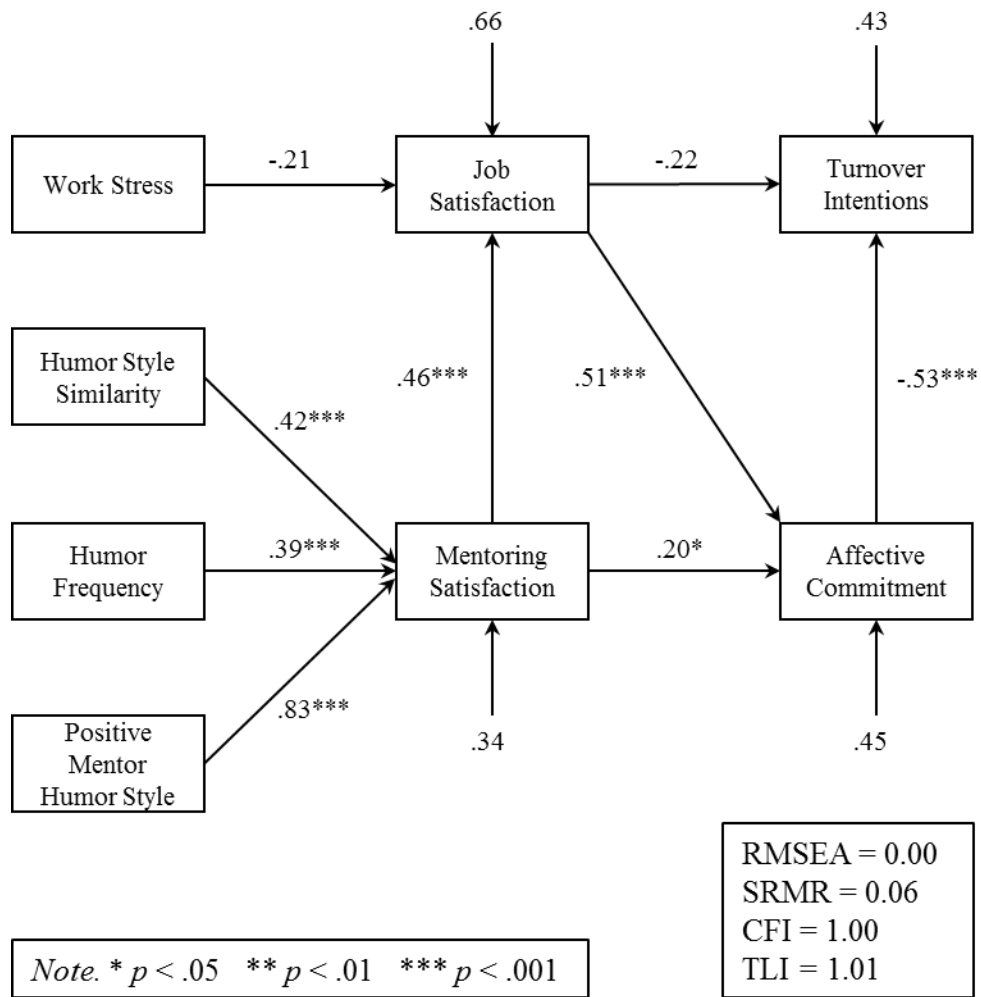
Figure 1. Annotated Hypothesized Path Model

Work Stress — H9: - → Job Satisfaction — H8: - → Turnover Intentions

Humor Style Agreement — H1: +

H5: +

H6: +

H7: -

Humor Frequency — H2: + → Mentoring Satisfaction — H4: + → Affective Commitment

Mentor Humor Style — H3: +

Figure 2. Path Model

Note. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

RMSEA = 0.00
SRMR = 0.06
CFI = 1.00
TLI = 1.01

Appendix A: IRB Materials

Notification of Initial Approval: Expedited

From:	Social/Behavioral IRB
To:	Zachary Love
CC:	Mark Bowler
	Zachary Love
Date:	10/10/2012
Re:	UMCIRB 12-001597
	Workplace Mentoring

I am pleased to inform you that your Expedited Application was approved. Approval of the study and any consent form(s) is for the period of 10/10/2012 to 10/9/2013. The research study is eligible for review under expedited category #7. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this study no more than minimal risk.

Changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. The investigator must submit a continuing review/closure application to the UMCIRB prior to the date of study expiration. The Investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

IRB00000705 East Carolina U IRB #1 (Biomedical) IORG0000418
IRB00003781 East Carolina U IRB #2 (Behavioral/SS) IORG0000418 IRB00004973

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Division of State Operated Healthcare Facilities
Central Regional Hospital

Beverly Eaves Perdue, Governor   J. Michael Hennike
Albert A. Delia, Acting Secretary   Chief Executive Officer
J. Luckey Welsh, Jr., FACHE, Director

September 7, 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

Mr. Love's research proposal was reviewed by members of CRH Nursing Management. We are willing to allow Mr. Love to utilize our facility to design and implement a mentoring program for direct care staff, specifically the Health Care Technicians.

We appreciate this opportunity to assist Mr. Love with his research proposal.

Sincerely,

David Burton, RN, MSN

Associate Chief Nursing Officer

Informed Consent to Participate in Research
Information to consider before taking part in research that has no more than minimal risk.

Dear Participant,

My name is Zachary Love and I am a graduate student in the Department of Psychology at East Carolina University. I am asking you to volunteer to take part in my research study entitled, "Workplace Mentoring: The Moderating Roles of Humor Style Agreement, Humor Frequency, and Mentor Humor Style".

The purpose of this research is to examine how humor affects workplace mentoring relationships. Furthermore, this research will determine how effective mentoring relationships are in large organizations such as psychiatric hospitals. By doing this research, we hope to learn if mentoring increases job satisfaction and organizational commitment, as well as if mentoring decreases turnover intentions and work stress. Additionally, I would like to learn how humor affects any of the previously mentioned outcomes. Your participation in the study is voluntary.

You are being invited to take part in this research because you are a direct-care staff member at Central Regional Hospital. You will be asked to complete a series of short surveys about job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intentions, work stress, humor style, and humor frequency. **When you complete a series of measures for the study, you will be entered into a raffle drawing for a $20 Amazon gift card as a reward.**

Because this research is overseen by the ECU Institutional Review Board, some of its members or staff may need to review my research data. You and your mentor will be given a unique code that will be the only identifier used for you throughout the study. Therefore, when your responses are analyzed, you will not be identified by name. Additionally, the data will be presented in group-format to maintain the confidentiality of your responses.

If you have questions about your rights as someone taking part in research, you may call the UMCIRB Office at phone number 252-744-2914 (M-F, 8:00 am-5:00 pm). If you would like to report a complaint or concern about this research study, you may call the Director of UMCIRB Office, at 252-744-1971.

You do not have to take part in this research, and you can stop at any time. If you decide you are willing to take part in this study, print and sign your name below. Thank you for taking the time to participate in my research.

Print Name: _____   Date: _____

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Sincerely,

Zachary Love, Principal Investigator

Appendix B: Measures

Demographic Questionnaire:

1. What is your age?
- ○ 18-29
- ○ 30-39
- ○ 40-49
- ○ 50-59
- ○ Over 60

2. What is your sex?
- ○ Male
- ○ Female

3. What is your race / ethnicity?
- ○ American Indian
- ○ Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- ○ Asian
- ○ African American
- ○ Caucasian
- ○ Hispanic
- ○ Other _____

4. What is your job title? (Please select all that currently apply)
- ○ TSS I
- ○ TSS II
- ○ TSS III
- ○ TRT member

5. How long have you worked at Central Regional Hospital?
- ○ Less than 2 months
- ○ 2-4 months
- ○ 5-8 months
- ○ 9-12 months
- ○ 13-17 months
- ○ 18-24 months
- ○ More than 24 months

6. If you are a TSS I, please write the full name of your current mentor below.

_____

7. If you are a TSS II, TSS III, or TRT member, please write the full name of your current mentee below.

_____

The GJS:

1. If you had to decide all over again whether to take the job you now have, what would you decide?
- ○ Definitely not take the job
- ○ Probably not take the job
- ○ Maybe take the job
- ○ Probably take the job
- ○ Definitely take the job

2. If a friend asked if he/she should apply for a job like yours with your employer, what would you recommend?
- ○ Not recommend at all
- ○ Probably not recommend
- ○ Maybe recommend
- ○ Probably recommend
- ○ Recommend Strongly

3. How does this job compare with your ideal job?
- ○ Very far from ideal
- ○ Somewhat far from ideal
- ○ Neither close nor far from ideal
- ○ Somewhat close to ideal
- ○ Very close to ideal

4. How does your job measure up to the sort of job you wanted when you took it?
- ○ Not at all like I wanted
- ○ Somewhat not like I wanted
- ○ Neither like nor dislike what I wanted
- ○ Somewhat like I wanted
- ○ Just like what I wanted

5. All things considered, how satisfied are you with your current job?
- ○ Very Dissatisfied
- ○ Dissatisfied
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Satisfied
- ○ Very Satisfied

6. In general, how much do you like your job?
- ○ Dislike Extremely
- ○ Dislike Very Much
- ○ Neither Like nor Dislike
- ○ Like Very Much
- ○ Like Extremely

The AOCS:

1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.
   - ○ Strongly Disagree
   - ○ Disagree
   - ○ Somewhat Disagree
   - ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
   - ○ Somewhat Agree
   - ○ Agree
   - ○ Strongly Agree

2. I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it
   - ○ Strongly Disagree
   - ○ Disagree
   - ○ Somewhat Disagree
   - ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
   - ○ Somewhat Agree
   - ○ Agree
   - ○ Strongly Agree

3. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.
   - ○ Strongly Disagree
   - ○ Disagree
   - ○ Somewhat Disagree
   - ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
   - ○ Somewhat Agree
   - ○ Agree
   - ○ Strongly Agree

4. I think that I could easily become as attached to another organization as I am to this one.
   - ○ Strongly Disagree
   - ○ Disagree
   - ○ Somewhat Disagree
   - ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
   - ○ Somewhat Agree
   - ○ Agree
   - ○ Strongly Agree

5. I do not feel like 'part of the family' at my organization.
   - ○ Strongly Disagree
   - ○ Disagree
   - ○ Somewhat Disagree
   - ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
   - ○ Somewhat Agree
   - ○ Agree
   - ○ Strongly Agree

6. I do not feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization.
○ Strongly Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Somewhat Disagree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Somewhat Agree
○ Agree
○ Strongly Agree

7. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.
○ Strongly Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Somewhat Disagree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Somewhat Agree
○ Agree
○ Strongly Agree

8. I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.
○ Strongly Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Somewhat Disagree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Somewhat Agree
○ Agree
○ Strongly Agree

The SIG-R:

<u>Directions:</u> Please indicate whether or not the following items describe your job situation.

1. Demanding
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   ○ Not Sure

2. Pressured
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   ○ Not Sure

3. Calm
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   ○ Not Sure

4. Many things stressful
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   ○ Not Sure

5. Nerve-wracking
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   ○ Not Sure

6. Hassled
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   ○ Not Sure

7. More stressful than I would like
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   ○ Not Sure

8. Overwhelming
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   ○ Not Sure

The PMHS:

Directions: Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

1. My mentor/mentee has a good sense of humor.
○ Strongly Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Agree
○ Strongly Agree

2. My mentor/mentee communicates with humor.
○ Strongly Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Agree
○ Strongly Agree

3. My mentor/mentee enjoys jokes.
○ Strongly Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Agree
○ Strongly Agree

4. My mentor/mentee tells jokes.
○ Strongly Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Agree
○ Strongly Agree

5. My mentor/mentee uses non-offensive humor.
○ Strongly Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Agree
○ Strongly Agree