EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The Quality of Mentoring Relationships and Mentoring Success

Limor Goldner · Ofra Mayseless

Abstract The quality of the relationships that mentors forge with their protégés is assumed to significantly affect the success of mentoring interventions. Building on previous research, this study examined the association between relationship qualities and protégé functioning. Multiple reporters (e.g., mentors, protégés and teachers) were used in a prospective research design spanning eight months in Israel's largest mentoring program—*Perach*. The sample consisted of 84 protégés ranging in age from 8 to 13 years ($M = 10.75$). Qualities in the mentoring relationship such as closeness, dependency and unrealistic expectations for the continuation and deepening of the relationship, beyond the planned period, were positively associated with the children's social and academic adjustment, and contributed to perceived academic competence, social support and wellbeing. Generalization of positive mentoring experiences to other relationships (such as the mother–child relationship) and the role of unrealistic expectations and dependency as key elements are considered. Implications of the findings for research and mentoring intervention are discussed.

Keywords Mentoring relationship · Dependency · Unrealistic expectations

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Mentoring relationships are among the most significant relationships that children develop with non-parental figures (Cavell et al. 2002; Klaw and Rhodes 1995). Mentoring is commonly defined as a special dyadic relationship between non-professional, non-parental adults and their protégés, and is naturally fairly common. For example 50–80% of American youth report having a meaningful relationship with a non-parental adult (Beam et al. 2002a; Zimmerman et al. 2002). In natural mentoring the relationship is embedded in the young person's social network and seems to fulfill a special empowering role between parents and friends. Since natural mentors are not always part of the social network of youth, especially those from underprivileged or risk populations (Rhodes 2002), organized mentoring programs have been suggested and implemented to fill this gap. The goal of this study was to explore the associations between emotional qualities of mentoring relations, specifically closeness, unrealistic expectations and dependency and protégé adjustment, using reports from protégés, teachers and mentors.

Organized or formal mentoring involves volunteers or part-time paid adults who are coupled with the protégés for a relatively short period of time. Their aim is to empower the youngsters' self, promote their personal development and compensate for lack of role models (DuBois and Silverthorn 2005; Rhodes 1994, 2002; Rhodes et al. 2002). Organized mentoring programs are fairly prevalent; for example, 5 million American youth are currently involved in mentoring programs (Grossman and Rhodes 2002). The increasing prevalence of mentoring programs, their potential contribution to the emotional, academic and social development of various populations (especially risk populations) and the vast budgets invested in these programs (DuBois et al. 2002; Miller 2002; Rhodes 2002) underscore the importance of rigorous research in this domain.

During the last two decades studies of organized mentoring have focused mainly on assessing the academic, social and emotional outcomes of mentoring. Research has shown that mentoring intervention is generally a moderately effective way to promote protégé development in these realms (see recent meta-analyses; Eby et al., in press; DuBois et al. 2002). Based on such outcome-focused examinations, DuBois et al. (2002) suggested that the time was ripe to identify specific process-level factors that could be critical for good mentoring outcomes. In particular, because quality of the mentoring relationship is the main vehicle for change, this was proposed as a central focus for future studies (Nakkula and Harris 2005; Parra et al. 2002; Rhodes et al. 2006).

Recently, Rhodes et al. (2006) suggested a promising model concerning the role of various qualities of the mentor–protégé relationship in mentoring success. According to the model, mentors who offer companionship and genuine caring and support may challenge and help change the negative views protégés have about themselves and their relationships with adults. Providing enrichment activities and direct and indirect "teaching moments" can contribute to protégés' cognitive development, as well as promote academic functioning and school motivation and values. Finally, by serving as role models and advocates, mentors can contribute to the positive identity development of their protégés.

Empirically, the importance of the quality of the mentoring relationships in the success of organized mentoring was highlighted by several studies conducted in the *Big Brothers Big Sisters* (BBBS) mentoring program (DuBois and Neville 1997; Langhout et al. 2004; Rhodes et al. 2005; Parra et al. 2002). DuBois and Neville (1997) found that mentors' feelings of closeness were associated with reports of fewer relationship obstacles, such as arguments and disagreements. Reports of closeness were also associated with mentors' rating of greater benefits for youth. Using path analyses, Parra et al. (2002) found that a feeling of closeness was the final component in the analysis and was linked to greater perceived benefits. Rhodes et al. (2005), who developed a specific mentoring relationship inventory, found that trust reported by the protégés predicted scholastic competence and self-worth over and above the demographic characteristics or duration of the mentoring. Likewise, happiness with the relationship as reported by the protégés predicted attitude to school, after controlling for youth characteristics and prior level of school value.

While closeness, trust and intimacy can promote better protégé functioning, the protégés' need for excessive closeness may become an obstacle to mentoring success. Dependency may be a central issue for designers and practitioners of mentoring programs, and it is often recommended that the mentoring period be long enough (Rhodes and DuBois 2006) to enable protégés to move gradually from a state of dependency to a state of autonomy and agency (Larson 2006). This recommendation is consistent with Grossman and Rhodes' (2002) findings in the BBBS mentoring program. The researchers found that the greatest improvement was among protégés who had been mentored for a period of a year or longer, while protégés whose mentoring period was terminated within the first 3 months suffered significant declines in their global self-worth and perceived academic competence. These negative effects may stem from the sharp and abrupt cessation of the dependency phase, which may activate a sense of rejection and arouse previous painful experiences that hinder protégé functioning.

Though short-term mentoring interventions that usually terminate according to a pre-planned schedule may succeed in cultivating feelings of closeness and hence promote positive outcomes, they may also arouse a sense of dependency that cannot be satisfied. In particular, unrealistic expectations for the continuation and deepening of the relationship may arise. Such expectations cannot be fulfilled by short-term organized mentoring that is limited in time and investment (McAuley 2003; Spencer 2007). In this respect, McAuley (2003) discussed the role of transference and counter transference in mentoring contexts and warned against the occurrence of dysfunctional transference, which could be characterized by the protégé's overdependence on the mentor. Protégés may manifest separation anxiety and inappropriate love, especially during the separation or termination period (McAuley 2003; Miller 2002). Similarly, Scandura, in the field of vocational mentoring (1998), and Spencer, in the field of youth mentoring (2007), warned against the creation of overdependent relationships or unrealistic expectations. According to the authors, both are reasons for early termination of the mentoring relationship.

The Current Study

In this study, we used reports by protégés and mentors to assess qualities of closeness and dependency, as well as unrealistic expectations, and examined their associations with mentoring success as reported by protégés and teachers. The research was conducted in *Perach* (the Hebrew acronym for Mentoring Project), which is the largest nationwide Israeli mentoring program and has been in operation since 1974. *Perach* pairs disadvantaged children with university students, who receive a small grant for this activity (Miller 2002).

Over the years the program has been found to be relatively effective. Two comparative studies regarding *Perach's* effectiveness were conducted at the beginning of

the 80 s (Eisenberg et al. 1983; Fresko and Eisenberg 1985). In a short-term longitudinal study the researchers examined academic and emotional functioning and compared students who participated in the program with a control group (Eisenberg et al. 1983). The treatment group scored higher in aspects such as attitude towards school, homework preparation and more reading in their free time. These findings were supported by reports from parents, teachers and mentors who indicated their satisfaction with the progress of the protégés at school. Two years later the researchers found that the percentage of students who dropped out of school was lower among those who participated in the program, their motivation for learning was stronger and their attitude towards preparing homework was more positive compared with the control group (Eisenberg et al. 1983). Findings of another 2-year study that tested Math and Reading skills among students who participated in the program for a period of 2 years showed a significant cognitive improvement after 1 year of mentoring, especially in Math (Fresko and Eisenberg 1985). In addition, retrospective satisfaction evaluations were gathered annually among samples of coordinators, mentors, parents and teachers. These reports revealed high levels of satisfaction with the program's contribution to the protégés in areas such as self-confidence, general knowledge, social functioning and motivation to learn (Hisherik 2004). However, the role of quality of mentoring relationships in mentoring success and, in particular, the possible effect of excessive dependency has, as yet, not been examined.

Based on the research reviewed above and the suggestions of Rhodes et al. (2006); McAuley (2003); Scandura (1998) and Spencer (2007), we expected closeness in mentoring relationships to be associated with improvements in protégé adjustment. Dependency and unrealistic expectations on the part of the protégés were expected to be associated with deterioration in adjustment.

We made two hypotheses. First, we hypothesized that closeness reported by protégés and mentors would be positively associated with increase in protégés' sense of social support from mother, father and friends; increase in protégés' academic and socio-emotional functioning (as reported by teachers); and in protégés' perceived positive contribution of mentoring to their wellbeing and functioning in the social and academic realms. Second, we expected that dependency as reported by mentors and unrealistic expectations as reported by protégés would be negatively associated with these outcomes. Specifically we expected that dependency reported by mentors and unrealistic expectations reported by protégés would be negatively associated with improvement in protégés' reports on their social support from mother, father and friends; improvement in teachers' reports on protégés' academic and socio-emotional functioning; and protégés'

perceived positive contribution of mentoring to wellbeing and functioning in the social and academic realms. In addition, the combined contribution of the various qualities of the relationship to mentoring outcomes was examined.

Method

Participants

Protégés were drawn from six elementary schools in a low socio-economic neighborhood in a district served by *Perach*. Permission to participate in the study was obtained for 92 of 120 (77%) protégés in the fourth to the sixth grades. At Time 2 eight protégés dropped out, leaving 84 protégés in the statistical analyses. There was no difference in any of the study variables between the protégés who remained in the study and those who dropped out.

About half the participant protégés were boys ($n = 44$, 52%) and 48% were girls ($n = 40$). Protégés' mean age at the start of the mentoring was 10.75 years (range 8–13, $SD = 1.07$). Half of the sample came from married families ($n = 40$, 48%); 20% ($n = 17$) were children from divorced families; and 14% ($n = 11$) were from single-parent families without contact with the father. 4% ($n = 3$) of the protégés had no contact with the mother. Data regarding family status was not recorded for 13 protégés. Parents of Israeli origin accounted for 45% ($n = 38$) of the protégés. Half the children had parents who came from the former Soviet Union ($n = 44$, 52%) and 2% ($n = 2$) had parents of Ethiopian origin. In addition, 78 mentors and 81 teachers participated in the study, so n for the analyses varied depending on the measure used. None of the background variables assessed in this study was associated with the study variables.

Mentors are Bachelor degree students drawn from universities and colleges in Israel. The students voluntarily register for the mentoring program and receive a partial scholarship in return for their participation. Their age usually ranges from 20 to 27 years. In this study 51% ($n = 40$) of the mentors were males and the balance ($n = 38$) were females.

Setting

Perach mentoring intervention is relatively structured and short-term, beginning each academic year in November and continuing through the end of June; a total of 8 months. The program serves elementary school children from second to sixth grade who receive at least 4 h of contact per week, with help mainly in academic and social domains. Since the project is relatively closely supervised, the length of the relationship and frequency of the meetings

are similar among the different dyads. Mentors receive monthly guidance from *Perach* coordinators on specific issues such as typical difficulties in the mentoring relationship, how to structure activities, or preparation for separation.

Procedure

Time 1 (start of the mentoring) assessment took place during the first month of the mentoring and Time 2 (end of the mentoring) assessment was during the last month of the relationship, when separation issues already surface. Hence the time span between Time 1 and Time 2 assessments was approximately eight months. Protégés completed the Social Support Questionnaire (Sarason et al. 1983) at the beginning of the mentoring and three questionnaires—the Social Support Questionnaire (Sarason et al. 1983), the Network of Relationships Inventory (Furman 2000, personal communication) and a retrospective inventory on mentoring contribution—at the end of the mentoring (Time 2). Mentors completed the Student–Teacher Relationship Scale (Pianta and Steinberg 1992) at the end of the mentoring. Teachers completed two questionnaires—Rating Scale for School Adjustment (Smilansky and Shfatia 1974) and the Teacher–Child Rating Scale (Hightower et al. 1986) at the beginning (Time 1) and at the end (Time 2) of the mentoring. Protégés completed the inventories in small groups of 10 children. The examiner read the items and explained difficult words. Teachers and mentors completed the inventories individually.

Measures

Closeness and Dependency—Report by Mentors

Student–Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) (Pianta and Steinberg 1992) was used to assess closeness and dependency within the relationship as reported by the mentors. The scale is a 28-item rating scale designed to assess teachers' perceptions of their relationship with a particular student on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (does not describe me at all) to 5 (describes me very well). Items are worded to assess teachers' feelings and beliefs about the relationship with a particular student. For this study the word "protégé" replaced the word "student" and only two subscales were used: closeness (11 items, e.g., "I share an affectionate, warm relationship with my protégé", "My protégé seems secure with me") and dependency (5 items e.g., "My protégé overreacts to separation from me", "My protégé constantly needs reassurance from me"). Mentors completed the inventory at the end of the mentoring.

Internal reliability in the original study was moderately good (for the closeness subscale $\alpha = .86$ and for the

dependency subscale $\alpha = .68$). Internal reliability (Cronbach's α) in this study for the closeness subscale was $\alpha = .73$, and for the dependency subscale $\alpha = .60$. The moderate level of the internal reliability probably reflects the small number of items (e.g., only 5 items in the dependency sub-scale). The correlation between closeness and dependency was $r = .32$ ($p < .01$, $n = 80$) demonstrating that they are similar yet distinct qualities of the relationship.

Closeness and Unrealistic Expectations—Report by Protégées

The Network of Relationships Inventory (NRI: Furman 2000, personal communication) was used to assess closeness and unrealistic expectations reported by the protégés. The inventory contains 30 items that assess ten emotional relationship qualities. The list of the ten qualities contains seven emotional provisions (reliable alliance, companionship, instrumental aid, intimacy, affection, nurturance and admiration) based on Weiss's (1974) model of emotional provisions (Furman and Buhrmester 1985) and three additional relationship qualities (conflict, antagonism, and relative power) designed to tap negative interchanges. In this research, six of the seven emotional provisions scales (companionship, instrumental aid, intimacy, nurturance, affection, and admiration) were used to asses a close mentoring relationship (e.g., "How much does your mentor like or love you?"). Cronbach's α for a closeness scale comprising the six subscales was .95. Furthermore, the original reliable alliance scale and three extra items that were developed by the authors specifically for the research were administered to the protégés to assess their unrealistic expectations from the mentor (e.g., "How sure are you that the mentoring relationship will last no matter what?", "How sure are you that your relationship will continue in the years to come?"); (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$). Protégés were asked to report the extent to which each quality was present in the mentoring. Ratings were on a five-point Likert scale (1 = little or none; 5 = very much). Scale scores were derived by averaging across the items comprising the scales.

The correlation between closeness and unrealistic expectations was quite high ($r = .77$, $p < .001$, $n = 82$), implying that these two qualities are similarly perceived by the mentors. However, since the two scales capture two conceptually distinct qualities and there was still about 40% non-shared variance, we decided to retain the two scales as distinct variables in our statistical analyses. Due to problems of multicollinearity, the two scales were combined to form one scale of desired closeness for the regression analyses only.

Protégés' Academic, Social and Emotional Adjustment—Report by Teachers

Two questionnaires, the Rating Scale for School Adjustment (Smilansky and Shfatia 1974) and The Teacher–Child Rating Scale (TCRS: Hightower et al. 1986), were completed by teachers to assess protégés school adjustment at Time 1 and again at Time 2. The scores of the items in the two questionnaires were combined to derive three composite scales: academic, social and emotional functioning. The Rating Scale for School Adjustment (Smilansky and Shfatia 1974) includes three main factors: (a) emotional adjustment, (b) academic adjustment and (c) social adjustment. Responses for each item were given on a five-point Likert scale (1 = not at all to 5 = very much; e.g., "it is almost impossible to interest her/him in anything", "Child has trouble in the company of children). The reliability and validity of the inventory are well established (Granot and Mayseless 2001; Levi-Shiff et al. 1998). The Teacher–Child Rating Scale (TCRS: Hightower et al. 1986) is a 36-item inventory designed to assess children's competence and difficulties in the classroom using a five-point Likert scale (1 = not at all to 5 = very much; (e.g., "disruptive in class", "anxious, worried", "underachieving, not working up to his/her ability"). Hightower et al. (1986) reported high reliability (higher than .90) and validity indices from kindergarten through grade six. Furthermore the TCRS scales are highly correlated with scales from other well validated behavior check lists and have been shown to be related to aspects of school adjustment such as achievement, retention and observation of classroom behavior (Hightower et al. 1986).

Due to high correlations across the subscales of the academic and the socio-emotional domains of the two questionnaires (Rating Scale for School Adjustment: Smilansky and Shfatia 1974; TCRS: Hightower et al. 1986), a data reduction procedure was done based on a factor analysis. Three composite scales were constructed by calculating an average score for items comprising the relevant scales: an academic functioning scale including comprehension, interest, concentration, scholastic ambition, scholastic self, learning skills and task-orientation; a social functioning scale including likeability, sociability, leadership, social assertiveness and social skills; and an emotional functioning scale including emotional balance, moodiness (reverse coded), discipline, independence, acting out (reverse coded), shy-anxious (reverse coded) and frustration tolerance. High scores on the scales indicated good adjustment. Internal reliability (Cronbach's α) for the composite scales was high: Emotional functioning composite scale—α Time 1 = .80 and α Time 2 = .86; Social functioning composite scale—α Time 1 = .81 and α Time 2 = .77; Academic functioning composite scale—α Time 1 = .92 and α Time 2 = .95).

Social Support—Report by Protégés

Protégés completed the eight-item Social Support Questionnaire at Time 1 and Time 2. The questionnaire is a short version of the 27-item social support questionnaire (Sarason et al. 1983). The inventory assesses the level of trust and satisfaction with available support from various figures such as mother, father, best friend and close friends, on a five-point Likert scale (e.g., "I can really trust on my mother to listen me when I need to talk", "My father really appreciates me as a person"). Although the original inventory was designed for adults, researchers have also used the questionnaire for younger children (e.g., Kashani et al. 1994).

In this study, as in previous studies (e.g., Brock et al. 1996), high correlations were found between the scores for trust and satisfaction for the different figures (with correlations ranging from .87 to .97) indicating a lack of distinction between these qualities of the support. Following the recommendation of Brock et al. (1996), the trust and satisfaction scores were averaged into one general measure of social support for each figure. High correlations ($r = .70$ at Time 1 and $r = .84$ at Time 2) were also found between best friend's support and close friends' support; therefore, these two indicators were likewise combined by averaging across the two scores. Thus three general scores of social support were constructed by calculating an average score for each figure's support: mother, father and friends. Internal reliability (Cronbach's α) for mother's support scale at Time 1 was α = .77 and at Time 2 α = .74; the respective figures for father's support scale were α = .80 and α = .82 and for friends' support scale α = .84 and α = .88.

Mentoring Contribution to Learning, Social Support, and Wellbeing—Report by Protégés

Protégés also completed the Mentoring Contribution Questionnaire. This questionnaire was designed specifically for this research and was completed by protégés at Time 2 to assess their estimation of the contribution of mentoring to the academic, social, and emotional domains. The questionnaire contained 20 items to be rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = not true at all, to 5 = very true). Three scales were constructed: *Contribution to learning* skills scale (seven items, e.g., "The mentoring helped me go to school more organized and prepared", "The mentoring improved my reading ability": α = .81); Contribution to social support (seven items, e.g., "Due to the mentoring I have more friends", "Because of the mentoring I'm not alone anymore": α = .83); and Contribution to emotional wellbeing scale (six items, e.g., "The mentoring made me feel good about myself", "Due to the mentoring I feel I can trust myself": α = .92).

Social Desirability—Report by Proteges

Protégés' potential social desirability biases were assessed by ten items from Weinberger Adjustment Inventory (Weinberger and Schwartz 1990) to control for this possible bias. The inventory contains statements that are usually answered affirmatively. Protégés need to choose whether the statement is "true" or "false" for them (e.g., "Sometimes I don't do something that somebody asked me to do" or "Sometimes I don't keep my promises"; Cronbach's α = .73). The social desirability score was obtained by summing the negative responses. Social desirability was not significantly associated with any of the study variables.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

The associations between mentors' and protégés' reports on the quality of their relationships were not significant, implying that the two parties probably had different experiences and perceptions of the quality of the relationship. We further examined the associations for the same variables across the two assessment times (e.g., perception of mother's support at Time 1 and at Time 2). As might be expected for assessments of the same construct across a time span of 8 months, the correlations were all significant and high, ranging from r = .43 ($p < .01$) for perception of father's support as reported by protégés to r = .86 ($p < .01$) for emotional adjustment as reported by teachers.

We further examined the association across reporters in assessments of the experiences and functioning of the

protégés for Time 1 and Time 2 assessments. For Time 1 assessments, perceptions of social support as reported by protégés were not significantly associated with perceptions of teachers with regard to protégés' functioning in the academic, social and emotional domains. For Time 2 assessments the perception of social support from father was significantly associated with teachers' reports on protégés' social (r = .24, $p < .05$) and emotional functioning (r = .28, $p < .05$). None of the other associations reached significance.

The Association Between the Quality of the Relationship and Mentoring Success

Difference scores between Time 2 and Time 1 protégé reports (8 months apart) on social support and between Time 2 and Time 1 teacher reports on adjustment were computed, with positive scores denoting improvement. The associations between the qualities of the mentoring relationship and mentoring success were examined by computing partial Pearson correlations between the reports on the quality of the relationship and the various difference scores controlling for the respective functioning scores at Time 1 (i.e., predicting the improvement in perceived support from mothers, controlling for Time 1 perceived support from them; see Table 1). This procedure follows recommendations on the use of difference scores in analyses and allows for the control of a possible ceiling effect and a possible effect of shared error variance between Time 1 and Time 2 assessments (Bereiter 1963; Cronbach and Furby 1970).

As hypothesized, and as can be seen in Table 1, closeness as reported by protégés was positively associated with

Table 1 Association between relationship quality and mentoring outcomes

Outcomes	Closeness (protégés' report)	Unrealistic expectations (protégés' report)	Closeness (mentors' report)	Dependency (mentors' report)
Protégés' reports on protégés' functioning[a]				
Change in mother's support	.26*	.20 #	−.03	.04
Change in father's support	.01	.00	.11	.14
Change in friends' support	.10	.09	−.05	.08
Protégés' retrospective reports				
Contribution to learning	.39***	.35**	−.04	.11
Contribution to social support	.56***	.53***	.05	.36*
Contribution to wellbeing	.73***	.63***	.00	.27*
Teachers' reports on protégés' functioning[a]				
Change in academic functioning	.18	.24#	.25*	.25*
Change in emotional functioning	.01	.07	.03	.05
Change in social functioning	.30*	.27*	.19	.21

[a] Controlling for Time 1 assessment of the same construct

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, # $p < .10$, n = 59–80

improvement in mother's support as reported by protégés (Time 2 minus Time 1), controlling for perceived mother's support at Time 1 ($r = .26$, $p = .05$) and improvement in social functioning as reported by teachers (Time 2 minus Time 1), controlling for social functioning at Time 1 ($r = .30$, $p = .05$). Furthermore, closeness as reported by protégés was positively associated with protégés' reports regarding the contribution of mentoring to well-being ($r = .73$, $p = .001$), to social support ($r = .56$, $p = .001$) and to learning ($r = .39$, $p = .001$). In addition, closeness as reported by mentors was positively associated with improvement in academic functioning reported by teachers (Time 2 minus Time 1), controlling for academic functioning at Time 1 ($r = .25$, $p = .05$).

Interestingly and contrary to our hypothesis, unrealistic expectations as reported by protégés were positively correlated with improvement in social functioning reported by the teachers, controlling for social functioning reported at Time 1 ($r = .27$, $p = .05$). Unrealistic expectations reported by protégés were also positively correlated with protégés' reports regarding the contribution of mentoring to well-being ($r = .63$, $p = .00$), to social support ($r = .53$, $p = .00$) and to learning ($r = .35$, $p = .01$). The associations between unrealistic expectations and improvement for mothers' social support reported by protégés controlling for mothers' social support reported at Time 1 ($r = .20$, $p = .10$), as well as the association between unrealistic expectations reported by protégés and improvement in academic functioning reported by the teachers, controlling for academic functioning reported at Time 1 ($r = .24.$, $p = .10$) approached significance.

Additionally, and again contrary to our hypothesis, dependency as reported by mentors was positively correlated with improvement in academic functioning reported by teachers, controlling for academic functioning reported at Time 1 ($r = .25$, $p = .01$). Dependency (mentors' reports) was also positively correlated with reports by protégés regarding the contribution of mentoring to social support ($r = .36$, $p = .05$) and to well-being ($r = .27$, $p = .05$) (see Table 1). Overall, the data implied that closeness, unrealistic expectations and dependent relationships were associated with protégés' perceptions regarding the mentoring contribution and their improved functioning in academic and social realms.

In order to examine the joint contribution of various aspects of the relationship to mentoring outcomes, three analyses of hierarchical regression were conducted for the dependent variables in which more than one predictor was significant: change in academic functioning reported by teachers, contribution of mentoring to learning reported by protégés and contribution of mentoring to social support reported by protégés. For each regression analysis only the relationship variables that were significantly correlated

with the dependent variable were entered. To avoid multicollinearity, it was decided to adopt a conservative approach and combine the protégés closeness and unrealistic expectations scales into one scale termed "desired closeness". For the regressions on contribution of mentoring to learning and contribution of mentoring to social support, which were only assessed at Time 2, there was only one step in which the scales assessing qualities of the relationship were entered. For the regression on protégé academic functioning, in the first step the protégés' functioning in the academic realm at the beginning of the mentoring was entered to control for base line level, and in the second step the closeness and the dependency scales were entered (see Table 2).

Relationship qualities accounted for 11% of protégés' perception regarding the contribution of the relationship to learning, with only desired closeness reported by protégés reaching significance. With regard to protégés' perceptions of the contribution of mentoring to social support, the desired closeness reported by protégés and the dependency scale reported by mentors accounted for 39% of the variance; both predictors were significant. With regard to teachers' reports on protégés' academic functioning, the closeness and dependency scales accounted for 6% of the variance, though neither was independently significant (see Table 2).

Discussion

This study demonstrated a clear association between the quality of the mentoring relationship and improvement in protégés' academic and social functioning after 8 months of mentoring intervention. Improvement was assessed using reports by protégés and teachers at the beginning and at the end of the mentoring intervention. Qualities of the mentoring relationship were also associated with perceived mentoring contribution to learning skills, social support and wellbeing reported by protégés.

As expected and similar to previous studies (e.g., Beam et al. 2002b; Greenberger et al. 1998; Parra et al. 2002; Rhodes et al. 2000; Rhodes et al. 2005), closeness in the mentoring relationship was associated with protégé adjustment and perceived mentoring contribution by protégés. These associations were maintained within reporter (i.e., the protégés) as well as across reporters, underscoring the strength of these effects. For example closeness reported by mentors was associated with improvement in academic functioning reported by teachers. Similarly, closeness reported by protégés was associated with improvement in social adjustment reported by teachers. Nevertheless, in line with the importance of subjective experience in promoting change, protégé reports regarding

Table 2 Regression analyses: emotional qualities of the mentoring relationship as predictors of mentoring outcomes

Predictor	Adjusted R square	F model	Beta
Predicting contribution to learning			
Desired closeness—protégés' reports			.37**
Dependency—mentors' reports			.01
Total adjusted R square	.11**		
F final model		F (2,69) = 5.38**	
Predicting contribution to social support			
Desired closeness—protégés' reports			.55***
Dependency—mentors' reports			.20*
Total adjusted R square	.39 ***		
F final model		F (2,70) = 24.00***	
Predicting academic functioning			
First step	.03		
Academic functioning at the beginning of the mentoring (teachers' report)		F (1,60) = 2.69	−.21
Second step	.06		
Academic functioning at the beginning of the mentoring (teachers' report)		F (2,58) = 2.58*	−.22
Closeness—mentors' reports			.19
Dependency—mentors' reports			.18
Total adjusted R square	.09*		
F final model		F (3,61) = 2.95*	

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

closeness showed more consistent associations with the various outcomes than reports of closeness by the mentors, both within (reflecting also a same-source bias) and across reporters. These findings suggest that closeness in the mentoring relationship serves as an important mechanism for protégé improvement in adjustment. In this sense it is important for designers of organized mentoring programs to try to enhance such qualities, for example by alerting mentors to the significance of closeness in promoting protégé improvement and helping them behave in a warm and responsive manner to advance this quality. At the same time, it is important to focus on improving optimal structural practices such as the duration of the mentoring period, mutual activities for protégés and mentors and parents' involvement.

In our study, perceived closeness with mentors was associated with reported improvement in social support by mothers, but not with fathers or with friends. In general, changes in perceived support by members of the child's social network who do not participate in the mentoring intervention might not be expected to occur readily, especially in a short-term intervention such as *Perach*. Hence the small but significant association with mothers' support should be emphasized. Though *Perach* mentoring intervention does not directly target the child's primary attachment working models, these findings might imply possible generalization from mentoring experience to other relationships (i.e., mothers) and the possible contribution of

adult figures outside the family (e.g., mentor) to the development of a positive script in which others are perceived as caring and the self as trustworthy. By offering an additional supportive and caring script, which might be integrated into the youngster's organization of close relations, mentoring could contribute to a renewed evaluation of the social network as more available and satisfactory and of the self as worthy and loved (Rhodes et al. 1994; Rhodes et al. 1999); hence it may be used as a compensatory and a corrective experience. Similar findings were indicated in previous research. Grossman and Tierney (1998) found that adolescents who had mentors, compared to those who did not, evaluated their relationships with their mothers with less criticism and hostility. Furthermore, in their examination of the paths that improve protégés' academic functioning, Rhodes et al. (2000), found that academic improvement was mediated by improving the protégé–parent relationship. The finding that only the perceived support of mothers was enhanced may reflect the centrality of this relationship in the protégé's social network and hence its sensitivity to internal improvements in wellbeing.

Interestingly, in addition to closeness in the relationships, unrealistic expectations and dependency were also qualities associated with mentoring success. These unexpected findings contradict McAuley's (2003) and Scandura's contention (1998), and previous findings in the field of teaching in the US, which link dependency between teachers and students to deterioration in social and

academic functioning (Pianta and Steinberg 1992; Pianta et al. 1995). For example, researchers who investigated the association between open communication, dependency and conflictual bonds with teachers at school and social and academic achievements among pre- and elementary-school students found that a warm connection with teachers served as a buffer guarding against transfer to special education classes or repeating the same class (Pianta and Steinberg 1992; Pianta et al. 1995), while student–teacher relationships in kindergarten, marked by conflict and dependency, were related to negative academic and behavioral outcomes through eighth grade (Hamre and Pianta 2001).

Several explanations can be proposed for this association. First, the positive association of dependency and unrealistic expectations with positive outcomes may be related to protégés' desire to promote their self-worth and may reflect their motivation and hope for change and development. Clinging to the mentor represents protégés' hopeful fantasies of extending their social network, satisfying their need to belong and reducing their stress of being alone. Though unrealistic, such optimistic fantasies, in and of themselves, may serve a positive role in furthering protégés' functioning and well-being (Chang and Sanna 2003; Fournier et al. 2002). The positive effects of dependency and unrealistic expectations in this sample might also be related to previous findings among at-risk children. These children were found to seek excessive physical proximity with non-parental adult figures such as coaches and teachers, as a compensating experience and this excessive proximity seemed, at times, to provide them with a greater sense of security (Lynch and Cicchetti 1991, 1992).

Another possible explanation relates to the time the quality of the relationship was assessed, which in our study was during the separation phase. In this phase, behaviors such as over-dependence on the mentor or unrealistic expectations concerning the continuation of the relationship might be magnified in reaction to the approaching separation and might be quite normative, especially if a good and close relationship has been established. In fact, in this phase these reactions may reflect the strength and significance of the relationship that was established. In this case we would expect that the negative reactions and possibly negative outcomes might surface only after cessation of the relationship.

Another relevant explanation for the positive effects of dependency and unrealistic expectations might be a cultural-contextual one. Though generally dependent relationships are negatively regarded in individualistic societies and are expected to lead to negative outcomes (Pianta and Steinberg 1992; Pianta et al. 1995), the meaning and implications of dependency may be different in different cultures. Being a developed, industrial and western culture, Israeli Jewish society is very similar to the US in its focus on individualistic values (Mayseless and Scharf 2003; Schwartz 1994). However, compared with the US Israel is considered more collectivistic and, in particular, is characterized by its higher evaluation of cohesiveness. Israeli Jewish society emphasizes the community and its integrity, and conspicuously places high value on the family, belonging to a social group, feelings of connectedness, reliance on community members and involvement with other Israelis (Mayseless 1998; Mayseless and Salomon 2003; Mayseless and Scharf 2003; Peres and Katz 1981; Schwartz 1990; Schwartz and Bardi 2001). The formation of a close and dependent relationship with adults might not be seen as problematic and might even be somewhat expected in Israeli society, which highlights connectedness among its members, particularly with adult caregivers outside the family. Thus, the positive correlations of dependency and unrealistic expectations with mentoring success in our sample may reflect a different meaning attributed to this property of the relationship in the mentoring dyad. Finally, the high correlation in mentors' reports between the scales assessing closeness and unrealistic expectations should be noted. This correlation may reflect a measurement problem: mentors may have had difficulties distinguishing between these relationship qualities. Nevertheless, protégés responses showed a differentiation between closeness and dependency, though the internal reliabilities of the scales were only moderate. It might be the task of future research to explore these different possibilities.

In our study, perceptions of mentors and protégés regarding the quality of their relationships were not significantly associated. This disparity might imply a major difference in the perception of the two parties concerning the relationship. It is not clear why there was such a difference in the perception, yet it is important to note that both perspectives were associated with outcomes of the mentoring program. Previous studies examining reports by other dyads regarding the quality of their relationships, such as parents and children or husbands and wives, found only low to moderate levels of association (e.g., Cook and Goldstein 1993). This is so, despite the fact that these relationships are quite long, highly central in the lives of the participants and involve extended periods of time together where shared experiences and perceptions can be established. In comparison, an organized mentoring relationship is temporary, usually less central in the lives of the participants and involves much less time spent together. It may be the case that similarity in perception of a dyadic relationship by the engaged parties involves inter-subjectivity that might take time and special effort to develop. Future studies may need to address this issue and look at moderators that could help identify dyads in which there is

high versus low correspondence in perceptions of the relationship.

Most correlations between the quality of relationships and mentoring outcomes were found primarily between protégés' reports on the qualities of the mentoring relationship and their reports on their functioning. Mentors' reports were not consistently associated with protégés' outcomes, which might limit the conclusions that can be drawn from the data. A shared source of bias is a possibility, but this profile of correlations may also reflect an expected outcome rather than a bias. As we have seen, there was a lack of correspondence between mentors' and protégés' perceptions of their relationships. In this study, we assessed changes in protégés' functioning, not changes in mentors' functioning. In this case the protégés' own subjective perception of the quality of the relationship should be more central and influential in affecting change in their functioning than perception by other reporters. A similar point was raised regarding the importance of adolescents' subjective perception of the conflict between their parents, compared to the perceptions of the parents or observers, in affecting the adolescents' functioning (Harold and Conger 1997). Had we assessed changes in mentors' perceptions (e.g., how mentoring contributed to their sense of efficacy or worth) we might have seen that the mentors' perception of the quality of the relationships becomes central in predicting these outcomes. It is recommended to further explore the effects of the different points of view of mentors and protégés in future studies.

Surprisingly, neither closeness nor dependency or unrealistic expectations were associated with change in emotional functioning reported by teachers. Several explanations might be suggested. First, possibly these aspects are more difficult to change than academic and social functioning as they relate to the child's self concept, which is based on internalized representations reflecting countless experiences in the child's life. In contrast, academic and social functioning is generally more connected to actual changes and may more easily be altered in changing circumstances. Furthermore, teachers may be better observers of children's academic and social functioning than of their more internal emotional states, reflected in their wellbeing or emotional functioning. In line with this suggestion, though teachers' reports on the protégés' emotional functioning were not associated with mentoring qualities, the reports by the protégés themselves regarding the contribution of mentoring to their wellbeing were significantly associated with protégés' and mentors' reports of the quality of the relationships.

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. The study design did not include a control group and the sampling of the research population was not random; therefore it did not necessarily represent the entire

Perach population. In addition, the findings implied an association between close relationships, dependent relationships and unrealistic expectations and mentoring success among a single mentoring organization serving middle school protégés in an urban area and one cultural context. It might be the task of future studies to explore whether these findings also apply to other programs such as school-based or cross-aged mentoring, and other cultures and contexts, as well as to assess related variables such as number of meetings, place of the mentoring, amount of contact or type of mentoring activities.

In sum, this study provided cross-cultural evidence of the association between closeness in mentoring relationships and progress in protégés' social and academic adjustment even in a short-term intervention. The study further highlighted the importance of examining the role of dependency and unrealistic expectations in the progress of protégés following a mentoring intervention. In particular, although scholars often emphasize adolescents' need for autonomy, this research showed the importance of dependent relationships between non-parental adults and young teenagers in promoting the teenagers adjustment. These findings underscore the importance of close mentoring relationships that respond to the need of disadvantaged young adolescents for a corrective relationship with a non-parental adult figure and the facilitating role such relationships, even dependent ones, may have on their adjustment.

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