

Motivation of paid peer mentors and unpaid peer helpers in higher education

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Abstract

While considerable research supports the use of peer mentoring to improve academic performance and decrease student attrition, few studies have examined the motives of peer mentors to take on this role and less clear are distinctions in peer mentor motivation in paid versus unpaid settings. Using semi-structured interviews, this study explored the motivations of student peer mentors in voluntary and paid peer mentoring services at the University of Ottawa, Canada. The findings showed that both paid and unpaid mentors reported being motivated by self-oriented reasons, such as learning about themselves and fulfillment, but that paid mentors were primarily motivated by generativity, or the desire to help young people, while volunteer peer helpers reported being highly motivated to fulfill social needs. This research helps shed light on the impact of payment on motivation to perform the mentoring function and on the communication strategies which may be used to attract student mentors to this position.

Key words: Peer mentoring, motivation, student support, volunteerism, higher education

Introduction

Peer mentoring, in which experienced students help struggling students, either informally or through a formal mentoring programme, has been cited as an intervention that can improve the retention, academic success, and educational experience of university and college students (Freedman, 1993; Johnson, 2002; Kram, 1983; McLean, 2004; Pagan & Edwards-Wilson, 2002; Topping, 1996). Many institutes of higher education have thus implemented some form of peer mentoring or peer helping programme as part of their student support services (Jacobi, 1991; Johnson, 2002; Tinto, 1998). These programmes match mentors and students who are roughly equal in age, experience, and power to serve one or both of two main functions: a task function (providing advice, support, and information related to course work, task accomplishment, study skills, etc.) or a psychosocial function (providing emotional and psychological support) (Kram & Isabella, 1985).

In addition to fulfilling the needs of a protégé, the literature shows that mentors reap many benefits from the mentoring experience. In the workplace, mentors can enjoy greater salary, greater promotion rates, and stronger subjective career success than individuals without any previous mentoring experience (Allen, Lentz, & Day, 2006). In addition, mentors may experience career revitalization, social recognition, and personal satisfaction (Allen, Poteet, & Burroughs, 1997; Burke, McKeen, & McKenna, 1994; Jacobi, 1991; Scandura, Tejada, Werther, & Lankau, 1996). In the university context, research has found that peer mentors gain confidence in facilitating small group focused learning, a deeper understanding of the subject matter covered, and enhanced problem solving skills (Topping, 1996). One study concluded that the mentoring experience enabled peer mentors to establish and maintain networks, or social capital, throughout the university (Terrion, Phillion, & Leonard, 2007). Similarly, in their study of the experience of university peer mentors, Dye, Pinnegar, & Robinson (2005) found that mentors learned through observation and self-reflection which led to changes in their own practice as university students and in their beliefs about influencing other students and personal responsibility in the learning process.

It is clear, therefore, that mentors enjoy certain benefits from their work. So what is it that motivates them to take on this role? Previous research suggests two main mentor motivators, either self-focused (e.g., to increase personal learning and to feel gratification) or other-focused (e.g., to help others) (Allen et al., 1997).

In terms of self-focused motivators, Allen (2003) asserts that mentors primarily are motivated to serve their own developmental needs, and that these egoistic concerns can be classified as one of two types. Specifically, Allen found that some mentors take on this role for *self-enhancement motivation*, or sources of motivation related to “personal learning and gratification” (2003, p. 139). Although Allen’s study was conducted in a business and not an academic setting, it is reasonable to assume that mentors motivated by self-enhancement would be more likely to focus on the immediate benefits of mentoring for their own goals, regardless of the context in which the mentoring occurs.

A second form of self-focused motivators is what Allen, Poteet, & Russell (2000) define as *advancement aspirations*, or “strong, personal career advancement goals” (p. 273). Allen and her colleagues point out that some mentors may take on this role because they perceive that it will enhance their career achievement, for example by aligning them with successful up and comers in their organization or by allowing them to learn work-related skills that they can use to further their career.

While the satisfaction of personal needs might motivate many mentors to take on this role, there is another key motivator identified in the literature. *Other-oriented*

motivation is defined, following Schroeder, Penner, Dovidio, and Piliavin (1995), as a commitment to helping in order to improve the condition of someone else. In their study of mentor motivation, Allen et al. (1997, p.82) found that mentors reported the following other-oriented motivations: “the desire to help others, the desire to pass along information to others and the desire to build a competent workforce”. Thus while some mentors are motivated for self-oriented reasons, there are also those who, altruistically, are primarily moved to perform this role in order to help others. The work of Allen and her colleagues has made important contributions to our understanding of mentoring motivation. However, little is known about motivation in the academic peer mentoring context specifically, and still less is known about the differences in motivation between those engaged in mentoring as a volunteer and those who do the same work in a paid capacity. The current study sheds rich qualitative light on these issues.

Theoretical Framework

Mentoring is a form of “planned helping” (Clary & Snyder, 1999, p. 156) and, as Clary and Snyder point out, “the helper’s decisions about beginning to help and about continuing to help are influenced by whether the particular activity fits with the helper’s own needs and goals”. Broadly speaking, the mentor motivation orientations identified by Allen et al. (1997) and discussed above have been defined in the social psychology literature as either egoistic concerns (helping in order to improve one’s own condition) or altruistic concerns (helping in order to improve the condition of others) (Schroeder, et al., 1995).

While these distinctions have been used by several theorists (e.g. Cnaan & Goldberg-Glen, 1991; Fitch, 1987; Gerstein, Wilkeson, & Anderson, 2004; Hwang, Grabb, & Curtis, 2005; Snyder, 1993) to study volunteers, in practice their breadth makes it difficult to measure fine distinctions within the two categories. Furthermore, as Clary and Snyder (1999, p.157) point out, people’s reasons for performing diverse and complex activities, such as peer-mentoring, “are very likely to be multi-faceted” and “motivations cannot be neatly classified as either altruistic or egoistic, both because some specific motives combine other-interested and self-interested considerations and because many people indicate that they have both kinds of reasons” for helping others (p. 157).

To address these limitations, Clary et al. (1998) used a functional approach in an attempt to advance theory on the motivation of volunteers and, while they designed the framework to assess volunteer motives, their work provides a useful framework for understanding those of both volunteers and non-volunteers engaged in planned helping behavior. Clary & Snyder (1999, p.156) assert that a core proposition of functionalist inquiry is “that people can and do perform the same actions in the service of different

psychological functions” or, in other words, that different people engage in the same activity but do so to fulfill different motives. This assertion indicates that it is the *action* that is motive-driven, regardless of whether it is remunerated. Thus although payment may be one of the motivators to take on a helping role, it is not likely to be the only thing that attracts people to this kind of work.

Building on the seminal work of Katz (1960) and Smith et al. (1956), Clary et al. (1998) proposed six motivational functions served by volunteerism. The table below describes each function:

Function	Description
<i>Values</i>	The individual volunteers in order to express or act on important values.
<i>Understanding</i>	The volunteer is seeking to learn more about the world or exercise skills that are often unused.
<i>Social</i>	Volunteering allows an individual to strengthen his or her social relationships.
<i>Career</i>	The volunteer has the goal of gaining career-related experience through volunteering.
<i>Protective</i>	The individual uses volunteering to reduce negative feelings, such as guilt, or to address personal problems.
<i>Enhancement</i>	The individual can grow and develop psychologically through volunteer activities.

Table 1: Six Motivational Functions (Clary and Snyder, 1999).

As a form of planned helping, mentoring is a service that can be provided in either a paid or an unpaid capacity, depending on the goals and resources of a programme. In the university context, Lima (2004) studied the personality and motivational characteristics of paid mentors and questioned the impact of payment, since “paying mentors ... for taking part in a structured mentoring programme may result in poorer quality mentorships than if one were to ask for volunteers, thus ensuring that those who volunteer are much more likely to be motivated for intrinsic satisfaction reasons” (p. 78). Lima (2004, p.11) concludes that “ideally, mentors should have a desire to engage in a mentoring relationship for the intrinsic satisfaction it may offer them, as opposed to engaging in [it] for the sake of gaining extrinsic rewards”. This conclusion is supported by the social psychology literature, which has argued that extrinsic rewards, such as money, can have a negative impact on intrinsic motivation (Deci, 1971; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Kohn, 1999). Specifically, according to self determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), extrinsic rewards can inhibit intrinsic motivation, or the desire to do something because it is worth doing, because if the reward comes to be seen as the reason one is doing an activity, then that activity will be viewed as less enjoyable. In addition, this

theory asserts that when people are paid to do a task, they perceive greater external control over their behavior and this perception can reduce their sense of self-determination and autonomy. The result of this can be reduced intrinsic motivation and performance (Gagné, 2003). The issue of payment for pro-social behavior thus raises many interesting questions and is clearly, as Lima proposes, an area for future research.

Some organizations, such as the University of Ottawa (UofO) have two peer-mentoring services, one where students are paid to serve as formal peer-mentors and one where students volunteer to perform this role. (See Terrion et al. (2007) for an evaluation study of the former programme). Briefly, paid mentors are hired by the university's Student Academic Success Service to work in a formal peer-mentoring programme whereby they are available to meet with mentees, who explain their concerns in a private, one-on-one meeting with the mentor, who, in turn, provides support and guidance. These mentors work out of Mentoring Centres, across the campus, which are housed in several faculties to serve students in their own faculty. Unpaid mentors, on the other hand, volunteer for the Student Federation of the University of Ottawa at a peer-help centre located centrally and serving students from all of the university's faculties. Like at the mentoring centre, peer helpers, as they are called, meet one-on-one with students to provide counseling and tutoring services. While the programme model of these two services is distinct, in the sense that one is run as a service to students by the university's administration employing paid undergraduate students while the other is a service offered by the student federation and employing volunteer undergraduate students, the mentoring functions served by peer mentors in the two services are highly comparable. That is, in both centers trained peer mentors provide task and psychosocial support (Kram & Isabella, 1985) to fellow students in one-on-one, private consultations.

The University of Ottawa thus offers an ideal research setting whereby a comparison of participants in each programme can be conducted to enable exploration of the following question: Given the choice between two activities, a paid and an unpaid one, why would a student provide a service as a volunteer that others are being paid to perform?

This study used Clary et al.'s (1998) six-function framework to explore qualitatively the motivational functions served for peer mentors in both voluntary and paid student peer support services at the UofO. Previous research has expounded on the need to establish a better understanding of that which "motivates or energizes an individual to mentor others" (Allen et al., 1997, p. 82) and has suggested that payment be examined as a potential variable (Lima, 2004). The research enhances knowledge by exploring the motivational functions, as they are described by paid and unpaid peer

mentors, of the mentoring role. As well, this study furthers our understandings of mentor perceptions of the impact of payment on their motivation to mentor.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited at the Mentoring Centres in the Faculties of Arts, Social Science and Science and at the Peer Help Centre at the UofO. After approval from the university's ethical review board was obtained by the researchers, each centre provided a list of paid peer mentors or volunteer peer helpers, respectively, and from these lists a random sample of ten paid mentors and ten unpaid peer helpers was drawn. It should be noted that the mentoring programme works differently than the peer helping programme in that peer mentors must be at least in 2nd year of university to apply, whereas peer helpers can start in their 1st year.

Procedures

Once selected, participants were contacted personally by letter from the first author. Participants were asked to inform the researcher by email of their willingness to partake in the study. Participants who did not reply to this request were contacted by phone by one of the researchers to invite them to participate. If they agreed, they were asked to meet with one of the researchers at a mutually convenient time at the Mentoring Centre or Peer Help Centre. If they did not agree to participate then they were replaced with the next randomly selected name. In this way a total of 9 peer mentors and 10 peer helpers were interviewed.

Instrument

Once participants had agreed to participate, they were asked to take part in a 20-minute semi-structured interview at either a Mentoring Centre or the Peer Help Centre. Open-ended questions were designed to elicit both factual and perceptual responses (Yin, 2003) and to provide rich narratives about their experience and motivation as a peer mentor or peer helper. This approach results in an explanation of the meaning of the action for the people involved (Alasuutari, 1998, p. 143) and is advocated by Marsick (2003, p. 390), who argues for "the systematic collection of critical incidents and anecdotal data that make tacit knowledge descriptive and explicit" because of the deep understanding of the interviewee's reality that can be gained.

Interviews took the form of face-to-face standardized open-ended questions related to mentoring motivation and the impact of payment on the mentor or peer helper's motivation. Interview questions were developed following Allen et al. (1997) but, because Allen et al.'s interview questions were designed for a business setting, they were

re-worded slightly to reflect the university context and to address both peer mentors and peer helpers. Examples of questions asked were: “Please describe how you came to be a mentor at the Peer Help Centre (Peer Helpers) or the Peer Mentoring Centre (Peer Mentors)” and “Please describe the reasons why you chose peer mentoring over other options/opportunities.” The interview questions were validated by two other researchers not associated with the study before being used. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim.

Analysis

As the goal was to identify references to Clary et al.’s (1998) six motivational functions fulfilled by mentoring in the narratives, a thematic assessment was used. To ensure inter-coder reliability (Frey, Botan & Kreps, 2000), coding of the data was conducted using the following procedures: Two coders (the first author and a research assistant) independently reviewed interview transcripts to identify any salient theme that reflected Clary et al.’s motivational functions (or any other motivation not identified by Clary et al.). Then the coders met to present, discuss and agree upon the definitions of the functions. Next, the coders independently coded all of the transcripts for references to these identified functions. Finally, the coders worked together to reach agreement on coded units. Disagreements between the coders were resolved through discussion. In this manner, the coders reached 100 per cent agreement on the identification of the functions.

Results and Discussion

Motivational Functions

Data analysis began with the aim of identifying statements that indicated one of Clary et al.’s (1998) six motivational functions. The next section will provide a definition of each function and will present several examples from the transcripts, differentiating between mentors and peer helpers, and will discuss the significance of these findings. Each excerpt from the transcripts is followed by a code which refers to whether the subject was a peer mentor (M) or peer helper (H) and the subject number. Table 2, below, presents a summary of the frequency of references to each function by each group.

Function	Description	Frequency of References by Peer Mentors	Frequency of References by Peer Helpers
<i>Values</i>	The individual volunteers in order to express or act on important values.	9/9 (100%)	6/10 (60%)
<i>Understanding</i>	The volunteer is seeking to learn more about the world or exercise skills that are often unused.	3/9 (33%)	4/10 (40%)
<i>Social</i>	Volunteering allows an individual to strengthen his or her social relationships.	3/9 (33%)	8/10 (80%)
<i>Career</i>	The volunteer has the goal of gaining career-related experience through volunteering.	5/9 (55%)	5/10 (50%)
<i>Protective</i>	The individual uses volunteering to reduce negative feelings, such as guilt, or to address personal problems.	0/9 (0%)	0/10 (0%)
<i>Enhancement</i>	The individual can grow and develop psychologically through volunteer activities.	6/9 (66%)	10/10 (100%)

Table 2: Frequency of References to Motivational Functions

Values. Statements were coded as Values if they seemed to reflect a desire to help others or to make a difference, to give back to society, to participate in community, or to contribute to the university. To be counted as a Value function, statements had to reflect an altruistic or other-oriented motivation.

The interviews with peer mentors revealed that Values was a function mentioned by all mentors. The following comments are representative of the Values function:

“I mentor outside of school, even outside my job, I’m just that way, I try to get ’em going, get them excited” (M01).

“You realize the impact [of mentoring] is monumental and that motivates me to keep going and progress” (M04).

A particular Values function cited by seven of the nine mentors was related to the desire to pass on information and thus facilitate the integration of other students. Mentors referring to this Value spoke of their own struggles in their first years of university or to help that they had received and of their goal of making it easier for others. This was

repeated more frequently among the mentors than the helpers. The following quotations from the interviews reflect this value:

“Because it’s something that I went through I feel like I can help them more than if I hadn’t gone through it. I understand the stresses that come with questioning your programme” (M07).

“I though, if I can help people with what I had trouble with, why not? ... If I can be there to help them and talk to them, because of my experiences, I think it would be a good thing” (M08).

Snyder and Clary (2004), following the work of Erikson (1963) on human developmental stages, refer to this desire to pass on wisdom and knowledge to future generations as *generativity*, since it reflects a “concern in establishing and guiding the next generation” (Erikson, 1963, p. 276). Erikson proposed that generativity is associated with psychological well-being and other important outcomes and that it is a critical stage of development that begins in early adulthood and culminates in, possibly, child rearing, but also in activities that allow for a role in the guiding of young people. While Erikson was primarily interested in adult development, his theory has been applied to the study of young people by Lawford, Pratt, Hunsberger and Pancer (2005) who examined the development of this trait in late adolescence and early adulthood and concluded that higher levels of adolescent community involvement were the most significant predictor of generative concern at age 23. Mentoring clearly provides an opportunity to participate in the role of guiding future generations and it is, therefore, not surprising that mentors would refer, indirectly, to generativity in discussing their motivation to “ensure[ing] the well-being, development, and survival of the species” (Smith, 2005, pp. 15-16).

While most peer mentors referred to generativity (albeit indirectly) as a motivator for their work, this value was expressed by only three of the peer helpers in their interviews. One peer helper stated that:

“I know the stressors people go through in university and a lot of the time it’s first year students coming in who are freaking out with their classes... I feel the need to help them because I’ve been in their position, I guess” (H07).

As for other Values expressed by the peer mentors, six out of the nine mentors acknowledged that they really enjoy helping people or making a difference. Although these references to enjoying helping people could be interpreted as being self-oriented, given that they reflect personal desires, they were coded as Values, given their emphasis on helping and altruism. If the participant had spoken simply of liking or enjoying *the job*

of peer mentoring or peer helping, these statements would have been coded as Enhancement, since they would have referred more to personal fulfillment than to helping others. This Value was expressed by one mentor as follows:

“I actually really like making a little bit of a difference. I can’t solve their problems but I can at least help them” (M05).

The desire to help others was repeated by six of the ten peer helpers, who mentioned doing work that one loves. Specifically, one peer helper stated the following:

“I really like the idea of peer support” (M09).

And another peer helper referred to the importance of helping others as a motivator:

“Getting to help somebody one on one, that idea really attracted me” (H08).

Understanding. The second function was defined as a desire to learn more about the world and about other people. Three mentors expressed this function, stating the following:

“It gave me new opportunities, new situations to have to face that I hadn’t been exposed to” (M01).

“[Mentoring’s] helped me to know what the greater community needs are and what we can do to change certain structural things to meet those needs” (M02).

As for Peer Helpers, Understanding was identified by four participants, with one, H05, discussing in detail the impact of this volunteer position on her own learning experience. Specifically, H05 spoke of how she learned from the one-on-one interaction with students, of how she learned about how others see the world and what others have gone through. In her own words:

“I’ve had this opportunity to hear sometimes a very sad story and sometimes a very remarkable story that I would not have been able to hear otherwise. I think it gives a broader scope of your place in the world” (H05).

Social. The Social function, related to a desire to build or strengthen one’s social relationships, was identified by three of the nine peer mentors (M05), who mentioned that she liked the people that she worked with and she “loved coming in and hanging out” at the peer mentoring centre.

As for the peer helpers, the social function was identified by eight out of the ten respondents. These participants referred to their desire to get involved, to meet people, and to make new friends. As examples, H01 stated that she had been “looking to get involved in the university on a scale where I would be able to interact with individuals” and H03 said that he “wanted to be more involved in school life and get to meet new people”. Thus, while only three of the peer mentors articulated a desire to fulfill the Social function by mentoring, for peer helpers this seemed to be a top priority in terms of what motivates them to take on this role.

Career. The fourth function, related to a desire to gain experience and knowledge that would enhance one’s career goals, was mentioned by five of the nine peer mentors. One of these mentors, M02, stated that she was interested in a career in social work and believed that the skills she would gain as a peer mentor would benefit her in this career path. M05 related how she plans to be a teacher and a high school counselor and stated that her experience as a mentor had solidified her commitment to this goal. Another, M09, referred to her studies in psychology and that mentoring allowed her to put into practice the theories that she was learning.

As for the volunteer peer helpers, five of the ten referred to the Career function in their interviews. The words of H02 capture the essence of the “testing the waters” aspect of this function:

“I’m considering a career in clinical psychology. I thought this would be a good experience to see what I like about that” (H02).

Likewise, the words of H01 refer to the gaining useful knowledge and experience that might help both in being accepted into a field of study and in practicing in that field:

“I’m interest in being a teacher and, obviously, peer mentoring would play really well into that” (H01).

Protective. The Protective function reflects a psychological desire to reduce negative feelings, such as guilt, through volunteering. In the total of ten interviews the protective function was not mentioned by any participant. It is difficult to say whether the lack of reference to this function results from the highly personal nature of this function – it is more of a personal admission to identify this as a motivator – or from the fact that it simply did not motivate these participants. It does seem to be the kind of thing that an interviewee would not feel comfortable disclosing so future research would need to use different measures to get at this function more effectively.

Enhancement. The sixth function, Enhancement, refers to a desire to deepen one's understanding of one's own self – to get to know oneself better – and to develop and improve one's self more fully. When participants spoke of enjoying or seeking “fulfillment” through their peer mentoring or peer helping, this was taken as indicative of the Enhancement function, given that it reflected more of a self-orientation rather than the altruistic, other-orientation exemplified by the Values function. This interpretation follows Hwang et al. (2005) who suggest that volunteering for the satisfaction it provides, while not being comprised of completely selfish motivations “does captures a more self-oriented, or what we have labeled a “personal,” set of rationales for doing voluntary work” (p. 392). Likewise Allen et al. (1997) included “personal gratification” as a self-oriented reason for mentoring.

Enhancement was referenced by six out of the nine peer mentors, with the following examples being representative:

“It's just helping me get better at what I was doing already and that's very fulfilling because it's something I enjoy myself anyways” (M01).

“They thank me for the little tips I give them and I love that. I love to hear that, that I actually did something. It's fulfilling” (M03).

“I love the satisfaction of knowing you helped someone and when they walk away they're happy and not on the verge of crying anymore” (M08).

Peer Helpers reflected a keen commitment to Enhancement as a motivator, with all ten participants referring, in some way, to a gain in their self knowledge, self fulfillment or personal gratification. The following statements provide good examples:

“It's nice to make a difference like that in one person's life” (H08).

“It teaches you a lot more about yourself and about your particular ticks” (H05).

It is not surprising that almost all of both paid and unpaid peer mentors identify Enhancement reasons as contributing to their motivation to perform this role. As several studies have shown, even when respondents refer to altruism as motivating them to volunteer or perform other helping behaviors, they also tend to rate personal motivations as important and thus are likely motivated by a mixture of both altruistic and self-oriented reasons (Hwang, et al., 2005; Knoke, 1986; Smith, 1994). Likewise, Allen et al. (1997) came to the same conclusion in their study of mentor motivation: “thus, mentoring others appears to be motivated by factors related to improving the welfare of others and by

factors related to improving the welfare of the self” (p. 82). In other words, it is likely a combination of motivators that reflects the complexity of human beings as they seek to meet their needs.

Impact of Payment. When asked about the impact of payment on their motivation to act as a peer mentor or a peer helper, five out of the nine paid peer mentors stated that they would do the same job as a volunteer, while admitting that time constraints would limit their ability to fit it in (in other words, they would have to work at some paying position so they would not have as much time to mentor if they were volunteering). Interestingly, one mentor mentioned that she would not serve as a mentor as a volunteer because she had already done volunteer work in order to gain career experience and, at this point, did not need that kind of experience. Of course, it is easy to state, when not required to follow through on the words with actions, that one would be willing to do a similar job as one is already doing for free. Whether the mentors would be willing to do this very thing remains to be studied through other means.

More interesting was the response of peer helpers when asked whether they would act as a peer helper if they were paid. Peer helpers had a number of interpretations of the possible impact of being paid. One stated that being paid to perform her duties might make her perform her function more poorly:

“Perhaps if I was being paid, and working on a schedule, and trying to fit a whole bunch of people in and feeling obligated to fit more people into my time, I might do worse of a job” (H01).

Eight peer helpers suggested that being paid would eliminate the altruistic nature of peer helping, stating that “If you’re paid for it, it’s not really helping other people. You’re just helping yourself” (H02) and “I wouldn’t want to get paid for it. I think it would require more commitment but it would also take away the initial reasons why you do it. You would be doing it more or less for the money” (H03) and “I think it would take away from it a bit, like, your reward. Instead of just generally doing good, it becomes a job” (H04) and “I think it would make it seem too much like a job rather than something I actually want to do” (H05). Clearly, these peer helpers see their volunteerism as something they do because it is altruistic, and that to be paid would put into question the very altruism that had motivated them in the first place. The peer helpers’ perspective on the impact of payment accurately reflects self determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), as discussed above, which argues that extrinsic rewards can inhibit intrinsic motivation because the reward comes to be seen as the reason one is doing the good deed rather than something satisfying about the deed itself (Deci, 1971; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Kohn, 1999).

While both paid peer mentors and volunteer peer helpers report being motivated by a combination of self and other orientations, there are some clear distinctions between the two groups. First, peer mentors reflect, more than peer helpers, the *Values* function in their answers to questions about why they choose to mentor others. Greater still is the difference between mentors and helpers in terms of their reference to *generativity*, with seven out of nine mentors referring to the desire to pass on knowledge or experience to younger students compared to just three out of ten peer helpers referencing this value.

Second, both mentors and helpers made minimal reference to the *Understanding* function, with three mentors and 4 helpers making reference to a desire to learn more about others and the world through their work. It does not appear, therefore, that student peer mentors and peer helpers, whether paid or unpaid, are primarily motivated by a desire to learn from their mentoring experience.

As for the *Social* function, 80 per cent of volunteer peer helpers, compared to 33 per cent of paid peer mentors, reported being motivated to volunteer in order to meet people or to get involved in the university. This is perhaps explained by the fact that peer mentors were in at least second year of university, while peer helpers were in first year. It is likely that the motivation to meet people is strongest at the beginning of a university experience, when a student is newly arrived at the university and lacking a social network, and may use the experience to meet other volunteers.

The *Career* function was reported by about half of the mentors and helpers as being met through their work. It might have been expected that more participants would refer to their career interests, since it has been found in the literature that young people, in contrast to older volunteers, seek volunteer opportunities to gain work experience in order to either gain entry into a university or college programme or to achieve a desired job (Okun & Shultz, 2003; Omoto, Snyder, & Martino, 2000). While they did identify career as a motivator, all of these mentors and helpers also identified other reasons, such as helping others, and this provides an optimistic outlook for organizations employing volunteers. That is, since research has shown that when volunteers are primarily motivated to gain career experience they may leave the organization as soon as they perceive that the need that brought them to the volunteer position in the first place (e.g. job experience) has been met (Jamison, 2003), it is risky (in the sense of it being potentially short-term) to engage volunteers who are primarily or solely motivated by the career function.

Protection was not mentioned by any of the participants as a motivator.

The sixth function, *Enhancement* was referenced by six out of nine mentors and all of the helpers. As discussed above, whether as a volunteer or in a paid position, people have complex motivations and the care and nurturance of the self is never far from what it is that drives people. It is clear that for volunteers, particularly, personal development is one of the main reasons that they would commit the time and energy required by the peer support role.

In relation to performing the peer helping function for payment, volunteer peer helpers responded negatively to the idea of being paid to do the job, explaining that being paid – rather than volunteering – would remove the altruistic nature of peer helping and, thus, be considered de-motivating. This finding is supported by Deci & Ryan (1985) and others who caution that providing extrinsic rewards for activities that would have been performed regardless of these rewards can remove the pleasure that was derived from the activity prior to the reward being offered. In terms of the impact of incentives such as course credit in encouraging student volunteerism, this is an area that should be considered with care, since the data presented in this study shows that those who engage in planned helping as a volunteer report that payment may inhibit their enjoyment of this work and even their ability to perform it as well.

Conclusion

This study has also provided insight into the most effective communication strategies that student support services could use to attract paid and unpaid peer mentors. Since it appears that both groups are highly motivated by the goal of helping others generally, this aspect of the peer mentoring role could be emphasized. In addition, peer mentors, particularly those who are in the later years of their studies, could be targeted with messages related to the ability to help others navigate through the transition to post-secondary education that can be met by peer mentoring (e.g. “make a difference to a new student”) while volunteer peer helpers could be targeted with messages that reflect the social function such as “getting involved, meeting people and making friends.” These recommendations follow Omoto and Snyder (1993) and Clary et al. (1998), who argue that organizations seeking volunteers should target recruitment, placement, and retention efforts on the basis of the particular sets of motivations that their desired volunteers exhibit.

Given some of the limitations of this study, namely the small sample size and the homogeneity of the sample, future research should attempt to draw from a larger sample of peer helpers and mentors and should try to include a wider range of students of different ages, genders, racial backgrounds and year of study. Diversifying the sample would enable greater generalization and a deeper understanding of the motivators of

different groups. In addition, future research should further the exploration of effective communication strategies by testing different recruiting messages either through focus groups or quasi-experimental designs on different target groups. Another limitation is the potential for mentors to post hoc rationalize their motivations – particularly the volunteer mentors who might believe that because they are not being paid must be doing it for altruistic reasons. Finally, given recent research on the phases that people undergo as they move from being new to more experienced volunteers in organizations (Haski-Levanthal & Bargal, 2008), longitudinal studies of volunteer motivation which attempt to track, over time, changes in motivational function, relationship of length of volunteer tenure to perceptions of generativity and impact of motivational function on volunteer retention would provide greater insight into the process of volunteering.

In closing, this study has helped to shed light on the reasons why students volunteer to perform important community roles, such as peer mentoring, and the impact of payment on their motivation to mentor. In light of the objective of many of today's universities and colleges of developing links with the community through student volunteerism, this study has offered a greater understanding of the motivators for voluntary and paid peer mentors. In particular, this study has found that while mentors and helpers are motivated by a complex mix of motives, the desire to help others seems to be an important part of why people engage in helping behavior, even when egoistic concerns also play a role. In other words, while students may perform volunteer and other helping roles to meet their own needs, it presents a hopeful outlook that they also have the needs of those less fortunate in mind.

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