

The Scientific Evidence Base for Mentoring: How Much Does it Matter?

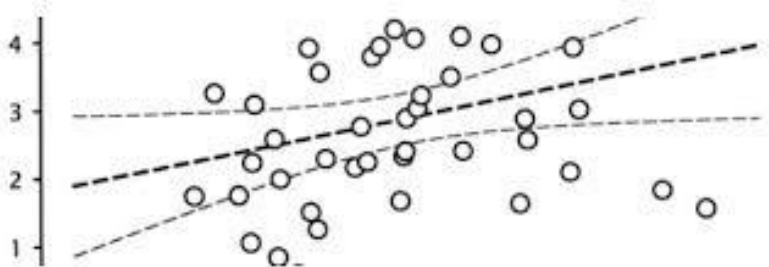
Lillian T. Eby, Ph.D.

**Department of Psychology &
Owens Institute for Behavioral Research**



A Critical Examination of the Mentoring Literature

- What do we really know about the value of mentoring?
- Systematic review of the scientific evidence
- Suggestions for moving the field forward



Does Being Mentored Matter?

- Comparisons of those with and without experience as a protégé
 - Compared on a variety of protégé outcomes
- Average impact of mentoring using meta-analysis
 - 116 unique samples (community, education, & work contexts)
 - Combined sample size of $N = 45,705$
 - Positive values indicate differences that favor individuals who are mentored compared to those who are not mentored
 - Small impact (.10) medium impact (.30), large impact (.50)



Does Being Mentored Matter?

Protégé Outcome		Impact (effect size)
Attitudinal	e.g., context satisfaction, institutional commitment, career attitudes	Small to medium effect (.16 - .19)

Does Being Mentored Matter?

Protégé Outcome		Impact (effect size)
Attitudinal	e.g., context satisfaction, institutional commitment, career attitudes	Small to medium effect (.16 - .19)
Behavioral	e.g., performance, retention, helping others, skills learned, socialization	Near zero to medium effect (.07 - .20)

Does Being Mentored Matter?

Protégé Outcome		Impact (effect size)
Attitudinal	e.g., context satisfaction, institutional commitment, career attitudes	Small to medium effect (.16 - .19)
Behavioral	e.g., performance, retention, helping others, skills learned, socialization	Near zero to medium effect (.07 - .20)
Health-related	e.g., psychological stress, strain, negative self-perceptions	Near zero effect (.04 - .08)

Does Being Mentored Matter?

Protégé Outcome		Impact (effect size)
Attitudinal	e.g., context satisfaction, institutional commitment, career attitudes	Small to medium effect (.16 - .19)
Behavioral	e.g., performance, retention, helping others, skills learned, socialization	Near zero to medium effect (.07 - .20)
Health-related	e.g., psychological stress, strain, negative self-perceptions	Near zero effect (.04 - .08)
Interpersonal	e.g., positive relationships with others	Small effect (.12)

Does Being Mentored Matter?

Protégé Outcome		Impact (effect size)
Attitudinal	e.g., context satisfaction, institutional commitment, career attitudes	Small to medium effect (.16 - .19)
Behavioral	e.g., performance, retention, helping others, skills learned, socialization	Near zero to medium effect (.07 - .20)
Health-related	e.g., psychological stress, strain, negative self-perceptions	Near zero effect (.04 - .08)
Interpersonal	e.g., positive relationships with others	Small effect (.12)
Motivational	e.g., work/school/career involvement, time spent on task	Small effect (.11 - .14)

Does Being Mentored Matter?

Protégé Outcome		Impact (effect size)
Attitudinal	e.g., context satisfaction, institutional commitment, career attitudes	Small to medium effect (.16 - .19)
Behavioral	e.g., performance, retention, helping others, skills learned, socialization	Near zero to medium effect (.07 - .20)
Health-related	e.g., psychological stress, strain, negative self-perceptions	Near zero effect (.04 - .08)
Interpersonal	e.g., positive relationships with others	Small effect (.12)
Motivational	e.g., work/school/career involvement, time spent on task	Small effect (.11 - .14)
Career	e.g., objective & subjective career success	Near zero to small effect (.05 - .11)

Does Being Mentored Matter?

- Yes, to some extent but impact is modest at best
- Being mentored matters more for some outcomes
 - Attitudes, interpersonal relationships, motivation & helping others*
- Mixed effects for behavioral & career outcomes
 - Those with experience as protégé have higher intent to stay & help others
 - No association between experience as protégé and task performance or actual retention
- No difference in health-related outcomes
- Considerable differences in effect sizes (moderators?)

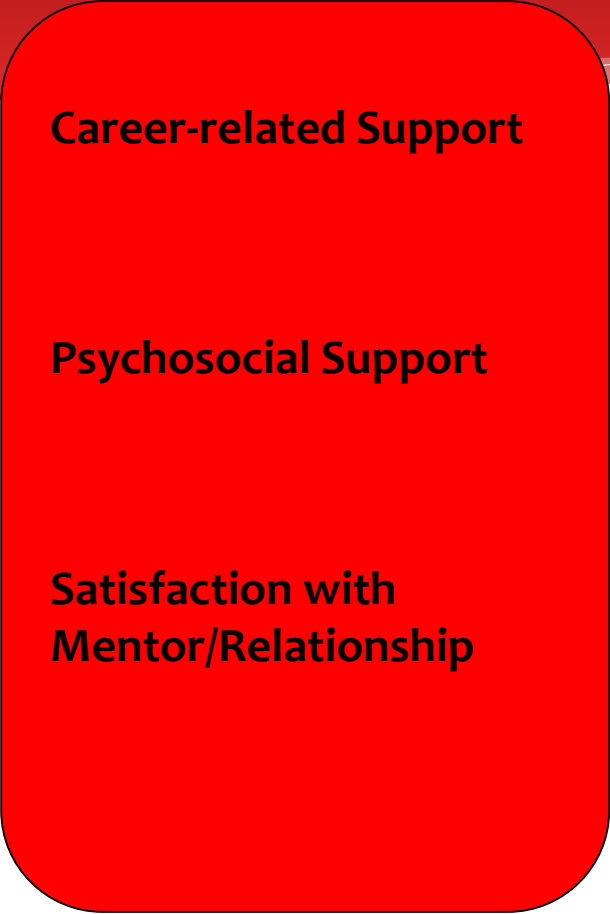
Why Aren't Effect Sizes Larger?

- Answer #1: Conceptualizing as the presence/absence of a mentor is not fine-grained enough
- Maybe the *quality of the relationship* matters
 - Amount of career-related support received
 - Amount of psychosocial support received
 - Satisfaction with the mentor/relationship (e.g., trust, liking, disclosure)



Does the Quality of the Mentoring Relationship Matter?

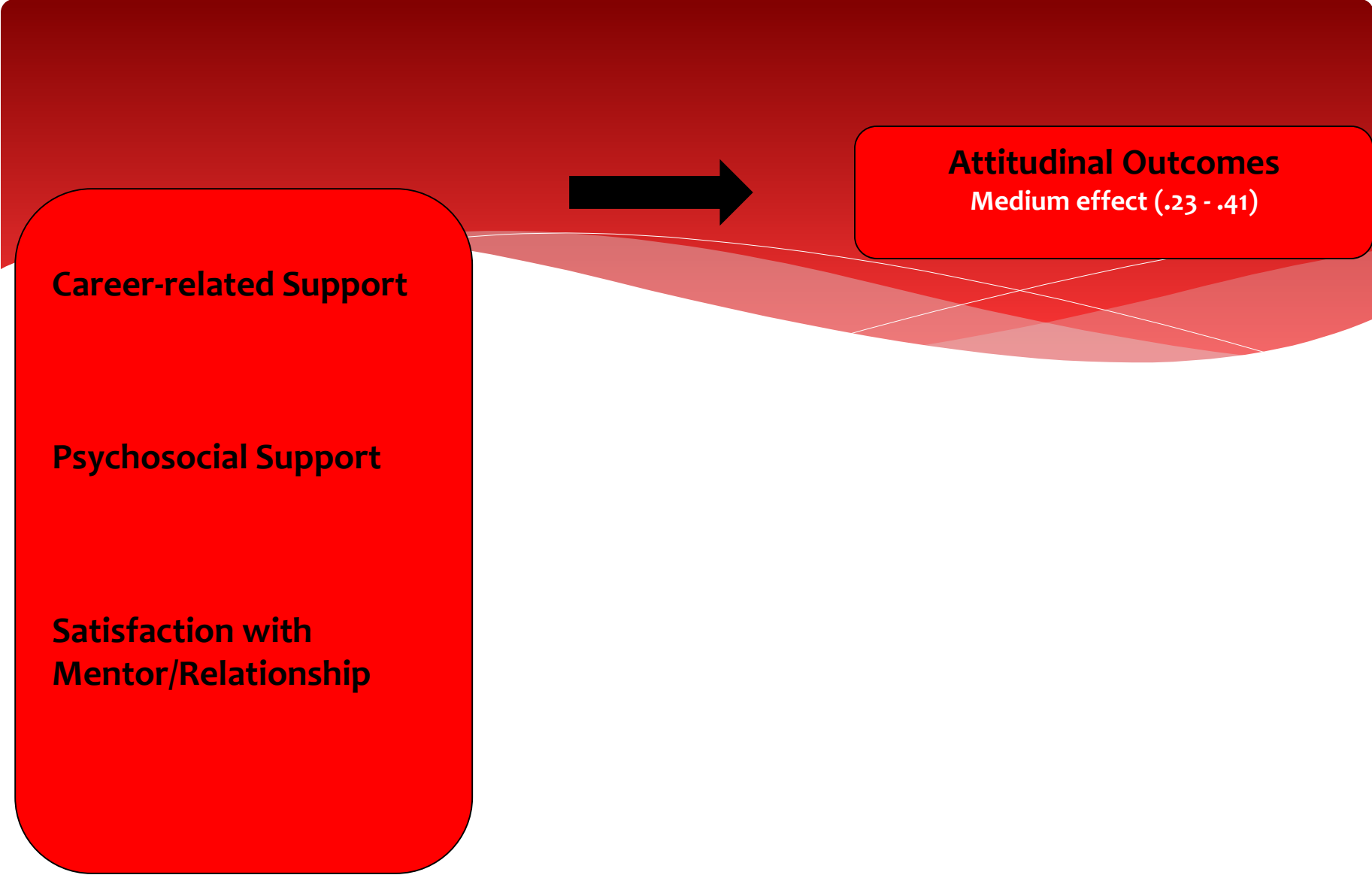
- Do perceptions of the amount of mentoring received and satisfaction predict protégé outcomes?
 - Same types of outcomes as Eby et al. (2008)
- Examined 3 aspects of relationship quality
 - Career support, psychosocial support, satisfaction with mentor/relationship
- Meta-analysis of 173 unique samples (community, education, work settings)
 - Combined sample size of $N = 43,737$



Career-related Support

Psychosocial Support

**Satisfaction with
Mentor/Relationship**



Career-related Support

Psychosocial Support

**Satisfaction with
Mentor/Relationship**



Attitudinal Outcomes
Medium effect (.23 - .41)

Career-related Support

The diagram features a large red rounded rectangle on the left containing three text elements. Two black arrows point from this rectangle towards two red rounded rectangles on the right. A light red curved arrow also points from the left rectangle to the top-right rectangle. The background is a dark red gradient.

Psychosocial Support

**Satisfaction with
Mentor/Relationship**



Attitudinal Outcomes
Medium effect (.23 - .41)

Behavioral Outcomes
Small to medium effect (.10 - .26)

Career-related Support

Psychosocial Support

**Satisfaction with
Mentor/Relationship**

Attitudinal Outcomes
Medium effect (.23 - .41)

Behavioral Outcomes
Small to medium effect (.10 - .26)

Career-related Outcomes
Zero to medium effect
(.00 - .32)

The diagram features a large red rounded rectangle on the left containing three categories of support. Four black arrows point from these categories to four corresponding red rounded rectangles on the right, each representing a type of outcome. A faint, light-red curved arrow also originates from the support categories and points towards the outcomes.

Career-related Support

Psychosocial Support

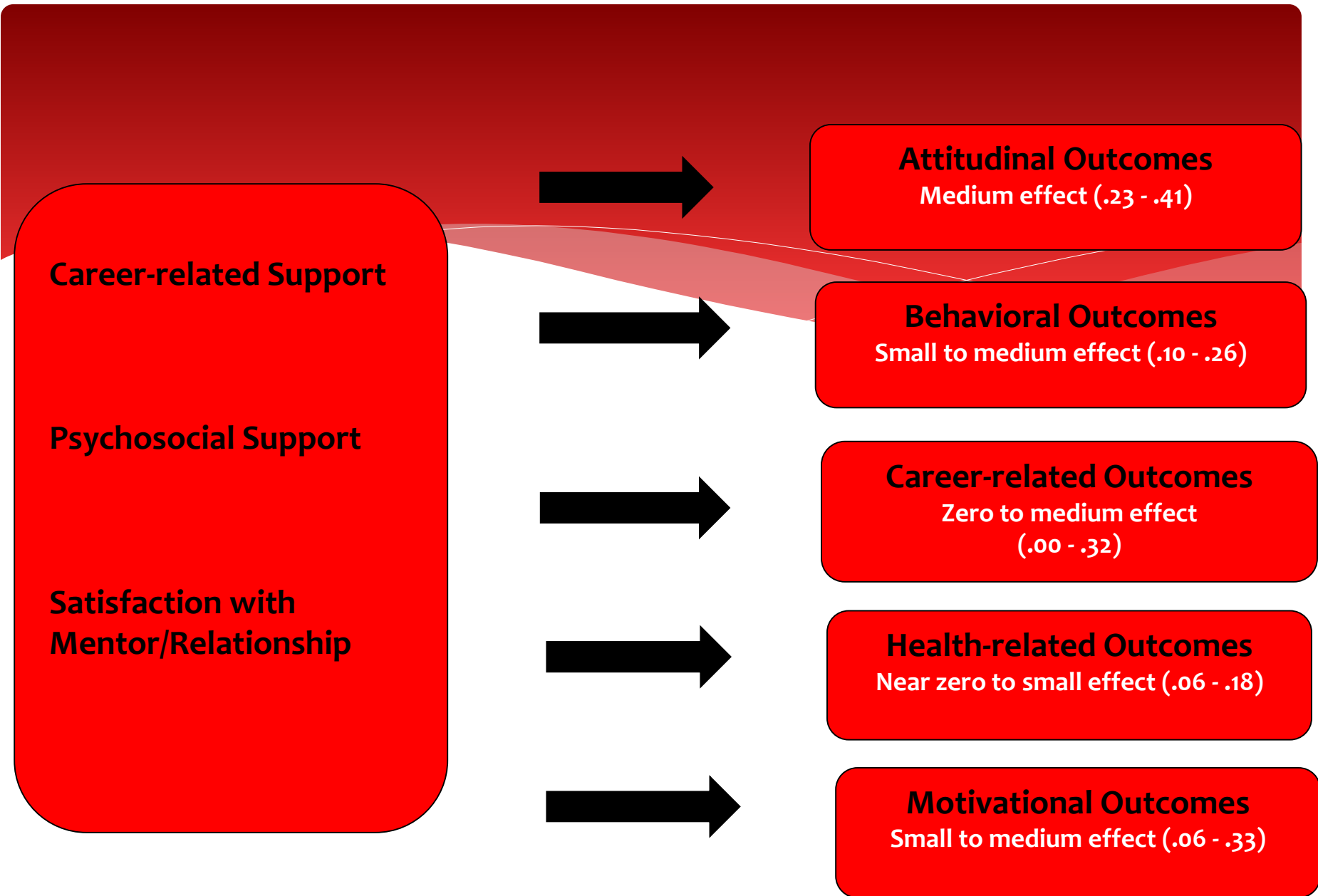
**Satisfaction with
Mentor/Relationship**

Attitudinal Outcomes
Medium effect (.23 - .41)

Behavioral Outcomes
Small to medium effect (.10 - .26)

Career-related Outcomes
Zero to medium effect
(.00 - .32)

Health-related Outcomes
Near zero to small effect (.06 - .18)



Does the Quality of the Mentoring Relationship Matter?

- Yes, to some extent
- Larger and more consistent effects than mentor-no mentor comparisons
 - Effects for some health-related & behavioral outcomes
- A lot of variability across outcomes
 - Largest effects for attitudinal outcomes, skills learned & socialization
 - Mixed effects for career outcomes
- Considerable differences in effect sizes (moderation?)



Why Aren't Effect Sizes Larger?

- Answer #1: We aren't considering full range of mentoring experiences
 - Decades of research on problems in close relationships
 - Discussion of relational problems in Kram's (1985) seminal work on mentoring
 - What types of negative experiences happen and do they predict outcomes?

Negative Mentoring Experiences

- Both protégés and mentors report negative experiences
- Continuum of problems
 - Relatively minor to serious dysfunctions
 - Less serious problems happen more often
 - Problems exist in both formal and informal relationships



Negative Mentoring Experiences

Reported by Protégés

- Mismatches
- Mentor neglect
- Manipulative behavior
- Lack of mentor expertise
- General dysfunctionality

Reported by Mentors

- Mismatches
- Performance below expectations
- Unwillingness to learn
- Overly submissive
- Serious dysfunctions (e.g., exploitive, deception, sabotage)

Negative Mentoring Experiences

- Negative experiences predict both mentor and protégé outcomes (over and above positive experiences)
 - Psychological strain
 - Withdrawal
 - Less favorable work attitudes
 - Less learning (protégés)
- Bad experiences > good experiences in predicting relational & strain outcomes
- Even low base rate bad experiences are highly predictive of turnover

Why Aren't Effect Sizes Larger

- Answer #2: We need to consider influences beyond the mentor
- Typical focus is on single source of support and mentoring is viewed as an individual-level experience
- May be important to consider shared perceptions of developmental support
 - Group-level developmental climate



Group-Level Developmental Climate

- Includes instrumental & affective support from BOTH mentors & peers
 - May have synergistic effects & explain positive protégé outcomes **over and above** individual mentoring received
- Shared perceptions of developmental climate predicted:
 - Commitment to the institution
 - Perceptions of self-competence
- Downstream positive effects on BOTH protégé retention & performance

Why Aren't Effect Sizes Larger?

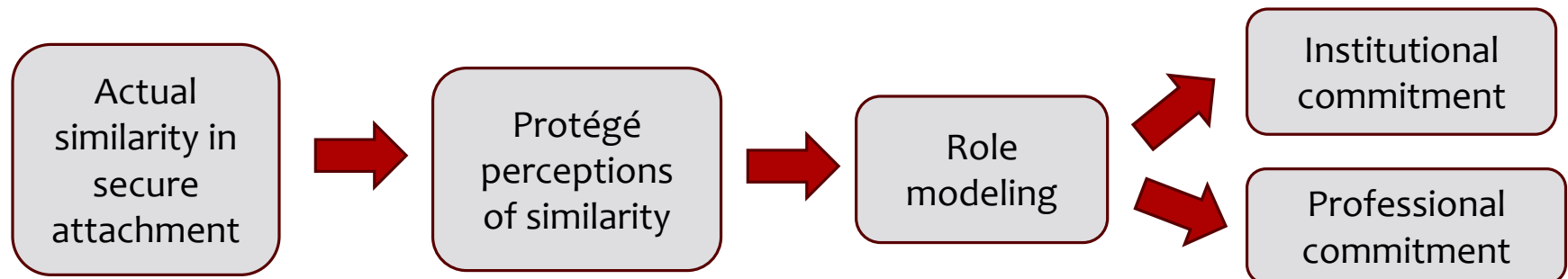
- Answer #3: We are forgetting that mentoring is a *relationship*
 - Mentoring involves two people
 - Relationships change over time
 - Mentor-protégé mismatch is one of the most common problems reported and occurs more in beginning of a relationship

Dyadic Fit

- Demographic match unrelated to protégé reports of mentoring received and relationship quality
- Perceptions of similarity is the strongest and most consistent predictor of protégé outcomes
- What predicts protégé perceptions of similarity?
- What is the mechanism linking similarity to protégé outcomes?
 - Requires looking at in-tact dyads

Dyadic Fit

- Little research evidence that actual similarity in broad personality traits matter (i.e., Big 5)
- But relationally-oriented traits show some promise
 - Similarity in secure attachment style
 - One's working model of close relationships



Why Aren't Effect Sizes Larger?

- Answer #4: We aren't considering institutional support for mentoring
 - Role models in the department/organization
 - Mentor accountability
 - As institutional support (as reported by both mentor & protégé) increases, so does protégés' reports of mentoring provided
 - Institutional support also deters protégés' reports of relationship problems

Moving the Field Forward

- Understand more about relationship quality
 - Unpacking the construct
 - Do different aspects of quality predict different outcomes?
- Remember that mentoring is a ***close relationship***
 - Consider full range of experiences
 - Focus on dyadic predictors of mentoring outcomes

Moving the Field Forward

- Important to identify moderators of the mentoring → protégé outcome relationship
 - Relationship formality
 - Supervisory vs. non supervisory mentoring
- Mentoring is a multi-level phenomenon
 - Individuals within relationships, within a department/unit, within an institution, within a culture

Moving the Field Forward

- Multiple relational influences at work
 - Teacher/advisor/supervisor, mentor, peers/colleagues
 - Additive and interactive effects
 - When does mentoring matter most?
- Mentoring experiences accumulate across the life course
 - Integration of literature on youth mentoring, student mentoring, & workplace mentoring

Acknowledgements

- Some of this research was funded by the National Institutes of Health (R01 DA026291, R01 DA019460, R01 DA028188)
- Faculty collaborators: Tammy Allen, Marcus Butts, David Dubois, Brian Hoffman, Thomas Ng, Belle Rose Ragins, Bob Vandenberg, Tanja Laschober & others
- Too many graduate student & undergraduate collaborators to list!
- Grant support staff: Jennifer Shaikun, OIBR staff

Thank you!

