NEGATIVE MENTORING: WHY SOME PROTÉGÉS REMAIN IN MENTORING

RELATIONSHIPS WHEN FACED WITH NEGATIVE MENTORING EXPERIENCES

by

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(Under the Direction of Lillian Eby)

ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of five negative mentoring experiences (general dysfunction, lack of mentor expertise, mismatch within the dyad, manipulation, and distancing behavior) on protégés' intentions to leave their mentoring relationships, along with potential moderators that may serve to weaken a protégé's intention to leave a relationship that is characterized by negative experiences. Results show that general dysfunction, lack of mentor expertise, and mismatch within the dyad have direct effects on protégé intentions to leave the relationship. Both perceived alternatives and fear of mentor retaliation were examined as potential moderators of the relationship between negative experiences and intentions to leave. Only the relationship between mismatch within the dyad and intentions to leave was moderated by perceived alternatives; both mentor manipulation and distancing behavior on intentions to leave the relationship was moderated by fear of mentor retaliation. Hierarchical regression analyses were used in this study.

INDEX WORDS: Mentoring, Negative experiences, Perceived alternatives, Fear of
                retaliation

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

NEGATIVE MENTORING: WHY SOME PROTÉGÉS REMAIN IN MENTORING

RELATIONSHIPS WHEN FACED WITH NEGATIVE MENTORING EXPERIENCES

Mentoring has been a substantial area of research in the field of organizational science and psychology for several decades. The major focus of research on mentoring has been the positive aspects and outcomes of the relationship between a mentor and a protégé. One of the first major works discussing mentoring in relation to the workplace was Kram's (1985) book, *Mentoring at Work*. Kram defines mentoring as a relationship between an older, more experienced mentor and a younger, less experienced protégé for the purpose of developing the protégé's career, as well as personal and professional identity development.

Mentoring provides individuals, both mentors and protégés alike, with many positive outcomes that may, in turn, benefit the organization. A meta-analysis by Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, and Lima (2004) supported the relationship between mentoring and several protégé outcomes, including increased compensation, higher salary, higher job satisfaction, higher career satisfaction, greater organizational commitment, greater career commitment, and greater intentions to stay with the organization (Allen et al., 2004). Mentoring has also been found to facilitate organizational socialization (Chao, 2007), positively affect learning (Ploeg, deWitt, Hutchinson, Hayward, & Grayson, 2007), and decrease turnover (McDonald, Erickson, Johnson, & Elder, 2007). Despite the benefits associated with mentoring, the outcomes and experiences are not always positive. It is important to addresses the negative aspects of mentoring as well. In

any close personal relationship there will be positive experiences as well as negative experiences; this is true of any mentoring relationship as well (Eby, Butts, Lockwood, & Simon, 2004; Eby & McManus, 2004; Ragins & Scandura, 1997). A growing body of literature has examined the negative experiences and outcomes that can result from some mentoring relationships.

Outcomes of negative mentoring. Individuals in relationships characterized by negative experiences have been shown to experience less learning, report less psychosocial and career support, report greater depressed mood, exhibit greater psychological job withdrawal (Eby et al., 2004), as well as report lower job satisfaction, increased turnover intentions, and higher stress (Eby & Allen, 2002). In fact, Ragins, Cotton, and Miller (2000) found that individuals reporting a complete lack of experience in mentoring relationships sometimes expressed more *positive* outcomes than those protégés that were in dysfunctional or dissatisfying relationships. This suggests that being in a mentoring relationship where one has negative relational experiences could do more harm than having no mentor at all. In addition to having harmful effects on the protégé, negative mentoring experiences have been posited to negatively impact the mentor and even the organization (Scandura, 1998). Thus, the potentially deleterious effects of negative mentoring experiences may be broad in scope.

Further, although researchers have found that the proportion of negative or dysfunctional relationships is low in comparison to positive relationships (Ragins & Scandura, 1997), this should not be taken to mean that negative mentoring experiences are low base rate phenomena. For example, in a study of both positive and negative mentoring experiences, Eby and colleagues (2000) found that over half of participants reported encountering negative mentoring experiences at some point in their careers. This substantial amount of protégés reporting negative mentoring

experiences is especially important in light of some of the harmful outcomes that can result from a mentoring relationship characterized by negative experiences.

Despite the outcomes of these negative experiences in mentoring relationships, some protégés will choose to remain in the relationship. With these outcomes in mind, it is critical that researchers seek to illuminate the reasons a protégé may remain in a relationship characterized by negative experiences. There are no studies to date that examine the factors that may serve to keep protégés in mentoring relationships even when they encounter negative relational experiences. This study addresses this gap by integrating the social psychology, mentoring, as well as management literatures, to investigate the mechanisms that may be at work in a protégé's decision to stay in mentoring relationships that are marked by negative experiences.

Theoretical overview. The exclusive focus on negative relational experiences is not meant to suggest that mentoring relationships are not simultaneously influenced by both positive and negative relational experiences. In fact, a protégé's positive experiences in a mentoring relationship are likely to influence his or her decision to remain in the relationship. As such, in order to examine the unique effects of negative mentoring experiences, protégé reports of positive mentoring experiences will be held constant (statistically controlled for) in order to pinpoint the unique effects of negative mentoring experiences on intentions to leave a mentoring relationship.

Many mentoring researchers have discussed the need to incorporate social psychology literature because the nature of mentoring relationships is similar to close personal relationships such as friendships and perhaps some aspects of romantic relationships (Scandura, 1998; Eby et al., 2000; Eby et al., 2004). Thus, social psychology literature can lend insight regarding some of the phenomena that may occur in these types of relationships.

Some theoretical work has been done to overlay mentoring relationships onto established social psychology theories. One such example is provided by Scandura (1998). She integrated mentoring relationships with a typology of the "dark side" of close interpersonal relationships created by Duck (1994). This typology distinguishes whether the intent of one person towards the other is a good intent versus a bad intent, and whether the relational event is inherent (i.e., in regards to an aspect of the relationship itself), versus emerging (i.e., in regards to a desired goal or outcome of the relationship). To make this typology pertain to a mentoring context, Scandura amended the relational events to be psychosocial mentoring events versus vocational mentoring events (also referred to as instrumental or career-related; Scandura, 1998). The dimension addressing the intent of one of the individuals in the relationship remained the same; a good intent verses a bad intent. From Scandura's revised version of this typology, the four quadrants now exemplify different types of relational problems that may occur in mentoring relationships: negative relations (bullies, enemies); sabotage (needling, revenge, silent treatment); difficulty (conflict, binds); and spoiling (betrayal, regret; Scandura, 1998). As noted by Eby and colleagues (2000), this work is important because it provides a theoretical framework for examining the negative side of mentoring and begins to address the distinction of the underlying intention of the mentor. However, there continues to be a need to empirically examine aspects of these negative events, such as the antecedents, consequences, and potential mediating or moderating variables of the relationships between negative mentoring events and specific outcomes.

Defining negative mentoring. Negative mentoring relations have been defined in terms of dysfunctional mentoring outcomes, such as dissatisfaction (Scandura, 1998), and by the negative experiences of protégés in terms of specific incidents or behaviors of the mentor (Eby, McManus, Simon, & Russell, 2000). Moreover, mentoring relationship dysfunction seems to

occur on a continuum, from general dislike to hostility (Scandura, 1998). Importantly, the absence of malice does not preclude a relationship from experiencing dysfunction (Eby et al., 2000; Scandura, 1998). For instance, a mentor may not sufficiently aid the protégé in attaining his or her goals or there may be interpersonal problems between the mentor and the protégé that thwart relationship effectiveness. Following these definitions, this study focuses on these negative experiences that may occur in mentoring relationships.

      Dimensionality of negative mentoring. Eby and colleagues (2000) developed a taxonomy of negative mentoring through content analysis of qualitative protégé reports of negative experiences. They determined that there are five distinct types of negative mentoring experiences: general dysfunctionality, mismatch within the dyad, lack of mentor experience, distancing behavior, and manipulative behavior. These five types of experiences are used to classify specific events or behaviors that take place between protégé and mentor and are referred to as negative mentoring experiences.

      General dysfunctionality occurs when the mentor has personal problems that may interfere with his or her ability to effectively mentor the protégé or when the mentor shows a negative attitude towards the organization and his or her work. Mismatch within the dyad occurs when one or both parties report that there is a mismatch in values, work styles, and/or personality. Lack of mentor expertise takes place when the protégé perceives the mentor as lacking expertise in interpersonal skills and/or a lack of expertise in technical skills. Distancing behavior is present when the mentor neglects or intentionally excludes his or her protégé from important meetings or events, as well as when the mentor is perceived to not have time for the protégé. Lastly, manipulative behaviors include two themes of behavior, misuse of position power and politicking. Misuse of position power refers to mistreatment that occurs when the

mentor uses his or her power in a dictatorial manner as well as situations where the mentor inappropriately delegates work to the protégé. Politicking occurs when a mentor is engaging political behavior for self-interest at the expense of the protégé (e.g., sabotage, deceit, and credit-taking).

In an examination of the five factor structure of negative mentoring experiences, Eby and Allen (2002) found that perhaps the negative experiences may be more parsimoniously categorized by two broad categories in which the experiences associated with malice or ill intent on the part of the mentor, such as distancing behavior and manipulation, comprise one category and the more neutral events, general dysfunction, lack of mentor expertise, and mismatch within the dyad, comprise a second category. These results should not be taken to mean that there are not in fact five dimensions, but that there are two broader categories that further classify and describe these five dimensions.

In support of this further classification of the five dimensions of negative experiences Simon & Eby 2003 found that the negative mentoring experiences have an underlying dimension addressing targeted actions on the part of the mentor. When the protégé perceives the negative experiences to be directly aimed at him or her, these types of experiences are closely related in the protégé's mind. When the mentor's actions are more diffuse in nature (i.e., not targeted toward the protégé), the protégé perceives those actions apart from targeted actions. This suggests that there is an underlying dimensionality of the five established negative mentoring experiences, and that they can be further categorized in order to examine antecedents (Simon & Eby) but also perhaps different moderating or mediating variables as well as relations to certain outcomes.

Abusive supervision. A growing body of literature in management research on abusive supervision suggests the negative effects of bad relationships in the workplace are similar to those found to result from negative mentoring experiences. Research examining the outcomes of abusive supervision finds that subordinates who perceived their supervisor as abusive have increased intentions to quit their jobs, report lower satisfaction with their lives and jobs, greater continuance commitment, lower affective and normative commitment, greater work-family conflict, and increased psychological distress (i.e., anxiety, depression, and stress; Duffy, Ganster, & Pagan, 2002; Tepper, 2000; Zellars, Tepper, & Duffy, 2002). These are not unlike the outcomes that may occur when mentoring relationships are characterized by negative experiences. As mentioned previously, lower job satisfaction, increased turnover intentions, and higher stress have all been shown to result from negative mentoring experiences (Eby & Allen, 2002). Moreover, in some mentoring relationships the mentor has some formal authority over the protégé. This may come in the form of an organizational supervisor, an academic supervisor, or as a clinical supervisor (Eby, 2007). In this way, research examining abusive supervision closely aligns with negative mentoring research. However, the abusive supervision literature is different from mentoring research in that not all mentors are also supervisors. Further, mentoring relationships can be formal or informal, where as a supervisory relationship is a formalized feature of one's job.

Often, if a relationship becomes negative, one or both parties may choose to leave the relationship (Scandura, 1998; Ragins et al., 2000). Therefore, it is hypothesized that the protégé's report of negative mentoring experiences will be positively related to the intention to leave the relationship.

H1(a-e): Protégés' negative experiences in mentoring(e.g., (a)general dysfunction,(b) mismatch within the dyad, (c)lack of mentor expertise, (d)distancing behavior, and (e)manipulation) will be positively related to the intention to leave the mentoring relationship, such that the more negative experiences one has will lead to greater intentions to leave the relationship.

Although negative experiences are expected to lead to intentions to leave the relationship, Ragins and colleagues (2000) note that there may be risks associated with terminating a relationship characterized by negative experiences. These risks may function to keep protégés in relationships marked by negative mentoring experiences. Specifically, it has been suggested that a protégé's perceived lack of mentoring alternatives or a protégé's fear of retaliation by the mentor may serve to keep the protégé in a relationship in which there are negative mentoring experiences (Scandura, 1998).

Perceived Alternatives

Several areas of organizational research discuss the influence of perceived alternatives on decision making regarding various outcomes. One such area of research concerns turnover intentions. Research on turnover in organizations often incorporates an individual's evaluation of the costs of leaving, which can include possible alternatives. One particular model of turnover is Lee and Mitchell's (1994) Unfolding Model of Employee Turnover. This model posits that there are several decision paths one could take when trying to decide whether or not to leave one's job. In an empirical investigation of the decision paths in the model, Lee, Mitchell, Wise and Fireman (1996) found that although there are always idiosyncratic reasons why individuals decide to leave, there are some patterns in the decisions paths. In one particularly relevant path, individuals are faced with a shock (an event that begins the thought process of deciding to leave or not), or

some violation of the person's image (personal values or goals), and these events, together or individually, initiate the process of the decision whether or not to leave. Next, an individual evaluates possible alternatives to the current situation. If dissatisfaction is present, due to the shock or image violation, the alternatives are then evaluated and can influence the final decision to stay or leave (Lee et al., 1996). This suggests that the evaluation of possible alternatives plays an important role in one's decision making process.

While this model concerns the issues surrounding one's job, it makes sense that it could be applied to intentions to leave other entities as well, such as a group, an organization, or individuals such as a supervisor or mentor. This is parallel to research on commitment whereby commitment can be focused on various targets such as an organization, a group, or a supervisor (e.g., Becker, 1992; Becker, Billings, Eveleth, & Gilbert, 1996; Meyer & Allen, 1997). Further, commitment has been discussed as being related to turnover intentions, albeit negatively, such that commitment serves to reduce one's intentions to leave (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Research on commitment has defined three distinct types of commitment: affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment. Of interest here is continuance commitment. This type of commitment is defined as the "awareness of the costs of leaving the organization" (Meyer & Allen, 1991, p.67). Again, it is important to remember that although the definition refers to leaving the organization, research on commitment states that commitment can have various targets or foci such as an organization, job, group, or individual (e.g., Becker, 1992; Becker, Billings, Eveleth, & Gilbert, 1996; Meyer & Allen, 1997). Continuance commitment develops from an accumulation of investments and the perceived costs of leaving; these costs can result in a perceived lack of alternatives if the cost is judged to be

great (Powell & Meyer, 2004). This suggests that when perceived alternatives are low, it leads to a decision to continue to be committed, or conversely, a weakened intention to leave.

In a related vein, social psychology research suggests that when women are involved in an abusive relationship, there are certain factors that may serve to prevent them from leaving these relationships that are characterized by negative experiences (e.g., Choice & Lamke, 1999; Anderson, Gillig, Sitaker, McClosky, Malloy, & Griggs, 2003). These abusive relationships can be characterized by both physical and emotional abuse, and women experiencing this type of relationship are often referred to as battered women. Although the scenario surrounding battered women is an extreme example of when relationships are characterized by negative experiences, research on battered women suggest that a lack of alternatives can function as a barrier, which may prevent these women from leaving abusive relationships (Anderson et al., 2003; Pedel, Eiskikovits, Enosh, & Winstok, 2000). According to Choice and Lamke (1999), when women are deciding whether to stay in their abusive relationships, they ask themselves two questions, "Will I be better off?" and "Can I do it?" The answer to the first question involves an evaluation of the quality of alternatives (Choice & Lamke, 1999). If there are no alternatives available or the alternatives are judged to be of lower quality than the current situation, one would likely choose to remain in the relationship. Further support for these suggestions can be seen in Rhatigan and Axsom (2006) in which they found that women who perceived themselves to have fewer alternatives were more likely to stay in their abusive relationship.

As previously mentioned, this should not suggest that the experiences of battered women are equal to those of protégés in mentoring relationships that experience negative events. However, there are some parallels between mentoring and abusive relationship literature that support the assertion that a perceived lack of alternatives may be a powerful influence on

whether an individual will choose to leave a relationship marked by negative experiences. Specifically, these parallels suggest that a perceived lack of alternatives will reduce an individual's intention to leave a relationship, even when that relationship is characterized by negative experiences.

This decision process whereby an individual examines possible alternatives can be seen in the mentoring literature as well. Eby's (2007) Investment Model of Mentoring Relationships suggests that the protégé's perceptions of possible alternatives can influence his or her commitment to the mentoring relationship. If there are few possible alternatives or if the alternatives are judged to be of low quality, the protégé may be more dependent on his or her current mentor and be less likely leave the relationship. This has also been posited by Scandura (1998) and Ragins and colleagues (2000). They state that a perceived lack of alternatives may reduce a protégé's intention to leave the mentoring relationship. Specifically, in a mentoring context, a perceived lack of alternatives would include things such as a lack of other possible mentors or alternative sources of developmental support (Higgins & Kram, 2001).

Given that alternatives may be an important component of one's decision to exit a relationship, it is important to examine how perceived alternatives may function in a situation where the mentoring relationship is marked by negative experiences. It is hypothesized that when a protégé encounters negative experiences in his or her mentoring relationship, he or she will have increased intentions to leave the relationship. However, there may be some cases, such as when a perceived lack of alternatives is functioning to reduce the protégé's intention of to leave his or her mentoring relationship, where the protégé chooses to remain.

H2(a-e): The relationship between protégés' experiences of all five negative mentoring

experiences (e.g., (a)general dysfunction,(b) mismatch within the dyad, (c)lack of mentor

expertise, (d)distancing behavior, and (e)manipulation) and intentions to leave the relationship will be moderated by protégés' perceived alternatives, such that the positive relationship between the negative mentoring experiences and intentions to leave the relationship will be weaker when perceived alternatives are low.

Fear of Retaliation

In the discussion of mentoring relationships that are marked by negative experiences, it is often noted that the occurrence of these events may be associated with a fear of retaliation by the mentor if he or she attempts to leave the mentoring relationship (Scandura, 1998; Ragins et al., 2000; Eby, 2007). This is especially true in the organizational context when the mentor may control valuable resources and have the ability to negatively influence the protégé's reputation with others in the organization.

In organizational literature on whistle-blowing, researchers often examine whether an individual's fear of retaliation affects his or her decision to blow the whistle. One study found that for individuals who observed one or more instances of wrongdoing, they were more fearful of retaliation if they acted to make the wrongdoing known (Miceli & Near, 1984). Miceli and Near (1985) describe the whistle-blower as an individual in a position to observe the wrongdoing, but not in a position of authority to correct the wrongdoing. This is similar to a mentoring relationship in which the protégé would be the observer of any negative mentoring experiences, but would often not be in a position of authority over the mentor to correct the behavior. Therefore, the options become whether to act (leave the relationship), or not to act (stay in the relationship); however, this decision may involve several factors. One important factor that is relevant here is the assessment of the potential personal costs of whistle-blowing. Miceli and Near (1985) note that fear of retaliation is one of the factors potential whistle-blowers

consider when making a decision to act. Moreover, when the fear of retaliation is low, the whistle-blowers act more frequently (Miceli &Near, 1985). In a mentoring context this would suggest that when fear of mentor retaliation is low, the protégé will have greater intentions to leave the relationship (to act) in the face of negative mentoring experiences.

Much like perceived alternatives, fear of retaliation may be a powerful influence on whether a protégé chooses to leave a mentoring relationship where he or she encounters negative experiences. Again, although battered women are an extreme example, social psychology research supports this phenomenon and has shown that a fear of retaliation can function to keep battered women in abusive relationships (Pedel et al., 2000). Grigsby and Hartman (1997) theorized that there are several categories of barriers that women in abusive relationships face in any attempt to leave the abusive relationship; one such barrier is the fear of retaliation from the abuser. In another study, battered women were directly asked why they chose to remain in the relationship; their responses indicated that fear of retaliation by the abusive partner was one of the most pervasive reasons for staying (Holtzworth-Munroe, 1988).

Being that mentors by definition are in a position of power over their protégés, it would follow that there could be a level of fear of mentor retaliation instilled in the protégé, especially in the face of negative mentoring experiences. Further, because mentoring relationships have been recognized as a close interpersonal relationship (Kram, 1985), it follows that a fear of retaliation by the mentor may lessen a protégé's intent to leave the mentoring relationship, much like fear of retaliation by an abusive partner would prevent a battered woman from leaving an abusive romantic relationship.

However, this relationship may only apply to certain dimensions of negative mentoring experiences. When examining the characteristics of the five dimensions of negative mentoring

experiences it would seem that there are some dimensions where fear of mentor retaliation would impact the protégé's intention to leave and other dimensions where fear of retaliation would not be a factor.

As previously discussed, Eby and Allen (2002) suggested a further classification of the five dimensions of negative mentoring experiences into two broader categories; one category for dimensions characterized by neutral intent on the part of the mentor and a second category for dimensions characterized by ill intent on the part of the mentor. It would seem that protégés' fear of mentor retaliation would be most impactful in the dimensions categorized by an ill intent on the part of the mentor (i.e., manipulation and distancing behavior). It is proposed that if the protégé is encountering negative relational experiences that have an underlying ill intention, the protégé would likely have weaker intentions to leave when they are fearful of mentor retaliation. Thus, ill-intended mentor behavior coupled with protégé's fear of mentor retaliation may function to keep the protégé in the relationship. If the negative experiences are more neutral in nature, such as in general dysfunction, mismatch within the dyad, and lack of mentor expertise, it is not likely that fear of retaliation would come into play in influencing their intentions to leave the relationship.

Therefore, it is hypothesized that the relationship between the two negative mentoring experiences characterized by ill intent of the mentor (manipulative behavior and distancing behavior) and the protégés' intent to leave the relationship will be moderated by the fear of retaliation by the mentor.

H3(a-b): The relationship between protégés' experience of two of the negative mentoring experiences (e.g., (a)mentor manipulation & (b)distancing behavior) and intentions to leave the relationship will be moderated by protégés' fear of retaliation, such that the

positive relationship between negative mentoring experiences and turnover intentions

will be weaker when fear of retaliation is high.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Participants & Procedure

A survey was sent to 2,250 alumni from a large southeastern university who graduated in 1995. Among the 466 returned surveys a subset was selected based on responses to the following information and questions, "One type of work relationship is a mentoring relationship. A mentor is generally defined as a higher-ranking, influential individual in your work environment who has advanced experience and knowledge and is committed to providing upward mobility and support in your career. A mentor may or may not be in your organization, and he or she may or may not be your immediate supervisor. Have you ever had a mentor?" (adapted from Ragins et al., 2000). The participant had to have responded "yes" to having had a mentor at the time of the survey, and "yes" to the question "Is the relationship currently on-going?" in order to be retained for the data analysis. This resulted in a sample of 149 respondents, and only these participants were used in subsequent data analyses. Theses respondents were almost equally split between males (46.3%) and females (53.7%), had an average age of 31, were almost all Caucasian (97.3%), and 35 percent had earned a degree higher than a bachelor's.

Control variables

Theoretically plausible variables were examined as possible control variables to include in the analyses. First, Scandura (1998) noted that a unique relationship exists between a protégé and a mentor when the mentor is the protégé's supervisor. This type of relationship could increase the distress in a dysfunctional relationship because of the fear of retaliation the protégé

may possess; therefore, supervisory status of the mentor was examined as a possible control variable. Second, whether the mentoring relationship was initiated by an informal or formal process will be considered because extant literature has discussed the impact this can have on the outcomes of the mentoring relationship (Ragins, & Cotton, 1999; Scandura, 1998; Eby & Allen, 2002). Third, the length of the relationship was examined as a potential control variable. The length of the relationship, which corresponds to stages in development, has also been discussed in the mentoring literature as related to reports of negative experiences because in the beginning of a mentoring relationship both parties have an ideal view of how the relationship will be (Eby et al, 2004), and mentoring relationships change over time making termination of the relationship more probable in the later phases (Eby, 2007). Finally, as previously mentioned, protégé's reports of positive experiences in the mentoring relationship were considered as controls. Because the current study seeks to examine the negative aspects of a mentoring relationship it is important to also consider the positive aspects that can sometimes serve to balance the negative aspects. In order to determine the control variables that were retained in the analyses, bivariate correlations between each control variable and the dependent variable (intention to leave the relationship) were examined. These correlation results showed that only the positive experiences in mentoring were significantly related to the intention to leave the relationship. Therefore, only this variable was retained as a control variable in the analyses.

Measures

  Negative mentoring experiences. Negative mentoring experiences were measured by a scale developed by Eby et al. (2004). The five dimensions in this scale have been shown to be psychometrically sound with discriminant and convergent validity (Eby et al., 2000). This scale was used to determine the extent to which the protégé reported negative mentoring experiences

with his or her mentor. Each respondent rated his or her agreement with each item on a one to five scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." A mean score of the items on each of the five dimensions of negative mentoring (i.e., general dysfunctionality, mismatch within the dyad, mentor lack of expertise, distancing behavior, and manipulative behavior) was calculated for each participant. For *general dysfunction* coefficient alpha was high, α = .90 (e.g., "My mentor approaches tasks with a bad attitude."). For *mismatch within the dyad* coefficient alpha was high, α =.89 (e.g., "The personal values of my mentor are different from my own."). For *lack of expertise* coefficient alpha was high, α =.88 (e.g., "I have my doubts about my mentor's job-related skills."). For d*istancing behavior* coefficient alpha was high, α = .89 (e.g., "My mentor does not include me in important meetings."). For *Manipulation* coefficient alpha was quite high, α =.94 (e.g., "My mentor has intentionally hindered my professional development.").

Intention to leave the relationship. The protégés' intent to leave the relationship was measured with a three item scale in which the protégé responded on a one to five scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" (e.g., "It is likely that I will actively look for a new mentor soon", "I often think about terminating this mentoring relationship", "I intend to exit this mentoring relationship in the near future"). These items were adapted from a turnover intentions scale (Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1979). The reliability coefficient for intent to leave was high, α =.88.

Perceived alternatives. Perceived alternatives was measured by a three item scale in which the respondent rated his or her agreement with each item on a one to five scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" (e.g., "I could easily find another mentor", "There are plenty of possible mentors in this organization", "Many people in this organization would be

willing to mentor me"). The reliability coefficient for perceived alternatives was adequately high, $\alpha = .83$.

Fear of retaliation. Fear of retaliation was measured using three items developed for this study. These were also rated by each participant on a one to five scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" (e.g., "I fear that my mentor would be really mad if I tried to end our relationship", "My mentor might well retaliate against me if I ended our mentoring relationship", "I feel like I cannot leave the mentoring relationship because of what my mentor might do"). The reliability coefficient for fear of retaliation was moderately high, $\alpha = .81$.

Positive mentoring experiences. Positive mentoring experiences were measured using Ragains and McFarllan's (1990) measure of career-related and psychosocial mentor support. These were also rated by each participant on a one to five scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" (e.g., "My mentor helps me reach my career goals.", "My mentor is someone I can confide in."). Although these are often examined as two separate dimensions of positive experiences, they were collapsed to create one general measure of positive experiences to use as a control variable in the study. This helps to reduce multicollinearity in the model. The reliability coefficient for positive mentoring experiences was high, $\alpha = .94$.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics. Variable means, standard deviations, intercorrelations, and alphas are reported in Table 1.

Confirmatory factor analysis. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted on the measures of perceived alternatives and fear of mentor retaliation. Because these measures were created for this study, it is important to determine that they are valid measures. Two CFAs were conducted in order to compare a two factor model to a one factor model. The one factor model specified that all six items load onto one general factor, while the two factor model specified the three perceived alternatives items to load onto one factor and the three fear of retaliation items to load onto a second factor. The two models were then compared to assess which provided the best fit to the data. Whereas the one factor model demonstrated extremely poor fit to the data (χ^2=190.63, p<.00; CFI =.60, TLI =.35, RMSEA = .29, SRMR =.19), the two factor model fit the data exceptionally well (χ^2=1.69, p=.99; CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.00, RMSEA < .01, SRMR = .02). A chi-square difference test resulted in a change in chi-square of 188.94(1), p<.01. This is a statistically significant difference and supports the two factor model in which each set of items load onto their respective constructs and demonstrates that both measures are functioning properly.

Hierarchical moderated regression. Hierarchical moderated regression analyses were employed to examine the nature of the relationship between negative mentoring experiences, fear of mentor retaliation, perceived alternatives, and intentions to leave the relationship. Results

appear in Table 2. In step one, the significantly related control variable (positive mentoring experiences) was entered. In step two, the main effect terms (perceived alternatives, fear of mentor retaliation, and all five negative mentoring dimensions) were entered. In step three, all the relevant interaction terms were entered into the regression equation (perceived alternatives X each of the 5 negative mentoring dimensions, fear of mentor retaliation X manipulation, and fear of mentor retaliation X distancing behavior).

To test hypotheses 1a-e, the full model was examined (Model 3). Model 3 was significant, $F (1, 146) =9.93, p<.01$. However, not all of the main effect hypotheses were supported. For the negative experiences only general dysfunction (β=.20, $p<.05$), mismatch within the dyad (β= .16, $p<.05$), and lack of mentor expertise (β=.22, $p<.05$) were significant. Neither distancing behavior nor manipulation was found to be significant. Thus, support was found for hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c, which stated that greater negative mentoring experiences (general dysfunction, lack of mentor expertise, and mismatch within the dyad) would lead to greater intentions to leave the relationship. Support was not found for hypotheses 1d (manipulation) or 1e (distancing behavior).

To test hypothesis 2a-e and 3a-b, a Δ F-test comparing the model containing the joint effects (Model 3) to the model containing only linear main effect terms (Model 2) was performed to determine whether the two-way interactions accounted for incremental variance in predicting intentions to leave the relationship. The Δ F-test between a model with only linear terms and a model with the interaction terms included was significant, $\Delta F (7,131) =3.48, p<.01$), indicating that there were moderation effects present. Among the two-way interactions of perceived alternatives and the five negative mentoring experiences only one of the interactions was significant. The significant interaction was of perceived alternatives and mismatch within the

dyad (β= .18, *p<.05).* The two-way interactions of fear and manipulation (β = -.28, *p<.05*) and of

fear and distancing behavior (β = .37, *p<.05*) were both significant in predicting intentions to

leave the relationship.

  Interaction plots. To examine the nature of these moderated relationships, the two-way

interactions between fear of retaliation and manipulation, fear of retaliation and distancing

behavior, and perceived alternatives and mismatch within the dyad were plotted in accordance

with Aiken and West's (1996) guidelines. The plots indicate that the interactions for perceived

alternatives and mismatch within the dyad, and fear of retaliation and manipulation were both in

the predicted direction. However, the plot of the interaction of fear of retaliation and distancing

behavior was in the opposite of the predicted direction.

  The significance of the interaction term along with the plot of the interaction lends

support for hypotheses 2b. As shown in Figure 1, when perceived alternatives are low the

relationship between mismatch within the dyad and the protégés' intention to leave the

relationships is weaker; however, when perceived alternatives are high there is a relationship

between mismatch and intention to leave. Hypothesis 3a was also supported. As shown in Figure

2, as fear of retaliation increases, the relationship between experiences of manipulation and

intention to leave the relationship weakens. An opposite trend is seen for low fear of retaliation.

Finally, while the interaction term was significant for fear of retaliation and distancing behavior,

the nature of the moderated effect did not support hypothesis 3b. The relationship was in the

opposite direction than predicted; as illustrated in Figure 3, as fear increases, the relationship

between distancing behavior and intentions to leave the relationship gets *stronger*. It was

predicted that high levels of fear would weaken protégé intention to leave.

Simple slopes analyses. Simple slopes analyses were also conducted on the three significant interaction terms in order to determine if the slope of the low and high levels of the moderators were significantly different from zero (Cohen, Cohen, Aiken, & West, 1993). The results of the simple slopes analysis for low and high levels of perceived alternatives indicated that the slope for high levels of perceived alternatives across low and high levels of mismatch was significantly different from zero, $t(145)=3.56$, $p<.01$, such that when alternatives are high the intention to leave the relationship increases as the level of felt mismatch increases. The slope for low levels of perceived alternatives across levels of mismatch was not statistically different from zero, $t(145)=-.12$, $p=.91$. This indicates that when a protégé perceives alternatives as low, her or she will not have increased intentions to leave the relationship, if there is mismatch within the dyad. This is consistent with hypothesis 2b.

The simple slopes analysis of low and high levels of fear of retaliation across levels of manipulations showed that neither slope was significantly different from zero at the $p<.05$ level, but the slope of the low level of fear of retaliation was close to significance, $t(145)=1.74$, $p=.08$. When examining the plot of the interaction along with the simple slopes analysis it can be seen that under conditions of high levels of manipulation a high level of fear of retaliation results in weaker intentions to leave the relationship than does a low level of fear of retaliation. Also, the plot illustrates that under conditions of low levels of manipulation the opposite effect is found, such that when fear of retaliation is high, the intentions to leave the relationship are greater than when fear of retaliation is low. Taken together, these results suggest that when manipulation is high and fear of retaliation is high, the protégé will have lower intentions to leave the relationship than when either of these variables is low. This supports hypothesis 3a.

Simple slopes analysis for low and high levels of fear of retaliation across levels of distancing behavior indicated that the slope for a high level of fear of retaliation was statistically significant from zero, *t(145)=3.10, p<.00.* This indicates that at a high level of fear of retaliation, the protégés intent to leave the relationship increase in correspondence to increases in experiences of distancing behavior. This is counter to hypothesis 3b that predicted high levels of fear of retaliation to weaken the relationship between distancing behavior and intentions to leave the relationship. Thus, this did not support hypothesis 3b.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The current study lends new insight into negative mentoring experiences by examining whether the five dimensions of negative experiences directly influence a protégé's intention to leave the mentoring relationship, as well as examining potential moderators that could lead a protégé to choose to remain in a mentoring relationship that is marked by negative experiences. Several main conclusions can be drawn. First, this study illustrates the significant influence negative experiences can have on mentoring relationships. Second, findings suggest that the relationship between negative mentoring experiences and intentions to leave the mentoring relationship is not as straight-forward as first expected. Finally, by classifying the five dimensions of negative experiences into broader categories, different moderating variables come into play in predicting outcomes of these relationships.

Influence of negative experiences. Direct effects were found for three of the five negative experiences (general dysfunction, lack of mentor expertise, and mismatch within the dyad) on intentions to leave the relationship, and three moderating effects were found, two for fear of retaliation and one for perceived alternatives. Importantly, these results were found while holding constant, and thereby accounting for, the impact of protégés' positive mentoring experiences. Because all interpersonal relationships will experience both positive and negative relational events, this creates a stringent test of the unique impact of negative mentoring experiences on a protégé's intention to leave the mentoring relationship. The results demonstrate that even when positive experiences are present, the negative experiences can have an influence

on the protégé's intention to leave the mentoring relationship. This finding, that negative experiences are predictive of outcomes even when positive experiences are present, has been found in other research as well.

In a large-scale interdisciplinary synthesis of research concerning the relative power of bad over good, Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, and Vohs (2001) found that bad is actually more predictive than good across situations, and that there may even be an evolutionary adaptive explanation for this phenomenon. This review also documented that bad has stronger and longer lasting effects than good across situations. One example is research on trauma. Trauma has been found to have severe and lasting effects on behavior, self-esteem, health, anxiety, and well-being; but a counterpart to trauma has not been found and there is little evidence that a single positive experience, no matter how good, can have equally influential effects. Moreover, this review illustrated that bad events are more powerful than good in close relational outcomes and in interpersonal interactions (Gottman, 1979, 1994; Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986), and in the evaluation of and reactions to positive or negative social network patterns (e.g., having a supportive social network versus a social network where one feels rejected; Manne, Taylor, Dougherty, &Kemeny, 1997; Rook, 1984; Okun, Melichar, & Hill, 1990). Specifically, research on close interpersonal relationships found that the presence or absence of negative behaviors was more strongly related to relationship quality than was the presence or absence of positive behaviors. One major implication is that decreasing negative interaction patterns is more influential than increasing positive ones (Gottman, 1979, 1994). Further, longitudinal research has shown that in relationships, destructive approaches to problems (e.g., exiting the relationship, or neglecting one's partner) were more predictive of outcomes than constructive approaches

(e.g., trying to improve relational conditions; remaining loyal; Rusbult et al., 1986); thus, long-term success in a relationship depends more on not doing bad things than on doing good things.

This finding is important in a mentoring context because even if a majority of the relational experiences is positive, a few negative experiences could be powerful influences on relational perceptions and outcomes. In fact, Gottman (1994) has claimed there is a ratio of five to one, good to bad, which is necessary for a relationship to succeed. Eby's Investment Model of Mentoring Relationships (2007) discusses how protégés may weigh the costs and benefits of their mentoring relationships when determining relationship satisfaction, commitment, and stability. Thus, it may be that a few negative experiences could have more of an influence on this ratio than many positive experiences.

Differential Effects. The present study shows that there are direct effects on intentions to leave the relationship for three of the five negative mentoring experiences: general dysfunction, lack of mentor expertise, and mismatch within the dyad. Interestingly, these are the three negative experiences categorized by a neutral intent on the part of the mentor; the remaining two dimensions, which are categorized by ill intent of the mentor, were not found to have a direct effect on intention to leave the relationship. However, there may be a statistical artifact. The correlations between manipulation and distancing behavior with intentions to leave the relationship are in the predicted direction and strong. The direct effects of manipulation and distancing behavior may not have been statistically significant due to the multicollinearity in the model due to the correlation among the five dimensions of negative experiences, as well as the amount of variance accounted for my positive experiences in the relationship.

The moderation effects for fear of retaliation that were found were for both of the ill intent dimensions: manipulation and distancing behavior. It seems that the ill intent dimensions

may elicit emotions in the protégé, such as fear of retaliation, that influence decisions about the mentoring relationship. Interestingly, the nature of the interaction between manipulation and fear of retaliation were opposite to the nature of the interaction between distancing behavior and fear of retaliation.

One perplexing finding is the surprising relationship between fear of retaliation and distancing behavior on intention to leave. This finding was counter to the hypothesized relationship and indicated that when the levels of both fear of retaliation and distancing behavior are high the protégé has stronger intentions to leave the relationship than when either of these variables are low. While this result necessitates further examination in other samples, some possible explanations can be offered. When mentors engage in distancing behavior they are neglecting their protégé. If the protégé is neglected it may likely mean that the protégé is no longer receiving any type of interaction from the mentor, positive or negative. In this scenario the protégé may feel that because he or she is not receiving any interaction with the mentor he or she is better off leaving the relationship, even if there is a felt level of fear of retaliation. In other words, the benefits of leaving and obtaining new mentorship outweigh the potential costs of mentor retaliation. This relationship between distancing behavior and fear of retaliation may simply be a unique combination of factors that lead a protégé to have strong intentions to leave the relationship.

Perceived alternatives. Intriguingly, the present results suggest that alternatives do not generally matter when a protégé is deciding whether or not to leave a mentoring relationship marked by negative experiences. Only the relationship between mismatch within the dyad and intention to leave the relationship was moderated by perceived alternatives. Perhaps protégés do not view having continuous mentoring relationships as critical, and that having immediate

replacement options is not necessary before deciding to exit a mentoring relationship. Here it seems as though protégés are willing to go without a mentor for some period of time when they are experiencing negative relational events in their current mentorship. It could be that protégés view mentorships as an extra benefit. Although the lack of support for the influence of perceived alternatives was surprising in light of the amount of extant research supporting the effects of this construct, it is important to consider that all of the empirical support for perceived alternatives came from contexts other than mentoring. Further, some research finds that mentoring relationships affected affective commitment and turnover intentions of the protégé to the *organization* (e.g., Stallworth, 2003; emphasis added). In the case of negative mentoring relationships, where a mentor is in a position to control resources and can influence a protégé's reputation, protégés may consider leaving the organization and not just the mentoring relationship. This could mean that alternatives are important in terms of alternate places of employment, but not necessarily to alternate mentors.

In a review of interpersonal relationship research, Berscheid (1994) noted that one issue plaguing this area of research is that each discipline examining interpersonal relationships is somewhat different and there are theoretical and methodological issues that make it difficult to integrate results into different types of relationship contexts. Further, the dynamics of various types of interpersonal relationship are often unique to each type and this creates challenges in terms of applying findings from one type of interpersonal relationship to another. These issues could in part explain why perceived alternatives did not function as expected in the mentoring context despite evidence to the contrary from other streams of research.

CHAPTER 5

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research should more closely examine the nature of the relationship between the two ill-intended negative experiences (manipulation and distancing behavior) and intentions to leave the relationship. One such examination should be directed toward replicating the finding concerning distancing behavior in order to see if this finding holds up across different samples and settings. These results suggest that although manipulation and distancing behavior have been discussed as being characterized by ill intent, they are functioning in different ways. The interaction of manipulation and fear of retaliation are functioning to likely keep the protégé in the mentoring relationship, but it could be that perhaps the negative experience of manipulation breeds feelings of fear of retaliation. This would suggest that it is the manipulative behavior that is inducing the felt fear of retaliation. In light of the present findings, future research should also examine more specific emotional reactions to both manipulation and distancing behavior such as anxiety, anger, or withdrawal. This could help us better understand the emotional dynamics associated with negative experiences and further explore the impact that these reactions may have on intentions to leave the relationship or other outcomes such as relationship satisfaction, or objective measures of career advancement and development.

Mentoring theory should also begin to address the potential issues that could occur over time if protégés choose to remain in relationships marked by negative experiences. It could be that over time the experience of fear of retaliation and negative relational experiences could lead to protégé burnout. Burnout has been shown to be an outcome of interpersonal stress (Maslach,

1998), and is even defined as "a prolonged response to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job" (p. 68, Maslach, 1998). Experiencing burnout can have deleterious effects on physical and psychological health, quality of work, and productivity (Maslach, 1976, 1978, 1979; Maslach & Jackson, 1978, 1979; Maslach & Pines, 1977), as well as influence on turnover, absenteeism, and worker morale (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). It is important for mentoring theory to consider the impact of negative mentoring experiences because these effects can lead to costly consequences for both individual workers and organizations (Maslach, 1982).

With the large amount of literature suggesting the potential effect of perceived alternatives on intentions to leave relationships, it is possible that they do play an important role. The impact of perceived alternatives may be found in other samples or with other variables included in the model that were not included in the present study. However, if subsequent mentoring research also finds that alternative mentors are not of importance in when a protégé considers leaving a mentoring relationship, this is an important finding in and of itself. Research would then benefit from examining why in a mentoring context perceived alternatives do not function similarly to other organizational outcomes and antecedents, such as turnover intentions and commitment to organizations, jobs, work groups, or individuals such as supervisors.

Lastly, future research should investigate the factor structure of negative mentoring experiences. While research has found there to be five dimensions of negative experiences (Eby et al, 2000), the differential pattern of effects found in the present study elicit a need to more closely examine the relationships among these five dimensions. One possible structure would be one in which the three neutral-intent dimensions hold together on one second-order factor and manipulation and distancing behavior stand on their own. Further, although differential effects were found for manipulation and distancing behavior they may load onto a factor characterized

by ill intent. A confirmatory factor analysis of various factor structures would work to advance

mentoring theory and research surrounding these negative experience by informing mentoring

researchers how best to model negative experiences.

CHAPTER 6

LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Several limitations should be considered along with the present results. First, the sample was somewhat homogenous with concern to age (most participants were in their early 30's) and race (over 90% Caucasian). It is possible that a more diverse sample would lend different results.

As this study only accounts for the protégé's perspective on the relationship, it would be interesting to obtain mentor perspectives, as mentors can have different experiences in the mentoring relationship (Fagenson-Eland, Marks, & Amendola, 1997). Because mentoring relationships are dyadic in nature, examining only the protégé perspective leaves out information from the other half of the dyad. However, obtaining mentor accounts was beyond the scope of the present study. In relation to the protégé reports of negative experiences, some researchers have questioned the accuracy of retrospective self-reports. However, researchers examining interpersonal relationships have found that this methodology is typically quite accurate (Berscheid, 1994).

The data is cross-sectional in nature and therefore it is impossible to infer causality. The conditions necessary to infer causation are not present in a cross-sectional design, such as temporal separation between the causal variable and the outcome variable (James, Mulaik, & Brett, 1982). Finally, other variables that were not included in the present study may affect the nature of the relationships between the present variables of interest. Future research should seek to pinpoint other potential moderators and mediators of the relationship between negative mentoring experiences and protégé intention to leave the relationship.

This research serves as an initial examination of the dynamics that occur in mentoring relationships characterized by negative experiences. There is great room for future research to examine the relationships in the present study more closely and to begin to make advances in the area of negative mentoring in general. This is an important avenue for mentoring research in light of the established harmful outcomes of negative relational experiences, as well as the present findings demonstrating that there are situations resulting in a protégé choosing to remain in these potentially harmful relationships.

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Table 1.

Means, Standard Deviations, Intercorrelations and Reliabilities

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
						Correlations					
1. Perceived Alternatives	2.86	.92	(.83)								
2. Fear of Retaliation	1.90	.85	-.22*	(.81)							
3. General Dysfunction	1.55	.66	-.09	.45*	(.90)						
4. Mismatch within Dyad	2.83	.83	-.03	.29*	.33*	(.89)					
5. Lack of Expertise	1.55	.56	-.16	.42*	.66*	.36*	(.88)				
6. Distancing Behavior	1.85	.65	-.24*	.43*	.48*	.51*	.65*	(.89)			
7. Mentor Manipulation	1.60	.60	-.21*	.55*	.73*	.40*	.75*	.70*	(.94)		
8. Intent to Leave	1.54	.66	-.01	.35*	.54*	.45*	.53*	.53*	.58*	(.88)	
9. Positive Experiences	3.75	.54	.21*	-.33*	-.39*	-.49*	-.42*	-.64*	-.48*	-.43*	(.94)

Note. N=149. Reliability coefficient alpha appears on the diagonal.

p<.05

Table 2.

Hierarchical Moderated Regression for Intention to Leave Relationship

Model	Variable	β (SE)	β (SE)	β (SE)
Model 1	Positive Experiences	-.43* (.09)	-.08 (.11)	-.03 (.11)
Model 2	Alternatives		.12 (.05)	.09 (.05)
	Fear of Retaliation		.00 (.06)	.04 (.06)
	General Dysfunction		.20* (.12)	.20* (.12)
	Mismatch		.17* (.06)	.16* (.06)
	Lack of Expertise		.11 (.12)	.22* (.13)
	Distancing Behavior		.14 (.11)	.16 (.11)
	Manipulation		.17 (.14)	.09 (.15)
Model 3	Alts X GenDys			.06 (.14)
	Alts X Mismatch			.18* (.06)
	Alts X Expertise			.20 (.13)
	Alts X Distance			.00 (.11)
	Alts X Manipulation			-.19 (.17)
	Fear X Distance			.37* (.13)
	Fear X Manipulation			-.28* (.10)
	ΔR^2	.18	.26	.09
	ΔF	32.61*	9.29*	3.48*
	R^2	.18	.45	.53
	Adjusted R^2	.18	.41	.48
	Overall F	32.61*	13.83*	9.93*

Note. N=149. Alts=lack of alternatives, Fear=fear of retaliation, GenDys=General
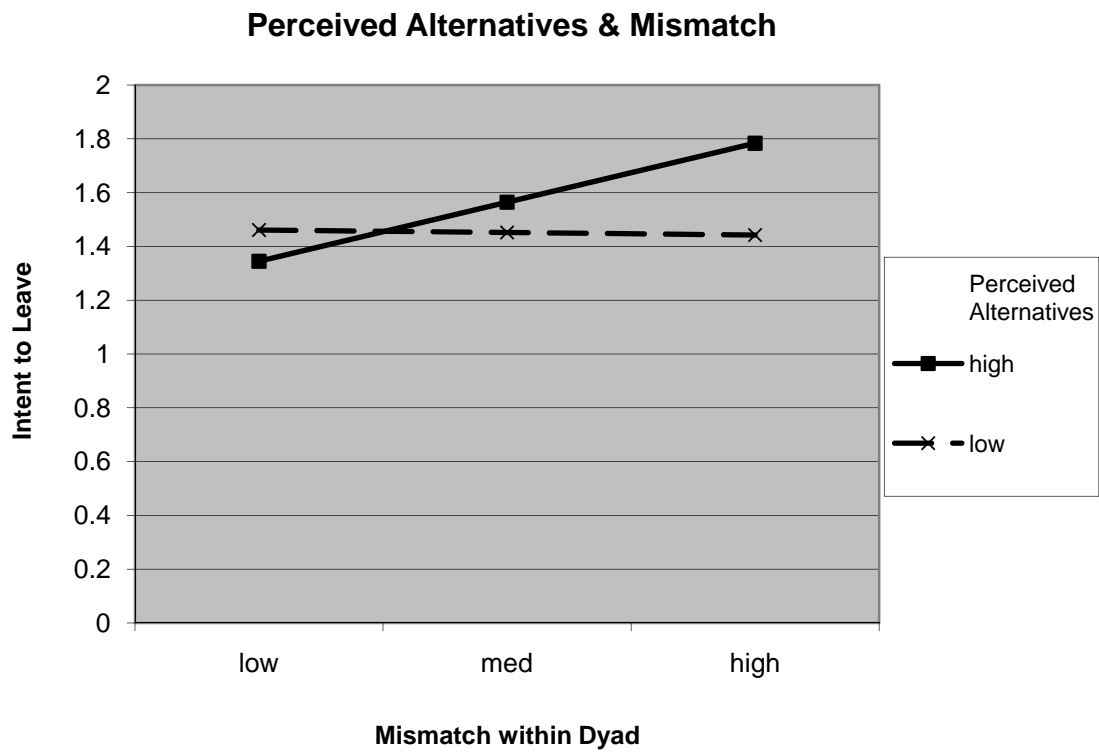
Dysfunction, Distance=Distancing Behavior

*p<.05

Figure 1. Perceived Alternatives & Mismatch
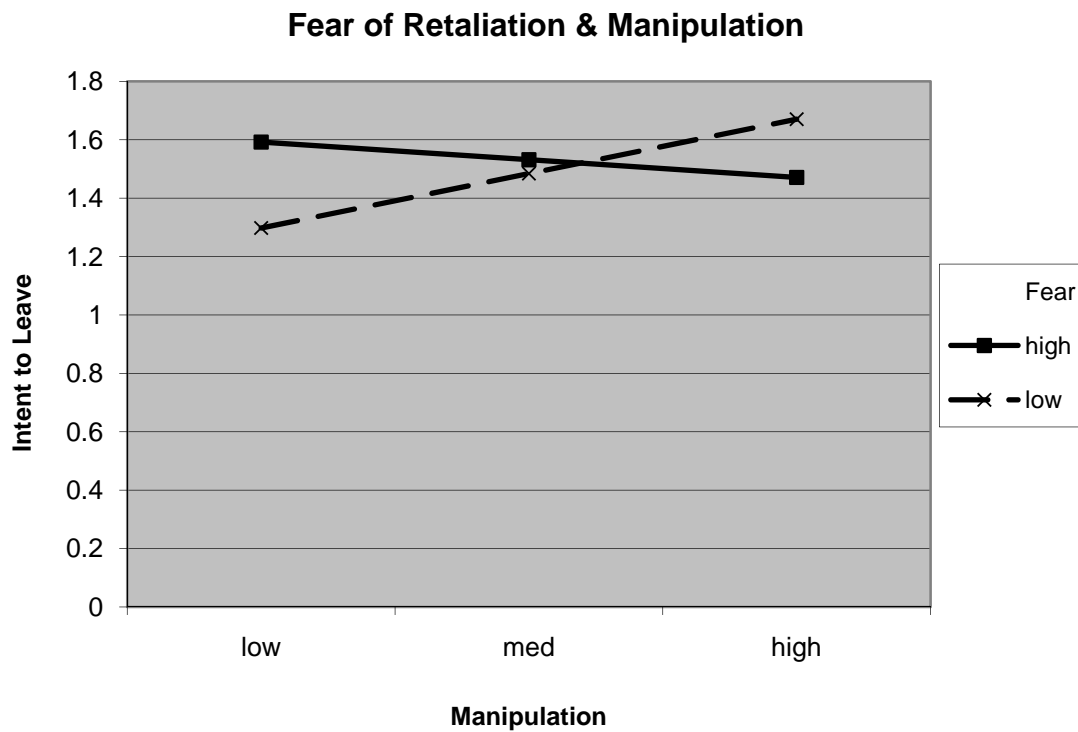
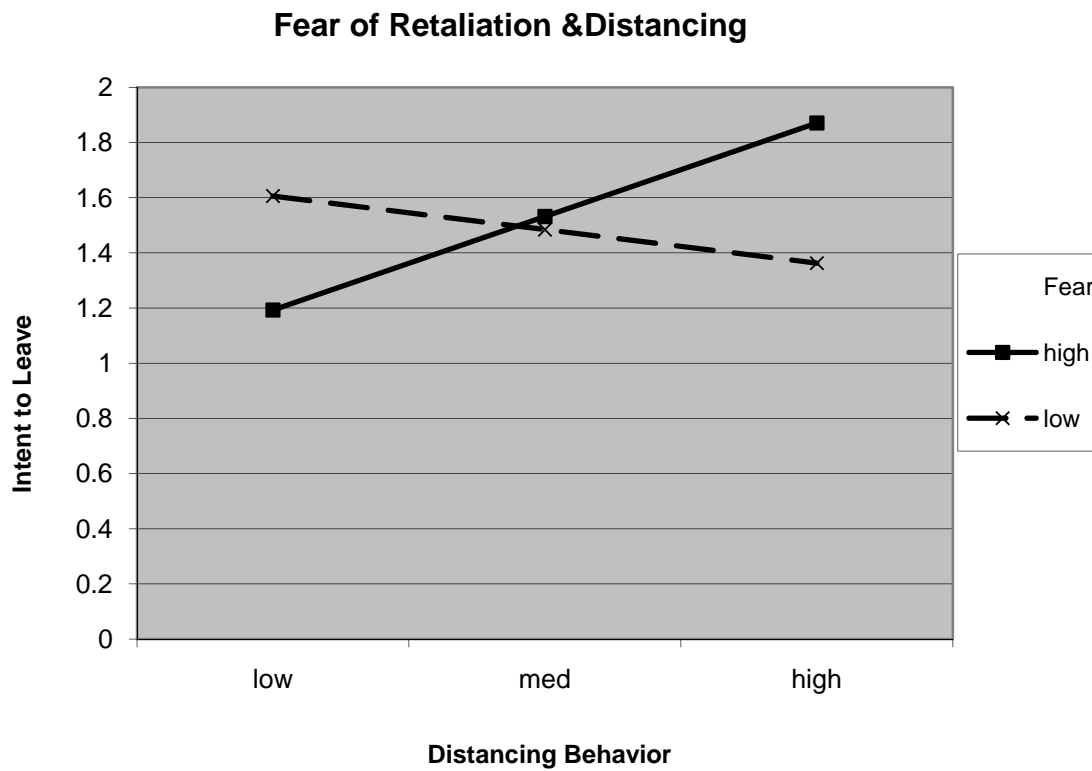**Fear of Retaliation & Manipulation**

Figure 2. Fear of Retaliation & Manipulation

Figure 3. Fear of Retaliation &Distancing Behavior