



Academic Mentors and Study Habits: How can Underrepresented Students Improve GPA?



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Introduction

- Most freshman college students do not possess effective study habits in order to effectively cope with the academic demands of colleges (Bishop, Bauer, & Becker, 1998; Sanoff, 2006).
- Teacher-mentors who are educated and familiar with the academic system may be able to provide social resources, such as skill-building, for educational outcomes that a mentor with less educational attainment would be less capable providing (Chang, Greenberger, Heckhausen, & Farruggia, 2010).
- Previous research focuses broadly on social resources that mentors provide to students, but not much is known about specific resources, such as fostering study habits, that can help students improve their GPA.
- Study motivation and study skills exhibit the strongest relationships with both GPA and grades in individual habits (Crede & Kuncel, 2008).

Research Questions

- Does the presence of at least one academic mentor associate with students practicing effective study habits among underrepresented college students?
- To what extent do effective study habits predict students' GPAs during their first year of college?

Participants

- Undergraduates (N = 340, M = 18.11, SD = 0.37) at an university were identified as underrepresented students and were contacted via email to participate in a longitudinal study.
- Survey was administered two times: Time 1 (Fall Semester); Time 2 (Spring Semester).
- Gender: Males (N = 105); Females (N = 233)
- Race: Native (N = 1); Asian (N = 55), Black (N = 99), Hispanic (N = 34), White (N = 80), Multiracial (N = 98)

Measures and Methods

Measures

- Three subscales (Help-Seeking, Time and Study Environment, and Effort Regulation) were selected from the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) to measure study habits (Pintrich, 1991).
- Students identified academic mentors, which we defined as anyone who may be in the position to give students academic advice.

Methods

- Correlations
- Regressions tested for:
 - Presence of Academic Mentors (Time 1) predicting effective study habits (Time 2)
 - Effective study habits (Time 2) predicting GPA (Time 2)

Results

Table 1
Intercorrelations, Means, and Standard Deviations for Study Habit Subscales, Fall and Spring GPA, SES, and SAT scores

Variable	Mean	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Help-Seeking	4.03	1.13	--	.19**	.20**	.14**	.12**	.08	-.04
2. Time and Study Environment	4.82	.99		--	.73**	.24**	.38**	.12*	.095
3. Effort Regulation	4.92	1.18			--	.29**	.36**	.04	.01
4. Fall GPA	3.13	.51				--	.64**	.01	.35**
5. Spring GPA	3.15	.52					--	.01	.30**
6. SES	7.99	3.26						--	.04
7. SAT scores	1893.62	202.01							--

Note. *p < .05, **p < .01

Table 2
Regression Analysis Summary for the Presence of Academic Mentors (AM) in the fall predicting Help-Seeking, Time and Study Environment, and Effort Regulation

	Help-Seeking				Time and Study Environment				Effort Regulation			
	B	SE	β	R ²	B	SE	β	R ²	B	SE	β	R ²
SES	.03	.20	.09		.04	.02	.12*		.01	.02	.04	
SAT	.00	.00	-.03		.00	.00	.10		3.49E-5	.00	.01	
AM	.40	.13	.17*		.21	.11	.10		.12	.14	.05	
				.040				.032				.004

Note. N = 316. SES and SAT scores were controlled for. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Table 3
Regression Analysis Summary for Help-Seeking, Time and Study Environment, and Effort Regulation predicting Spring GPA

	Help-Seeking				Time and Study Environment				Effort Regulation			
	B	SE	β	R ²	B	SE	β	R ²	B	SE	β	R ²
SES	.00	.01	-.002		-.004	.02	-.03		-.001	.01	-.01	
SAT	.00	.00	.03		.00	.00	.09*		.00	.00	.11*	
Fall GPA	.63	.05	.61***		.58	.05	.56***		.56	.05	.55***	
Study Skills	.02	.02	.03	.429	.12	.02	.23***	.478	.09	.02	.21***	.469

Note. N = 316. SES, SAT scores, and Fall GPA were controlled for. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Conclusion

Findings

- Overall, these results largely do not support the hypothesis that academic mentors are associated with more effective study habits. However, results do support the hypothesis that effective study habits are associated with higher GPAs.
- The presence of academic mentors in the fall semester predicts Help-Seeking and almost predicts Time and Study Environment study habits ($\beta = .103, p = .068$) in the spring, but it fails to show support for the Effort Regulation subscale.
- Only Time and Study Environment and Effort Regulation predict higher student GPA in the spring semester, while Help-Seeking does not.

Limitations

- We did not examine the quality of the mentoring relationships or account for the quantity of academic mentors students had.
- Only a subset of the sample (N = 155) had at least one academic mentor in the fall.

Implications

- Future research should look the association of other effective study habits with the presence of academic mentors and student GPA.

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