Motives to mentor: Self-focused, protégé-focused, relationship-focused, organization-focused, and unfocused motives

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A B S T R A C T

This study examines the motives mentors have for providing developmental support to their protégés. Based on qualitative interviews with 20 informal mentors, we show five broad categories of mentor motives: self-focused motives (based on individual reasons), protégé-focused motives (directed at the protégé), relationship-focused motives (directed at the relationship between the mentor and the protégé), organization-focused motives (benefiting the organization), and unfocused motives (mentoring as the result of unconscious information processing). Furthermore, based on self-determination theory, we show five subcategories of self-focused motives, ranging from extrinsic motivations to intrinsic motivations. Implications of the findings and suggestions for future research are presented.

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Mentoring relationships are important in organizations, as they provide employees with a "sense of competence, identity, and effectiveness in a professional role" (Kram, 1985, p. 32). Since Kram's work, the number of mentoring studies has increased rapidly. Mentoring research has traditionally focused on the protégé (Allen, Eby, O' Brien, & Lentz, 2008) and examined, for example, how protégés can benefit from mentoring relationships (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004), how protégés' characteristics influence the initiation of mentoring relationships (Singh, Ragins, & Tharenou, 2009), and how protégés' negative experiences influence their intentions to leave a mentoring relationship (Burk & Eby, 2010). Various scholars have emphasized that the mentor is a neglected actor in mentoring research (e.g., Allen et al., 2008; Ghosh & Reio, 2013) and as a result, we have a one-sided and incomplete understanding of mentoring relationships. Much more research is needed to examine mentors' attitudes, needs, motivations, and behaviors. Most often, mentoring is not mandated or rewarded in organizations. Since mentoring relationships are associated with several positive outcomes for both mentors and protégés (Allen, Lentz, & Day, 2006; Allen et al., 2004; Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2008), it is important to create insight into why mentors would perform this kind of extra-role behavior, so organizations can encourage or facilitate such developmental relationships. While the focus of most previous studies has been on the influence of individual variables (e.g., mentors' age and gender) on people's intentions to be a mentor, this study qualitatively examines mentors' motives to engage in specific mentoring relationships. Our research question is: "What are informal mentors' motives to provide developmental support to their protégés?" This study extends previous research on mentors' motives to mentor others in several ways.

First, most previous studies examined general intentions to be a mentor instead of intentions to be a mentor for a specific protégé. The willingness to mentor is then measured by general statements such as "I would like to be a mentor in the future" (e.g., Ragins & Scandura, 1994; Wang, Noe, Wang, & Greenberger, 2009) instead of focusing on mentoring specific possible protégés. Although this gives a good insight into how people vary in their willingness to mentor others in general, it is questionable to what extent this general

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intention holds true for specific relationships. For example, previous studies (Allen, 2004; Allen, Poteet, & Burroughs, 1997a; Allen, Poteet, & Russell, 2000; Olian, Carroll, & Giannantonio, 1993) show that mentors are more willing to help protégés with favorable characteristics (e.g., showing high-performance) than to help protégés with less favorable characteristics (e.g., showing need for help). Research in the domain of helping behavior (e.g., Anderson & Williams, 1996) shows a positive relationship between the quality of the relationship between the helper and receiver, and the amount of helping behavior. Based on these studies, we argue that the willingness to mentor may vary across different relationships. Applying a developmental network perspective in our interviews, we asked mentors to describe various specific developmental relationships, to get insight into the various motives one can have for different relationships.

Second, mentoring research has thus far not explored the full range of motivations that mentors can have to engage in mentoring relationships. The idea that people can have different forms of motivations to perform a certain behavior, and that these forms of motivation depend on for example the specific circumstances (e.g., relationships) in which the behavior is performed, is the essence of self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985). SDT proposes that human motivation falls along a continuum, ranging from extrinsic motivation to intrinsic motivation. These two forms of motivation are comparable with mentor motives distinguished in earlier studies (Allen, 2003; Allen et al., 1997a). However, SDT distinguishes three other forms of extrinsic motivations (introjection, identification, and integration), which allow for a more specific understanding of mentors' motivations. As suggested by Allen et al. (1997a), insight into specific motives would be a first step in determining how specific motives are related to mentoring functions provided. Therefore, we applied SDT as framework in our data analysis, which allows us to deductively create a fine-grained picture of self-focused motives that influence mentors' willingness to mentor.

Last, previous studies on mentor motives have paid little attention to which relational motivations play a role in one's willingness to mentor. Previous studies most often solely applied a social exchange perspective on mentoring. As a result, the willingness to mentor others is conceptualized as being the result of a cost-benefit analysis, where it is expected that mentoring would somehow be rewarding for the mentor (e.g., Olian et al., 1993; Ragins & Scandura, 1999). However, as suggested by relational mentoring theory (Ragins, 2011), this instrumental approach leaves little room for relational motivations such as humans' need for connectedness and belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) as drivers for the willingness to engage in a mentoring relationship. Previous work already showed the importance of relatedness functions in developmental relationships (Janssen, Van Vuuren, & De Jong, 2013). The present study shows how, next to a social exchange orientation as for example shown in our deductive analysis based on SDT, mentors report relational motivations. Based on inductive data analyses, we distinguish four other main categories of motives, next to these self-focused motives: protégé-focused, relationship-focused, organization-focused, and unfocused motives. In these categories, we distinguish two subcategories with relational motivations that mentors have to engage in mentoring relationships. Based on our inductive data analyses, we not only show categories based on social exchange orientations, but also based on relational motivations. We show how affiliative motivations – the need to form and maintain close relationships with others – (McAdams & Constantian, 1983) and communal orientation – the focus on the well-being of others – (Clark & Mills, 1993) play a role in employees' willingness to mentor.

1. Theoretical background

1.1. The willingness to mentor others

Providing developmental support to others is a form of helping behavior: "an action that has the consequence of providing some benefit to or improving the well-being of another person" (Dovidio, Piliavin, Schroeder, & Penner, 2006, p. 22). Why people do or do not help other people is a long-debated question in social psychology. This question is also highly relevant for mentoring literature, as informal mentoring is a voluntary activity, not mandated or (directly) rewarded within organizations (Allen, 2003). We distinguish two research lines in the literature about the willingness to mentor others.

First, several studies have applied a social exchange paradigm to mentoring. According to social exchange principles (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1976), individuals engage in relationships which they think are rewarding for them. Following this reasoning, mentors would be more willing to mentor others if they expect mentoring will have benefits for them than they would be if they expect drawbacks and obstacles. Indeed, Ragins and Scandura (1999) found that expected costs of being a mentor (e.g., time-consuming, bad reflection on one's reputation) are negatively related to intentions to mentor, while expected benefits (e.g., recognition by others, ego-enhancements) are positively related. Other studies applying this social exchange paradigm focused on favorable protégé characteristics. For example, studies found that mentors are more attracted to high-performing protégés than to average-performing protégés (Olian et al., 1993), and that mentors select their protégés on the basis of their ability rather than on their need for help (Allen et al., 2000). Other studies found that mentors are more willing to mentor protégés high in willingness to learn than those low in willingness to learn (Allen, 2004; Allen et al., 1997a).

Although each of these studies made a great effort in explaining one's willingness to mentor, a limitation of a social exchange approach is that it fails to take relational motivations into account (Ragins, 2011). Kram (1985) stated that both instrumental and psychological needs may drive mentors to help others. For example, Ragins and Cotton (1993) found that, although women anticipated more barriers to becoming a mentor than men, they expressed equivalent intentions to serve as a mentor in the future. The authors explain that women may have a stronger desire for interpersonal relationships than men do, which means that they have stronger relational motivations. However, with few exceptions (e.g., Allen, 2003), mentoring research has predominantly focused on instrumental motives to engage in mentoring relationships, and neglected relational motivations to do so.

Second, a larger group of studies has examined how mentors' individual characteristics may affect their general willingness to mentor. Several studies examined the influence of mentors' demographics on their willingness to mentor. For example, several studies examined if gender is related to the willingness to mentor (Allen, Poteet, Russell, & Dobbins, 1997b; Ragins & Cotton, 1993; Ragins & Scandura, 1994). These studies show that men and women in general have similar intentions to mentor others. Ragins and Cotton (1993) found that people's organizational rank is a significant predictor of their willingness to mentor. One would expect that age would also be of influence on the willingness to mentor. However, Ragins and Cotton (1993) found no support for this claim, and Allen et al. (1997b) even found a negative relationship between age and willingness to mentor. There is also some evidence that mentors' personality factors are of influence on the willingness to mentor. For example, Allen et al. (1997b) found that internal locus of control is positively related to people's willingness to mentor: individuals with an internal locus of control possibly view perceived barriers to mentoring as more controllable, and therefore express more willingness to mentor. In another study, Allen (2003) found that helpfulness relates to one's experience as a mentor, while empathy did not.

These studies provide insight into which types of mentors are more likely to provide support in general. However, they do not give insight into reasons or motives to mentor others. The qualitative inquiry of Allen et al. (1997a) is an important exception to this. Based on interviews with 27 mentors, the authors identified two types of reasons to mentor others: "self-focused reasons," such as the desire to increase personal learning and the gratification of developing others, and "other-focused reasons," such as improving the welfare of others and the desire to help the organization succeed. Later, Allen (2003) developed a measure to quantitatively operationalize these motives, and this has resulted in a refined three-factor structure of motives: benefiting others (other-focused motives), self-enhancement (extrinsically oriented self-focused motives), and self-gratification (intrinsically oriented self-focused motives). Moreover, this study showed how these various motives lead to the provision of different mentoring functions. The self-enhancement motive significantly related to the provision of career mentoring, but not to the provision of psychosocial mentoring. Intrinsically oriented self-focused motives related positively to psychosocial mentoring, but not to career mentoring. Last, the benefit-others motive related to the provision of both career mentoring and psychosocial mentoring. The present study builds on these previous studies. We aim to get a more comprehensive view of various mentor motives, including a fine-grained picture of mentors' self-focused motives to engage in mentoring relationships, by applying SDT.

1.2. Self-determination theory and motivation

SDT represents a meta-theory for the study of human motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). According to SDT, humans have three basic needs: autonomy (experiencing choice and volition of one's own actions), competence (experiencing that one can succeed challenging tasks and influence desired outcomes), and relatedness (experiencing connection, mutual respect, caring, and reliance in relationships with others). One of the key questions for scholars in the field of SDT is to examine how social contexts facilitate or undermine people's experience of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. SDT proposes that the satisfaction of these three needs together will facilitate people's self-motivation and effective functioning (Deci & Ryan, 2000). SDT conceptualizes motivation not in terms of a dichotomy but as a continuum from non-internalized (controlled) to internalized (autonomous) reasons. SDT organizes motivational dispositions or orientations by the extent to which behavior is characterized as being controlled versus autonomous.

According to SDT, people experience autonomy when they perceive their behavior to be volitional rather than driven by external controls (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Whereas Allen (Allen, 2003) identified two types of self-focused motives (extrinsic and intrinsic motives), SDT can enhance our understanding of specific mentor motives by refining this picture of motives. According to SDT, behavior is *externally regulated* when the behavior is engaged to satisfy an external demand or reward contingency (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Some mentors may be involved in mentoring relationships mainly for extrinsic reasons, for example because their supervisor asked them to help junior newcomers. The motive then comes from outside the person: this is the most controlled motive for acting. When the motive begins to be internalized, but the regulation of the behavior still depends on the evaluation against external standards, the behavior is *introjected regulated*. This often appears as ego involvement (Ryan, 1982). People often engage in activities that are socially acceptable, in order to avoid feelings of guilt (e.g., paying back a favor to the protégé), or to gain others' respect (e.g., meeting the work environments' expectations to take a junior under their wings). Introjection is the second most controlled motive for acting. The next step on the continuum of autonomy is *identified regulated* behavior (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In this case, the behavior in itself might not be enjoyable (i.e., intrinsically motivating), but it is seen as serving an important purpose (e.g., spending time to help the protégé, because this will lead to less workload in the future) and is typically experienced as somewhat internal. When extrinsic motivation is most completely internalized, the behavior is *integrated regulated* (Deci & Ryan, 2000): the person fully accepts and integrates the values guiding the behavior with other needs and values that define his or her self-concept (i.e., helping others is important in my life). Last, behavior is *intrinsically regulated* when the behavior is experienced as the result of free choice and therefore as fully autonomous. Adopting this continuum to mentors' self-focused motives is an important step in understanding the detailed motives one can have to engage in mentoring relationships and the factors that can influence these motives (Haggard, Dougherty, Turban, & Wilbanks, 2011).

2. Method

Semi-structured interviews were well suited to identifying various forms of mentors' motives. Although we had a general idea of mentors' motivations based on previous work (Allen, 2003; Allen et al., 1997a), these interviews enabled us to gain a deeper understanding of specific motives.

2.1. Participants

The first author interviewed 20 employees from 18 organizations based in the Netherlands. We asked personal contacts to recommend persons who serve as an informal mentor for others. Participants had to meet two selection criteria to be invited. First, participants had to hold senior or supervisor roles, as we assumed that those employees are most likely to act as an informal mentor on a regular basis. Second, participants had to hold clerical or professional positions, so the occupational group characteristics that might influence the nature of mentoring relationships were similar for participants. Participants received a letter with information about the study, and those who identified themselves as an informal mentor were subsequently interviewed. All participants were at least 37 years old (mean = 50 years), with an education level of at least a four-year college degree. The average years of work experience was 27. The organizations represented a wide range of industries, including consulting, education, and manufacturing.

2.2. Semi-structured interviews

To start the conversation, the first author asked the participants to describe their career history. Participants were then asked to explain why they served as a developer or informal mentor for others in general. Next, participants named protégés they had supported during their career, described these relationships, and explained why they served as a developer or informal mentor for these protégés. Further, they selected at least two relationships to discuss in further detail. For each relationship, the first author asked them how the relationship started and why the participant supported the protégé, and to describe specific examples of how they helped the protégé. Next, participants were asked what the relationship meant to them. At the end of each interview, participants were asked to share any other information about their motives they felt was relevant. All interviews were between 45 minutes and 2 hours in length and were recorded after permission.

2.3. Data-analysis procedure

All of the interviews were transcribed verbatim, leading to 209 transcript pages, and were analyzed with the help of ATLAS.ti software for tracking code creation. We used a multi-step content-analytic procedure consisting of six steps. First, the first author segmented the transcriptions into meaningful units of analysis, which consisted of single or multiple sentences. Second, the first author took the lead in proposing a set of themes. These themes were discussed with the other two authors and modified until there was agreement on five broad themes. The main criterion to classify a statement in one of these themes was the subject of the statement. First, we distinguished self-focused motives. This category consists of statements in which the mentor is the subject, without explicit references to the protégé, the organization, or the mentoring relationship (e.g., "I really like helping other people."). Second, we distinguished protégé-focused motives. This category is different from the previous category, in the sense that the subject of the statements in this category is the protégé, instead of the mentor (e.g., "She is a talented junior."). Third, we distinguished relationship-focused motives. Different from the previous categories, statements in this category are statements in which mentors did not speak about themselves *or* the protégé, but about themselves *and* the protégé ("we"), and about the exchanges between themselves and the protégé (e.g., "We get along very well."). Next, we distinguished organization-focused motives. These statements focus on interests that exceed the mentor–protégé dyad, such as the team or the organization as a whole (e.g., "Our team can benefit from it."). Last, we created a category with unfocused motives, which consists of statements in which mentors attribute their mentoring behaviors to a series of coincidence, rather than being the result of a rational, conscious choice (e.g., "I think it was just coincidence that I helped him.").

Third, the first and second author met several times to construct an initial codebook, which provided detailed definitions of different subcategories within these five broad themes. Based on the five stages of the motivation continuum of SDT (Blais, Sabourin, Boucher, & Vallerand, 1990; Deci & Ryan, 2000), we deductively created five subcategories for the self-focused motives and coded the data accordingly. For the other four themes (protégé-focused motives, relationship-focused motives, organization-focused motives, and unfocused motives), no existing taxonomy or model was available. Therefore, we looked for subcategories in the data and by applying an iterative procedure, we compared these subcategories with phenomena in the literature on relationship motivations and mentor motivations (e.g., Allen et al., 1997a; Clark & Mills, 1993; McAdams & Constantian, 1983). These subcategories were then labeled to capture the meaning reflected by each group of comments (e.g., "Communal Orientation" as a subcategory of "Protégé-focused motives," and "Affiliative Motivation" as a subcategory of "Relationship-focused motives"). While our deductive data analysis was based on SDT and was thus based on rather instrumental orientations, this inductive data analysis resulted in categories based on both instrumental (i.e., social exchange orientations) and relational motivations. Subsequently, all of the (sub)categories were defined in a codebook. We looked for common ideas and patterns in participants' responses, so (sub)categories represented by a single comment made by one participant were not included in the codebook.

Fourth, this codebook was given to an independent coder who was not involved in the previous stages of coding, and a quarter of the total sample of responses was individually coded by the first author and this independent coder. This initial coding round resulted in Cohen's κ's of .72 (self-focused motives), .83 (protégé-focused motives), .58 (relationship-focused motives), .72 (organization-focused motives), and .86 (unfocused motives). Problems with the code definitions and problematic codes were then discussed and the codebook was modified. Fifth, the first author and the independent coder repeated the coding process with the modified codebook for another quarter of the total sample of the responses. This resulted in Cohen's κ's of .76 (self-focused motives), .89 (protégé-focused motives), .88 (relationship-focused motives), .89 (organization-focused motives), and .84 (unfocused motives). Sixth, based on this

final codebook, the remaining half of the total sample of responses was coded by the first author. The quotes presented in the Results section are illustrative of the 20 interviews.

3. Results

3.1. Self-focused motives

Motivations to engage in and maintain a mentoring relationship were categorized along a motivation continuum. On the one hand, there is intrinsic motivation. On the other hand, there are subtypes of extrinsic motivation falling along the continuum of internalization, when regulations remain external or are only partially internalized (Blais et al., 1990; Deci & Ryan, 2000). Table 1 shows these various types of regulation.

3.1.1. External
Although all participants in this study were informal mentors, participants perceived some of their mentoring relationships as more extrinsically driven. This is the least autonomous form of motivation and mentoring behaviors in this category are driven by the desire to attain a favorable consequence, such as tangible rewards or to avoid a threatened punishment (Deci & Ryan, 2000). For example, participants stated that mentoring others is part of their job, or that they are paid for doing this: "In our organization, it is just part of my job."

3.1.2. Introjection
Participants often stated that they perform mentoring behaviors because of ego involvements, which is typical for introjected regulated behavior (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Mentoring behaviors are then performed to demonstrate that one can attain or preserve feelings of self-worth. First, mentors demonstrated that they can preserve feelings of self-worth from others. They help protégés to gain others' respect, to enhance their own reputation: "The fact that I was able to keep these people in till the end of their contract, and to keep them working, said something about my coaching skills. I like it when people speak highly of me when they leave the organization. Partly, this is driven by, well, self-interest." Second, mentors demonstrated that they can preserve feelings of self-worth from themselves. Participants stated that they help others because it makes them feel good about themselves: "When it eventually ends well, I can give myself a pat on the back, then I think I've done well. … It is satisfying to know that I've done well."

Additionally, some participants reported that they help others to manifest and promote themselves. This form of helping behavior shows similarities to what is called "agentic generativity" in literature (Bradley, 1997; McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992): "a tendency to assert, expand, and develop the self in a powerful and independent way." (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992, p. 1005) The manifestation of the mentor's self is then central in his or her helping behavior, as is characterized by the following statement: "It could also be that you're thinking you know it all better, and that can be a reason for you to interfere. I don't know if that's helpful. Then it's more about manifesting yourself. And for me personally, that's definitely the case sometimes. Not doing it to help, but just to interfere."

3.1.3. Identification
Mentors reported that they perform mentoring behaviors because they are instrumental, for example because mentoring others is beneficial to their own development or because it lowers their own workload. As one mentor noted, "Eventually, it's easier. And why? It's easier for yourself. When someone develops fully and you cannot work temporarily or have been away on vacation, then more issues will be resolved. So it benefits you when someone else develops himself. So also very practical, basic benefits." Although this behavior is more autonomous than behaviors in the previous categories, according to SDT, it is still extrinsically motivated, as the relationship is instrumental rather than a source of satisfaction and enjoyment in itself (Blais et al., 1990; Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Table 1
Results of the deductive analysis of mentors' self-focused motives based on self-determination theory.

Category	Definition	Sample comments
External (11 participants)	Mentoring behavior is performed because the mentor sees it as part of his/her job, or because (s)he receives an external reward (e.g., salary) for it.	"This relationship was typical, because it was also part of my job to help him."
Introjection (13 participants)	Mentoring behavior is performed to attain or preserve self-worth (of oneself and of others). The mentor helps the protégé to promote oneself, or for ego-enhancements (e.g., to experience feelings of pride). The mentor's self-worth is central in his/her giving behavior.	"What you get in return is that people see you as an important source for something. And that strokes your ego. No need to make it any more difficult than it is, it just strokes your ego."
Identification (8 participants)	Mentoring behavior is performed because it is instrumental in a beneficial outcome for the mentor (e.g., mentor can enhance own competencies, mentor's workload lowers because protégé can take over work).	"So when everyone enjoys [working], that positive energy, I need that to perform. …. That gives me energy."
Integration (7 participants)	Mentoring behavior is performed because (s)he believes it is important and this behavior is in harmony with his/her personal values, beliefs, needs, and identity.	"Yeah, it's a little like religion, you're trying to help thy neighbors. …. I believe you should try to help others. But that's something that, yeah, from childhood on, that's almost been drilled into you."
Intrinsic (13 participants)	Mentoring behavior is performed because of its intrinsic value for the mentor (e.g., sense of enjoyment that the mentoring behavior gives).	"I love doing this. …. I just enjoy doing this the most."

3.1.4. Integration

Integrated regulation is the most complete form of internalization of extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In this case, mentors not only identify with the importance of helping others, but they also integrate these activities in one's true self and identity (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Mentoring behavior is then fully assimilated with the mentor's identity and is part of his or her personal values and needs: "Because I always go by the principle: if you want to live and work in a community, then you have to contribute to it. That also has to do with this. …. I think that's important."

3.1.5. Intrinsic

When intrinsically motivated, the mentor helps the protégé because this activity in itself is a source of satisfaction and enjoyment. Different from the previous categories, the intrinsically motivated mentor does not help the protégé because of a consequence of this behavior, but because of the intrinsic value of the activity at that moment. In line with Carbonneau, Vallerand, and Lafreniere (2012), we see three forms of intrinsic motivations. First, mentors report that they help the protégé because this helping in itself brings them feelings of pleasure, excitement, or enjoyment. As one mentor stated, "I just like doing it. This is 10 times more fun than managing a project. I'd rather sit with her in a restaurant, talking about how she can develop herself, than sit behind my computer, drawing a flowchart or describing a process. This is just a lot more fun." Second, mentors support protégés for the satisfaction and pleasure derived from trying to accomplish something, in this case trying to motivate the protégé: "I really liked starting out with her, to see if I could turn this around. And it was especially challenging for me, because I've never mentored anyone from a distance before. So we have to be very creative with Skype and new things, so that was a challenge for me personally, to find out if that would work out." Last, mentors help their protégés because mentoring behaviors give them the pleasure and satisfaction of exploring and trying to understand something new: "He is someone who just lingers a little. Doesn't make a clear choice, is a very intelligent boy in my opinion, but yeah, somehow he doesn't quite manage to rise above himself. And at that point, I just get curious, what's happening there? What's causing it?"

Table 2
Results of the inductive content analysis for developers' protégé-focused, relationship-focused, organization-focused, and unfocused motives.

Broad category	Category	Definition	Sample comments
Protégé-focused	Communal orientation (18 participants)	The mentor has positive attitudes toward benefiting the protégé and has concerns for the welfare of the protégé.	"For these people, getting that diploma was the most important thing. So, actually, that's what I meant, it was more for them in the end. …. Eventually, it has less to do with self-interest."
	Protégé reflection of self (13 participants)	The mentor and protégé share values or characteristics, or the mentor recognizes the situation of the protégé.	"Yeah, I think I choose people who look like me."
	Admiration (6 participants)	The mentor has respect for the protégé or for what (s)he is doing.	"But also, and that might be the most common one, sometimes there's someone of whom you think: That is real talent."
	Protegé chooses mentor (6 participants)	The protégé asked the mentor for his/her help and the mentor agreed with this request.	"Or sometimes someone just asks for help. It's not like I'm always starting things, sometimes people just ask for help."
Relationship-focused	Affiliative motivation (12 participants)	The mentor wants to establish and maintain a positive, affective relationship with the protégé.	"We spend a lot of time together and yeah, we get along. And then you help each other forward."
	Exchange orientation (7 participants)	The mentor expects that there will be an equity of exchanges in this relationship. By helping the protégé, the mentor expects something in return.	"Well, when you consider development, I just called it win–win. And that's the most beautiful form to have. So people come with practical ideas, which I never could've thought of myself. …. They have their success, and I have the solution to the problem. So it's also a matter of give and take."
Organization-focused (17 participants) Unfocused (11 participants)		The mentor helps the protégé because this helping behavior is beneficial for their team, for the organization, or for their professional group. Mentoring behavior is the result of subconscious information processing, or the mentor describes his/her mentoring behavior as the result of a series of coincidences, without prior intentions to perform this behavior.	"Someone who's enthusiastic and who contributes in a positive way is of more use to the group." "There's not an exact turning point, but it grows gradually. It's not like I'm thinking all day: How can I help you? It works subconsciously."

3.2. Protégé-focused motives

In line with previous work on mentor motives (Allen, 2003; Allen et al., 1997a), we distinguished protégé-focused reasons to mentor others. Mentors reported that the decision to help a protégé is based on a communal orientation towards the protégé, or because they admire characteristics of the protégé. Also, mentors reported that they sometimes do not initiate the mentoring relationship themselves, but rather respond to a protégé's request to do so. Table 2 shows these protégé-focused motives.

3.2.1. Communal orientation

Mentors discussed that their mentoring behaviors may be the result of feeling responsible for the welfare of the protégé and of focusing on the needs of the protégé. This communal orientation (Clark & Mills, 1993; Mills, Clark, Ford, & Johnson, 2004) towards the protégé is characterized by positive attitudes of the mentor toward benefiting the protégé. The mentor wants to give the protégé a good future ("Well, he is employed on a temporary basis. …. And I want to help him, so if I'm not able to keep him here, then he'll be off to a good start towards the future"), or wants to care for or protect the protégé ("I really can't stand injustice. …. So I want to give people a fair chance. …. Because I believe they're not getting what they deserve, from their manager."). Comments in this category are characterized by mentors stating that they did the protégé a favor, while disregarding their self-interest. This way, the focus is really on the welfare of the protégé, in contrast with agentic generativity, where the mentor is primarily concerned with asserting the self. Different from the category of "Integration," the subject of statements in this category is the protégé, rather than the mentor. Comments in this category also contrast with comments in the category of "Exchange Orientation," in which help is given because the mentor expects to receive comparable benefits of the protégé in the future.

3.2.2. Protégé reflection of self

Mentors often discussed that they want to help the protégé because they identify with the protégé. This is similar to what Allen et al. (1997a) call "protégé reflection of self." The mentor and protégé share values or characteristics ("Each of these people shares pieces of my values with me. So when I see those pieces, I recognize and understand those. Some of these people show an eagerness to be able to do something, and others show a certain kind of morale. Yeah, each of them has pieces that closely resemble your own."), or the mentor recognizes the situation the protégé is in ("Another thing is, when you've experienced it yourself, because you also developed yourself in difficult environments, then you can also imagine: that's not nice. I also liked it when I could turn to people for help and ask them how they would deal with things. So, why wouldn't you also do that for others?").

3.2.3. Admiration

Previous research shows that mentors are more willing to mentor protégés who show competence (Allen et al., 1997a; Ragins & Cotton, 1999), desirable personality factors, or motivational factors (Allen et al., 1997a). In the current study, participants also reported that they want to support the protégé because they admire the protégé, because of his or her ambitions, personality characteristics, or talent: "Yeah, sometimes I see something in someone which makes me think, I believe he is good at this, or I see a certain talent and think: you should do something with that. You often find your own talent normal. That obviously doesn't just apply to me, but also to other people."

3.2.4. Protégé chooses mentor

Another reason for getting involved in a mentoring relationship is because the protégé asks the mentor for help. Here, mentors stated that the primary initiative was not taken by themselves, but rather by the protégé: "I think it's very basic. Someone asks me to help and I respond. …. When someone requests my help, I will respond accordingly."

3.3. Relationship-focused motives

Besides self-focused and protégé-focused motives, we discovered motives that are characterized by their focus on the connection between the mentor and the protégé and their behaviors towards each other. These relationship-focused motives are shown in Table 2.

3.3.1. Affiliative motivation

Similar to what Atkinson, Heyns, and Veroff (1954) and McAdams and Constantian (1983) call "the need for affiliation," participants discussed how their need to establish and maintain a positive affective relationships with the protégé can serve as a motive to support the protégé. Often, the wish to continue or deepen an existing relationship (e.g., friendship between mentor and protégé) was mentioned as a reason to provide support to the protégé: "He was a friend of mine. …. So, being there, having a relationship, that's a very important one. So having a relationship, and discussing things based on that relationship. …. And the friendship deepens because of that."

3.3.2. Exchange orientation

While a communal orientation is characterized by helping the protégé while discarding the mentor's self-interest, sometimes, mentors help protégés because they believe there is or will be an equity of exchange within the mentor–protégé relationship. Reciprocity is the keyword here. Comments in this category follow social exchange rules (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) and are characterized by a balance between helping and receiving, or input and output. In a negative way, several mentors indicated that a

lack of this reciprocity demotivates them to help the protégé: "Sometimes you have to push people…if they don't want to change… and you keep investing in someone, and you see no results of that, that's annoying." Comments in this category contrast comments in the category of "Communal Orientation," since help is provided contingently, in response to comparable benefits or results expected in the future. While in the category of "Identification" it is about the benefits for the mentor only, in this category it is about benefits or results for both the mentor and the protégé.

3.4. Organization-focused motives

Mentors also reported motivations that were directed towards their organization. Table 2 shows that mentors help their protégés because this benefits their team: "I help these people in general, because I want to propel the group. So not only individually, but also as a group. We have to reach a certain level as a group, so I tell them: we want to go there." Others stated that mentoring helped their organization in general: "Yeah, I do believe in a strengthening effect …. I have a lot of projects for trainees. I encourage that. And I believe it is helpful to the trainees, but the one who is training the trainee also learns from it. A trainee introduces new insights, knowledge, methods, causing others to think: well, this is interesting. …. So, it is partly also connected to the development of the organization." Last, some mentors explained that they wanted to serve their professional group by mentoring others: "You're trying to convey the love for your profession. To me, it's important to have good colleagues; most of the people you're training here will be your own colleagues in the future. …. And you just want to be sure that it will be carried out by the right people."

3.5. Unfocused motives

While the previous categories describe motivations resulting from conscious thinking (i.e., based on reflection and analysis), this category describes how mentors attribute their mentoring behaviors to unfocused motives. These motives are not aimed at a certain individual or a certain need that is fulfilled by engaging in mentoring relationships, but these are subconscious or unplanned. For example, mentors described motivations that rely on intuition and emotion (i.e., based on quick, automatic, and subconscious thinking), which is in line with dual process theory (Evans, 1984; Kruglanski & Gigerenzer, 2011). Mentoring is then based on subconscious information processing, rather than on a rational, conscious choice: "Someone comes up to you to ask you something, and you have to decide right then, right there. At that moment, you follow your gut feeling. You really follow your gut feeling." Mentors also explained that their mentoring behaviors were the result of a series of coincidences, without having concrete prior intentions to do so. For example, mentors stated that the occasion arose because or proximity of the protégé: "Of course, coincidence is a very important aspect, and her sitting at my table." Sometimes, mentors are not even aware of their mentoring role: "You're just having a conversation with someone and a lot of unintended things may happen. And then you notice that, for instance, the same goes for [him or her]. After the conversation, he [the protégé] says: this helped me. …. So you can be of significance to someone without being aware of it at the moment."

4. Discussion

In summary, this study uncovered several nuances in mentors' motivations to engage in mentoring relationships. It empirically illustrated five broad categories of motives: self-focused, protégé-focused, relationship-focused, organizational-focused, and unfocused motives. Data from our interviews enrich our understanding of these specific types of mentors' motives. This way, our study offers several key contributions to mentoring literature.

First, our study shows how the application of an SDT framework creates a fine-grained picture of both intrinsic and extrinsic self-focused motives that mentors can have when mentoring others. While previous research (Allen, 2003) already distinguished two broader categories of intrinsic and extrinsic motives, the current study extends this research by differentiating four types of extrinsic motives. Most quantitative studies on SDT do not measure integrated regulation, because it is hard to distinguish from identified and intrinsic regulations (cf., De Naeghel, Van Keer, Vansteenkiste, & Rosseel, 2012). However, our qualitative data allowed us to nuance integrated regulation from other forms of motivations. This way, our study gives a theory-based and detailed insight into the broader category of extrinsic mentor motives. The results also provide nuances in the types of intrinsic motives that mentors can have, as we showed how mentors can have intrinsic motives to know, to accomplish, and to experience when mentoring others. This SDT continuum creates new opportunities for continued research on mentors' motivations. Based on previous work (Allen, 2003), it is expected that the various forms of motives lead to the provision of different mentoring functions. In Allen's study, mentors motivated by self-enhancement reasons were more likely to report providing career mentoring, while mentors motivated by intrinsic reasons were more likely to report providing psychosocial mentoring. As our SDT continuum creates more insight into the specific motives one can have, future research may examine how these specific forms of motives differentially relate to the provision of specific mentoring subfunctions (e.g., sponsorship, friendship, exposure and visibility). Also, we encourage researchers to examine how the specific types of motives are related to relationship satisfaction and well-being. From studies building on a hierarchical model of motivation (Vallerand, 1997), we know that motivations for relational activities show a unique and significant contribution to relationship well-being (e.g., Gaine & La Guardia, 2009). We encourage mentoring researchers to examine how motives for specific mentoring functions (e.g., creating exposure and visibility, providing challenging assignments) can vary within and across developmental relationships, and influence relationship well-being as experienced by both members. Moreover, we encourage mentoring researchers to examine which contextual characteristics at the workplace can promote mentors' autonomous motivations.

Second, our study shows a comprehensive picture of motives that mentors can have when mentoring others. Besides general motivations to mentor others (e.g., because it is seen as part of the mentor's job), we show how mentors describe more concrete motives concerned with a specific protégé (e.g., admiration for specific characteristics of the protégé), or the relationship between the mentor and the protégé (e.g., the wish to continue or deepen an existing work relationship). This has important implications for future research on mentor motives. While previous studies on mentor motives most often focused on the willingness to mentor others as a general intention, this study shows that, although we agree that some mentors would be more likely to mentor others in general, motives that are more situational of nature may also play a role in one's willingness to mentor others. Especially in developmental network research, it would be valuable to compare the various motives one can have to mentor specific protégés in terms of, for example, relationship functions and outcomes. With regard to the measurement of mentor motives, we encourage researchers to develop scales that measure one's motives to mentor specific protégés, in addition to general scales (e.g., Ragins & Scandura, 1994; Wang et al., 2009).

Third, this study contributes to our understanding of how both instrumental and relational motivations complement in mentors' willingness to provide developmental support to others. For example, mentors in our study reported both exchange-oriented motivations and affiliative-oriented motivations to help others. While we acknowledge that reciprocity may be important in some mentoring relationships, other exchange rules could play a role as well (cf., Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Further, our study illustrates that the decision to mentor others may sometimes be a decision based on bounded rationality. Mentors described that their decision to mentor others was sometimes based on intuitive feelings rather than logical reasoning. While most previous studies mainly focused on instrumental and cognitive motivations to help others, we agree with Allen (2003) that we should conceptualize the willingness to mentor others as a process in which instrumental, relational, and psychological motivations play a role, rather complementary than competing with each other. To conclude, this wider lens of looking at mentor motives shows a nuanced and theory-based exploration of the underlying motivations of developmental relationships.

4.1. Limitations

We acknowledge certain limitations of our study. First, our findings are based on a small number of mentors ($n = 20$), so caution is needed in generalizing the results from this study. Furthermore, we recognize that the results from this study apply to informal mentors. Formal mentors may describe other forms of motives than the mentors in our study. Although most formal mentors are not likely to be externally rewarded, these mentors may describe different extrinsic motivations, as research on SDT shows that more controlling social contexts (e.g., a formal mentoring program with a prescribed format) are likely to inhibit the internalization process (Deci & Ryan, 2000). We look forward to seeing similar studies conducted with other samples so that we may compare and extend our findings.

Second, there may be a social desirability bias in our results as we worked in face-to-face interview settings. For example, almost all our participants mentioned that they were mentoring others because it benefits their organization. Intuitively, this motive is likely to be perceived more socially desirable than, for example, an introjected motive (i.e., involving ego-enhancements). It could also be that the nature of our sample, consisting of employees holding a senior or supervisory role, influenced the omnipresence of the category of organization-focused motives. We would like to stress that the aim of our current study was not to display the prevalence of mentors' motives, but to identify a fine-grained and complete picture of motives. Therefore, we do not believe that these issues pose a major threat to the validity of our findings. However, we encourage other researchers to work with methods that are less susceptible to social desirability.

Further, we relied on retrospective data only. It could be that mentors are influenced in their descriptions of motives by past and current experiences in those mentoring relationships. For example, it may be that mentors describe their motives for pleasant mentoring relationships in retrospective accounts as more relationship-focused (e.g., because the relationship is meaningful for them), although they may not have mentioned this motive beforehand (e.g., in advance of the mentoring relationship). Therefore, future research may examine mentor motives from mentors in various stages of the relationship.

4.2. Practical implications

This study also has practical implications. Insight into possible mentor motives is a first step for managers in promoting the internalization of the values and regulations of mentoring behaviors. Our results can help organizations to facilitate the mentor's internalization process. The results can also guide organizations working with formal mentoring programs in both their sampling of possible mentors and their design of the program. While mentoring others implies a broad activity, specifying various motivational aspects of mentoring others may help mentors to internalize the value and regulation of their behaviors.

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