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Match Characteristics Questionnaire

The Match Characteristics Questionnaire (MCQ) is the most comprehensive measure of match relationship quality (MRQ) available with published validity evidence¹. It is completed by matched mentors and typically takes 10-15 to administer. The MCQ was designed to complement the youth-completed Youth Mentoring Survey (YMS), and strong correlations between the two measures have been obtained.

Structure & Scoring

The MCQ measures relational and instrumental (growth-focused) MRQ, including positive and negative perspectives on *internal quality* (dynamics influenced directly by the matched adult and youth), *structure* (mentors' *purpose*), and *external* (dynamics not directly influenced by the pair) MRQ. Version 2.2x consists of three sections of rating questions. The first section (22 items) measures facets of internal MRQ such as relational satisfaction, instrumental satisfaction, and availability to support. The second section (20 items) assesses *purpose*, how much mentors value activities devoted to having fun, sharing, academics, future outlook, and character development. The third section (27 items) measures additional perspective on internal MRQ and aspects of external MRQ (e.g., program support, parental engagement). Three questions measure the frequency, duration, and location of meetings.

The three sections of the MCQ present statements that mentors read and answer by indicating their response on a six-point Likert-style scale (internal items). All scores are translated to a scale of 0-100, with higher scores indicating more positive ratings. Scores on subscales and broadscales are reported only if the respondent answers at least 67% of the questions.

Administration

The surveys are intended for administration 3-4 months after the match begins meeting, again at 10-12 months into the match, and then at six-month intervals thereafter. The first interval was chosen to avoid an early honeymoon period in which participants may have an unrealistically hopeful perspective on the match and may still be "on their best behavior." The second interval typically would be expected to fall within the early stages of a "mature" relationship. Subsequent intervals show shifts in the relationship.

We recommend adhering to these intervals but they are not hard-and-fast guidelines. The MCQ has been used as frequently as monthly to provide structure to match supervision. Regardless of administration timeline you select, all surveys should be administered within two weeks of the chosen interval in order to facilitate accurate comparisons of quality across matches. When survey administrations are missed, administer the survey as soon as possible and resume administrations on the original schedule.

Use & Citation of the MCQ

Permission to use the YMS and MCQ is granted freely and may be obtained through ARC's website (www.MentoringEvaluation.com). The appropriate citation for the MCQ is provided below and should be used in any reporting associated with the surveys.

We ask that all who use the MCQ to share collected data with ARC along with related demographic information and, if possible, related outcome data. ARC will use this data to improve the surveys and to develop norms for them. ARC will respect all requests made about what is done with shared data.

Harris, JT, & Nakkula, MJ. (2008). Match Characteristics Questionnaire (MCQ). Unpublished measure, Applied Research Consulting. Fairfax, VA.

Subscale Descriptions & Validity Evidence

ARC has analyzed over 1,000 MCQ surveys. Respondents in ARC's database tend to be matched with elementary-aged youth representing two national mentoring organizations. Most matches in ARC's database involve white mentees and come from rural or suburban environments. However, the database also reflects hundreds of matches serving other ethnicities, adolescents, participants from urban settings, and other organizations.

The MCQ has strong validity evidence, some of which has been published (Nakkula & Harris, 2005). The authors have additional, strong evidence that is being prepared for publication. Scales from the MCQ have been found to correlate strongly with scales from the YMS and other measures of MRQ. The MCQ also has been found to predict outcomes related to academic functioning, length of match, and psychosocial development. Additional evidence has been gathered from interviews and focus groups with youth and practitioners who have taken/administered the survey. The MCQ's practical utility has been demonstrated through its use by practitioners as a tool to structure monthly match supervision. It has been used by researchers and practitioners throughout the United States and on several continents.

Factor analyses of the MCQ subscales have yielded strong reliability estimates (Cronbach's alpha). The elements of Internal MRQ measured by the MCQ (with reliability alphas) include:

- Compatibility (.74), how much mentors feel they are well-matched with their mentees;
- Handle Mentee's Issues (.61), how much mentors feel prepared to handle mentees' issues;
- Closeness (.82), how much mentors feel close with mentees;
- Not Distant (.78), how much mentors feel mentees *do not* push them away;
- Satisfaction (.85), mentors' sense of fulfillment in the relationship;
- Nonacademic Support Seeking (.86), how much mentors feel mentees seek personal support;
- Academic Support Seeking (.92), how much mentors feel mentees seek academic support;

The elements of Structure measured by the MCQ include:

- Fun (.77), how much mentors value hanging out and having a good time with their mentees;
- Sharing (.68), how much mentors value activities designed to forge a bond with their mentees;
- Character Development (.78), how much mentors value activities focused on mentees' maturation and psychosocial development;
- Future Outlook (.76), how much mentors value activities related to mentees' planning and preparing for their futures; and,
- Academics (.79), how much mentors value school-related and mentally stimulating activities;

The elements of External MRQ measured by the MCQ include:

- Programmatic Support (.79), how much mentors feel supported by the program; and,
- Parental Support (.54), how positively mentors feel mentees' parents influence the match; and,
- Interference (.65): how much mentors feel logistical and personal factors interfere with meetings.

ⁱ Nakkula, M. J. & Harris, J. T. (2005). Assessment of mentoring relationships. In DuBois, D. L. & Karcher, M. J. (Ed.s) *Handbook of Youth Mentoring* (pp. 100-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.