HEAD START UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND MENTORSHIP OF GRADUATE STUDENTS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD RESEARCH

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Abstract:
University-community partnerships are becoming increasingly salient to the development of early childhood education experiences that promote school readiness for young children (Barnett & Frede, 2001). Given the unique skills required for such collaborative research endeavors, there is a need for capacity-building that begins with training of new scholars in the early childhood education and development field. One funding source that focuses on assisting graduate students with developing research skills in the context of university-community collaborations is the Head Start Graduate Student Research Grant program (referred to throughout as the Scholars Program). The Scholars Program emphasizes faculty mentorship of graduate students conducting field-initiated studies in collaboration with Head Start programs (Administration for Children and Families [ACF], 2005), as a context for learning the requisite skills to do successful community-based, partnership-building research. To inform future directions in the preparation of early childhood education scholars, the purpose of the current study was to evaluate the alignment of graduate students' Scholars Program experiences with stated program goals. The study examined students' perspectives about the utility of the program's central component — the mentorship process.

Article:
HEAD START SCHOLARS PROGRAM: A MODEL OF TRAINING FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION RESEARCHERS

Initiated in 1991 by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), the Scholars Program aims to enhance the training experiences of graduate students who aspire to research careers involving young children from low-income families. A major premise of the Scholars Program is that investing in talented graduate students will increase the capacity at a university level to develop "true working research partnerships" (p. 21204) with professionals working in early childhood education programs. This new generation of scientist-practitioners is expected to need a skill set that includes awareness of and appreciation for the multiple, complex systems that influence the development of young children within family systems. In other words, these scholars must be trained to balance practical applications and scientifically rigorous interventions aimed at how young children develop and learn. In sum, the early childhood, community-based researcher will likely be expected to create a shared, collaborative vision with community

stakeholders, such as parents, teachers, policy makers, etc., in order to successfully conduct a research project or program evaluation (Barnett & Frede, 2001; Mendez & Lloyd, 2005).

To foster these training and capacity-building needs, the role of mentorship is conceptualized as a key component of the Scholars Program. Mentorship within this initiative serves to encourage graduate students in the early childhood development and education field to conduct research within collaborative, community-based partnerships. Specifically, the development of a collaborative relationship between graduate student and mentor serves as a model for partnering relationships within the context of Head Start research, such as those between researchers and Head Start staff (ACF, 2005). With guidance from mentors, graduate students are expected to acquire the necessary skills for building functional partnerships with communities, learn and apply theory to autonomous research endeavors, and generate new knowledge for the scientific community. An emphasis on acquiring field-specific skills within a mentorship context makes the Scholars Program distinct from other funding avenues designed to promote faculty mentor-protégé relationships (e.g., Frances Degen Horowitz Millennium Scholars Program — Society for Research in Child Development) and graduate student and postdoctoral research fellowships (e.g., The Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program — U.S. Department of Education; Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award Program — National Institute of Child Health and Human Development).

HEAD START SCHOLARS PROGRAM GOALS AND INNOVATIVE COMPONENTS
The Scholars Program's dual emphasis on mentorship and training in applied community-based research is reflected in four program goals, as set forth in the Federal Register Call for Applications (ACF, 2005):

1. Provide direct financial support to graduate students to encourage them to conduct research with Head Start populations.
2. Promote mentor-student relationships that support graduate training and professional development for young researchers engaged in policy-relevant, applied research.
3. Emphasize the importance of developing true working partnerships with Head Start programs and other relevant entities in the community.
4. Support active communication, networking, and collaboration among graduate student researchers, mentors, and other prominent researchers in the field.

The Scholars Program includes several specific components or requirements to ensure that participants' experiences reflect these goals (see Table 1). Clearly, goal one is met by providing grant funds for the completion of research within Head Start settings. As for goals two and three, only advanced graduate students about to conduct dissertation research are eligible to submit proposals for the competition, thus students already have a foundation in research design and have an approved topic. The criteria used to select grant recipients follow standard procedures for evaluating federal proposals (e.g., peer review, scoring criteria), but there is an explicit emphasis on the quality of the mentor-protégé relationship and the plan to conduct research embedded within community partnerships. For example, letters of support from the intended partner and the mentor in support of the graduate student applicant are required within the initial grant application. To address the fourth goal, attendance of mentors and students at annual grantee meetings and student presentations at professional meetings are required activities and

must be included in the annual budget of the grant. Outside of these program components, the success of the Scholars Program largely rests upon the unique experiences of each mentor-student dyad during the process of completing the funded dissertation project.

Table 1

Scholars Program Goals and Components

Goal	Component
1. Provide direct financial support to graduate students to encourage them to conduct research with Head Start populations.	• Establishment of funding opportunity, and provision of grant awards. • Opportunity for two years of funding allows students to devote time to research
2. Promote mentor-student relationships that support graduate training for young researchers engaged in policy-relevant, applied research.	• Letter from mentor in support of graduate student application is required in the grant application • Evaluation criteria of grant proposals reflect the value of established mentorship experiences.

Table 1 (continued)

Goal	Component
3. Emphasize the importance of developing true working partnerships with Head Start programs.	• Evaluation criteria of grant proposals reflect the value of partnership-based research. • Letter of support is required from the intended partner in support of the proposed research • Approval by the parent policy council is required prior to granting of the award
4. Support active communication, networking and collaboration among graduate student researchers, mentors, and other prominent researchers in the field.	• Mentor-student attendance at the annual grantee meeting is funded and a required component of the budget. • Attendance at the annual meeting of the National Head Start Association in Washington, D.C., is funded and a required component of the budget • Fund student presentations at relevant national conferences.

In the most recent Federal Register entry for the Head Start Graduate. Student Research Grant, ACF indicates that the Scholars Program has funded young scientists who "have continued to make significant contributions to the field of early childhood research" and suggests that "this funding mechanism is an important research capacity-building effort" (p. 21204; ACF, 2005). One objective of this study was to examine whether the current activities and careers of previously funded Scholars reflect the Program's longstanding commitment to capacity-building within the field of early childhood research. To this end, we surveyed former Scholars to determine how their Scholars Program experience contributed to their development of applied, community-based research skills and initial career choices. Another objective of this study was to uncover particular elements of protégé and mentor roles that facilitated an effective mentoring

experience — a key component of the Scholars Program. Implications for the future training of graduate students engaged in early childhood education research are then discussed.

METHODS

Participants

Seventy-three former participants in the Head Start Scholars Program were identified using public records that describe the program and participants' projects. Of this total, e-mail addresses were available from an initial sample of 61 individuals who were invited by e-mail to participate in the study. E-mail messages for nine individuals were returned as undeliverable. Therefore, the final sample consisted of 38 former Head Start Scholars out of 52 eligible individuals with working e-mail addresses, resulting in a 73% participation rate.

Procedure

Eligible participants were sent an e-mail message from an independent e-mail account. The message included a brief description of the study and an invitation to participate. Individuals choosing to participate were instructed to open an accompanying e-mail attachment containing an informed consent form and the Head Start Scholar Experiences Survey. Participants were instructed to complete the consent form by typing their full name and the date, which was the only page of the document on which the participant's name was required. Once the consent form and survey were completed, participants were instructed to save their responses and return them via e-mail attachment to an independent, secure e-mail account. Individuals received no honorarium for their participation. The e-mail procedure ensured that only one survey was received from each eligible participant.

Each completed survey was downloaded from the secure e-mail account and saved under an assigned identification number. Paper copies of completed consent forms and surveys were printed. Consent forms were immediately separated from and stored in a different location than accompanying surveys. Links to participants' e-mail addresses and messages were then deleted.

Measures

For the purpose of this study, the Head Start Scholar Experiences Survey was created by means of a user-friendly, interactive Word document format. Respondents could click on specific choices or use pre-generated pull-down menus to indicate their desired responses. Additionally, participants had the option to type responses to open-ended questions in specially-designed response fields. The survey consisted of three subsections:

Basic information. A series of questions was used to obtain a descriptive profile of the participants. Participants provided information pertaining to the type of graduate program they attended and descriptions of their employment and professional activities. Due to the small pool of potential participants, and the likelihood that many respondents continue to work in the field of early childhood research, demographic information such as gender, age, and ethnicity was not included as part of the survey. This decision ensured anonymity of the target population and was intended to facilitate honest responses about the personal experience of mentorship.

Head Start Scholar experience. The purpose of this section was to obtain feedback on participants' experiences during their time as a Head Start Scholar, and their views on how the

experience impacted their professional development. Respondents provided information as to whether results from their Scholar projects were disseminated via conference presentation and/or journal publication. Regarding the goals of the Head Start Scholars Program, participants rated how much aspects of the program made a contribution to their career path and/or success from a major contribution (4) to a negligible contribution (1). Finally, participants rated experiences with their faculty mentor and other Scholars Program components using a 4-point scale from very helpful (4) to not as helpful (1) in regards to their development of specific, community-based research skills. Examples of these skills included increasing a student's level of cultural competence, developing a sense of professional autonomy, and building relationships with community partners.

Perspectives on effective mentoring experiences. This section of the survey focused on views about the mentoring process, based on experiences within the Head Start Scholars Program. Items were based conceptually on Kram's (1985) model of mentorship, focusing on career and psychosocial support functions. Participants rated the importance of specific elements of the protégé and mentor roles that contributed to a successful mentoring relationship on a 4-point scale from very important (4) to not as important (1). For the protégé role, sample elements included being prepared for meetings, sticking to deadlines, and being receptive to constructive criticism. On the mentor's part, sample elements included serving as a role model for the student, providing student opportunities to engage in research, and guiding the student in managing program requirements. Additionally, participants provided open-ended descriptors of their views regarding a successful mentoring relationship.

RESULTS

Career Paths

Ninety-two percent of respondents reported having earned a Ph.D., while a few others earned an Ed.D. The specialization area of these degrees was diverse, including representation from school psychology, community psychology, developmental psychology, educational psychology, family studies, language and communicative
disorders, and educational leadership. All but one Scholar had presented findings from their grant projects at an eclectic group of conferences. The Head Start National Research Conference was the most frequently cited location of presentations, whereas other common events included conferences of the Society for Research in Child Development, the American Educational Research Association, and the Association for the Advancement of Behavior Therapy. Thirty-seven percent of past Scholars also indicated that they had published their Head Start grant-funded work in a scholarly journal.

When indicating the location of initial employment after graduate school, former Scholars most commonly reported working in academic departments (55%) and non-profit organizations (13%). Similarly, past Scholars frequently reported that their current employment setting was an academic department (58%), whereas equivalent numbers of Scholars reported current employment in medical schools, non-profit organizations, and public/private schools (each at 11%).

Some clear patterns were evident in the amount of time that Scholars spent in different activities during their current jobs. Regardless of the particular activities, 92% of respondents indicated

that their current work was related to their Scholars dissertation project. Over 80% also noted that they still had contact with the Head
Start community at a local and/or national level. A large portion of the sample (21%) spent from 40-100% of its working hours in a teaching role, whereas half of past Scholars spent more than 50% of their work time on research activities. In fact, five former Scholars reported spending all of their time at work on research, whereas comparatively only 5% indicated no current participation in research activities. More than 55% provided no direct service at all (e.g., therapy, assessment). Most former Scholars spent very little time in their jobs focused on policy and planning, though a select few spent as much as 50% of their time in this area. Finally, a vast majority of the sample spent less than a third of its time in indirect service (94%; e.g., administration, supervision).

Feedback about the Head Start Scholars Experience
Given the careers listed above, previously funded Scholars rated the extent to which experiences consistent with the four major goals of the Head Start Scholar Program contributed to their career paths. On average, Scholars rated financial resources in support of student research (M = 3.78, SD = .63), emphasis on skills related to partnership building in the community (M = 3.11, SD = .81), and support of active communication and networking with Head Start colleagues (M = 2.92, SD = .94) as being relatively major contributions to their career development. The Head Start Scholar Program's emphasis on the mentoring relationship was rated slightly lower than the others (M = 2.62, SD = 1.11), though still in the range of making a contribution. A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to compare responses on these four items for each Scholar. There was a significant multivariate effect, reflected by Wilks' Lambda = .40, F(3,33) = 16.62, p<.001. Post hoc analyses indicated that financial resources were perceived to make the most significant contribution to career success, compared to the other Scholar experiences.

Next, former Scholars rated the helpfulness of their faculty mentor and other experiences (e.g., yearly Scholar group meetings, relationship with community partners) in terms of developing community-based research skills. On average, both the faculty mentor relationship and other Head Start experiences were rated as equally helpful in developing community-based research skills; a paired sample t-test indicated no significant difference between average ratings in each of these areas (t(34) = 1.00, n.s.). The three highest-rated skills that faculty mentors helped students develop were designing a research project, writing a grant proposal and feeling comfortable in a leadership role. The top three skills that other Scholar experiences helped students develop were comfort with a leadership role, developing professional autonomy, and building relationships with community partners. Faculty mentors were rated as making the least helpful contribution to developing a sense of cultural competence and learning to provide feedback to community partners. Alternatively, other Scholar experiences were least helpful in terms of proteges' organization/analysis of data and dissemination of findings in journals (See Table 2).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Evaluative Feedback of the Head Start Scholar Experience

	Faculty Mentor		Other Scholar experiences	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Cultural competence	2.56	1.08	3.06	.89
Professional autonomy	3.26	.82	3.39	.77
Leadership role	3.36	.80	3.42	.69
Diverse team	2.81	1.06	3.06	.96
Design research project	3.47	.94	2.97	.88
Write grant proposal	3.42	.97	2.92	.91
Build community relationships	3.06	.89	3.28	.74
Collect data in community	3.19	1.01	3.08	1.02
Organize and analyze data	3.28	.94	2.42	1.13
Disseminate to journals	2.92	1.23	2.39	1.05
Feedback to community	2.44	1.21	2.67	1.10
Composite average	3.08	.73	2.94	.62

Note. N = 38. Scores ranged from *very important* (4) to *not as important* (1).

With respect to the fourth goal of the Scholars program, maintaining professional connections forged during the Head Start Scholar experience, almost half of the participants (45%) reported having continued contact with their faculty mentors at a rate of once per month or even more often (as much as once a week for some respondents). Another 47% indicated that they have contact with their former faculty mentors a few times per year or less, whereas only 5% of the sample seemed to have no continued contact with their mentors. In addition, former Scholars consistently reported that they have collaborated professionally with other individuals whom they met as a direct result of participating in the Head Start Scholars program (61% of sample). Interestingly, thirteen Scholars also indicated having experienced mentoring from a community member, such as a Head Start parent, center director, teacher, or parent policy council member. These examples of community mentorship were rated as highly valuable.

Elements of Effective Mentorship Experiences
Participants provided their perspectives regarding specific elements of the protégé role that contributed to a successful mentoring relationship (see Table 3). Scholars reported that the three most salient aspects of the protégé role for them included receptiveness to criticism, being inquisitive, and acting proactively. Sharing multiple sides of oneself, expecting mentors to be available, and requesting a verbal contract from mentors were the lowest ranked elements of a protégé role.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Key Elements of the Protégé Role

	M	SD
Receptive to criticism	4.00	.00
Ask questions	3.86	.35
Be proactive	3.78	.48
Prepared for meetings	3.64	.59
Establish/share personal goals	3.61	.69
Balance needs of mentor and self	3.60	.55
Be flexible	3.53	.61
Stick to deadlines	3.33	.59
Modify mentorship over time	3.31	.68
Listen to mentor's perspective	3.29	.57
Pursue multiple mentors	2.76	.87
Share multiple sides of self	2.69	.83
Expect mentor availability	2.20	.83
Request verbal contract	2.17	.85

Note. N = 38. Scores ranged from *very important* (4) to *not as important* (1).

In addition, former Scholars rated specific elements of the mentor role that they felt would lead to a successful mentoring relationship (see Table 4). Atop the list were the three following elements: offering acceptance, support, and encouragement; providing research opportunities for a protégé; and helping protégé gain exposure and visibility. Past Scholars indicated that it was not as important for mentors to guide protégés through academic requirements, serve as a protégé's friend, or be demographically similar to protégés for maintenance of an effective mentoring relationship.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Key Elements of the Mentor Role

	M	SD
Offer acceptance/support/encouragement	3.75	.50
Provide research opportunities	3.72	.61
Help protégé gain exposure/visibility	3.61	.55
Serve as role model	3.58	.69
Advocate for protégé	3.53	.61
Sponsor protégé for desirable positions	3.39	.77
Provide direct training/instruction	3.33	.83
Help protégé learn employment strategies	3.31	.75
Protect student	3.14	.90
Socialize protégé to learn academic system	3.14	.83
Provide personal guidance/counsel	3.03	.88
Guide protégé through requirements	2.94	.79
Serve as a friend to protégé	2.17	.88
Be demographically similar to protégé	1.61	.77

Note. N = 38. Scores ranged from *very important* (4) to *not as important* (1).

Finally, participants responded to an open-ended question that solicited three adjectives that they felt best described a successful mentoring relationship. The most commonly listed descriptors included supportive and encouraging (n = 23), whereas respectful, challenging, and collaborative were also reported (n = 11, 9, and 9, respectively). Remaining descriptors, such as knowledgeable, communicative, trusting, committed, and responsive, were used by Scholars to describe a successful mentoring relationship, though with less frequency (n = 3 to 6).

DISCUSSION
University-community partnerships are becoming increasingly salient to the development of quality early childhood education experiences that promote school readiness for young children. Given the special set of skills required for such collaborative research endeavors, there is a need for capacity-building at the university level that begins with development of new scholars in the early childhood education and development field (e.g., Fisher, Rau, & Colapietro, 1993; Higgins-D'Alessandro, Fisher, & Hamilton, 1998). A particular funding source for graduate students in the field that focuses on developing research skills in the context of university-community collaborations is the Head Start Graduate Student Research Grant program (Scholars Program). As described in this article, the Scholars Program emphasizes faculty mentorship as a context for learning the requisite skills to do successful community-based research. Based on a survey of

previously funded Scholars, findings suggest that these graduate students tend to pursue careers in research-focused environments and rate many components of the Scholars experience to be helpful in learning how to form community-based partnerships and conduct early childhood education research. Scholars also provided valuable insight into future directions for training of applied early childhood developmental researchers by highlighting core, effective aspects of their mentoring experiences within the Scholars Program.

Is the Scholars Program Building Capacity for University-Community Partnerships?

The overarching mission of the Scholars Program is to increase the capacity of universities to partner with early childhood education settings to ensure that future research is responsive to the youth and families within these communities. Previously funded Scholars were overwhelmingly successful in obtaining their doctoral degrees, though most notable was the varied landscape of specializations in the fields of education and psychology, ranging from speech-language to educational leadership. It is apparent that new scholars are trained to conduct early childhood research within an incredibly diverse range of disciplines. Diversity of this group was further highlighted by the location of conferences at which Scholars' research was presented, commonly including Head Start's National Research Conference but also spanning traditional developmental, clinical, and community psychology outlets.

The array of early career paths and job responsibilities of former Scholars is also striking. Though skewed toward academic positions and research activities, employment was also evident in non-profit organizations and public schools, with job tasks spanning teaching, therapy and assessment. These career trajectories reflect the range of skills that Scholars developed during graduate training, and also reveal the broad career options that Scholars had upon finishing graduate school. In considering how to increase the capacity of universities to conduct research in collaboration with the early childhood community, it is worth reflecting on the dilemma that graduate students trained in community-based research face; these new scholars develop a valuable skill set that provides them with attractive job opportunities that are not exclusively research-based. And yet, findings suggest that, as professionals, former Scholars may contribute to a university-community partnership from an academic setting or a practitioner role. Lastly, the majority of former Scholars did report remaining engaged in some capacity with the Head Start community as a part of their present professional activity.

Evaluation of Scholars Experience

Though faculty mentorship is a major goal of the Head Start Scholar program and was a central point of inquiry in this study, it is apparent that faculty mentors alone were not the key to a successful training experience for these Scholars. Undoubtedly, faculty mentors were perceived to have made a major contribution to the Scholars' development of important skills (Scholars Program Goal 2), such as designing a research project and writing a grant proposal. Yet, interestingly, other aspects of the Head Start Scholar experience provided valuable, yet different, contributions to the learning process. Financial support provided by this funding source, for example, was highly valued by Scholars. Other Scholar experiences, which included mentorship experiences via relationships with community partners and yearly meetings with the entire cohort of funded Scholars, also seemed to be particularly helpful in developing professional autonomy and skills related to university- community partnership-building (Scholars Program Goals 3 and 4). In fact, a number of Scholars emphasized the contributions of mentorship from a community

member during the research project. It seems that the blend of faculty mentorship and other experiences provided by the Head Start Scholars Program resulted in Scholars learning both traditional research skills (e.g., designing research projects, grant writing) and the nuances of conducting research in tandem with community partners. Support garnered through relationships developed during the Head Start Scholar experience and maintained during early career moves also appeared to be a valuable commodity.

The four Scholars Program goals were also reflected as major themes in Scholars' open-ended responses to questions regarding the general value of their Head Start Scholar experience as it related to their later work experiences. First and foremost, participants indicated that learning to conduct research within a collaborative, community partnership (n = 11) and making connections within the Head Start research community (n = 11) were the most valuable experiences during the Head Start Scholar process. For example, one participant wrote that "learning from community members how to partner with them to do research" was one of the key parts of the Scholar experience, whereas another reported that "the acceptance, guidance, and mentorship that I have received from countless members of advanced Head Start researchers has been invaluable in my development as a researcher and psychologist." Seven participants indicated how important it was to receive financial support, described by one participant as "enabling me to conduct quality research" and another as providing "the opportunity to conduct a fully funded dissertation instead of cutting back the project." Former Scholars also referred to the grant writing process as being invaluable (n = 5), whereas a few participants wrote that the Head Start experience helped them to learn how to lead independent research efforts (n = 4). Clearly the provision of this funding opportunity served as a conduit for experiencing a diverse array of meaningful training experiences for young scholars.

Elements of Effective Mentorship
Having experienced a formalized and mandated mentorship across university and community settings, Head Start Scholars were in a unique position to provide fine-grained details about the critical aspects of successful mentoring relationships. Mentorship is typically defined as a personal relationship between an experienced professional and a junior protégé in which the senior individual provides career and emotional support to help guide the less experienced individual toward becoming successful in a given field (Johnson, 2002). Kram's (1985) early work on mentoring also noted that a mentor's role consists of two major functions: career and psychosocial support. This dual functionality of the mentor role was apparent in the Scholars' perspectives on ideal mentoring. Results suggest that graduate students who responded to this survey value a mentor who uses a Vygotskian approach that balances support and encouragement with increasingly challenging expectations. The fact that a majority of Scholars report continued contact with their mentor following the grant experience suggests that a useful zone of proximal development was created as part of the Scholars program that persists to the present day.

Scholars were also asked to reflect on the key qualities that a protégé can adopt in order to contribute to a stronger relationship with a mentor. Interestingly, Scholars described successful protégés as students who take a flexible, proactive approach to learning within the mentoring relationship. One can infer from these responses that the protégé is responsible for giving feedback to the mentor regarding the types of knowledge, support, and experiences that will help

contribute to the development of new skills for the protégé. Interpersonal aspects of mentorship were overwhelmingly rated as more important than demographic similarity or formal academic advisement. Mentoring would appear to be most valuable and satisfactory to those students who actively seek a mentor with a balanced supportive and challenging style, while maintaining this proactive approach within ongoing mentor-protégé interactions. Such a dynamic approach to mentorship also serves as an apt model for building university-community research partnerships, relying on a flexible and active approach to collaboration with professionals in the field of early childhood.

Implications for Graduate Training in Early Childhood Education and Development
Taken together, our findings indicate that Scholars Program participants valued a multifaceted training experience that offered mentorship and funding for skill development in conducting community-based research within Head Start programs. We believe these results speak to the importance of training experiences which provide access to mentorship from both university faculty and early childhood community members. The Scholars program is a unique training experience embedded within receipt of a federal grant, and is consistent with the calls for increased university-community partnerships (e.g., Jensen, Hoagwood, & Trickett, 1999; Lerner, Fisher, & Weinberg, 2000), particularly in the context of advancing applied child development research (e.g., Lamb-Parker, Greenfield, Fantuzzo, Clark, & Coolahan, 2000; Sherrod, 1999). Indeed, Sherrod (1998) argued that university-community collaborations offer four impacts on science: 1) blurring distinctions between basic and applied research; 2) generating new perspectives on evaluation via programs and policies; 3) contributing to the dissemination of science; and 4) promoting reciprocity between academic and community members. Diverse graduate school training experiences within the context of university-community partnerships, particularly via mentorship from university faculty and community members, help advance the agenda outlined by Sherrod (1998), and impact science via efficient and comprehensive capacity-building efforts for the next generation of researchers. As demonstrated in the current study, participants in the Scholars Program emerged from their graduate programs having benefited from direct integrative experiences in university-community partnerships.

As graduate programs embrace the idea of training young scholars to be competent working in applied settings (e.g., Kuther, 1996), findings from this study suggest that graduate training programs offering applied experiences in university-community partnerships would do well to incorporate an emphasis on broad mentorship experiences for emerging scholars. Future study in this area would benefit from continued exploration of the nuances of mentorship roles on the part of the mentor (i.e., faculty member, community member) and graduate student, focusing on how these mentoring experiences facilitate competence for engaging in university-community partnerships as relevant to a particular context (e.g., early childhood research). The university-level implications of incorporating a more expansive mentorship model within graduate training programs warrant particular attention, as well as under what conditions a mentoring relationship is not appropriate or a positive experience for the student.

Limitations and Conclusion
The conclusions based on this study are limited due to several factors including the select sample, descriptive quality of data, and retroactive design. Also, we acknowledge that some of the non-responding former Scholars may likely no longer participate in academic or applied

developmental careers and may have concluded this survey was irrelevant. The Head Start Scholars Program is just one of a set of grant-funded programs that promote development of new researchers in the early childhood education and development fields, not to mention the abundance of preexisting training models in graduate programs across the United States. The thoughts and perspectives of Scholars Program participants by no means reflect the attitudes of all graduate students in this field; however, we argue that their experiences in university-community partnerships and with mentorship allow them to provide useful information when reflecting upon graduate training. Finally, we also acknowledge the bias regarding a retrospective survey regarding experiences in the Scholars program, including the possibility of forgetting details and allowing more recent experiences to influence perspectives about their graduate training experience.

In summary, this survey of former participants in the Head Start Scholars Program offers valuable information about training new scholars in the field of early childhood education and development. Faculty mentoring that provides support while also challenging protégés seems to be helpful in the development of certain research skills, whereas other more community-based experiences are equally valuable in learning how to partner with early childhood communities. As graduate school programs consider the growing need to increase their capacity for collaboration with community-based early childhood organizations, they might consider adopting a training approach that promotes a culture of productive faculty-protégé relationship development that also involves research experiences and partnering with community members.

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