

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE DETERMINANTS OF SUCCESSFUL ASSIGNED MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

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This study examined the influence of protégé characteristics, gender composition of the mentoring relationship, the quality of the relationship, and the amount of time the protégé spent with the mentor on career and psychosocial benefits gained by the protégé. Protégés were assigned to mentors as part of a development program designed to facilitate personal and career development of educators. An instrument designed to assess the extent to which mentors provide career and psychosocial outcomes to protégés was developed. Protégé gender, job involvement, and career planning activity was related to attainment of psychosocial outcomes. Implications and future directions for research regarding mentoring are discussed.

According to social learning theory, direct and observational learning may be used to acquire behavioral patterns and strengthen expectations regarding the ability to perform tasks successfully (Bandura, 1977). Components of social learning theory such as modeling and vicarious reinforcement have been incorporated into behavior modeling training programs, which have been successfully used for developing managers' interpersonal skills (see Decker & Nathan, 1985). The effectiveness of modeling for acquiring work-related interpersonal skills has stimulated interest in the use of mentoring relationships to fulfill employees' career and psychological needs (e.g., Kram, 1985; Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1978; Zey, 1984). A number of testimonials, case studies, and descriptive research studies suggest that mentors can facilitate personal development and advancement of their protégés in the organization by providing challenging assignments, guidance and counseling, and increased exposure and

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visibility to top management and by serving as role models (Burke, 1984; Jennings, 1976; Phillips-Jones, 1982, 1983; Roche, 1979).

While preliminary studies have focused on identifying the benefits protégés gain by participating in mentoring relationships, the mentoring construct remains unclear. Likely, this is because of a lack of agreement regarding the functions provided by mentors and differences in the purpose and extent of formalization of mentoring programs in organizations. Examination of the various definitions of mentoring (e.g., Bolton, 1980; Clawson, 1980; Hunt & Michael, 1983; Klauss, 1981; Levinson et al., 1978) reveals several common themes. The mentor is usually a senior, experienced employee who serves as a role model, provides support, direction, and feedback to the younger employee regarding career plans and interpersonal development, and increases the visibility of the protégé to decision-makers in the organization who may influence career opportunities. Phillips-Jones (1983) indicates that the majority of mentoring relationships are informal. That is, the relationship develops because of shared interests, admiration, or job demands that require the skills of two or more persons. In informal mentoring relationships, discussions between the mentor and protégé usually go beyond career-related issues to more in-depth personal sharing of interests, needs, and values.

Many organizations have attempted to formalize mentoring relationships in order to capitalize on the potential developmental aspects of such relationships. In formal mentoring programs, individuals are assigned to a mentor. Klauss (1981) and Kram (1985) warn that assigned mentoring relationships may not be as beneficial as mentoring relationships that develop informally, due to personality conflicts between parties, perceptions of the protégé's supervisors that their ability to influence the subordinate is eroded by the presence of the mentor, and the lack of true personal commitment of either the mentor or the protégé to the relationship because it was not formed on their initiative. Nonetheless, assigned mentoring relationships are currently being used for employee socialization, training, and personal and professional development (e.g., Fagan & Ayers, 1985; Shelton, 1982; Wilbur, 1987). For example, a large consumer-goods producer in the northwestern United States uses a formal mentoring program for socializing new engineers into the organization and facilitating their understanding of both the administrative and technical processes used in manufacturing. In the one-year program, mentors and protégés are required to complete a variety of job-related tasks such as the review of project procedures, purchasing functions, and available reference materials. Many of the mentoring relationships continue after the end of the program, suggesting that mentors and protégés are obtaining interpersonal benefits as well as job-related information from the experience. Although the focus of formalized mentoring programs may be on completion of designated

tasks, activities, or protégé skill learning, mentors may also provide valuable counseling, coaching, and role-modeling functions for the protégé. Unfortunately, no empirical studies have attempted to identify the benefits protégés receive from participating in assigned mentoring relationships.

The most systematic and detailed work regarding the mentoring process has been conducted by Kram and her associates (Kram, 1983, 1985; Kram & Isabella, 1985). Kram (1983) conducted in-depth biographical interviews with 18 managers in a public-sector organization in order to identify the functions provided by mentors. Content analysis of the interviews revealed that mentors provided career and psychosocial functions. *Career functions* included those aspects of the mentoring relationship that prepared the protégé for career advancement. These functions included nominating the protégé for desirable projects, lateral moves, and promotions (sponsorship); providing the protégé with assignments that increased visibility to organizational decision makers and exposure to future opportunities (exposure and visibility); sharing ideas, providing feedback, and suggesting strategies for accomplishing work objectives (coaching); reducing unnecessary risks that might threaten the protégé's reputation (protection); and providing challenging work assignments (challenging assignments). *Psychosocial functions* enhance the protégé's sense of competence, identity, and work-role effectiveness. These functions included serving as a role model of appropriate attitudes, values, and behaviors for the protégé (role model); conveying unconditional positive regard (acceptance and confirmation); providing a forum in which the protégé is encouraged to talk openly about anxieties and fears (counseling); and interacting informally with the protégé at work (friendship). Kram (1985) suggests that the greater the number of functions provided by the mentor, the more beneficial the relationship will be to the protégé.

Unfortunately, mentoring research has failed to advance beyond Kram's initial work. Although Hunt and Michael (1983) provided an excellent conceptual framework for mentoring research, few empirical studies of mentoring relationships have been conducted. This may be due to the lack of attention devoted to operationalizing the mentoring functions identified in previous qualitative analyses. In the only study that attempted to develop a measure of mentoring functions, Olian, Giannantonio, and Carroll (1985) found that mentors were perceived as providing two roles, which were similar to those identified by Kram (1983): (1) an instrumental role, which included mentor's behavior that influenced the protégé's visibility in the organization, and (2) an intrinsic role, which included mentor's behavior that provided psychological support to the protégé. Clearly, more research is needed to develop a quantitative measure of the types of functions mentors provide for protégés.

In addition to issues related to the measurement of the functions provided by mentors, research is needed to identify the individual and organizational factors that influence the success of mentoring relationships. Burke (1984) and Olian et al. (1985) investigated the relationship between mentor and protégé personal and employment characteristics (e.g., sex, age, level in the organization) and mentoring outcomes. These studies suggest that female protégés prefer that mentors engage in career-enhancing activities more than counseling, and that mentors at higher organizational levels are likely perceived as being more successful at providing career and psychosocial functions. Also, Kram (1985) suggests that self-concept and the importance placed on work and career may be determinants of the success of mentoring relationships. Additional research is needed to identify the influence of protégés' personal characteristics and job and career attitudes on both the extent of interaction with mentors and the benefits gained from the relationship.

Finally, no research has investigated formal, assigned mentoring relationships (i.e., mentoring relationships involving assignment or matching of mentors and protégés). Because the use of formal mentoring programs for socialization and career development is being increasingly emphasized (e.g., Leibowitz, Farren, & Kaye, 1986; London & Mone, 1987), it is important to determine whether protégés can receive career and psychosocial benefits similar to those reported in studies of informal mentoring relationships.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of protégés' job and career attitudes, the gender composition of the mentoring dyad, the amount of time spent with the mentor, and the quality of the interaction with the mentor on the psychosocial and career benefits protégés gain from participation in assigned mentoring relationships. As part of this effort, a measure designed to assess the various types of functions provided by mentors was developed.

Factors Influencing the Development of a Successful Assigned Mentoring Relationship

Protégé Characteristics

Locus of control. Locus of control is a stable personality trait that may affect individuals' motivation to participate in developmental activities such as mentoring relationships. According to [Rotter \(1966\)](#) individuals with an internal locus of control believe that job performance and events that occur in the work setting are contingent on their own behavior and under personal control. Opportunities that may increase the probability of receiving rewards, such as promotions, pay increases, or recognition, are particularly salient to internals. Externals believe that work outcomes are

beyond personal control and, therefore, attribute work outcomes to luck, fate, or the actions of others.

Research indicates that internals may exert more effort to learn and may utilize information more effectively than externals (e.g., [Davis & Phares, 1967](#); [Seeman & Evans, 1962](#)). Also, Hammer and Vardi (1981) and Thornton (1978) found that internals acted on career planning and development information to a greater extent than did externals. [Spector \(1982\)](#) suggests that because locus of control is a personality characteristic that influences beliefs regarding the ability to improve skills, it should be an important determinant of participation in developmental activities. In the context of a mentoring relationship, protégés with an internal locus of control may be more motivated to interact with the mentor and more effectively utilize the information provided by the mentor than will externals. As a result, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 1: Internals will spend more time with their mentors and more effectively utilize the mentors than will externals.

Job involvement. Lodahl and Kejner (1965) define job involvement as the degree to which the individual identifies psychologically with work, or the importance of work for the person's self-image. Individuals' interest in developing skills may be dependent upon how important their jobs are for their self-image, their enthusiasm for work, and the importance they place on the job in comparison with non-work activities. Preliminary research results indicate that job involvement may be an important determinant of skill acquisition in training programs ([Noe & Schmitt, 1986](#)).

The extent to which individuals interact with and effectively utilize a mentor may be influenced by their job involvement. Exposure and visibility, coaching, and challenging assignments provided by mentors are likely more appealing to individuals with high levels of job involvement because these types of mentor activities may facilitate performance improvements and increased skill utilization. Good performance and greater skill utilization are rewarding for job-involved individuals because work success is directly related to self-perceptions. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 2: The greater the protégé's level of job involvement, the more time he/she will spend with the mentor and the more effectively he/she will utilize the mentor.

Career planning. Exploratory behavior has been emphasized as an important determinant of occupational success and satisfaction ([Jordaan, 1963](#)). Exploratory behavior refers to mental or physical activity undertaken with the purpose of eliciting information about self or environment or forming decisions regarding occupational adjustment, progression, or

choice. This includes self-assessment of skills, career values, interests, goals, or plans, as well as the search for job-related information from family, friends, counselors, and other career-information outlets (Mihal, Sorce, & Compte, 1984; Stumpf, Colarelli, & Hartman, 1983). The extent to which individuals engage in career planning, a type of exploratory behavior, has been shown to be related to the likelihood of participation in self-development activities, salary level, and advancement (e.g., Gould, 1979; Super & Hall, 1978).

Individuals who engage in career planning activities are likely to have a greater awareness of their own strengths, weaknesses, and interests than will individuals who have not considered their career plans. According to Kram (1983), mentors devote a considerable amount of time to career-related discussions (e.g., coaching) or to activities that are directly related to the protégés' career goals and interests (e.g., sponsorship, exposure and visibility). "Career planners" may be more enthusiastic about participating in mentoring relationships and better prepared to effectively utilize the mentor than will "non-career planners." Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 3: The greater the extent to which protégés engage in career planning, the more time they will spend with their mentors and the more effectively they will utilize their mentors.

Relationship importance. Through relationships with others in the work environment, individuals receive social support (i.e., assistance derived from personal relationships that involve frequent interactions and strong positive feelings—House, 1981). Relationships with peers and managers have been found to facilitate organizational socialization, help in coping with job stress and work demands, and aid in personal and professional development (Feldman & Brett, 1983; Kram & Isabella, 1985; Levinson, et al., 1978; Lewis, Posner, & Powell, 1983). However, Fisher (1985) suggests that the positive effects of social support may occur only for individuals who value relationships with others at work. Individuals who perceive work relationships as being superficial and task-oriented are more likely to seek social support from individuals outside the formal work environment (Henderson & Argyle, 1985).

Kram (1985) suggests that the importance that individuals place on interpersonal relationships at work will likely have a significant influence on the success of mentoring relationships. In successful mentoring relationships, the protégés allow the mentors to influence their development through modeling, counseling, providing exposure and visibility, assigning challenging work assignments, and protection from organizational politics. However, if the protégé does not believe that interpersonal relationships can be valuable for personal and professional development, it is likely that

he /she will not be receptive to the mentor's influence attempts. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 4: Protégés who believe that relationships with peers and supervisors at work are worthwhile for personal and professional development will spend more time with their mentors and more effectively utilize their mentors than will protégés who do not value relationships at work.

Gender Composition of the Mentoring Dyad

The gender composition of the mentor-protégé dyad may influence the effectiveness of the relationship (Clawson & Kram, 1984; Fitt & Newton, 1981). Mentoring has been found to be related to advancement and job satisfaction of both men and women (Barnier, 1982; Berry, 1983; Riley & Wrench, 1985). However, as Noe (1988) indicates, the development of successful cross-gender mentorships may be inhibited by perceptions that women lack managerial skills and are unsuitable for challenging positions, preferences for interaction with members of the same gender in the work environment, and concerns that peers may perceive the mentoring relationships as sexual in nature, leading to resentment and malicious gossip. As a result it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 5: Male-female mentoring dyads (heterogeneous gender) will spend less time together, and protégés will obtain fewer benefits from the relationship in comparison with male-male and female-female mentoring dyads (homogeneous gender).

Quality of Interaction and Amount of Time Spent with the Mentor

In order to obtain career and psychosocial benefits from participating in a mentoring relationship, the protégé must interact with the mentor to discuss problems, set personal and work-related goals, and obtain guidance on career and personal issues (Kram, 1985). Also, the protégé must effectively utilize the time spent with the mentor by asking questions and discussing problems and interests in order to obtain the full range of benefits available from the relationship. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 6: The more time the protégé spends with the mentor and the more effectively the protégé utilizes the mentor, the greater the career and psychosocial outcomes the protégé will obtain from the relationship.

Method

Background Information

The mentoring program was part of a comprehensive development program designed to promote personal and career development of educators who aspired to attain administrative positions (e.g., principal, superintendent of schools). One part of the development program consisted of participation in a simulation designed to improve administrative and interpersonal skills (see Moses, Hakel, & Loacker, 1983). Mentors were assigned to protégés during this program. Mentors observed the protégés during the simulation and provided feedback to them regarding the level and quality of skills observed. Following the simulation, mentors were instructed to provide personal support, career information, and guidance to their protégés.

Each mentor was assigned from one to five educators as protégés. The mentor was located in the educator's school district, was familiar with educational administrative work, but did not directly supervise or evaluate the protégé. However, the mentors were in upper-level positions in the school district: for example, superintendent or district coordinator of development, which permitted frequent contact with individuals who made decisions regarding promotions and job assignments in the school district. The mentors were chosen on the basis of their willingness to help aspiring administrators, a past record of effective administrative work, and successful completion of a mentor training program that emphasized the mentor's role in the development of the educators.

Participants

Development programs were administered at nine different sites across the United States and involved 139 educators and 43 mentors. More of the protégés were female ($N = 74$) than male ($N = 65$). The average age of the protégés was 40. The majority of protégés had master's degrees ($N = 87$), and a few more held assistant principal ($N = 72$) than held teacher or counselor ($N = 67$) positions.

Slightly more of the mentors were male ($N = 22$). The mean age of the mentors was 48 years, indicating they were somewhat older than the protégés. About half of the mentors had doctoral degrees in education ($N = 17$). Most of the mentors held directorships ($N = 14$) or were assistant superintendents ($N = 11$) in the school districts.

Measures

Job involvement. Lodahl & Kejner's (1965) 20-item scale was used to assess protégés' job involvement. This scale measures work enthusiasm, work as an indicator of self-worth, and work importance (e.g., "Sometimes I kick myself for the mistakes I make in my work." "To me work is only a small part of who I am."). A 5-point response scale was used, with 1 = "Strongly disagree" to 5 = "Strongly agree." The observed internal consistency reliability estimate for this scale in this study was .72. The higher the mean scale score, the greater the degree of job involvement.

Locus of control. Locus of control was assessed using an 11-item measure developed by Andrisani and Nestle (1976). These items represented the more adult and work-oriented items from the Rotter (1966) scale (e.g., "Who gets promoted often depends upon who was lucky enough to be in the right place first." "Becoming a success is a matter of hard work; luck has little or nothing to do about it.") A 4-point response scale was used, with 1 = "Strongly disagree" to 4 = "Strongly agree." The observed internal consistency reliability estimate of this scale in this study was .67. A high mean scale score indicated an internal locus of control.

Career planning. Gould's (1979) six-item measure of career planning was used to assess the clarity of protégés' career objectives and plans. This scale measures the extent to which career plans exist, how frequently career plans change, and whether or not a strategy exists for the achievement of career goals. The six items include the following: "I change my career objectives frequently." "My career objectives are not clear," "I know what I need to do to reach my career goals," "I have a strategy for achieving my career goals," "I have a plan for my career," and "I have not really decided what my career objective should be." A 4-point response scale was used, with 1 = "Strongly disagree" and 4 = "Strongly agree." The observed internal consistency reliability estimate for this scale in this study was .89. A high mean scale score indicated that participants had engaged in a high degree of career planning.

Relationship importance. Five items were developed to measure the importance of relationships with supervisors and peers at work. The items included "I believe that the opportunity to consult with someone who is a more experienced educator than myself is a valuable experience," "I prefer a team-oriented work environment," "I value my peers' opinion of my performance as an educator," "Discussing my career interests with others will benefit me in the long run," and "I often receive informal information from peers that helps me to perform my job better." A 5-point response scale was used with 1 = "Strongly disagree" to 5 = "Strongly agree." The internal consistency reliability of this scale was low ($\alpha = .60$). A

high mean scale score indicated that participants felt relationships with supervisors and peers were important.

Quality of interaction and amount of time spent with mentors. The amount of time protégés spent with the mentor was determined by asking mentors: "How many hours have you spent with this mentee since the follow-up meeting?" The quality of the relationship was measured by asking mentors to indicate the extent to which they felt that they were effectively utilized by the protégé ("To what extent do you feel this mentee has effectively utilized you as a developmental mentor?"). Response categories ranged from 1 = "A very slight extent" to 5 = "A very large extent."

Gender composition of the mentoring dyad. A dummy variable indicating the extent to which the mentoring dyad was either homogeneous or heterogeneous in terms of gender was computed. A mentoring relationship was defined as homogeneous if the mentor and protégé were both men or both women ($N = 58$). A heterogeneous mentoring relationship included those in which the mentor and protégé were of opposite sex ($N = 63$). There were 36 male mentor/female protégé dyads and 27 female mentor/male protégé dyads. Gender information was not provided by either mentor or protégé for 18 dyads.

Mentoring functions. Thirty-two items were developed to assess the extent to which the protégés believed the mentors provided career and psychosocial functions. These items were developed on the basis of career and psychosocial functions identified by previous qualitative analyses and descriptive studies of mentoring relationships (e.g., Burke, 1984; Kram, 1983, 1985; Kram & Isabella, 1985; Roche, 1979; Zey, 1984). Protégés were asked to read each item and report on the extent to which it described their mentoring relationship. A 5-point Likert-type scale was used with 1 = "To a very slight extent" to 5 = "To a very large extent." Also, a "Don't know" response category was provided; this category was treated as a missing response in subsequent analyses.

Procedure

Protégés completed the locus of control, career planning, and job involvement measures prior to participating in the development program. The measures were administered by school district personnel coordinating the study at each development program site. Approximately six months after the training follow-up meeting, questionnaires were mailed to mentors and protégés. The protégé questionnaire included the relationship importance and mentoring function measures. The mentors provided information regarding the number of hours spent with the protégé and how effectively they were utilized by the protégé.

Data Analysis

Factor analysis was used to identify the underlying constructs assessed by the mentoring functions scale. Correlation analysis was used to test the study hypotheses. Regression analysis was used to examine the relative contribution of protégé characteristics, gender composition of the mentoring dyad, quality of interaction, and amount of time spent interacting with the mentor for explaining variance in the career and psychosocial benefits obtained by the protégés.

Results

Development of Mentoring Functions Scale

The purpose of the factor analysis was to identify the constructs underlying the mentoring functions items. An exploratory factor analysis strategy was used instead of a confirmatory approach because this study represented one of the first attempts to develop a measure of mentoring functions, and theoretical development regarding the types of functions provided by mentors is incomplete. Principal factor analysis followed by varimax rotation was performed on 29 of the mentoring function items. Three items were excluded from the analysis ("Mentor has taken blame or credit in controversial situations," "Mentor has spoken highly of your skills and abilities," "Mentor nominated you for desirable lateral moves or promotions") because more than 50% of the participants endorsed the "Don't know" response category for these items. Inclusion of these items would have significantly reduced the sample size for the factor analysis, resulting in an unstable, inaccurate solution. Estimated communalities were used on the diagonal of the factor matrix. Two decision rules were used to determine which items defined the rotated factors. First, an item had to have a factor loading equal to or greater than .30. Second, items had to clearly load on one of the factors. Items with similar loadings across factors were not used to interpret the factors or form scale scores. Two interpretable factors represented by 21 of the items emerged. Table 1 presents the item means and factor loadings.

Factor 1 appears to represent psychosocial mentoring functions because the items defining the factor assess the extent to which the mentor provided coaching, counseling, acceptance and confirmation, and served as a role model. Examination of the item loadings for Factor 2 suggests that this factor represents mentoring functions related to the protégés career (i.e., protection, exposure and visibility, sponsorship, and challenging assignments). All mentor functions are represented by the two factors, with

TABLE 1
*Mentoring Functions Item Means, Standard Deviations,
 and Rotated Factor Loadings*

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Factor loadings	
			1	2
1. Mentor has shared history of his/her career with you. (Coaching)	3.41	1.25	<u>.35</u>	.07
2. Mentor has encouraged you to prepare for advancement. (Coaching)	3.76	1.36	<u>.40</u>	.20
3. Mentor has encouraged me to try new ways of behaving in my job. (Acceptance & Confirmation)	3.81	.97	<u>.47</u>	.15
4. I try to imitate the work behavior of my mentor. (Role Model)	3.24	1.03	<u>.57</u>	.31
5. I agree with my mentor's attitudes and values regarding education. (Role Model)	4.19	.88	<u>.71</u>	.15
6. I respect and admire my mentor. (Role Model)	4.49	.82	<u>.79</u>	.12
7. I will try to be like my mentor when I reach a similar position in my career. (Role Model)	3.66	.99	<u>.68</u>	.14
8. My mentor has demonstrated good listening skills in our conversations. (Counseling)	4.59	.63	<u>.66</u>	.12
9. My mentor has discussed my questions or concerns regarding feelings of competence, commitment to advancement, relationships with peers and supervisors or work/family conflicts. (Counseling)	4.08	1.01	<u>.62</u>	.06
10. My mentor has shared personal experiences as an alternative perspective to my problems. (Counseling)	3.92	1.00	<u>.50</u>	.07
11. My mentor has encouraged me to talk openly about anxiety and fears that detract from my work. (Counseling)	3.61	1.05	<u>.51</u>	.20
12. My mentor has conveyed empathy for the concerns and feelings I have discussed with him/her. (Counseling)	4.24	.76	<u>.65</u>	.08
13. My mentor has kept feelings and doubts I shared with him/her in strict confidence. (Counseling)	4.31	.67	<u>.34</u>	.14
14. My mentor has conveyed feelings of respect for me as an individual. (Acceptance & Confirmation)	4.28	.88	<u>.74</u>	.06
15. Mentor reduced unnecessary risks that could threaten the possibility of becoming a school principal or receiving a promotion. (Protection)	2.41	1.16	.12	<u>.33</u>
16. Mentor helped you finish assignments/tasks or meet deadlines that otherwise would have been difficult to complete. (Protection)	2.40	1.21	.11	<u>.61</u>
17. Mentor helped you meet new colleagues. (Exposure & Visibility)	2.12	1.17	.10	<u>.41</u>
18. Mentor gave you assignments that increased written and personal contact with school administrators. (Exposure & Visibility)	1.94	1.30	.13	<u>.83</u>

Table 1 (continued)

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Factor loadings	
			1	2
19. Mentor assigned responsibilities to you that have increased your contact with people in the district who may judge your potential for future advancement. (Exposure & Visibility)	1.88	1.21	.14	<u>.80</u>
20. Mentor gave you assignments or tasks in your work that prepare you for an administrative position. (Sponsorship)	2.25	1.33	.12	<u>.82</u>
21. Mentor gave you assignments that present opportunities to learn new skills. (Challenging Assignments)	2.25	1.38	.16	<u>.84</u>
22. Mentor provided you with support and feedback regarding your performance as an educator. (Challenging Assignments)	3.57	1.18	.42	.35
23. Mentor suggested specific strategies for achieving your career goals. (Coaching)	3.30	1.24	.32	.31
24. Mentor shared ideas with you. (Coaching)	3.74	1.18	.45	.35
25. Mentor suggested specific strategies for accomplishing work objectives. (Coaching)	3.35	1.30	.31	.34
26. Mentor gave you feedback regarding your performance in your present job. (Coaching)	2.85	1.52	.25	.30
27. My mentor has invited me to join him/her for lunch. (Friendship)	3.24	1.50	.20	.17
28. My mentor has asked me for suggestions concerning problems she/her has encountered at school. (Acceptance & Confirmation)	2.42	1.10	.22	.12
29. My mentor has interacted with me socially outside of work. (Friendship)	2.45	1.36	.25	.05
Eigenvalue	11.71	2.62		
Variance explained	67.3%	15.0%		

Note: Item loadings defining factors are underlined. The type of mentoring function that the item was written to assess is listed in parentheses. Item response scale ranged from 1 = "to a very slight extent" to 5 = "to a very large extent."

the exception of items assessing friendship, which did not clearly load on either factor. Examination of the eigenvalues indicates that the two factors explain approximately 82% of the variance in the mentoring function items. In order to assess the stability of the factor loadings, the 21 items that defined the rotated factors were reanalyzed. The resulting factor loading pattern was identical to the original analysis.

On the basis of the factor analysis results, scale scores were calculated by computing the average of the sum of the items with the highest factor loadings on each factor. Internal consistency reliability estimates were calculated to assess the homogeneity of the two scales. The internal consistency estimate for the career-related functions scale, which included the seven items assessing the extent to which the mentor provided exposure and visibility, sponsorship, protection, and challenging assignments, was .89. Similarly, a high internal consistency reliability estimate was found

for the psychosocial functions scale, which included 14 items assessing the degree to which the mentor served as a role model and provided counseling, acceptance and confirmation, and coaching ($\alpha = .92$). The intercorrelation between the scales assessing career and psychosocial functions was .49.

Test of Study Hypotheses

Means and intercorrelations between protégé characteristics, amount of time spent with the mentor, quality of interaction with the mentor, gender composition of the mentoring dyad, and mentoring functions are presented in Table 2. Participants reported high levels of job involvement ($M = 3.82$, $SD = .40$) and career planning activity ($M = 4.18$, $SD = .65$). Participants tended to have an internal locus of control ($M = 3.54$, $SD = .31$) and valued relationships with supervisors and peers at work ($M = 4.40$, $SD = .41$). On average, mentors reported spending approximately four hours with the protégés in the six-month period that the study covered ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 3.55$). Protégés reported similar levels of interaction ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 3.56$). The large standard deviation suggests significant variation in the amount of time mentors spent with their protégés. Further examination of the data revealed that 22% of the mentors spent no time with their protégés, 61% spent between one and six hours, and 17% spent more than six hours with their protégés. A t test revealed that protégés reported that the psychosocial benefits ($M = 3.96$, $SD = .69$) from participating in the mentoring relationship were significantly greater ($t = 20.91$, $p < .05$) than were career-related benefits ($M = 2.23$, $SD = .97$).

Only Hypothesis 6 received partial support. Effective utilization of the mentor was significantly related to protégé's attainment of psychosocial functions ($r = .22$), but not career functions. Protégés' level of job involvement, locus of control, relationship importance, and career planning were not related to effective utilization of the mentor or amount of time spent with the mentor. Results regarding the gender composition of the mentoring dyad were the opposite of those hypothesized. Protégés in mentoring relationships that were heterogeneous in terms of gender were rated as more effectively utilizing the mentor ($r = -.16$) than protégés involved in mentoring relationships with mentors of the same gender. An unplanned t test revealed that male mentors with male protégés reported that they were less effectively utilized by the protégé ($M = 2.43$, $SD = .97$) in comparison with female mentor–female protégé and heterogeneous gender dyads ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 1.13$).

Although the hypothesized relationships were not supported, some unexpected relationships were found. Older protégés reported receiving significantly more career functions ($r = .15$) yet spent less time with their mentors ($r = -.18$) than did younger protégés. The higher the protégés'

TABLE 2
Means, Standard Deviations, Intercorrelations

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Age			.12												
2. Gender			-.10	-.09											
3. Dyad gender			.04	.18*	-.13										
4. Position			-.01	.03	-.13	.12									
5. Education			-.02	.22*	-.14	.00	.00								
6. Job involvement	3.82	.40	.00	.12	-.04	-.05	-.09	.30*							
7. Career planning	4.18	.65	-.08	.03	.17*	-.07	-.02	.05	.20*						
8. Locus of control	3.54	.31	-.07	-.02	.17*	-.22*	-.20*	.00	.20*	.18*					
9. Relationship importance	4.40	.41	-.07	.22*	-.16*	.17*	-.05	.11	.10	-.07	.01				
10. Quality of interaction with mentor	3.00	1.12	-.07	.10	.01	.14	.03	.12	.04	.12	.04	.37*			
11. Amount of time spent with mentor	3.64	3.55	-.18*	.26*	-.04	.10	.05	.19*	.15*	-.06	.12	.22*	.12		
12. Psychosocial functions	3.96	.69	.03	.03	-.05	.05	.17*	.08	.02	-.02	.02	.02	-.03	.49	
13. Career functions	2.23	.97	.15*												

Note: Sample size ranged from 120 to 127 due to incomplete responses from protégé or mentor. A high mean scale score indicates a high level of the particular attitude or activity. For gender, 1 = female, 0 = male; for dyad gender, 1 = homogeneous, 0 = heterogeneous.
* $p < .05$

TABLE 3
Regression Results for Psychosocial Functions

Variable	β	F
Protégé gender	.19	4.05*
Locus of control	-.15	2.46
Relationship importance	.13	1.82
Job involvement	.10	1.17
Career planning	.07	.68
Amount of time spent with mentor	.01	.43
Quality of interaction with mentor	.06	.63

* $p < .05$

level of education, the more they reported receiving career functions from their mentors ($r = .17$). Women reported that they received significantly more psychosocial benefits from their mentors than did men ($r = .26$). Also, the greater the protégés' job involvement ($r = .19$) and career planning activity ($r = .15$), the more psychosocial benefits they reported receiving from the mentoring relationship.

Regression analysis was used to examine the relative influence of protégé characteristics, protégé gender, effective utilization of the mentor, and amount of time spent interacting with the mentor on career and psychosocial functions obtained by the protégé. The regression results are presented in Table 3. Because the regression equation for career functions was not significant [$F(7, 107) = .29$, n.s.], it is not included in Table 3. The regression equation for psychosocial functions was statistically significant [$F(7, 107) = 2.28$, $p < .05$], accounting for a small amount of variance ($R^2 = .13$). The significant beta weight for protégé gender ($\beta = .19$) indicates that gender accounted for significantly more of the variance in psychosocial outcomes obtained from the mentoring relationship than did amount of time spent with the mentor, effective utilization of the mentor, or protégés' job and career attitudes. That is, females reported receiving significantly more psychosocial benefits from the mentoring relationship than did males.

Discussion

This study represents one of the first attempts to investigate the determinants of successful assigned mentoring relationships. One contribution of this study is the development of a measure of mentoring functions based on a synthesis of previous research. Factor analysis results suggest that mentors do provide two functions, a career function and a psychosocial function. These factors are nearly identical to those reported by Kram (1983) and Olian et al. (1985). The sole exception is that items related

to mentors' coaching behavior (e.g., shared work history, encouraged advancement) shared more common variance with the psychosocial functions. Perhaps, protégés perceive coaching behaviors as more instrumental for work effectiveness and self-identity than for career advancement.

The high internal consistency reliability estimates and homogeneity of item content suggest that the mentoring function scales may be a useful criterion measure for researchers and training practitioners concerned with understanding the effectiveness of assigned mentoring relationships. Also, the large number of item loadings above .60 suggest that the factor solution on which the scales are based is likely to be accurate (Guadagnoli & Veliver, 1988). However, interpretation of exploratory factor analysis results should be regarded, not as final, but rather as a lead for further development of the construct (Gorsuch, 1983). Studies utilizing confirmatory factor analysis are needed to verify the factor structure of mentoring functions found in this study and to test alternative models.

Protégés reported receiving beneficial psychosocial outcomes but limited career functions (e.g., sponsorship, coaching, protection) from the assigned mentor. Also, a limited amount of time was actually spent interacting with the mentor. Mentoring relationships that provide the complete range of career and psychosocial functions are considered to exemplify the classic or "primary" mentoring relationship (Clawson, 1980; Kram, 1985; Phillips-Jones, 1982). "Primary" mentoring relationships are characterized by increased levels of commitment by both the mentor and the protégé and are seen as more critical for personal development. However, in most mentoring relationships only a subset of possible functions are provided by the mentor (Kram, 1986). Relationships that provide only career functions are valued primarily for instrumental means and characterized by less intimacy. Results of this study suggest that organizations should not expect protégés to obtain the same type of benefits from an assigned mentoring relationship as they would receive from an informally established, primary mentoring relationship. Nonetheless, protégés did report obtaining feelings of acceptance and confirmation, a forum for exploring personal and professional dilemmas, and beneficial feedback from the assigned mentor. Also, concerns regarding the possible negative reactions of individuals to assigned mentor relationships due to anxiety and confusion of responsibilities of the mentor and protégé and to pessimism regarding the value of the relationship may be unwarranted. The characteristics of the assigned mentor program may be more important determinants of the success of the assigned mentoring relationship.

Protégés' responses to an open-ended question regarding the reasons for the lack of interaction with the mentor provide some insight into the problems that can inhibit the interaction between the protégé and mentor in assigned mentor programs. Time limitations, incompatible work schedules,

and physical distance were the most frequently mentioned reasons for lack of interaction. The mentoring program that was the focus of this study included many of the characteristics suggested by Phillips-Jones (1982) as important for the success of formal mentoring programs: clearly defined purpose and goals of the program, selection of mentors on the basis of interpersonal skills and interest in developing employees, and mentor training. In addition, the results of this study suggest that organizations developing assigned mentoring programs should take steps to ensure that mentors are accessible to protégés. It will be difficult for protégés to obtain benefits from the relationship if they are separated geographically from their mentors. Also, in order to facilitate the development of the relationship, organizations should consider requiring weekly meetings between protégés and mentors. Perhaps protégés would have received more career benefits from the relationship if opportunities to interact with the mentor were not restricted.

Clearly, more rigorous studies using quasi-experimental designs are necessary to determine if individuals receive similar benefits from participating in informal and formal assigned mentoring programs. Studies demonstrating the effectiveness of formal mentoring programs for increasing organizational effectiveness are sorely needed. For example, studies should investigate the link between protégés' acquisition of career and psychosocial functions and performance improvement, participation in developmental activities, organizational commitment, and turnover rates. Also, empirical research is necessary to identify the characteristics of formal assigned mentoring programs that are critical to the effectiveness of the program.

Protégés' job and career attitudes had no effect on the time spent with the mentor or on quality of the relationship. However, protégés who had high levels of job involvement or engaged in career planning reported receiving more psychosocial benefits than did protégés with low levels of job involvement or underdeveloped career plans. Because these individuals had already formulated career plans or a strong interest in work, they may have had a greater need for their mentors to provide relationships in which they could openly discuss work and career-related anxieties and frustrations (i.e., psychosocial functions). Relationship importance may not have had the hypothesized effect because of the failure to properly operationalize this construct (as indicated by the low internal consistency reliability). Further studies of the influence of relationship importance on the extent to which individuals participate in developmental relationships (such as mentoring) are necessary. These studies should utilize a construct valid measure of relationship importance such as the perceived support subscale of the Work Environment Scale developed by Moos (1981).

There may be individual-level variables other than those included in this study that have a more potent influence on the success of mentoring relationships. For example, protégés' self-efficacy may have an important influence. Self-efficacy is the belief that behavior required to cope with potentially threatening situations can be successfully executed ([Bandura, 1977](#)). Individuals with high levels of self-efficacy may exert considerable effort to gain career and psychosocial benefits from mentoring relationships, a situation that may demand new behavior patterns as the mentors attempt to provide challenging assignments, sponsorship, and visibility to important organizational members. Future research is needed to identify the impact of protégés' job and career attitudes and behavior on the success of mentoring relationships. This type of research may lead to the development of a "readiness for mentoring" measure, which could be used by organizations to select for participation in mentoring programs those employees who are most likely to benefit from the experience. Employees who are not predisposed to benefit from mentoring relationships could be provided with alternative developmental activities or required to participate in career planning or self-assessment activities (which may stimulate more effective utilization of the mentor) prior to involvement in the mentoring program.

Surprisingly, mentors matched with protégés of the opposite gender reported that these protégés utilized the relationship more effectively than did protégés of the same gender as the mentor. A possible explanation for this result is that protégés in mentoring relationships with members of the opposite gender work harder to make the relationship successful because of an awareness of the possible negative outcomes that are believed to result from cross-gender relationships at work. Also, mentors indicated that females more effectively utilized the relationship than males. Women may be more motivated than men to utilize mentors who are provided via a formal program because of the general lack of mentors for women (see [Warihay, 1980](#)). Also, in this study women were employed in an occupation that is congruent with occupational role stereotypes. Upper-level administrative positions in educational settings may be congruent with mentors' expectations for career movement. As a result, mentors may not have been inhibited by stereotypes from interacting with female protégés. Similarly, female protégés may have had greater motivation to utilize the mentors because upward career movement in education has not traditionally been stymied or discouraged for women. Future research needs to investigate gender differences in motivation for participating in mentoring relationships and differences in the types of benefits obtained by protégés in formal and informal mentoring relationships that occur in traditionally male and traditionally female occupations.

This study focused entirely on protégé characteristics and the types of benefits protégés obtained from the relationship. However, mentor characteristics may be equally important determinants of the success of mentoring relationships. Super's (1957) theory of career development defines four work-relevant life stages: exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline. Mentors who are motivated to develop their own sense of accomplishment or opportunities for advancement may be less willing or adept at providing career functions. That is, individuals in the maintenance and decline career stages may be more effective mentors than individuals in the earlier career stages. Also, mentor perceptions of perceived benefits from the mentoring relationship may dictate the types of functions provided to the protégé. For example, a mentor who views the relationship as an opportunity to develop coaching skills may emphasize those skills in the relationship and spend less time providing career-related functions for the protégé. Studies are needed to identify the benefits that mentors obtain from participating in mentoring relationships and the effects of mentor characteristics, such as career stage, on the types of functions provided to protégés. Perhaps having satisfactorily performing, plateaued managers serve as mentors may motivate them to avoid technological obsolescence, hone their interpersonal skills, and increase feelings of self-worth.

Study Limitations

Several limitations of this study should be noted. First, a self-report questionnaire was the sole source of information regarding protégés' job and career attitudes. The use of additional information sources concerning protégés' job involvement and career planning activities, such as the number of hours worked per day and examination of personnel records for evidence of planning activities, would strengthen the validity of the study. Second, a self-report questionnaire was used to collect information regarding the types of outcomes obtained by the protégés. Future studies should attempt to use supervisor, peer, and mentor assessments. For example, supervisors and peers may be able to verify self-report information by reporting the extent to which career planning or other activities mentioned by the protégé in conversations are attributed to the mentoring relationship. Also, mentors should be asked to assess the extent to which they tried to provide career and psychosocial functions. Third, it is possible that unique aspects of educators and the field of education may preclude the applicability of this study's findings to the private sector. For example, educators may have higher levels of job involvement and value work relationships more than individuals in other occupations. A climate for personal development is inherent in the goals of education (e.g., learning). In the private sector,

productivity and profit goals likely make personal and professional development less salient issues. However, determinants of career advancement (e.g., degree requirements, visibility to decision makers) and individuals' psychosocial needs are likely similar across occupations. Also, the large majority of assigned mentoring programs in the private sector involve individuals who are seeking positions with management responsibilities; these aspirations are similar to the aspirations of the educators in this study. Nevertheless, readers should be careful not to overgeneralize the results of this study, which represents an initial attempt to study assigned mentoring relationships systematically. A final limitation is that the results of this study provide an indication of only the short-term effectiveness of assigned mentoring relationships. Kram (1985) suggests that the first year of a mentoring relationship is characterized by a task focus. Because these behaviors (e.g., coaching, role modeling) facilitate task completion, it may not be surprising to find that protégés reported that mentors provided more psychosocial functions. After two to five years, Kram suggests, protégés obtain the maximum benefit from the relationship. Longitudinal study of formal mentor programs is necessary to determine if mentors and protégés continue to interact after the novelty of the relationship is reduced and if protégés can receive career functions from participating in mentoring relationships of shorter duration. Such studies would involve assessment of the hours of contact with the mentor and career and psychosocial benefits protégés obtain from the relationship over multiple time periods during and after the end of the formal program.

This study represents one of the first attempts to investigate the antecedents and consequences of assigned mentoring relationships. The continued emphasis on the use of formal assigned mentoring programs for employee development (e.g., [Kram, 1985](#); [Stumpf & London, 1981](#); [Zey, 1984](#)) dictates that further systematic study of assigned mentoring relationships be undertaken in order to better understand the implications of these relationships for the individual and the organization.

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