Mentoring in Organizations: Implications for Women[1]

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ABSTRACT. This paper reviews the literature on the mentoring process in organizations and why mentoring can be critical to the career success of women managers and professionals. It examines some of the reasons why it is more difficult for women to find mentors than it is for men. Particular attention is paid to potential problems in cross-gender mentoring. A feminist perspective is then applied to the general notion of mentorships for women. The paper concludes with an examination of what organizations can do to further mentor relationships and an agenda for further research in this area.

During the past ten years, managers and their employing organizations have become increasingly interested in careers and career development processes (Hall, 1976; Jellinek, 1980). This interest has arisen because organizations are experiencing difficulties in a number of areas: (1) developing enough talented managers to replace those retiring, (2) assisting managers trapped in the wrong job, (3) providing ways in which managers can continue to provide high levels of contribution to the organization until their retirement, and (4) reducing high turnover in early career stages (Schein, 1978).

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The importance of mentor relationships

Writing on careers has suggested that a crucial role in career devleopment is played by one's mentor (Stumpf and London, 1981). Articles in the *Harvard Business Review* (Roche, 1979; Zaleznik, 1977; Lunding *et al.*, 1978) proposed that mentors are linked with managerial and career success, the process of developing leaders as opposed to managers, and early socialization and later succession issues. Levinson (1978) highlighted the important role played by mentors in the lives of his sample of 40 mid-life men. Schein (1978) provided a short list of things mentors do, as did Roche (1979). Dalton (1980) distinguished between mentors and sponsors. Levinson (1979) distinguished between identification and compensation as the motivation behind career achievement, and proposed that mentors are crucial in providing a positive and constructive basis for achievement (via identification) and that every manager should be taught teaching and modeling processes.

Kanter (1977) noted that her informants from Indsco (a fictitious name of a large manufacturing organization), used the words "Rabbis" and "Godfathers" to describe mentors and sponsors who were integral to the informal network. Dalton and his colleagues (1977) label one of the career stages in their model the Mentor Stage, suggesting that the phenomenon is pervasive.

More recently, Morrison *et al.* (1987) and Henning and Jardim (1977) reported that all of the successful female managers in their studies had a male mentor who performed significant functions in their careers. In their 1987 study of 76 top executive women in the United States, Morrison, White and Van Velsor reported that 100% of those who had reached the highest levels had help from above. This is in

contrast to their earlier study on successful executive men in which they report that only 55% of these men had help from above (Morrison et al., 1987, p. 190). The women in the study who had failed to reach the highest levels cited help from above as one of three critical assets they lacked. The importance of mentoring or help from above may have been the critical factor in determining some of the "fatal flaws" of the women who failed to reach the highest levels. An inability to adapt was one of three flaws exhibited significantly more often by unsuccessful women as compared to successful women (Morrison et al., 1987, p. 188). One of the functions performed by mentors is to help their proteges learn the ropes and adapt to organizational expectations. Women who failed to adapt may have had unsuccessful mentoring relationships or no relationships at all. Their results reinforce the importance of mentors to careers, but highlight them as a factor more critical to the success of women than men.

In addition to their role in career success, mentoring relationships may have a role in the quality of organizational life for women. The literature on stress and professional women suggests that one of the moderating variables which may influence the effect of stress on professional women is mentoring (Nelson and Quick, 1985). Mentoring relationships have the potential to alleviate stress by increasing the protege's self-confidence, forewarning her of career stress and suggesting ways to deal with it. In addition, it is suggested that female mentors provide unique role models for female proteges because they can relate to the causes of stress unique to female executives. These unique causes of stress are discrimination, stereotyping, the marriage/work interface, and social isolation (Nelson and Quick, 1985). This unique role played by female mentors with female proteges is corroborated by Master Card International's Joanne Black who said, "My greatest role as a mentor is to tell a woman she's not hysterical, not a misfit, that what's going on is really what's going on," (Hardesty and Jacobs, 1987, p. 138). In spite of much speculation on the role of mentoring in organizations, little empirical information is available.

This paper has three objectives. The first is to review research findings and opinion on mentor relationships in organizations. The second is to highlight issues, strategies and prospects specific to

mentoring and women in management. In this regard, particular emphasis will be devoted to the management of cross-gender mentor relationships. The third is to suggest areas in which future research is needed.

Review of research findings

Who is a mentor?

There are some differences in the way that mentoring has been defined. Collins (1979) defines mentoring as "a one-to-one relationship between a more experienced person and an inexperienced person, and only until the latter reaches maturity." Bolton (1980) proposes that mentoring exists when

> an experienced person provides guidance and support in a variety of ways to the developing novice. . . In addition to being a role model, acts as a guide, tutor, or coach, and a confidante.

Levinson (1978) provides the richest source of insights and hypotheses about the mentor relationship, in addition to providing an all-encompassing definition of the phenomenon. Levinson believes that a mentor could be an author of a book that has had an influence on an individual.

Levinson (1978) defines mentoring as follows:

> The mentor relationship is one of the most complex, and developmentally important, a man can have in early adulthood. The mentor is ordinarily several years older, a person of greater experience and seniority in the world the young man is entering. No word currently in use is adequate to convey the nature of the relationship we have in mind here. Words such as "counselor" or "guru" suggest the most subtle meanings, but they have other connotations that would be misleading. The term "mentor" is generally used in a much narrower sense, to mean teacher, advisor or sponsor. As we use the term, it means all these things, and more.

As in any new field of inquiry, there is both disagreement and confusion in the definition and use of the term mentor (Kram, 1985; Riley and Wrench, 1985). One specific area in which this shows up is the question of how common mentoring is. These figures have been found to range from 47% to 92% (reported in Riley and Wrench, 1985). Riley

and Wrench compared the effects of using a more stringent criterion (as opposed to a less stringent one) on the career experiences of women lawyers. They found that those meeting the more stringent criterion saw themselves as more successful and satisfied in their career than those not meeting it. Those women who said that they had mentors, but did not meet the criterion, reported themselves as less successful and satisfied than those who claimed to have a mentor and met the criterion. Riley and Wrench saw their results as demonstrating the value of the more stringent criterion (what they termed "true mentors"). A true mentor was an individual who provided high degrees of specific functions and activities.

Unfortunately, it is not clear in the Riley and Wrench study *who* provided these functions. That is, the asked each respondent to list up to five individuals who were felt to have played a positive role in their career. It was not clear whether these were mentors, peers, subordinates, or friends or family members outside of work.

What do we know about mentoring?

Table I provides a structure we all use to summarize opinion and research findings on mentoring in organizations.

Mentoring may be widespread

The model of career stages proposed by Dalton *et al.* (1977) suggests that successful managers inevitably become mentors to others. In addition there are several professions in which one has historically learned the trade from mentors (athletic coaching, university teaching, various artistic forms). Writings by many researchers as outlined under "The Importance of Mentor Relationships", attest to the prevalence of mentoring and its importance to protege and mentor.

An important factor in career success

The crucial role mentors play in development is

TABLE I
Mentor relationships

May be widespread.
An important factor in career success.
Complex.
Developmentally important for a man in early adulthood.
Part of a larger array of relationships or networks in organizations.
Often (but not exclusively) situated in the work setting.
Mentor = Male. Women less mentoring than men.
Possible sex differences in emphasis and functions.
Not all-or-none.
Can evolve informally. Not defined in terms of formal roles but in terms of the CHARACTER of the relationship and the FUNCTIONS it serves.
Several years older (8—15) but not too young or too old.
A mixture of parent and peer.
A transitional figure.
Functions of the mentor — many and varied.
What proteges need to know.
What is in it for the mentor.
A form of love relationship — therefore difficult to end in a reasonably civil manner.
Risks — mentor not going anywhere.
    — Protege flops
    — Relationships seen as/is a sexual one.
Identification versus compensation.
Absence of mentoring related to some real organizational problems.

highlighted in *Harvard Business Review* articles (Roche, 1979; Lunding *et al.*, 1978). Supporting material is present in Henning and Jardim (1977) and Kanter (1977). The studies of executive men and women reported in *Breaking the Glass Ceiling* (Morrison *et al.*, 1987, p. 190) also point to the importance of mentorships to careers. However, an individual can develop a successful career without a mentor, and individuals may have mentors and have limited success in their careers. There are several ways to learn. Having a mentor is only one way. Work by Kram and Isabella (1985) suggests that peer relationships may be as important as mentorship in career development at every stage. Noe (1988) speculates that women may prefer interaction with others of similar status in the organization and identifies the potential that peer relationships have as an important alternative for women in environments where mentors may not be available.

A type of developmental relationship

The mentor relationship is one of a range of developmental relationships individuals may experience in organizations (Kram, 1985). Early research (Levinson and his associates, 1978) emphasized the hierarchical mentor relationship, which may provide the widest range of career and psychosocial functions. With increased understanding of this particular relationship, other types of developmental relationships were observed. Thus we know that traditional hierarchical mentor relationships are limited in duration and some individuals do not find such relationships. In addition, for some individuals, relationships with peers (Kram and Isabella, 1985) and/or subordinates (Thompson et al., 1985) serve important developmental purposes. Finally, men and women may experience very different experiences with male mentors (Noe, 1988). And some mentor relationships are destructive.

Kram (1986) offers the concept of the *relationship constellation* to capture the range of relationships with seniors, juniors and peers that can provide developmental functions. She also notes the importance of not oversimplifying or glorifying the mentor relationship in organizations. Kram and Isabella (1985) identified three types of peer relationships (information peer, collegial peer, special peer) which provided career development and psychosocial functions. Thus not only did peer relationships serve mentoring functions, these relationships emphasized different issues and differed in importance as a function of one's career stage. Mentoring functions, therefore, may exist in several relationships, not only one. And while the hierarchical mentor relationship may provide the widest range of career and psychosocial functions, relationships with peers offered several functions, as well as mutuality of exchange between equals.

In some circumstances, the role of one's immediate supervisor depending on their career stage may limit the functions such individuals can fulfill. Outside work friends and family members may better fill these functions because they are not competing within the same organization or profession, or they may have a deeper understanding of the total person, instead of just career concerns. And the relationship constellation, along with one's needs and organizational circumstances, changes over time.

As individuals advance their careers and become older and more experienced, new sets of peers and subordinates emerge.

Riley and Wrench (1985) tested the hypothesis that it may be more desirable for a woman professional to have a number of supportive relationships (termed group-mentored) rather than a traditional mentor relationships (termed a true mentor). A woman had a true mentor if they reported an individual who provided a high level of career support. A woman was group-mentored if she had two or more individuals who provided moderate (i.e., lower) levels of career support. They report that more women were "truly mentored" than group-mentored, and that having a true mentor was more strongly associated with career success and satisfaction than being group-mentored. One must treat these findings with caution, given the concerns raised earlier about who provided which career support.

Complex

The complexity of the mentoring relationship is outlined in the writing of Daniel Levinson (1978) and Harry Levinson (1979). The most simple definitions of mentoring make reference to the teaching and learning aspects of this process. One person teaches; a second person learns — sounds simple. Levinson (1978) has shown, as one can see from his definition presented earlier, that complex needs of both the mentor and protege are involved. A Freudian might view the protege as a child searching for a parent!

Often, but not exclusively situated in the work setting

Levinson (1978) defines mentoring such that a protege might never have met his mentor, in person. Thus by reading a book written by a particular individual and being moved and influenced by this experience, the author of the book could qualify as a mentor. Most writers focus on individuals that have had contact with the protege. Similarly, a writer does not necessarily have to work in the same organization. Thus, one's neighbour, father or mother, uncle or aunt, or Priest or Pastor might qualify as a mentor.

Mentor = male, women less mentored than men

Because mentors are typically older, more experienced and more responsible job incumbents in organizations, and since most senior jobs in administration are filled by men, it follows that most mentors would be male. Given the difficulties that men and women sometimes experience in working together, it has been suggested that women have more difficulty in acquiring mentors than do men.

What do proteges need to know?

What is it that a person moving into managerial ranks must learn? Levinson (1979) lists six items:

1. The politics of the organization.
2. The norms, standards, values, ideology, history, and who are the organizational heroes in this organization. This refers to the "psychological contract" — the implicit expectations that organizations and their members have of each other.
3. What skills and competences are necessary in this organization for succession to the next immediate step.
4. What are the paths to advancement and which are the blind alleys.
5. What are the acceptable methods for gaining visibility in the organization. Who needs to know about what — and what do these people need to know?
6. What are the characteristic stumbling blocks in this organization and what are the personal failure patterns.

That is, how do people stumble across invisible barriers or what style of personal behaviour is self-defeating.

Morrison *et al.* (1977, p. 74) list the following six lessons for success as a result of their interviews of 76 top executive women:

1. Learn the ropes;
2. Take control of your career;
3. Build confidence;
4. Rely on others;
5. Go for "the bottom line", and
6. Integrate life and work.

In their discussion of "learning the ropes", they identified the importance of help from above and actively seeking and responding to feedback as critical dimensions of this activity.

What do mentors do?

Roche (1978) asked his respondents to rank the characteristics most important for a mentor to have. They gave highest value by far to a mentor's *willingness to share knowledge and understanding*. Those executives who themselves had a mentor gave high values to:

1. sharing and counselling traits,
2. knowledge of the organization and the people in it,
3. the mentor's rank,
4. respect from peers in the organization resulting from being the protege of a particular mentor,
5. knowledge of the use of power,
6. organizational power of the mentor, and,
7. upward mobility of the mentor.

Levinson (1979) proposes that the mentoring process consists of teaching, demonstration, interaction with the phenomenon, feedback and counselling. A good mentor often becomes a model that the protege can follow whenever he is unsure how to approach a problem. He instructs and provides the subordinate with a chance to try his hand while making sure he does not make important errors. Another crucial function of a mentor is to tell the apprentice (if none else will) when he is doing a poor job (also telling him when he is doing a good job). Being a mentor requires knowledge about the apprentice so one can have a rich discussion with him. The mentor must know more about his apprentice than anyone else does. Candor is essential, some emotional investment is required; and some hurt must be transcended. Table II provides a partial list of mentor functions.

What's in it for the mentor

Up to this point it might appear that the mentor is involved in giving of himself to others and getting nothing back in return. At one level, mentoring does involve some measure of altruism, a sense of meeting

TABLE II

Functions of mentors

Teacher, coach, trainer

A positive role model or example

Developed my talent through job assignments

Opened doors for me

A protector, learn without risking my job

A sponsor, visibility

As mentor rose, so did I

Counsel, moral support under stress

Confidence in me made me confident

Went to bat for me, fought for me

Bypass red tape, inside information, short-cuts

Reflected power, baking of an influential person

Host to a new world

Believed in my dream, supported my dream

Represented a more advanced level for which I strove

Provided me with negative feedback

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an obligation, of doing something for another human being. But more than altruism is involved in mentoring. The mentor is also doing something for himself. The mentor is making productive use of his own knowledge and skill in middle age (Levinson, 1979) and is learning in ways that would otherwise not be possible for him. Thus the mentoring relationship is one of mutual benefit. Levinson (1978) believes that the mentoring relationship is, in fact, one of the most significant relationships available to men in middle adulthood. These relationships allow the mentor to identify and to keep what is youthful in himself, to further the development of young men and women, to help others in their struggles to form and live out their Dream, and to assist others to lead better lives according to their own values and abilities.

Erikson (1963) refers to the middle adulthood period as a period of Generativity or Stagnation. By Generativity he means coming to grips with the legacy, what one will leave behind to future generations. Mentoring is a potentially important way of giving back in return for what one has himself received. This is why individuals who themselves have had nurturing relationships with mentors are more likely in turn to fulfill this function for others.

Kanter (1977) postulated that executives are motivated to sponsor someone because it will gain them more power and recognition, a grateful, up-and-coming executive, and the respect of their colleagues

for spotting talent and engineering the proteges advancement for the good of the company.

Phases in the mentor relationships

Kram (1983, 1985) presented a conceptual model which highlighted successive phases of a mentor relationship based on intensive biographical interviews. She identified four predictable though not entirely distinct phases: initiation, cultivation, separation and redefinition.

Initiation — a period of 6 months to one year during which time the relationship gets started and begins to have importance for both individuals. Expectations of both parties become firm, and realized. Opportunities exist for work-related interaction. Mentor provides coaching, challenging work, and visibility; protege provides technical assistance, respect and desire and willingness to be coached.

Cultivation — a period of 2 to 5 years during which the number of career and psychosocial functions provided by the mentor increase to a maximum. Both individuals continue to benefit from the relationship. More frequent and meaningful interactions occur. Both become more emotionally linked.

Separation — a period of 6 months to 2 years after a change in the structural role relationship (transfer, promotion) or in the emotional parts of the relationship (feelings of independence, threat, betrayal). Protege may no longer need coaching; mentor may be psychologically or physically unable to provide career or psychosocial functions. Opportunities for interaction limited by job rotation or promotion.

Redefinition — an indefinite period during which time the relationship ends or takes on a more peerlike friendship quality. Mentor relationship is no longer needed. Protege develops relationship with new mentor. Peer status may be achieved as a result of diminished resentment and anger and increased thankfulness and appreciation.

Ending the mentor relationship

Levinson and his associates found that many of the

mentor relationships they examined ended with hard feelings and conflict. They coined the phrase "becoming one's own man" (Boom) to capture the reasons for the conflict and tensions. The protege has developed to the point where he or she needs to stand on their own two feet; the mentor is unable or unwilling to permit this freedom and independence to the protege. The relationship ends with ill will and hurt feelings. The intensity of the conflict and negative feelings is a function of how emotionally intense the relationship had become.

Other data (Burke, 1984) has indicated, however, that most mentoring relationships end on a positive note. In this study, the mentor relationship seemed less emotionally intense, ended with one or the other individual moving to another position inside or outside the organization, and were of shorter duration. In addition, the data were gathered using questionnaires other than interviews (Levinson *et al.*, 1978), and a different sample (managers and professionals in early career vs artists, professors in mid-career). We can only conclude at this point that mentor relationships can have a variety of endings.

Sex differences in mentoring

Much of the writing on mentors (Fitt and Newton, 1981; Shapiro *et al.*, 1978) suggests that woman often lack mentors or sponsors who can be instrumental in their career advancement. Fitt and Newton speculate, in addition, that although the activities male mentors pursue on behalf of their male proteges are basically the same as those they pursue on behalf of female proteges, there may be a difference in emphasis. Women proteges at lower levels in the organization need more encouragement than their male colleagues and women at higher levels have to be 'sold' more actively.

Risks in the mentor relationship

Both mentor and protege shoulder some risks entering a mentor relationship. From the perspective of the mentor, the protege may lack the talent to perform at a high level, and if the protege is the opposite gender, the mentor relationship may be seen by outsiders as a sexual one, or may become

one. From the perspective of the protege, the mentor may lack the talent to perform at a high level (going nowhere), being attached to a particular mentor may be problematic if the mentor loses in a major political contest, and if the mentor is the opposite gender, the mentor relationship may be seen by outsiders as a sexual one, or may become one.

Proteges may have a greater work load and work under heightened scrutiny on their jobs. In addition, proteges may live under the shadows of their mentors, which can undermine their feelings of self-worth and independence. Proteges may also run a risk if they terminate the relationship with their mentor but continue with the organization.

Benefits to both individuals and organizations

The importance of mentoring and sponsoring can be seen in actual organizational dynamics. For example, an organization in which junior engineers leave in large numbers because their careers are not developing might be suffering from an absence of mentoring relationships. Similarly, a rapidly growing organization facing a shortage of personnel capable of moving up might also be suffering from the same problem since no one would be actively sponsoring such a pool of talented personnel. Thus, the presence of mentoring and sponsoring could pay dividends to both managers and their organizations. Roche (1979) reported that executives who had a mentor earned high salaries at an earlier age, were better educated, were more likely to be following a career plan, and sponsored more proteges than executives who had not had a mentor.

Implications of the mentoring process for organizations

If mentoring relationships are indeed important in meeting organizational needs and if, as Roche suggests, people who are mentored are more likely to mentor, the facilitation and encouragement of such relationships is of potential significance to organizations.

First, that every manager should be a mentor, and that individuals perform best when their mentors are

just a few years 8—10 (Levinson, 1978) older than they are.

Second, every performance appraisal should contain a section for evaluating the effectiveness of each manager's mentoring ability.

Third, every mentor should learn the nature of the identification process, the importance of modeling behaviour, and how to go about systematically teaching others.

Fourth, every manager should provide experiences in interaction with peers and superiors to help subordinates come to understand and learn to behave in ways that fit with the culture in which they now find themselves. The manager should bring to the attention of the subordinate, as honestly and directly as possible, the ways in which the subordinate is viewed by those who have influence on what will happen.

Fifth, every manager who in a period of generativity (36—55) needs to understand that an effective way of resolving the middle-age crisis and passing oneself on through other people is the mentoring process. Every good manager needs to appreciate that service to others via mentoring also serves oneself.

Sixth, the teaching of the managerial mentoring role should be a part of all management education. Organizations must think seriously about the perpetuation role in organizations, about the critical need in organizations for building in succession, for creating reservoirs of adaptive people who in their turn can regenerate organizations by being effective teachers and by obtaining satisfaction in that role, as well as in the specific role which is directly related to immediately measurable bottom-line results. A critical part of the teaching process is to teach the process of teaching others to managers.

Seventh, organizations need to be particularly sensitive to the unique needs and circumstances of women since they now constitute a high percentage of new professional and managerial intake. Special attention must be paid to managing cross-gender relationships (Clawson and Kram, 1984).

Creating formal mentor programs

When an organization realizes that in the next few years there will be a leadership vacuum (i.e., there do not appear to be qualified individuals capable of moving into these senior level positions) fostering

mentor and sponsorship might be one way of addressing this problem. Zaleznik (1977) makes a distinction between managers and leaders and concludes that they are psychologically different and that the development of one-to-one relationships with mentors is crucial to the development of leaders. Thus leaders are developed through personal mastery, which emerges from an accelerated and intensified personal development through an apprenticeship. Such individuals are the recipients of a *tutorial* on their organization by an experienced and knowledgeable person.

For this development strategy to be effective however, it is important that: (1) individuals identified as potential apprentices be talented, and (2) potential mentors have the qualities required to develop mentoring relationships with desired characteristics. Not everyone is capable of being a good mentor. For example, mentors who feel threatened by the talents and accomplishments of their proteges would be limiting.

The Jewel Company has received a lot of publicity because of its effort to support the mentoring process (*Harvard Business Review*, 1978). In this article, mentor relationships between three successive chief executives are described. Jewel has institutionalized a mechanism whereby each newcomer to their organization is attached to an older, more experienced member of the organization. These mentors look after the individuals in their early years to ensure that their careers get off to a good start. Out of these relationships it is hoped that the young managers learn to take risks, accept a philosophical commitment to sharing, and learn how to relate to individuals in a caring and sensitive way.

Kram (1986) believes that organizations cannot successfully formalize or mandate that managers function as mentors or sponsors, however, organizations can certainly create mechanisms which will facilitate the appearance of these processes.

An empirical Canadian study

Burke (1984) examined mentoring relationships in organizations as experienced by proteges. The sample, eighty mentored women in early career stages, provided data by means of questionnaires. Three-quarters of the group had one or more mentors. Women were as likely to have had a mentor as were

men. All four possible gender compositions were present. The male mentor-male protege combination was the most common (72%) followed in turn by the female-male combination (14%), then female-female combination (9%) and the male-female combination (5%). Mentors were always older than proteges (42.7 years vs 24.4 years on average). In 75% of the cases, mentors had direct supervisory and organizational responsibility for the protege.

In the majority of instances (59%) respondents believed that relationships with their mentors just "emerged", that is, evolved or developed spontaneously. Mentor relationships were characterized by frequent contact (daily, 59%, several times a week, 31%). Forty-eight percent of the proteges indicated that their mentor relationship lasted less than two years; 37% lasted between two and five years. Most relationships ended with one or the other (usually the protege) leaving the organization (61%). For another 20%, the relationship ended because of a job transfer within their own organization. In addition, most of these relationships ended with positive feelings (very well, 45%, well, 38%). The mentor relationships examined here did not appear to be as emotionally intimate and intense as those observed by Levinson and his colleagues (1978).

Most of the proteges reported that their mentors had extraordinary or considerable influence on them as individuals (76%) and on their careers (63%). Career progress (66%) was by far the career area most influenced by mentors. Most respondents believed their mentors were wish performers as well as being satisfied in their jobs. There was little consensus on what proteges learned from their mentors. It appeared that proteges learned a wide range of *different* things, perhaps depending on their unique needs and circumstances.

Respondents rated the extent to which their mentors provided fifteen roles or functions. The five most common were: a positive role model, built self-confidence, went to bat for them, a teacher, coach or trainer and used job assignments to develop proteges. These data were fact analyzed and three factors emerged: career development functions, psychosocial functions, and role model functions. Respondents' reports of the extent to which their mentors performed these three functions were then correlated with other measures.

The following comments are offered in summary. First, older mentors were less likely to perform

psychosocial functions or activities. Second, the larger the gap in ages between mentor and protege, the less likely was the mentor to perform psychosocial and role model functions. Third, length of relationship with one's mentor (among those whose relationships with their mentor had ended) tended to be associated with greater performance of career development and psychosocial functions by mentors. Fourth, mentors performing more career development, psychosocial and role model functions had greater influences of both a personal and career nature. Fifth, respondents' reporting that their mentors served more psychosocial and role model functions were more likely to report that their mentors had no influence on their career aspirations. Sixth, respondents' reporting that their mentors served more career development and psychosocial function also reported that their mentors had more influence on their career progress. Seventh, respondents' reporting greater career success tended to report that their mentors provided more career development and role model functions. Finally, mentors who served greater role model functions were more likely to be seen as more satisfied in their jobs, as higher performers in their jobs, and as more successful in their careers.

There was a suggestion that very high-performing mentors may be less likely or less able to provide psychosocial functions. It takes time to mentor and it may be that these extremely high performing mentors had neither the time, interest or ability to engage in the more emotional and personally intense aspects of the mentoring relationship.

Comparisons of various combinations of gender of mentors and proteges were undertaken. These conclusions should only be seen as suggestive given the small number of women. First, there were some significant differences between male and female proteges: male proteges had more mentors, were themselves older, and indicated that their mentors had greater influence on their career choice. Female proteges indicated that their mentors performed more psychosocial functions.

Second, there were some significant differences between respondents with male versus female mentors: male mentors were older and there was a larger gap between their ages and the age of their proteges, female mentors had a greater impact on career aspirations of their proteges and performed more psychosocial functions.

Third, there were some differences between male and female proteges with male mentors: male proteges indicated they had more mentors, female proteges reported that their male mentors had greater career influence, particularly on career progress, and also saw their male mentors as more job satisfied. Finally, there were some statistically significant differences between male and female mentors of male proteges: male mentors had a larger age gap between themselves and their proteges, and female mentors had a greater influence on their proteges as persons (as opposed to career influences), and performed more psychosocial functions.

Women in the sample did not believe that it was necessarily more difficult for women than men to develop mentor relationships in organizations (qualitative data in response to open-ended question). It depended on several factors: the abilities and characteristics of the men and women in the organization, the number of men and women in the organization, the number of women in more senior jobs, the culture and norms of the organization and the attitudes of males in more senior positions.

The results of this study should be considered as tentative given the broad definition of mentoring used and the small number of female proteges.

Issues, strategies and prospects specific to mentoring and women in management

Issues unique to women

Noe (1988) has recently reviewed the limited literature on women and mentoring. He believes that the number of mentorships available to women has not kept pace with the increasing number of women needing mentors. The acticles that have examined women in mentoring relationships have shown that women, like men, report greater job success and job satisfaction than women who did not have a mentor.

Noe identified six potential barriers for the establishment of cross-gender mentorships. One was *lack of access to information networks*. That is, women may not develop mentorships because of limited contact with potential mentors. This may result from a lack of knowledge of how to develop informal networks, from a preference for interaction with others of similar status, or the deliberate exclusion of women

by male managers. Women may not be in-group members.

A second factor was *tokenism*. Potential mentors for females may be unwilling to take them on as proteges because of their visibility. If the relationship fails, the mentor may more readily receive subtle punishments for the failure. Women promoted to meet affirmative action goals (given preferential treatment) may be seen as a threat to potential male mentors. They may see their token status as fulfilling the stereotype that women cannot make it on their own. Women themselves may lack the motivation for establishing mentorships under these conditions, since they may believe that their success is the result of policy decisions and not their own ability.

A third factor was *stereotypes and attributions*. Negative attitudes about women's abilities to manage, shared by both men and women, may make it more difficult for cross-gender mentoring to occur. Women may be excluded from mentorships because they are perceived as not possessing characteristics necessary for managerial success. He notes that even good performance by women may be seen as the exception rather than the norm. These perceptions are based on sex characteristic stereotyping, beliefs about women's job preferences, attributions regarding performance outcomes, and sex-role stereotypes.

A fourth factor was *socialization practices*. Women may be socialized to develop personality characteristics and behaviours that are contrary to those necessary to be a successful manager.

A fifth factor was *norms regarding cross-gender relationships*. Concern about the public image of the relationship may cause male managers to avoid establishing mentorships with women. In addition, male mentors may prefer developing protege relationships with males than females, because men prefer interacting with men.

The sixth factor Noe (1988) identified was *reliance on ineffective power bases* by women. Men and women differ in their use of various influence strategies. The influence tactics or power bases commonly used by women may result in their not being sought for mentorships.

Hardesty and Jacobs (1987) provide a seventh factor of concern to women. In their book, *Success and Betrayal — The Crisis of Women in Corporate America*, Hardesty and Jacobs caution women against becoming overly dependent on mentors, especially

in later career stages. They speculate that women's desire for connectedness and personal bonds lead to this overdependence. When this overdependence is coupled with a growing realization that there are limits to which male advice is applicable or productive for female proteges, the relationship is likely to end as Kram (1983) describes it, "with considerable ambivalence . . . much like a love relationship."

Managing cross-gender mentoring

There are unique problems that arise when mentoring relationships cut across gender lines. These problems include sexual attraction, marital disruption, and damaging gossip. A mentor-protege relationship is a close developmental relationship. Both men and women in organizations must struggle with creating developmental relationships with the other sex while managing the complexities and difficulties associated with close male/female working relationships. Clawson and Kram (1984) refer to this as a "developmental dilemma"; that is, the desire to develop one's subordinates demands a close relationship, but the desire to avoid complications demands a distance from them.

Clawson and Kram (1984) identified three specific characteristics of cross-gender mentor relationships that were sources of anxiety and confusion. These were: assuming stereotypical roles that reduced the female managers' competence, freedom and effectiveness, concerns about increasing levels of intimacy leading to avoidance of frequent interaction and decreased effectiveness, and concerns about the public image of the relationship leading to avoidance of private or extended one-on-one contact. Cross-gender mentor relationships combined the complexity of effective developmental relationships with the special difficulties of cross-gender relationships.

Clawson and Kram (1984) identified two aspects of mentor relationships that need managing (see Table III): The *internal* relationship which is the relationship between the two individuals, and the *external* relationship, which is the relationship between the two individuals and the rest of the organization and the public. The developmental dilemma, the appropriate balance of intimacy or distance, has relevance for both aspects of the mentor-protege relationship. Two aspects of risk are involved — that

TABLE III

Some outcomes of three levels of intimacy in two kinds of relationships

	Unproductive intimacy	Productive levels of intimacy	Unproductive distance
Internal relationship	sexual liaisons likely; less than desired growth.	desired levels of productivity and development.	less than desired productivity development.
External relationship	perceived favouritism and distrust.	development of respect for boss, subordinate, and for other sex.	reinforced prejudices.

associated with unproductive closeness and that associated with unproductive distance. Either extreme limits the developmental possibilities of the mentor relationship at both internal and external levels.

Let us briefly consider both the internal and external relationships. Developing an appropriate level of intimacy is difficult in any relationship. The parties may have different views on how close they should become. In cross-gender mentoring relationships, the parties must define the boundary between desired levels of intimacy and romantic involvement. Should the relationship include romantic feelings, the parties must agree to not act on them to maintain a professional relationship.

When a mentor and a protege develop an emotionally and a physically intimate relationship, they run the risk of seriously damaging their personal lives (particularly if married) and their professional effectiveness. Clawson and Kram (1984) list the following risks associated with unproductive internal intimacy:

> guilt, loss of self-confidence, shame, loss of reputation among co-workers, loss of respect for others' judgement and professional objectivity, divorce or damaged marriages, disrupted careers, loss of income, loss of career opportunities, loss of references, loss of focus on job demands, loss of analytic judgmental and even legal costs. (p. 22)

Mentor-protege relationships that are overly distant reduce the learning of the protege. The mentor may be seen by proteges as uncaring or lacking knowledge about them. Proteges in turn, may be unwilling to contribute their best to the mentor and the organization.

The external relationship deals with the way others in the organization or the public *perceive* the level of intimacy in the mentor-protege relationship rather than the *actual* level of intimacy between mentor and protege. If colleagues conclude you are emotionally and physically involved with your protege, they may lose respect for your judgement and believe you will favour the protege. This may lead to reduced morale among other staff members, lessen the respect of others for the individuals, and reduce the effectiveness of the mentor as a manager. In addition, these perceptions reinforce the historical biases against women in management. That is, introducing women into the workplace is associated with romantic liaisons and affairs.

There are also some disadvantages resulting from perceptions of too much distance between mentor and protege. Others may be unwilling to learn from the mentor because of his or her aloofness. They may not develop open lines of communication because they do not feel free to approach the mentor. Unproductive distance may signal to others that the mentor is uncomfortable with members of the other sex. Finally, the mentor may be unable to promote the development of subordinates as much as his or her organization would like.

The objective would be for the mentor to manage the developmental relationship with other-sex proteges so that there is an optimal level of closeness which fosters learning without compromising the internal or external relationships of either party.

Strategies for women

The following strategies for women are based on the assumption that they continue to work in hierarchical and patriarchal organizations dominated by men. While this is still the case in the majority of North American companies, it should be borne in mind that theoretically, at least, this assumption may change as women assume more and more leadership roles. The strategies which follow would then be

viewed as temporary measures until gender equilibrium and potential organization change are attained.

Research on professional women and stress suggests that mentoring relationships may be one way to deal with stress. Since it is suggested that women in organizations face unique stressors, it is important that they avail themselves of any and all modes of reducing stress to improve the quality of their organizational experience. The involvement in mentoring relationships would seem to be critical to the success and organizational well-being of executive women. Kram and Isabella (1985) and Noe (1988) suggest that peer relationships may be as important to women as mentoring relationships and may be preferable to women. This suggests that women should actively seek not only mentoring relationships but also a broadly based peer network in organizations.

Clawson and Kram's (1984) work discusses the problems presented by cross-gender mentoring and suggests strategies for managing those problems. Women and men need to become educated about these issues and strategies. Open discussion in the workplace about the new organizational dynamics is necessary for positive relationship development. Organizations wishing to establish and/or reward mentoring relationships should make the discussion of cross-gender mentorships an explicit part of their program.

Prospects for women

Increasing the access of women to successful mentoring relationships may improve their organizational success. If the mentors are women, an improved ability to deal with stress may be an additional benefit. For these reasons, women entering organizations now must be taught the teaching process so that they will become effective mentors for women who follow.

We personally see the introduction of large numbers of women in higher levels of organizations as an opportunity to create new corporate values and modes of interaction. There, therefore, seems to be a dilemma with respect to mentoring as follows. If one of its purposes is to teach the protege organizational values and norms, to which the protege must adapt for success, then how can the new corporate values

and modes of behaviour occur? One of the possibilities is the education of a generation of female business graduates who, in addition to the traditional business courses, are exposed to course material which challenges the organizational status quo. Ideally, these women would be provided with a framework in which to organize and evaluate their own corporate experience. This framework would enable them to understand what is necessary to succeed in a given organizational structure, and more importantly, to retain their own ideals of value and structure until they are in positions to effect change.

The strategies proposed in the preceding section are part of a framework for understanding what is necessary to succeed in a given organizational structure.

The agenda for research which follows seeks new understanding of the values and structures which women may strive for when they are in positions to effect change.

An agenda for research

1. More research attention must be devoted to examining the antecedents and consequences of mentoring. It is important to examine types of functions provided to proteges at each career stage. Do the functions desired from mentors (or provided by them) differ by gender? For men, the early years of adulthood coincide with early career stages. Women may differ in at least two ways. First, for some women, the early years of adulthood may be spent in the homemaker role, or in a traditional (sex-role appropriate) career or in low involvement careers. Second, women's careers are typified by later career selection, more frequent career interruptions and fewer advancement opportunities. Women in this pattern are likely to have later years of adulthood coincide with early career stages.

It is observed that the role of mentoring in career development may be different for women (Missirian, 1982). This is asserted because the relationship of age and career development are not as predictable for women (Bolton, 1980). One of the questions which occur to me concerns the typical 8–15 year age gap which Noe mentions as existing between mentor and protege. How feasible is this for middle aged

women reentering careers? Is there something about our conceptions of middle aged people that is at odds with our cultural expectations of a suitable protege? In addition, how can we adapt traditional notions of mentorship and its phases to careers interrupted by pregnancy and child care realities.

2. How available are mentorships to women? Morrison *et al.* (1987) reported from their study in the U.S. that 40% of the senior males who had mentored cited Equal Employment Opportunity Legislation as important to their willingness to mentor. Thus professional and managerial women in Canada may be disadvantaged because of the weaker legislation in our country.

3. What barriers have been experienced in mentorships? What barriers are unique to cross-gender mentorships? There are different levels of power and the male-female dynamic reflects a power inequity that is societal. In other words, the power differential of mentor/protege is work-related and the goal is to lessen it via the mentorship. However, in cross-gender mentorships this is confounded by the societal male/female power differential and whether the mentorship can overcome that is at question. Its presence may prevent the mentorship from working effectively unless male mentors explicitly understand this as an issue.

4. Attention must be paid to the mentorship process and cross-gender mentorships. Gilligan (1982), in discussing Jean Baker Miller's Analysis on relationships in Miller's book, *Toward a New Psychology of Women* (1976), notes that Miller defines one type of relationship which we believe mentoring fits. It is characterized by a temporary inequality in which power is used to foster the development that removes the original disparity. If mentoring relationships, (male mentor/female protege) exist in our society in which men dominate or have power over women in *many* types of relationships, does this render the purpose of the male/female mentorship contradictory? Can such relationships work *only* if they do not threaten other dominance/subordination relationships between men and women — that is, if women are not a threat? If so, then what is the *real* purpose of a mentoring relationship? Once again, we wonder, are peer relationships "a better fit" for women? We think the question we would really like answered is would women, if left to design/develop ways of working, create mentorships as we

currently know them in hierarchies, as a way of working and learning?

5. In what ways do male and female mentors differ? In what ways do male and female proteges differ? Gilligan (1982, p. 156) writes:

> Male and female voices typically speak of the importance of different truths, the former of the role of separation as it defines and empowers the self, the latter of the ongoing process of attachment that creates and sustains the human community.

If this is true, what are its implications for mentoring for women? Several researchers (Kram, 1983; Levinson et al., 1978; Phillips-Jones, 1982; Kram and Isabella, 1985) suggest that mentorships go through predictable phases and eventually end. If women know this, are they likely to seek this sort of relationship if, as Gilligan asserts, it is ongoing connectedness that they value? In relation to this, are peer relationships as described by Kram and Isabella more congruent with women's values? Noe (1988) hints at this issue when he asserts that women have a preference for interacting with others of similar status.

The fulfillment of psychosocial needs is cited as one of the benefits provided to proteges by mentoring relationships (Kram, 1983, 1985; Burke, 1984). Questions: Are women's psychosocial needs different from men's and if so, how? Can mentoring relationships fulfill women's psychosocial needs as well as such relationships fulfill them for men?

Noe (1988) asserts that one of the ways that the protege attracts the attention of a mentor is by outstanding job performance. If women are in the mentor role, will it be this attribute that will trigger them to begin relationships? That is, do women value this as much as the other factors Noe cites (similarity of interests or hobbies)? Gilligan's research suggests they would seek the personal rather than the power connection.

6. Characteristics of proteges who have benefited from mentoring relationships need to be investigated. What or who makes an effective mentor? Does this differ by gender of mentor and protege and by age and career stage of protege?

7. What are the potential benefits and limitations of mentorships for mentors?

8. What role is played by the broader organizational context (norms, culture) on mentorships? Does it matter, and if so, how, if the organization (or profession) is male-dominated, female-dominated, or mixed?

9. Do formalized mentor programs provide benefits for individuals and their organizations? What characterizes an effective formal mentoring program? Are there different models for creating an effective formal training program?

10. What factors explain the spontaneous formation of mentorships for men and for women?

11. Is the selection of a protege triggered by different factors for male mentors than for female mentors? Women may have unique difficulties in this regard. First, individuals generally feel more comfortable associating with others similar to them. Second, there may also be a tendency of people wishing to develop people like themselves to replace themselves. A way around mortality? Does this fulfill specific psychological needs? If this is a motivation to mentor it has negative implications for women as proteges — since they are not *like* the mentors.

12. Are there gender differences in the range of relationships with seniors, juniors and peers that can provide developmental functions?

13. What role do demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender) and attitudinal variables (attitudes toward competition, competence, authority, intimacy and learning) play in the mentoring process? Are there any gender differences?

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