Historical Working Papers   Cox School of Business

1-1-1980

Mentors & Managers

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Working Paper 80-103*

by

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"Perhaps this latest promotion was a bit unexpected but I don't think anyone would say that it is undeserved. I've more than met every job challenge they've given me, although I'm the first to admit I wouldn't have gotten the chance to be challenged without J.R.'s help." Andy Marks is commenting on his recent promotion from an Assistant Store Manager to Divisional Manager for a major Southwestern retailer. At 29 Andy is the youngest Divisional Manager in the company's history. He is regarded by higher-ups as a high potential young manager. Reflecting on his rapid rise, from entry level to just outside the exective suite in less than 7 years, Andy points to the influence of his "sponser," J.R., a vice-president. "J.R. hired me personally, and he's always taken a strong personal interest in my career, influencing the job assignments I was given, clueing me in to company politics, and counseling with me when I had problems. I wouldn't have gotten where I am nearly as fast without J.R.'s help. I sometimes think I might not have gotten here at all."

Matthew Smith is Assistant Vice President of a metropolitan Miami bank. At 31 he is the highest ranking black employee in the bank. "Being the first black to climb the career ladder here has been very tough. There is no one in the bank I can look to, to see how it's done. My white peers have lots of role models and examples they can follow like a road map to the top. I'm all alone out here -- no model, no map, just me -- most of the time I feel pretty lost."

Cynthia Laderman has just completed her MBA degree and joined a large insurance company as a claims supervisor. "I took a course in

Career Management my last semester at school, and I know that in a large company like this a mentor can be very helpful, not only as a guide, but someone to shine the spotlight on you every now and then, so you don't get lost in the shuffle. What I don't know is, how do I get a mentor? Do I just sit around and wait for someone to come up to me and say, 'I want to be your mentor?' Or maybe I should be the one who seeks out someone to be my mentor. Another thing that bothers me is that I think around here a mentor needs to be a man -- there aren't any women candidates -- I'm not sure how I feel about that. There are a lot of issues there. For something that seems so important to my career, I have to confess I'm pretty confused."

Ben Wheeler is a forty-seven year old manager. Ben is what the literature calls a "plateaued performer." He has reached that point in his career where he performs his present duties and responsibilities very capably, but he has been informed by management that he is "not promotable." Unwilling at his age to change careers or companies, Ben faces twenty years of doing exactly what he's doing now, and the prospect concerns him. "I'm not so worried about not being promoted -- hell, I can understand that the people coming in now seem better qualified than I am. What bothers me is wondering where the challenges are going to come from. I already know how to do what I'm doing, there's no excitement there and isn't likely to be in the future. What is there going to be to get me enthused about going to work each day? That worries me. They've tried to get me interested in giving more attention to developing the younger people in the organization. They've talked about

the challenge of coaching young people in their careers. I think that might be a good role for people like me, but how do I do it?

These four individuals, each of a different background, different organizational experience, and each at a different place in his or her career, all raise aspects of a topic which has become the focus of a great deal of current attention from individuals and organizations -- the role of mentors in career development. How important are mentors? Who has them? Who does not? How do you get a mentor? What does a mentor do? These questions are being asked, not only by those just entering careers or those looking for new dimensions in established careers, but by everyone who is seeking to more effectively manage his or her career. In order to better understand the role of mentoring in career management, this article will first examine the context in which mentor questions are raised; secondly, review responses to these questions, and finally turn attention to the implications for managers and management. The intent throughout is to explore the current state of theory and practice in mentoring.

There can be little doubt that interest in career development is at all time high. Since 1975, career development articles have become commonplace in the professional and practitioner journals. Organizations of every size and description actively seek advice and information on career development programs. Business schools have begun to offer courses and/or individual counseling and programming in career development and career management for students, alumni, and the community at large. The Graduate School of Business at Columbia University has

established a Center for Research in Career Development which has begun
publication of the first journal dedicated to the field, The Career
Development Bulletin.

Speculation on the cause of current interest in career development/
management issues has been diverse. One argument traces the interest to
the concerns of new entries into the management labor force, primarily
women and minorities who are openly vocal in asking, "How does one get
ahead here?" (Armstrong & Place, 1975; Harragan, 1977; Herbert & Yost,
1978). Another explanation of current interest in career development is
that it represents a natural extension into the work place of the themes
of what one social observer has termed the "Me Decade," and another the
"New Narcissism." Increasingly, organizational members value autonomy
and self-determination and seek to take control of their own organiza-
tional lives; to do so they aggresively seek career development informa-
tion and advice. Peter Drucker (1979) advances the alternative but com-
plementary view that demographics alone demand that potential executives
give greater attention to their own career development. In Drucker's
analysis, career development over the last 15 years was managed by the
co-influence of an expanding economy and a rapidly retiring executive
group. Organization growth and the resulting promotion opportunities
forced careers to develop. By contrast, current demographics will slow
career progress for those entering the job market as paths to rapid ad-
vancement are blocked by those with equal education who are only a lit-
tle older and who got there first. As Drucker argues:

> There is a need for them (new employees) to realize that they will have to take control of their own careers far more carefully than their older brothers and sisters. There will be little room for error. They will have to think through at each stage where they really belong; where their strengths can produce results and will be recognized and rewarded.
> (1979, p. 1)

The driving force behind current interest in career development may be the open questioning of new entries into the managerial labor force. Perhaps the source is to be found in the self-help, "me-first" motives and manners of the 1970's. Or, it may be that recognition of the realities of diminished career opportunities and the consequent need for greater care for one's career is the cause. Most probably each of these contemporary dynamics contributes to the current interest in career development. Whatever its source, most of the recent interest in career development has focused on the traditional practices and programs of the field (Career Development Bulletin, 1979):

° Education: in house, tuition aid programs; education leaves and incentives

° Career Counseling: assessment centers

° Manpower Planning & Forecasting: job skills; inventories; job enlargement/enrichment; job rotation; outplacement

° Life/Career Planning: life stages; alternative careers

Accompanying this interest in the traditional approaches to career development, have been a number of theory building efforts (Hall, 1976; Jelinek, 1979). Throughout the new and the old in career development, throughout the theories and practices, there is the recurrent issue of "mentors." Mentorism and mentoring has long been central to career

development theory, and mentoring has long been practiced, yet surprisingly little is known about this important career process. Borrowing from Greek legend and lexicon where Homer's "faithful and wise" Mentor advised Odysseus and was entrusted with the education of Telemachus, mentor has been broadly used to describe the teachers, guides, coaches, helpers, who contribute to an individual's development. Throughout the career development literature there is reference to the importance of mentor relationships (Jennings, 1971; Hall, 1976; Zaleznik, 1977; Schein, 1978; Hall, 1978). Upon examination of the literature, three general propositions emerge. These propositions may be said to comprise the "state of the art" vis a vis mentors and mentoring.

> Proposition 1: Successful managers usually have had a mentor or mentors, most often during the first five to seven years of their careers. It has been argued from this observation that those managers who desire to be successful should get a mentor.

A recent Harvard Business Review article bore the title, "Everyone Who Makes It Has A Mentor" (Collins & Scott, 1978). While the observation that "everyone who makes it has a mentor" may be an overstatement, it does capture the spirit of career development theory vis a vis mentors. The article is the latest in a line of anecdotal researches to report that mentor relationships are critical to career success (Jennings, 1971; Hall, 1976; Zaleznik, 1977). The conclusions of one author are representative of the view of these studies; "Psychological biographies of gifted people repeatedly demonstrate the important part a mentor plays in developing an individual. Mentors take risks with

people. They bet initially on talent they perceive in younger people, risking emotional involvement in working closely with their juniors," (Zaleznik, 1977, p. 76). It is noteworthy that these conclusions are consistent with the more general life-stage and adult development literature which points to the importance of mentor relationships in the development of young adults (Sheehy, 1976; Levinson, 1978).

The new interest in career development has led to empirical research on many issues that have heretofore had only anecdotal affirmation. The subject of mentors is one such issue. Recently Roche surveyed all the senior executives whose appointments were announced in the "Who's News" column of the Wall Street Journal during the year 1977 (Roche, 1979). These announcements are limited to chairmen and presidents of listed and actively traded unlisted companies and privately held companies of at least $100 million volume in sales; to executive, senior and group vice presidents and vice presidents of the nation's 500 largest industrial companies; and to officers with similar titles in the 15 to 25 largest organizations in non-industrial fields. Roche discovered that among this group of corporate leaders (a group that might be termed the "most successful of the successful" in career development) nearly two-thirds (63.5%) reported having mentors at some point -- most during the first five years of their careers.

In the face of such evidence it would appear that the conventional wisdom which has argued the value of mentors to young careerists is accurate and appropriate. Everyone should have a mentor!

Proposition 2: Mentors play a variety of roles in an individ-
ual's career -- it is not clear that any one
of these behaviors is more or less helpful
than any other.

Levinson writes of mentors, "The mentor is a mixture of parent and
peer. His primary function is to be a transitional figure in a man's
development," (Levinson, 1978). "Parent" and "peer" are only two of a
myriad of descriptions which have been and are used in discussing what
it is a mentor does. The list of mentor referents would certainly in-
clude role model, teacher, developer, coach, sponser, counselor, guide,
guardian, and, at the margins, terms such as godfather and guru. Each
of these descriptions evokes images of helping relationship. There is
no denying the variety of such relationships to be found in organiza-
tions, but to say that helping relationships are helpful is, in itself,
little help. More precision with regard to this proposition would be
desirable, but is not to be found in the career development literature.

Proposition 3: Becoming a mentor is a natural and desirable
career progression for mature managers. Just
as young careerists should have mentors, late
in an individual's career, he/she should be-
come a mentor.

The life-stages literature has long reported the emergence of a
mentorlike stage in the latter years of adult development. Jung spoke
of the Wise Man-Great Mother archetypes as nuturing and generative
(Jung, 1959). Erikson's "Generativity" crisis involves, in part, coming
to grips with the issue of developing others (Erikson, 1963). Gould
(1972) and Levinson (1978) in separate studies record a period of adult

development, roughly 45-55 years of age, wherein mentoring is a central concern. Specifically within the career development literature, Dalton, Thompson, & Price have identified the third of their four career stages as the "mentor stage" because of the "increased responsibility individuals in this stage begin to take for influencing, guiding, directing, and developing other people" (Dalton, Thompson, Price, 1977). Beyond observing mentoring as a stage which <u>does</u> occur in the latter years of an individual's career, there are those who argue prescriptively that careers may be rekindled through mentoring. There is the suggestion that managers who have perhaps plateaued in their own careers can respark their interest and drive by becoming mentors to younger managers (Connor & Feldmann, 1973; Kets deVries, 1978; Golembiewski, 1978). Thus it is argued, the role of mentor is a natural and desirable one for mature managers.

<center>THE PROBLEM</center>

These three propositions may constitute the state of the art, but in light of current interest in career development they raise more questions than they answer about mentors and mentoring in management. The key questions are implied in the issues included and excluded by the above propositions. These questions frame the exploratory research at hand.

1. <u>How much mentoring actually goes on in organizations?</u> As noted there are two prescriptions prevalent in the mentor literature: One, young managers should get mentors; two, older managers, who perhaps have

plateaued in their own careers, should become mentors. To the former group, the mentor relationship promises the guidance and counsel necessary to successfully climb the career ladder. To the latter group, the mentor relationship offers an opportunity to rekindle some of the challenge and commitment in a job that has become routine. The fact that these behaviors are prescribed is no assurance that they are present in organizations. Despite observations that most managers have a mentor in the early stages of their careers and are mentors in the latter stages of their careers, there is reason to suspect how much mentoring actually occurs. All of the research has been done on successful managers looking back on their early careers from a perspective as distant as 25 or 30 years. No attention has been directed toward organizational members (regardless of their success) who have mentors or toward those who are mentors. As a result, significant questions exist about just how much mentoring is actually going on in organizations today. How many young managers currently have mentors? How many senior managers currently are mentors?

2. Who has mentors? The conventional wisdom and current research argues that everyone who aspires to the higher rungs of the career ladder should have a mentor. Roche's study (1979) indicates 2/3 of those who reach the highest rungs report that they have had mentors. Does this mean that only "high potential" successful types have mentors? What about those whose careers plateau far below the highest career ladder rungs; did they/do they also have mentors? Do women in management have mentors? Some observers suggest that women do not have access to

mentors as readily as do men and this lack of access impedes their career progress (Thompson, 1976; Kanter, 1977; Hennig & Jardim, 1977; Scott 1978). Could the same be said for young minority managers? There is simply no data available on these important questions. Less than 1% of Roche's respondents were women and there is no minority data. Once again, the state of the art is rife with supposition and suggestion based on what is at best, questionable substance.

3. Who are the mentors? As important as knowing who has mentors is the companion question, "who are the mentors?" Beyond the general observation that mentoring is a role which comes late in an individual's career/life, little is known specificially about: Who and where mentors are in the organization (or outside of the organization); how they view their role and its relationship to their career; how mentors choose or are chosen by proteges.

4. How do mentors mentor? Several behaviors have been ascribed to the mentor role -- teacher, guide, sponsor, guardian, and others (Schein, 1978). These ascriptions have been drawn largely from anecdotal accounts of what this or that mentor did for this or that successful executive. Those who might be interested in finding out what a mentor might do for them or how they might be a mentor to others are left largely to their own devices. If mentoring is as prevalent as it is purported to be, it ought to be possible to determine with some precision what it is that mentors do, and perhaps which mentor behaviors are most helpful to career development.

4. Can mentoring be managed? If the mentor relationship is as important to career development as it has been argued to be by theorists,

can the mentoring process move from theory to technique? Can the mentoring process be managed and programmed in the way that other key career development processes are managed and programmed. Are there mentoring techniques which can be taught and fostered? In order to answer these questions it is necessary to complement responses to the questions noted above with information about the organizational contexts in which mentoring occurs. What do organizations do to stimulate or frustrate mentoring? Are mentors rewarded? How? Little research attention has been given to the management of mentoring as a process in career development, yet mentoring is continually presented as a key process in career development.

This article presents the results of a three-pronged exploratory study of mentors and mentoring. The above questions served as a point of departure. Information concerning the incidence of mentoring behaviors, the identification of mentors and their means, and the management of mentors was collected. The intent was to describe mentoring as it occurs and in so so doing to compare descriptive data with conventionally held concepts vis a vis mentors and mentoring. The methods and results of the survey are reported below.

METHODS OF ANALYSIS

The Sample

The population sampled included entry level managers with no more than seven years experience. In many organizations entry level managers are newly-hired recent college graduates. In some organizations this

entry level in management is the first promotional step beyond the supervisory ranks. The seven year experience boundary corresponds to the career stage where mentoring is most likely to occur and to have an impact on career development (Schein, 1978; Hall, 1976; Roche, 1979). Two sources of survey participants were sampled: (1) the entry level managers in a large retail department store organization (major department managers and assistant store managers); and (2) the participants in professional development seminars for bank managers (for the most part these respondents were managers of specific functions in medium to large banks). Using these sources of data, it was possible to gather data from a broad base of young careerists in two disparate organizational settings.

Questionnaires were distributed at group meetings, with envelopes allowing return directly to the researcher. A cover letter accompanying the survey insured anonymity and offered report of the results to participants if desired. The combined response was 231 out of 317 distributed (73%) with 219 usable responses, 101 retailers and 118 bankers. The characteristics of respondents are presented in Table 1.

Male respondents tended to be older and more experienced than female respondents with the exception of minority female retailers who were both older and more experienced than their male counterparts. Both male and female bankers were older and more experienced than male and female retailer respondents. All respondents fell within the parameters established in the design of the research, i.e. managers in the first seven years of their career. There were no minority female banker respondents.

TABLE 1

CHARACTERISTICS OF MENTOR RESPONDENTS

Respondents (n)	Age	Experience
All male respondents (119)	31.3 years	4.9 years
Male bankers (82)	32.7	5.5
Minority male bankers (19)	31.4	4.8
Male retailers (37)	28.1	3.6
Minority male retailers (3)	24.5	2.5
All female respondents (100)	28.9	3.8
Female Bankers (36)	32.8	4.2
Female retailers (64)	26.7	3.6
Minority female retailers (8)	27.1	3.2
All minority respondents (30)	29.6	4.4
All respondents	30.2	4.4

The small number of minority respondents is a cause for caution in reviewing the statistical presentations which follow. Were it not for the paucity of minority data available in the literature, rigorous analysis would suggest the exclusion of these responses. They are included here as a point of interest precisely because so little minority data is available. They are not intended to be represented as conclusive.

Survey Design

The survey included five sections on various dimensions of mentors and mentoring. Questions were asked on the following topics:

°   Respondent race, sex, age, time in career

°   Incidence of respondents' receipt of mentor behavior

°   Description of mentors

°   Description of how the mentor relationship came to be

°   Identification of the mentor behavior that was perceived to

      be most helpful

Subsequent to administration of the survey, one-sixth of the participants (36) were selected by random draws for interviews. The purpose of these open-ended interviews was to gather anecdotal data and to identify specific individuals in the organization who were seen as mentors. From those so mentioned, one-sixth (15) were selected by random draw to be interviewed about their mentoring activities and their role as mentors in the organizations.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The following sections provide a desciption and analysis of the survey results and the interviews.

The Incidence of Mentoring. Typical empirical researches into mentor relationships define the concept in very general terms, "a person who took a personal interest in your career" (Roche, 1979). Yet in the broader, theoretical literature, several specific activities are ascribed to mentors -- teaching, modelling, challenging, protecting, and others. The study asked if respondents had been the recipient of these specific activities. Table 2 registers respondent's perceptions of the seven mentor behaviors, in their own career experience.

Table 2

Distribution of Responses on Experience of Mentor Behaviors

	% reporting no mentor behaviors	% reporting "a person who has taught"	% reporting "a person who set a good example"	% reporting "a person who gave challenging work"	% reporting "a person who fought upstairs"	% reporting "a person who protected"	% reporting "a person who gave exposure to higher-ups"	% reporting "a person whose own success helped"
LE SPONDENTS	10.9 (13)	51.1	62.3	77.1	72.3	55.3	65.7	36.2
Bankers		58.3	66.7	75.0	62.5	58.3	79.2	48.7
Minority bankers		14.2	57.1	57.14	57.14	42.8	42.8	14.3
Retailers		57.1	52.8	85.7	92.3	64.3	52.8	28.6
Minority retailers		33.3	66.7	100.0	100.0	0	100.0	0
ALE SPONDENTS	14.0 (14)	83.6	86.8	78.9	71.1	44.7	48.7	21.6
Bankers		71.4	78.6	78.6	71.4	50.0	42.8	27.3
Retailers		95.2	90.5	76.2	66.7	42.8	47.6	23.6
Minority retailers		87.5	87.5	87.5	100.0	33.3	100.0	0
RITY PONDENTS	17.2 (5)	41.6	66.7	76.9	76.9	33.3	59.8	8.3
PONDENTS	12.3 (27)	63.9	65.5	77.7	72.4	48.5	58.8	27.1

16

Table 2 indicates the prevalence of mentor behaviors in the respondents' organizations. Only 12.3% of the respondents reported having no experience of any of the seven mentor behaviors. This response was slightly more descriptive of young minority careerists than of majority careerists but not significantly so. Of the 87.7 percent who reported experiencing mentor behaviors, all reported experiencing more than one of the behaviors. It may be important to underscore the point that the concern here is with mentor behaviors exhibited in relationships. There are cues to behaviors (mentors' in that sense) to be found in religious role models, spiritual guides and philosophical ideals that exist apart from any specific relationship. In the strictest construction it cannot be said that one who experiences no mentoring behaviors is not mentored.

Distribution of experience with the seven mentor behaviors varied widely from a high of 86.8% of the female respondents reporting "a person who set a good example" to a low of only 8.3 percent of the minority respondents reporting "a person whose personal success helped to insure your success." Two mentor behaviors were widely experienced by respondents. Nearly three-fourths of male and female respondents reported "a person who gave challenging work" and "a person who fought upstairs." Similar percentages, 77.7 percent and 72.4 percent, describe the experience of minority respondents with these behaviors.

Two behaviors were experienced by nearly two-thirds of the group, but for each of these behaviors there were differences in the reported experiences of men, women, and minority respondents. Eighty-three percent of the women respondents reported "a person who taught you a lot

about how to do things on the job," but only half of the men (51.1 per-
cent) reported experiencing this teaching behavior; and, when grouped
for race, only 41.6 percent of minority respondents were affirmative. A
similar distribution pattern describes respondents' experience of "a
person who set a good example" -- women 86.8 percent, men 62.3 percent,
minority, 66.7 percent. Two mentor behaviors were experienced by ap-
proximately half of the respondents, "protection" and "exposure to
higher-ups," although in the case of the minority respondents protection
was one of the mentor behaviors least experienced. Finally, there was
only one mentor behavior not experienced by at least half of any one re-
spondent group. Fewer than one-third of the respondents reported their
careers being aided by the personal success of someone else. Among mi-
nority respondents, fewer than one-tenth (8.3 percent) reported this be-
havior.

The data from Table 2 suggests that young careerists experience a
great deal of mentoring behavior in organizations. Earlier studies
(Roche, 1979) with older, more experienced respondents have indicated
that nearly two-thirds of the successful executives have had a mentor or
sponsor. This data suggests that the number of young careerists who ex-
perience mentor behaviors is nearer to 80 percent. This apparrent dis-
crepancy may be explained in part by the focus in the present study on
specific behaviors associated with mentorship as opposed to the broader,
more traditional "did you have a mentor or sponsor" line of inquiry.
Further explanation may be found in the time lag which has accompanied
most mentor research. The specific effects of another's behavior on

one's own career may dim as one grows older. An additional qualifier is that previous studies have focused on "successful managers" experience whereas the present data describes the experiences of young managers without any attempt to identify whether or not they are "successful." It may be that "successful" managers experience less mentoring, or at least report less mentoring, than do young managers in general.

There is clearly a lot of mentoring behavior going on in organizations, but the specific behaviors that any one individual may experience are likely to be quite different from the way another is mentored. There is evidence in Table 2 to suggest that at least two points of differentiation may be sex and race. Table 3 represents a ranking of mentor behaviors based on the percentage of respondents experiencing each behavior. From such an ordering, it is possible to suggest the kinds of mentor behaviors most likely to be experienced by young male careerists, young female careerists, and young minority careerists (although with much less confidence due to the small number of respondents).

Young men and young minority careerists are most likely to experience someone who challenges them, forces them to push themselves and fights upstairs for them. Young women careerists report most frequent experience with mentors in the organization who set a good example or teach them a lot about how to do things on the job. This is in sharp contrast to reports from males and minority respondents of their experience with teachers. No group of respondents reported frequent experience with a person whose own personal success helped to insure their success. There appears to be very little "coattail" mentoring in organizations.

TABLE 3

Ranking by Percentage of Respondents
Experiencing the Mentor Behaviors

	MALE RESPONDENTS (%)		FEMALE RESPONDENTS (%)		MINORITY RESPONDENTS (M & F (%)		ALL RESPONDENTS (%)	
1	challenger	(77.1)	good example	(86.8)	challenger	(76.9)	challenger	(77.7)
2	fought upstairs	(72.3)	teacher	(83.6)	fought upstairs	(76.9)	fought upstairs	(72.4)
3	exposure to higher-ups	(65.7)	challenger	(78.9)	good example	(66.7)	good example	(65.5)
4	good example	(62.3)	fought upstairs	(71.1)	exposure to higher-ups	(59,8)	teacher	(63.9)
5	protects	(55.3)	exposure to higher-ups	(48.7)	teacher	(41.6)	exposure to higher-ups	(58.8)
6	teacher	(51.1)	protector	(44.7)	protector	(33.3)	protector	(48.5)
7	successful	(36.2)	successful	(21.6)	successful	(8.3)	successful	(27.1)

One observation suggested by the data in Tables 2 and 3 is the difference between what might be termed implicit/passive mentorship and explicit/active mentorship. In implicit/passive mentorship, there is no need for the mentor to alter his/her organizational behavior in order to act as a mentor. Mentoring occurs as a natural by-product of one's normal behavior in the organization, often without formal acknowledgement of the mentor-mentee relationship and without specific intentions or desired outcomes. Providing a good example and teaching are implicit/ passive mentorship behaviors. Identifying teaching as a "passive" behavior will no doubt raise many objections, many of which are legitimate. However, much learning in organizations is attributed to individuals who have little intention to "teach" and little awareness of themselves as "teachers." They simply "do" and if others decide to "do likewise" and view it as teching/learning then so be it. The impact of these passive teachers is no less substantial on young careerists.

Explicit/active mentorship acknowledges awareness and intention on the part of the mentor. There is an awareness of the mentor-mentee relationship and an acknowledged intent to affect the careers of mentees in specific ways. This awareness and intent leads to such active interventions as challenging young careerists with work assignments, fighting upstairs for them, exposing them to higher-ups, protecting them, and bringing them along in the wake of one's own career success.

Women respondents reported greater experience with implicit/passive mentorship than did male and minority respondents, but about the same experience with explicit/active mentorship. It may be that women are

more attuned to the subtle modes and messages of passive mentors than are men -- either because they seek harder for mentoring or simply find more mentoring behaviors.

These data suggest some preliminary responses to questions raised earlier. It is evident that there is a great deal of mentoring experienced by young careerists, male, female, majority and minority, even more than previous ex post facto investigations have suggested. It is also clear that not everyone is "mentored" in the same way. The data are suggestive but not conclusive with regard to the relationship between sex and race and the specific mentor behaviors experienced.

Characteristics of Mentors. Respondents in the study were asked several questions about their mentors -- their age, experience, position in the organization. The study also attempted to determine how many mentors respondents had had and the influence of organizational mentors on career relative to influence by those outside the organization.

Table 4 registers the characteristics of mentors as reported by respondents. It is evident that there are significant differences in the age and experience of mentors in banks and those in retail organizations. These age-experience differences in mentors may be reflective of differences in age and experience throughout respondents' organizations. All mentors were reported to be white; however in banking they are predominantly male -- exclusively so for male and minority respondents -- whereas in retailing, mentors were reported to be predominantly female. This may be explained by the frequency with which mentors are reported to be "Immediate Superior" or "Superior, one level or function removed."

TABLE 4

Characteristics of Mentors

Mentor Characteristics Respondents	Age	Yrs. Exp.	Race[a]	Sex	Pos.[b]
Bankers					
Male	48.6	14.9	100% white	100% male	53.6%IS 47.4%S
Female	42.6	13.2	100% white	76.2 male 23.8 female	63.4%IS 24.8%S 11.8%P
Minority	51.3	25.4	100% white	100% male	83.1%IS 13.5%S 3.4%P
Retailers					
Male	34.1	7.5	100% white	37.5 male 62.5 female	79.3 IS 11.6 S 9.1 P
Female	33.7	7.8	100% white	18.7 male 81.3 female	64.7 IS 24.8 S 10.5 P
Minority	30.1	5.5	100% white	32.3 male 67.7 female	81.4 IS 14.7 S 3.9 P

[a]Alternative responses were: black ___,Mexican American ___, White ___, other ___.

[b]Alternative responses were: Immediate Superior ___, Superior (not immediate, i.e. one level removed or another function) ___, Peer ___.

Given the recruitment and career patterns in retail organizations, young men are likely to have a woman as a superior early in their careers in retailing. This is not likely to be the case in banking.

The profile of a mentor that emerges from banking respondents is consistent with the conventionally held view of mentors -- middle aged men, experienced and in organizational positions that give them the opportunity to affect young peoples' careers. A very different profile of a mentor is revealed in retailers' responses -- relatively young females with some experience, in positions to affect young peoples' careers. It may be that mentoring is as much a function of an individual's position in the organization as it is a function of personal style. If this is the case, there are probably operational limits to the extent of which plateaued managers can be encouraged to discover new dimensions of their lives and careers as mentors.

Tables 5 and 6 present additional data relevant to the characteristics of mentors. Of those respondents who reported having mentors, nearly two-thirds report having two or more mentors. Most female and minority respondents identified three mentors at this early point in their careers. The percentage reporting multiple mentors is considerably higher than has been reported in other studies (Roche, 1979). Here again, it may be the case that the older respondents surveyed in other studies have altered their perception of how influential they felt some people to be early on in their careers; the examination of a phenomenon as it occurs is often at odds with reports of a phenomenon as it is remembered. An alternative explanation is that young careerists are more

sensitive to the importance of mentors today and therefore seek more mentor relationships and behaviors.

TABLE 5

Number of Mentors Per Respondent

	One Mentor %	More Than One % (Mode)	
Respondents			
Male	39.1	60.9	(2)
Female	28.9	71.1	(3)
Minority	41.7	58.3	(3)
All	35.4	64.6	(2)

TABLE 6

Frequency of Mentors Outside the Organization

	Percentage Reporting Someone Outside the Org. As "More Helpful" Than Anyone Inside	Relationships Most Frequently Mentioned
Male	21.3	Former Employer Friend Relative (Father, Brother)
Female	15.8	Friend Husband, Lover
Minority	27.6	Former Employer Wife Family
All	19.8	

Table 6 presents data which suggest that for most young careerists, mentors will be found inside their organization. For those who do find someone outside the organization "more helpful" it is most likely to be: a former employer, a friend, or member of the family.

Managing Mentoring. In order to generate information about how the mentor process might best be managed, the study attempted to identify the mentor behaviors that young managers deemed to be most helpful and to discover how their mentor relationships come about. Respondents were asked to identify the mentor behavior which they felt had been most helpful in their career. Table 7 records the four behaviors most frequently mentioned by each group of respondents.

It is curious to note that the behavior deemed "most helpful" by respondents, "Successful Leader," -- one whose own success helped to insure your success -- is the behavior least often experienced by young careerists. There can be little question as to why respondents see "coattailing" as a major career assist, but there are serious questions about the extent to which an organization can or ought to encourage this particular mentor behavior. The line between "coattailing" and "playing favorites" is very thin; when crossed it is usually detrimental to morale throughout the organization. A more reasoned and reasonable tack might be for organizations to encourage mentor behaviors which challenge young careerists, which force them to push themselves both of which are deemed helpfull.

The mentors interviewed had some interesting responses to the desired mentor behaviors as expressed by young managers. A senior bank

TABLE 7

"Most Helpful" Mentor Behaviors

Desired Behaviors by Frequency of Response

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	All other responses
Male	Succesful Leader[1]	Challenger[2]	Good Example[3]	Fought Upstairs[4]	Account for less than 15%
Female	Challenger	Good Example	Teacher	Successful Leader	Account for less than 20%
Minority	Succesful Leader	Exposed to Higher-ups	Fought Upstairs	Challenger	Account for less than 10%
All	Succesful Leader	Challenger	Good Example	Fought Upstairs	Account for less than 20%

Note: 1. "Successful Leader" = a person whose own personal success helped to insure your success

2. "Challenger" = a person who gave you challenging work, forced you to push yourself

3. "Good Example" = a person you were able to learn from by watching him/her

4. "Fought Upstairs" = a person who made sure you were given growth producing assignments

27

manager, reflecting on his role as a mentor, commented: "I am aware, as I think my collegues are, of the importance of giving young people challenging work -- work that really stretches them. Frankly, the problem in doing that is that there just isn't that much challenging work to go around. I sometimes think we overhire; we get all these bright hard-charging MBA's and have no where for them to charge to. The brighter they are, the harder it is to challenge them; and at the level they come in, the work is just not that challenging. What I try to do is help them see the subtle challenges in the work there is to do. If you know your people _very_ well, their abilities and limits, you can sometimes find challenges for them even in the mundane."

A retailing VP also explained the difficulty in "challenging," but from quite a different perspective. "I can see the value in giving challenging work as a means to develop young managers, but most of the really challenging work around here is in areas where we can't afford to make mistakes; the risks are simply too high to use it as a learning experience for someone. When my neck is on the line for some project and it is _always_ on the line, I'd be a fool to use the project to challenge the young people who work for me. Hopefully, they see me being challenged and learn from that; we can't afford to get too caught up in challenging them."

As one executive interviewed noted, "It really doesn't matter much how _they want_ to be mentored. The simple truth is the easiest way to mentor is to try to be a good example and maybe do a little teaching when you get a chance. Most of us are so concerned with our own careers

that we can't give a whole lot of attention to helping someone else with his career. It just has to "sort of happen."

These excerpts from interviews with mentors present a rather pessimistic view of the mentor process in organizations. There is a prevailing sense that if it happens, it happens, but no one works very hard making it happen. If this is true how do mentor relationships come about? How do they proceed? Table 8 presents respondents' perceptions of how they became involved with a mentor. There is no clear pattern of initiation in the mentor relationships reported. Young women seem most likely to find their mentors in assigned superior-subordinate relationships. The minority respondents were most active in seeking out mentors. With these patterns as possible exceptions, mentor relationships appear to come about in a variety of ways. This general observation is

TABLE 8

The Origins of Mentor Relationships

Atlernative Initiations of Mentor Relationship

Respondents	Mentor is/was assigned superior	Mentor was sought	Mentor sought relationship
Male	38.7%	22.6%	35.5%
Female	48.4%	29.0%	22.6%
Minority	28.3%	53.5%	18.2%
All	45.2%	25.8%	29.0%

supported by mentors themselves as they describe the circumstances and actions giving rise to their mentorships.

"I never look for people to mentor. It seems to me to be a part of my job to further the careers of those who work for me; so, when I help them, I'm just doing my job." This statement from a retailing manager was echoed by many in retailing and banking alike and seems to be prevailing sentiment among mentors. Two statements are reflective of less widely held views among mentors of how their relationships with proteges came about. A bank manager noted, "Once you get a reputation as someone who will listen or help, there's no end to the numbers of people who come to you. You don't have to look for someone to mentor. I have the sense that they're out there anxiously waiting for a sign that someone is willing to help."

Another banker described his more direct approach. "I think senior managers are obliged to look down into the organization and identify those young people with unusual potential,then we should take a personal interest in their career progress. I seek out people to coach, to be a mentor to, and I know most of the other senior managers around here do the same thing."

When questioned as to how mentor-protege relationships were sustained, those mentors interviewed were nearly unanimous in their opinion that the rewards for mentoring were personal -- there are no organizational rewards. The comments of a retail manager are representative of many mentors interviewed. "I act as a mentor because I like to do it, not because my job requires it or my organization rewards it -- the

benefits are entirely personal. The company puts out the standard line about our responsibility to develop young people to further their careers, but it's largely lip service. I say that because we receive no training in developing others, it's not a part of my performance review, and the only way the organization acknowledges that I have developed someone is when he is transfered out from under me. Rather than being rewarded for mentoring, I am punished; I lose a good employee and have to start all over with someone new."

Despite the apparent importance of mentoring in the development of young careerists, it appears that the initiation and sustainment of mentor-protege relationships is left largely to individuals with few or no organizational incentives. There are a very few organizations which have instituted formal mentor programs (Cooke, 1979) although none of the organizations participating in this study do so. Such formal legitimation of mentoring is clearly the exception rather than the rule. This observation has important implications for the way in which mentoring in managed by individuals, mentors and proteges alike, and by organizations. These implications, when taken in concert with those which emerge from other data in the study, present a picture of mentoring quite different from that commonly held in the literature.

IMPLICATIONS

This study represents an attempt to answer important operational questions about mentoring which arise from key propositions vis a vis mentoring in the career development literature and research. The

conclusions and implications to be drawn from the study can be framed in terms of these questions.

How much mentoring actually goes on in organizations? The study reveals that much more mentoring occurs in organizations than has previously been argued and discovered in other researches. Three methodological features of the study may account for these differences. One, this study represents one of the first attempts to measure mentoring as young careerists are being mentored rather than retrospectively, as successful executives look back on their early careers from a distance of 20-30 years. Two, the study focused on young managers without regard for their success. Previous studies have focused on successful managers. Three, the focus on mentoring behaviors is more revealing of the frequency of mentoring experienced by young careerists than is the more common focus on a sponsor or mentor. In this regard, the study revealed that some mentor behaviors, notably teaching, setting a good example, and challenging, are engaged in much more frequently than others such as protecting and coattailing. This raises an important question for further research: "What mentor behaviors contribute most to the development of young careerists?"

Who has mentors? In general mentoring behaviors are experienced by over 80 percent of the young managers in organizations. It appears that women and minority careerists are just as likely to be mentored as are men (the small minority sample needs to be considered as an important qualifier here). This is not to say that men, women and minorities will experience the same kind of mentoring. Women seem more attuned to

implicit/passive mentoring behaviors, whereas male respondents most often report experience with explicit/active mentoring. Nearly 20 percent of the respondents reported experiencing no mentoring behaviors whatsoever. An important question for future research is to identify who are the people who are not "mentored," why are they not, and what are the consequenses for their careers?

Who are the mentors? The results of this study present a picture of mentors that is somewhat at odds with the stereotype. Mentors are generally believed to be older, experienced employees who are in positions from which they can affect young peoples' careers. For those respondents from banking organizations this stereotype is an accurate one; their mentors were most often white, middle-aged, male superiors with 15 or more years of experience. In the retailing organization, the mentor profile was quite different -- female, 30-35 years of age, with 7-10 years of experience. The common element in both profiles is that most often mentors are the proteges' superiors, either immediate or one level or function removed. This being true, the difference in mentor profiles may be explained in part by the large number of young females in positions of responsibility in retailing, a condition not true of banking organizations. It is clear that young careerists look upward in the organization for mentoring; whoever is above, male or female, young or middle-aged, has the opportunity to mentor if they so choose. An arena for further study is a comparison of the mentoring behavior and consequences for proteges' careers of younger vs. older mentors, female vs. male, inexperienced vs. experienced.

How do mentors mentor? Mentors choose among implicit/passive be-
haviors — providing a good example, teaching -- and explicit/active be-
haviors -- protecting, challenging. The data suggests that giving chal-
lenging work assignments and forcing proteges to push themselves is the
most frequently experienced behavior followed closely by fighting up-
stairs, setting a good example, and teaching. These behaviors are en-
gaged primarily in the context of assigned superior-subordinate rela-
tionships. It is a much less frequent occurence for mentors to seek out
proteges or vice versa. This suggests that most mentors mentor within
their normal work relationships, mentoring outside the network of one's
job is the exception. This observation raises important questions about
the management of mentoring in organizations.

Can mentoring be managed? There is reason to ask a prior question
here -- "Should mentoring be managed?" It is evident that quite a lot
of mentoring goes on, in one form or another, without any formalized
training, attention to structuring mentor relationships, or providing
organizational rewards for mentoring. Should it be any different? The
question must be answered by indivdual organizations as they consider
their own career development needs and patterns. Conditions such as
high managerial turnover, the inability to fulfill positions of respon-
sibility from within, the prevalence of early career plateaus, all may
be reasons to examine the conduct and consequences of mentoring. If
there is general satisfaction with these and other dimensions of career
development, there is probably little motivation or merit to managing
mentoring. However, where these conditions cause concern, there is

reason to explore improved management of mentoring. Areas of exploration in such an effort would include: (1) identification of mentor behaviors that are most helpful to career development in the target organization; (2) identification of the most effective mentors; (3) training of mentors to be effective; (4) attention to mentor-protege relationships in job assignments; (5) providing organizational rewards for mentors. It may be that the degree and nature of mentoring needed and available in organizations is a function of identifiable organizational characteristics such as stability, leadership style, and technology. At present there is little evidence to suggest that organizations give any systematic attention to these questions in the management of mentoring.

CONCLUSION

As individual attention to career development increases, and there are ample social and economic indicators to suggest that it will, mentor relationships are likely to become increasingly important. This exploratory study has attempted to update the descriptive context of mentoring -- how much, who, how. The next step forward in the field will address prescriptive questions such as: What should be the relationship between mentoring and career development? What mentoring behaviors are most effective? Why? Which mentors are most effective? Why? With the descriptive data currently available, the field is adequately prepared to raise and research these important prescriptive issues.

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