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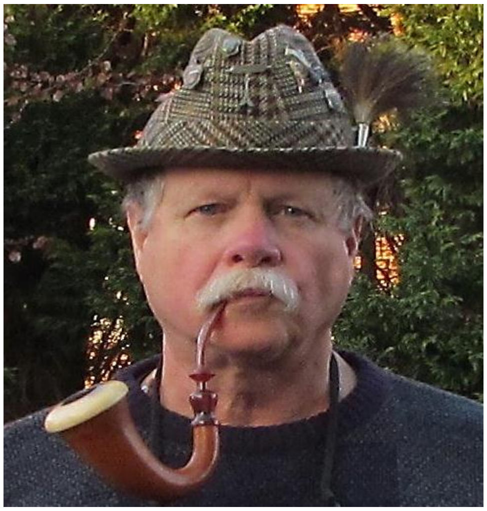

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MENTORING: ADDING VALUE TO ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Given that leadership is value-based and relationship-permeated,[1] *one asks how leaders can transfer personal and organizational value to employees. One answer to this is through mentoring.*

Mentoring young or inexperienced workers is an investment in the future of business, the school system, organizations, etc. Understanding this idea is difficult because current mentoring research demonstrates that mentoring is more convoluted than was once thought.

This article will make an effort to untangle some of this research and then suggest a "common sense" and "practical" definition of "mentoring." This is a definition that can be used in large and small businesses, in churches, schools, and by community organizations. In our conclusion, we summarize the research examined:

- *The characteristics of a mentor*
- *The characteristics of a mentor-protégé relationship*
- *A description of the mentoring process*
- *A simple definition of "mentoring" that is widely applicable*

INTRODUCTION

A philosophy of leadership succession lies in the background of any successful organization. Thus, prior to any statement about "mentoring" are assumptions about the culture of which it is a part. Psychologist E. Paul Torrance[2] mentioned the importance of organizational culture to mentoring when he said, "What is cultivated in a culture is developed there." He pointed to leadership as a mentoring process in which one's peers and superiors (or leaders) take it upon themselves to cultivate a mentoring culture and therein develop, motivate, guide, and even protect emerging young minds in their push to achievement.

The *leader as mentor*, no matter what the level within the organization, is charged with contributing to creative achievement. The mentor-protégé relationship, without the support of the culture of which it is a part, hangs on the slender thread of personal relationships and individual commitment only. Mentoring, to be affective, cannot be an island unto itself.

Understanding that leadership is relationship-based, businessman and leadership advisor H. Darrell Young[3] says that the leader is charged with cultivating relationships, engineering change, and directing people. He says this is accomplished by empowering and enabling, teaching and consulting, and coaching those in the leader's charge.

Interestingly, Higgins and Kram[4] (study #3 below) provided a *social network theory* to explain the relationship of protégés and the mentoring environment. They made clear that mentoring involves a constellation of "multiple relationships." This idea is emphasized by Torrance and Young and enriched by Haggard, et al.[5] under the topic of "boundary conditions."

According to Higgins and Kram these conditions include: (a) the mentor's place within the organization hierarchy, (b) supervisory versus nonsupervisory mentoring, (c) inside versus outside mentoring, and (d) the level of intimacy between the mentor and protégé. These are cultural conditions which imply that the attitudes, work ethic, and ethical behaviors of both mentor and protégé are preconditions for these relationships to work smoothly.

This deepens the idea that mentoring is indeed a responsibility of a values-based leader seeking to add human capital to his or her organization. It strengthens both vertical and horizontal relationships within the corporate culture as the mentor-protégé relationship is not an indiscriminate one-way flow of information, advice, and ultimate reward.

Over the past quarter century, mentoring research has made steady progress; yet, researchers have remained troubled because of its qualitative nature with outcomes that have been demonstrated as potentially spurious. Kammeyer-Mueller and Judge[6] (study #1 below) have reviewed much of this research. Intuitively they concluded that mentoring has substantial effects on job and career satisfaction, but that other variables such as core self-evaluations, tenure, and education have even stronger effects on career outcomes. Isolating and determining the effects of these related variables remains an ongoing task. The magnitude and diversity found in mentoring practices cushioned by differences found in corporate cultures makes assessment difficult.

Especially important to mentoring research is agreeing on a definition of "mentoring." This becomes increasingly critical when estimating the effects of mentoring on job success and productivity. Haggard, et al. found at least forty variations of mentoring in their search. They noted that "the mentoring literature reflects a wide range in the percentage of people who *self-identify* as protégés," and suggested that an examination of how mentoring is defined may be beneficial as the research is plagued by vagueness and ambiguity. This has led many researchers to construct their own definition ("theoretical postulate") and examine its applications in the workplace. Facing these difficulties Haggard, et al. concluded,

> *However, to understand the construct of mentoring we need to evaluate the definitions provided to research participants to determine whether we are measuring the same construct across studies.*

CURRENT MENTORING PRACTICES AND THE DIFFICULTY OF DEFINING "MENTORING"

Overview

In his editorial in the *Journal of In-Service Education*, Tony Bates[7] references the vagueness of mentoring research, but remains convinced that mentoring is an essential part of professional development. He laments that mentoring has been subject to constant and unrelenting change making an empirical examination of current mentoring practices difficult to synthesize and quantify. Georgia Chao[8] is in agreement as she challenges current mentoring research and points out, "Empirical studies claiming to examine mentoring have often not specified what mentoring is." This reflects Haggard, et al.'s assessment and draws attention to the problem that the variety of mentoring practices in the workplace is a dilemma that beleaguers researchers.

A mentoring relationship is an inherently dyadic and complex process, with the mentor and the protégé each enacting different roles and responsibilities in the relationship.

To understand mentoring or an organization's mentoring culture, Chao recommends examining the complex relationships that make up various business cultures and the mentoring environment. These include relationships involving sponsors, guides, peer pals, and supervisory affiliations. Special attention should be given value- and relationship-based leadership, which Higgins and Kram have stressed. It also reminds those examining mentoring that mentoring should never be random only, but advanced by corporate culture and steered toward protégé development. Important to this assessment is that researchers should never underestimate the values, motives, and attitudes of individuals, either mentors or protégés.

Recognizing this predicament, Allen, Eby, O'Brien, and Lentz[9] have suggested that additional research needs to be developed on the capabilities and practices of mentors. They point out,

> ***…a mentoring relationship is an inherently dyadic and complex process, with the mentor and the protégé each enacting different roles and responsibilities in the relationship.***

This need is underscored by Carmin[10] who shares I. A. Barnier's[11] insight: "The defining characteristic of a mentor is the significant nature of the involvement the mentor has with the total development of that individual." Carmin discovered that mentors and protégés also report different benefits as well as costs in a mentoring relationship. Data from both perspectives is needed to fully understand a mentoring relationship or a mentoring culture.

Carmin is convinced that a "mentoring relationship occurs in a learning context and is a continuing, one-to-one relationship between an older and/or more experienced individual and a younger and/or less experienced person." This echoes Kram's[12] conclusions in her earlier foundational study. These are not empty generalizations, as they are based on an examination of the culture in which mentoring has evolved, provide direction for future research as well as a guide for those who are involved in this important task. These generalizations dance on the delicate thread of the mentor-protégé relationship.

Yet, to say that *mentoring is a one-on-one relationship* is questionable and unproductive as Haggard, et al. have pointed out:

> ***Although an individual might receive mentoring functions from a variety of people, it is possible that none of those relationships meet the standard for being considered a mentoring relationship, depending on how mentoring is defined.***

It is apparent that many researchers have used proposed definitions, constructs, and theoretical propositions that they claim are definitive of "mentoring." These have been created from a careful study of mentoring practices and the researcher's own experience and insights. Theoretical constructs indeed influence research and have the tendency to re-direct it in prescribed ways.[13] These constructs become problematic when an effort is made to apply them across business and organizational cultures without regard to the adaptations found there. Researchers must guard against creating rather than discovering the reality that they seek.[14]

To advance a theoretical model that doesn't take into account corporate culture creates a more than usual limited stereotypical view of mentoring. If organizational culture is left outside the corridors of explanation and intuitive constructs are tested only, those involved in theoretical research are getting only a partial view of a larger observable situation.

If coaching, teaching, and supervising are included in the definition of mentoring, then the concept of mentoring remains beleaguered by ambiguity because of the difficulty of assessing an endless number of covariates.

DEFINING "MENTORING" ISSUES AND DIFFICULTIES

Chosen at random, the definitions of "mentoring" were reviewed from several Internet sites as a first step to confirm the validity that "mentoring" is not a constant across business and organizational cultures. As was expected, discovered definitions of "mentoring" revealed the problems mentioned above.

- Management Mentors[15] distinguishes between coaching and mentoring and comment, "People often confuse coaching and mentoring. Though related, they are not the same. A mentor may coach, but a coach does not mentor. Understanding the definition of mentoring is crucial. Mentoring is 'relational,' coaching is 'functional.'

Avoiding this apparent semantics debate, one can agree that coaching often involves evaluating, which further confuses isolating and defining the mentoring process. Also, pointing to mentoring as advising or counseling, related to the psychosocial skills needed in the workplace, and coaching, as that of developing particular skills through instructing, teaching, or training is an important distinction. This is not to say that a mentor cannot wear two hats — one as coach and one as advisor — and very often coaches become advisors to those whom they teach. It is only to stress that these are different behaviors and have different purposes and are best kept separate when seeking a definitive mentoring concept.

- How To Guides[16] (HTG) provides the following general definition:
  Mentoring is about one person helping another to achieve something. More specifically, something that is important to them. It is about giving help and support in a non-threatening way, in a manner that the recipient will appreciate and value and that will empower them to move forward with confidence towards what they want to achieve. Mentoring is also concerned with creating an informal environment in which one person can feel encouraged to discuss their needs and circumstances openly and in confidence with another person who is in a position to be of positive help to them.

This definition has promise but becomes muddled when HTG included coaching as a part of the mentoring process: "Professional coaches need to be coached using an ongoing coaching relationship with a mentor/coach…clients do not trust the coaching relationship with a coach who is not actively being coached." HTG seems to stress the creation of an organizational mentoring culture, but in an organization where everyone or nearly everyone is a mentor/coach, empirical testing becomes challenging, especially when trying to isolate the organizational covariates in a causal mentor-*protégé* relationship. Also, it is not clear what is meant by "coaching" in this context. Clarity and precision are needed.

If one thinks of coaching as teaching a specific set of skills, then coaching becomes both a teaching and assessment process. Even if mentors detect any deficiencies in a protégé that require remediation, they can encourage further training. On the other hand, keeping in mind the career goals and social/ psychological needs of the protégé and the privacy of the relationship, integrating teaching and assessment with the delicacy of this process could be self-defeating.

- The University of South Carolina's College of Mass Communications & Information Studies Alumni Society Mentor Program[17] (USC-ASMP) provides at least four responsibilities of a mentor. These include teaching, problem-solving, motivating, and coaching. Because these responsibilities imply different roles for a mentor and assume a different relationship pattern between mentor and protégé, measuring the effectiveness of mentoring, given the enormous variety of covariates, will be demanding. The USC-ASMP rightly concludes,

  Mentoring is a developmental partnership through which one person shares knowledge, skills, information and perspective to foster the personal and professional growth of someone else. We all have a need for insight that is outside of our normal life and educational experience. The power of mentoring is that it creates a one-of-a-kind chance for collaboration, goal achievement, and problem-solving.

The USC-ASMP model clearly reflects that which was adopted by the State Board of Education in North Carolina[18] By including *coaching* as a function of *mentoring*, it raises both the question of function and clarity; that is, how do the functions of a coach and mentor differ? Clearly they share similarities but dissimilarities exist as well. When the "evaluating" variable is rolled into this mix, the positive or negative effects of mentoring become difficult to assess.

The NC model identifies the role of the mentor as "to advocate, support, and coach beginning teachers as they learn and acquire new instructional strategies for effective teaching." It is based on the research of Reiman, Alan J. and Lois Thies-Sprinthall[19] and Costa and Garms-ton.[20] Costa and Garmston maintain:

> ***Using the coaching cycle model, the beginning teacher and the mentor should work on a single instructional focus at a time using the cycle of planning conference, observation, reflective conference, and a written coaching plan to guide them through the process of review, practice, and incorporation of best teaching practices.***

Costa and Garmston define "coaching is a cyclical process that uses focused, specified skill development or problem-solving for developing instructional expertise and change," and conclude that the mentor's goal is to "***build on the strengths of the mentee [protégé] and remediate in a structured way the areas where improvements are needed."*** This model also includes an emphasis on psychosocial needs — a discussion of feelings and perceptions as well as the building of trust between mentor and protégé — and professional, productivity needs that promote learning.

An emphasis on psychosocial needs is supported in mentoring research. When trying to build trusting relationships, the inclusion of teaching, coaching, and evaluating as mentoring responsibilities appear as self-defeating. This may only be a problem of semantics, which signifies that each of these concepts needs further flushing out. However, it is clear that Costa and Garmston join supervision and mentoring as a single concept.

- In 2009, SQW Consulting[21] compiled a report for NESTA (The National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts in the UK was established by an Act of Parliament in 1998) as part of an evaluation of two NESTA mentoring programs – *Creative Business Mentor Pilot* and *Raise the Game*. The purpose of these two pilot programs is to match growth companies within the creative industries sub-sectors (TV production, advertising, digital media and games) with senior executives from these sub-sectors in mentoring relationships. The two pilots aim to generate benefits for participating businesses through an intensive and directed relationship with mentors who have intimate knowledge of their sectors and track records in building successful creative businesses.

SQW used *The Chartered Institute of Professional Development* (CIPD) definition of mentoring: "[Mentoring is...] the long term passing on of support, guidance and advice. Also a form of apprenticeship whereby an inexperienced learner learns the tricks of the trade from an experienced colleague backed up as in modern apprenticeships by offsite training."

SQW looked at the differences between mentoring and coaching and concluded that mentoring generally differs from coaching in that it involves a greater focus on specific industry experience and relevance. Often, according to CIPD, mentoring relationships are less formal and goal-oriented than coaching. In the case of the NESTA, there is a focus on specific industry experience. However, in the NESTA model, mentoring is structured and bound by a set time period and a desire to maximize impact.

The concurrence of mentoring and coaching in the CIPD definition is consistent with that provided by the website, *How to Guide*, but differs by separating coaching and mentoring. Their explanation becomes distorted by including "apprenticeship" to define the protégé's functional role. "Apprenticeship" generally means "a beginner or learner," and also, "one bound by legal agreement to work for another for a specific amount of time in return for instruction in a trade, art, or business." Indeed, this implies, or seems to imply, a structured, or "formal" mentoring relationship that perhaps includes coaching, training, and assessment as a part of this process.

Learned from CIPD is that mentoring is less formal than coaching, but when mentoring programs are focused on definable goals, they often become more structured. A difficulty arises of separating mentoring from coaching, teaching (training), and supervising. Because they are distinct parts of the same general process and have significant differences, CIPD's definition of mentoring remains plagued by a certain vagueness and ambiguity.

REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

The review above illustrates the problems of mentoring research and formulating an overarching and consistent definition of mentoring. Thus, one is able to query if a single definition of "mentoring" is possible, and if mentoring is a practice relative to the goals of individual corporations and organizations (and of individuals) that makes a singular definition difficult to support, aside from a conceptual model comprised of isolated but tested theoretical propositions.

Four questions emerge from this brief survey:

1. ***Has a focus on short-term rather than long-range goals rendered mentoring difficult to measure?***
2. ***How does one separate the results of "informal" and "formal" mentoring?***
3. ***Have some researchers tied the definition of "mentoring" too tightly to a theoretical construct suggesting ideas that lend themselves to empirical testing, but are inconsistent with the realities of corporate cultures?***
4. ***Another question involves the rewards of mentoring for both mentor and protégé. Will the rewards be extrinsic only, or are there intrinsic rewards that cannot be totally measured?***

If Bates is correct, perhaps mentoring is more complex than others suspect or wish to admit. A person may still be plagued with the conclusion that mentoring is often built on a foundation of self-interest rather than meritocracy. Behind this is the fact that many mentoring programs have been adopted to satisfy an accountability culture in which mentoring, coaching, and assessment become internally mingled. More information is required on the random but associated variables of both as the implications of formal and informal mentoring show mixed results. If one chooses formal mentoring as an ideal type and ignores informal mentoring, one is perhaps clothing mentoring on a skeleton on which the flesh and sinew of individual initiative and real mentoring power cannot grow.

Mentoring may turn out to be a conceptual minefield whose definition is strongly related to the purposes and practices of different organizations, and thereby, is situationally defined. These are questions the research has yet to resolve.

Acknowledging these issues, Odunayo Arogundade[22] moves forward, recommending mentoring as a strategy for "leadership succession" which ensures "the availability of future qualified candidates to fill up critical vacancies." In his opinion, the purpose of mentoring is to ensure a continuity of skills, knowledge, desired organizational cultural traits, and leadership styles, which can be formal or informal. He also recommends executive sponsorship, integrated planning with business and workforce objectives, and the use of *capability templates* as a measurement tool when planning mentoring programs. This is an important recommendation that should be taken seriously in future mentoring research. Arogundade gives wide latitude to the definition of "mentoring" and acknowledges its situational characteristics.

Arogundade is confident that the acquisition of certain knowledge, skills, and corporate values will confirm the importance of mentoring when long-term goals are the focus of the mentoring process. This suggestion supports the hypothesis that leadership is a mentoring responsibility — not that the leader is directly involved as a mentor — but that the leader is responsible for creating and sustaining a mentoring culture throughout the company, team, school system, church, department, or organization.

For empirical researchers, understanding mentoring as an effective business practice remains problematic. In their quantitative review of mentoring research, Kammeyer-Mueller and Judge have concluded that "mentoring does have substantial effects on jobs and career satisfaction, ***if and only if***, such associated variables as demographics, human capital, and self-evaluations can be held constant." [Emphasis added]. Caution is required, for to control, isolate and assess the effect of these variables to what is being observed is perhaps an impossible request.

Suggesting further research that reflects the complexity of mentoring relationships, Carmin offers her own definition of "mentoring":

> ***Mentoring is a complex, interactive process occurring between individuals of differing levels of experience and expertise which incorporates interpersonal or psychosocial development, career and/or educational development, and socialization functions into the relationship. This one-to-one relationship is itself developmental and proceeds through a series of stages which help to determine both the conditions affecting and the outcomes of the process. To the extent that the parameters of mutuality and compatibility exist in the relationship, the potential outcomes of respect, professionalism, collegiality, and role fulfillment will result. Further, the mentoring process occurs in a dynamic relationship within a given milieu.***

Carmin's description captures the essence of the mentoring process, but becomes convoluted when the idea that mentoring, as a one-on-one relationship only, is included. This ignores the many dimensions and relationships involved in mentoring as suggested by Higgins and Kram. For example, in an unstructured mentoring environment, the protégé may go to a variety of sources — inside and outside the organization — for support and guidance. It reflects the reality that mentoring is a "people business" of evolving relationships that have taken many years to form.

In agreement with seeking cause-effect relationships that can be quantitatively measured, Allen, Eby, O'Brien, and Lentz theorize,

> ***However, by not using controlled settings and experimental designs it is impossible to establish cause-and-effect relationships among key constructs, which is an essential step in theory testing. It is also important to underscore that mentoring represents a basic social process that could seemingly benefit from careful study in a highly controlled environment.***

Not to dismiss laboratory research, they remind readers of Mook's[23] discussion of the merits of "external invalidity":

> ***Experimental research is not intended to be generalized across people, time, and settings. Rather, it is used to test the validity of specific theoretical propositions that may (or may not) have utility in understanding some comparable phenomena in the field.***

If one is confused about these two comments, it is understandable, but it also draws attention to the utility and importance of empirical research. Testing theoretical postulates is a way of isolating and testing the variables associated with mentoring. Such testing does have benefit if one is careful about not over-generalizing the conclusions reached. Caution must be taken for the slightest invasion into a mentoring relationship could affect any research outcome, theorized or realized.

Although the results of such assessment may not be generally applicable, what is discovered can be offered as a menu of "best practices" and insights into what works or doesn't work and provide explanations for these conclusions. One can also foresee the difficulty of finding "highly controlled settings" and question if this would be, in the end, possible, practical, and beneficial.

Noted in the highlighted studies below is the conclusion that the effects of mentoring on career outcomes range from moderate to weak. In their summation, Allen, Eby, O'Brien, and Lentz rationalize,

> ***Mentoring research has grown and become a major topic of interest primarily based on the belief that it leads to beneficial outcomes such as career growth and favorable job attitudes. Yet for the most part, researchers have not made a convincing case that this reflects a causal relationship. In fact, some have argued that protégés are singled out for mentoring because they demonstrate positive work attitudes or high performance potential.***

For some this may appear to prejudice the mentoring process as bordering on favoritism. Just below the surface of this remark is the function of mentoring as a process that highlights the strengths of potential protégés. An organizational culture should enhance both the strengths and the weaknesses of young workers. If this is the case, then selecting some protégés with apparent potential should be no problem.

Perhaps the research is at a standstill, because no studies exist on the long-term phases associated with formal mentorships as pointed out by Kram in 1985[24] and as recommended by Bates and Arogundade. Also, social-science data does not yield strict causal relationships and strict causal relationships may never be fully determined. The realization of the number of variables involved in social relationships even makes statistical correlation difficult to control.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF HIGHLIGHTED STUDIES

Study #1: (K-MJ)
Article title: "Quantitative Review of Mentoring Research: Test of a Model"

In their review of mentoring literature, Kammeyer-Mueller and Judge (K-MJ) provide a quantitative synthesis of the mentoring literature. Their purpose is to resolve issues related to the definition and functioning of mentoring, the assessment of the effects of mentoring, and an examination of the influence of mentoring on markers of career success relative to other related constructs. Assessed in this model are (1) relationships among mentoring, mentoring indices, and demographic and personality variables, and (2) relationships among mentoring including human capital and performance variables. A general description of their findings follows:

FINDING #1: DEFINITION AND DIMENSIONS

K-MJ first compared how various measures of mentoring might relate to career outcomes. They asked, "Given that all participants have mentors, which type of mentor is most effective?" And, "Are different mentors differentially effective?" Noting that statistical models used in most meta-analyses are poor approximations to any reasonable theoretical model,[25] they used causal modeling techniques (CMT) based on meta-analytic data[26] to demonstrate the contribution of several related variables to a common outcome like performance or success, and training.

It should be noted that a causal model is an abstraction that attempts to describe the causal mechanisms of a system. In a causal model, path diagrams are used to portray relationships among variables at the group level and, as such, do not provide a clear illustration of how a particular causal chain operates within a particular mentor-protégé relationship. Such a model must express more than correlation for correlation doesn't imply causation.[27]

Using CMT, K-MJ described mentoring relationships in terms of two broad categories or functions provided by mentors based on both qualitative and quantitative data. The first category was "career functions" which included actions such as linking protégés with human capital enhancement opportunities and to powerful individuals in the organization.

The second was "psychosocial functions" which included counseling the protégé about anxieties and uncertainties, providing friendship and acceptance, and role modeling. They reported that it was unfortunate that the correlation between mentoring methods was not investigated in the research studies that they reviewed.

In their opinion, this leaves the dimensionality (value, effectiveness, etc.) of mentoring open to question. It also skews the meta-analytic data.

FINDING #2: ANTECEDENTS OF MENTORING

K-MJ uncovered the fact that many individuals are singled out for mentoring because they have demonstrated the skills, knowledge, and work ethic needed for leadership succession. K-MJ found nothing inherently wrong with this, but discovered that minorities, including women, have complained that they are generally overlooked in this process. Self-report data confirms that women have the perception that there are more barriers to gaining a mentor than do men; yet, they reported that this research remains inconclusive.

K-MJ provided evidence that some mentors select protégés based on their expected productivity. They suggested that mentors deliberately seek capable individuals to act as protégés because they believe these protégés will be the best able to reciprocate the mentor's assistance by giving information and providing the mentor with power in the organization. This can imply a self-centered motive for protégé selection based on a protégé's self-image leading to more productive job performance and career rewards. Evidence from core self-evaluations show that these variables related significantly to motivation, job performance, and job satisfaction. ***This is a significant finding, but it also introduces a different and difficult to measure correlate into mentoring assessment: the motives for selecting certain individuals as protégés and not others.***

K-MJ dismissed job performance or productivity as a contributing variable because they found it impossible to determine the extent to which prior productivity or estimated potential are a cause or an effect of mentoring. Thus, job performance leading to higher pay and promotions and productivity were treated as noncausal associations. Yet, these were treated as "goals" — career functions — of the mentoring process which leaves open the question of causation (See: Finding #1, K-MJ).

Also confounding their study is the possibility that a mentor's status may be the result of variables such as tenure and education. Tenure and education imply some responsiveness to perceived potential — other things being equal. ***The conclusion can be reached that how protégés are chosen and their eventual status in the organization remains muddled variables in research literature.***

FINDING #3: OUTCOMES AND RESULTS OF MENTORING

K-MJ recommends that the outcomes of mentoring should come through two distinct pathways. These are (1) extrinsic success (salaries, promotions, rank in the organization) and (2) psychological support and opportunities for development. It has been demonstrated that psychological support contributes to the general satisfaction of protégés above and beyond the extrinsic rewards they can secure for their protégés. They concluded,

> ***... [E]ven with personality and other career related variable[s] held constant, mentoring remains an important predictor of many career outcomes. However, when assessed***

> ***relative to the effect on sizes for variables like tenure and education (in predicting salary) and core self-evaluations (in predicting performance, job satisfaction, and career satisfaction); it appears that the benefits of mentoring are modest.*** [Emphasis added].

K-MJ acknowledged that although "career mentoring is considerably more important in a multivariate model, this was not demonstrated, and that the effects of mentoring on career outcomes range from moderate to weak." They do not say that mentoring is unimportant, only that *it is no more important* than other influences on career success such as ability and personality.

A question remains about the link between correlation and causation. K-MJ comment,

> ***...it appears that if researchers wish to explain career success, they may increasingly have to turn away from mentor functions scales and towards a more detailed understanding of the mentor process as organizationally embedded.*** [Emphasis added].

K-MJ concluded that the mentor's position within the organization is an explanatory variable, and, as a consequence, it may not be especially helpful to one's career success if a relatively powerless mentor comes to one's assistance, no matter how helpful she or he may be. This heightens the importance of developmental networks as proposed by Higgins and Kram in Study #3 below.

Study #2: (WWH)
Article title: "Mentoring Research: A Review and Dynamic Process Model"

Wanberg, Welsh and Hezlett[28] (WWH) examined formal and informal mentoring relationships and concluded that mentoring is a tool used by organizations in developing their human resources. After surveying the literature on mentoring, these authors provide a formal mentoring model to further explain the mentoring process. They asked,

> ***Why prefer formal or intentional mentoring over informal or accidental mentoring? Conceivably it is because the informal mentoring process narrows the range of possible interpretations, while the formal broadens this range, implying that there is vastly more to be understood needing our research. The accidental or informal does not explain and so we dismiss it. It is an awkward intrusion on our theoretical and explanatory model and includes behaviors that theory cannot accommodate. We have to acknowledge that our experience of the world — either formal or informal — is circumstantial and cultural, and qualified by context and perspective. If we strip away culture-making as if it were a ruse and concealment, we lose the essential qualities that make up human relationships, including mentoring.***

Guiding this study is the preference of formal over informal mentoring because, as WWH says, the informal "is an awkward intrusion on our theoretical and explanatory model and includes behaviors that theory cannot accommodate." This conclusion seems inconsistent with their acknowledgement in Finding #1 below that when informal mentoring develops naturally within organizational cultures, it can advance the personal and professional growth of protégés.

In this study, the use of the term "accidental" mentoring rather than "informal" or "unstructured" mentoring seems to confirm their choice of "formal" or "structured" mentoring over informal or unstructured mentoring. Although difficult to measure, there is nothing *accidental* about a new employee seeking the assistance, advice, and counsel of more experienced employees. This seems to be more than a semantics debate as their purpose is to show the benefits of a formal mentoring model.

FINDING #1: PURPOSE OF MENTORING

WWH began by defining mentoring as "a one-on-one relationship between a less experienced (i.e. protégé) and a more experienced person (i.e. mentor), and is prototypically intended to advance the personal and professional growth of the less experienced individual." They acknowledged that this relationship can be formal (assigned pairing) or informal (having developed naturally) within an organization. They comment,

> ***Whatever form it takes, the purpose of mentoring is to leverage human and social capital within organizations. Human capital consists of the personal elements that engender excellent performance as a leader, such as vision, strategic focus, personal presence, inspirational skills, and creation of supportive work environments.*** [Emphasis added].

Social capital comes from the interpersonal relationships that yield valued resources and connections. No one is disputing the importance of these relationships. WWH concluded, "Learning to leverage both human and social capital is vital to [a person's] success as leaders in organizations."[29]

FINDING #2: MENTORING FUNCTIONS

WWH identified two broad mentoring functions we found consistent with the functions described by Kammeyer-Mueller and Judge: career and psychosocial. *Career functions* are those that aid career advancement, including challenging assignments, coaching, exposure, protection, and sponsorship. *Psychosocial functions* are those they help build a sense of identity, competence, and effectiveness. Embedded in this discussion was the relationship between mentoring, supervision, and leadership, but they delayed their discussion of these "mentoring types" and proceeded to identify two areas of uncertainty.

One area of ambiguity was that of identifying the many distinct dimensions of mentoring. They noted that the research doesn't permit strong inferences about underlying latent structures such as role modeling. Their indecision about role-modeling left their conclusions open-ended. They comment:

> ***Overall, the bulk of the evidence indicates that there are at least two distinct mentoring functions (career and psychosocial), but is less clear on whether a third dimension [role modeling] is needed to adequately represent the construct space.***[30]

A second area of uncertainty for WWH was whether specific, narrow mentoring functions are facets of psychosocial or career mentoring. This was supported by Scandura and Williams[31] in their study of supervisory career mentoring. They pointed out that:

- In 1985, Kram classified *coaching* as a career function and *friendship* as a psychosocial function.
- In contrast, Noe[32] included coaching in his measure of psychosocial mentoring and dropped items related to friendship as too small to be studied efficiently.
- WWH also found that additional facets of psychosocial mentoring have been proposed and cautions future research to keep in mind the many different functions that a mentor may provide.

Thus, in this research study, it seems that certain issues were discounted in order to address their main interest; the comparing and contrasting of formal and informal mentoring programs.

FINDING #3: POSITIVE OUTCOMES OF MENTORING

WWH note, "Based upon positive empirical findings [reviewed by WWH] it seems safe to conclude that research has been supportive of positive outcomes being correlated with both protégé status and the level of mentoring functions received." Some research[33] has reported mentoring relationships as important determinants in career success and advancement. However, the studies surveyed by WWH have found this research to be inconclusive.

WWH also found, as did K–MJ, that "talented individuals who possess drive and commitment to their profession, career, and organization, and who are good at developing social networks may be both more likely to get a mentor and to experience career success." One wonders if this implies formal or informal mentoring. Although these relationships have not been fully examined, they observed that having a mentoring relationship was correlated with higher work satisfaction. Ragins and Scandura[34] confirmed this finding and mention that executives agreed mentoring is a "rewarding experience."[35] Agreeing with Douglas & McCauley, WWH also mentioned that little attention has been given to mentoring at the executive level.[36]

FINDING #4: THE FORMAL MENTORING CONTEXT

According to WWH, a goal of formal mentoring involves the sharing of experience between current leaders and future leaders. Another goal is to promote the careers, development and performance of protégés at a managerial level. Citing a host of recent research,[37] they concluded that an additional goal of mentoring is to increase diversity at higher levels which includes women and minorities. More specifically, WWH pointed out that formal mentoring programs are designed to give protégés a head start on acquiring an understanding of the organization and how to best be effective. WWH suggested the following components of a formal mentoring program:

1. ***Specific objectives and an identified target population;***
2. ***A process to select and match protégés with mentors;***
3. ***An orientation that involves suggestions on maintaining the relationship as well as expectation setting;***
4. ***Communication with involved parties about the intent of the program;***
5. ***A monitoring and evaluation process;***
6. ***A coordinator to provide support to participants; and***
7. ***Clearly linking the program to business goals.***

WWH continued by suggesting four potential areas of protégé change due to formal mentoring, but admitted that there is insufficient research in this area. These four areas are cognitive, skill-based, and affective-related learning, with the addition of social networking. With "sparse" research, they made the intuitive assumption that these will drive the achievement of career success outcomes.

WWH are confident that formal mentoring will produce higher levels of socialization, career commitment, organizational commitment, and organizational self-esteem, but did not fully support these conclusions. Ragins et al.[38] agreed and suggested that protégés with high levels of satisfaction with their formal mentors reaped, or had the potential to reap, the same benefits as informal mentoring relationships.

Study #3: (HK)
Article title: "Mentoring at Work: A Developmental Network Perspective"

Higgins and Kram state:

> ***In much of the mentoring research of the past three decades, researchers have conceptualized mentoring as the developmental assistance provided by a more senior individual within a protégé's organization — that is, a single dyadic relationship.***

Revisiting Kram's 1985 idea that individuals rely upon not just one, but multiple individuals for development — what is labeled as "relationship constellations" — Higgins and Kram further query, "...who provides such support and how [is] such support provided?" They answered this question from the point of view of "developmental network diversity," defined as "the range of social systems (e.g., community, employment, school) from which individuals draw mentoring support."

They expanded this view with a typology of "developmental relationship strength" and commented:

> ***These two dimensions, developmental network diversity and developmental relationship strength, form the basis of the typology of developmental networks that we introduce. They are also consistent with core concepts in social network theory and research...by focusing on these two dimensions and, more generally, by integrating social network research with prior mentoring research, we extend the mentoring literature beyond its traditional dyadic focus to emphasize the importance of multiple developmental relationships. We call this new approach to mentoring at work a "developmental network perspective."***

Their typology evaluates these relationships from a low range with weak and strong ties (receptive and traditional) to a high range with weak and strong ties (opportunistic and entrepreneurial). They show that the factors shaping these relationships both constrain and facilitate protégé behavior, building a cause/effect chain throughout the network. HK state:

> ***The interactions that occur within the developmental network structure can modify that structure itself — as, for example, when an individual actively seeks to strengthen specific ties or work environment changes, such as organizational restructuring, can affect an individual's network structure. Therefore, individuals can effect changes in their***

> ***developmental networks and can simultaneously be constrained by their work environment in the types of developmental networks they are able to develop.***

HK provide further studies to support their conclusions[39] and point out how human interaction and the relationships that evolve naturally impact a protégé's career. They concluded that mentoring is a multiple relationship phenomenon and is best thought of as a "developmental network."

Following is a summary that describes these developmental relationships:

- ***Strong ties and entrepreneurial networks are formed from open as opposed to instrumental (managerial) relationships.***
- ***Emotional stability and competence yield strong-tie relationships.***
- ***Entrepreneurial relationships are characterized by change, personal learning, and opportunity.***
- ***Finally, entrepreneurial relationships are opportunistic and lack the higher levels of organizational commitment found in traditional developmental networks.***

The authors concluded,

> ***Fully gauging the extent to which developmental relationships exhibit the mutuality and reciprocity that are characteristic of strong ties will require in-depth qualitative research, reflecting the research approach in some of the foundational work on mentoring and the clinical work underlying the development of relational theory. Interview questions could be used to generate accounts of how each of the protégé's relationships began and then to generate illustrative examples of how the protégé and his or her developers interacted, including openness to feedback-giving and -receiving. Additionally, survey methods could be used to assess the frequency of communication and affective closeness between the protégé and his or her developers, consistent with prior social network research.***

We strongly agree with these authors that building and sustaining relationships are important to a smoothly functioning organization or business, and perhaps the foundation of the mentoring process itself. Yet, we interject caution about the unintended consequences of clinical or qualitative studies. Collecting empirical data more often than not influences that which is being studied, either negatively or positively. Even if a questionnaire has construct validity, its introduction into a mentoring relationship will influence the results of information gathered in significant ways. It seems that none of the studies mentioned in this article addressed this issue.

CONCLUSIONS

Drawing definite conclusions from this research is difficult. Discovered is that mentoring is only one among many organizational practices leading to leadership succession. Mentoring is conditioned by the internal structure of a business or an organization; it adds value in terms of human capital to organizational culture. In the studies which have been highlighted, we discovered that ***organizational culture is a leading determinant of mentoring success.***

In most conventional organizations information flows vertically, usually from top to bottom. Yet, for creative entrepreneurship to emerge there need to be professional networks and informal exchanges of ideas. Higgins and Kram have pointed out that horizontal interaction encourages conceptual blending and relationships between collaborators and the density of these connections are important for the flow of ideas. Mentoring thus becomes "a culture of collaboration." The importance of mentoring often comes from knowledge spillovers and overlapping minds. These interpersonal collisions promote open and flexible dialogue and growth.

Several conclusions can be reached from these studies:

First, mentoring research requires a baseline that distinguishes formal (organizationally structured) from informal (organizationally unstructured) mentoring. This will require sound psychometric measurements that have construct validity. We prefer the terms "structured" and "unstructured" rather than "formal" and "informal" and believe these concepts capture the reality of organizational culture.

These measurements will include the knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and personality traits of both mentor and protégé. This will also require the construction and validation of measurement instruments such as questionnaires, tests, and personality assessments. Caution must be taken for this can distort or irrevocably alter the mentoring-protégé relationship. Theoretical testing is important, but we should avoid confusing "correlation" with "causation." Testing often begins with the intuitions and assumptions of researchers. A "best practices" mentality needs to be promoted as business cultures vary. The applications of sound theoretical propositions will never take place in a clearly defined form.

Second, researchers need to be careful about applying preconceived ideas to their testing, no matter how strongly they are rooted in experience. They should also guard against using theoretical models only to reach their conclusions. Because mentoring is relationship- permeated, perhaps more concentration needs to be given to the "whys" (the beliefs and values that define the business or organizational culture) and not just the "hows."

Third, imbedded in the research is the implication that mentoring is tied to organizational culture and reflects organizational beliefs and values. This implies that mentoring — in whatever form it takes — is a leadership responsibility. This also means that leaders have the responsibility of creating an organizational culture where mentoring can flourish and leadership succession, at any level, can be attained. This also implies that mentors will or should highlight the strengths of protégés and not only focus on remediating their weaknesses. Success Factors, a SAP Company[40] comments:

> ***Developing leadership talent is a long-term investment. A well-developed succession planning process increases the retention of superior employees because they recognize that time, attention and skill development are being invested in them for the purpose of career development. When you continue to challenge and reward talented employees, you eliminate their need to seek opportunities elsewhere.***

Such a culture should inform the definition of "mentoring," something with which much of the examined research struggled. This definition, to be applicable across a wide-range of organizational cultures, must itself be more general than many wish.

Fourth, building an unstructured (informal) network of relationships within and outside an organization is important. These contacts are an important source of information, advice, and shared experience which makes available to the protégé a path of growth and knowledge. For example, a janitor or housekeeper in any organization can be a valuable source of advice about the attitudes and temperaments of those in the organizational hierarchy. Also, protégés can take the initiative to reach beyond the boundaries of the department or organization for added information and advice that is pertinent to their work. Mentors can be found anywhere within and outside an organization.

Fifth, research identified a major problem: that those in positions of authority may lack the communication and other social skills — or even the right motives — to mentor a protégé in positive and ethical ways. The research strongly recommends the selection of mentors based on their willingness to serve, ability to communicate, and dedication to continuous learning. This entails a commitment to treat their co-workers, including protégés, with dignity and respect, honesty, and fairness.

Sixth, we highly recommend separating mentoring from other organizationally-structured responsibilities such as teaching, coaching, training, and/or supervising. Coaching and teaching/training for specific skills are *not* mentoring, however. The purpose of mentoring is to develop a sense of identity, competence, and effectiveness in protégés. These may include acceptance, counseling, friendship, and role modeling. A mentor should not be charged with evaluating the protégé for this will likely compromise the mentor-protégé relationship.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A MENTOR

In summary, we are able to conclude that mentors…

- Are leaders who are cognizant of their strengths, weaknesses, and limitations.
- Can articulate and assess their performance and are committed to continuous learning.
- Are concerned with, and take pride in, their work and project a positive self-image.
- Voluntarily work to build the communication and ethical skills of a protégé.
- Encourage protégés to openly discuss problems and take responsibility for the outcomes.
- Communicate a belief in the ability of protégés.
- Divest of self and self-interest. This is an ethical as well as an organizational commitment.
- Is willing to invest his/her knowledge and experience in the protégé.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A MENTOR-PROTÉGÉ RELATIONSHIP

We learn from mentoring research the following:

- Mentoring, structured or unstructured, is relationship-permeated.
- Mentoring is a relationship that can be self-initiated or initiated by others.
- The boundaries of this relationship are open-ended and flexible.

- Communication is a vital component of mentoring. Open communication should provide a common context of meaning for both the mentor and protégé.
- The mentor-protégé relationship represents a network of patterns built up with life-experiences, sharing, and feedback. These exchanges are refined by the moral commitments shared in this relationship.
- A mentoring relationship helps others grow, change, and overcome limitations.
- In the context of values-based leadership, mentoring is reasonably determined by the internal culture of a business and/or organization.

DESCRIPTION OF THE MENTORING PROCESS

- No matter what form mentoring takes, the mentoring process is not a destination, but a pathway to active and responsible growth.
- Mentoring is defined by responsible behavior. Whether assigned or seeking, "To Mentor" is both dialogical and dialectical.
- Mentoring reflects the values and beliefs of the organization and avoids motives that are self-promoting.
- The mentoring process is a source of feedback for enhancing the growth and maturation of the protégé.
- Mentoring is one pathway to leadership succession.
- The mentor is responsible to the protégé, but not for the protégé's actions and behavior.
- The essence of mentoring is to care and the opportunity of mentoring is to serve.

MENTORING: A DEFINITION

In conclusion, and keeping with the characteristics and descriptions above, mentoring, or the practice of mentoring, is far simpler than the research supposes:

> ***Mentoring is a process engaged in by (usually) two people for the development of the protégé's social character, personal enlightenment, or business success. This process is relationship-permeated, is a means of leadership succession, and emphasizes responsible and ethical behaviors.***

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