

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE MENTOR IN A
FORMAL WORKPLACE MENTORING PROGRAM

by

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ABSTRACT

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE MENTOR IN A FORMAL WORKPLACE MENTORING PROGRAM

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This qualitative case study was designed to explore how mentors in a formal mentoring program perceive their experience. The study is based upon the following assumptions: (1) mentors have experienced challenges; (2) mentors have had positive experiences in a mentoring dyad; (3) mentors will share their experiences; (4) the organization evaluates mentoring efforts by analyzing the mentees' outcomes only; and (5) the organization offers support to the mentor.

The site for the study was a global retailer located in New York, New York that had a formal mentoring program. The primary sources of data were: in-depth interviews with 19 former mentors, a focus group, and a document review.

Mezirow (1990) proposed a process that one undergoes in a transformative learning event. In his model, individuals must have a dialogue with trusted others for support as they examine their prior roles. Therefore, it can be assumed that having a mentor could be instrumental in one's transformative learning experience (Brookfield, 1987). Daloz (2000) proposed that for a transformative learning event to occur, there must be "the presence of the other, reflective discourse, a mentoring community, and opportunities for committed action" (p. 112). These concepts provided a construct for analysis and synthesis of the research findings.

Although this study sought to examine how mentors perceived their role, a key finding revealed that participants were motivated by the desire to gain visibility. This

impetus shaped their experience greatly. Further, the findings identified three categories of mentors: (1) those who accepted the role to appease management and possessed no desire to be a mentor, hence termed the Disgruntled; (2) those who were invested to the organization and had a desire to help others, and thus are Believers; and (3) those that were invested in the relationship, but had personal agendas for being in the role, called the Politicos.

The primary recommendation from this study is that human resources need to be thoughtful in how they structure and monitor the mentoring dyad. This includes allowing participation in the program to be voluntary, providing training, and checking in with each member throughout the duration of the engagement.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my daughter, Mia Haven Lee.

“Here’s to strong women.

May we know them.

May we be them.

May we raise them.”

Author Unknown

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A. L.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Background and Context

The Need for Knowledge Transfer

The aging workplace presents a prolific challenge for organizations. As more and more Baby Boomers begin to enter into retirement, workplaces are being confronted with the need to transfer knowledge among the populations (Bear & Hwang, 2015). The Pew Research Center reports that 10,000 Baby Boomers will be retiring each day until the year 2029. By 2030, that entire generation will have hit the traditional retirement age of 65 years old (Cohn & Taylor, 2010). Therefore, there is an urgent need for organizations to develop effective strategies to ensure that the stability of their intellectual capital remains in place after the Baby Boomer generation fully leaves the workplace. The Conference Board's research report, *Bridging the Gaps: How to Transfer Knowledge in Today's Multigenerational Workplace*, emphasizes the adoption of a holistic approach that takes into account the diversity of the employees, technology available, and inherent generational differences. The report calls for a systemic change to occur within organizations to create a culture that embraces and promotes sharing information capital (Piktialis & Greenes, 2008).

Further, as the job market continues to shift from blue-collar manufacturing to an environment that requires a more service oriented, knowledge-based skill set, the transfer of tacit intelligence is becoming increasingly critical (Darwin, 2000). Although basic

knowledge is required for one to effectively perform his/her role, the imparted wisdom resulting from lived experience is an essential learning that cannot be captured in a traditional training intervention. This intelligence is personal, deep-rooted, and critical when confronting adaptive challenges where a solution is not straightforward (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

DeLong (2004), author of *Lost Knowledge: Confronting the Threat of an Aging Workforce*, warns that the cost of “unanticipated lost knowledge” could be potentially devastating to an organization (p. 27). The author stresses the urgency for senior leadership to acknowledge their knowledge transfer vulnerabilities and to prioritize a strategy today for preserving the intelligence of tomorrow. Moreover, DeLong outlines five interdependent areas that human resource professionals must take into account when evaluating knowledge retention strategies. These include “systems for evaluating an organization’s skill/knowledge base, succession planning/career development processes, the building of a retention culture, phased retirement programs, and the reinvention of the recruiting process” (p. 5). He further emphasizes the need for organizations to re-evaluate their knowledge transfer policies within every phase of the employee lifecycle.

A Mentoring Approach

Organizations have begun addressing this need for knowledge management through the implementation of formal mentoring programs (Hezlett, 2005; Kahle-Piasecki, 2011; Wilson & Elman, 1990). An article from the *Wall Street Journal* reported that 70% of Fortune 500 companies have enacted mentoring programs in some capacity (Gutner, 2009). Workplaces such as International Business Machines (IBM) and Xerox are relying on mentoring to be a two-way learning opportunity. Whereas the mentors can provide guidance on how to navigate rapid organizational changes, the mentee aids in teaching the more seasoned employee various things, such as how to use social media or other emerging technology platforms. Moreover, organizations are recognizing that the

younger generation brings something to the mentoring table as well and are structuring their efforts to be what is termed “reverse mentoring,” where the more junior employee serves in the mentor role.

PricewaterhouseCoopers’s “Millennials at Work” study suggested that Millennials, who will comprise 75% of the workforce by the year 2025, preferred to learn at work through mentors and considered these relationships to be the most valuable training and development resource (Ledingham, 2015). Further, the research indicated that mentoring helped alleviate generational tensions between the different populations within the organization. Their data showed a decrease in turnover among Millennials (born between 1980 and 2000) and the company; they attributed this statistic to their unique approach to mentoring.

Sun Microsystems analyzed 13 years of data pertaining to their formal mentoring program and found a 1,000% return on investment (Dickinson, Jankot, & Gracon, 2009). The report indicated that mentors and mentees had increased retention rates at 69% and 72%, respectively, compared to those who did not take part in the program (Moore, 2015). Moreover, Sun Microsystems experienced a decrease in turnover that resulted in \$6.7 million in savings. Both the mentors and the mentees also reported salary grade changes as compared to non-mentored employees (Moore, 2015).

Therefore, organizations have found ways to quantify the return on the investment for their mentoring efforts, and many have reported positive results. There is a strong business case for implementing formal mentoring programs as a strategy to promote knowledge transfer in the workplace.

A Focus on the Mentee

While many definitions of mentoring exist (Kahle-Piasecki, 2011; Ragins & Cotton, 1993; Russell & Adams, 1997), the most commonly known reference can be described as an “intense interpersonal exchange between a senior experienced colleague

(mentor) and a less experienced junior colleague (protégé or mentee) in which the mentor provides support, direction, and feedback regarding career plans and personal development” (Russell & Adams, 1997, p. 2). In much of the existing literature, a “successful” mentoring initiative is determined by a positive mentee outcome, with little to no mention of what the mentor has learned nor the cost of being in the relationship (Hezlett & Gibson, 2005; Ragins & Scandura, 1999). For example, one of the most recognized in the field, Daniel Levinson (1978), sparked interest in the topic of mentoring when he published *The Seasons of a Man’s Life*. In his work, Levinson explored the significant effect mentoring had on the developmental growth of young men and the influence it had on the advancement of the protégé’s identity (Kram & Isabella, 1985).

Kram (1983, 1985) published one of the most cited pieces of literature on mentoring and proposed that there were two core functions of mentors: Career and Psychosocial. Kram emphasized the critical need for the mentors to support the development of their mentee’s character and self-worth, while providing coaching and supervision of challenging assignments (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004; Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992; Mullen, 1998). However, while these scholars briefly referenced the mentor, the majority of the literature emphasizes their role through the lens of the mentee’s experience in the relationship.

Wanberg, Welsh, and Hezlett (2003) found that of 90 studies they reviewed, 95% examined the mentoring outcomes for the protégé and only 13% considered the mentor. Further, there is a gap in knowledge within the context of a formal workplace mentoring initiative (Menges, 2016). Much of the existing empirical research on mentoring focuses on academia and the experience that student teachers have with their mentors as part of a teacher training program (Hezlett & Gibson, 2005). Assuming that the results of these findings are generalizable for all workplace settings is problematic.

Given the critical need for knowledge transfer in the workplace, it is imperative to fully understand the conditions that need to be present in order for a mentor to prosper in their role and find value in participating in the relationship. This includes understanding motivating factors to serve in the role, the expected costs and benefits of being in a mentoring dyad, the learning potential for the mentor, and the critical organizational support needed. Since the mentor is the core individual responsible for providing the career and psychosocial support to the protégé, it becomes precarious not to understand the dyad from his/her perspective. If the conditions necessary for a mentor to prosper are not present, then all parties will experience a negative outcome. The organization will not be successful with their knowledge transfer, the protégé will not reap any benefits, and the mentor may not find value in continuing the relationship. Further, if the mentor has a negative experience, they may lose the motivation to ever serve in the role again, thus becoming detrimental to the longevity of all future efforts.

Problem Statement

While prior research on formal mentoring programs has focused on the impact those efforts have on the mentee protégé, little research existed on the role of the mentor in that process. This was important given the mentor was largely responsible for the transfer of knowledge, specifically, what they know and how things should be done. Given that the mentor was a co-learner in the relationship, it was problematic to investigate the nuances of the relationship without understanding the conditions needed for a mentor to grow and thrive in the dyad. Therefore, further research was warranted with respect to the experience of mentors within the mentor/mentee relationship.

There was also a need to further investigate the organization's involvement in supporting a formal mentoring program. There was existing research surrounding how to make a mentoring relationship successful; however, "success" seemed to be evaluated

through the protégé's outcomes. There was an opportunity for research that focused on how the organization could structure their program so that the mentor had a positive learning outcome as well. This would be critical as organizations continue to utilize mentoring relationships as part of their knowledge transfer efforts. One could assume that if the mentor had a negative experience, they would be much less likely to volunteer to serve in the role in the future, which in turn threatened the viability of the organization's strategy.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this research was to explore with 19 mentors in a formal mentoring program their perceptions of their experience in the role of mentor.

To carry out this purpose, four research questions were addressed:

1. How did participants describe what motivated them to take on the role of mentor?
2. What challenges did participants describe they faced in their role as mentors?
3. In what ways did participants learn to increase their professional skills in their role as mentors?
4. How did participants describe the critical elements of organizational support they needed to be a successful mentor?

Approach

This qualitative case study was designed to study a mentor's experience as part of a formal workplace mentoring program at a large company in the Northeast referred to under the pseudonym *Camson Retailers*. An in-depth, semi-structured interview with 19 current and former mentors was the primary form of data collection. All interviewees

were given pseudonyms to protect their identity. Supplementary data sources included a document review and an on-site focus group of five former mentors who met the same criteria as the interviewees but were not part of the study. The researcher obtained approval from the Teachers College Institutional Review Board prior to beginning the interviews and data collection. All participants were made aware of their rights and confidentiality in accordance with IRB regulations.

Anticipated Outcomes

This study was intended to provide practitioners with an understanding of the mentor's experience within a formal mentoring dyad. It was hoped that the results would provide human resource professionals with recommendations on how to best structure their mentoring efforts so that the mentor feels supported and engaged.

Assumptions of the Study

The researcher held the following assumptions as she undertook this study:

1. Mentors have experienced challenges in the role.
2. Mentors have had positive experiences in a mentoring dyad.
3. Mentors will freely share their experiences with the researcher.
4. The organization evaluates effectiveness of mentoring efforts by analyzing mentees' outcomes only.
5. The organization offers some sort of support and structure to the mentor.

Rationale and Significance

The rationale for conducting this study was based upon the researcher's desire to shed light on the lesser known participant in a mentoring dyad. While there was an influx

of research pertaining to mentoring relationships, much less was known regarding the mentor's involvement within a formal program. The existing empirical research emphasized the mentee's experience, with the mentor serving a supporting role. Exploring the mentor's experience and perceptions would expand on the general themes that had been exposed in past literature. Moreover, much of the existing literature focused on mentoring in an academic context. There was a need to understand a mentor's role in a non-educational setting.

The results of this research will benefit human resource developers by providing recommendations on how to best structure and optimize their formal programs. Given the need for successful knowledge transfer among employees, organizations must understand the critical factors that are required for mentors to be effective conduits of intellectual capital.

This study also benefited the mentors participating in formal mentoring programs. The resulting recommendations provide insight into how best to organize a mentoring initiative so that the mentor feels supported and effective in the role.

Further, the results provided insight to the mentee on how best to approach a mentoring dyad. Given that mentoring is a two-way street, this study helps protégés understand how to make the relationship mutually beneficial.

The Researcher

The researcher brought to this study both practitioner and academic experience within the field of mentoring. During her master's studies, the researcher studied business and workplace education and developed a specific interest into the practice of mentoring. She conducted a literature review surrounding the topic that resulted in discovery of a gap in the literature pertaining to the mentor's experience. When she began her doctoral

studies, the researcher continued to expand her interest in the topic by connecting her prior work to theories of adult education.

The researcher also had formal and informal experience working with mentoring in a practitioner setting. She leveraged an informal mentor to help her navigate a career change from the field of marketing to that of learning and development. Her mentor provided both emotional support and work-related advice that aided the researcher in making decisions and understanding the nuances associated with the move.

She also had experience managing a formal workplace mentoring program. As a member of an organization's learning and development team, she inherited the management of the existing mentoring efforts. This included facilitation of the mentor/mentee expectation setting, meetings, matching responsibilities, and overall program evaluation. After serving in the role for some time, it became clear that much attention was placed on the mentee and ensuring that they were being set up for success. However, little consideration was given to the mentor and trying to understand how they were making sense of their experience. This was disconcerting, given the amount of time and resources the mentor was dedicating to the relationship.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to explore with 19 mentors in a formal mentoring setting their perceptions of their experience in the role of mentor. It was hoped that this research would provide practitioners with insight on how best to structure their formal mentoring programs in a way that effectively supports the individual in the mentor role, thus resulting in a successful transfer of knowledge between the mentor and protégé. It was also presumed that this research would aid the mentor in making sense of their experience within a formal dyad.

To carry out this purpose, the following four research questions were addressed:

1. How did participants describe what motivated them to take on the role of mentor?
2. What challenges did participants describe they faced in their role as mentors?
3. In what ways did participants learn to increase their professional skills in their role as mentors?
4. How did participants describe the critical elements of organizational support they needed to be a successful mentor?

The literature reviewed in this chapter will provide further insight into the research problem and will be revisited throughout the data collection and analysis stages of the study.

The researcher utilized an extensive number of online databases to become familiar with the topics selected. These included Google Scholar, PROQUEST, JSTOR, and EBSCO, which were accessed through the Teachers College Gottesman Library. She retrieved and reviewed articles in a range of academic journals and publications to ensure she had a representative amount of literature.

Keywords used to identify articles on mentoring included “history of mentoring,” “motivation to mentor,” “benefits of being a mentor,” “the matching process,” “organizational support for mentoring relationships,” “formal mentoring programs,” and “types of mentoring relationships.” The following keywords were used to locate articles on adult learning: “experiential learning,” “dialogue,” “reflection,” “social learning,” and “role-modeling.”

Rationale for Topics

A selected review of the literature will focus on two topics: (1) mentoring and (2) adult learning. These were deemed to be relevant, since the study’s purpose was to explore the mentor’s experience in a formal program and, in particular, what they learned in the role.

Topic I, Mentoring, is covered by a review of literature and research on the history of mentoring as well as the theories commonly associated with the practice. The section will detail the various types of mentoring relationships with a focus on formal dyads, which was the structure this study was investigating. Within formal relationships, the researcher focused on the role of the company, as well as the individual and organizational outcomes. The review also explored the motivating factors for one to serve in a mentor role, detailing the matching process and discussing the organization’s support.

Topic II reviews literature on Adult Learning Theory. Given that the purpose of this study was to understand how and what a mentor learns in their role, it was important to understand theories pertaining to experiential learning, reflection, dialogue, and social learning theory.

The chapter concludes with a summary that synthesizes the literature, followed by a description of the Conceptual Framework. This model was developed in alignment with the Research Questions.

Topic I: Mentoring

Definition and History of Mentoring

Although the study of mentoring is fairly new, its historical roots can be found in Greek mythology. As portrayed in Homer's *Odyssey*, the mentor is entrusted to protect and shield King Odysseus's son while he is away fighting Troy (Kahle-Piasecki, 2011; Russell & Adams, 1997). Since its inception, many different definitions of mentoring have emerged, and this lack of consensus has become a common critique. Whereas in many workplace settings, mentoring is defined as a practice that enables knowledge transfer and career advancement, more academic and educational settings define mentoring as a key learning activity required for someone to truly understand their role and future service to others (Davis, 2005).

Although different contexts result in varying definitions surrounding mentoring, there are two core features that are consistent (Davis, 2005). The traditional definition of mentoring is described as an "intense interpersonal exchange between a senior experienced colleague (mentor) and a less experienced junior colleague (protégé [or mentee]) in which the mentor provides support, direction, and feedback regarding career plans and personal development" (Russell & Adams, 1997, p. 2). Kram (1985), one of the most notable scholars in the field of mentoring, defines it as "a relationship between a

younger adult and an older, more experienced adult that helps the younger individual learn to navigate in the adult world and the world of work” (p. 2). While in today’s organizations age may not be the key defining characteristic of a mentoring dyad, this notion of experience is consistent. The second core feature that is present in most definitions is development. The more seasoned employee typically assumes the role of “mentor” and guides and supports the mentee as they grow in some capacity.

Moreover, while there have been modifications to the meaning of mentoring throughout the years, it is consistently described in a workplace setting, which is the defining characteristic that distinguishes a mentoring relationship from simply a personal association (Ragins & Kram, 2007). However, while there is an abundance of research pertaining to mentoring within the profession of education, it has only begun to emerge in non-academic organizations within the past 25 years (Chao et al., 1992; Kahle-Piasecki, 2011).

Coaching versus Mentoring

There’s a need to differentiate the definitions between mentoring and coaching, especially within a workplace context. Coaching is a newer field than that of mentoring and is described as a developmental process that has a performance and behavioral focus (Clutterbuck, 2009; Thomas & Thomas, 2015). It has evolved over time to become a profitable accredited practice, with organizations such as the International Coach Federation offering certifications for a fee (Rolfe, 2015). Typically, coaches are brought into an organization to tackle very specific industry or role challenges and they are considered “prescriptive and proactive” (Richards, 2015). Thomas and Thomas (2015) state, “Coaching looks at the present and how to improve to a future state and is more skill focused, and mentoring looks at the future and at potential” (p. 55). The relationship is based upon a desired intervention that the organization has identified. Thus, the coach typically has a dual client; that of the company who hired them and that of the coachee

(Passmore, 2007). While both coaching and mentoring are useful tools that organizations can employ to develop their people, it is important to note their differences.

Types of Mentoring Relationships

While it is commonly assumed that mentoring relationships take on the traditional form of two people, there are other structures that are growing in popularity. Group mentoring occurs when a few different individuals come together to share knowledge and best practices. Zachary (2010) states that these relationships are particularly common within professional organizations. Moreover, he describes this mentoring structure as one where a single, senior mentor is responsible for overseeing numerous protégés. A study performed by Dansky (1996) proposed that there were four outstanding benefits of group mentoring: psychosocial support, the perception of inclusion, the prevalence of networking opportunities, and occurrence of role-modeling activities. This structure is suggested to be beneficial due to its organic promotion of group discussion and information sharing (Kaye & Jacobson, 1995).

Peer mentoring commonly occurs when two colleagues on the same or very close “step-ahead” hierarchical levels establish a dyad (Ensher, Thomas, & Murphy, 2001; Zachary 2010). These relationships are believed to provide value in that the individuals are simultaneously experiencing the same organizational challenges. The colleagues can truly connect with one another and provide relatable career and psychosocial guidance. Moreover, whereas in most mentoring relationships it is assumed that the benefits are exclusive to the mentee, it is suggested that both individuals grow in this particular structure (Kram & Isabella, 1985; Russell & Adams, 1997).

Bamford (2011) performed research to uncover the effectiveness of the e-mentoring relationship. Given the rapid pace of change within organizations and the need for a quick response, the author suggested that online interactions could be both effective and efficient. Further examination indicated that these virtual connections result

in a reduction in organizational costs and help to support a true “learning community” (Bamford, 2011). Intel was believed to be one of the innovators of this form of mentoring, and other companies such as KPMG followed close behind (Owens, 2006). Yet, virtual mentoring has been one of the newest structures, and there has been a nominal amount of pilot research. Additional investigation needs to occur to substantiate their efficacy (Hunt, 2005).

Reverse mentoring has just recently begun to gain popularity within organizations, especially with the increasing reliance on emerging and new technology (Davis, 2005). A more junior employee serving in the mentor role, helping to support an employee who has more tenure at the company, characterizes this structure. The less seasoned individual has a strong particular skill set that is lacking from the senior colleague, and the goal is for knowledge transfer, rather than career advancement or socialization. This approach is commonly used to create a mutual rapport and understanding across a multi-generational workplace (Marcinkus Murphy, 2012).

Functions of the Mentor

Kram’s (1983, 1985) work on the functions of the mentor is the most commonly cited in mentoring research. She suggested that mentors provide their mentees two key sources of support: career and psychosocial. It can be suggested that whereas career functions serve on an organizational level, psychosocial functions operate on a more interpersonal level (Davis, 2005). Moreover, research has shown that these two functions can work together interdependently to create the most impactful outcome to a mentoring relationship (Chao et al., 1992; Davis, 2005).

Kram (1985) refers to career functions as those that prepare the mentor for advancement either inside or outside the organization. This can include sponsorship, providing challenging assignments, protection, and exposure and visibility to key allies within the company. The mentor provides feedback that, in turn, fast tracks the mentee’s

development. This results in the learning of a unique skill set that allows for one to more rapidly establish their professional identity within an organization (Davis, 2005; Zellers, Howard, & Barcic, 2008).

Psychosocial functions focus on one's sense of competence and perceived effectiveness in their role (Fogarty, Reinstein, Heath, & Sinason, 2017). Schockett and Haring-Hidore (1985) elaborated on Kram's work and proposed four specific psychosocial functions of the mentor: (1) role-modeling, where the mentee watches how the mentor interacts with others and deals with conflict, how to balance personal and professional priorities, etc.; (2) confidence building, where the mentor provides emotional support and encourages the mentee to perform at their best; (3) counseling, where the mentor engages the mentee with dialogue surrounding their anxieties and fears; and (4) friendship, where a mentor moves away from positional power and supports on a collegial or peer level.

Informal Mentoring

Informal mentoring consists of relationships that grow organically and require no official guidance or instruction from the organization. A company does not regulate these connections, but rather the two individuals spontaneously find each other, and the mentor deems the mentee worthy of guidance (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Commonly, the mentor will recognize aspects of himself/herself in the mentee and decides to develop the individual (Davis, 2005; Erikson, 1963). It has been suggested that the organic matching characteristic of an informal mentoring structure results in more career-related support to protégés than that of a formal dyad (Chao et al., 1992). This could be a result of the recognition of innate similarities found between the mentor and mentee (Chao et al., 1992).

Ragins and Cotton (1999) also contend that individuals with informal mentors received higher compensation and promotions than those who were either non-mentored

or in a formal mentoring relationship. However, a follow-up study conducted by Ragins, Cotton, and Miller (2000) challenged that finding and called it potentially erroneous since it does not control for quality or satisfaction with the overall mentoring relationship. Although the mentee may receive advancement within the organization, this cannot be correlated to one's overall gratification with being in the dyad.

Formal Mentoring Programs

Formal mentorship programs emerged in the 1980s and continue to grow in popularity. There have been numerous economic and societal factors that served as a catalyst for organizations to adopt this type of mentoring structure. These include: increasing competition, growing cross-cultural companies, labor shortages, the explosion of mergers, and the mandate of innovation (Kram & Bragar, 1991; Murray & Owen, 1991; Zey, 1988). As a result of this environmental shift, many companies have begun to acknowledge the obstacles hindering their informal developmental relationships and have decided to embrace a more formal mentoring structure.

Formal mentoring programs attempt to achieve the same results and benefits as informal mentoring relationships, but strive to institutionalize the process (Davis, 2005). The key characteristic that defines a formal mentoring program is that it is the company's responsibility to structure the relationship, beginning with the recruitment and matching of the mentor/mentees. (Chao et al., 1992). The program administrators then continue to guide and support the dyad throughout the duration of the relationship up until the termination of the mentoring efforts.

Formal approaches to mentoring have received much criticism. These include role conflict between the mentee's supervisor and their mentor, negative experiences with rapport between mentee/mentor, lack of effectiveness from the mentor, and resentment by non-participants (Douglas & McCauley, 1999; Noe, 1991). However, it can be argued that these negative reactions can occur in both a formal or informal mentoring

relationship and, further, can be indicative of a particular occurrence rather than the relationship as a whole (Davis, 2005).

The formal mentoring structure has also received criticism surrounding the time commitment required from the mentor (Allen, Poteet, & Burroughs, 1997). Research has positively correlated the mentor's level of commitment to the overall success of the dyad (Allen & Eby, 2008; Allen, Eby, & Lentz, 2006; Ortiz-Walters & Gilson, 2005). The mentor's presence, both physically and emotionally, is viewed as a vital component of mentoring satisfaction. However, this adds an additional load to the mentor's existing role at the organization.

The organizational outcomes. While there are many positive outcomes for individuals in mentoring programs, it has been suggested that organizations benefit as well (Wilson & Elman, 1990). Furthermore, the "Best Companies to Work For" use formal mentoring programs as a criteria factor for inclusion onto the list (Branch, 1999). Kahle-Piasecki (2011) classified the ROI into three primary categories: retention, attracting talent, and savings on training and development. Due to having emotional and skill set support, it was suggested that protégés stayed at their companies for a longer duration of time that resulted in an increase in a company's overall retention rate (Russell & Adam, 1997). CBS reported that the cost of an employee leaving her/his job was approximately 20% of the individual's salary (Lucas, 2012). Thus, focusing on retention through mentoring could be viewed as a key cost-savings strategy for an organization.

Given that most organizations exist in highly competitive and turbulent business environments, top-notch management skills are critical. Mentoring helps bridge the knowledge gap between the experienced and novice worker that results in a more rapid development of future leaders. Mentoring also serves a socialization function that aids new employees, which resulted in dramatically lowered formal training costs. The "green" hires are not only taught explicit technical skills, but they also gain an understanding of abstract elements such as corporate culture and the internal political

intricacies. In many cases, this is not a part of a training department's curriculum. Therefore, mentoring is key in the assimilation of inexperienced workers into their new roles (Payne & Huffman, 2005; Wilson & Elman, 1990).

The individual outcomes. As previously mentioned, mentors support two functions: Career and Psychosocial (Kram, 1983). Protégé results from the mentor support included tangible outcomes such as increased promotions and salaries (Scandura, 1992). These rewards further produced subjective by-products, such as higher self-esteem and lower levels of stress (Allen et al., 2004; Dreher & Ash, 1990; Russell & Adams, 1997). In a study performed by Eby and Lockwood (2005), it was reported that the top benefit perceived by a protégé in a formal mentoring program was coaching, or in other words, having the opportunity to analyze problems with their mentors and work toward finding solutions. They also proposed that mentees relied heavily on their experienced counterpart to provide career planning and networking opportunities. These learning outcomes included achievement in technical knowledge, an adjustment in motivations and attitudes, and overall skill advancement (Hezlett, 2005).

The Motivation to Mentor

The successful recruitment and selection of mentors is a key component of a formal mentoring relationship. In a mixed methods study conducted by Thurston, D'Abate, and Eddy (2012), the authors reported that 23% of the employees they surveyed faced barriers when seeking out mentors. Moreover, 14% of the respondents reported a shortage of mentors, and 18% stated that there was a lack of access to these mentors. Yet, in much of the existing mentoring literature, this finding is commonly overlooked, and it is assumed that there is an abundance of individuals wanting to serve in the mentor role, especially as employees progress toward retirement (Aryee, Chay, & Chew, 1996; Ragins & Cotton, 1993; Thurston et al., 2012). Therefore, further investigation is needed to fully understand what the motivating factors are for one to participate in a mentor position.

The impact of gender. As women continue to enter into corporate positions at a rapid pace, organizations are responding to their need for additional support through formal mentoring initiatives (Ellinger, 2002). Moreover, it has been suggested that same-sex mentoring relationships occur more frequently and are preferred by mentees (Kalbfleisch, 2002). As a result, there is a significant need for workplaces to successfully recruit women into the mentor role (Bailey, Voyles, & Finkelstein, 2014; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). However, while it is proposed that both men and women have the same amount of intent to mentor (Ragins & Cotton, 1993), it appears that women perceive many more drawbacks to serving in the role than do men (Hansman, 2002; Hetty, Baugh, & Euwema, 2005; Ragins & Cotton, 1993). Thus, this creates a major recruitment challenge for human resource professionals.

Much of the existing literature stressed that a perceived benefit for the mentor was the increased visibility it provided within an organization (Allen et al., 1997; Ellinger 2002). However, Ragins and Cotton (1993) administered a correlational survey to 229 women and 281 men and found that the women respondents felt this additional exposure could potentially result in negative attention, and they considered it a drawback to serving in the role. Further, the female respondents reported that they had less time to support a mentee due to greater job demands than men. The authors attributed this to the women's potential belief that they must work twice as hard to be considered as competent as their male counterparts, resulting in having little disposable time to support a mentee's growth. Lastly, the female participants claimed that they did not possess the necessary qualifications to serve as a mentor (p. 107). Ragins and Cotton (1993) correlated the women's lack of self-confidence to their perception that the mentor role was more "male-typed."

The authors did note that a limitation to their study was the very niche sample population they studied. All of the respondents were educated white-collar workers in research and development firms within the United States. The study did not take into

account race or other variables that may further impact one's perception of the mentor role. Future investigation could employ a broader sample and take on a qualitative approach in an attempt to provide more clarity into the perceived drawbacks for women. These data would provide a critical missing piece in mentoring literature that could aid practitioners in better structuring their mentoring efforts.

Personality traits. Research has focused on one's personality and the implications it has on a mentor's motivation to serve in the role (Allen et al., 1997; Scandura, 1992). Hetty et al. (2005) administered a correlational survey to 262 employees of a Dutch bank, and the results suggested that mentors with high career aspirations showed more of a willingness to participate in a formal initiative. The authors found that the main motive for mentors to be in the dyad was their own career advancement. Their study suggested that mentors accepted the role so that their work would gain exposure, thus resulting in an additional consideration surrounding promotions. For many employees, the motivation to be a mentor is completely a self-serving drive (Hetty et al., 2005).

Although the authors studied a Dutch organization, one could assume that the results would translate to an American context, especially given the individualistic mindset of the United States. However, this finding is contradictory to the work of Allen (2003), who stated that the motivation to mentor is intrinsic and other-oriented. Further investigation is needed into the "self" versus "other" orientation for the mentor, with a focus on an American population.

When examining the motivation to mentor through the five factor model of personality, it has generally been accepted that individuals with high levels of extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience were typically more willing to be a mentor (Lee, Dougherty, & Turban, 2000; Menges, 2016; Niehoff, 2005). Yet, findings pertaining to agreeableness and neuroticism tend to be mixed and warrant future research. Whereas Lee et al. (2000) suggested that employees reporting high levels of neuroticism were usually not as motivated to enter into a mentoring dyad, Niehoff (2005)

proposed that this personality trait had no correlation to one's willingness to mentor and instead suggested that it may impact the effectiveness of the relationship. Further, Niehoff's (2005) survey of 194 practicing veterinarians found that agreeableness did not predict one's propensity to serve as a mentor, since individuals' "tendency towards compliance might prevent them from stepping forward as mentors/leaders in a voluntary situation" (p. 329). However, contradictory research exists that suggests that agreeableness was indeed an accurate predictor of willingness to mentor. Since those who are high on this trait typically displayed concern for others and were more altruistic, they may desire to engage in a supportive relationship (Allen et al., 1997; Lee et al., 2000).

There is an opportunity to conduct further research on personality traits and their relationship to one's willingness to serve as a mentor. By employing quantitative and qualitative measures to get more insight into the topic, one can better provide direction to practitioners on how best to recruit mentors. This research could also focus on what personality traits typically predict a positive outcome for a mentor, rather than focusing on the impact one's competencies have over the protégé's experience.

Contextual prosocial motivation. Contextual prosocial motivation can be defined as one's desire to serve in a position within their organization that will help others (Grant & Berg, 2011). Bear and Hwang (2015) extended the work of Allen (2003) and administered a qualitative survey to 322 employees within three healthcare companies. The authors sought out to examine the significance of the relationship between contextual prosocial motivation and one's willingness to serve as a mentor. Bear and Hwang also investigated the relationship between contextual factors such as an individual's organization-based self-esteem (OBSE), defined as their sense of value within their corporate context (Pierce & Gardner, 2004), their perceived organizational support (POS), or the degree to which an individual feels their company values their work and overall wellbeing (Shore & Shore, 1995), proximity to retirement, and the threat of

downsizing to see the impact it had on an employee's level of contextual prosocial motivation.

Bear and Hwang (2015) found a positive relationship between willingness to be a mentor and one's level of prosocial motivation. The authors recommended that practitioners focus on providing opportunities for employees to enhance their contextual prosocial motivation, which in turn would increase an individual's desire to serve in mentoring roles. They also found a very strong relationship between OBSE and contextual prosocial motivation, meaning that if organizations created an environment that promoted positive feedback, teamwork, and recognition, then employees would want to further promote the goodwill, potentially through participating as a mentor.

The study also explored one's proximity to retirement and their level of contextual prosocial behavior. A negative relationship was found, which was contrary to some of the existing literature. Kram and Hall (1989) found that employees in the later stage of their careers (or 40 years and older) tended to be more inclined to be a mentor. Though participants in Bear and Hwang's (2015) study stated that one's impending retirement did not motivate them to share knowledge and serve as a mentor, in fact the authors found the opposite held true. They attributed this to the fact that employees were retiring at slower rates due to the financial crises, and as a result viewed their acquired knowledge as a competitive advantage over others. The respondents revealed that they were highly reluctant to share this knowledge with mentees. Lastly, Bear and Hwang (2015) found no significant relationship between whether or not the threat of downsizing had an impact on prosocial motivation. The authors stated that that could be because corporate restructuring was omnipresent and employees were consistently hearing about potential layoffs.

The recency of Bear and Hwang's work (completed in 2015) presents an interesting segue for future inquiry. Much of the existing research was published prior to the financial crisis of 2008, or shortly thereafter, and does not account for the long-term

effects of the devastating event. Although Kram and Hall (1989) found that corporate stress was a positive catalyst for one to serve as a mentor, a lot has changed in today's business environment. Variables such as delayed retirement, a decrease in job security, and one's trust level for their organization need to be re-examined within the context of a mentor. Further, Bear and Hwang stated that a major limitation of their study was that it took place within a healthcare organization. The authors suggested that the corporate culture within this setting might naturally result in higher levels of citizenship behaviors. An assumption could be made that the results might be quite different in a financial or more profit-focused organizational context.

The Matching Process

It has been suggested that informal mentoring relationships are more effective than formal due to their increasingly organic nature, which includes the initial identification and socialization of the mentor and mentee (Chao, 1997; Chao et al., 1992). Therefore, it can be supposed that trying to mimic this approach to matching in a formal initiative will also have a positive impact on the dyad. However, while much focus has been placed on matching techniques that lead to a positive mentee experience (within formal and informal structures) (Bozeman & Feeney, 2008; Menges, 2016), there is considerably less literature that focuses solely on the mentor's needs. It is commonly presumed that if the protégé is satisfied with their mentor, then the mentor is also equally content, which is not always the case. It becomes increasingly problematic to continue to examine the matching process as a single entity, rather than two individuals with differing needs entering into a committed relationship.

Viator (1999) administered a correlational survey to 723 individuals who were working at a major public accounting firm that had a formal mentoring program. He sought out to identify the components that made for a "satisfying" experience for both the mentor and mentee. The data showed that 32.8% of respondents said they had no input

into the matching process, though the respondents who did have a voice reported higher levels of satisfaction being in the relationship. The author suggested that human resource professionals must find a way to gain input from the dyad before formalizing a match.

Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, and Johnson (2005) summarized two types of fit: supplementary and complementary. Within the framework of mentoring, a supplementary fit would refer to the perceived similarities between the mentor and mentee, such as the values, goals, and attitudes. A complementary fit could be viewed in terms of what each member of the dyad brings to the table in the obtainment of a shared goal. Therefore, a challenge for HRD is to match the mentee and mentor so that both parties see a “fit” (Bailey et al., 2014; Homans, 1958; Hu, Baranik, & Wu, 2014; Poulsen, 2013). Bozeman and Feeney (2008) stated:

We feel that mentoring relationships should in most cases be viewed as sub optimization process, seeking the best possible fit between different and possibly conflicting preferences, the product of a social exchange, focusing not only on the motivation and needs of the protégé, but also of the mentor and, ultimately, of the two jointly (i.e. the dyad). (p. 472)

It should be noted that it is quite difficult to find a consistently reliable and empirically tested technique for matching, especially for a formal program. After reviewing an extensive amount of research, one can find many suggestions for effective matching, yet there are no statistically proven methods, specifically when it pertains to mentor-specific approaches (Allen et al., 2006). Whereas some recommend a similarity-attraction approach (Alleman, Cochran, Doverspike, & Newman, 1984; Hu et al., 2014), others suggest matching based upon personality (Allen & Poteet, 1999; Menges, 2016), learning styles (Honey & Mumford, 1982), or even race and gender (Allen & Eby, 2004; Ragins & Cotton, 1993). What is conclusive is that there is no one proven method and that there is an opportunity to further examine techniques through the lens of the mentor participating in a formal program.

Yet, it is becoming apparent that there are some key factors in matching the mentor and mentee. One effective method of grouping is through the act of pairing individuals who have similar cognitive styles. This entails analyzing if the individuals are left-brain or right-brain oriented. Depending on whether an individual is characterized by being intuitive and thoughtful (right-brained) or is depicted as being logical and analytical (left-brained), it is believed that this has an effect on the outcome of the mentoring relationship (Kahle-Piasecki, 2011). Moreover, it was found that successful mentor and mentee matching could be achieved through the evaluation of each individual's disposition and temperament. Kahle-Piasecki (2011) suggested that a common method of determining specific personalities could be accomplished by administering the traditional Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. However, a frequently overlooked, but very effective way for matching is simply having either the mentor and mentee request one another (Bell & Treleaven, 2011). Once again, adults equate a positive association with experiences when they feel they are in control (Allen et al., 2006).

Research can be found that focuses on the demographic variables of the mentoring relationship. It is suggested that same-sex mentoring relationships promote higher psychosocial outcomes, since the individuals relate to each other on a more distinct level (Ismail, Kho Khian Jui, Boerhannoedin, & Rasip, 2009). Furthermore, it was proposed that females received more psychosocial benefits, regardless of whether there was a male or female acting as the mentor. It was assumed that women had more emotional and friendship needs than males. Both genders were more apt to willingly provide this guidance to the women mentees (Allen & Eby, 2004). Yet, when race was explored, it was found that higher career support was associated with same-race dyads, but the psychosocial results and overall experience of the mentor and mentee were not affected by this particular demographic (Ensher et al., 2001).

Organizational Support

Much of the mentoring literature has focused on two distinct forms of mentoring: informal and formal. Whereas informal relationships grow organically and require no official guidance or instruction from the organization (Russell & Adams, 1997), formal mentoring programs require extensive organizational support to ensure that the mentor and mentee are successful in the relationship (Zachary, 2005). In this type of initiative, human resource professionals determine the goals of the relationship, program objectives, and policies (Viator, 1999). Given the amount of structure imposed on formal mentoring programs, practitioners need to consider the extent of preparation mentors should receive as they engage in the relationship.

Training. As Garvey and Alred (2000) proposed, it should not be assumed that a mentor has the skills or knowledge to effectively support a mentee. Therefore, it is suggested that organizations support mentors through training efforts (Allen et al., 2006). Sarri (2011) stated that training mentors before the kickoff of a formal relationship will only boost the individual's confidence, thus further ensuring a positive learning experience for both members of the dyad. Poulsen (2013) suggested that "the more focus there is on the mentor's opportunities for learning, the easier it is to motivate them to take on the role of mentor and the greater the effect the mentoring programme will have on mentees and on the organisation" (p. 256). Portillo (2013) found that individuals who felt a high level of perceived organizational support (POS) were more likely to participate in a mentor role. Therefore, it is necessary for workplaces to examine the amount of training and resources they are providing to the mentors.

Redmond (1990) suggested that training should include a discussion of:

- (a) the goals and objectives of the program, (b) the matching process,
- (c) support services available to the mentor (d) basic and cross-cultural communication skills, (e) relationship-building, and (f) the roles of the mentor as an advocate, broker of services, imparter of knowledge and skills, and friend and wise counselor. (p. 197)

Young and Perrewé (2004) analyzed survey data from 108 assistant professors serving in mentor roles and 215 doctoral students who were acting as protégés to examine the relationship between expectations for mentoring support and perceptions of support received. Through a correlational analysis, they found a significant and positive relationship between the two variables. The authors stated that an important implication from their study was that managing expectations from the start of the dyad was a critical step for human resource professionals. It is recommended that some sort of learning and development opportunity be available that explicitly addresses the perceptions and roles for the relationship. Yet, one limitation to Young and Perrewé's study was the variance in the sample populations (108 mentors to 215 protégés). Future research should be conducted to get a more comprehensive understanding of the mentor's expectations.

However, while it has been suggested that training mentors is necessary, it would be remiss to neglect the abundance of research that states that a perceived cost of being a mentor is the time commitment it requires (Allen et al., 2006, 2009; Ragins & Scandura, 1999). One could assume that mandating a training session for mentors would add yet another obligation on top of a mentor's day-to-day responsibilities (Voetmann, 2017). Further, Hezlett and Gibson (2005) proposed that protégés might find it condescending to suggest that they must undergo training to be part of a mentoring relationship. While research has stated that a training intervention is needed prior to the kickoff a formal mentoring initiative, additional investigation is necessary regarding the content and format of training appropriate for formal workplace programs.

Topic II: Adult Learning Theory

This study was intended to investigate the meaning making that mentors underwent during their experience in that role. While much emphasis has been placed on the career and psychosocial outcomes of the protégé, much less was known about how and what the

mentor learns. Thus, a focus surrounding adult learning theory was applicable for this review of literature. As noted earlier, the following topics pertaining to adult learning theory will be discussed: experiential learning, reflection, dialogue, and social learning theory.

Learning from Experience

Kolb (1984) stated, “Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p. 41). Such is the essence of experiential learning, in that experience is the primary stimulus for learning and the process is created and re-created rather than an independent entity to be acquired or transmitted. Dewey (1938) argued that in order for learning to be educative, there must be two core principles present: continuity and interaction. Learners must connect what they have learned from current experiences to those in the past and must also see future implications (continuity). Moreover, they must also understand how the experience is a transaction between an individual and his environment (interaction).

Kolb (1976, 1984) drew from the work of Dewey, Piaget, and Lewin and stated that learning from experience was an interaction between two processes: experience is first taken or grasped, and then transformed into meaning. He emphasized that learning was a process and not an outcome, and that all learning was essentially re-learning. In Kolb’s commonly cited model, he suggested that four different interrelated and cyclical phases must be present in order for learning to be effective. These include Concrete Experience (the event), Reflection Observation (analyzing what happened), Abstract Conceptualization (what was learned and future implications), and Active Experimentation (what will be done differently in the future). Kolb proposed the Learning Styles Inventory and stated that adults naturally have a preferred style of learning. This preference is a result of two conflicting modes as viewed on an axis where east-west is referred to as the Processing Continuum (how we approach a task), and the

north-south axis is the Perception Continuum (our emotional response to the task) (Kolb, 1971).

Reflection. Boud, Keogh, and Walker (1985, 1996) critiqued Kolb's work due to his lack of emphasis on reflection. Further, they stressed that we must retreat and attend to the feelings created by these experiences in order for true reflection to be effective. Boud et al. (1985, 1996) suggested that proper reflection requires three stages: (1) adults must return to and replay the experience; (2) they must attend to those feelings; and (3) they must re-evaluate the experience in hopes that they can use it as a way to prepare for a future occurrence experience. Boud et al. (1985, 1996) stress that individuals must be present and work through any potentially negative feelings, as they can show up as barriers to future learning.

Schön (1983) expanded on Dewey's work on experiential learning and emphasized the practitioner's role in reflection, both during and after an event. Schön assumes that those involved in the reflective process were focused on both problem solving and problem finding. Practitioners must have the ability and desire to make judgments about actions in situations and remain action-oriented. Schön's work focused on three key concepts that included: knowing-in-action, reflection-on-action, and reflection-in-action. Knowing-in-action was having the tacit internal knowledge that allows you to automatically employ a course-correct. Reflection-on-action was thinking through a situation after it happened. Reflection-in-action entailed stopping to think during an event, resulting in the practitioner engaging in on-the-spot course correction.

Reflective Discourse

Transformative learning occurs when an individual encounters an uncomfortable experience followed by a process of deep critical reflection. One starts to question their previously held attitudes, values, and beliefs and, as a result, come to view themselves

and the world in a significantly altered manner (Mezirow, 1990). Zachary (2005) described the theory as:

A cycle begins as learners become aware of their existing assumptions. Learner self-awareness converts to self-understanding as people begin to challenge existing assumptions. The learning that results from increased understanding enables learners to let go of the self-limiting and unrealistic assumptions holding them back and transform their thinking into new and more productive action and behavior. (p. 225)

Mezirow (1990) proposed a ten-step process that one undergoes as they work through a transformative learning event. One of the key components to his model is that individuals must connect and have a dialogue with trusted others for support and guidance as they examine their prior roles. Therefore, it can be assumed that having a mentor could be an instrumental component in one's transformative learning experience (Brookfield, 1987; Galbraith & Cohen, 1996). Daloz (2000) proposed four components that must be present in order for a transformative learning event to occur, which included "the presence of the other, reflective discourse, a mentoring community, and opportunities for committed action" (p. 112).

The role of reflective discourse is a critical component within the transformative learning process. Mezirow (1990) was inspired by Habermas's conditions for proper reflective discourse to occur, which include: accurate information, freedom from coercion, openness to other points of view, the ability to assess arguments, awareness of context and one's own assumptions, and equal opportunity for participation and a willingness to seek new understanding through dialogue. By discussing ideas and conflicts, the mentor and mentee partake in reflective discourse, thus creating the opportunity for one to change their perspective on work and their identity (Mullen & Noe, 1999).

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory (Bandura, 1986) suggests that individuals can learn by watching, observing, and modeling others. Albert Bandura stated that our social interactions with others greatly shape how we view ourselves and our levels of self-efficacy. He elaborated that “most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action” (Bandura, 1977, p. 22). Observing how a mentor acts in a given situation and patterns of acceptable behavior within an organization helps the mentee with the acculturation process. While the mentoring rapport could traditionally fall into the master-apprentice category, Chao (2007) posits that social learning can occur on a subtler basis where neither member is completely conscious that the modeling is taking place (Dominguez & Hager, 2013).

Summary

Research is still in its infancy surrounding formal mentoring programs, especially within the context of a non-academic setting. Moreover, while many definitions of mentoring exist, for the purpose of this study the mentor will be a more experienced employee and the mentee will be a junior colleague.

This particular study focused on formal mentoring programs, which tend to replicate many of the characteristics of informal relationships, yet place a reliance on the organizational support and structure.

Using experiential learning, reflection, reflective discourse, and social learning theories as a lens to understand the mentor’s experience was an instrumental element for both mentors and practitioners who were structuring their formal mentoring program.

Moreover, while research exists surround mentoring as well as adult education, there have been few studies that have connected the two.

Reviewing this literature allowed the researcher to formulate the following research questions: (1) How did participants describe what motivated them to take on the role of mentor? (2) What challenges did participants describe they faced in their role as mentors? (3) In what ways did participants learn to increase their professional skills in their role as mentors? (4) How did participants describe the critical elements of organizational support they needed to be a successful mentor? The researcher continually reviewed the literature throughout the dissertation process.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that supports this study can be found in Appendix G and is provided below in graphic form. It consists of four categories that are aligned with the research questions and served as the framework for coding the data collected from the interviews and focus group. These categories are: Motivating Factors, Challenges, Learnings, and Organizational Support.

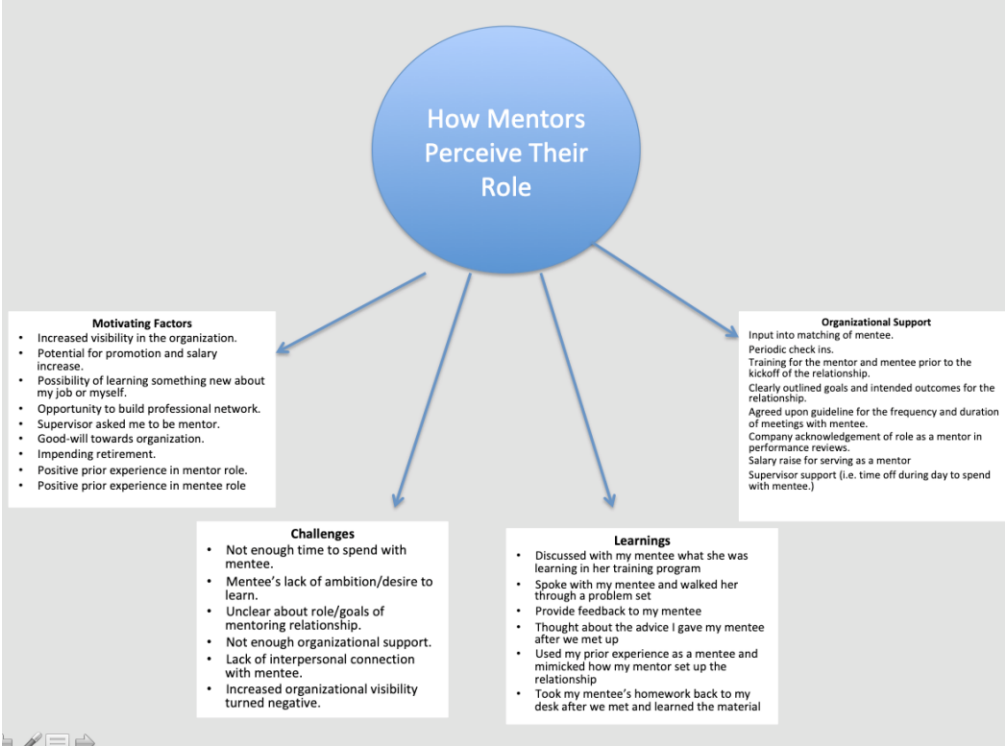


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction and Overview

The purpose of this research was to explore with 19 mentors in a formal mentoring program their perceptions of their experience in the role of mentor. It is hoped that this research will provide practitioners with insight on how best to structure their formal mentoring programs in a way that effectively supports the individual in the mentor role, thus resulting in a successful transfer of knowledge between the mentor and protégé. It was also presumed that this research would aid the mentor in making sense of their experience within a formal dyad.

To carry out this purpose, the following four research questions were addressed:

1. How did participants describe what motivated them to take on the role of mentor?
2. What challenges did participants describe they faced in their role as mentors?
3. In what ways did participants learn to increase their professional skills in their role as mentors?
4. How did participants describe the critical elements of organizational support they needed to be a successful mentor?

This chapter describes the study's methodology and includes a discussion of the following: (a) rationale for research approach, (b) description of the research sample, (c) summary of information needed, (d) overview of research design, (e) methods of data collection, (f) analysis and synthesis of data, (g) ethical considerations, (h) issues of

trustworthiness, and (I) limitations of the study. It will also set the context in which the study took place. The researcher will provide insight into the history of Camson Retailers, along with pertinent details surrounding the organization's training program and how HR incorporated the mentoring initiative into the curriculum. A description of the organization's climate will also be included in this chapter in attempt to provide clarity into the corporate culture at Camson Retailers. The final section will be composed of a brief summary of the chapter.

Rationale for Qualitative Research and Case Study Approach

This study employed a qualitative, case study approach in an attempt to gain a deeper understanding of the mentor's experience in a traditional, formal workplace mentoring program. Qualitative inquiry was used due to the fact that it "emphasizes the great and multifaceted complexity characterizing human experience and the sociocultural context in which humans act" (Goussinsky, Reshef, Yanay-Ventura, & Yassour-Borochowitz, 2011). Since the intent of this research was to capture the subjective sense-making of the mentors through reflective dialogue, the researcher deemed a qualitative methodology appropriate (Creswell, 2014). Moreover, this research attempted to understand the mentor's reality and did not gauge truth or falsity. Rather, it sought to clarify the processes that individuals engaged in, which lent itself to a qualitative approach (Maxwell, 2008). The context and environment in which this study was conducted was also a very critical element that relied on the researcher's observations and that warranted qualitative research (Merriam, 1998).

This study also employed a case study approach since the researcher sought to explore a social phenomenon situated within a particular context and utilized multiple data sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008). As Yin (2003) proposes, a case study design allows for the researcher to understand the "how" and "why" of the problem. Moreover, in this

study, the workplace context was a critical element that must be acknowledged throughout the research (Yin, 2003). As such, a case study methodology supported the goals for this study.

After a careful review of the literature on mentoring, the researcher confirmed that little was known about the learning that occurred for individuals who served in a mentor role within a formal workplace setting. While the mentee's experience had been extensively explored, there was significantly less known pertaining to the phenomenon of the mentor's experience. Therefore, a qualitative case study design was well suited for this study. This approach allowed the researcher to adequately address and understand the sense making mentors made as they lived the experience.

Description of the Research Sample

The researcher employed a purposeful sample of 19 participants. As Maxwell (2013) states, a purposeful approach allows for the greatest chance for the researcher to receive answers to the research questions. The researcher selected participants based upon the following criteria:

- Currently employed by Camson Retailers
- Must have served in the role of mentor within Camson Retailers' formal workplace program
- Must have served in mentor role within the last five years

The researcher had access to Camson Retailers' formal mentoring program that was offered to entry-level employees as part of their Merchant Development Program (MDP). By partnering with the Program Manager of the MDP training initiative, the researcher collected the names and email addresses of former mentors who served in the role.

The researcher sent out an email invitation (Appendix D) along with an informed consent form (Appendix E) for each potential participant to review. Participants were asked to sign the consent form and were told in written and verbal form that their identity would be confidential and that participation was voluntary. They were made aware that the interviews would be recorded and that the transcripts and other data collected would be used for research purposes only.

Interviews were conducted in person at the corporate headquarters of Camson Retailers located in New York, New York. They were within 60 minutes, and all but one interview was audio-taped and transcribed. One participant requested not to be recorded, so the researcher took detailed notes. The interviews took place during July-September of 2018.

In order to achieve triangulation, the researcher also conducted an on-site focus group and document review. The focus group consisted of five prior mentors who met the same criteria as the interviewees but were not part of the study. This session also took place in the corporate headquarters of Camson Retailers located in New York City.

Overview of Information Needed

This multi-case study focused on 19 prior mentors who participated in the Camson Retailers' MDP mentoring program. The data collected will help practitioners understand how to best support the individual serving in the role of mentor, thus ensuring that they have a positive learning experience. The researcher sought out information surrounding four areas: (a) contextual, (b) perceptual, (c) demographic, and (d) theoretical.

Contextual Data

As Lewin (1935) posits, it is imperative to take into account one's environment when trying to understand their behavior. Specifically, Lewin says behavior is a function

of the interaction between persona and environment. This notion was especially relevant for this study where the researcher was entering into a global organization that has experienced much transition within the past few years. The common context for this study was the participant's experience in the role of the mentor as part of Camson Retailers' MDP mentoring program. The researcher obtained information about the initiative from the current Program Manager. This included a review of the mentoring materials so that the researcher could adequately understand the climate in which the mentoring relationship took place. These data were collected by a selected review of relevant public company documents.

Perceptual Data

Perceptual information was collected in attempt to understand the meaning making of the mentor's experience. This included insight into what motivated them to sign up to be a mentor, as well as how they overcame challenges that arose during the relationship. Their perception of the organization's involvement with the program along with the impact that had on their learning was critical when trying to understand their experience. These data were collected through in-depth interviews of the participants.

Demographic Data

Prior to the interviews beginning, a demographic inventory (Appendix A) was distributed. The questionnaire gathered data on the participant's age, gender, race of ethnic group, level of education, years of professional experience, and tenure with Camson Retailers. This information was used to conduct cross-case analysis in order to assess similarities or differences in participants' profiles that may explain common themes within their perceptions.

Theoretical Data

The literature review and conceptual framework was re-visited frequently to ensure that it was supporting the methodological approach. The two areas included (1) Mentoring and (2) Adult Learning Theory. Under the topic of mentoring the following subcategories were examined: (a) Definition and History of Mentoring, (b) Types of Mentoring Relationships, (c) Functions of the Mentor, (d) Informal Mentoring, (e) the Motivation to Mentor, (f) the Matching Process, and (g) Organizational Support. The subcategories of adult learning theory that were explored consisted of: (a) Learning from Experience, (b) Reflection (c) Reflective Discourse, and (d) Social Learning Theory. The literature surrounding these areas was utilized to support the analysis and conclusions that were drawn.

Research Design Overview

The steps taken to conduct and complete this study of mentors within formal workplace programs are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Steps to Complete the Study

1.	Research Topic Determination: The researcher selected a topic that was both of personal and professional interest. She had witnessed in her own workplace the need to further understand how to build impactful formal mentoring programs. After speaking with colleagues, it became clear that there was a gap in knowledge surrounding the mentor's role and how to properly support him/her. Therefore, the researcher deemed that this was a researchable "problem" and developed questions that she sought to answer.
2.	Literature Review: The researcher conducted a thorough review of the scholarly literature pertaining to her topic and problem areas so that she was well versed in what was known. This guided the development of her conceptual framework and was continually re-visited throughout the study. The focus of the literature was divided among two focus areas: mentoring and adult learning theory. This review of work was used as a guideline for interpretation and analysis of key findings.
3.	Identification of Sample Participants: The researcher met with the current Program Manager who oversaw the mentoring program to discuss the scope of the study. She asked for a document that listed the names and email addresses of all the mentors from the past five years.
4.	Proposal Hearing: The researcher had her proposal hearing in May, 2018 with her adviser and second reader.
5.	IRB approval: Immediately after her proposal hearing and acceptance, the researcher completed the required paperwork for approval from the Teachers College IRB.

Table 1 (continued)

6.	Letter of Invitation and Consent: As soon as the researcher received IRB approval, she emailed all potential interviewees (see Step 3) to invite them to participate in the study. This note outlined the purpose of the study and details concerning the length, location, and possible dates/times for the interview. The researcher also included an Informed Consent Form that explained participants' rights and confidentiality.
7.	Document review: In preparation for the interviews, the researcher collected all documents that the Program Manager had surrounding the mentoring initiative. This included paperwork distributed to the mentor and mentee, as well as any planning materials used.
8.	Primary Interviews: In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 19 former mentors. The researcher attempted to conduct all of the interviews in person and electronically recorded the session for all but one interview. There was one participant who did not want to be recorded, so the researcher took detailed notes. For each interview, she followed the interview protocol that was aligned to the research problem and questions. The researcher asked all participants to complete a demographic inventory in attempt to identify themes among respondents.
9.	Conducted Focus Group: The researcher identified and contacted five past mentors who were not a part of the primary participants of the study. She conducted an on-site focus group with this group to understand their experience as a mentor in the organization's program. The session was electronically recorded.
10.	Data Analysis: All interview and focus group recordings were transcribed verbatim and coded in relation to the conceptual framework. The interview data was compared both individually, as well as across cases. Likewise, the focus group data was compared and contrasted to the individual interviews. The researcher ensured inter-rater reliability by asking for a colleague to code two randomly selected interviews.
11.	Findings: When the researcher was satisfied with the quality of data collected, the findings were reported in the dissertation. She also included the recommendations and implications that emerged as a result of the study.

Methods of Data Collection

A selected review of literature was conducted to inform this study; however, the literature itself was not considered data. Rather, this aided in framing the problem and research questions and was re-visited throughout the study.

As Patton (1990) and Yin (2003) suggest, the use of multiple data sources is considered a hallmark of case study research. This study employed multiple data collection methods to ensure triangulation and that there was an adequate amount of credible evidence surrounding the problem. This included: (1) document review, (2) in-depth interviews with 20 past mentors, and (3) an on-site focus group with 5 individuals. The flow of data collection is outlined below.

Document Review

By reviewing the mentoring program document base, the researcher started to understand the support and structure that the organization provides to the mentors. This approach was advantageous because it could be conducted “without disturbing the setting in any way. The researcher determined where the emphasis would lie after the data had been gathered” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006 p. 108). The document review helped the researcher fully understand the context in which the mentoring relationships took place.

The researcher tried to understand how the Program Manager recruited mentors, as well as the communication prior to the launch of the mentoring relationship. She attempted to review the documents that were distributed throughout the duration of the program. The researcher also tried to collect any evaluation forms that were distributed at the conclusion of the dyad. Moreover, she tried to gather historical data on Camson Retailers’ mentoring program so that she could fully understand how the mentoring program had evolved throughout the year as well as the rationale for the current structure.

In-depth Interviews

As Creswell (2014) posits, qualitative data traditionally encompass four approaches—observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials. The primary method of research for this study consisted of 19 semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with past mentors who participated in Camson Retailers’ mentoring program. The researcher chose this approach because it provided both historical and contextual information, which would be especially relevant for this study (Creswell, 2014). Further, it allowed for the researcher to gain observational data, which was important when trying to understand the meaning making of mentors (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). As Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) stated, the usage of interviews is a way to “understand the world from the subjects’ point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences” (p. 1). This was a vital component to the success of this study.

Further, according to Marshall and Rossman (2006), interviews presented immediate opportunities for the researcher to follow up and clarify points that deserved attention (p. 101). They allowed for the researcher to have some sort of control in ensuring that research questions were adequately addressed (Creswell, 2014). Aligning with the constructivist approach, interviews would enable the co-creation of knowledge based upon the interaction between the participants and the researcher (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

However, there were some disadvantages to interviews of which the researcher was aware. She strove to establish a sense of comfortableness by listening and was cognizant of the perceived level of authority that could be present within the interviewee and interviewer roles (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Further, she paid special attention to the inherent interplay between the participant and herself, and was mindful of perceptions related to age, personal appearances, ethnicity, and role in the organization, as these may have affected the responses (Alvesson, 2003).

Alvesson (2003) also stressed the need for the researcher to be aware of the power dynamics present in interviews. Interviewees may alter their response to help achieve their own agendas, as well as make a favorable impression with the researcher. Given that both individuals worked in the same organization, the participant created a script that aligned with the supposed need of the researcher. Although the researcher could not eliminate this perceived power, she was aware of it and skillfully crafted her interview questions to probe appropriately (Alvesson, 2003).

The researcher emailed every past mentor who was still with the organization and who had participated in the program within the past five years. After participants were identified and the consent forms were signed, the researcher scheduled one-hour meetings with each individual. The interviews began with the researcher re-iterating the purpose and confidentiality agreement (including the usage of pseudonyms), followed by the interviewees completing a demographic inventory (Appendix A).

The researcher utilized an interview protocol to guide the conversation (Appendix B). This protocol was based upon the research questions and was comprised of 12 open-ended questions designed to uncover the mentor's experience as part of Camson Retailers' mentoring program. The first group of questions sought to understand the motivation for why mentors volunteered to serve in the role. The researcher tried to understand how they became aware of the mentoring program and what the catalyst was for enrolling to be a mentor.

The next set of questions probed the mentor on the challenges he or she faced in the role. These questions eventually transitioned into what the mentor learned as a result of being in the role. The last group of questions explored the organization's involvement with the dyad. These questions attempted to explain the level of support necessary for the mentor to have a positive learning experience.

Eighteen of the interviews were recorded, and the researcher utilized a third party to transcribe the recordings. She took detailed notes for the interview with the participant who did not want to be recorded. The researcher began coding the data immediately after she received the transcribed interview data. The researcher continually referred back to the conceptual framework as well as past literature to help draw out themes.

Focus Group

The researcher conducted a normative focus group consisting of five individuals in attempt to uncover any additional alternative explanations and interpretations of the interview data. The focus group was one-hour long and was recorded and transcribed verbatim with approval from respondents. The researcher expressed to the group that their confidentiality and anonymity were respected. She encouraged all members not to share or disclose the commentary with others outside of the session.

The researcher explained her role as observer and told the members that she would only speak up to progress the dialogue through the two predetermined segments. The first

of these segments focused on the motivating factors of why the mentors signed up for the role. The researcher attempted to understand why they participated in the program and touched upon the organization's involvement in the recruitment and maintenance of the relationship. The second segment of questions asked participants to discuss the challenges they experienced, as well as attempted to identify what, if anything, the mentor learned as a result of facing those obstacles. The questions that were posed to the group can be found in Appendix C.

Krueger and Casey (2015) highlighted five notable characteristics of focus groups, which included: the usage of a relatively smaller group of individuals; all members exhibit similar and intentional characteristics that have importance to the study; the dialogue produces qualitative data; the participants convene with the intent of discussing a specific topic; and the produced output provides insight into a particular subject. These characteristics led nicely to accomplishing the goals outlined for this study and were an appropriate data collection method.

The researcher also selected this approach because it was “socially oriented” and allowed for the researcher to “study participants in an atmosphere more natural than artificial experimental circumstances and more relaxed than a one-to-one interview” (Edwards & Skinner, 2010, p. 113). Further, Krueger and Casey (2015) noted that listening to others in the group might serve as a stimulus for additional thoughts or points to surface from members, thus providing a forum for a deeper reflection to occur.

However, focus groups do have disadvantages that needed to be noted. Marshall and Rossman (2006) mentioned the power dynamics that may be present and the potential impact this could have on all group members. Given that participants were part of the same organization, they might have “in group” and “out group” relationships. The researcher made a deliberate attempt to ensure that all participants focused on answering the research questions and that everyone felt comfortable sharing in this “safe” space.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

Marshall and Rossman (2006) outlined seven analytical steps for data analysis that the researcher followed. These include: (1) organizing the data; (2) identifying stories in the data; (3) creating categories and themes; (4) coding the data; (5) providing meaning through analytic memos; (6) attempting to disclose alternative understandings; and (7) writing the findings.

After each interview, the researcher listened to the recording and made notes on body language, tone, and expression. A third party transcribed all data collected from the one-on-one interviews and the on-site focus group. The researcher supplemented the transcriptions with her written account of each interview. Utilizing the conceptual framework, descriptive codes were assigned to the raw data. After coding and assigning the categories to the data, the researcher analyzed the data accordingly.

The researcher identified and explored further the most frequent codes. She compared and contrasted to relevant literature and attempted to uncover themes that were reflective of the experience of the participants. She displayed the data in distribution tables that aligned the participants' responses to the conceptual framework and research questions.

Ethical Considerations

Participant's confidentiality was strictly adhered to throughout the course of this study. Since individuals were still employed by Camson Retailers at the time of their involvement, upkeeping anonymity was of the utmost importance. To that extent, the researcher met with the current Program Manager to ensure agreement on the process for identifying and contacting potential participants so that expectations were aligned.

Following approval by the Teachers College Institutional Review Board (IRB), as well as a meeting with Camson Retailers' Program Manager, past mentors were sent an

email outlining the purpose of the research and detailing the request for participation. Included in this email was an Informed Consent document (Appendix E) in which their rights were clearly outlined. The communication stressed the voluntary nature of their participation and explained that the option of withdrawal from the study was available throughout their involvement with the research. The document also explained how their confidentiality would be preserved within the organization, as well as in the written findings. Pseudonyms were used for each participant and the company where research is taking place. All data collected, both physical documents as well as audio files, were kept in a secure locked location. Audio files were password protected.

Issues of Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, the “researcher has provided evidence that ... her descriptions and analysis represent the reality of the situations and persons studied” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 77). Whereas in quantitative research one can provide validity and reliability, this does not apply to a qualitative approach. The following section will outline how the researcher accounted for trustworthiness in this study by speaking to its credibility, dependability, and transferability (Guba & Lincoln, 1998).

Credibility

The researcher upheld the highest standard of integrity throughout all aspects of the study. This included portraying the data in a true and accurate manner (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). The researcher engaged in self-reflection during the data collection process and kept a journal to record and note any potential biases that might have come up. (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

The researcher also triangulated data sources to substantiate findings and further achieve credibility. Creswell (2003) stressed that this was a vital element in establishing

effectiveness in a study. By employing multiple data collection methods, the researcher was able to ensure that potential limitations for each single source are appropriately accounted for.

Dependability

Dependability can be correlated to that of reliability within a quantitative research approach and refers to the tracking of processes and procedures used to collect and understand data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). All of the information and data gathered for the purpose of this study will be available upon request to other researchers. The researcher will be able to provide an “audit trail” should one be requested (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

The researcher also established inter-rater reliability by asking two colleagues to code two randomly selected interviews. As Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) stated, “This process of checking on the consistency between raters reduces the potential bias of a single researcher collecting and analyzing the data” (p. 78).

Transferability

Although the results of these findings were not generalizable to all settings, the researcher strove to provide enough details surrounding the context so that lessons learned could be useful for others (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). The ample descriptions and narratives aided in providing a holistic and transparent picture to readers (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

Limitations of the Study

Given that this study was attempting to understand a phenomenon, a qualitative approach was appropriate, though some limitations do exist that included researcher bias, participant reactivity, and the small sample size of participants.

Researcher Bias

It must be noted that the researcher worked at Camson Retailers and most likely had some sort of prior contact with many of the potential participants. The researcher had been with the company since 2013 and had held multiple roles within the Human Resources Department. She made note of these nuances in her researcher journal so that she could revisit during the data analyzing phase. She also employed inter-reliability, which further ensured consistency among coding.

Participant Reactivity

Given that a few of the participants had an existing rapport with the researcher, participant reactivity was a limitation of this study. The participants were informed that the researcher currently worked within the Human Resources Department of their organization and they may have tried to answer questions to appease her and uphold their standing within the company. This hesitation to share based on relationship status was noted as a common limitation to interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Alternatively, the participants may have withheld information and were not as candid due their difficulty with the researcher taking on an interviewer role (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). To combat this, the researcher acknowledged assumptions upfront. She was also stringent in the coding of the data and partnered with her advisor and peers to reduce this limitation. Lastly, the researcher rehearsed being in the role of the interviewer prior to engaging in the actual interviews.

Sample Size

Qualitative research inherently lends itself to a smaller sample size more than quantitative research, and the researcher acknowledged this as a potential limitation to the study. To ensure that this was addressed in a meaningful manner, the researcher employed a purposeful sampling to select a representative range of participants. The rich

dialogue and narrative surrounding the context assisted in ensuring the applicability to other settings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

History of Camson Retailers

Founded in the 1600s, Haven Company is a publicly traded Canadian-based retail business group who owns and operates three department store chains in the United States, Canada, and parts of Europe. These widely recognized chains include Camson Retailers, Sur Outfitters, and Buck Outdoors. Collectively, Haven Company employs 65,000 employees and operates 480 stores. Year-over-year sales for the organization have been declining over the past five years, and the company has had to react to environmental factors in order to keep the business afloat. These challenges, unfortunately, have resulted in a plan to reduce the workforce by 2,000 employees by the end of 2018. The CEO of Haven Company announced his plan to re-align the workforce to internal employees as well as to the external industry media outlets.

The specific department store chain selected for this study was Camson Retailers. The company was founded in the 1800s and was one of most recognizable and reputable shopping destinations in the United States. Camson Retailers was acquired by Haven Company in 2013 for \$2.9 billion. The retailer employs 30,000 associates and is headquartered in New York City. Camson Retailers was included in the overarching Haven Company plan to reduce headcount by 2,000 and had recently undergone their first round of restructuring efforts about two months prior to this study taking place.

Human Resources

Camson Retailers employed their own human resources team outside of Haven Company who owned all of their training initiatives. While their team had various programs for different audiences, the group was known within the retail industry for

having a best-in-class merchant training program. The intensive development program they designed was geared to young professionals who were entry-level buyers and planners, and it was extremely competitive to get into. The HR team recruited the best and brightest in the industry.

The training program was a cohort format that ran for six months at a time on a yearly basis. The HR team structured it around the 70/20/10 model, which stated that 70% of learning should be on the job, 20% should be through coaching and mentoring, and 10% should be in a formal classroom setting. Participants in the training program spent two days a week attending hard- and soft-skill classes, and then were with their offices the other three days. Trainees were asked to do assignments and homework each week and had to successfully pass a comprehensive retail math exam in order to graduate. They also had to complete an action learning capstone project as a team, where they attempted to shed insight into a current organizational challenge. Each project team was assigned an Executive Sponsor who met with the trainees and assisted them with their final project.

As the 70/20/10 model suggested, 20% of the trainees' time in the program was supposed to be spent with either their mentor or their supervisor. Trainees were automatically enlisted as a mentee as part of their experience in the program. The HR Program Manager for the training initiative owned the matching process between the mentee and the mentor, along with setting up the structure for the dyad. After requesting participation from mentors, the HR representative emailed out guidelines outlining how the relationship should be structured. The guidelines that were distributed to the mentor can be found in Appendix J.

Organizational Climate

Haven Company announced that 2,000 roles from three department store chains would be eliminated throughout 2018. Employees at Camson Retailers had just seen one

round of restructuring two months prior to this study beginning and were acutely aware that more could be forthcoming. When meeting with certain mentors, there was an undeniable air of uncertainty for the future. Employees understood that their role could potentially be eliminated and were trying to shift through the ambiguity of it all. While positions within the organization were eliminated, the business strategy from the lens of the mentors did not change. This resulted in fewer people, but the same amount of work.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the process the researcher followed for conducting her qualitative study of 19 former mentors. The researcher explained the rationale for why she employed a qualitative case study approach to explore the participants' perceptions through an open-ended and broad questioning approach.

The chapter then included a description of the methodology that was used, specifically detailing the one-on-one interviews, focus group, and document review. The researcher included a literature review to explain the strengths and weakness of each data collection method.

The researcher also included an overview of the sample criteria, which stated that the mentors must have served in the role of mentor at Camson Retailers as part of their MDP training program within the past five years. This was a purposeful choice, and all potential participants would have been a mentor at the same organization, Camson Retailers.

This chapter then detailed the types of information (i.e., contextual, demographic, perceptual, and theoretical) that were required to conduct the research. It provided the steps the researcher took as part of the design of the study, the last being the data analysis and synthesis. In this section, the researcher provided a description of the intended approach to interpreting the data. Through transcriptions and coding, the researcher

sought to gain insight into the problem. She also engaged colleagues and employed inter-rater reliability methods to ensure accuracy within the data analysis process.

The researcher provided a discussion surrounding ethical considerations and issues of trustworthiness. Beginning with IRB approval, the researcher outlined how she would uphold confidentiality and would ensure the integrity of the research. The chapter also included an overview of the limitations of the study that included the potential for researcher bias, participant reactivity, and sample size.

This chapter concluded with the researcher providing an overview of the history of the organization along with details on Camson Retailers' training program. It provided a description of the organization's climate in an attempt to provide transparency on the corporate culture, as this unique culture had a clear impact on the mentors' perceptions of their roles.

Chapter IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction and Overview

The purpose of this research was to explore with 19 mentors in a formal mentoring program at a large company in the northeast referred to under the pseudonym *Camson Retailers* their perceptions of their experience in the role of mentor. It was hoped that this research would provide practitioners with insight on how best to structure their formal mentoring programs in a way that effectively supported the individual in the mentor role, thus resulting in a successful transfer of knowledge between the mentor and protégé. It was also presumed that this research would aid the mentor in making sense of their experience within a formal dyad.

To carry out this purpose, the following research questions were addressed:

1. How did participants describe what motivated them to take on the role of mentor?
2. What challenges did participants describe they faced in their role as mentors?
3. In what ways did participants learn to increase their professional skills in their role as mentors?
4. How did participants describe the critical elements of organizational support they needed to be a successful mentor?

This chapter provides a review of the four key findings that arose from the participants' responses to the research questions. Participants in this study were identified by pseudonyms and were asked to share their experiences being in the role of the mentor.

Findings

The four major findings revealed through the data collected in this study are:

1. A strong majority (84%) of participants indicated that they were motivated by their desire to gain increased visibility in the organization.
2. The majority of participants (68%) indicated that their biggest challenge was having the time to participate in their role as mentor.
3. A majority of participants (78%) learned to increase their professional skills through mentoring by engaging in dialogue with their mentees and through personal reflection.
4. An overwhelming majority (95%) described the need for training as the most critical element of organizational support required to ensure success.

Finding #1

A strong majority (84%) of participants indicated that they were motivated by their desire to gain increased visibility in the organization.

Participants were asked to describe how they were motivated to take on the role of mentor. In order to gather rich and robust commentary, respondents were probed on what prompted them to become involved in the formal mentoring program and what the perceived benefits would be, if any, for serving in the role of the mentor. A strong majority (84%) of participants indicated that they were motivated by their desire to gain increased visibility in the organization See Appendix K: Frequency Table—Finding #1 for the complete list of challenges reported. In addition, Table 2 provides a summary of Finding #1 data.

Table 2. Outline of Finding #1

FINDING #1

A strong majority (84%) of participants indicated that they were motivated by their desire to gain increased visibility in the organization.

Mentors reported extrinsic motivation in the following ways:

- **An Opportunity to Gain Visibility (16 of 19, 84%)**
 - Positive Perception by HR/Supervisor
 - Gain Honor and Prestige in being Asked
- **Ability to Gain Leadership Competency (11 of 19, 58%)**
- **Ability to Influence Future Mentee Hiring Decision (3 out of 19, 16%)**

Mentors reported intrinsic motivation in the following two ways:

- **Desire to Share their Prior Experience with Mentee (12 of 19, 63%)**
- **Desire to Promote Organization's Goals (8 of 19, 42%)**

Extrinsic Motivation.

An opportunity to gain visibility. The majority of respondents (84%) stated that their motivation to be a mentor was based upon their desire to gain visibility within the organization, which could potentially lead to a promotion down the line. Participants commented on how Camson Retailers was a very relationships-driven company and that one needed a strong internal network in order to get promoted or move up the ranks at the organization. Sue described:

One of my strong suits is the relationships that I have within the company, and I'm very much a people person. Yes, I felt that it was a good way to give back to Camson Retailers, but I thought it would also build up my personal network. I want my name to in the mix during promotion time and I felt being a mentor couldn't hurt.

Laura elaborated on that sentiment by saying, “Being a mentor is a really, really good way to meet people within the company. A lot of your career here is driven by who you know and I felt that this would benefit me in the long run.”

Tate, a focus group participant, also noted what she termed the “social politics” of Camson Retailers. She stated, “Let’s be honest, the more people you know here, the better positioned you are to move up. That’s why I took on the role.”

Further, Sarah mentioned:

I did it in some sense to build my network, as selfish as it may sound. You meet other people through [the mentoring program] and you meet other mentors, and those people could potentially have a hand in hiring you onto their teams someday.

Tom, another focus group participant, noted:

I’m going to say this just because I feel like it needs to be said. I was asked to be a mentor and said yes, because to be frank...being a mentor looks very good for your resume. But I wouldn’t say I was thrilled to do it. I did it to get my name out there.

Positive perception by HR/supervisor. Mentors also commented that they accepted the role in order to be perceived in a positive light by their supervisor and HR. All of the respondents noted that a human resources (HR) representative or their supervisor asked them to become involved as a mentor, typically via email. Many of the participants described how they did not necessarily volunteer to sign up for the position, but instead were made aware of their involvement through an email requesting their participation. There was a sense of obligation to say “yes” among participants, as they did not want to cast a negative light on themselves to the critical stakeholders who owned their career path.

Mary summarized her interaction with the human resources department by stating:

I’ve been a mentor four times now and every single time I’ve gotten an email from somebody from HR saying, “Congratulations. You’ve been chosen to be a mentor. You’ll be instructing a mentee. If you’re not able to do it let me know, but I really hope you can.” I mean I wanted to do it, but even if I didn’t I really couldn’t tell HR no....

Cindy declared that she, “did not volunteer for the role” and that she was “chosen to be a volunteer.” While laughing about the irony, she suggested that she was “voluntold” by the human resources department. She noted:

I had just assumed a new role and was still getting up to speed. I had been a mentor in the past and enjoyed it, but the current timing wasn't great to get this sort of request from HR. But, I just didn't feel like comfortable telling the HR department no.

Brittany described a similar sentiment:

Honestly, this is sort of selfish, but I accepted the role to show [management] that I'm a team player. I wasn't thrilled to be a mentor, and I didn't really have the time, but I couldn't tell HR that I wouldn't volunteer for the role. I felt obligated at that point to do it. So I did it probably more because it would look good.

Gained prestige and honor in being asked. For some mentors, they also felt a sense of prestige and honor when they were asked to be in the role. The request was a strong indicator that they were performing well in their roles, which inspired them to take on the position. They felt a sense of pride that HR, and their supervisors were acknowledging their abilities and appreciated the fact that being a mentor provided them a visible platform to showcase those capabilities.

Laura stated, “I think it was an honor to be asked to be a mentor. I never proactively said that I wanted to be a mentor, but when it was offered to me I was flattered.” She continued by noting, “I think 99.9% of people are so flattered. The second one of my friends gets asked to be a mentor by HR, they start texting each other asking who else was chosen to be a part of the program.” For Laura, being asked to be a mentor was almost a status symbol among her peer set.

Mia described her reaction to the human resource team's outreach and commented, “I was happy about it because it made me feel like they see me as somebody that could help and impact somebody else's experience here, so I was very honored to be asked to be a mentor.” She continued, “HR facilitates your career here, so I felt it was a good sign

that they wanted me to be part of the program. I must be doing well enough to be asked to support someone else.”

Ally also commented on how being asked to be a mentor made her feel valued and appreciated by the company. She stated, “For me, being asked to be a mentor showed that Camson Retailers admires my work and thinks I’m mature enough to handle guiding someone else through their career journey here.” She laughed and continued, “Though I would prefer the company acknowledge my work through a raise or a promotion.”

Similarly, Drew stated that being selected to be a mentor “definitely speaks to your credibility.” He continued, “At least I’m being recognized within the company as someone who has a strong skill set, and that I’m valuable enough to mentor a new hire.”

Ability to gain leadership competency. However, while the mentors acknowledged that they did not volunteer for the position, 58% of respondents did perceive the benefit of advancing their leadership competencies by serving in the mentor position. Some of the participants had either never managed a direct report before or had recently taken on a position where they were overseeing another team member’s development. They believed this role would provide them the opportunity to learn how to manage and lead others.

For example, Cindy noted that being a mentor would be “good practice” for her to identify and understand her leadership style. She detailed how the recent restructuring negatively impacted her team and that there were not as many developmental opportunities to learn to manage others. Being in the role would provide her the space to find what she quoted as her “leadership voice.”

Cali, a focus group participant, also touched on this topic and spoke about a fairly recent restructuring that occurred to her team, leaving Cali with no direct reports. She noted:

I went from having a three person team to now being on my own. While I didn’t necessarily volunteer to be a mentor, I did think the benefit would be to be able to lead someone, even if it was just as their mentor. So, I was OK with taking on the position.

Christine stated, “I think a big opportunity in the mentor role is to learn how to manage yourself, and of course manage others.” She continued, “There’s a lot of opportunity to show leadership through mentoring without technically being in a leader role.” For Christine, she described how she wanted to grow within the organization and stated, “I want to learn to be able to properly manage a team ... and I guess make sure everyone is happy on my team.”

Ally agreed with that sentiment and elaborated on how she felt being a mentor would help her learn how to navigate both the soft and hard skill development of future employees reporting to her. She stated:

Every buyer and planner manages people and they have to train them. They need to be comfortable teaching skills, but also must have more sensitive growth conversations. I think mentoring is a good entry point in terms of figuring out your leadership style. There’s really no other place to practice this skill set at the company right now.

While she was in a mentor role, Patricia was interviewing internally for a position where she would be managing four direct reports. It would be the first time she would be leading a team, and she noted that an immediate benefit of being a mentor would be to expedite the “learning curve” of managing others in a perceived “safe space.” She commented, “Between you and me, I have no idea how to lead others. I need to be a mentor! I’m counting on that experience, and so is my future team!”

While many of the participants were eager to learn more about how to lead others, some mentioned that they felt being a mentor would allow for them to further develop their technical skill sets as well. Given that the mentees were part of an intensive classroom training experience, some of the interviewees perceived that they could also benefit from gaining exposure to what their mentee was learning in the development program.

Deirdre noted that she had graduated from the training program three years prior, and she believed that serving as a mentor would help “bring me back to the basics” and

would allow her to “learn new systems that may help me in my own role.” She explained, “Some day I’ll need to teach my own team how those systems work, so I knew being a mentor would help me get ahead of some of those key learnings that I’ll need to teach.”

Dana elaborated on that notion by stating:

I wanted the ability to hear anecdotally what the leaders were saying was important to the young talent. Even though I’m more tenured in my career, I never get direct access to those leaders, so I felt that if I accepted this role then I would be able to polish off some skills and stay relevant, in a way.

Ability to influence future mentee hiring decision. A small population of mentors (16%) commented that being a mentor would result in mentors having the ability to influence future mentee hiring decisions. Being in the role allowed mentors to have insight into the young talent within the organization. Brittany explained:

My approach with being a mentor, and I guess my strategy, was by getting to know someone early on in their career, I might be able to pick up on who’s very talented or who has great skills. Maybe down the road, if I’m in a position where I need to hire someone on my team, I might consider that person a candidate. That kind of networking appealed to me. I know, that sounds selfish.

Sue agreed with that sentiment and stated, “I could potentially have this person work for me in the future, so I thought [being a mentor] would be a good opportunity to scope out future team members.”

Sarah commented, “I’m going to help my mentee and mold her into what I want from a team member. I’m going to start training her now so that I can hopefully hire her!”

Intrinsic motivation.

Desire to share their prior experience with mentee. A majority of mentors (63%) were motivated by their desire to share their prior experience with their mentee. Many participants referred back to a past mentoring experience (positive or negative) when deciding to serve as a mentor, and wished to shape their current dyad accordingly. Most of the mentors had recently completed the same training program that their mentee was

enrolled in, so many of the interviewees felt they could relate to them on some level.

Patricia noted:

I guess at some point you go through a new experience and it's helpful to have someone. I loved my mentor when I went through the training program, and I just felt like I would like to do that for someone. That's what made me really excited to be a mentor.

Similarly, Laura stated, "I had just graduated from the training program so I remembered what it was like to be new to the company. It was way less intimidating to bounce ideas off my mentor versus my supervisor."

Liz commented that she had many mentors growing up as a member on a competitive swim team and that she felt the need to "pay it forward" and be a support to someone else, similar to what she had received throughout her life. She commented, "I thought this would be such a good opportunity for me give back, in a way. My mentor challenged and supported me and I ultimately grew from her support. I wanted to do that for someone else."

Drew noted that when he was asked to be a mentor, he was quite excited. He stated, "I remember being a mentee and my mentor had a major impact on my day-to-day experience of getting through the training program. I wanted to do that for a trainee."

Sarah continued with this theme of past mentoring experiences by summarizing:

My mentor here was super supportive. She helped me with some really difficult situations. She's no longer with the company, but we still speak regularly. She's been a wonderful person in my life. I feel like if I could be that to someone else, I would certainly not turn down the opportunity.

However, while most of the respondents spoke about their positive past mentoring relationships, Kate did reference her negative experience as a mentee participating in Camson Retailers' formal program. She recalled how her mentor was laid off during a restructure that happened during her time in the mentoring program, and that the Human Resources Department never found her a replacement mentor. She elaborated, "I saw my

peers getting support from their mentor, and I just fell by the wayside. I wanted to provide to another person what wasn't necessarily given to me.”

Cindy also described a negative experience that served as a catalyst for her to accept the mentor role. When she was a mentee, her mentor seemed disinterested in being in the position, and as a result, there was a void in their relationship. She recalled:

I had zero relationship with my mentor. She made no effort and there was no connection. I thought it would be nice to change that up a bit and try and actually help mentor someone, so that they could kind of get out of it what I would have wanted to.

Desire to promote organization's goals. A smaller percentage (42%) of respondents were motivated to be a mentor due to their desire to promote the organization's goals. This “do good” attitude was a prominent motivating factor for accepting the mentor role, regardless of whether or not they had prior mentoring experience.

Brittany declared, “I actually had never been a mentor before, but I did think it would be nice to give back, so I did it more for the mentee. I wanted to take her under my wing. I also like this company and thought it would be a good way to show that.”

Similar to Brittany, Christine had not had any past mentoring experience either. She felt a need to promote positivity within the organization. Christine commented, “We spend more hours here than with our own family, so why not help others out and kind of build up our culture. If I can help someone overcome a challenge and have a better day, then I will.”

Mia described her motivation for being a mentor by commenting, “Although Camson Retailers has some crazy moments, I do really love the company. I accepted the mentor role, in a way, to share that passion with the younger employees who are new to their jobs.”

Caitlin continued, “I'm driven and I want to climb the Camson Retailers ladder, and I feel like I want to bring other people to the top with me.” She noted:

I want to be able to instill confidence in someone else to be able to truly be their authentic selves and go out and build relationships, and ultimately find what they want out of their career here. I guess, I want others to have a good experience here and for the company as a whole to succeed.

Patricia explained how she had always gravitated toward positions throughout her life that allowed her to help others. She described in length how she had an innate desire to teach others and, in fact, considered a teaching profession. She stated, “My parents told me that life is about connecting and lifting each other up. When I was asked to be a mentor, I didn’t hesitate. I want to lift others up. I want to teach and help the people under me grow.”

Deirdre described a similar sentiment. She commented, “I just love what I do here. If I can spread that passion to someone else, then I’m going to. Hopefully, my mentee will be just as passionate.”

Ally described how being asked to serve as a mentor was “humbling” and that she felt it was “empowering to help the next generation navigate their early careers.” She noted, “It’s the year of the female! I was excited to help develop younger women who had just joined the company. If we don’t help each other out, who will?”

Finding #2

The majority of participants (68%) indicated that their biggest challenge was having the time to participate in their role as mentor.

Participants were asked to identify the challenges they faced in their role as mentors. To ensure a robust description of events surrounding their challenges, participants were asked to describe specific situations in which something served as a roadblock to them. The majority of participants (68%) indicated that the time commitment required to be a mentor was their biggest challenge. See Appendix L: Frequency Table—Finding #2 for the complete list of challenges reported. In addition, Table 3 provides a summary of Finding #2 data.

Table 3. Outline of Finding #2

FINDING #2

The majority of participants (68%) indicated that their biggest challenge was having the time to participate in their role as mentor.

Mentors described five challenges:

- **Limited Time Available (13 of 19, 68%)**
- **Matching/Lack of Connection with Mentee (12 of 19, 63%)**
- **Lack of Organizational Support & Training (11 of 19, 58%)**
- **Organizational Environment not Conducive (8 out of 19, 42%)**

Limited time available. The majority of the participants (68%) stated that the biggest challenge they faced in the mentor role was time. When reviewing the mentoring guideline that was distributed to the mentors at the start of the program (Appendix J), it was suggested that a mentor meet with their mentee once a month for approximately six months. The document did not recommend how long the meeting should be, nor did it state where it should take place. Regardless, this once-a-month check-in still seemed to pose an obstacle for many of the mentors. The majority of respondents noted a major restructure that happened two months prior to the interview. As a result of the new organizational design, numerous roles within their teams were eliminated, leaving the remaining employees feeling stretched quite thin. Caitlin summarized the environment by stating, “The role went away, but the work didn’t. We all just had more responsibility added to our plates pretty much overnight.”

When probed further on the theme of time, Sarah said that her team was “very lean in general, so it’s very hard to even process the fact that I have to sit with [my mentee] because I have so much on my plate every day.”

Drew agreed with Sarah's sentiment and commented that the biggest challenge he encountered was actually meeting up with his mentee due to his workload. He elaborated that they would make plans in advance; however, when "push came to shove, I inevitably would cancel because my boss had me working towards a sometimes impossible deadline that obviously took precedence over coffee."

Cindy elaborated, "No one has time, especially in this current work environment. Everyone is filled to the brim basically. Meeting your mentee can almost feel like an inconvenience, especially if you and your mentee do not have a natural bond."

Similarly, Mary stated, "The first challenge really is time. And I think this goes back to what we were saying before about mentoring not being something I proactively sought after."

This notion of time being a challenge was also substantiated by the focus group members. Rita, who had been with the company for five years, served in a mentor role three different times. She stated that although she was aware of how important meeting up with your mentee was, she had always felt like her time with that individual was "rushed" and that "everyone upstairs in the office was looking for me when we were getting coffee."

A few of the respondents commented on how they relied on texting or email to keep the relationship progressing, since finding the time to meet in person was very hard. Caitlin stated that she "texted [her] mentee all the time," but that they limited getting together in person to the suggested once a month due to workloads. She commented, "My mentee would shoot me a text with a question, and I would just respond that way. It was just easier for both of us."

Liz also relied on texting and noted that she and her mentee messaged each other multiple times a week about "this and that," but would only actually meet up every other month. She stated, "My mentee and I would always text about random stuff. It was just easier to chat through text than over coffee."

Matching/lack of connection with mentee. A notable number of participants (63%) described a lack of connection due to poor matching with their mentee to be a challenge.

Drew described a “stigma” around being a mentor and the relationship with the person one is matched with. He felt it was assumed that as a mentor you would get along with your mentee; however, “it’s a little bit difficult sometimes to have a natural relationship with someone when you’re kind of just, for lack of a better term, forcibly paired.” He continued, “So it’s a little awkward to get through that hump. It’s almost like being set up on a blind date.”

Ally elaborated on this notion of connection, or lack thereof, and attributed it to the fact that every individual in the training program was automatically enlisted to be a mentee and matched with a mentor. She felt that regardless of becoming a trainee, you should still have a say into whether or not you want to receive a mentor. In her case, she felt her mentee was not fully invested. She commented, “My mentee didn’t really see the value because she did not actively seek out a mentor. She found really no value in my support, which became frustrating.” Ally, in particular, was very excited to take on a mentee and felt like the experience fell quite short of her expectation. She continued, “My mentee had also been with the company for a few years prior to joining the training program. She really didn’t need my help navigating the system, you know? Being a mentor was almost a waste of my time.”

Sarah also noted that her mentee had been with the company a few years before becoming involved with the mentoring program. She already had her internal network, and when she got into the training program, she chose to leverage those contacts. Sarah explained, “My mentee had her own thing going on, so meeting with me almost felt like more of a task for her, I think. We got along, but I feel like she didn’t really need me at times.”

Janine described how her mentee was technically the same title as her and explained how their interactions at times were “uncomfortable and challenging.” When trainees graduate from the program, they are assigned an Assistant title. In the case of Janine and her mentee, the business needed an Assistant and could not wait until the mentee completed the program. The mentee was given the Assistant title prematurely and became the same level as her mentor. Janine found that this power dynamic was not conducive to an effective mentoring relationship. She explained, “One day I’m giving her advice because I’m technically higher up than her. When my mentee got promoted, the whole vibe changed. She was now my peer. She didn’t want me telling her how to do things any more.”

Dana’s mentee had undergone a career change and was ten years her elder but working at a lower hierarchical level. She stated, “It felt like my mentee clearly did not see any benefit in having me around. She would always cancel our meetings, so eventually I just let the relationship fall through the cracks.” Dana continued, “How do I give someone advice who has WAY more life experience than me?”

Anna stated that for her, “the number one challenge with these formal mentoring programs is if there’s going to be a connection or not. That’s the challenge that stood out to me the most.” She continued to describe how she went into the experience fearing this lack of connection to be the most probable roadblock, and that it unfortunately ended up coming true. Her mentee was focused on “gossiping” and wanted to focus their dialogue on the rumors going on in the company, which she did not feel was appropriate, nor was it the goal of their relationship. After a few meetings, Anna’s mentee started to piece together that her mentor would not honor those types of conversations, so she said they eventually stopped meeting altogether.

Mary felt that a roadblock for her was her mentee’s “lack of ambition.” She described how gaining admission into the training program was a very admirable feat, as spots were offered to a limited amount of individuals. She was surprised to see that her

mentee wasn't as "in it" as when Mary was a trainee herself. When probed further, Mary noted that her mentee showed little enthusiasm for the actual work she was doing, or for the organization as a whole. She elaborated:

I've been a mentor before, and usually we hit it off purely because we're excited about what's to come in our careers. This past time when I was a mentor, there was something off. I couldn't see any hint of myself in her.... I think that's why we never bonded.

This theme of not seeing attributes of oneself in your mentee was also noted by Laura. She commented that her mentor's "approach to her work was just different," and as a result she found it "hard to provide advice to my mentee." She continued by describing how her mentee waited until the last minute to submit projects or rehearse presentations. Laura explained how it frustrated her since she was very driven and eager to help her mentee, yet she felt her mentee was not fully invested.

Lack of organizational support and training. More than half the participants (58%) also described the lack of organizational support and training to be challenging. During the document review, the researcher uncovered a two-page document that was distributed to the mentor and mentee at the start of the relationship (Appendix J). However, that was the only structure the human resources team provided.

Cindy stated, "I received an email with some sort of PDF attachment, but I took it like a grain of salt. I didn't truly understand what I had been asked to sign up for. I just kind of wung it."

Anna described how "outside of an initial email from HR," there's not much information or guidance. She elaborated and said the organization tells you that you're a mentor, and "it's up to the mentee to manage how much they want to speak to you or how little." She continued:

I've been a mentor a few times and I remember getting several packets of information the first time. That first time we had a formal meeting and we got to talk to each other in person and I was given a pamphlet to say what my expectations were as a mentor. And then the next go as a mentor I think I

just attended a meet and greet with my mentee, but no real information from HR. This past time I received an email from HR and was essentially told—good luck! Enjoy! There was no structure at all.

However it must be noted that when the researcher tried to uncover the “several packets of information” from Camson Retailers, it was explained that the program has been managed by many different individuals over the years, and the current HR lead did not know where to find those materials.

During our focus group, Kevin also commented on the lack of organizational guidance, stating, “It’s very grey, I would say, in terms of what we [as mentors] are expected to do or how to show our mentee support. The whole program is very ambiguous to me.”

Dana continued with that notion, stating that HR made the initial contact by sending an email saying she was going to be a mentor, but never reached out again. She just assumed that HR would be in contact with the mentee or herself to see how the relationship was progressing, but that did not end up being the case. Dana thought not having a “check-in with HR” was a huge miss because she would have used it as a channel to “pulse check” how she was doing as a mentor. She described how she would have changed her approach to the relationship if she had found out her mentee was not satisfied with how the dyad was progressing.

Kate explained, “This organization has not supported me at all as a mentor. The only thing that they’ve provided me with is the person, and then from there me and the person have made it work.” She continued, “[The mentoring relationship] could have been so much more. I could have met so much more with my mentee and helped them so much more if the company helped.” When the researcher probed further, Kate commented that she didn’t understand what her role was and that if she had more clarity on the goals of the relationship, she would have been more focused with her outreach and dialogue with her mentee. She summarized her thoughts by stating, “It’s like HR didn’t care and set us up to fail.”

Janine also agreed with this sentiment, adding, “There’s not only the challenge of scheduling and keeping that schedule, but bringing something to the table for your mentee to take away and making sure the time is perceived as useful by both of you.” Janine felt that she wasn’t sure what her role of mentor entailed and believed the meetings with her mentee were “fluff.” She longed for more structure in the program so that if they were taking time out of their day to meet, they both would feel it was worthwhile.

Continuing on this theme about the lack of organizational support, a few respondents explained how their supervisors were not supportive of them serving in a mentor role, which only exacerbated the situation. Mary noted:

The last time I was a mentor, my office was so busy. It wasn’t that I didn’t want to be a mentor, but it was more so that I was worried that I didn’t have the time. I feel bad because my mentee wanted to meet with me a lot and I just didn’t have the time. I also had a hard time explaining to my boss (who didn’t care or acknowledge that I was a mentor) that I had to leave for 30 minutes for coffee, even though we’re slammed with work. So I would sneak out of the office. It was so awkward and I definitely wasn’t fully present with my mentee. I was worried my boss would be upset with me when I got back to my desk.

Sue also did not have a very supportive supervisor. She described:

I couldn’t necessarily explain to my boss that when we’re drowning in work that I had to go and be a mentor. HR never looped in my boss ... I sort of did, but I downplayed it and my excitement because I knew my boss would be weary given all the projects I’m working on. I sort of wish HR would’ve let my boss know how important this was for me and the company.

However, for the mentors whose supervisors were aware that they were in the role and were supportive, there seemed to be a different take on leaving the office. Jillian stated:

My immediate boss did know that I was selected as a mentor, which was definitely helpful because finding time to meet with my mentor was tough. I would tell her I couldn’t attend a meeting because I was getting coffee with my mentee and she understood the importance of that. She encouraged me to leave, even when things were crazy.

Sarah had a similar situation and commented, “My boss was great about asking how the mentoring program was going. She asked when the meetings were and would even move things around if there were conflicts. She would reschedule meetings so that I could meet my mentee.”

Organizational environment. Forty-two percent of respondents reported that the actual organizational environment was not conducive to a successful mentoring relationship. Camson Retailers had adopted an open floor plan about two years prior to this study. All Vice-President level employees and below sat on long, open tables. The conference rooms had glass doors, allowing for full visibility into who was occupying them.

Anna found the open work space to be particularly challenging. She described that if she and her mentee went into a conference room and closed the door and were not visibly working on a project from her laptop, people would get suspicious and rumors would begin.

Mia agreed that Camson Retailers had a culture where “people speculate and gossip” if they see you “behind closed doors with someone not from your immediate team.” She perceived that the physical layout of the organization presented an obstacle that stood in her way to being an effective mentor.

Patricia had a similar sentiment as Mia, adding that being required to leave the actual floor to meet with a mentor was a challenge. However, she felt she could not meet on her own floor due to the “rumor-mill.” She elaborated that Camson Retailers did not have a mentoring culture and that the open desk environment only exacerbated that. When probed further, she noted that the organization is “cutthroat” and you need to “keep your head down and do your work.” She felt that if she was meeting too frequently with a mentee, then people would think she didn’t have enough to do or that she was “chitchatting” with a friend. Patricia wished the organization would promote her

involvement in the mentoring program more publicly so that she could feel comfortable meeting openly with her mentee.

Janine elaborated on that theme, noting that other floors housed different functions from hers had ping-pong tables, but the culture on her particular floor was one where everyone was “strapped thin and would look down on you for taking a few minutes to play ping-pong, or meet with a mentee for that matter.” She continued by stating that people would “assume you do not have enough on your plate” if you had “free time to just talk with someone not on your team.”

While respondents commented on how rumors might start to develop when you’re in a conference room with a non-immediate team member, Sue identified a slightly different challenge with the open floor plan. She stated:

It’s harder to get away because you’re so visible. There are so many people that need you constantly, so you can’t go into a conference room because people will pop in asking you something. You need to actually leave the floor and that’s hard. It feels like you have to escape and hide out.

Kate commented on a similar situation that happened to her: “I was meeting with my mentee and someone had a question for me and saw me in a conference room. Before I knew it, 30 minutes had passed, and my mentee had to leave for another meeting.” As a result, she spoke about the necessity to leave the floor to take a meeting with her mentee. She explained how the total travel time of waiting for an elevator, going downstairs, etc. was 15 minutes. Kate explained, “I didn’t ask for this role. I know this sounds awful, but the 30-minute meeting and the travel time took an hour out of my day that I didn’t have.”

Finding #3

A majority of participants (78%) learned to increase their professional skills by engaging in dialogue with their mentees and through personal reflection.

Participants were asked to describe the ways in which they learned to increase their professional skills in their role as mentors. In order to collect rich commentary,

individuals were probed on the process in which they became aware of their strengths and opportunities. The majority of participants learned something during their time in the mentor role, with 78% acquiring that knowledge through engaging in dialogue with their mentees. See Appendix M: Frequency Table—Finding #3 for the complete list of challenges reported. In addition, Table 4 provides a summary of Finding #3 data.

Table 4. Outline of Finding #3

FINDING #3

A majority of participants (63%) learned to increase their professional skills by engaging in dialogue with their mentees and through personal reflection.

Mentors described four approaches to learning:

- **Dialogue with Mentees (15 of 19, 78%)**
- **Personal Reflection (11 of 19, 58%)**
- **Role Modeling (4 of 19, 21%)**
- **Self-Direction (3 out of 19, 16%)**

Dialogue with mentees. Seventy-eight percent of participants noted that they learned throughout the mentoring experience by engaging in dialogue with their mentee. Patricia summarized by stating, “Just talking to my mentee and helping her through things made me think more big picture about my own business, and pulled myself out of my own day-to-day. I learned a lot by talking through her issues with her.”

Liz agreed with this sentiment, noting, “As a mentor, you have the ability to teach someone things you might not even realize you know or understand yourself. By speaking and giving advice on a situation, you can almost have an ‘aha- moment’ yourself.”

As noted in prior commentary, Camson Retailers had undergone an organizational restructuring two months prior to this study, which resulted in many of the reporting layers being removed within the company. This had an impact on the amount of leadership roles available to employees. Jillian commented:

There's no opportunity at all in the company right now to feel empowered or to have any leadership opportunity. So unless you have a mentor, there's no real place to learn leadership. I was able to use this experience to find my voice as a leader. I practiced giving feedback and that was very helpful to me. I learned what worked and what didn't when talking to someone about their performance.

Anna agreed with this sentiment, stating, "The layoffs in June threw everyone a curve ball. I lost my entire team. I have no direct reports right now, so this is the only way I can learn to manage someone."

Mia also used her time in the mentor role to learn how to provide feedback to a future direct report. She described one instance in which she was a little too straightforward with her approach to her mentee. Mia commented, "I told her that her logic was incorrect. We were going through a retail math homework problem. She was quiet and I heard after the fact from a friend on her team that I had upset her." She continued, "That was never, ever my intent. I just thought that she would want honest and direct feedback. The situation made me realize I need to be very careful with my approach and tailor it to the person."

Brittany felt as though she learned how to effectively explain new concepts to others while being a mentor. She described how she was able to use mentoring as a "test run" for someone who might work for her someday. Brittany commented:

I would try different approaches to teaching my mentee about her business. I would talk her through a problem and if that didn't stick, then I would try a different approach. I realized my personal style is more "figure it out and come to me if you have questions"; however, my mentee needed a much more hands on approach. At first it was frustrating, but I then realized not everyone learns the way I do. It was a good take-away for when I take on

a leadership role someday. I have to adjust my style and approach to explaining things.

Sarah also felt as though she learned some leadership capabilities while serving as a mentor. She noted:

I would walk my mentee through various reports and there were times she was completely lost. I learned that I need to describe things at her level. Not dumb them down per se, but describe things in a more simple way. I think this will be really important when I finally get promoted into a position where I'm managing others. At least I'm starting the learning curve now. Other than being a mentor, there's nowhere else I would get this opportunity to learn.

Katrina, a focus group participant, elaborated on this sentiment by stating that her time as a mentor "reinforced how important soft skills are when you're leading someone." She continued, "I do not readily get the ability to practice teaching more junior-level employees. Being a mentor kind of fills that gap in development."

Respondents also commented on how they were able to gain procedural knowledge by serving in the mentor role. As noted earlier, the mentees were part of a formal training program that had a classroom component to the experience. They were given merchant math problem sets and homework on a weekly basis. They were also required to do a capstone presentation at the end of the program in order to graduate and move onto their next roles.

Laura stated, "For me, talking with someone else about their open to buy or walking them through different reports for their business, I think it just makes you feel more empowered as a merchant. You learn a ton." She continued:

I feel like mentoring made me grow as a merchant because it definitely puts you outside of your comfort zone. When you've been focusing on the same business area for a few years you get tunnel vision. My mentee would talk to me about the brands her team was managing and it was great to learn about other areas. I would review her project that was focused on a vendor in her area and it was eye-opening, in a way. Ultimately, being a mentor set me up to be an even more informed merchant ... which will hopefully get me promoted faster.

Christine elaborated on this theme by describing how her mentee would show her the presentations and homework that she was being given as part of the program. She continued, “It had been a minute since I had been exposed to certain aspects of retail math. Many times I found my mentee walking me through a problem set. I was actually learning from her!”

Caitlin explained how her mentee’s supervisor provided feedback on a certain aspect of her capstone presentation. She realized that she would have approached the problem similar to her mentee and commented, “My mentee walked me through the feedback, and I realized I didn’t even think of that different approach to analyzing that area of the business. Her boss was a director, and it taught me how that level in the company approaches business decisions.”

Personal reflection. A noteworthy amount of mentors (58%) commented that they learned during the experience through engaging in reflection. Jillian stated that, given the scarce resources at Camson Retailers, there was no real time for “self-reflection” and called the practice a “luxury.” However, she felt as though she found herself engaging more in reflection after her meetings with her mentee. She explained, “Removing yourself from the day-to-day minutiae of it all was very beneficial for me. I would get home at night and think about our conversations. It made me reflect on my own situation ... and honestly why I’m still working here.”

Upon reflection, Janine also questioned her future at Camson Retailers:

Being a mentor helps you realize that you are in this place in your career where you have the ability to mentor someone, and you might sometimes forget that you have this wealth of knowledge. So ... it reminds you and emphasizes that, which is nice. It makes you take a minute to look back at your career and realize that you belong in the position you’re in, and that you are doing well. Given the competitive environment of this place, it’s comforting to know that you know your stuff ... and that you’re marketable should you want to leave!

Mentors also noted that upon reflection, they realized that they knew more than they thought they did, resulting in an increased amount of confidence in their own abilities. Drew explained:

I thought to myself, that was really cool. I was in my mentee's position in the training program about a year ago and at that point in time I would've never been able to describe that report the way I just did. It confirmed for me that I'm on the right path. I would think to myself, wow...I am meant to do this for a living.

Caitlin felt very similar to Drew and described one specific example where her mentee was asked to complete an elevator chat activity. The exercise required her mentee to walk a senior-level associate through top-level information about a brand she was overseeing. She elaborated, "I took a look at the reports with her, and I gave her advice on what I would say. When I finished speaking, I thought to myself, I know more than I think I do. It was really gratifying."

Sue also noted that being a mentor taught her to be confident in her approach to work, as well as with potentially uncomfortable topics with his boss. She described:

I would explain things to my mentee about how to overcome a situation with her boss and then I would go home at the end of the night and ask myself why I wasn't heeding my own advice. Being a mentor, I would give advice, and then would think about those words all day. I realized I need to walk my own talk! I need to speak up more when I'm unhappy with a situation. Right now, my boss and I don't get along. I would spend the night thinking to myself, gosh ... what would you tell your mentee in this situation.

Elaborating on that thought, Patricia described how she would talk her mentee through a tough situation and then reflect afterwards and ponder why she wasn't taking her own advice. She explained, "I realized I need to be more confident in my approach to various things. I know how to handle tough conversations ... being a mentor empowered me to go practice what I was preaching."

Some of the mentors that were interviewed also commented that being in the role gave them the opportunity to reflect on what can be changed within their own vendors that they were managing. Brittany elaborated:

I would many times stress to my mentee to think big picture about her business. After we met, I found that I would always think—what is going to move the needle of MY own business? I would ask myself, what do I need to do to really drive sales and impact my brands. What can take the back burner, and what’s worth focusing on? It was really helpful to think back on our conversations and put those thoughts into practice.

Christine agreed with this sentiment and described:

I was able to stand back and look at something a little more holistically, which I struggle with when I’m working on my own projects. By looking at someone else’s work I was reminded to periodically step back and look at my own the same way, which was really cool. I would think to myself—what would I tell my mentee in this situation. How can I approach my business differently?

Anna, who noted that she had a negative rapport with her mentee, explained how the process of reflection allowed her to learn a little bit more about her approach to relationship building. She elaborated that after she would meet with their mentee, she would reflect and think to herself, “Why am I taking this so personally?” She stated:

I had to come to the realization that not everyone is going to like me ... and that’s ok. I’m a people person and I wanted so badly for this relationship to work. In a way, it hurt my feelings that my mentee and I couldn’t find a middle ground. That was a big lesson for me. I can’t please everyone. Maybe I was just too serious with my role as mentor and the program. Our lack of relationship would keep me up at night, which is crazy, but it did.

Conversely, Sarah stated that being a mentor made her realize how strong she was at building and fostering relationships. She noted that she never had a doubt that she would be able to connect with her mentee, even though she was not a part of the matching process. She explained, “I would hear about fellow mentors having issues with their mentees and that was never the case for me.” Sarah continued:

After the mentorship came to end, I thought about the experience and realized that while I am an introvert, I have a unique ability to connect with others. Relationships get you promoted here, it was nice to know that I have that going for me!

Role modeling. Twenty-one percent of respondents stated that they learned how to be an effective mentor during their time in the role through role modeling. Given that the

existing program did not provide much structure surrounding goals and objectives for the initiative, individuals noted that they relied on role modeling past mentors that they had in their lives to help define their current approach.

Sue stated, “I kind of thought about what my mentor had done with me and the kind of things he taught me about, the kind of ways he supported me, and I tried to give support in that way.”

Liz similarly explained:

HR never gave us any structure, so I tried to mimic aspects of my past mentoring relationship. For example, my mentor would always pay for our coffee. I know that’s trivial, but it meant a lot to me. With my past mentee, I did the same.

Deirdre also noted:

My mentor was great and always found the time to meet with me. She would put time on my calendar every two weeks. She proactively sent the meeting planner. She set the tone for the relationship. When it came time for me to be a mentor, I followed her lead and used that as my guideline, especially since the organization didn’t give us much direction. Granted, my mentee typically cancelled the meeting ... but my intent was there!

Kate, who didn’t have such a great experience with her own mentor, described how she drew upon that experience to understand what not to do. She explained, “My mentor was never around and made no effort to meet up.” Kate continued: “I didn’t want to be that person to my mentee, so I did everything differently. I did the initial outreach to my mentee and made sure that if I ever had to cancel a coffee, that is was rescheduled for later in the week.”

Self-direction. A fairly similar amount of participants (16%) engaged in self-direction to learn during their time as a mentor. This was apparent in Sue’s case, where she brought a retail math class back to her desk after her meeting with her mentee and worked through the problem set on her own. She commented, “I want to succeed in my career. I realized that this was what the leaders of the training program were focusing on ... so, I better learn how to get the answers.” She laughed and continued, “Isn’t that a

huge perk of being a mentor? You get to learn what the young kids are learning and stay relevant!”

Melissa, a focus group participant, also utilized her time as a mentor to teach herself what the trainees were learning as part of their program. She entered the company at her current level and did not have prior experience as a Camson Retailer trainee. Melissa leveraged their curriculum to help her understand the “Camson” way of doing things. She described how she would photocopy her mentee’s retail math notes and PowerPoint documents and would spend a lot of time after their meetings teaching herself the various nuances associated with how the company runs their business. Melissa stated, “My old company did things VERY differently. I joined Camson Retailers in a role that didn’t allow me to go through the training program. Being a mentor was like a crash course on how do to my job, essentially.”

Brittany also held a similar mindset, noting that she would take the reports her mentee was learning about back to her desk and teach herself how to analyze them. She explained: “I was somewhat embarrassed that my mentee knew more than I did. I didn’t want to go to my own supervisor, so I would go into a conference room after we met and read and analyze the reports until they made sense to me.”

Sarah also emphasized that she thought the biggest “plus” of being a mentor was learning about what the trainees were being exposed to. She commented that it had been “years since I had to analyze a report in the detail my trainee was doing.” Similar to Cindy, Sarah would review her mentee’s notes after their meetings to ensure she was understanding all the components of any particular document.

Finding #4

An overwhelming majority (95%) described the need for training as the most critical element of organizational support required to ensure success.

Participants were asked to describe the critical elements of organizational support they needed to be a successful mentor. The majority of participants (95%) indicated that training was necessary to ensure a productive and positive experience. See Appendix N: Frequency Table—Finding #4 for the complete list of challenges reported. In addition, Table 5 provides a summary of Finding #4 data.

Table 5: Outline of Finding #4

FINDING #4

An overwhelming majority (95%) described the need for training as the most critical element of organizational support required to ensure success.

Mentors described three critical elements:

- **Training for Mentor and Mentee (18 of 19, 95%)**
 - Clearly outlined goals and intended outcomes for the relationship.
 - Talking points/ conversation topics
 - Agreed upon guideline for the frequency and duration of meetings with mentee.
 - Organizational check ins.
- **Input into Matching (12 of 19, 63%)**
- **Company Acknowledgement/Recognition (6 of 19, 32%)**
 - Acknowledgement through plaque, town halls, etc.
 - Supervisor support (i.e. time off during day to spend with mentee.)
 - Opportunity for mentor networking/learning opportunities

Training for the mentor and mentee.

Clearly outlined goals and intended outcomes for the relationship. In order for both parties to feel like the dyad was worthwhile, respondents noted that it was critical to understand the goals of the relationship, as well as the intended outcomes. Anna summarized this concept, stating, “While mentoring is primarily all about the mentee, it’s a two-way street and the mentor also needs to feel some sort of worth and support. There needs to be training so that both the mentor and mentee understand the program.”

Anna stated that she had a negative experience with her mentee because that individual didn’t understand what a mentoring program was, nor did she realize what she was supposed to get out of the relationship.

Jillian elaborated by recommending that HR get all the mentees in a room before the kickoff of the relationship to provide a “high level overview of why we’re setting this relationship up, the kinds of things that you, as mentees, should be asking or looking for, or trying to connect about.”

Mary agreed with that sentiment and elaborated, “It’s so important for the mentee to know what a mentor is, really. How is my support different than that of your supervisor? Things like that are so important and will prevent uncomfortable problems down the line.”

Similarly, Ally noted a desire for “a little more training in terms of how the relationship should be structured, what you should be assisting them in, things like that. I wish I had known what a productive relationship looked like.”

Sarah felt as though her “reputation was on the line” and described how she ultimately wanted her mentee to speak positively about her. In order to do so, she commented that she desired clearly outlined role and responsibilities to ensure that she was being effective and that her mentee was perceiving her in a positive light. She stated:

I want my mentee to get something out of the relationship. If the goal is to help her with her homework, then let me know that and I’ll make sure to

focus on that. Or, if it's to help her network then I'll take a different approach and introduce her to different colleagues. I just need more transparency from the HR team.

This concept of self-analysis also arose during the interview with Christine. She requested an evaluation at the conclusion of the mentoring program for both her and her mentee. She commented that the HR department should require, "a review where you're asked to provide the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for both of each other so you feel like the relationship was constructive and that you're both 100% benefitting from it."

Talking points/conversation starters. Laura commented that she would like not only to understand the goals of the relationship, but also would appreciate HR providing a weekly "curriculum or an outline." She noted that a learning plan of some sort could help her guide her mentee's growth. She explained, "I want to know exactly what they're learning in the program; that way I can provide supplemental support that aligns to the classroom portion."

Ally elaborated that her mentee had been with the company for many years, and she felt at a surface level that she added little to no value. She noted that if the company had provided some guidance into how she should be supporting her mentee on a weekly basis, she would have had a clearer picture of how to frame their interactions to ensure that they both were being effective and gaining something from the relationship.

Brittany also suggested conversation topics that could help shape their coffee chats to ensure that they were productive. She summarized:

I think I could have been way more useful to my mentee if I had certain things that were outlined that I was supposed to teach her. If it was really just so that she has another name and face in the company, then I think I served my purpose. If I was supposed to actually teach something, then it would've been helpful to understand what exactly that was.

This concept of weekly talking points would also help Liz, who felt that this sort of organizational support would aid the more introverted mentors get over potential

“awkwardness” with their mentees. She felt as though it would be useful to leverage the conversation starters to kick off the relationship so that they both felt comfortable and “could then transition to other more personal topics.” She also commented on how she could be an even better support if she knew what the trainees were learning in the classroom. The talking points would help her navigate those conversations to be productive for her mentee. Ultimately, Liz believed that talking points would expedite the acculturation period of the relationship, especially given the six-month relationship duration recommendation provided by HR.

Time commitment. Mary described a desire for the training materials to clearly communicate the time commitment required to be a mentor. She also noted that the mentor’s supervisors should be briefed on their involvement, along with the time associated with being a mentor to ensure their support. Mary stated:

It needs to be enforced to the leaders that if someone from your team is a mentor that there is a time obligation. I’ll make the time for my mentee, happy to do so, and I can maneuver my calendar and make the time even when I’m busy. I think it’s more so just having HR explain to my boss the importance of this so she doesn’t judge me for leaving the floor to get coffee.

Sue agreed with this sentiment and felt that if her supervisor was aware and supportive of her role as a mentor, she would have been much more available to her mentee. She elaborated by stating that she would feel comfortable leaving the floor to grab a quick lunch, or openly sitting in a conference room where her team could see her, if it was “common knowledge” that she was meeting with her mentee.

Brittany, who stated that she was motivated to take on the role so that she could potentially hire her mentee someday, explained how supervisors should see this as “an opportunity for someone on the team to, in a sense, be interviewing a candidate for a potential opening down the line.” She felt like her supervisor should allow her to take the mentor meetings to help her and the team gauge whether or not that mentee could be a

cultural fit for their team should a position become available. To Brittany, having supervisor buy-in for the time requirement needed to be in the role was a critical element.

A few respondents felt it would be helpful if there was guidance from the organization as to who sets up the meetings and how frequently they occur. While the document that is administered prior to the relationship (Appendix J) does recommend meeting once a month, Drew felt HR should place some sort of additional control over that meeting. He suggested that HR send out the monthly calendar invitations to the mentor and mentee as a “gentle nudge.” If they saw that the meeting planner would consistently get cancelled from a member of the dyad, then they could follow up to see if there was an issue.

Liz agreed with HR “owning” the meeting planner, but felt the opposite of Drew in that she did not want the organization to “monitor and judge” if the meeting had to move. Rather, she felt as though this would alleviate “the guessing game of who should make the first move and place something on the calendar.” She simply wanted HR to send the initial recurring planner and then let the dyad progress from there.

However, some respondents felt the guideline in the mentoring documents pertaining to the frequency and length of meetings was sufficient. Sarah stated that a relationship will “either grow or not,” so putting structure around timing was insignificant.

Anna elaborated by summarizing, “That’s where formal mentoring programs get murky. When the organization tries to control every aspect, the relationship then feels contrived and like just another ‘check the box’ commitment.”

Dana agreed with that sentiment, adding:

I want the HR team to tell me what the suggested frequency of meetings and time commitment is. From there, I can say whether I have the time and I want to be a mentor. I can plan the coffee chats ... I don’t need a “Big Brother” tapping on my shoulder asking if I met with my mentee. If I volunteered to be in the role, I’ll make the meetings happen.

Organizational check-ins. Another theme that emerged among participants was the desire for a mid-point check-in from the organization. Brittany noted:

I thought it was nice that there was no formal structure in terms of when you're meeting. I don't know if that would make things better or worse. Actually...that would make things worse. I really like that it's flexible. But maybe HR needs to be more involved by just checking in to understand if the mentee is getting something out of the relationship.

Anna agreed and stated that outreach from the HR team would have been quite valuable. In particular, Anna (who had a negative experience with her mentee) stated, "If HR pulled me aside and said what's going on, how's it going? I definitely would have raised the concern, and then maybe we could've course corrected." She felt as though things continued to spiral downhill in her relationship with her mentee and that a check-in would have been useful as a proactive intervention.

While Christine believed her relationship with her mentee was progressing positively, she wished that HR would have done a check-in just to confirm that she was "having an impact" on her mentee and that their collective efforts thus far had been worthwhile. Given that they were both taking time out of their day to meet, Christine commented that she would have "valued the reassurance that [she] was supporting [her] mentee in a way that she desired and found useful."

Laura elaborated on this thought by suggesting that the organization implement a "mid-point survey" that would ensure that people "were both getting what they want out to the relationship." She felt this would be a helpful touch-point for HR to reiterate the role of the mentor and quickly gauge the effectiveness of both members' efforts.

Input into matching. More than half the participants (63%) commented that input into matching was critical to ensuring a successful mentoring relationship. In particular, it became noteworthy that matching must be done with both the mentor's and mentee's hierarchical level in mind. Janine summarized:

I've heard of a few [mentoring] instances I know of at Camson Retailers did turn negative because the mentee and mentor were kinda on the same level, such as my situation. The mentors clashed with their mentee and it was more like a rivalry-type thing where they were essentially peers and on the same level and now one was telling their mentee what to do. It was like, stop acting like you're better than me because we came from the same place.

Jillian also touched upon this notion and suggested that the mentors be at least two levels above the mentee, as well as someone not currently working in the same office as each other. She felt that being a mentor was a struggle for her because her mentee was an employee one level below her who was on her team. Her mentee sat next to her in the open floor plan, so they were regularly communicating. There was nothing "special" about the relationship, which she felt resulted in both of them cancelling quite frequently. Jillian stated:

I knew exactly what projects she was working on and she always was asking me for help. We would frequently leave the office together to pick up our lunch and then would sit in front of our computers eating everyday, chatting about this and that. There was no reason to meet above and beyond that. I was so confused why HR thought this made any sort of sense.

Cindy felt strongly that being a mentor should be voluntary. She noted, "You should be asked and not told to be a mentor because, truth be told, some people do not want to be in the mentor role, which just creates a negative experience for everyone."

Sue agreed with that sentiment, adding, "I think we need to have mentors that really want to be here and who have a positive outlook on Camson Retailers. Right now this isn't the case." She felt as though some of the individuals HR selected to be mentors were not "rays of positivity," and given that restructuring was occurring frequently within the organization, mentees needed people who saw the "good in the changes and could help their mentees see that." She also felt that if HR had asked those mentors with a negative outlook to be in the role, they would have declined the offer. She stated, "I can't imagine that the mentee had a good experience. How can you when your mentor is pessimistic and constantly complaining about the company? I bet if asked, those people would never had agreed to be in the role."

While Cindy and Sue noted that being a mentor should be voluntary, Ally also felt strongly that being a mentee should be optional. Ally had a negative experience with a mentee who was not as receptive to her offer of support. As part of the training program, individuals were automatically enlisted to be mentees. Ally felt the mentees should opt into the mentoring initiative so that you know they are “invested and actually want to take the relationship seriously.” She continued, “The mentees should be a group of young people who want a mentor, want that support, and that type of relationship from a more senior merchant. Right now, that’s not the case.”

Patricia suggested a different approach to the organization in terms of matching, and suggested that mentees nominate who they would like their mentor to be. HR would then make the connection between the mentor and mentee. She elaborated that it would be “very rewarding to know that a mentee selected you to be their mentor and that they look up to you and admire your career.” She continued by stating that when HR “randomly forces two people together, it sometimes doesn’t feel authentic.” By allowing the mentee to select their mentor, it not only feels “really, really good” to the mentor, but it also feels slightly less controlled by the organization.

Christine had similar thoughts to matching and noted:

I think that when you assign mentors and mentees there’s a chance they’ll click. But it also might go the opposite way and you might dread to spend time with this person. So I think that it’s nice when the mentee has a say in who their mentor is because it’s somebody that they really like and respect and want to learn from. It makes both the mentor and mentee more committed and the mentor want to establish a strong relationship.

While Dana did not suggest a nomination process, she did recommend that there be transparency into why the mentors were placed with their mentee. She elaborated:

Formal mentoring programs are not natural. So, understanding the reasoning why you were matched with your mentee would be beneficial. This doesn’t have to be shared with the mentee, but it will help me be a better mentor if I know why HR wanted me with this particular person.

Company acknowledgment/recognition. A portion of the participants (32%) expressed the desire for some sort of acknowledgment and recognition for being a mentor. In particular, a few of the respondents felt the organization should provide networking opportunities for the mentors. Some noted that they would like more “activities” that they could attend with other mentors. As mentioned in prior commentary, one’s success at Camson Retailers relies heavily on one’s relationships, so this would be a way for mentors to grow their reach within the company.

Laura described this concept by stating, “Camson Retailers is a political company, and you get ahead based upon who you know. It would be great for the company to offer more frequent opportunities for mentors to build their own networks. That would be a huge draw for a mentor.”

This request for networking opportunities was also articulated by Winnie during the focus group session. She stressed how impactful it would be to have the opportunity to meet other mentors across the various departments and levels.

Sarah elaborated on this notion of planned programming and stated that the HR department should provide more formal, organized “mixers” for both the mentors and mentees. She felt that especially at the start of the relationship, being forced to form a bond can be quite awkward. By hosting “group happy hours or workout classes,” mentors and mentees can get to know each other outside the confines of the office, thus expediting the development of a more personal rapport between the dyad.

While there was a clear desire for recognition in the forms of networking, there was also commentary from respondents wishing for acknowledgment through a physical reward. Anna noted: one’s mentoring takes time out of your day, and something even as small as, like, when you end the program you get a plaque or you get a certificate or something ... something that recognizes that you did this for someone.”

Kate also mentioned her longing for a certificate that was “similar to what employees get when they hit a sales goal.” She described how, for her, being selected to

be a mentor was an honor and that having the framed reward on her desk would act as a reminder that when “times get tough, at least I know the company values me as a leader.”

Sue preferred acknowledgment in more of a public forum. She stated that she would appreciate recognition on the communal TV sets located on each common area within Camson Retailers, or even a “shout out” at a company-wide town hall.

Drew also felt that a town hall would be appropriate and that it did not have to be “anything crazy,” but simply a “shout out by a senior leader to say thank you.” He continued:

We’re all crazed and overwhelmed right now, so being a mentor is tough. Having your name read out loud in front of people you respect would be really rewarding for me. It’s as if the company is telling everyone that they believe in your leadership and ability to groom future talent. That’s a big deal.

Summary of Findings Chapter

This chapter explained the four major findings that emerged as a result of this study. The findings were organized according to the research questions that were posed. The data that the researcher collected from individual interviews, focus groups, as well as a document review, uncovered the participants’ perceptions of their experience in the role of the mentor. As per a traditional qualitative research approach, samples of quotations from the individuals the researcher spoke to were included in the report. By writing the participants’ actual spoken words, the researcher strove to instill the utmost confidence of readers by accurately depicting the reality of the persons and the experiences studied.

The first finding was quite pervasive in that a strong majority of participants indicated that they were motivated by their desire to gain increased visibility in the organization. While past literature suggested that the intent of a mentor was to help the “other,” as demonstrated in this study, there seemed to be a very prominent sense of “self” present as well. Most of the mentors believed there was personal gain from serving

in the mentor role. In particular, mentors described the desire for increased visibility within the organization, which they hoped would lead to a promotion. They also noted the ability to learn a new leadership competency that would aid in their career advancement. Further, mentors commented that being in the role could provide them the ability to influence future mentee hiring decisions.

However, mentors did also note the intrinsic factors that motivated them to take on the role. Many of the mentors had been mentees in Camson Retailers' formal program in the past and felt a desire to share that experience with their current mentee. Moreover, respondents also commented on how they simply believed in the goals of Camson Retailers and wanted to see its employees do well. This innate good will served as the catalyst for their participation in the program.

The second finding described the challenges the mentors faced in their role, most notably the time required to be an effective mentor. Further, respondents described the lack of organizational support and guidance, which hindered their ability to be effective. Mentors also noted the challenge of successfully matching the dyad and the resulting impact it had on the connection between the mentee and mentor. This bond was only further challenged by the open floor plan, which made it quite difficult for many of the mentors to forge relationships with their mentees.

The third notable finding was that the majority of mentors learned to increase their professional skills by engaging in dialogue with their mentee and through personal reflection. Participants described how they would walk their mentees through challenges, which resulted in them learning more about their own situation. Serving as a mentor also allowed the individuals to reflect on their own professional skills, thus instilling confidence in their abilities to perform in their role. Moreover, mentors leveraged role-modeling to compensate for the lack of organizational guidance provided. Respondents commented on how they mimicked past mentors to structure their current approach to the role. Lastly, mentors were self-directed in their learning and were able to grasp hard skills

by taking away the lessons that were being taught to their mentees as part of the training program.

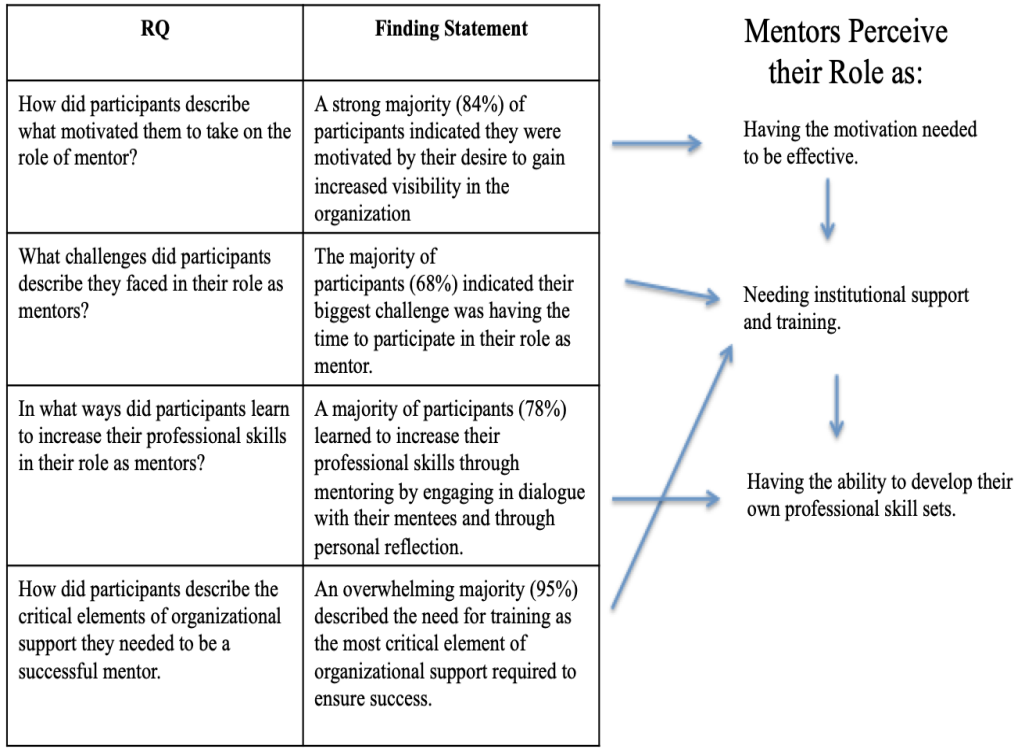
The fourth finding provided insight into the critical elements of organizational support required to ensure success. Respondents expressed the desire to have some sort of say into the matching of their mentee. Mentors also touched upon the need for training for both members of the dyad so that they understood the goals and objectives of the relationship. Further, mentors expressed a desire for acknowledgement for serving in the role. Given the time commitment, they explained how recognition would validate their efforts.

Analytic Categories

In an attempt to identify higher-level understanding from her findings for analysis, the researcher took steps to align her research questions with the major findings statements, and then answered the core question of this study: How do mentors perceive their role? The answers to this central inquiry then became the analytic categories used to shape the findings for analysis and interpretation. Mentors must possess the motivation needed to be effective (Analytic Category 1). In order for the mentor to have a positive experience, they require institutional support and training (Analytic Category 2). Mentors also perceive their role as having the ability to develop their own professional skill sets (Analytic Category 3). The findings were then reviewed through this analytic categories, as depicted in Table 6.

Table 6. Relationship between RQs and Findings Leading to Analytic Categories

Analytic Categories for how Mentors Perceive their Role:



Chapter V

ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, AND SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS

Introduction and Overview

The purpose of this research was to explore with 19 mentors in a formal mentoring program at a large company in the Northeast, referred to under the pseudonym *Camson Retailers*, their perceptions of their experience in the role of mentor. It was hoped that this research would provide practitioners with insight on how to best structure their formal mentoring programs in a way that effectively supports the individual in the mentor role, thus resulting in a successful transfer of knowledge between the mentor and protégé. It was also presumed that this research would aid the mentor in making sense of their experience within a formal dyad.

To carry out this purpose, the following research questions were addressed:

1. How did participants describe what motivated them to take on the role of mentor?
2. What challenges did participants describe they faced in their role as mentors?
3. In what ways did participants learn to increase their professional skills in their role as mentors?
4. How did participants describe the critical elements of organizational support they needed to be a successful mentor?

These research questions were elaborated upon within the findings presented in Chapter V.

Findings

The researcher identified the following four major findings resulting from the interviews.

1. A strong majority (84%) of participants indicated that they were motivated by their desire to gain increased visibility in the organization.
2. The majority of participants (68%) indicated that their biggest challenge was having the time to participate in their role as mentor.
3. A majority of participants (78%) learned to increase their professional skills through mentoring by engaging in dialogue with their mentees and through personal reflection.
4. An overwhelming majority (95%) described the need for training as the most critical element of organizational support required to ensure success.

This chapter will provide explanatory and interpretive insights into the findings presented in Chapter IV by attempting to interpret why the respondents answered the questions as they did. The researcher was cognizant that the data she gathered during her interviews with the participants represented a quick portrayal of what her participants remember saying or doing while they were in the role of a mentor. The researcher used the participants' data to suggest analytic categories that could be further tested and investigated and that hold implications for research and practice.

In the Findings chapter, the researcher provided abbreviated narratives that aligned with and supported the research questions. However, this chapter will conjoin those individual answers to present a more holistic picture of the research phenomenon presented. The three analytic categories, found in the Findings chapter, that will drive this process are:

1. Having the motivation needed to be effective.
2. Needing institutional support and training.

3. Having the ability to develop their own professional skill sets.

The researcher has leveraged these three analytic categories to obtain a higher-level understanding of her findings. This chapter will be structured around these analytic categories, followed by a review of the related findings that are supported by literature in mentoring and adult learning.

After the summary of the analysis and interpretation, the researcher will return to the assumptions discussed in Chapter I and will outline contributions to the existing mentoring literature that this study offers. The chapter will conclude with the researcher's reflections.

Participant Groupings

The role of the mentor had a significant impact on the mentors' personal and professional lives. Throughout the data collection process, the mentors spoke openly and candidly about their perceptions of their experiences in that role. There was quite a bit of difference in terms of how the participants described their time as a mentor and how they processed their experiences. In analyzing these differences, the researcher was able to identify three distinct groups among the sample population: The Disgruntled (8), The Believers (6), and Politicos (5). The following evidence table below (Table 7) provides a depiction of these categories along with rationale for each grouping.

These categorizations were based on the mentors' depiction of their experiences in the mentor role. The researcher understands and acknowledges that the limitations of data collected deem it quite difficult to conclude that mentors may respond alternatively if the data were collected over a period of time. Each group, the Disgruntled, Believers, and Politicos, will be described below, and will be leveraged to analyze the mentors' experience in the role as part of a formal workplace-mentoring program.

Table 7. Evidence Table for Participant Groupings

<p>Disgruntled (8 Participants)</p>	<p>Kate, Mary, Cindy, Dana, Janine, Ally, Jillian, Anna</p>	<p>The Disgruntled made it a point to interject throughout the interviews that they did not sign up to be a mentor. For example, Cindy declared that she, “did not volunteer for the role” and that she was “chosen to be a volunteer.” Ally noted that her motive for being in the role was self-serving and that recent lay-offs impacted her ability to learn how to develop others.” She stated, “I think mentoring is a good entry point in terms of figuring out your leadership style. There’s really no other place to practice this skill set at the company right now.” Dana also had a personal goal for being in the role of wanting to hear anecdotally what the leaders were teaching the trainees so that she could “stay relevant.” Further, all members of this group noted significant challenges such as the time commitment, matching, or lack of org. support. Kate went so far as to say, “it’s like HR didn’t care and set us up to fail.”</p>
<p>Believers (6 Participants)</p>	<p>Patricia, Mia, Liz, Caitlin, Deirdre, Christine</p>	<p>All 6 of the Believers provided commentary on their intrinsic motivation to be a mentor. Patricia stated, “My parents told me that life is about connecting and lifting each other up. When I was asked to be a mentor I didn’t hesitate. I want to lift others up. I want to teach and help the people under me grow.” They overcame the challenges in the role with ease. For example, Liz spoke to the challenge of time and stated how she relied on texting. Her and her mentee messaged each other multiple times a week about “this and that,” but would only actually meet up every other month. This positivity that they brought to the role also resulted in them developing and learning. Liz noted, “As a mentor, you have the ability to teach someone things you might not even realize you know or understand yourself. By speaking and giving advice on a situation, you can almost have an ‘aha- moment’ yourself.”</p>
<p>Politicos (5 Participants)</p>	<p>Sue, Laura, Sarah, Brittany, Drew</p>	<p>All of the Politicos entered into the mentoring dyad with a personal goal of getting something out of it. Laura spoke about her motivation to be a mentor - “Being a mentor is a really, really good way to meet people within the company. A lot of your career here is driven by who you know and I felt that this would benefit me in the long run.” Sue stated, “...I thought [being a mentor] would also build up my personal network. I want my name to in the mix during promotion time and I felt being a mentor couldn’t hurt.” However, the majority had also been in a mentee role before and felt the desire to “pay it forward.” Drew noted that when he was asked to be a mentor he was quite excited. He stated, “I remember being a mentee and my mentor had a major impact on my day to day experience of getting through the training program. I wanted to do that for a trainee.” Further, they were concerned with the mentee having a good experience. For example, both Brittany and Laura made suggestions for additional org. support that would ensure that the mentee is learning and growing as a result of the dyad.</p>

Disgruntled

The Disgruntled accepted the role of mentor out of a sense of obligation, but at the same time brought with them a lackadaisical approach to managing the relationship. The motivation to serve in the role was typically self-serving and extrinsic.

The Disgruntled could not see past the immediate roadblocks of the organization. The recent layoffs were top of mind for this group, and they felt no loyalty at all to Camson Retailers. They were disappointed with leadership and were not aligned with the direction the company was headed in. They brought this negative energy to the relationship, which resulted in both members of the dyad assumingly having an adverse experience.

Believers

On the other hand, the Believers had an innate desire to develop others. While there may have been some sort of extrinsic motivating factor present, their intrinsic passion for growing young talent far outweighed any sort of personal agenda. They brought an excitement to the role of the mentor and were eager to transfer knowledge to their mentee.

The Believers gracefully navigated through challenges that arose while they were mentors. They may have noted the turbulent organizational environment; however, they overcame such organizational chaos with ease. While they may not have had much support in their roles, they took advantage of the experience, thus resulting in both the mentee and themselves having a positive learning experience.

Politicos

The Politicos entered the mentoring relationship with a particular focus on their own professional development. While the majority had been mentees previously in Camson Retailers' mentoring program and wanted to share that experience with their current protégé, the Politicos also had clear extrinsic motivational factors present. They

felt prestige in being asked to be in the role and thought this would be an excellent platform for gaining visibility within the organization. The Politicos also felt as though this would expose them to the young talent at Camson Retailers, thus giving them an advantage in future hiring decisions. Overall, the Politicos were not as committed to the organization as the Believers were; however, they had not gotten to the point of frustration as the Disgruntled had. Their loyalty wavered, and while they did not explicitly say they had plans to exit the company, it could be assumed that in their eyes the knowledge they gained in the mentor role could help them in their career, either at Camson Retailers or elsewhere.

However, while the Politicos were focused on the “self,” they still did care about and want to support the “other,” their mentees. From the mentees’ perspective, they appeared to be available, committed, and positive.

Analysis

Analytic Category 1: Having the Motivation Needed to be Effective

This analytic category will be used to analyze the first research question: How did participants describe what motivated them to take on the role of mentor? Allen (2003) suggested that the motivation to be a mentor was typically intrinsic and that mentors typically wanted to help others grow and develop at their organization. However, literature has also suggested the contrary and has indicated that there were certain individuals who craved some sort of extrinsic gain from being in the mentor role (Allen, et al., 1997; Ellinger 2002). While participants in this study noted that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations were present, the majority tended to focus on the extrinsic factors. These motivational factors will be analyzed through the lens of the Disgruntled, the Believers, and the Politicos.

Extrinsic motivation. While the Believers commented more frequently on the intrinsic motivational factors that served as a catalyst for them serving in the mentor role, they also touched upon extrinsic factors. Members of this group were aware that there was a possibility of gaining a leadership capability or being exposed to different areas of the business; however, the Believers inevitably shifted the dialogue from what they would learn to how that knowledge would aid the rest of their team. For example, Christine mentioned how being a mentor would enable her to develop her leadership style but followed up the comment by stating how this would ultimately result in her future teammates being “happy in their roles.”

In terms of hard skill development, the Believers spoke to their excitement of learning a new software system but, similar to above, would shift focus to how that capability would help their teams in the future. There was always a sense of the “other” when the Believers spoke about their own individual development. While they wanted to grow professionally, they saw this advancement through the lens of their team’s benefit.

When discussing their motivation for serving as a mentor, the Disgruntled made it a point to call out the lack of developmental opportunities at Camson Retailers and felt as though being a mentor would help them gain a competency that would be otherwise unattainable. Participants such as Cindy noted how the restructuring had a negative impact on her ability to learn leadership, since the size of her team was significantly reduced. Dana also commented on the lack of ability to gain access to certain executives. She wanted to serve as a mentor so that she could hear anecdotally what the leaders were describing as important to the young talent as part of their training program. Dana felt that being a mentor would help her stay “relevant.”

Further, while participants from this group such as Jillian believed that being selected to be a mentor demonstrated that their supervisor thought they were knowledgeable in their roles, some members of the Disgruntled, such as Ally, would have preferred acknowledgment through a “raise or promotion,” rather than being gifted a

mentor role. Since HR or the mentor's supervisors requested their participation in the program, no one truly volunteered or raised their hand for the role. However, the Disgruntled made it very known that they did not sign up for this position, and that they were going through the motions because they felt obligated to do so. They felt as though they had to comply with the request or their reputations would be tainted.

The Politicos were the most extrinsically motivated to serve as a mentor, with Sarah and Brittany going so far as to call their motives "selfish." Many members of this group, such as Sue, Laura, and Sarah, mentioned how Camson Retailers was a political and relationships-driven organization. The notion of having the ability to grow one's own network was quite appealing to the Politicos, and they felt as though it could lead to career advancement. The group also mentioned how being a mentor could help them be exposed to the young talent in the organization, potentially giving them a leg up in future hiring decisions. This notion of hiring their mentee in the future someday was unique and specific to the Politicos. Of all of the groups, the Politicos had clear self-serving goals and a personal agenda for being in the mentor role.

Appendix P demonstrates evidence of the differences among the Believers, the Disgruntled, and the Politicos with respect to the extrinsic motivating factors for being in the mentor role.

Intrinsic motivation. The Believers had the strongest sense of intrinsic motivation present. In particular, all five members of this group displayed an innate desire to promote the organization's goals. Mia went so far as to say that Camson Retailers was "crazy," though she "loved" the company. Deirdre also mentioned how she "loved what she did here," which was the catalyst to her becoming a mentor. This admiration and "love" for the company was unique to the Believers.

Moreover, most of the members of the Believers group had been mentees in Camson Retailers' mentoring program previously. This past experience tended to be positive and was a driver for the members to pay it forward and become a mentor

themselves. The Believers had a passion for Camson Retailers, for their roles and the work that they were doing, and for ensuring that their fellow colleagues were being set up for success.

In contrast to the Believers, the vast majority of the Disgruntled population displayed very minimal levels of intrinsic motivation for being in the mentor role. Two of the Disgruntled did mention past mentoring relationships as a catalyst for them to accept the mentor position. However, unlike the Believers, they had had negative experiences in the prior mentee role. These individuals thought that being a mentor would provide them the ability to shift gears and potentially give someone else what they felt was taken away from them. Just one member of the Disgruntled, Ally, made any sort of positive intrinsic reference for serving in the mentor role.

The majority of the members in the Politicos group described some sort of intrinsic motivation present for serving in the mentor role. Most commented on prior positive experiences of being a mentee and expressed how they wanted to provide that support to others. For the one member of the group who did not have prior mentoring experience, Brittany, she explained that she simply enjoyed Camson Retailers and wanted to give back to the organization. However, she was the only Politico who vocalized her passion for the company when speaking to the motivational factors.

Appendix Q demonstrates evidence of the difference among the Believers, the Disgruntled, and the Politicos in regard to the intrinsic motivational variables that were driving forces in their accepting the mentor role.

Analytic Category 2: Needing Institutional Support and Training

This analytic category will be used to analyze two research questions: What challenges did participants describe they faced in their role as mentors? (Research Question 2); and How did participants describe the critical elements of organizational support they needed to be a successful mentor? (Research Question 4).

Formal mentoring programs attempt to achieve the same results and benefits as informal mentoring relationships, but strive to institutionalize the process (Davis, 2005). The key characteristic that defines a formal mentoring program is that it is the company's responsibility to structure the relationship, beginning with the recruitment and matching of the mentor/mentees (Chao et al., 1992). The program administrators then continue to guide and support the dyad throughout the duration of the relationship up until the termination of the initiative. If this organizational support is not thoughtful and present, the dyad will inevitably hit challenges that reduce the overall effectiveness of the mentoring relationship.

While the various challenges reported manifest themselves differently among the Believers, the Disgruntled, and the Politicos, there are several similarities, which will be described through the lens of each group.

Matching of the mentor/mentee. When probed on the challenges mentors face in their roles, the Believers did not touch upon matching as something that in the moment prohibited them from being effective. Instead, they brought it up when asked about the type of organizational support they desired to ensure a productive and rewarding experience as a mentor. The Believers tended to focus on providing suggestions on how to evolve the matching process to ensure both the mentee and mentor had a good experience. For example, Patricia proposed that a mentee put in the request for whom they want as their mentors. She thought it would be "rewarding" to know that a mentee specifically requested you to be their mentor. Patricia also noted that this shift in the process would aid in establishing the authenticity of the relationship, which sometimes got lost when two people were forcibly paired together. Christine agreed with Patricia's sentiment and suggested that this method of matching may lead to even more commitment from both members of the dyad. As demonstrated by Patricia and Christine's commentary, the Believers did not see matching as a challenge per se, but rather saw opportunities to make the process even stronger.

However, contrary to the Believers, the Disgruntled were quite vocal about their challenges as it pertained to matching, and it appeared as though they had the most difficulty relating to their mentees. Mary had a personality conflict with her mentee and felt as though her mentee was not invested in the program or the organization. Anna also had troubles connecting on a personal level with her mentee, who seemed to be more into “gossiping” than actually having a productive relationship. Moreover, Ally had a similar situation and noted that her mentee did not want nor need her support and they did not have any sort of relationship.

The members of the Disgruntled had definitive recommendations for how the organization should go about better matching the dyads. They felt strongly that the entire mentoring program should be voluntary for both the mentor and the mentee. Cindy elaborated by stating that some mentors simply did not want to be in the mentoring program. If the program had been voluntary, these mentees would have never signed up for the role. Cindy felt that serving as a mentor and having a mentee not fully invested was a total waste of time for her.

Jillian and Janine also suggested that the matching take into account both individuals’ current teams and levels. HR should ensure that the mentor has distinct seniority over the mentee and that they are on different teams so that the relationship feels special. They felt as though this was a huge miss and that it had a negative impact over how the effectiveness of their mentoring efforts.

The Politicos’ comments aligned rather closely with those of the Disgruntled. For example, Sarah also touched upon her mentee not needing her support. She commented on how her mentee had been with the company for a while and already had a network she turned to for guidance. She explained, “I would’ve loved to spend more time and get to know her team and stuff, but she wasn’t interested.” As demonstrated in the quote, Sarah felt disappointment that her mentee was not as passionate about meeting up, and in particular felt a sense of loss in not being able to socialize with her mentee’s team

members. Similar to the Disgruntled, Laura also commented on a personality mismatch between her and her mentee. Moreover, Drew mentioned establishing a connection with one's mentee as a potential challenge, but he never elaborated on whether or not this presented itself as an issue in his personal experience with a past mentee.

Organizational support and training. Whether or not the participants commented on the lack of organizational support and training, it became very clear during the researcher's document review that not much was provided to the mentors at Camson Retailers. However, the Believers did not allow this lack of guidance to prevent their effectiveness. While they did comment that it was challenging at times, they chose to find ways to overcome this obstacle.

The concept of time was noted as the biggest challenge from the collective sample population; however, only two members of the Believers, Liz and Caitlin, spoke of it as being a hurdle. Further, both of them followed up their statements with how they proactively overcame this roadblock. They spoke about leveraging alternative ways to support their mentees (i.e., texting or emailing) so that they were still present and communicating with their mentee on a regular basis but were able to do so in a way that did not interfere with their regular workload. This was very unique to the Believers, as they were resourceful in finding ways to be present in the dyad without having to meet up in the traditional sense.

The Believers did recommend that the organization get involved further by sending out a meeting planner for their bi-weekly coffee chats, yet they did not desire nor want any further follow-up from the company regarding the cadence of the meetings. The Believers wanted to be in control with how the relationship progressed and did not require much structure in terms of meeting up with their mentee from the organization. They also suggested more involvement from the organization in terms of weekly talking points and check-ins. For the Believers, they were focused on ensuring that the mentee

had a positive experience, and they felt this would confirm that they were progressing the relationship in the right direction.

Camson Retailers' open floor plan also proved to be tough for all three groups, but the Believers had the most to say about this particular obstacle and their desire for more organizational support. The group felt strongly that others would judge them when they saw through the glass conference room that they were meeting with a non-immediate team member. The Believers struggled with the balance of providing support to their mentee, and not being personally questioned for doing so. While they wanted to meet up regularly with their mentees, they felt challenged within the context of the organizational environment. Patricia in particular wished that Camson Retailers would promote the mentoring program more publicly, so she felt comfortable meeting up with her mentee and did not risk being judged.

The Disgruntled were very forthright in their disappointment with the lack of organizational support. Kate went so far as to say that by not providing any sort of resource or training, it felt as though "HR didn't care and set us up to fail." The Disgruntled did not want to deal with any sort of ambiguity and wanted a clearly articulated vision of what their role was, as well as how exactly they were supposed to support their mentee. Not having any sort of training was a huge miss from their perspective.

The Disgruntled were also the most vocal about their recommendations for the training that should occur before the start of the mentoring relationship. In particular, Anna attributed her negative experience with her mentee to the fact that the mentee did not fully understand what the point of the relationship was, or how she was supposed to leverage Anna for support. The Disgruntled longed for explicit directions on how to be a mentor, what the goals of the relationship were, and how to structure the dyad.

The Disgruntled also spoke the most frequently about the time commitment of being a mentor. They lamented on how the recent restructuring resulted in there being no

time to devote to their mentee. Dana synthesized this sentiment by stating, “The role went away, but the work didn’t.” The members of the Disgruntled commented on how they did not proactively volunteer to be a mentor in the first place, so this added responsibility only exacerbated their perceived stress and ever-growing workload. They longed for structure from the organization so that they could make their time with the mentee as effective and efficient as possible.

Unlike the Believers who got caught up with their perception as it related to their workload, the Disgruntled focused on how the additional time of leaving the floor presented an obstacle. Kate, in particular, quantified this challenge by stating that having to leave her office resulted in 30 minutes of travel time. She made sure to note that this was significant, considering she “did not sign up” to be a mentor in the first place. The Disgruntled tended to find every opportunity available to reiterate that they didn’t step forward to be a mentor and that this position was forced upon them.

The Disgruntled also tended to want formal recognition through tangible items such as a plaque or certificate. They wanted the organization to showcase how the mentors committed their time to this endeavor and craved something that would highlight how they went above and beyond their job descriptions.

For the Politicos, they wanted more organizational structure to ensure that each member of the dyad was getting what they wanted and needed out of the relationship. For example, Sarah mentioned that her “reputation was on the line” and requested clear guidelines and expectations from the organization so that she could confirm that the goals for the dyad were being met. She wanted to be looked upon as an effective and knowledgeable mentor by the program administrators. Sarah wanted to be seen as a valuable asset to the organization.

The Politicos did mention time as being a challenge; however, they did not focus as much on who owns meeting planners or how many times the dyads meet up. Rather, they tended to emphasize the need of organizational support in the form of check-ins. They

strove for a productive relationship where both members were getting something and made suggestions on how the company can monitor its progress. For example, both Laura and Brittany suggested sending out a curriculum or conversation topics that aligned with their mentee's training program so that they could go in prepared for a worthwhile dialogue.

Similar to the Disgruntled, the Politicos also wanted recognition; however, they tended to want acknowledgment through a public setting. Sarah and Laura recommended that the company instill mixers or other events where the mentors could socialize and meet other Camson Retailers employees. They craved the ability to grow their own professional contacts and felt this would be an acceptable way to reward them for their contribution to the mentoring program. Sue and Drew also touched upon being acknowledged through town halls or through internal messaging systems, such as the TVs located on each floor. Overall, this group felt strongly that some sort of acknowledgment in front of their peers and/or executives would be a rewarding perk for serving as a mentor.

Analytic Category 3: Having the Ability to Develop Their Own Professional Skill Sets

This analytic category will be used to analyze research question 3: In what ways did participants learn to increase their professional skills in their role as mentors? Poulsen (2013) suggested that “the more focus there is on the mentor's opportunities for learning, the easier it is to motivate them to take on the role of mentor and the greater the effect the mentoring programme will have on mentees and on the organisation” (p. 256).

What exactly the mentors learned and how they went about learning differed among the Believers, the Disgruntled, and the Politicos. These distinctions will be depicted through the lens of each group.

Dialogue with mentees. All six members of the Believers reported that they learned something while being a mentor through engaging in dialogue with their mentee.

Individuals spoke about how they were able to refine their leadership voices and practice management skills, such as providing feedback. They also noted the occurrence of more incidental learning. The Believers found themselves conversing with their mentee about the classroom portion of their training program and, as a result, absorbing what their mentees were learning. For example, in a somewhat surprised manner, Christine explained, “It had been a minute since I had been exposed to certain aspects of retail math. Many times, I found my mentee walking me through a problem set. I was actually learning from her!”

Half of the Disgruntled reported learning something from conversing with their mentees. However, these mentors tended to focus on the restructuring that recently occurred and explained how they no longer had direct reports. As a result, the mentors had little ability to practice any sort of leadership. For example, Anna and Jillian explained how they leveraged their roles as a mentor to refine and evolve their leadership styles.

The vast majority of the Politicos did indeed learn through conversing with their mentee. They brought a thoughtful and learner-centric mindset, and they entered into the relationship with the agenda of wanting to learn something new about himself or herself, or the organization. For example, Brittany was excited to use her role as a mentor as a “test run” for when she was leading her own team. Sarah also spoke about looking forward to learning basic managerial skills by being a mentor. She was grateful to get ahead of the “learning curve” for when she had direct reports. Moreover, Laura noted that her mentee taught her about a different side of the business. She felt this made her a more informed merchant, which would hopefully lead to a promotion.

Personal reflection. Half of the Believers engaged in reflection, and for those mentors it tended to result in an increase in confidence about their roles and abilities. For example, after reflecting on her time with her mentee, Caitlin said, “I realized I know more than I think I do. It was really gratifying.” Patricia reported feeling “empowered”

after reflecting on her meetings with her mentee. Being able to think through the advice she provided to her mentee resulted in her having the ability to step back and gain confidence on how to deal with her own challenging situations. Christine felt very similar to Caitlin and Patricia and noted that speaking with her mentee was a catalyst for thinking of her own work in a more holistic manner, which was something she struggled with.

The Disgruntled tended to use reflection as a way to evaluate their current status at the organization. Meeting with their mentees served as an impetus for reflecting on their own situation and careers. Jillian, who commented that reflection was a “luxury” due to time constraints, noted that she would go home and think about her own role at Camson Retailers and ponder why she wasn’t considering another opportunity. Janine also reported that she would reflect upon her interactions with her mentee and think about what her next step was at the company. Being a mentor validated the Disgruntleds’ skill sets, and similar to the Believers, it instilled confidence in their abilities. However, for the Disgruntled, this esteem led the way for them wanting to know their path within the organization or elsewhere.

The Politicos also gained confidence as a result of engaging in reflection. For example, both Sue and Drew gained confidence in their ability to do their jobs well as a result of reflecting on their time with their mentee. Further, reflection allowed Sarah to realize how strong she was at building relationships. For a Politico, this notion of being able to build rapport with others was a key professional skill.

Role modeling. Only four of the total participants reported instances of learning via role modeling. These respondents fell into the following categories: two Believers, one Disgruntled, and one Politico. All four of the participants, regardless of what group they fell into, leveraged role modeling to compensate for the lack of organizational guidance. Given that Camson Retailers did not provide much support in terms of structure or training for the mentor and mentee, the mentors had to many times define the

parameters for the relationship. They leveraged experiences with their past mentors to help them know how to model their current mentee-mentor dynamics.

Self-direction. The only group that noted learning through self-directed means was the Politicos. Three of those members commented that they would take home the materials and the homework distributed to their mentee and would teach them the content. Sue called the ability to leverage the curriculum from their training program a “perk of being a mentor.” For the Politicos, gaining access to the learnings of their mentees was a huge benefit of being in the role of the mentor.

Summary of Analysis

Taking into account participants’ descriptions of their experience as a mentor, the research identified three qualitatively different groups among the sample population—Believers, Disgruntled, and Politicos. The study’s findings, which were distilled into analytic categories, were examined through the lens of these three groups.

The Believers were completely devoted to being a mentor. They thought highly of the organization and wanted Camson Retailers and its people to exceed. While members of this group did not volunteer to be in the role, they commented on how they would have raised their hands to be a mentor regardless. The Believers were invested in the position that resulted in them having a positive experience in the dyad. The group seemed to face challenges that arose with ease, and while they stated that more organizational support would have been beneficial, the Believers were resourceful and proactive in filling the voids that were present. Being a mentor was a truly rewarding growth opportunity for these individuals.

The Disgruntled had blinders on and could only view the relationship through their lens, which was one shaded with negativity. They felt wronged by the organization and demonstrated little loyalty to Camson Retailers. This group had no desire to be a mentor and did not report any sort of satisfaction. They were vocal about how they were

mismatched with their mentee and felt as though the lack of support from the organization left them out to fail. Further, what they learned in the mentor role was typically leveraged to question their value and worth at the company.

The Politicos possessed a unique balance of “self” and “other.” They wanted to be in the relationship and were committed to their mentee, but they definitely had specific motivating factors that supported their own agenda. This group was acutely aware of the corporate politics and saw being a mentor as an opportunity to gain visibility and move up the ranks. While they did want their mentee to have a positive experience and grow in the dyad, the Politicos also wanted to achieve their own goals. This group was very calculated about what and how they learned. They desired structure from the organization so that those goals could be accomplished. This was not to say that they weren’t supportive and committed to their mentee, but they had a very self-serving motive that was always present in their interactions.

The researcher conducted cross-case analysis by reviewing a number of demographic factors—age, gender, race, country of origin, education, tenure at Camson Retailers, and date of involvement in past mentoring relationships at Camson Retailers. Despite careful analysis, the researcher could not find any evidence of a relationship between the demographic factors and the study’s findings.

Interpretation

Analytic Category 1: Having the Motivation Needed to be Effective

The motivating factors for serving in the mentor role were introduced in the Analysis section. The interpretation for this analytic category is organized based upon how these factors presented themselves among the Believers, Disgruntled, and Politicos. While each of these groups demonstrated some sort of motivation for being in the mentor role, the degrees of either intrinsic or extrinsic motivation differentiated the groups.

The Believers were consistently focused on the “other,” and their motivation for being a mentor, regardless of whether it was intrinsic or extrinsic, was ultimately focused on helping their mentee. Their motivation was driven by their passion for the organization and their careers at Camson Retailers. The Believers generally had a positive experience at the company thus far and wanted to promote that good-will and empower their mentees to have the same experience. They were able to rise above the turbulent organizational environment and restructuring that occurred and instead were able to see the good in all the change.

The Believers possessed a high level of what literature has termed “contextual prosocial motivation” (Grant & Berg, 2011). They viewed their organization through a positive lens and had a natural desire to see the company grow and prosper. Given this loyalty to the organization, it made sense that the Believer group possessed the highest levels of intrinsic motivation to serve as a mentor. Although neither HR nor their supervisors asked them to take on the role of mentor, it could be assumed that these individuals would have volunteered regardless due to their devotion to the organization. Moreover, while this study did not analyze the relationship from the mentee’s lens, it is quite probable that the mentee had a positive growth experience since their mentor was committed and invested in the dyad from the start.

The Disgruntled were quite vocal about how Camson Retailers had wronged them in the past, and as a result, they were not very motivated to serve in the mentor role. They had very low levels of contextual prosocial motivation and did not feel they owed the organization anything above and beyond what they were hired to do. Although a study by Kram and Hall (1989) found that corporate stress, especially caused by downsizing, increased one’s motivation to be a mentor, this study proved to be contradictory to that body of literature. Kram and Hall found that mentoring was a valuable vehicle for social support and learning during times of turbulence. However, the volatile work environment

at Camson Retailers proved to have a negative impact on the Disgruntled, who felt as though they were coerced into the dyad.

The Politicos clearly had a hidden agenda for being a mentor. While they did want their mentees to have a positive experience, they also wanted to get something out of the relationship. The literature has focused on the mentee receiving career and psychosocial outcomes as the result of being in a mentoring experience (Allen et al., 2004; Chao et al., 1992; Mullen, 1998). However, this study demonstrated that mentors also enter into a relationship with the desire to learn or grow in a professional capacity. They, too, had very specific outcomes they hoped to achieve.

While all of the mentors in this study were asked to be in the role by their supervisors or HR, the Politicos gladly accepted, knowing that serving in this position would benefit them in the long run. Whether it was expanding their network, being able to add a line item on their résumés, or simply the ability to be exposed to what the mentees were learning in their training program, the Politicos had a clear plan they stuck to. This finding did align with the research of Hetty et al. (2005), which suggested that the motivation to become a mentor could indeed be self-serving. That particular study found that many mentors accepted the role in hope that their own work would gain exposure, thus resulting in career advancement. This seemed to be the case for the Politicos at Camson Retailers.

Analytic Category 2: Needing Institutional Support and Training

The concept of needing institutional support and training was introduced in the Analysis section. The interpretation for this analytic category is organized based upon how these factors presented themselves among the Believers, Disgruntled, and Politicos. Each group demonstrated various degrees of support needed, which will be explained in this section.

What differentiates formal from informal mentoring programs is the company's involvement and control over structuring the dyad. Zachary (2005) suggested that formal mentoring programs require extensive organizational support to ensure that the mentor and mentee are successful in the relationship. Portillo (2013) found that individuals who felt a high level of perceived organizational support were more likely to participate in a mentor role. If an organization wants to grow and promote a mentoring culture, they need to understand the resources required in order to make it an effective venture for all parties involved. However, the critical organizational support and resources seemed to be absent at Camson Retailers.

It was not clear as to how the organization matched the mentors to the mentees since it was done behind the scene and the rationale for the pairing was not shared with the participants. Viator (1999) found in his study that 32.8% of respondents said they had no input into the matching process. As such, Camson Retailers' approach was not unique, but should certainly be re-evaluated. While the lack of ownership did not bother the Believers, it clearly had an impact on the Disgruntled. One could make the assumption that if given the opportunity to volunteer to serve in the mentor role, they would opt out. Further, by not having an invested mentor, it could also be assumed that the mentee had a very negative experience in the dyad.

The goal of HR is to carefully select members for the dyad who fulfill each other's needs. However, as demonstrated in this study, that is very difficult given that each type of mentor (Believers, Disgruntled, Politicos) possessed varying motivations and desired outcomes for being in the role. This is consistent with Allen et al. (2006), who found there are no statistically proven matching methods that exist in the current literature.

Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) summarized that there are two types of "fit" when it comes to matching—supplementary and complementary. Whereas a supplementary fit matches a dyad based upon similarities, a complementary fit could be viewed in terms of what each member of the dyad brings to the table in the obtainment of a shared goal. It

would appear as though the Believers would prefer a supplementary fit and the Disgruntled and Politicos desired a complementary one. Therefore, a challenge for HRD is to understand the motivating factors for each individual and match the mentee and mentor so that both parties see a “fit.” This study further substantiated the complexity of the matching process.

Members of the Disgruntled group made comments about how there were personality gaps between them and their mentees that made it hard to connect. While no personality assessment was administered in this study, the Disgruntled members did display what could be described as high levels of neuroticism. Lee et al. (2000) suggested that employees reporting high levels of neuroticism were usually not as motivated to enter into a mentoring dyad. Therefore, it could be assumed that the basic desire to establish a connection with their mentee was absent.

As Garvey and Alred (2000) suggested, it should not be assumed that a mentor has the skills or knowledge to effectively support a mentee. Much of the mentoring literature has suggested that there be training and objective setting prior to the start of a relationship (Redmond, 1990; Young & Perrewé, 2004). Camson Retailers provided a two-page document (Appendix J) that was attached to the email solicitation to become a mentor. The company kicked off the mentoring relationship in a very lackadaisical manner and then essentially walked out of the picture, hoping that the relationship would flourish. For the Believers, they were able to overcome this lack of support due to their higher level of prosocial contextual commitment to Camson Retailers. The Believers felt valued by the company, and they demonstrated their commitment to the organization by proactively problem solving any challenges that arose.

On the other hand, the Disgruntled had a very difficult time with the lack of organizational support. Redmond (1990) suggested that training should include a discussion of:

(a) the goals and objectives of the program, (b) the matching process, (c) support services available to the mentor (d) basic and cross-cultural communication skills, (e) relationship-building, and (f) the roles of the mentor as an advocate, broker of services, imparter of knowledge and skills, and friend and wise counselor. (p. 197)

This aligned with the commentary from the Disgruntled, especially as it pertained to the goals of the mentoring program and role of the mentor. They struggled with understanding the intent of the mentor role and the initiative as a whole and lacked the desire or energy to seek out more information. Instead, they held a negative perspective that only exacerbated the challenges associated with any formal mentoring program.

However, it must be noted that the Disgruntled were the most vocal about the time commitment for being a mentor. The thought of having to attend a mandatory training session on top of the suggested meetings could go either way. While they desired more support and transparency on what their role as a mentor was, the workshop would be another obligation that could potentially lead to frustration. This aligns with Voetmann (2017), who found that training before a mentoring program could be seen as tedious and time-consuming. Finding the right balance seemed to be key for the Disgruntled group.

The Politicos were focused on getting ahead and painting a good picture of themselves. For this group, their idea of an effective mentoring relationship was having their own agenda achieved. They craved structure to ensure that they had the ability to perform well and ultimately obtain what motivated them to take on the role in their first place. The Politicos felt their reputation was on the line and that the mentor role made them more visible to management. While this was a benefit to serving in the role, they also worried that it may backfire. This concern aligns with the work of Ragins and Cotton (1993), who found that women in particular saw the opportunity for the additional exposure to turn negative. This is especially noteworthy, since 18 out of 19 mentors were female.

The Politicos desired more structure so they could be effective mentors, thus resulting in a positive reputation within the organization. Further, they wanted the

organization to provide official networking opportunities as a reward for serving in the role. Being perceived as a good mentor and gaining a positive portrayal among the organization was of utmost importance for the *Politicos*.

Analytic Category 3: Having the Ability to Develop Their Own Professional Skill Sets

Whether or not mentors learn in their roles, as well as how they capture that knowledge, was highlighted in the Analysis section. The interpretation for this analytic category is organized based upon how the *Believers*, *Disgruntled*, and *Politicos* demonstrated those learnings.

Zachary and Fischler (2009) posit that our knowledge about adult learning has resulted in a mentoring paradigm shift where the mentor role is now seen as a facilitator of learning, where both the mentor and the mentee engage with one another to gain greater understanding. This is a big transition from the more traditional mentor role that was previously perceived to be an authority figure. Moreover, Kolb (1984) states, “Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p. 41). His work (Kolb, 1984) suggests that learning from an experience involves an interaction between two processes: experience is first taken or grasped, and then transformed into meaning. For the participants included in this study, dialogue and reflection were the most commonly used processes the mentors leveraged for making meaning.

Further, Daloz (1999) and Mullen and Noe (1999) suggest that mentoring relationships are transformative in nature, in that the mentee and mentor are continually engaging in the process of critical reflection and dialogue. As Mezirow (1990) notes, transformative learning can occur as a result of a personal or social crisis. Given the somewhat chaotic environment at Camson Retailers, it made sense that the participants were beginning the journey of what could result in a transformative learning experience.

The fact that dialogue and reflection were the top adult learning processes reported only further supports this notion of participants exploring a transformative learning event.

It became apparent that many of the mentors in this study were facing some sort of disorienting dilemma (trying to get promoted, dealing with organizational turbulence). They leveraged their mentor roles to engage in task-oriented problem solving (objective reframing) or self-reflection to assess their own ideas and beliefs (subjective reframing).

As Schön (1983) posits, reflection is the critical component required to transition experience into learning. In this study, reflection was the second most commonly noted learning process for the mentors. Participants described how they would meet with their mentees and then reflect afterwards on their own particular situations and practice. In particular, the process of re-visiting the experience resulted in the mentors being able to address their own realities and, in many cases, gain a newfound confidence in their abilities. This notion of reflection-on-action leading to confidence aligned with much mentoring literature, which has suggested that one outcome of mentoring for the protégé was an increase in confidence (Poor & Brown, 2013; Rekha & Ganesh, 2012).

However, the results of this study suggest that the confidence building psychosocial function could be mutually beneficial. The mentor is not just boosting up the confidence of the mentee, but rather they are also uncovering their own strength and abilities, resulting in a sense of empowerment.

For the Believers, this added confidence was channeled in a positive way. They felt even better equipped in their role and ability to perform at Camson Retailers. However, the opposite was true for the Disgruntled. This group reflected on their interaction with their mentee, and while they felt confident in the work and their knowledge of their role, this reflection period resulted in them pondering how the organization was setting them up for success. Contrary to the Believers, the Disgruntled reflection and confidence building was channeled in a negative way.

Summary of Interpretation

None of the mentors in this study volunteered to be in the role, nor did they receive much support once they were involved in the program. This was the one constant variable present among the participants. However, it became very clear that each group brought with them a motive and corresponding mentality that shaped their experience. For the Believers, they were intrinsically motivated to help others. They were resourceful and viewed the lack of organizational structure as a hurdle, but not a steadfast blocker. However, the Disgruntled seemed to perceive every challenge as an impossible feat and did not have the energy or commitment to the organization to overcome these barriers. Their motivation tended to be extrinsic, and their involvement was a burden.

The Politicos wavered between the Believers and the Disgruntled. They did have moments when the negative aspects of the mentoring program intervened with their thought process, but they overcame those hurdles because they had a strong internal desire to find a personal gain from being in the role. In any given situation, they would display the positive traits of the Believers or would sway more toward the mindset of the Disgruntled.

Summary of Analysis, Synthesis, and Interpretation

For a mentor to have a positive experience in their role, this study demonstrated that there needs to be some sort of strong motivational factor present that ultimately drives the mentor's interaction with their mentee. The Believers and the Politicos both possessed a desire to help their mentee grow and develop. While the Politicos also had clear extrinsic motivational factors present, at their core they were effective and committed to the relationship and their mentee. Both the Believers and Politicos tended to have a better experience overall in the dyad, since they brought a positive outlook to the relationship and were invested from the start. On the other hand, although the Disgruntled

did reference motivational variables, those factors were not strong enough to overcome the turbulent organizational climate, thus resulting in the mentor assuming a negative outlook on the relationship from the start of the dyad.

This study demonstrated the need for some sort of institutional support and training. Guidance from the organization was critical at the start of the relationship (i.e., objective setting, role clarification, matching, and general program training). However, the mentors also needed continued engagement with HR throughout the duration of the relationship in order to feel supported. Moreover, the actual amount of resources required to be effective differed for each group. This research showed that if you are highly motivated and invested in the relationship, such as the Believers, you would need less interaction with the company. Yet, the Disgruntled required much more structure and training. They were not interested in being a mentor in the first place and wanted the organization to lay out the groundwork for every interaction.

Lastly, mentors want the ability to develop their own professional skill sets during the relationship. They crave the opportunity to learn something new about their work or themselves. Given that being a mentor requires a large time commitment, having the opportunity to engage in dialogue and being able to reflect after an encounter with their mentees was something positive that the mentors were able to take away.

Revisit Assumptions

As discussed in Chapter I, the researcher held six assumptions related to this study. The following will consist of a discussion of each of these assumptions as they relate to the findings that were presented in Chapter IV, as well as the analysis that was represented in this current chapter.

The first assumption was that mentors have experienced challenges in the role. All 19 mentors that were part of this study did indeed report obstacles that stood in their way,

thus making this assumption true. In much of the existing mentoring literature, the challenges of time, matching, and organizational support were commonly cited. However, this study unveiled an additional challenge that needs to be considered, which was the actual physical environment where the mentoring was taking place.

The second assumption the researcher held was that all of the mentors had been part of a formal mentoring program in the past and had positive experiences. This did not hold to be true for this study, as a few of the mentors had not been part of a formal mentoring initiative. Further, for the ones that had, not everyone found their time in the dyad rewarding and positive. This former negative experience shaped their approach to the current role just as much as those who had positive mentoring experiences.

The third assumption the researcher had was that the mentors would freely share their experiences with the researcher. This was the case for 18 of the mentors who were interviewed. However, one mentor in particular did not want to be audio-recorded and preferred that the researcher take notes instead. This made the researcher believe she was not as comfortable “going on the record” about her experience. Therefore, this assumption was not fully validated.

The fourth assumption was that the organization evaluates effectiveness of mentoring efforts by analyzing mentees’ outcomes. This could not be proven in the case of this study. The human resources team had never collected official evaluation data from either the mentee or the mentor, so it would be remiss to conclude one way or the other.

Lastly, the fifth assumption that the researcher had going into the study was that the organization offers some sort of support and structure to the mentor. This was true to a certain extent, as there was a one-pager that was distributed at the start of the relationship. However, outside of that PDF email attachment, there was no further training or engagement.

Contributions to Literature

The current study has made three contributions to the literature:

The first finding of this study supported the research from Grant and Berg (2011), who describe the concept of contextual prosocial motivation as it pertains to mentoring. As the authors propose, employees who demonstrate high levels of this type of motivation typically are more loyal to the organization and are more apt to serve in a mentor role. This study substantiated this finding.

This study also supported mentoring literature that stated that training and organizational support was critical for the mentoring dyad to have a positive experience (Garvey & Alred, 2000; Redmond, 2000; Young & Perrewé, 2004; Zachary, 2005). Mentors needed to fully understand their role and the organization's expectations for the dyad in order to have a positive experience.

Lastly, this study supported the claim that mentoring relationships were transformative in nature (Daloz, 1999; Mullen & Noe, 1999). Participants were engaging in dialogue and reflecting upon their experience in the role. They were mentors within an organization that could be described as chaotic, and many used their time in the position to make sense of their environment.

Researcher Reflections

The process of writing this dissertation proved to be quite a challenging process. Gathering the data was actually quite simple, given that the researcher studied the organization in which she was currently employed. She had a reputation at Camson Retailers that resulted in the solicitation of available potential participants for the interviews and focus groups being rather uneventful. However, she did find it to be a struggle to find one last mentor to make her sample population the recommended 20 individuals. The study's participants frequently touched upon recent layoffs, and that also

had an impact on this dissertation. Many of the former mentors either voluntarily—or unfortunately involuntarily—left the organization.

The researcher was employed full time at the rather demanding organization, so finding the time to analyze the data was a daunting task. However, the never-ending support and care from her advisor made the feat digestible. Ultimately, her advisor was her mentor. The researcher many times found herself paralleling the experiences the mentors depicted with her current rapport with her advisor. However, in her eyes, the match between her and her advisor was effective, and as a result, the researcher learned both formally and informally from her mentor.

Chapter VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to explore with 19 mentors in a formal mentoring program at a large company in the Northeast, referred to under the pseudonym *Camson Retailers*, their perceptions of their experience in the role of mentor. The researcher uncovered the motivational factors that led participants to serve in a mentor position, the challenges that they faced in the role, how they learned by being in a mentoring dyad, as well as suggested training that mentors required from the organization. This study yielded insights into how to best support mentors so that they have a positive growth experience in the role.

Conclusions

Based on the major findings, the researcher has drawn the following four conclusions.

Conclusion 1

In order for professionals to engage as mentors, they need to be motivated to do so.

The researcher concluded that individuals needed to be motivated to become involved in taking on the role of mentor. All of the mentors in this particular study were asked to be in the position from HR or their supervisors. However, for those who had

additional motivational factors present, the overall mentoring experience was typically more rewarding. The intrinsically motivated individuals innately wanted to do good for someone else. They strove to develop others, and the mentor role provided them a forum for doing so. These mentors found the time to meet with their mentee and overcame the challenges that came their way. They were committed to the role, their mentee, and the organization, which enabled them to have a positive learning experience. Their motivation to develop others far outweighed the somewhat chaotic organizational setting.

The researcher also concluded that mentors who were extrinsically motivated were also effective in their role. There were participants in this study who noted more “self”-related motivational factors for serving as a mentor. They desired a personal outcome, such as an increased visibility within the organization or the ability to learn something new about them or the organization. However, while these mentors had very self-serving reasons for being in the role, they also provided an ample amount of support to their mentees and were able to have a productive relationship within the dyad.

Conclusion 2

Mentors must have the time available to participate in a mentoring program.

The researcher concluded that the biggest challenge for mentors was time. Camson Retailers had recently downsized, and as a result, there were fewer people doing more work. Employees felt stretched quite thin, and being a mentor was a heavy time commitment that was hard to make. The mentors specifically noted the challenge of actually stepping away from their desk so that they could meet with their mentee. Given the amount of competing priorities, it seemed at times impossible to remove themselves from their office to get coffee with someone. Prior to entering into a mentoring relationship, mentors must understand the time commitment required, as well make the judgment call as to whether or not their schedule allows for them to participate.

Conclusion 3

In developing mentoring programs, it is important to create an environment where mentors can engage in dialogue and reflection.

The researcher concluded that mentors primarily learn in the role through dialogue and reflection. The organization must present conditions where a mentor has the ability to properly converse with their mentee, including a space for them to do so. This study introduced the challenge of the physical organizational environment as being especially critical for learning to occur. Participants frequently noted that they had a tough time finding a place to meet with their mentees given the open floor plan at Camson Retailers. They were already facing the obstacle of actually finding the time to meet with their protégé, and the lack of privacy within the office space even further compounded that issue.

Participants commented that reflection was considered a luxury; however, 58% of respondents said they learned by reflecting upon their interactions with their mentees. This demonstrates the need for the organization to empower mentors to reflect as part of their participation in the formal mentoring program.

Conclusion 4

In order to ensure the success of the mentoring program, the organization must provide training and resources to potential mentors and mentees.

Mentors desire training and resources from the organization both before the dyad begins and throughout the duration of the relationship. They want established guidelines pertaining to the goals of the mentoring program and clarity into what their particular role is, along with how they should be supporting the mentee. They require support and acceptance from their manager and their teams so that they can carve out the time to meet with their mentees and not feel any sort of judgment.

It became clear that mentors also desired for mentees to have training prior the kick-off of the relationship. Mentors felt that their mentees should have a clear

understanding of what the goals of the relationship were, along with how they should be leveraging their mentors for support.

This study demonstrated that mentors also want recognition for being in the role. Given the time commitment, there is a desire for a tangible reward, such as a certificate, or a public acknowledgment during a town hall. The mentors felt as though they were going above and beyond their job description and that they deserved some sort of formal recognition for doing so.

Recommendations

The findings of this study allow the researcher to offer a set of recommendations to three groups: mentors, mentees, and an organization's human resources (HR) department. The researcher has also identified four opportunities for future research as a result of this study.

Recommendations for the Human Resources Leadership Team

The first recommendation suggests that when the HR leadership team is structuring the program, they do so in a way that allows the mentor's involvement to be voluntary. Individuals need to possess the motivation to enlist themselves to be a mentor based upon their own desire to become involved. This will bring a candidate pool of mentors who exude contextual prosocial motivation, which will in turn result in them being committed to the relationship as a whole. This is a critical step in ensuring that both the mentor and mentee have a positive learning experience during their time in the dyad.

The second recommendation calls for the HR leadership team to design the mentoring program so that the mentee role is also voluntary for employees. Camson Retailers automatically enrolled their trainees into the mentoring program. As evident in this study, not every young professional wants or needs the support of a mentor. They

may have their own network, which they leverage for guidance. When you place an eager mentor with a disengaged mentee, you are setting up the mentor for disappointment. That negative experience will be a catalyst for the mentor not to volunteer for the role in the future, thus threatening the sustainability of the mentoring program and knowledge transfer efforts as a whole.

The HR leadership team also needs to be very thoughtful in how they match the dyads. While there is no empirically proven method for achieving this, the researcher recommends that the HR team take the list of mentors and mentees who volunteered to be part of the mentoring program and allow the mentee to submit their top three choices for who they would like to be their mentor. From there, HR can match against those requests. The researcher also suggests matching so that the mentor is at least three to four hierarchical levels higher than the mentee. This will eliminate the chances of the mentor and mentee possessing the same role, thus ensuring that the power dynamics are balanced.

A third recommendation calls for the HR leadership team to proactively create an environment conducive to learning for the mentor. This means making sure that the mentor's supervisor knows that their employee is serving as a mentor and allowing them to take the time to meet up with their mentee. Managers should encourage the mentors to leave the office for a coffee and even engage with them afterwards to ask how the relationship is going and what they are learning. HR should also provide a journal for mentors to use while they are in the role. Mentors can capture their thoughts and insights on situations and track their own personal growth.

A fourth recommendation suggests that HR leaders be quite involved throughout the duration of the mentoring experience. This includes training upfront, mid-program check-ins, and a final evaluation of the program. There needs to be a short, yet effective overview of the mentoring program and its intended goals. A mentor needs to show up to the dyad understanding what is expected of them, including the time commitment. The

HR organization must keep tabs on the relationship by meeting with the mentor and mentee formally at least once to do a midpoint check-in. This will allow them to help problem-shoot challenges, as well as provide additional support as required by the dyad.

A fifth recommendation is that HR leaders provide networking opportunities for the mentors. Eighty-four percent of participants in this study accepted the role to achieve more visibility from the organization. HR leaders could accomplish this by providing outlets such as roundtables and panels with senior leadership to the group of mentors. This would not only help the mentors grow their network, but would also be a way to have leaders acknowledge who the mentors are at the organization. This small but impactful step would make the mentoring program more attractive to mentors, thus ensuring the sustainability of the organization's mentoring efforts.

A final recommendation is that HR should conclude their involvement at the end of the mentoring program by evaluating the initiative. HR should send out a survey to both the mentor and the mentee that allows for qualitative and quantitative data to be collected. They should aim to gain insight from both members of the dyad on their experience in the relationship and solicit suggestions on how to improve for the next cohort of mentors.

Recommendations for Mentors

Individuals who are considering being a mentor need to understand what is personally motivating them to take on the role. This driving force will ultimately shape their experience and what they learn in the position. Further, they need to feel liberated enough to either accept or decline the mentor position accordingly. If the mentor is accepting the role out of obligation or guilt, then they need to acknowledge and respect that sentiment and turn down the offer.

A second recommendation is that mentors also need to be forthright in asking for the support they need in order to be effective. Individuals need to be comfortable

recognizing challenges that arise and must be aware of the training and resources available to them. This means going to HR and asking for more clarity around their role, the structure of the dyad, or advice on how to manage the relationship.

Recommendations for Mentees

Mentees also need to be aware of what their own goals for the relationship are. They need to identify whether or not it is career or psychosocial support, or both, and proactively solicit that guidance from their mentors. They need to own the initial meeting planner and place time on their mentor's calendars after the initial kick-off of the dyad. Mentees must take on an invested and committed approach to the relationship and understand that mentoring is a two-way street.

Recommendations for Future Research

The researcher recommends a study with a larger sample of mentors to validate the findings that were identified in this study. Further, there is an opportunity for a mixed-methods study that allows some anonymity in the responses through deployment of a survey. Being a mentor in the workplace is a very subjective role, and the confidentiality of quantitative data might enhance the findings from this study.

There are also several new directions for exploration that the researcher identified as a result of this research. For example, Camson Retailers had recently undergone downsizing, resulting in a very turbulent and lean work environment. Employees lost their team members to layoffs and felt very overwhelmed in their current roles. There is an opportunity to look at a more stable organization in an industry that is doing fairly well to see if the findings were consistent. The stress of performing with little resources could have impacted the psyche of this study's participants, and further research should focus on an organization that has less chaos occurring on a regular basis.

The workforce demographics at Camson Retailers skew more female, and as such, the sample for this study consisted of 18 females and 1 male. This made it impossible to

generalize any findings and correlate them back to gender. Future research should attempt to engage a more proportionate group of participants in an attempt to understand if gender has an impact on how one perceives their role in a formal corporate mentoring program.

Lastly, the mentees in this sample were automatically enlisted to be mentees as part of an intensive training program they were in. The mentees were fed a weekly curriculum, and naturally these learnings were top of mind for both the mentor and mentee. Additional research should study mentors and mentees who volunteered to be in the role and who had no training program backing their interactions. This may have an impact on what exactly the mentors learned, along with the process of how they acquired that knowledge. It could also greatly impact the mentor's motivation to be in the role, as participants in this study noted that they were eager to be a mentor so that they could learn what their mentee was being exposed to as part of the training program.

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Appendix A

Demographic Data Inventory

To help understand the mentor's experience within a formal workplace program, the following information is requested. Please answer each question by indicating the choice that best describes you, or write in the correct information. All responses are strictly confidential. Individual responses will not be shared.

1. What is your age range?
 - a. 29 – 39
 - b. 40 – 49
 - c. 50 - 59
 - d. 60 - 69
 - e. 70 - 79 +

2. Gender:
 - a. Female
 - b. Male

3. Race or ethnic group
 - a. Asian American/ Pacific Islander
 - b. African American
 - c. Hispanic
 - d. Native American
 - e. White/Caucasian
 - f. Other

4. What is your country of origin (where you were born)? _____

5. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
 - a. Graduated from college
 - b. Some graduate training beyond college
 - c. Masters level graduate degree
 - d. Advanced degree (e.g., Ph.D., J.D)

6. How many years have you been at Camson Retailers? _____

7. What year did you participate in the Camson Retailer's mentoring program? ____

8. Were you ever a mentee in a formal mentoring program (please specify whether or not you were a prior mentee within Camson Retailer's mentoring program) _____

Appendix B

Interview Schedule

1. Can you talk about what made you decide to serve as a mentor?
2. Please describe what prompted you to become involved in the mentoring program.
3. What did you expect would be a benefit in your becoming a mentor?
4. How would you describe any obstacles that may have stood in your way as you took on the role of a mentor?
5. As you got involved in the Mentoring process, what were some of the things that stood in your way in carrying out your role?
6. How would you describe any roadblocks you encountered in taking in the role of a mentor?
7. How would you describe how your experience as a mentor changed you and/or the way you work?
8. In what way have you become more aware of your own opportunities or strengths from serving as a mentor?
9. Can you talk about the influence being a mentor has had on you?
10. How would you describe what you need from the organization to ensure your success as a mentor?
11. How would you characterize the essential support mentors need from the organization in carrying out their role?
12. Please describe the ways in which the organization supported you throughout your mentoring experience.

Appendix C

Focus Group Questions

For the first half-hour, members will be asked to discuss: What challenges did you face in taking on the role of mentor and then

For the second half-hour, members will be asked to discuss: How they learned to overcome those challenges.

Appendix D

Letter of Invitation

Hi _____,

I hope this email finds you well. I am a Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Organization and Leadership at Teachers College, Columbia University in New York City and am requesting your voluntary participation in a learning research study I'm conducting.

I am interested in your participation in this study because you served as a mentor within the past five years in Camson Retailers' mentoring program. Participation in this study will involve: (1) completing a consent form and agreeing to the terms and conditions of the study, which will include the audio recording of the interview, and (2) participating in a face-to-face or video conference interview with me on a day and time to be determined that will last approximately one hour.

For your participation, you will be provided with a copy of the research findings. If you are interested and would be willing to participate in this study, please email me back to schedule your one hour interview.

Annie Lee
917.714.6993
awm2120@tc.columbia.edu

Appendix E

Subject Consent Form

Informed Consent

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH: You are invited to participate in a research study that is intended to explore the mentor's experience as part of a formal workplace program. You will be asked to participate in an interview and to answer survey questions. Annie Lee, a Doctoral Candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University, will conduct the research. The interview will take place at a mutually agreeable time and place, either in person or by phone, in a location that provides privacy.

The interview will be audio recorded with your permission. The audio recording is a means of analyzing the data on behalf of the study. The audio recordings will not be used for anything other than this purpose and will be maintained in a secure location along with the other data gathered for this study. The audio recording will be destroyed after the study is finalized.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: The harm or discomfort anticipated in the research is not greater than what would normally be encountered in an information-gathering interview. You will not be required to reveal information such as specific project names, technologies, or proprietary information that would be inappropriate to share with external parties. Your participation is strictly voluntary and you may discontinue participation at any time with no penalty or fear of recourse.

For your participation, you will receive feedback about this study in the form of a brief summary of the dissertation's findings.

PAYMENT: There will be no payment of any sort for your participation.

DATA STORAGE TO PROTECT CONFIDENTIALITY: Your confidentiality as a participant is of the utmost importance and will be a priority in the research process. All participants will be given an identification code and names will not be made known at anytime to anyone other than the researcher. All data gathered from interviews or other sources will remain confidential and used for professional purposes only. Data will be maintained in a locked file at the researcher's office.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: Your participation will take approximately 60-90 minutes.

HOW WILL RESULTS BE USED: The results of this study will be used in partial completion of a dissertation, which is being undertaken by the researcher in the discipline of Adult Education and Organizational Leadership. At a future point, data may also be published in journals, articles, or used for other educational purposes.

Appendix F

Participant's Rights

Principal Investigator: Annie Lee

Research Title: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE MENTOR IN A FORMAL WORKPLACE MENTORING PROGRAM

I have read and discussed the Research Description with the researcher. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the purposes and procedures regarding this study.

My participation in research is voluntary, I may refuse to participate or withdraw from participation at any time with no penalty or fear of recourse.

The researcher may withdraw me from the research at his/her professional discretion.

If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue to participate, the investigator will provide this information to me.

Any information derived from the research project that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.

If at any time I have questions regarding the research or my participation, I can contact the investigator, who will answer my questions. The investigator's phone number is (917) 714-6993.

If at any time I have comments, or concerns regarding the conduct of the research or questions about my rights as a research subject, I should contact Teachers College, Columbia University Institutional Review Board / IRB. The phone number for the IRB is (212) 678-4105. Or, I can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY, 10027, Box 151.

I should receive a copy of the Research Description and this Participant's Rights document.

Audio taping is part of this research, I [] consent to be audio taped. I [] do NOT consent to being audio taped. Only the principal investigator and members of the research team will view the written, and/or audio taped materials.

Written, and/or audio taped materials [] may be viewed in an educational setting outside the research [] may NOT be viewed in an educational setting outside the research.

My signature means that I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Participant's name: _____

Investigator's Verification of Explanation

I, Anne Lee, certify that I have carefully explained the purpose and nature of this research to _____ (participant's name). He/She has had the opportunity to discuss it with me in detail. I have answered all his/her questions and he/she provided the affirmative agreement (i.e. assent) to participate in this research.

Investigator's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix G

Original Conceptual Framework

1. Motivating Factors

- Increased visibility in the organization.
- Potential for promotion and salary increase.
- Possibility of learning something new about my job or myself.
- Opportunity to build professional network.
- Supervisor asked me to be mentor.
- Good-will towards organization.
- Impending retirement.
- Positive prior experience in mentor role.
- Positive prior experience in mentee role.

2. Challenges

- Not enough time to spend with mentee.
- Mentee's lack of ambition/desire to learn.
- Unclear about role/goals of mentoring relationship.
- Not enough organizational support.
- Lack of interpersonal connection with mentee.
- Increased organizational visibility turned negative.

3. Learnings

- Watched and observed others navigate similar scenarios
- Spoke with other colleagues and gathered more information on the situation
- Leveraged the Program Manager and the various materials available to me
- Simply trusted my gut
- Reflected on the experience and in the moment decided to take a different approach
- Reflected on the experience and after I acknowledging how I truly felt, I decided on a new course of action

4. Desired Organizational Support

- Input into matching of mentee.
- Periodic check ins.
- Training for the mentor and mentee prior to the kickoff of the relationship.
- Clearly outlined goals and intended outcomes for the relationship.
- Agreed upon guideline for the frequency and duration of meetings with mentee.
- Company acknowledgement of role as a mentor in performance reviews.
- Salary raise for serving as a mentor
- Supervisor support (i.e. time off during day to spend with mentee.)

Appendix H

Coding Scheme

1. Motivating Factors

Intrinsic

- MI1 - Possibility of learning a new skill myself / ability to practice leadership
- MI2 - Good-will towards organization.
- MI3 - Natural Leader
- MI4 - Prior experience in mentoring relationship

Extrinsic

- ME1 - Increased visibility in the organization/ Opportunity to build network.
- ME2 - Felt prestige/honor in being asked
- ME3 - Hire mentee in the future
- ME4 - Supervisor asked me to be mentor.
- ME5 - HR asked me to be a mentor

2. Challenges

- C1 - Not enough time to spend with mentee.
- C2 - Mentee's lack of ambition/desire to learn/Lack of interpersonal connection with mentee/Relationship is not organic or authentic/ Building trust with mentee
- C3 - Lack of organizational support/training
- C4 - Matching
- C5 - Restructuring

3. How They Learn

- HL1 - Role Modeling
- HL2 – Personal Reflection
- HL3 – Dialogue with Mentee
- HL4 - Self Direction

4. Critical Organizational Support Needed

- OS1 - Having input into matching of mentee
- OS2 - Training for mentor & mentee
- OS2a - Periodic check ins.
- OS2b - Clearly outlined goals and intended outcomes for the relationship.
- OS2c - Talking points/ conversation topics
- OS2d - Agreed upon guideline for the frequency and duration of meetings with mentee.
- OS3 - Company Acknowledgement and Rewards
- OS3a - Acknowledgement through plaque, town halls, etc/

- OS3b - Supervisor support (i.e., time off during day to spend with mentee.)
- OS3c - Opportunity for mentor networking/learning opportunities

Appendix I

Timeline for Dissertation

5/12/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish writing research proposal • Submit proposal to Dr. Volpe for review
5/21/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review proposal with Dr. Volpe • Proposal to Dr. Yorks
6/4/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hearing with Dr. Volpe and Dr. Yorks
6/6/2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit to IRB and obtain IRB approval
6/7/2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select Sample Participants
6/15/2018- 7/2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send letters of participation • Send demographic inventories and technology adoption questionnaires • Schedule and conduct interviews • Use outside service to transcribe all interviews as they occur • Begin process of data analysis as interviews are transcribed to ascertain emergent themes
9/2018 – 10/2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze data using conceptual framework • Collaborate with Marie on major findings
11/2018 – 12/10/2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write findings
12/10/2018 – 3/2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write Analysis, Interpretation and Synthesis
3/2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write conclusions and recommendations
3/2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defend research dissertation
3/2018 – 4/7/2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make post-defense edits
5/2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduation

Appendix J

Document Review

Merchant Development Program - Mentor Guidelines

Purpose and Matching Process

The Merchant Mentoring Program provides Merchant Development Program (MDP) participants with an opportunity to realize both professional and personal growth through mentoring relationships with buyers/planners.

The program will enable the mentoring partners (1 MDP and 1 Buyer, Planner or Digital Category Manager) to develop their individual talents and skills while increasing their value to Camson Retailers as well as building our organization's merchant capability. Our goal is for mutual learning and benefit to result for both partners in these relationships.

Each mentor will work with one mentee throughout the MDP and will focus on providing:

1. Career and organizational insights
2. Appropriate career and development feedback
3. Networking opportunities
4. An additional source of advice and support when the AMDP is planning and managing the transition into their buyer/planner/digital category manager role

Mentor Program Expectations

Expectations of the Mentor

- Ensure that you and your mentee have an agreement that clarifies:
 - Goals for the relationship
 - Specific development needs you'll focus on
 - How often you'll meet/how you'll work together
- Ensure that discussions with your mentee are advancing the goals you established and set clear next steps at the end.
- Seek informal opportunities to build the relationship, perhaps outside of the immediate work environment.
- Use the following effective mentoring behaviors, when possible:
 - Be a sounding board, a facilitator
 - Provide needed support
 - Provide structure, feedback and direction
 - Identify/recommend resources
 - Challenge in a positive way; push toward highest standards
 - Provide visibility and recognition of the mentee's talents

Expectations of the Mentee

- The mentee has primary responsibility for his/her development. Therefore, he/she should identify development needs he/she wants the mentor's help in addressing, and be proactive in asking for feedback and support.
- The mentee should seek to give something back to the mentor and should clarify what that "something" is.
- The mentee should seek to learn as much as possible from this experience.

Expectations of the Pair

- Share responsibility for how you work together. Together, determine the frequency and content of your interactions, based on your needs.
- Make a commitment to prioritize having regular discussions. Ensure that the conversations take place as planned.
- Confidentiality is respected.
- The MDP's current supervisor is **still** a key partner in their growth and development.
- Learn from one another's strengths; mentoring should be fun and rewarding for both of you.

Guidelines for a successful mentoring relationship:

These guidelines are provided to ensure that mentors understand the success factors of a strong mentoring relationship.

- **Ensure regular meetings with your mentee:** Make a commitment to regular discussions with your mentee, and prioritize around other commitments to ensure that upcoming conversations are scheduled and occur as planned. The suggested guideline is to meet with your mentee one time a month for the time they're in the training program, 6 months.
- **Manage discussions with your mentee effectively:** Strive to ensure that each discussion with your mentee advances the shared goals established early in the relationship, and that both of you consider the time to be well spent.
- **Set clear next steps to close regular discussions:** Establish clear next steps for both mentor and mentee at the close of all discussions, and use these to drive two-way momentum in the relationship from month to month.
- **Follow-up on commitments:** Meet (or exceed!) your own deadlines for follow-up commitments and hold your mentee to his or her commitments as well.
- **Note upcoming "life events" for your mentee** Understanding what's happening in your mentee's life will help you to plan for upcoming discussions and determine how you can provide support beyond the immediacy of their job and the organization.
- **Seek informal opportunities to build the relationship:** Informal interactions—perhaps outside of the immediate work environment—can help bring depth to the mentoring relationship and solidify two-way commitment.

Appendix K

Frequency Table—Finding #1

RQ1: How did participants describe what motivated them to take on the role of mentor?

N = 19

Participants	Extrinsic			Intrinsic	
	An Opportunity to Gain Visibility	Ability to Gain Leadership Competency	Ability to Influence Future Mentee Hiring Decisions	Desire to Share Their Prior Experience with Mentee	Desire to Support Organization
Kate	X	X		x	
Mary	X	X			
Cindy	X	X		x	
Sue	X		x	x	
Laura	X			x	
Patricia	X	X		x	x
Dana	X	X			
Brittany	X	X	x		x
Janine		X			
Mia	X	x		x	x
Ally	X	x			x
Liz				x	x
Caitlin				x	x
Deirdre	X	x			x
Jillian	X			x	
Sarah	X		x	x	
Drew	X			x	
Christine	X	x			x
Anna	X			x	
Total	16	11	3	12	8
%	84%	58%	16%	63%	42%

Appendix L

Frequency Table—Finding #2

RQ2: What challenges did participants describe they faced in their role as mentors?

N = 19

Participants	Time	Matching/Lack of Connection with Mentee	Lack of Org Support & Training	Org Environment not Conducive (restructuring/physical workspace not conducive)
Kate	x		x	x
Mary	x	x	x	
Cindy	x		x	
Sue	x		x	x
Laura	x	x	x	
Patricia		x	x	x
Dana	x	x	x	
Brittany	X			
Janine	X	x	x	x
Mia		x	x	x
Ally	X	x		
Liz	X			x
Caitlin	X			
Deirdre				x
Jillian	X	x		
Sarah	X	x		
Drew	X	x		
Christine		x	x	
Anna		x	x	x
Total	13	12	11	8
%	68%	63%	58%	42%

Appendix M

Frequency Table—Finding #3

RQ3: In what ways did participants learn to increase their professional skills in their role as mentors?

N = 19

Participant	Dialogue with Mentee	Personal Reflection	Role Modeling	Self-Direction
Kate			x	
Mary	X			
Cindy		x		
Sue	X	x	x	x
Laura	X			
Patricia	X	x		
Dana	X			
Brittany	X	x		x
Janine		x		
Mia	X			
Ally	X			
Liz	X		x	
Caitlin	X	x		
Deirdre	X		x	
Jillian	X	x		
Sarah	X	x		x
Drew		x		
Christine	X	x		
Anna	X	x		
Total	15	11	4	3
%	78%	58%	21%	16%

Appendix N

Frequency Table—Finding #4

RQ4: How did participants describe the critical elements of organizational support they needed to be a successful mentor?

N = 19

Participant	Training for Mentor and Mentee	Input into Matching	Company Acknowledgement & Rewards
Kate		x	x
Mary	x	x	
Cindy	x	x	
Sue	x	x	x
Laura	x	x	x
Patricia	x	x	
Dana	x		
Brittany	x	x	
Janine	x	x	
Mia	x		
Ally	x	x	
Liz	x		
Caitlin	x		
Deirdre	x		
Jillian	x	x	
Sarah	x		x
Drew	x		x
Christine	x	x	
Anna	x	x	x
Total	18	12	6
%	95%	63%	32%

Appendix O

Demographic Data Table

Name	Age	Gender	Race or Ethnic Group	Country of Origin	Highest Level of Education	How Many Years at Camson Retailers	Year of Participation as Mentor	Were You Prior Mentor or Mentee at Camson Retailers?
Kate	31	Female	White	USA	Bachelors	5	2017	Yes
Mary	28	Female	White	USA	Bachelors	4	2014, 2015, 2016, 2017	Yes
Cindy	29	Female	White	USA	Bachelors	5	2016, 2017	Yes
Sue	35	Female	Asian	USA	Bachelors	6	2017	Yes
Laura	24	Female	White	USA	Bachelors	7	2017	Yes
Patricia	27	Female	White	USA	Bachelors	5	2016	Yes
Dana	25	Female	White	USA	Bachelors	3	2017	Yes
Brittany	24	Female	African American	USA	Bachelors	5	2016	No
Janine	25	Female	White	USA	Bachelors	4	2017	Yes
Mia	26	Female	Asian	USA	Bachelors	6	2017	Yes
Ally	32	Female	White	USA	Bachelors	4	2015, 2016, 2017	Yes
Liz	26	Female	White	USA	Bachelors	4	2017	Yes
Caitlin	27	Female	White	USA	Bachelors	3	2017	Yes
Deirdre	26	Female	White	USA	Bachelors	5	2016	Yes
Jillian	27	Female	White	USA	Bachelors	3	2017	Yes
Sarah	25	Female	White	USA	Bachelors	2	2016, 2017	Yes
Drew	26	Male	White	USA	Bachelors	5	2017	Yes
Christine	25	Female	White	USA	Bachelors	5	2017	No
Anna	28	Female	White	USA	Bachelors	6	2015, 2016, 2017	Yes

Appendix P

Evidence Table—Extrinsic Motivating Factors

Variations in the extrinsic motivating factors across Believers, Disgruntled, and Politicos

Category	Name	Comments
Believers	Patricia	Patricia was interviewing internally for a position where she would be managing four direct reports. It would be the first time she would be leading a team, and she noted that an immediate benefit of being a mentor would be to expedite the “learning curve” of managing others in a perceived “safe space.” She commented, “Between you and me, I have no idea how to lead others. I need to be a mentor! I’m counting on that experience and so is my future team!”
	Deirdre	Deirdre noted that she had graduated from the training program three years prior, and she believed that serving as a mentor would help “bring me back to the basics” and would allow her “learn new systems that may help me in my own role.” She explained, “some day I’ll need to teach my own team how those systems work, so I knew being a mentor would help me get ahead of some of those key learnings that I’ll need teach.”
	Mia	Mia described her reaction to the human resource team’s outreach and commented, “I was happy about it because it made me feel like they see me as somebody that could help and impact somebody else’s experience here, so I was very honored to be asked to be a mentor.” She continued, “HR facilitates your career here, so I felt it was a good sign that they wanted me to be part of the program. I must be doing well enough to be asked to support someone else.”
	Christine	Christine stated, “I think a big opportunity in the mentor role is to learn how to manage yourself, and of course manage others.” She continued, “There’s a lot of opportunity to show leadership through mentoring without technically being in a leader role.” For Christine, she described how she wanted to grow within the organization and stated, “I want to learn to be able to properly manage a team...and I guess make sure everyone is happy on my team.”
Disgruntled	Cindy	Cindy talked about her response to being asked to be a mentor: Cindy declared that she, “did not volunteer for the role” and that she was “chosen to be a volunteer.” While laughing about the irony, she suggested that she was “voluntold” by the human resources department. She felt obligated to take on the role and that she could not tell HR “no” when they reached out. However, she also noted that being a mentor would be “good practice” for her to identify and understand her leadership style. She detailed how the recent restructuring negatively impacted her team and that there were not as many developmental opportunities to learn to manage others. Being in the role would provide her the space to find what she quoted as her “leadership voice.”
	Jillian	Jillian commented on how she thought she got selected to be a mentor: I would like to think that my supervisor recommended me for a specific reason (hopefully a good one – maybe she thinks I’m good at my job which would be flattering, I guess), but I’m not sure if that’s accurate. Who knows why I was selected, really.

	Mary	Mary summarized the communication from the human resources department by stating: I've been a mentor four times now and every single time I've gotten an email from somebody from HR saying, "Congratulations. You've been chosen to be a mentor. You'll be instructing a mentee. If you're not able to do it let me know, but I really hope you can." I mean I wanted to do it, but even if I didn't I really couldn't tell HR no...
	Dana	Dana spoke about what was her motivation to be a mentor - "I wanted the ability to hear anecdotally what the leaders were saying was important to the young talent. Even though I'm more tenured in my career, I never get direct access to those leaders, so I felt that if I accepted this role then I would be able to polish off some skills and stay relevant, in a way."
	Ally	Ally spoke to the rationale for her being a mentor - "Every buyer and planner manages people and they have to train them. They need to be comfortable teaching skills, but also must have more sensitive growth conversations. I think mentoring is a good entry point in terms of figuring out your leadership style. There's really no other place to practice this skill set at the company right now." She also stated - "For me, being asked to be a mentor showed that Camson Retailers admires my work and thinks I'm mature enough to handle guiding someone else through their career journey here." She laughed and continued, "Though I would prefer the company acknowledge my work through a raise or a promotion."
Politicos	Sue	Sue described her desire to build her network while serving as a mentor - "One of my strong suits is the relationships that I have within the company, and I'm very much a people person. Yes, I felt that it was a good way to give back to Camson Retailers, but I thought it would also build up my personal network. I want my name to in the mix during promotion time and I felt being a mentor couldn't hurt." She also later referenced her mentee and stated, "I could potentially have this person work for me in the future, so I thought [being a mentor] would be a good opportunity to scope out future team members."
	Laura	Laura spoke about her motivation to be a mentor - "Being a mentor is a really, really good way to meet people within the company. A lot of your career here is driven by who you know and I felt that this would benefit me in the long run." She also noted, "I think it was an honor to be asked to be a mentor. I never proactively said that I wanted to be a mentor, but when it was offered to me I was flattered." She continued by noting, "I think 99.9% of people are so flattered. The second one of my friends gets asked to be a mentor by HR, they start texting each other asking who else was chosen to be a part of the program." For Laura being asked to be a mentor was almost a status symbol among her peer set.
	Sarah	Sarah described her motivation - I did it in some sense to build my network, as selfish as it may sound. You meet other people through [the mentoring program] and you meet other mentors, and those people could potentially have a hand in hiring you onto their teams someday. She also stated, "I'm going to help my mentee and mold her into what I want from a team member. I'm going to start training her now so that I can hopefully hire her!"

	Brittany	Brittany commented on her motive for being a mentor - "Honestly, this is sort of selfish, but I accepted the role to show [management] that I'm a team player. I wasn't thrilled to be a mentor, and I didn't really have the time, but I couldn't tell HR that I wouldn't volunteer for the role. I felt obligated at that point to do it. So I did it probably more because it would look good. She also touched upon another motive - My approach with being a mentor, and I guess my strategy, was by getting to know someone early on in their career, I might be able to pick up on who's very talented or who has great skills. Maybe down the road, if I'm in a position where I need to hire someone on my team, I might consider that person a candidate. That kind of networking appealed to me. I know, that sounds selfish."
	Drew	Drew stated that being selected to be a mentor "definitely speaks to your credibility." He continued, "At least I'm being recognized within the company as someone who has a strong skill set, and that I'm valuable enough to mentor a new hire."

Appendix Q

Evidence Table—Intrinsic Motivating Factors

Variations in the intrinsic motivating factors across Believers, Disgruntled, and Politicos

Category	People	Comments
Believers	Patricia	Patricia explained her motivation - “I guess at some point you go through a new experience and it’s helpful to have someone. I loved my mentor when I went through the training program, and I just felt like I would like to do that for someone. That’s what made me really excited to be a mentor. She also explained how she had always gravitated towards positions throughout her life that allowed her to help others. She described in length how she had an innate desire to teach others and in fact, considered a teaching profession. She stated, “My parents told me that life is about connecting and lifting each other up. When I was asked to be a mentor I didn’t hesitate. I want to lift others up. I want to teach and help the people under me grow.”
	Mia	Mia described her motivation by commenting, “Although Camson Retailers has some crazy moments, and I do really love the company. I accepted the mentor role, in a way, to share that passion with the younger employees who are new to their jobs.”
	Liz	Liz commented that she had many mentors growing up as a member on a competitive swim team, and that she felt the need to “pay it forward” and be a support to someone else, similar to what she had received throughout her life. She commented, “I thought this would be such a good opportunity for me give back, in a way. My mentor challenged and supported me and I ultimately grew from her support. I wanted to do that for someone else.”
	Caitlin	Caitlin commented, “I want to be able to instill confidence in someone else to be able to truly be their authentic selves and go out and build relationships, and ultimately find what they want out of their career here. I guess, I want others to have a good experience here and for the company as a whole to succeed.”
	Deirdre	Deirdre also described a similar sentiment. She commented, “I just love what I do here. If I can spread that passion to someone else, then I’m going to. Hopefully, my mentee will be just as passionate.”
	Christine	Christine, who did not have prior mentoring experience commented, “We spend more hours here than with our own family, so why not help others out and kind of build up our culture. If I can help someone overcome a challenge and have a better day, then I will.”

Disgruntled	Kate	Kate referenced her negative experience as a mentee participating in Camson Retailer's formal program. She recalled how her mentor was laid off during a restructure that happened during her time in the mentoring program, and that the human resources department never found her a replacement mentor. She elaborated, "I saw my peers getting support from their mentor, and I just fell by the wayside. I wanted to provide to another person what wasn't necessarily given to me."
	Cindy	Cindy also described a negative experience that served as a catalyst for her to accept the mentor role. When she was a mentee, her mentor seemed disinterested in being in the position and that there was a void in their relationship. She recalled: I had zero relationship with my mentor. She made no effort and there was no connection. I thought it would be nice to change that up a bit and try and actually help mentor someone, so that they could kind of get out of it what I would have wanted to.
	Ally	Ally described how being asked to serve as a mentor was "humbling" and that she felt it was "empowering to help the next generation navigate their early careers." She noted, "It's the year of the female! I was excited to help develop younger women who had just joined the company. If we don't help each other out, who will?"
Politicos	Laura	Laura spoke about her motivating factors "I had just graduated through the training program so I remembered what it was like to be new to the company. It was way less intimidating to bounce ideas off my mentor versus my supervisor."
	Sarah	Sarah talked about her intrinsic motivation and stated, "My mentor here was super supportive. She helped me with some really difficult situations. She's no longer with the company, but we still speak regularly. She's been a wonderful person in my life. I feel like if I could be that to someone else, I would certainly not turn down the opportunity."
	Brittany	Brittany declared, "I actually had never been a mentor before, but I did think it would be nice to give back, so I did it more for the mentee. I wanted to take her under my wing. I also like this company and thought it would be a good way to show that"
	Drew	Drew noted that when he was asked to be a mentor he was quite excited. He stated, "I remember being a mentee and my mentor had a major impact on my day to day experience of getting through the training program. I wanted to do that for a trainee."

Appendix R

Evidence Table—The Challenge of Matching

Variations in the challenge of matching across Believers, Disgruntled, and Politicos

Category	People	Comments
Believers	Patricia	Patricia suggested a different approach to the organization in terms of matching, and suggested that mentees nominate who they would like their mentor to be. She elaborated that it would be “very rewarding to know that a mentee selected you to be their mentor and that they look up to you and admire your career.” She continued by stating that when HR “randomly forces two people together, it sometimes doesn’t feel authentic.” By allowing the mentee to select their mentor it not only feels “really, really good” to the mentor, but it also feels slightly less controlled by the organization.
	Christine	Christine spoke to matching and noted: I think that when you assign mentors and mentees there’s a chance they’ll click. But it also might go the opposite way and you might dread to spend time with this person. So I think that it’s nice when the mentee has a say in which their mentor is because it’s somebody that they really like and respect and want to learn from. It makes both the mentor and mentee more committed and the mentor want to establish a strong relationship.
Disgruntled	Mary	Mary was surprised to see that her mentee wasn’t as “in it” as she was when Mary was a trainee. She elaborated: I’ve been a mentor before and usually we hit it off purely because we’re excited about what’s to come in our careers. This past time when I was a mentor, there was something off. I couldn’t see any hint of myself in her...I think that’s why we never bonded.
	Cindy	Cindy felt strongly that being a mentor should be voluntary. She noted, “you should be asked and not told to be a mentor because truth be told, some people do not want to be in the mentor role which just creates a negative experience for everyone.”
	Dana	Dana described her relationship with her mentee, “It felt like my mentee clearly did not see any benefit in having me around. She would always cancel our meetings, so eventually I just let the relationship fall through the cracks.”

	Janine	<p>Janine described how her mentee was technically the same title as her and described how their interactions at times were “uncomfortable and challenging.” She explained, “One day I’m giving her advice because I’m technically higher up than her. When my mentee got promoted, the whole vibe changed. She was now my peer. She didn’t want me telling her how to do things anymore.” Janine stated: I’ve heard of a few [mentoring] instances I know of at Camson Retailers did turn negative because the mentee and mentor were kinda on the same level, such as my situation. The mentors clashed with their mentee and it was more like a rivalry-type thing where they were essentially peers and on the same level and now one was telling their mentee what to do. It was like, stop acting like you’re better than me because we came from the same place.</p>
	Ally	<p>Ally elaborated on this notion of connection, or lack thereof, and attributed it to the fact that every individual in the training program was automatically enlisted to be a mentee and matched with a mentor. She felt that regardless of becoming a trainee, you should still have a say into whether or not you want to receive a mentor. She commented, “My mentee didn’t really see the value because she did not actively seek out a mentor. She found really no value in my support, which became frustrating.” She continued, “My mentee had also been with the company for a few years prior to joining the training program. She really didn’t need my help navigating the system, you know? Being a mentor was almost a waste of my time.” Ally also felt strongly that being a mentee should be optional.</p>
	Jillian	<p>Jillian also touched her challenge with matching. She felt like being a mentor was a struggle for her because her mentee was an employee one level below her who was on her team. Her mentee sat next to her in the open floor plan, so they were regularly communicating. There was nothing “special” about the relationship, which she felt resulted in both of them cancelling quite frequently.</p>
	Anna	<p>Anna stated that for her, “the number one challenge with these formal mentoring programs is if there’s going to be a connection or not. That’s the challenge that stood out to me the most.” She continued to describe how she went into the experience fearing this lack of connection to be the most probable roadblock, and that it unfortunately ended up coming true. Her mentee was focused on “gossiping” and wanted to focus their dialogue on the rumors going on in the company, which she did not feel was appropriate, nor the goal of their relationship. After a few meetings, Anna’s mentee started to piece together that her mentor would not honor those types of conversations, so she said they eventually stopped meeting all together.</p>

Politicos	Sue	Sue agreed with that sentiment and added, “I think we need to have mentors that really want to be here and who have a positive outlook on Camson Retailers. Right now this isn’t the case.” Sue felt as though some of the individuals that HR selected to be mentors were not “rays of positivity” and given that restructuring that was occurring frequently within the organization, mentees needed people who saw the, “good in the changes and could help their mentees see that.” She also felt that if HR had asked those mentors with a negative outlook to be in the role, they would have declined the offer. She stated, “I can’t imagine that the mentee had a good experience. How can you when your mentor is pessimistic and constantly complaining about the company? I bet if asked, those people would never had agreed to be in the role.”
	Laura	Laura commented that her mentor’s “approach to her work was just different” and as a result she found it, “hard to provide advice to my mentee.” She continued by describing how her mentee waited until the last minute to submit projects or rehearse presentations. Laura explained how it frustrated her since she was very driven and eager to help her mentee, yet she felt her mentee was not fully invested.
	Sarah	Sarah also noted that her mentee had been with the company a few years before becoming involved with the mentoring program. She already had her internal network and when she got into the training program, she chose to leverage those contacts. Sarah explained, “My mentee had her own thing going on, so meeting with me almost felt like more of a task for her, I think. We got along, but I feel like she didn’t really need me at times.”
	Drew	Drew described a “stigma” around being a mentor and the relationship with the person you’re matched with. He felt that it was assumed that as a mentor you would get along with your mentee, however “it’s a little bit difficult sometimes to have a natural relationship with someone when you’re kind of just, for lack of a better term, forcibly paired.” He continued, “so it’s a little awkward to get through that hump. It’s almost like being set up on a blind date.”

Appendix S

Evidence Table—The Challenge of Institutional Support and Training

Variations in the challenge of institutional support and training across Believers, Disgruntled, and Politicos

Category	People	Comments
Believers	Patricia	Patricia felt as though she could not meet on her own floor due to the “rumor-mill.” She elaborated on this challenge by saying that Camson Retailers did not have a mentoring culture and that the “open desk environment” only exacerbated that. She wished that the organization would promote their involvement in the program more publicly so she felt comfortable meeting with her mentee.
	Mia	Mia felt as though a challenge was that Camson Retailers had a culture where “people speculate and gossip” if they see you “behind closed doors with someone not from your immediate team.” She perceived that the physical layout of the organization presented an obstacle that stood in her way to being an effective mentor.
	Liz	Liz spoke to the challenge of time and stated how she relied on texting. Her and her mentee messaged each other multiple times a week about “this and that,” but would only actually meet up every other month. In terms of organizational support, she thought the organization could support via weekly talking points. This sort of organizational support would aid the more introverted mentors get over potential “awkwardness” with their mentees. She also commented on how she could be an even better support if she knew what the trainees were learning in the classroom. The talking points would help her navigate those conversations to be productive for her mentee. Liz also agreed with HR “owning” the meeting planner, which would alleviate “the guessing game of who should make the first move and place something on the calendar.”
	Caitlin	Caitlin spoke about how she overcame the challenge of meeting up with her mentee and the time constraints. Caitlin stated that she “texted her mentee all the time,” but that they limited getting together in person to the suggested once a month due to workloads. She commented, “My mentee would shoot me a text with a question and I would just respond that way. It was just easier for both of us.”

	Christine	Christine felt that the HR department should require, “a review where you’re asked to provide the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for both of each other so you feel like the relationship was constructive and that you’re both 100% benefitting from it.” While Christine believed her relationship with her mentee was progressing positively, she had wished that HR would’ve done a check in just to confirm that she was “having an impact” on her mentee and that their collective efforts thus far were worthwhile. Given that they were both taking time out of their day to meet, Christine commented that she would’ve, “valued the reassurance that she was supporting her mentee in a way that she desired and found useful.”
Disgruntled	Kate	Kate explained, “This organization has not supported me at all as a mentor. The only thing that they’ve provided me with is the person, and then from there me and the person have made it work.” She summarized her thoughts by stating, “it’s like HR didn’t care and set us up to fail.” She also noted the challenge of the open floor plan and said explained, “I didn’t ask for this role. I know this sounds awful, but the 30 minute meeting and the travel time took an hour out of my day that I didn’t have.” Kate also mentioned her longing for a certificate that was “similar to what employees get when they hit a sales goal.”
	Mary	Mary noted about the challenge of time: The last time I was a mentor, my office was so busy. It wasn’t that I didn’t want to be a mentor, but it was more so that I was worried that I didn’t have the time. I feel bad because my mentee wanted to meet with me a lot and I just didn’t have the time. I also had a hard time explaining to my boss (who didn’t care or acknowledge that I was a mentor) that I had to leave for 30 minutes for coffee, even though we’re slammed with work. Mary described a desire for the training materials to clearly communicate the time commitment required to be a mentor.
	Cindy	Cindy stated, “I received an email with some sort of PDF attachment, but I took it like a grain of salt. I didn’t truly understand what I had been asked to sign up for. I just kind of wung it.”
	Dana	Dana spoke to the support she wanted from HR: I want the HR team to tell me what the suggested frequency of meetings and time commitment is. From there, I can say whether I have the time and I want to be a mentor.
	Janine	Janine spoke of the confusion around goals for the program, “there’s not only the challenge of scheduling and keeping that schedule, but bringing something to the table for your mentee to take away and making sure the time is perceived as useful by both of you.”

	Ally	Ally noted that she would like, “a little more training in terms of how the relationship should be structured, what you should be assisting them in, things like that. I wish I had known what a productive relationship looked like.”
	Jillian	Jillian recommended that HR get all the mentees in a room before the kick off of the relationship to provide a “high level overview of why we’re setting this relationship up, the kinds of things that you, as mentees, should be asking or looking for, or trying to connect about.”
	Anna	Anna described how “outside of an initial email from HR” there’s not much information or guidance. Anna also found the open workspace to be particularly challenging. She touched upon the organizational structure she needed and said, “While mentoring is primarily all about the mentee, it’s a two way street and the mentor also needs to feel some sort of worth and support. There needs to be training so that both the mentor and mentee understand the program.” Anna also desired recognition for being a mentor: Mentoring takes time out of your day, and something even as small as, like, when you end the program you get a plaque or you get a certificate or something...something that recognizes that you did this for someone.
Politicos	Sue	Sue preferred acknowledgement in more of a public forum. She stated that she would appreciate recognition on the communal TV sets located on each common area within Camson Retailers, or even a “shout out” at a company-wide town hall.
	Laura	Laura commented that she would like to not only understand the goals of the relationship, but also would also appreciate HR providing a weekly “curriculum or an outline.” She explained, “I want to know exactly what they’re learning in the program, that way I can provide supplemental support that aligns to the classroom portion.” Laura elaborated on this thought by suggesting that the organization implement a “mid-point survey” that would ensure that people “were both getting what they want out to the relationship.” Laura also touched being recognized for being a mentor. She stated: “Camson Retailers is a political company and you get ahead based upon who you know. It would be great for the company to offer more frequent opportunities for mentors to build their own networks. That would be a huge draw for a mentor.”

	Sarah	Sarah felt as though her “reputation was on the line” and described how she ultimately wanted her mentee to speak positively about her. In order to do so, she commented that she desired clearly outlined role and responsibilities to ensure that she was being effective and that her mentee perceived her in a positive light. In terms of control of the meet-ups with their mentee, Sarah stated that a relationship will “either grow or not,” so the organization putting structure around timing was insignificant. Sarah also felt that the company should acknowledge mentors by rewarding them with networking opportunities. She elaborated on this notion of planned programming and stated that the HR department should provide more formal, organized “mixers” for both the mentors and mentees. .
	Brittany	Brittany also suggested conversation topics that could help shape their coffee chats to ensure that they were productive. She summarized: I think I could have been way more useful to my mentee if I had certain things that were outlined that I was supposed to teach her. If it was really just so that she has another name and face in the company, then I think I served my purpose. If I were supposed to actually teach something, then it would’ve been helpful to understand what exactly that was. Brittany also noted I thought it was nice that there was no formal structure in terms of when you’re meeting. I don’t know if that would make things better or worse. Actually...that would make things worse. I really like that it’s flexible. But maybe HR needs to be more involved by just checking in to understand if the mentee is getting something out of the relationship
	Drew	Drew also felt that a town hall would be appropriate and that it did not have to be “anything crazy,” but simply a “shout out by a senior leader say thank you.” He continued: We’re all crazed and overwhelmed right now so being a mentor is tough. Having your name read out loud in front of people you respect would be really rewarding for me. It’s as if the company is telling everyone that they believe in your leadership and ability to groom future talent. That’s a big deal.

Appendix T

Evidence Table—Learning Through Dialogue

Variations in how the mentors leveraged dialogue across Believers, Disgruntled, and Politicos

Category	People	Comments
Believers	Patricia	Patricia summarized by stating, “just talking to my mentee and helping her through things made me think more big picture about my own business, and pulled myself out of my own day-to-day. I learned a lot by talking through her issues with her.”
	Mia	Mia also used her time in the mentor role to learn how to provide feedback to a future direct report. She described one instance in which she was a little too straightforward with her approach to her mentee. Mia commented, “I told her that her logic was incorrect. We were going through a retail math homework problem. She was quiet and I heard after the fact from a friend on her team that I had upset her.” She continued, “that was never, ever my intent. I just thought that she would want honest and direct feedback. The situation made me realize I need to be very careful with my approach and tailor it to the person.”
	Liz	Liz noted, “As a mentor, you have the ability to teach someone things you might not even realize you know or understand yourself. By speaking and giving advice on a situation, you can almost have an ‘aha- moment’ yourself.”
	Caitlin	Caitlin explained how her mentee’s supervisor provided feedback on a certain aspect of her capstone presentation. She realized that she would have approached the problem similar to her mentee and commented, “My mentee walked me through the feedback and I realized I didn’t even think of that different approach to analyzing that area of the business. Her boss was a Director and it taught me how that level in the company approaches business decisions.”
	Christine	Christine described how her mentee would show her the presentations and homework that she was being given as part of the program. She continued, “It had been a minute since I had been exposed to certain aspects of retail math. Many times I found my mentee walking me through a problem set. I was actually learning from her!”

Disgruntled	Jillian	Jillian commented: There's no opportunity at all in the company right now to feel empowered or to have any leadership opportunity. So unless you have a mentor, there's no real place to learn leadership. I was able to use this experience to find my voice as a leader. I practiced giving feedback and that was very helpful to me. I learned what worked and what didn't when talking to someone about their performance.
	Anna	Anna stated, "the layoffs in June through everyone a curve ball. I lost my entire team. I have no direct reports right now so this is the only way I can learn to manage someone."
Politicos	Laura	Laura stated: I feel like mentoring made me grow as a merchant because it definitely puts you outside of your comfort zone. When you've been focusing on the same business area for a few years you get tunnel vision. My mentee would talk to me about the brands her team was managing and it was great to learn about other areas. I would review her project that was focused on a vendor in her area and it was eye opening, in a way. Ultimately, being a mentor set me up to be an even more informed merchant... that will hopefully get me promoted faster.
	Sarah	Sarah felt as though she learned leadership capabilities while serving as a mentor. She noted: I would walk my mentee through various reports and there were times she was completely lost. I learned that I need to describe things at her level. Not dumb them down per se, but describe things in a more simple way. I think this will be really important when I finally get promoted into a position where I'm managing others. At least I'm starting the learning curve now. Other than being a mentor, there's nowhere else I would get this opportunity to learn.
	Brittany	Brittany felt as though she learned how to effectively explain new concepts to others while being a mentor. She described how she was able to use mentoring as a "test run" for someone who might work for her someday. Brittany commented: I would try different approaches to teaching my mentee about her business. I would talk her through a problem and if that didn't stick, then I would try a different approach. I realized my personal style is more 'figure it out and come to me if you have questions,' however my mentee needed a much more hands on approach. At first it was frustrating, but I then realized not everyone learns the way I do. It was a good take-away for when I take on a leadership role someday. I have to adjust my style and approach to explaining things.

Appendix U

Evidence Table—Learning Through Reflection

Variations in how the mentors leveraged reflection across Believers, Disgruntled, and Politicos

Category	People	Comments
Believers	Patricia	Patricia described how she would talk her mentee through a tough situation and would then reflect afterwards and ponder why she wasn't taking her own advice. She explained, "I realized I need to be more confident in my approach to various things. I know how to handle tough conversations...being a mentor empowered me to go practice what I was preaching."
	Caitlin	Caitlin provided an example where she gained confidence through reflection. She stated, "I took a look at the reports with her and I gave her advice on what I would say. When I finished speaking I thought to myself, I know more than I think I do. It was really gratifying."
	Christine	Christine described: I was able to stand back and look at something a little more holistically, which I struggle with when I'm working on my own projects. By looking at someone else's work I was reminded to periodically step back and look at my own the same way, which was really cool. I would think to myself - what would I tell my mentee in this situation. How can I approach my business differently?
Disgruntled	Janine	Janine explained her experience by describing: Being a mentor helps you realize that you are in this place in your career where you have the ability to mentor someone, and you might sometimes forget that you have this wealth of knowledge. So...it reminds you and emphasizes that, which is nice. It makes you take a minute to look back at your career and realize that you belong in the position you're in, and that you are doing well. Given the competitive environment of this place, it's comforting to know that you know your stuff...and that you're marketable should you want to leave!
	Jillian	Jillian stated that given the scarce resources at Camson Retailers, there was no real time for "self-reflection" and called the practice a "luxury." However, she felt as though that she found herself engaging more in reflection after her meetings with her mentee. She explained, "Removing yourself from the day to day, minutia of it all was very beneficial for me. I would get home at night and think about our conversations. It made me reflect on my own situation...and honestly why I'm still working here.."

	Anna	Anna, who noted that she had a negative rapport with her mentee, explained how the process of reflection allowed her to learn a little bit more about her approach to relationship building. She elaborated by stating that after she would meet with mentee she would reflect and think to herself, “why am I taking this so personally?” she stated: I had to come to the realization that not everyone is going to like me...and that’s ok. I’m a people person and I wanted so badly for this relationship to work. In a way, it hurt my feelings that my mentee and I couldn’t find a middle ground. That was a big lesson for me. I can’t please everyone. Maybe I was just too serious with my role as mentor and the program. Our lack of relationship would keep me up at night, which is crazy, but it did.
Politicos	Sue	Sue also noted that being a mentor taught her to be confident in her approach to work, as well as with potentially uncomfortable topics with his boss. She described: I would explain things to my mentee about how to overcome a situation with her boss and then I would go home at the end of the night and ask myself why I wasn’t heeding my own advice. Being a mentor, I would give advice, and then would think about those words all day. I realized I need to walk my own talk! I need to speak up more when I’m unhappy with a situation. Right now, my boss and I don’t get along. I would spend the night thinking to myself, gosh...what would you tell your mentee in this situation.
	Sarah	Sarah stated that being a mentor made her realize how strong she was at building and fostering relationships. She noted that she never had a doubt that she would be able to connect with her mentee, even though she was not a part of the matching process. She explained, “I would hear about fellow mentors having issues with their mentees and that was never the case for me.” Sarah continued, “After the mentorship came to end, I thought about the experience and realized that while I am an introvert, I have a unique ability to connect with others. Relationships get you promoted here, it was nice to know that I have that going for me!
	Brittany	Brittany elaborated about how she reflected on her time with her mentee: I would many times stress to my mentee to think big picture about her business. After we met, I found that I would always think - what is going to move the needle of MY own business? I would ask myself, what do I need to do to really drive sales and impact my brands. What can take the back burner, and what’s worth focusing on? It was really helpful to think back on our conversations and put those thoughts into practice.
	Drew	Drew explained this confidence boost as a result of reflection: I thought to myself that was really cool. I was in my mentee’s position in the training program about a year ago and at that point in time I would’ve never been able to describe that report the way I just did. It confirmed for me that I’m on the right path. I would think to myself, wow...I am meant to do this for a living.

Appendix V

Evidence Table—Learning Through Role Modeling

Variations in how the mentors leveraged role-modeling across Believers, Disgruntled, and Politicos

Category	People	Comments
Believers	Liz	Liz commented on how she role modeled behavior to compensate for the lack of organizational support: HR never gave us any structure, so I tried to mimic aspects of my past mentoring relationship. For example, my mentor would always pay for our coffee. I know that's trivial, but it meant a lot to me. With my past mentee, I did the same.
	Deirdre	Deirdre also noted: My mentor was great and always found the time to meet with me. She would put time on my calendar every two weeks. She proactively sent the meeting planner. She set the tone for the relationship. When it came time for me to be a mentor, I followed her lead and used that as my guideline, especially since the organization didn't give us much direction. Granted, my mentee typically cancelled the meeting...but my intent was there!
Disgruntled	Kate	Kate, who didn't have such a great experience with her own mentor, described how she drew upon that experience to understand what not to do. She explained, "My mentor was never around and made no effort to meet up." Kate continued: I didn't want to be that person to my mentee, so I did everything differently. I did the initial outreach to my mentee and made sure that if I ever had to cancel a coffee, that is was rescheduled for later in the week.
Politicos	Sue	Sue stated, "I kind of thought about what my mentor had done with me and that kind of things he taught me about, the kind of ways he supported me, and I tried to give support in that way."

Appendix W

Evidence Table—Learning Through Self-Direction

Variations in how the mentors leveraged self directed learning Believers, Disgruntled, and Politicos

Category	People	Comments
Politicos	Sue	Sue described how she brought a retail math class back to her desk after her meeting with her mentee and worked through the problem set on her own. She commented, “I want to succeed in my career. I realized that this was what the leaders of the training program were focusing on...so, I better learn how to get the answers.” She laughed and continued, “isn’t that a huge perk of being a mentor? You get to learn what the young kids are learning and stay relevant!”
	Sarah	Sarah also emphasized that she thought the biggest “plus” of being a mentor was learning about what the trainees were being exposed to. She commented that it had been “years since I had to analyze a report in the detail my trainee was doing.” Similar to Sue, Sarah would review her mentee’s notes after their meetings to ensure she understood all the components of any particular document.
	Brittany	Brittany also held a similar mindset and noted that she would take the reports that her mentee was learning about back to her desk and would teach herself how to analyze them. She explained: I was somewhat embarrassed that my mentee knew more than I did. I didn’t want to go to my own supervisor, so I would go into a conference room after we met and read and analyze the reports until they made sense to me.