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ABSTRACT

This symposium on the role of human resource development (HRD) in women's career development consists of three presentations. "Career Goals of Non-Managerial Women: An Adaptive Approach" (Linda M. Hite, Kimberly S. McDonald) reports an exploratory study that produced data from which these four themes emerged--adaptive goals, family influence, security needs, and organizational support--that suggest non-managerial women take an adaptive approach regarding their careers. "The Career Life Cycle and Mentoring: The Opportunity for Reflection as an Outcome for Mentors" (Ellen J. Mullen et al.) describes results that suggest that, among professional educators, mentoring was a vehicle for mentor reflection, particularly among women, and demonstrating organizational skills and promoting independent thinking were predictive of the opportunity to reflect. "Functions Performed by Mentors That Assist in the Career Development of Women Managers" (Rose Mary Wentling) focuses on a study that investigated whether women managers had mentors and how the mentors assisted them in their career development. It reports that being an influential leader and willing to share knowledge and expertise were the characteristics the women managers most often wanted in their mentors and that mentors were the most influential in the women managers' career development. All three papers include substantial bibliographies. (YLB)

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Career Goals of Non-Managerial Women: An Adaptive Approach

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While the past twenty years has seen a significant increase in research on managerial women, little has been written on non-managerial women's career development. This exploratory study investigated non-managerial women's career plans. Four themes emerged from the data, suggesting these women take an adaptive approach regarding their careers.

Keywords: Women, Careers, Non-managerial

Problem Statement

As women's participation in the workforce has increased, so has the research on women and work. In the past twenty years there has been a significant body of literature focusing on women's career development issues. Much of the research has attempted to help us understand why women still are underrepresented in many prestigious occupations, why women still are segregated into certain jobs, and why women still find it difficult to reach the upper-echelons in organizations. Some of this work has focused on the need for alternative career development theories/models to explain women's career progress in organizations (Caffarella & Olson, 1993; Gallos, 1989; Larwood & Gutek, 1987; Schreiber, 1998). Others have focused on glass ceiling issues and what has deterred and facilitated women's advancement in organizations (Bierema, 1996; Cafarella, Clark, & Ingram, 1997; Ohlott, Ruderman & McCauley, 1994; Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998; Wentling, 1996). Additional research has emphasized women's career goals and aspirations (Arnold, 1993; Eccles, 1994; Erwin & Stewart, 1997; Harmon, 1989; Murrell, Frieze, & Frost, 1991; Nauta, Epperson, & Kahn, 1998).

These studies suggest that the human resource development (HRD) function can play an important role in helping women develop their careers (Bierema, 1996; McDonald & Hite, 1998; Wentling, 1996). However, the majority of gender-based research in HRD has concentrated on women in professional occupations (particularly law and medicine) or in managerial jobs (those in positions of authority over programs or people). Additionally, most of the literature regarding women's goals and career aspirations has focused on high school and college students. Very little empirical research has been done on non-managerial women's career aspirations and plans. These women are not in positions of authority. Instead, they are on the front lines of organizations, serving customers, making sales or working in clerical capacities. They have been ignored in most HRD initiatives and by most research endeavors. We know very little about the goals and interests of this group of working women, inappropriately assuming that by focusing on women in management, we have adequately explored women's roles in the workplace. This exploratory study was designed to help bridge that gap in information by examining non-managerial women's perspectives of their careers and the factors that have facilitated and hindered their career plans. Are these women happy with their work roles or do they desire more? Are they on the front lines by choice or due to lack of opportunity? The dearth of research on this population promoted the use of existing frameworks that address gender, studies on managerial women and on the career aspirations of young women, as a starting point.

Theoretical Framework

An examination of research on women's career aspirations and choices reveals a few continuing themes and some unanswered questions. Looking at careers from a global perspective, advocates of career models for women suggest that women's careers cannot be understood, developed, and/or evaluated using many of the traditional career development models/theories, because the focus is on the male experience. Gallos (1989) wrote: "Women's distinctive developmental voice and needs point to fundamentally different career perspectives, choices, priorities, and patterns for women that need to be understood and appreciated. . . ." (p. 127)

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Many studies highlight life and career considerations. For example, when female students discuss occupational and career choices, they consider a variety of issues. Eccles (1994) wrote: “. . . Occupational choices are not made in isolation of other life choices, such as the decision to marry and have children, and the decision to balance one’s occupational behaviors with one’s other life roles. . .” (p.605). Perhaps the most pervasive theme in the literature is that family issues such as marriage and children do influence women’s goal aspirations and attainment (Arnold, 1993; Erwin & Stewart, 1997; MacKinnon-Slaney, Barber, & Slaney, 1988; Murrell, et al., 1991). For example, Arnold (1993) in a longitudinal study of high school valedictorians, found that the women in her study anticipated interrupting their careers to raise children. She concluded that:

Women perceive, realistically, that high level careers require great commitment. Prestigious male-dominated occupations demand continuous employment and long hours of work. Some women respond to these perceived future demands by lowering their career goals. Other forge ahead and hope that somehow they can juggle valued roles (sic) (p. 175).

In addition, some studies focus on differences in aspirations by gender, by race, or by type of career goal. For example, women appear to have lower career aspirations than men (Bayley, 1992; Arnold, 1993). Arnold (1993) illustrated one possible reason for this again:

Unlike their male peers, who progressively narrowed their career choices during college, the study women pursued a “contingency” approach, with plans remaining open and shifting in the face of expected juggling of work, marriage, parenting, leisure, and community roles. The pressure to remain open to future marriage and family needs that were unknown and uncontrollable during college hindered career planning for many of the women (p. 170).

Further, Bayley (1992) noted that white females' career aspirations were lower than those of black females. Finally, Murrell, et al. (1991) found that female college students indicating a desire to work in male-dominated occupations, had higher career and education aspirations than women who planned to work in female-dominated occupations.

The majority of the studies cited above focused on the career aspirations of high school and college students. One notable exception was Wentling’s (1996) research on the career aspirations of women in middle management. She concluded that many in her sample lacked a career strategy and some “had not realized they wanted a career or that it was even a possibility” (p. 265).

While recognizing that not all women have the same aspirations or interests, studies with managerial women may offer ideas to consider when exploring the career goals of non-managerial women. For example, the research on women managers informs us of the factors most likely to assist women in their career development and advancement within organizations. Managerial women frequently cite the importance of “stretch assignments” and taking on risky tasks as being important to their advancement (Catalyst, 1996; Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998; Wentling, 1996). Demonstrating competence and performing well on the job (Ragins et al, 1998; Ruderman, Ohlott, & Kram, 1995; Wentling, 1996), being assertive and persistent (McDonald & Hite, 1996), and having good mentors (Hansman, 1998; Ragins, et al, 1998; Wentling, 1996) are often mentioned as additional important factors influencing women’s career progress.

Another area of research that may be useful when reviewing the career aspirations of non-managerial women is the work on barriers to career development for female managers. Women managers perceive that discrimination (Cafarella, et al., 1997; Ragins, et al., 1998; Ruderman et al., 1995; Wentling, 1996), unsupportive bosses (Wentling, 1996), and a lack of understanding of the political climate of an organization (Ragins, et al., 1998; Wentling, 1996) hinder their career advancement and opportunities. Other deterrents to women’s advancement include lack of general management and line experience (Ragins, et al., 1998), less exposure to assignments involving risk and visibility (Ohlott, et al., 1994), and difficulty adapting to the corporate culture (Bierema, 1996).

While the literature to date provides HRD practitioners with some knowledge and recommendations regarding the career aspirations and strategies of women managers, little research has examined the career choices and plans of non-managerial women. What factors affect non-managerial women’s career choices? Do the same facilitators and deterrents cited by the literature on managerial women affect the careers of their non-managerial cohorts? This study begins to investigate these issues.

Research Questions

This study explored non-managerial women’s career aspirations and planning. The questions posed were focused on aspirations and actual career experiences, with the goal of learning more about what this group of women wanted and what they received from their work lives. The term “career” used in the questions was defined to the participants as referring to paid or unpaid work. The following questions were addressed:

- What were some of your early career plans?
- How have these plans changed over the years?
- How does your current job fit your career plans?
- What has helped you fulfill these career plans?
- What has hindered you from fulfilling these career plans?
- How has this organization helped your career plans?

Methodology

The subjects for this study were twenty-six (26) women employed in non-managerial positions. Four focus group discussions were conducted to gather data related to participants' career goals and development. Focus group methodology is recommended when the study is exploratory and when "factors related to complex behavior or motivation" are being examined (Krueger, 1994, pp. 44-45). We wanted to obtain data that "emerges from the group" (Krueger, 1994, p. 45). Focus group discussions provide a forum where subjects can interact with one another in a non-threatening manner. Erwin & Stewart (1997) suggested that "diverse ideas may be evoked, inhibitions released, new questions stimulated, and greater diversity of opinions revealed with greater spontaneity in focus groups" (p. 211).

The focus group participants represented a convenience sample. Human resource representatives from two organizations were contacted to determine their interest in this project. These individuals solicited volunteers to participate in this project, with the only parameter being that the potential participants occupy front line positions, as opposed to having responsibility for managing people. Three focus groups involved women employed in a large utility company, the fourth one consisted of females working in a large manufacturing company. The focus groups had 6 or 7 participants each.

Each focus group began with a brief overview of the purpose of the discussion and a definition of career plans. The six major questions listed above were presented to each group to answer. Each focus group discussion was 1-1 hours in length. Company representatives indicated we needed to abide by these time constraints, which may be a limitation of the study. However, there was sufficient time to obtain responses from all participants regarding each question and we began to hear redundancies in responses by the end of each focus group discussion. One researcher served as moderator, while the other took notes. Throughout the discussion, both the moderator and note taker verified participant responses through the use of clarifying questions, additional probes and paraphrasing responses. Immediately following each discussion, a debriefing between the moderator and note-taker took place to discuss "first impressions" and compare and "contrast findings from earlier focus groups" (Krueger, 1994, p. 128). The discussions were tape recorded for review and preparation of abridged transcriptions. Each researcher analyzed the session notes and transcriptions independently to determine major themes emerging from the four groups. The researchers then met to compare findings and to reach agreement on the major themes. Additionally, the abridged transcripts were read and analyzed by an independent researcher, not associated with the project, to control for potential bias in interpretation (Krueger, 1994; Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

Demographics

The twenty-six participants in this study represented a range of ages and experience within their respective companies. Seven of the women reported to be in the 41-50 year age range; six were 34-40; five were 26-33; and four each were at the highest and lowest ranges, 18-25 and 51-60. Regarding years with the organization, half of the participants (13) noted 1-10 years with their companies; eight indicated 21 years or more; five said 11-20 years. Educational levels among the participants varied as well, with nine reporting high school diploma or GED as their highest educational credential; eleven noting post high school work or associate degrees; and six indicating bachelor's degree completion.

The nature of this sample (non-managerial women) also drew a wide range of position titles and responsibilities. Job titles included sales productivity leader, customer account specialist, lead graphics dispatch clerk, executive administrative assistant, accounting clerk, and equipment processor.

The variety of chronological and service years added strength to the study, although the numbers were small. Additionally, varied positions offered another level of complexity to the sample that enriched the data while illuminating the variety of experiences among participants.

Results

Based on an analysis of the six questions asked of focus group participants, four themes emerged: adaptive goals, family influence, security needs, and organizational support.

Adaptive Goals

The overall theme of adaptation is evident throughout these results. The data reveal a pattern of adjusting goals to meet life circumstances. This tendency shows a pragmatic focus, solidly based in the reality of the current situation, as opposed to setting long term plans. As one woman observed, "I work from a practical standpoint. I want to get the maximum out of what I've got the training for...." The first indication of this perspective was when in response to the first question about early career plans, many of the participants began by describing how they had changed their goals over the years, in response to the context of their lives. One woman said her goals had changed to adjust for "real life." Another agreed, stating, "Life doesn't always turn out the way you planned." The term "evolved" was used by several of the participants to describe how their career goals had altered over time. Yet as they went on to describe the cycles of events that led to their revised goals, the processes sounded much more like conceding to circumstances than purposeful evolution. For example, the job changes usually were unplanned and typically were the result of non-work-related decisions.

Other respondents to the first question about early goals showed an interesting dichotomy that also plays into the adaptive mode. At one end of the spectrum, some of the older participants noted they had the traditional choices offered to women: teacher, nurse, secretary, homemaker, so they chose one of the latter two options. These women made other statements regarding not being encouraged to pursue higher goals or not being prompted to set goals at all. One woman illustrated this by stating, "I had three choices, I could be a homemaker, I could be a nurse, or I could be a secretary.... My dad felt college was wasted on girls."

Another group of participants cited early non-traditional goals that one described as "lofty," including physician, veterinarian, and lawyer. These goal revelations were followed by explanations about why they decided against those choices. The reasons for changing plans included financial constraints that precluded college, greater interest in marriage and family, or simply finding work at a good wage preferable to more career preparation.

Family Influence

Family appeared as a clear priority in all of the groups. Family responsibilities were cited as guiding the career choices and goal revisions of many of the participants. One woman stated this clearly as she explained her decisions:

I actually thought about goals probably 4-5 years after I started working here, thinking about what would I really like to do and what would I change and I knew it would require going back to school. But as a result of having one child at that time and wanting another one within a few years, I made a personal decision that I'm just not going to pursue anything further for me because I want to have kids and I personally know I can't do it all.

Another woman offered this explanation for the family over career choice, "I think women have had difficulty always setting career goals, because culturally we are the nurturers and we are the ones having children and by whatever design, culturally or morally or whatever, we tend to make sacrifices of ourselves."

Family responsibilities also were cited a career restraint, with examples given about opportunities turned down or educational credentials not pursued, because of the desire to be more available to children. Often the potential opportunities involved travel or less flexibility, factors that directly influence home life. For example, one woman responded, "Other personal commitments I found have hindered me. After I had been here a year and a half, I was offered a promotion that I turned down because my husband had died a year and a half before, and I knew it involved a lot of overtime....I wasn't willing to put my daughter through that."

While it was evident throughout this study that the participants had made multiple adjustments in their own career plans to accommodate family needs, they also were clear about being satisfied with those choices. Several of the women pointedly said they had no regrets about their decisions to put their families before their careers. Whether that satisfaction was genuine or simply a means of coping with dissonance over lost opportunities could not be determined from the available data. Their pragmatic approach to careers could be used to make a case for either interpretation.

Security Needs

The mindset of family before career also appeared to prompt a high need for job security and a reluctance to risk or to move on. While there were a few exceptions, many of the participants expressed a strong desire to stay with what they knew to be a secure job with good benefits, putting off additional schooling or career advancement opportunities until children are older or more self-sufficient. One woman articulated the difficulty that presented to her, as she weighed putting more time into her career versus having more time with her child. "It's very difficult. It's a constant struggle for me. I want to be the best mom in the world. That's what I want most of all...However, progressing in my career is going to bring more money, which would make things easier for us. I'm a single mom."

Another participant expressed frustration over wanting a different job, but not wanting to sacrifice the accumulated time off she uses to visit grandchildren in other parts of the country. She said, "I'm struggling daily with it. Do I leave here? Do I leave twenty years of service, five weeks of vacation, you know, just to be able to find something I like doing better, or do I put up with whatever they give me because I do have this long service?" One of her cohorts immediately described this as her "golden handcuffs," recognizing the strong hold of perks and loyalty that come from many years of employment with the same organization, even when the job is less than desirable.

Others commented on the value of having steady employment and good benefits to provide for family members. As one woman observed:

I stay in the job that I have now because of fear if I get a management job I might be chopped off next week...I stay in the job that I am...As far as me spreading my wings now and saying this is what I want to be when I grow up, I'm probably not going to do that, because I'm a single mom and I have that fear that I could lose my job...

Similarly, another participant commented on her own pragmatism in her choices, saying "I've just stayed there, because what was important to me was making a good wage where I have skills and in a corporation of this size, that's where the better wages are and keeping the benefits..."

Other observations focused more on the desire not to risk or to change what has become customary, even if family needs no longer are primary. For example, these two perceptions were shared: "Once you get comfortable, once you get in a place that you like, but you know you need to grow...What is supposed to be the next step and what will give you the confidence to go forward?" "You get in a comfort zone and it's hard ...to get out and stretch." These comments fit with those of another respondent who cautioned a younger employee not to stay in the same place too long or she will limit her options.

Support Factors

Coupled with the priority given to family and security interests was the desire for scheduling flexibility to accommodate family responsibilities. Many of the participants highlighted the importance of job flexibility to help them accommodate the needs of their families. This came up as they described their job-related choices to date and was reiterated when they reflected on how their companies have been helpful in their career plans. Another organizational factor cited as helpful was a tuition reimbursement programs, although family obligations were mentioned by many of the participants as the reason they have not taken full advantage of this opportunity.

It was acknowledged widely that when advancement did come in their careers, it was in no small measure the result of good mentoring and supervisory support. While these commodities seemed rare among those in this study, a few noted their professional benefit. One of the higher risk-takers among this group expressed satisfaction with her career, and readily praised her mentor within the company, noting "If it had not been for him, I don't think I'd be where I am." Related statements included the importance of knowing the "right" people and getting supervisors' recommendations for moving up in the organization.

Not surprisingly, the lack of support was acknowledged as a hindrance to fulfilling career plans. Perhaps as another indication of a willingness to adapt rather than to initiate, or another example of pragmatism, participants in this study clearly viewed management as having power in deciding who has advancement opportunities. One observed, "We cheerlead for each other, but we don't necessarily get that from, say, people...that have the sphere of influence that we need to pull ourselves up." Another voiced her disappointment in being held back by a non-supportive supervisor, "I've been in departments where supervisors have put big restraints, big restraints. You're capable of so much more and they just won't, don't see it. They won't allow it... very frustrating."

Discussion and Recommendations

The participants in this study echoed several of the themes found in previous research on women's careers. These non-managerial women made career choices that were similar to Eccles' (1994) and Arnold's (1993) descriptions of women's occupational planning. Their career choices were greatly influenced by other life choices. Their careers reflect an adaptive approach, frequently influenced by the need to accommodate others and circumstances in their lives. Paradoxically, while their career choices could be characterized as being malleable, many of these women now seemed less flexible in career options due to their job tenure and parental responsibilities. Several appeared less open to career changes because they perceived their current jobs as paying well and offering good benefits.

Like some of the middle managers in Wentling's study (1996), the majority of these women did not articulate a clear career strategy. As previous research suggests, this lack of planning is related to socialization and family issues. Additionally, this research reaffirmed the importance women place on mentors in their career development. However, while the women in this study discussed mentoring and its importance, it was unclear whether they had had mentors. Only one woman spoke of her personal experience having a mentor and the role that individual played in her career.

The participants in this study focused primarily on extrinsic factors when discussing those things that helped and hindered their careers. Using the gender comparison of managerial women, the literature indicates that external factors such as mentors, family responsibilities, bosses, etc. influenced their careers. However, the research also reveals the importance of intrinsic factors, such as taking initiative, being assertive, being persistent, and taking risks, in their career development. In general, the women in this study did not focus on these types of intrinsic factors. Instead, several expressed concerns about taking risks and exploring other career options. This appears to be a major point of contrast between managerial and non-managerial women.

Given the exploratory nature of this study, the small sample, and the limited types of industries represented, more research is needed to determine if non-managerial women perceive extrinsic factors as more salient to their career progress than intrinsic factors. A number of variables, such as age, locus of control, and self-efficacy must be considered as potential influences on these factors. In addition, the culture of the organization may play a role in how women perceive their developmental opportunities.

The women in this study mentioned few HRD initiatives as being instrumental in their career development. Several indicated they participated in training programs offered by their organizations and some had taken advantage of company tuition reimbursement programs. Overall, while HRD benefited some, all the members of this study did not see it as a critical factor. Consequently, the potential need for HRD intervention is unclear for women in non-managerial positions. However, in an era when organizations must continually monitor, realign, and change in response to the turbulent and unpredictable external environment, it is imperative that individuals be prepared for careers that are nimble as well. The findings of this study suggest that non-managerial women may benefit from assistance in career planning to help them explore ways to maximize their potential, whether they stay in their current jobs or choose to move on.

Contribution to HRD Research

HRD clearly has the potential to contribute to the career progress of all women. To date, however, the research has focused primarily on the careers of managerial women, and how they attempt to succeed in organizations. This study explored the career aspirations and plans of non-managerial women to help HRD practitioners better understand the needs and interests of women at various levels within organizations. More research needs to be done to determine how to address the needs of non-managerial women who want more advancement opportunities. For example, research should explore whether the barriers to advancement facing non-managerial women are the same as those encountered by managerial women or by non-managerial men. HRD also can assist non-managerial women not wanting to move up to remain challenged and interested in their jobs by focusing on career development and training.

As competition and labor shortages increase, there is a need for non-managerial employees to take on more responsibilities and to contribute more directly to systems level success. Understanding the career aspirations and plans of non-managerial women can help HRD as it attempts to maximize the potential of all organizational associates.

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The Career Life Cycle and Mentoring: The Opportunity for Reflection as an Outcome for Mentors

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This is a quantitative look, within the framework of the Life Cycle of the Career Teacher (Steffy & Wolfe, 1997), at whether mentors find mentoring to be an opportunity for reflection and what mentoring activities are predictive of that opportunity. Results suggest that, among these educators, mentoring was a vehicle for mentor reflection, particularly among women. Demonstrating organizational skills and promoting independent thinking were predictive of the opportunity to reflect.

Keywords: Mentor Outcomes, Opportunity for Reflection, Career Life Cycle

Mentoring initiatives have become popular among organizations, both in business and industry and education, for the professional and personal growth of employees (mentees) through mentor coaching, role modeling, professional development plans, observation and feedback, demonstration and direct assistance (Van Ast, 1999). The popularity of mentoring seems to grow as the evidence of its value as a professional development tool expands (e.g., Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1991; Dreher & Ash, 1990). Interest in mentoring, both in terms of relationships initiated by the mentor or mentee and relationships initiated by the organization, can be seen in both the educational arena and in business and industry. This study focuses on mentoring in education from the perspective of the Life Cycle for Career Teachers (LCCT) model (Steffy & Wolfe, 1997) because of mentoring's striking relevance and importance to the model's process of reflection, growth and renewal. Certainly, mentoring is targeted at professional as well as personal growth and serving as a mentor would presumably provide one the chance to reflect on one's career. This study examined the opportunity to reflect as an outcome of being a mentor and what mentoring activities are predictive of it. The LCCT model and how mentoring fits into it are described below and relevant mentoring literature, from both the business and education perspectives, is discussed.

Mentoring in Business and Industry

An increasing body of studies has shown generally positive consequences of mentoring, with research focusing largely on outcomes for mentees; we know far less about the effects on the mentor. Mentees in business and industrial settings most often report increased salary as an outcome, but mentored individuals also report more promotions, career advancements, and more mobility within organizations (e.g., Aryee, Wyatt, & Stone, 1996; Baugh, Lankau, & Scandura, 1996; Chao, 1997; Scandura & Schriesheim, 1994; Turban & Dougherty, 1994). Mentor benefits potentially include the development of relationships, gaining new information, receiving job-related help, and imparting knowledge to others (e.g., Allen, Poteet, & Burroughs, 1997).

Intrinsic benefits associated with being a mentor most often described in the literature are job satisfaction and perceived career success, as well as more internal satisfaction, satisfaction in helping others, and new perspectives of a mentor's own situation (Allen, Poteet, & Burroughs, 1997; Aryee et al., 1996; Chao, 1997; Corzine et al., 1994; Ragins & Scandura, 1994; Scandura, 1997; Thibodeaux & Lowe, 1996; Turban & Dougherty, 1994). Still, the majority of mentoring research has focused on outcomes for the mentee while the work focusing on mentor outcomes remains largely nonempirical. Mullen (1997) recently suggested dual foci on mentoring as a reciprocal relationship that benefits *both* mentor and mentee. Companies using mentoring programs can also reap rewards, such as increased employee satisfaction, and can shape their programs to fit corporate agendas (Berube, 1996; Scandura, 1997). Thus, the mentee, the mentor and the organization all stand to gain from a mentoring intervention.

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Mentoring in Education

Mentoring has also been widely viewed as beneficial in the educational arena (e.g., Bush & Coleman, 1995; Rehrig, 1996; Southworth, 1995). Mentored teachers tend to have a better understanding of student needs, and their students show greater learning (e.g., Dembele, 1996; Van Ast, 1995; Mullen & Van Ast, 1999). Mentoring programs enable faculty to improve instructional materials, keep up-to-date on new technology and teaching methods, and to network with other faculty (Foote, 1996).

Mentored teachers also report intrinsic benefits, such as mutual respect, trust, emotional support, and personal development (e.g., Abell, 1995). Campbell (1995) reported that protégés felt less of a need to seek help than nonprotégés. According to Graham (1994), mentors were reminded of the value of their past experience and received an opportunity to examine their own practices, and protégés obtained insight into their style of learning and working and were more confident. Although faculty mentoring programs tend to produce benefits, they appear to be potentially less helpful in terms of career advancement than in other aspects (e.g., Shumate, 1995).

The Life Cycle of the Career Teacher Model and Mentoring

The Life Cycle of the Career Teacher (LCCT) Model by Steffy and Wolfe's (1997) illustrates the developmental phases of career growth among teachers. It also prescribes that support is necessary for positive growth and evolution through the phases. Mentoring would appear to be a critical component of the career life cycle for educators. Having a mentor helps the educator grow and develop in the earlier phases, while serving as a mentor helps the educator continue to grow and develop in the latter phases. The LCCT phases include the Novice, Apprentice, Professional, Distinguished, and Emeritus phases.

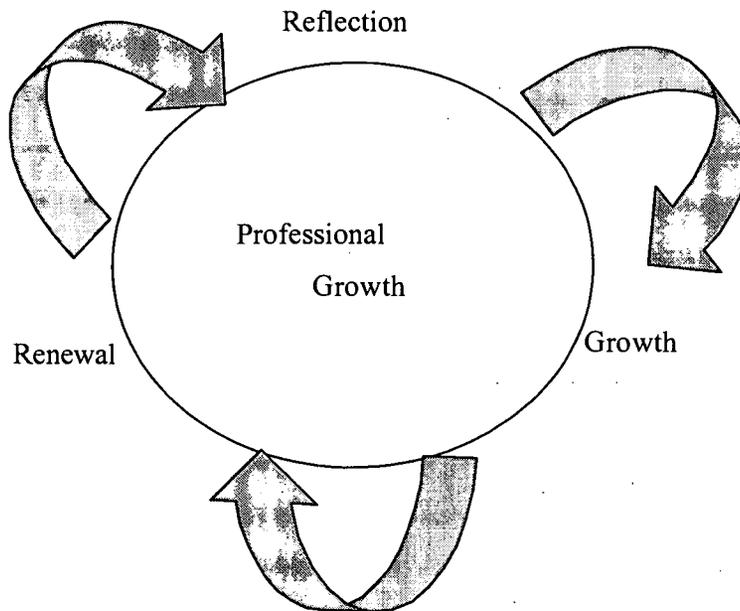
The Novice level encompasses the practicum, student teaching, and intern experiences for preservice teachers and is marked by continued skill development and growth in awareness as well as experience. The Apprentice phase begins when the preservice teacher is given full responsibility for planning and delivering instruction and continues into the first-third years as a teacher. This phase is characterized by enthusiasm, energy and passion within the new teacher. The Professional phase of the model describes teachers as growing in self-confidence and gaining motivation externally through feedback from students. Teachers in the Professional phase tend to seek opportunities for continued growth, but may not get enough administrative support because the latter don't perceive the need. The Expert phase is reached when the teacher's performance meets national certification requirements and his/her expertise is "cutting-edge" but still evolving.

The Distinguished phase of the cycle is reached only by those teachers who are considered exemplary by their peers and administrators. Finally, the Emeritus phase includes teachers who have served a lifetime in the expert or distinguished phases of the career life cycle. According to the model, reflection is a critical piece in the evolution towards self-actualization. The current authors suggest that mentoring experiences play a prominent role throughout the phases of the LCCT, beginning with experiences as a mentee and advancing to experiences as a mentor (Steffy & Wolfe, 1997). Thus the investigation into mentoring outcomes, in this case the reflection opportunity in particular, and their predictors is integral to the examination of the career life cycle. While the LCCT was developed with a K-12 educator focus, this study extended the model to other educators.

Research Question

Central to the LCCT model is the idea that professional educators continue to grow and develop through the process of reflection, growth and renewal (Steffy & Wolfe, 1997). Mentoring can play a very important role in that process. This study contends that mentoring is an important vehicle for reflection and looks at the opportunity for career reflection as an outcome of serving as a mentor. The study addresses the question: What mentoring activities are predictive of the opportunity for educator mentors to reflect on their careers? Looking at the mentor's experience within the career life cycle framework: 1) adds depth to the model by incorporating serving as a mentor as an instrumental vehicle for career reflection and renewal; 2) expands the body of knowledge about outcomes associated with being a mentor; and 3) expand the application of the LCCT model to include K-12 administrators, community college instructors, and university faculty. The results will provide unique insight into the role of mentoring in one's

Figure
Life Cycle of the Career



Novice - Apprentice - Professional - Expert -

Reflection is a central component for promoting growth over a professional lifetime career life cycle via the opportunity for career reflection that can emerge from serving as a mentor. If we can find what mentoring activities are related to the opportunity to reflect, then we can potentially maximize both the engagement in mentoring activities and the opportunity to reflect throughout the phases of the LCCT.

Methodology

Participants

Data (overall n = 84) were gathered from three subsamples, including: 1) 25 mentors involved in a structured mentoring program for K-12 educators enrolled in a graduate program for school administration preparation; 2) 21 mentors who had been involved in a 2-year structured induction and mentoring program for community college instructors; and 3) 38 faculty who had mentored in a nonstructured faculty mentoring program at a large university.

Data Collection Methods and Measures

Questionnaires were mailed to respondents to gather information regarding mentor activities and the opportunity for mentor reflection. The relationship between opportunity for reflection and mentoring activities items was examined via quantitative analyses described below. Mentor activity items developed for a recent related

study (Mullen, Van Ast, & Grant, 1999) were used to quantitatively measure the extent to which mentors engage in various mentoring activities, including: 1) "Matching needs of mentee with a structured plan for growth and improvement;" 2) "Identifying and affirming mentee responsibilities;" 3) "Identifying role expectations and communicating them clearly;" 4) "Encouraging mentees' efforts through consistent and appropriate feedback;" 5) "Demonstrating well-defined organization skills;" 6) "Utilizing collaborative teaching/learning methods;" 7) "Encouraging independent thinking;" 8) "Listening to mentees with an open and accepting attitude before responding;" 9) "Promoting mentee risk-taking;" 10) "Diagnosing mentee needs at the beginning of the relationship."

These items were developed based on activities used in a community college induction/mentoring program (Van Ast, 1999). The response format for the mentoring activities items provided a 5-point scale ranging from 5 = extremely important to 1 = no importance. The opportunity to reflect was measured via an item asking to what extent the mentor had experienced the opportunity to reflect as an outcome of mentoring (5 = very large extent to 1 = very small extent). Demographic items, targeting information regarding gender, tenure, and job type (faculty or administrative), were also included, as were items seeking information regarding the mentoring relationship, e.g., number of formal mentees; frequency of communication with one's mentee; and hours per month spent with one's mentee; and formal or informal mentor training.

Data Analysis Strategy

SPSS-PC was used to analyze the data generated via the questionnaire described above. The analyses involved generating descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, computing Cronbach's alphas, and running Pearson correlation coefficients and multiple regression equations within and across the three subsamples. The backward regression technique was used to determine which of the mentoring activities measured (i.e., independent variables) were predictive of the opportunity for the mentor to reflect (i.e., dependent variable). The data were analyzed by subsample and as a combined sample to allow us to look both within groups and across all mentors.

Results

Eighty-four of 214 mentors responded to the questionnaire for an overall response rate of 39%, including 38 of 96 university mentors (40%), 21 of 56 community college mentors (38%) and 25 of 62 K-12 principal mentors (40%). Within the overall sample, the average respondent was a male (61.2%) nonadministrative faculty member (57.6%) who had formally mentored 1-2 (mean = 1.39) mentees and spent an average of 1.83 hours per month with his mentee. The average university mentor respondent was male (76.9%); a nonadministrative faculty member (82.1%); had mentored 1-2 (mean = 1.42) mentees formally; and spent 1.41 hours per month with this mentee. The average respondent from the community college subsample was male (66.7%); a nonadministrative faculty member (71.4%); had formally mentored 1 (mean = 1.14) mentees; and spent an average of 1.95 hours per month with the mentee in question. The average principal mentor respondent was female (60%) administrator (92%); had formally mentored 1-2 mentees (mean = 1.56); and spent 2.39 hours per month with her mentee.

Respondents in the overall sample indicated that the opportunity for reflection was fairly important (mean = 3.26)(See Table 1). The mean responses regarding reflection opportunity for the subsamples were 2.77 for university mentors; 3.06 for community college mentors; and 4.14 for principal mentors. Means on the mentoring activity items for the overall sample ranged from 3.40 for "utilizing collaborative teaching/learning methods" to 4.25 for "listening to mentees with an open/accepting attitude," indicating average responses in the "important" to "very important" range. Mentoring activities mean responses for the subsamples ranged from 2.70 to 4.03 for the university mentors; from 3.55 to 4.40 for community college mentors; and from 4.08 to 4.58 for the principle mentors. Patterns among the Pearson correlations for the overall sample included opportunity for reflection being significantly related to gender (women perceived reflection opportunity as more important) and to all the mentoring activities except "utilizing collaborative teaching/learning methods" (see Table 1). Gender was related to 6 of the 10 mentoring activities, with women reporting higher usage than men.

Table 2 reflects the results of the backward multiple regression. These analyses indicated that, among the university mentors, demonstrating organizational skills was significantly related to the opportunity for mentor reflection (see Table 2). Encouraging mentee independent thinking was a significant predictor of the opportunity to reflect among the community college mentors (see Table 2). For the principal mentors, identifying role expectations, matching mentee needs to a plan, and promoting mentee risk-taking were all significant predictors of the opportunity for the mentor to reflect (see Table 2). In the analysis of the combined data (all 3 subsamples),

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlation Coefficients for Overall Sample and Subsamples

Variables	Sample	N	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Opp. For Reflection	All	82	3.28	1.20										
	Univ	36	2.75	1.11										
	CC	21	3.10	1.22										
	Princ	25	4.20	0.71										
2. Match Mentee Needs with Plan	All	82	3.83	1.03	.37**									
	Univ	37	3.51	1.07	.28									
	CC	20	3.65	1.04	.06									
	Princ	25	4.44	0.65	.34									
3. Identify Mentee Responsibilities	All	82	3.76	0.94	.46**	.68**								
	Univ	36	3.39	1.02	.43*	.59**								
	CC	21	3.71	0.78	.19	.72**								
	Princ	25	4.32	0.63	.23	.56**								
4. Communicate Role expectations	All	83	4.13	0.93	.20	.48**	.44**							
	Univ	37	4.11	0.91	.12	.29	.30							
	CC	21	3.86	1.11	.23	.62**	.70**							
	Princ	25	4.40	0.76	.00	.72**	.42*							
5. Provide Feedback	All	83	4.10	0.89	.38**	.62**	.68**	.53**						
	Univ	37	3.73	0.96	.29	.57**	.60**	.45**						
	CC	21	4.19	0.87	.12	.59**	.67**	.75**						
	Princ	25	4.56	0.51	.26	.49*	.59**	.47*						
6. Demonstrate Organization Skills	All	83	3.40	1.16	.51**	.46**	.60**	.32**	.47**					
	Univ	37	2.78	1.06	.49**	.37*	.54**	.29	.41*					
	CC	21	3.48	1.17	.18	.39	.48*	.48*	.35					
	Princ	25	4.24	0.66	.25	.04	.31	.05	-.05					
7. Collaborative Learning/Teaching	All	83	3.34	1.22	.43**	.43**	.44**	.19	.41**	.72**				
	Univ	37	2.59	1.26	.40*	.28	.29	.11	.23	.62**				
	CC	21	3.71	0.96	.02	.28	.22	.24	.31	.67**				
	Princ	25	4.08	0.64	.24	.61**	.45*	.36	.24	.54**				
8. Encourage Independent Thinking	All	80	3.89	1.13	.52**	.58**	.53**	.37**	.50**	.61**	.69**			
	Univ	35	3.37	1.31	.46**	.59**	.51**	.30	.42*	.58**	.68**			
	CC	21	4.19	0.81	.48*	.44	.48*	.64**	.44*	.53*	.40			
	Princ	24	4.38	0.71	.43*	.45*	.19	.34	.21	.34	.59**			
9. Listen Openly and Acceptingly	All	82	4.24	0.82	.33**	.45**	.33**	.27*	.54**	.35**	.42**	.52**		
	Univ	36	4.03	0.94	.23	.51**	.23	.10	.48**	.26	.40**	.47**		
	CC	21	4.43	0.97	.23	.39	.48*	.68**	.79**	.27	.32	.44*		
	Princ	25	4.40	0.65	.55**	.26	.29	.17	.18	.18	.45*	.32	.59**	
10. Promote Risk-taking	All	82	3.54	1.24	.51**	.40**	.46**	.22*	.49**	.62**	.56**	.58**	.52**	
	Univ	36	2.81	1.24	.40*	.42*	.44**	.10	.43**	.69**	.51**	.46**	.42*	
	CC	21	3.95	0.97	.43	.12	.18	.41	.31	.15	.09	.45*	.44*	
	Princ	25	4.24	0.83	.34	.11	.17	.30	.16	.16	.42*	.28	.56**	.67**
11. Diagnose mentee needs	All	83	3.73	1.13	.34**	.51**	.47**	.29**	.44**	.34**	.24*	.49**	.30**	.51**
	Univ	37	3.41	1.21	.17	.63**	.56**	.11	.45**	.35*	.11	.46**	.24	.40*
	CC	21	3.81	1.21	.35	.14	.20	.58**	.23	.17	.08	.50*	.32	.76**
	Princ	25	4.16	0.75	.33	.45*	.15	.18	.30	-.08	.15	.20	.21	.07

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

demonstrating organizational skills and promoting independent mentee thinking were significantly related to mentors' opportunity to reflect in the final iteration (see Table 2).

Table 2. Backward Multiple Regression Final Iteration Results For Predicting Opportunities for Reflection With Mentoring Activities Variables

Variable	Final Iteration Beta Weights			
	Overall Sample	University Subsample	Community College Subsample	Principals Subsample
Organization Skills	.34**	.49**		
Independent Thinking	.36*		.71*	
Role Expectations				-.69**
Matching Needs with Plan				.86**
Risk-Taking				.40**

Note. Dependent Variable: Opportunity for Reflection.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Discussion and Implications

This research examines relationships between mentoring activities and the opportunity for mentors to reflect, a central piece of the LCCT (Steffy & Wolfe, 1997). Specifically, this study looked at what mentoring activities or practices are predictive of the opportunity for reflection as an outcome of being a mentor, expanding the body of knowledge related to outcomes for mentors and linking it to the LCCT model (Steffy & Wolfe). The data suggest that mentoring does, in fact, allow mentors to reflect on their careers. This would lead us to conclude that serving as a mentor may be a key vehicle for reflection and, thus, growth in the latter phases of a career. We've recognized for some time that mentoring is invaluable for the development of the mentee. These data indicate that mentoring may be invaluable for the development of the mentor as well.

Some interesting results emerged from the separate (by subsample) and combined data. First, different mentoring activities were predictive of mentors' opportunity for reflection for each of the 3 subsamples. This may reflect differences in populations, differences in the mentoring initiatives in each population or, perhaps, measurement issues. Further research delving into these differences is warranted. Results for the mentors in the university subsample indicated that the opportunity for reflection was related to demonstrating organizational skills for the mentee. In other words, mentors who reported demonstrating organizational skills for their mentees also reported having the opportunity to reflect as a result of the mentoring role. Thinking about how one organizes oneself is certainly consistent with reflection and one would certainly have those thoughts when demonstrating organizational skills to others. For community college mentors, encouraging mentees to think independently was related to finding the opportunity to reflect through being mentors. Again, this is an action that could certainly lead one to reflecting on his/her own thinking. With the principal data, results indicated that the opportunity for reflection was related to the mentor identifying role expectations for the mentee, matching the mentee's needs to a plan, and promoting mentee risk-taking. In other words mentors who engaged in these actions also reported gaining the opportunity to reflect through serving that role. These activities logically could all require introspection in order to engage in them.

Overall, for the combined sample, mentor opportunity for reflection was predicted by demonstrating organizational skills and encouraging independent thinking. It is intuitive that both of these activities would require some introspection, leading to reflection. The notion of having one's mentee benefit from one's successes as well as failures is completely consistent with reflection. In fact it absolutely requires it.

Not surprisingly, various mentoring activities were related to the opportunity for mentor reflection. These findings are important for various reasons. For one thing, they suggest, as was expected, that mentors do report gaining the opportunity to reflect from being a mentor. We certainly predicted that the kinds of activities mentors perform for their mentees would be related to reflection, for you could easily argue that mentors must examine themselves and their careers to engage in those activities effectively. The very notion of mentoring involves the mentor passing on to the mentee what he/she has learned through experience. When a mentee thinks about his/her experiences, that is a prime opportunity to reflect. These data support our assertion that serving the mentor role is an important part of the career life cycle because it allows the individual in later phases of the cycle to reflect and, thereby, grow and renew. This is very encouraging and supports thinking about this additional dimension of mentoring. It doesn't just help the mentee grow. The mentor stands to learn about him/herself and has a prime

opportunity to reflect and grow. Administrators should encourage mentoring because both mentors and mentees stand to gain. But they should also teach mentors the mentoring activities that, while aimed at "showing the mentee the ropes," also provide the mentor an excellent opportunity to reflect and grow both personally and professionally. Activities such as articulating mentor and mentee roles and responsibilities, setting goals and developing mentoring action plans are essential to the maximization of mentor and mentee outcomes. Mentoring initiatives that incorporate these kinds of activities provide the framework and the expectations for mentors and mentees, demystifying what effective mentoring involves. According to Van Ast (1999), essential mentor functions include role modeling; assisting with a professional development plan; observation and feedback; demonstration, informal guidance; and direct performance assistance. And mentoring, as a vehicle for growth and reflection, may play a key role in the career life cycle. This is consistent with Steffy and Wolfe's (1997) LCCT model, which incorporates the themes of reflection, *growth* and renewal.

The limitations of this study should be recognized. First, self-report was utilized via a single means of data collection. Some biases may be inherent. Further, some items were developed for this study because of a lack of existing measures. These measures were piloted, but need further validation. The small size of the subsamples also presented a limitation, restricting the methods of analysis employed as well as the interpretations that could be made. Still, this is an important step toward greater understanding of the connection between mentoring and reflection on one's career.

Mentoring literature is in its infancy. This research examines relationships between mentoring activities and the opportunity for mentors to reflect, a central piece of the LCCT (Steffy & Wolfe, 1997). It builds on the body of knowledge related to outcomes for mentors, linking it to the LCCT model of career growth (Steffy & Wolfe). Much more ground needs to be covered, particularly where the mentor's perspective is concerned. In this study, we've found that there was a reported opportunity to reflect related to serving as mentors and that certain mentoring activities were related to that reflection. This will help to add depth to the LCCT model (Steffy & Wolfe, 1997). Future research should also take this line of inquiry into business and industry and examine the application of the LCCT model in that setting. It would seem that mentor reflection and the mentoring activities that lead to it should be universal, regardless of line of work. This needs to be tested. HRD professionals need to look at ways to maximize the opportunity for career reflection that serving as a mentor provides, since this reflection opportunity may be critical for continued growth. This work illustrates that we can identify mentoring activities that are related to the opportunity for career reflection. If HRD professionals can train mentors to engage in activities that not only enhance mentee growth, but provide career reflection opportunities for the mentors as well, then everyone, including the organization, stands to gain dramatically.

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Functions Performed by Mentors that Assist in the Career Development of Women Managers

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The purpose of this study was to investigate whether women managers had mentors and how the mentors assisted them in their career development. The researcher conducted in-person interviews with 30 women in middle-level management positions in 15 Fortune 500 companies. The study revealed that being an influential leader and willing to share knowledge and expertise were the characteristics the women managers most often wanted in their mentors. Also, revealed was that mentors were the most influential in the women managers' career development.

Keywords: Mentors, Career Development, Women Managers

During the past decade, business organizations have become increasingly concerned with the development of women managers. Some of the major factors which have caused this concern include the increasing number of women seeking management positions as a result of their greater participation in the labor force, expanded access to educational opportunities, and involvement in affirmative action programs (Costello, Stone, & Dooley, 1996; Frye, 1996). Women account for more than half of today's labor force and will constitute a large segment of the available management talent to draw on within the next decade (Herz & Wootton, 1996; Powell, 1999; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1998). Carnevale and Stone (1995) indicated that by the year 2005, as many as 90 percent of all women between the ages of 25 and 40 will be working. The rising labor force participation of women has been the single biggest change in the American labor market in the past 30 years (Fagenson & Jackson, 1994). The female share of employment has risen from 29% in 1950 to 48% in 1996, and this trend is expected to continue (Blau, Ferber, Winkler, 1998; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1998).

For the first time women constitute over half of university-level students. The courses they are enrolled in are increasingly career-oriented. For example, in 1996, women were over 37% of those obtaining MBA degrees and 49% of those enrolled in undergraduate business programs (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998). Over the past decade, the increase in the number of women graduating from leading universities has been much greater than the increase in the total number of graduates, and these women are well represented in the top 10 percent of their classes. (Costello & Krimgold, 1996; Schwartz, 1989). In 1996 women outnumbered men among the recipients of postsecondary degrees at every level, except the doctoral level (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998).

Despite increasing numbers of women in the workforce and in business, and their enhanced educational credentials, women's access to senior level management positions remain limited. (Fierman, 1990; Korn/Ferry International, 1993; Morrison, 1992; Powell, 1999). While women's numbers in management are increasing, they are still largely clustered in lower and, to a lesser extent, middle level management positions (Fagenson & Jackson, 1994). Women's progression to upper management levels has been very slow, currently representing only 5% of senior level executives (Korn/Ferry International, 1993; Powell, 1999).

Mentoring relationships have been found to be significant in the career development, advancement, organizational success, and job satisfaction of women managers (Corzine, Buntzman, & Busch, 1994; Dreher & Ash, 1990; Fagenson, 1989; Scandura, 1992; Schaubroeck, Cotton, Jennings, 1989; Wentling, 1996). Research shows that people who have mentors secure more promotions, have greater job mobility, recognition, satisfaction, and easier access to powerful individuals in the organization (Dreher & Ash, 1990; Fagenson, 1989; Jeruchim & Shapiro, 1992; Ragins & Cotton, 1991). A study of 205 working women found that mentored middle level managers were promoted an average of 2.3 times in a five-year period. Those who were not mentored averaged 1.7 promotions during that time period ("Mentors Big," 1994). Although mentoring relationships are important for all organizational members, they may be particularly important for women (Burke & McKeen, 1990; Noe, 1988; Ragins, 1989). Mentors can help women overcome barriers to advancement in organization (Morrison, 1992).

This suggest that advancement to powerful positions in organizations may be partially based upon the

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successful development of mentoring relationships. Nevertheless, mentoring is an important training and development tool for upward professional progression in organizations for women managers. Mentors for the purpose of this study has been defined as higher ranking, influential, senior organizational members with advanced experience and knowledge who are committed to providing upward mobility and support to a protégé's professional career (Flanders, 1994; Kram, 1988). Mentoring can be either formal, that is, part of the formal organizational policy, or informal, a private arrangement between two individuals which does not necessarily have organizational approval (Davidson & Cooper, 1992).

Is a mentor a necessary ingredient for the career advancement of women managers? What are the characteristics mentors should possess in order to provide worthwhile and valuable assistance to those women managers aspiring advancement in their careers? What functions that mentors perform are most likely to enhance the career development of the women managers? These are some of the questions that guided this study. The literature offers much speculation concerning mentors functions and characteristics, but there is a lack of empirical research to verify these conclusions. This study was designed to contribute further knowledge in this area by determining the functions that mentors perform that assist in the career development of women managers. Career development for the purpose of this study was defined as the series of positions held over time and the factors influencing an individual's advancement through those positions (Peterson, Sampson, Reardon, & Lenz, 1996). Investigation in this area will assist aspiring women managers who seek help in career development and advancement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether women managers had mentors and how the mentors assisted them in their career development. Specifically, this study addressed the following five research questions:

1. Have the women managers had mentors in their professional careers?
2. How were the mentor relationships established?
3. What are the functions performed by mentors that most effectively assist the career development of women managers?
4. What are the most beneficial lessons that the women managers learned from their mentors?
5. What are the major obstacles that were encountered during mentoring relationships?

Methodology

The major method of this research study was a series of individual case studies. Case studies that relied on face-to-face interviews with a sample of women middle managers were conducted by the researcher. Middle manager for the purpose of this study is defined as, "the group of managers extending from top management down to those immediately above first-line management. They implement the strategies or policies set by top managers and coordinate the work of lower-level managers" (Van Fleet, 1988, p. 33). The case studies required the collection of extensive data in order to produce an in-depth understanding of the role of mentoring in the career development of the women managers who were being studied.

An interview guide was developed to assist in collecting the data from the interviews. A study advisory committee, made up of three business educators and three people from business and industry, reviewed the interview guide and study procedures. Also, a pilot study, involving a sample of five women in middle-level management positions in business firms, was conducted to determine content validity and appropriateness of the interview guide. There was agreement by the study's advisory committee and the pilot test participants that the interview guide and the data being collected were appropriate for meeting the objectives of the study.

The researcher conducted in-person interviews with 30 women in middle-level management positions in 15 Fortune 500 companies. The companies were located in the midwest (Illinois, Missouri, and Indiana).

After reviewing the total number of Fortune 500 companies in the state of Illinois (50), Missouri (15), and Indiana (8), a proportional sample was randomly selected to reflect the number of companies in each of the states. A total of 15 companies were randomly selected, 10 from Illinois, 3 from Missouri, and 2 from Indiana.

The Placement Service Office at mid-west university was then contacted to assist in identifying the campus recruitment person for each of the companies. The campus recruitment person from each of the fifteen Fortune 500 companies was then contacted by telephone and was asked to assist in identifying two women in middle-level management positions in the company. Names, position titles, and telephone numbers of thirty women managers were then obtained. Initial contacts with the women managers were made over the telephone at which time dates, interview appointments, and arrangements were made. All thirty women managers who were contacted consented to participate in the study.

Each interviewee received a letter confirming the interview appointment and a copy of the interview guide two weeks before the scheduled interview. The participants were able to examine the research questions prior to the interview. The

interviews were conducted on-site in each participant's corporate office. During the interview, the researcher used the guide to focus the interview process. Flexibility was retained to probe into each participant's statements and replies and to pursue additional issues related to the focus of the study that were not included in the interview guide. The interviews focused on mentors and their role in the career development of the women managers. The interviews lasted from one and a half to two and a half hours, with an average of two hours. The interviewer/researcher took extensive shorthand notes during each interview, then the notes were transcribed after each interview.

Description of Study Participants

Thirty middle-level women managers who worked in Fortune 500 companies located in the mid-west were interviewed. They worked in industrial corporations with sales varying from \$500 million to more than \$20 billion, with assets from \$600 million to more than \$24 billion. The average number of employees in these companies is 35,000. The study participants are employed in a variety of industries including aerospace, chemicals, computer, electronics, food, petroleum refining, industrial and farm equipment, pharmaceutical, and publishing/printing.

The women managers range in age from 30 to 46 years, with an average age of 38.2 years. They hold positions in a variety of departmental areas including human resources, management information systems, finance, marketing, accounting, engineering, and research.

The number of years of work experience acquired by participants range from 8 to 25 years, with an average of 15.1 years. The number of years of managerial experience (including all levels of management experience) that participants have had range from 3 to 17 years, with an average of 7.6 years of managerial experience. The number of years of experience that participants have had as middle managers range from 1 to 10 years, with an average of 4.5 years. The number of years that participants have been employed with their present company range from 1 to 22 years, with an average of 12.0 years. The number of years that it took participants to attain a middle level management position ranges from 1 to 20 years, with an average of 10.0 years.

Results

The results of this study are summarized in five major sections, which parallel the major research questions: (a) women managers' mentors; (b) how mentor relationships were established; (c) functions performed by mentors that most effectively assist the career development of women managers; (d) most beneficial lessons women managers learned from mentors; and (e) obstacles encountered during mentoring relationship.

Women Managers' Mentors

Twenty-seven (90%) of the women managers in the study indicated having one or more mentors during their professional careers. Three (10%) of the women managers indicated that they had not had mentors during their professional careers. Of the 27 women managers who indicated having mentors, 18 (67%) had only male mentors; while eight (30%) had male and female mentors. It is significant to note that only one study participant had had only female mentors. Most often it was a boss or a top manager that served as a mentor for these women. It is also interesting to note that of the 54 mentors identified, 45 (83%) were male and only 9 (17%) were female. Five (19%) of the women managers had had only one mentor; 17 (63%) had had two mentors; two (7%) had had three mentors; and 3 (11%) had had more than three mentors. It is important to note that more than three-quarters of the women managers had had more than one mentor.

How Mentor Relationships Were Established

Fifteen (56%) of the study participants indicated that their mentoring relationship was initiated mutually. Six (22%) indicated their mentoring relationship was initiated through their company's formal mentoring programs, while 3 (11%) had initiated the relationship themselves, and another 3 (11%) indicated that top management had initiated the mentoring relationship. Length of mentor relationships ranged from one to ten years, with an average of 4.5 years.

The study participants most frequently named commitment and dedication, hard work, demonstrated competency on the job (produced high quality work), leadership abilities, positive attitude, and self-confidence as the six most important factors that helped them gain a mentor.

Being an influential leader and willing to share knowledge and expertise were the characteristics the women managers most often wanted in their mentors. Other important attributes were: interest in the women manager's growth and development;

willing to commit the time and energy required for the mentoring process/relationship; having established credibility and respect within the company; and possessing high standards of integrity and trustworthiness.

Functions Performed by Mentors that Most Effectively Assist the Career Development of Women Managers

Although a few women managers reported that they received an array of benefits from a single mentor, most of the women managers came to rely on several mentors, each for a different sort of help. The women managers indicated that their mentors were good role models, advocates, or instructors. A variety of functions were performed by mentor that assisted the women managers' career development, as illustrated by Table 1. The seven most frequently cited functions performed by mentors included the following: Provided them with job opportunities/challenges to demonstrate their skills and abilities, 20 (74%); offered them feedback on their performance, 19 (70%); gave them useful advice, 17 (63%); shared his/her expertise with them, 16 (59%);

Table 1. Functions Performed By Mentors That Assisted Women Managers' Career Development (n=27)

Function	(f)	(%)
1. Provided me with job opportunities/challenges to demonstrate my skills and abilities.	(20)	74
2. Offered me feedback on my performance.	(19)	70
3. Gave me useful advice.	(17)	63
4. Shared his/her expertise with me.	(16)	59
5. Encouraged me to meet high performance standards.	(15)	56
6. Acknowledged my skills and talents and encouraged my career development.	(15)	56
7. Suggested strategies for advancing my career.	(15)	56
8. Demonstrated a belief in me.	(14)	52
9. Served as a role model for me.	(14)	52
10. Helped me gain a greater sense of self-confidence.	(12)	44
11. Assisted me in developing new skills and abilities.	(12)	44
12. Instructed me on organizational norms and politics.	(12)	44
13. Provided me with valuable "inside" information.	(11)	41
14. Recommended me for more responsible positions.	(11)	41
15. Assisted me with making professional contacts.	(10)	37
16. Encouraged me to take risks.	(10)	37
17. Advocated for me with others.	(9)	33
18. Provided me with access to important/influential people.	(9)	33
19. Oriented me to my job/profession.	(8)	30
20. Provided me with personal support and encouragement.	(8)	30
21. Praised my potential to others.	(7)	26
22. Passed along information about career opportunities.	(7)	26
23. Instructed me on how the company functions and its organizational structure.	(5)	19
24. Nominated/appointed me to important committees/boards/task forces.	(4)	15
25. Served as a "sounding board."	(3)	11

Multiple responses were accepted.

encouraged them to meet high performance standards, 15 (56%); acknowledged their skills and talents and encouraged their career development, 15 (56%); and suggested strategies for advancing their careers, 15 (56%).

The majority (90%) of the women managers indicated that their mentors were the people they considered to have most significantly influenced their career development. They reported that their mentors had provided them with substantial help, which had assisted them in their career progression, and in more effectively dealing with barriers they encountered.

Most Beneficial Lessons Women Managers Learned From Mentors

The women managers reported a variety of lessons that they learned from their mentors. The ten most frequently cited lessons that they learned from their mentors that were most beneficial to their career development included the following: The importance of setting priorities and how to approach problems in a systematic way, 19 (70%); to deal and work with people from different backgrounds, level, and experiences to get things accomplished, 17 (63%); to be more adaptable and flexible, 15 (56%); to be more visionary and to be a better planner and organizer, 14 (52%); to manage and develop a team/group of people and how to pull together everyone's knowledge and skills to accomplish a task; 13 (48%); to work and deal with difficult people and make the best of every situation, 12 (44%); to be diplomatic and to negotiate more effectively, 11 (41%); to take risks and diversify their work experiences, 10 (37%); the importance of accuracy and high performance standards, 9 (33%); and how to modify behavior under certain circumstances and relate better to all types of people, 8 (30%).

The majority of the women believed that without the lessons learned from their mentors their career progression may have been hindered or made considerably more difficult. It is interesting to note that the majority of the lessons that the women managers learned from their mentors that were most beneficial to their career development were related to enhancing their interpersonal/people skills.

Obstacles Encountered During Mentoring Relationship

Although the women managers have received numerous benefits from their mentors, the majority 17 (63%) had encountered obstacles during their mentoring relationships. The following eight obstacles were mentioned by the women managers: Stayed with one mentor too long, 7 (41%); became too dependent on mentor and could not function properly without his/her support, 5 (29%); mentor did not have sufficient time to spend with me, 4 (24%); mentor was threatened by my talents and accomplishments, 3 (18%); mentor blocked my advancement because of a desire to retain my relationship and services, 3 (18%); jealous spouse created problems, 2 (12%); resentful co-workers created problems, 2 (12%); and mentor was not liked by senior management, 2 (12%).

All the women managers who had encountered obstacles agreed that the professional gains from mentors exceed the obstacles that they encountered during a mentoring relationship.

Discussion

The results of this study support other studies which indicate that functions performed by mentors are essential in the career development and progression of women managers in organizations (Burke & McKeen, 1994; Jeruchim & Shapiro, 1992; Morrison, 1992; Ragins & Scandura, 1994).

The results of this study clearly demonstrate that career development help does not come from only one mentor, but instead comes from many different mentors. Shapiro and Farrow (1988) suggest that it is more advantageous for women to seek help from a variety of mentors rather than from only one. Having multiple mentors may be a way for women managers to avoid the obstacles encountered during mentoring relationships. Some of the major obstacles mentioned by the women managers in this study were staying with one mentor too long, becoming too dependent on the mentor, and mentor not having sufficient time to spend on the relationship. The aspiring women manager can reduce the adversity of each of these problems, if she has more than one mentor. Having more than one mentor reduces the chances of staying with one mentor too long or becoming too dependent upon any one of them. Davidson and Cooper (1992) warn women managers not to expect a mentor to guide their careers forever, or to learn everything from a single mentor. To the extent that one has many mentors, the less time demands will be required from any one mentor, since there are others they can go to for assistance. In addition, the woman manager spending less time with any one mentor may also reduce the amount of gossip about the relationship, and the mentor spending less time with any one employee should reduce resentment from other employees. Hardesty and Jacobs (1987) caution women against becoming overly dependent on one mentor, especially in later career stages. They speculate that women's desire for connectedness and personal bonds lead to this overdependence.

Eighty-three percent of the individuals that served as mentors for the women in this study were men. Many authors have reported a shortage of female mentors (Morrison, 1992; Noe, 1998; Parker & Kram, 1993; Powell, 1999; Ragins, 1989). Since mentors are usually defined as high-ranking, influential member of an organization, the lack of women at high levels may certainly be one reason for the lack of female mentors (Noe, 1988; Ragins, 1989). According to Ragins and Cotton (1998), the shortage of women at upper levels of organizations creates a lack of potential female mentors, and the women in management who are available to form mentoring relationships are overburdened with requests from the large number of women at lower levels. This means like the women in this study, they usually have to approach men for mentor relationships.

The results of this study seem to indicate that increasing the access of women to successful mentoring relationships may not only assist in their career development, but also improve their organizational effectiveness. Therefore, it may be in the organization's best interest to provide mentoring opportunities for women managers. Organizations can create conditions to encourage mentoring. For example, they can increase the formal and informal opportunities for women to meet potential mentors. Organizations may sponsor various events, such as networking luncheons and weekend retreats. By sponsoring these types of programs, the company can encourage social interaction between the potential mentors and the women who need mentors. In addition, organizations can promote the development of mentors for women by formally recognizing mentoring activities in performance appraisals and salary decisions. Also, women managers who have attained mentors successfully could share their strategies for finding a mentor, obstacles they encountered in their mentoring relationships and how to address them, and the benefits of having a mentors with women managers who currently need mentors. Overall, company leaders can promote the development of mentors by communicating the organizational and individual benefits of mentoring throughout the company.

Recently, recognition of mentoring as a management technique and career development method has been adopted by many companies (Flanders, 1994; Simonetti, Ariss, & Martinez, 1999). For example, McDonnell Douglas has a policy called "Career Counseling and Mentoring". The objective of this policy is to "enable people to contribute fully over the course of their careers, by providing periodic formal reviews of their individual career objectives and by providing informal mentoring support. The policy describes mentoring as a two-way process that is important to career development" (Geiger, 1994, p. 65). Every employee is encouraged to be a mentor and to have one or more mentors.

In summary, this study adds to current knowledge by demonstrating the assistance in career development that is available for women managers from mentors, as well as the obstacles they may encounter in mentoring relationships. This study found that being mentored was advantageous to the career development of women managers. Mentoring is one way that companies can provide better opportunity for the advancement of women managers. It can also assist in assuring that organizations do not lose or underutilize the talents of the capable and educated women who now comprise a significant and vital portion of the workforce. Businesses today need all the leadership, expertise, and creativity possible as they face worldwide competition.

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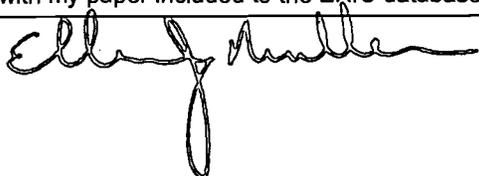
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