

A Summary Analysis And Prescriptions For Mentoring In Multicultural Organizations

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This review examines mentoring outcomes for women and minorities in contemporary organizations from a policy-in-experience perspective. The history of organizational mentoring and its formal and informal distinctions are addressed. Extant empirical research addressing mentoring outcomes for women and minorities is reviewed. A gender and ethnicity mentoring typology is presented along with 6 prescriptions for developing equitable formal mentoring programs.

Keywords: Mentoring, Multicultural Organizations, Career-benefit Outcomes

This paper critically examines the practice of mentoring as an organizationally sanctioned strategy for socializing newcomers into organizations. In addition, it offers several prescriptions to increase the effectiveness of organizational mentoring. Historical accounts (Cameron, 1978; Dalton, Thompson, & Price, 1977; Fagenson, 1988; Kram, 1983; Kram and Isabella, 1985; Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson & McKee, 1978; Spilerman, 1977) and relatively recent research identified mentoring as an essential mechanism in fostering career development for employees in organizations (Burke, McKeen & McKenna, 1993; Gaskill, 1993; Pollock, 1995; Reid, 1994). Some of these articles addressed a number of important issues (type, outcomes, and obstacles) relevant to the mentoring phenomenon. Although many of these articles made substantive contributions to our understanding of mentoring, what is most noteworthy is the proliferation of mentoring programs in organizations. This prevailing trend towards using mentoring as a career development and socializing tool in today's organizations must be examined for its practical and theoretical significance in the domain of Human Resource Development. Moreover, it is useful to examine the efficacy of mentoring in socializing newcomers.

The purpose of this paper is to review and analyze the empirical studies that addressed mentoring outcomes for women and minorities as compared to their White organizational counterparts in similar mentoring relationships. According to Caldwell and Carter (1993), business organizations experienced profound changes within the last decade of the past century. These changes stem from global, societal, economic and demographic trends that permanently changed the workforce and the ways in which it is developed (Caldwell & Carter, 1993; Galpin, 1996; Harvey & Brown, 1996). Contemporary organizations are different from those of the past because there is less time and opportunity for developmental relationships (Gaskill, 1993; Kram & Bragar, 1991; Murray & Owen, 1991; Zey, 1988). In response to these constraints, contemporary organizations appear to rely less on informal developmental relationships such as informal mentoring (Caldwell & Carter, 1993; Kram & Bragar, 1991; Murray & Owen, 1991; Zey, 1988). Ironically, these organizations seem to have prematurely adopted the use of formal mentoring as a socializing tool based upon the popular literature and a paucity of scholarly articles advocating the virtues and effectiveness of informal mentoring as a socializing tool (Douglas, 1997; Merriam, 1983). For definitional purposes, informal mentoring is a naturally occurring relationship based on attributes, attraction and, similar interests, where experienced organizational members provide career and psychosocial support to lesser-experienced organizational members. Formal mentoring is a program designed and developed by the organization to facilitate structured mentoring relationships where experienced organizational members provide career and psychosocial development to lesser-experienced organizational members.

Statement of the Problem

Despite a lack of sound empirical support for mentoring (formal and informal), formal mentoring programs continue to proliferate overtly, and informal mentoring still manifests itself covertly in organizations. The problem on a macro-level standpoint is that much of what we know about mentoring is anecdotal and may be anachronistic given the changes described by Caldwell & Carter (1993). Unlike organizations of the past, contemporary organizations are no longer stable and are more multicultural. The problem at a micro level, and more germane to the focus of this paper, is the fact that organizations faced with renewal must replace their old and departing members with new and younger members who will be selected from contemporary workforce that is increasingly more multi-ethnic and multicultural (Finkelstein, Seal & Schuster, 1998; Rubow & Jansen, 1990). Moreover, it is predicted that minorities

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will account for 62% of the U.S. workforce by year 2005 (U. S. Department of Labor, 1995). According to Forsythe (2003) by the year 2050, 85% of new entrants to the workforce will be the women and minorities who are now collectively considered minorities but will become the new majority in the workforce. This reality portends difficulty for the traditional practice of mentoring (formal and informal) in contemporary organizations. In the past, mentoring was a relatively simple process. Older or veteran members of an organization would simply guide younger and newer members of the organization with little or no self-reflection. Wellington (1999), cogently describes mentoring of the past in this manner “ if the “new boy” has a life history and life circumstances that are just like those of the “old boy,” then all the “old boy” has to do is to remember what private or secret information was useful and important for him to know and then pass that information on to the “new boy” (p.xi). In today’s more multicultural organizations, the mentoring custom is now even more complicated; and new entrant socialization is less than automatic. Because of this reality, the “new boy” may not look like the “old boy”, and may also have a different cultural background (Wellington, 1999). As a consequence, the reliance upon age-old customs and knowledge may no longer be sufficient for mentoring women and minorities.

Theoretical Framework

It should be noted that this paper uses Social Learning Theory as the broad explanatory base to address mentoring phenomenon. Merriam and Caffarella (1991) stated, “Social learning theories contribute to adult learning by highlighting the importance of social context and explicating the process of modeling and mentoring” (p.139). This paper does not focus on the mentoring construct itself or the specific operational nuances of mentoring programs. For a discussion of the mentoring construct, see Kram (1983), Kram (1986). For a discussion of the history and operational nuances of mentoring in organizational settings, see Murray and Owen (1991), and Phillips-Jones (1982). A significant amount of research has been conducted on various aspects of the mentoring phenomenon. Specifically, research on mentoring in organizations has succeeded in understanding key characteristics of the mentoring phenomenon. The phases of mentoring have been established (Kram, 1983). The role of the mentor has been sufficiently defined (Levinson et al., 1978; Noe, 1988; Tack & Tack, 1986) and several studies have established the outcomes of mentoring (Fagenson, 1988, 1989; Hunt & Michael, 1983; Whitely et al, 1991).

Despite significant research progress and efforts aimed at understanding the organizational mentoring phenomenon, few studies have attempted to understand the policy implications of using mentoring as a socializing tool for women and minorities in contemporary multicultural organizations. According to Smith, Smith, and Markham (2000) very little is known about cross-race and cross-gender mentoring including their impact and outcomes. This is a policy analytic study examining the experiences of women and minorities who engage in organizational mentoring programs. It uses Guba’s (1984) policy framework. The policy to be examined is the use of mentoring (formal and informal) as a socializing strategy in multicultural organizations.

Policy Questions

Three policy questions are proffered in order to examine the mentoring outcomes for women and minority (women and people of color) protégés who engage in mentoring programs at their respective organizations.

1. Do minority protégés and White protégés of the same organization have different mentoring outcomes as a result of participating in a mentoring relationship?
2. Do same-race and cross-race mentoring relationships produce different mentoring outcomes?
3. Do same-gender and cross-gender mentoring relationships produce different mentoring outcomes?

These three questions rest squarely in the definitional domain of policy as it is experienced.

Review of the Literature

The review of the literature relevant to this policy examination is divided into three sections. First, the history and evolution of mentoring is addressed. Second, mentoring’s conceptualizations, definitions, and distinctions are addressed. Third, and finally, extant empirical research on the mentoring phenomenon as it relates the experiences of women and people of color are addressed. The empirical research reviewed was selected through keyword searches within business, educational and psychological databases containing journal and peer reviewed articles on mentoring women and minorities. The reviewer only selected published articles germane to the mentoring experiences of women and minorities for this review.

History of Mentoring

History offers us many examples of mentoring relationships (Carden, 1990; Murray & Owen, 1991; Phillips-Jones 1983). According to Murray and Owen (1991) Homer’s account of the Mentor Telemachus relationship in the Odyssey illustrates one of the first attempts to facilitate mentoring. Moreover, it was a relatively sophisticated

attempt because it utilized not only the male, Mentor, but it also sought the wisdom and guidance of the female goddess, Athena. The Athena-Telemachus relationship was perhaps one of the first recorded instances of a cross-gender mentoring relationship. Historically, mentoring has played a significant role in the continuity and evolution of art, craft and commerce (Murray & Owen, 1991).

Mentoring's Conceptualizations, Definitions and Distinctions

Two schools of thought govern the existence of mentoring in business and industry. The first school of thought relies on the belief that mentoring can be designed and created. The second school of thought rests on the assumption that mentoring can only occur naturally (Murray & Owen, 1991). The distinction between the first school of thought and the second is simply a distinction between formal mentoring and informal mentoring. Mentoring, as it has evolved through the ages, has suffered from conceptual and definitional problems (Carmin, 1988; Carruthers, 1993; Chao et al., 1992; Merriam, 1983). An examination of mentoring's conceptualizations in organizational settings suggest a wide degree of variance in the concept prompting numerous definitions. In a critical review of the literature, Merriam (1983) said that "Mentoring appears to mean one thing to developmental psychologists, another thing to business people and, a third thing to those in academic settings" (p.169). Despite this wide degree of variance for the mentoring concept, most mentoring conceptualizations fall into one of two outcome categories: 1) those that stress professional development and protection, and 2) those that emphasize both professional and personal development of the mentee (Carruthers, 1993).

Two scholars in particular, seem to have been pivotal in creating the two distinct conceptual categories as outlined by Carruthers. Kanter (1977) suggests that the mentor is a person of significant power who helps the protégée climb the organizational ladder through patronage. The mentor according to this conceptualization fights for the protégé and provides assistance to the protégé. In many instances the protégé gains indirect power by being associated with the mentor (Kanter, 1977). Kanter's mentoring conceptualization focuses on the professional development of the protégé. At the other end of the mentoring continuum is the more elaborate mentoring conceptualization offered by Levinson et al. (1978) that not only includes professional development but personal development as well. In this conceptualization, the mentor takes on a series of roles such as teacher, advisor, and sponsor in a work setting.

Mentoring Outcomes and Empirical Examinations of the Experiences of Women and Minorities

This section first addresses the establishment of mentoring outcomes. Second, it addresses the significant empirical studies examining mentoring outcomes for women and minorities.

Fagenson (1989) examined mentoring's effect on several career-benefit outcomes (job satisfaction, career mobility/opportunity, recognition, security, and promotion). Fagenson found that mentored employees reported more satisfaction, career mobility/opportunity, recognition and higher promotion rates than non-mentored employees.

In another study, Dreher and Ash (1990) investigated linkages between mentoring experiences and the outcome variables of income, promotion, and perceptions of satisfaction with compensation. Their findings suggest that individuals involved with extensive mentoring relationships obtained more promotions, higher incomes, and perceived being more satisfied with the salary and benefits than individuals who were not.

Koberg, Boss, Chappell, & Ringer (1994) studied the correlates and outcomes of mentoring among professional and managerial employees. Significant findings of this study were that men received more mentoring than women; minorities received more mentoring than whites. Overall mentoring was associated with higher levels of job satisfaction and lower levels of work alienation. These studies are significant because they establish the efficacy of mentoring in producing career-benefit outcomes.

The next set of studies discussed directly addresses the policy analytic questions posed in this paper. These studies although few, are significant because they deal directly with the experiences of women and minority protégés involved in organizational mentoring. Noe (1988) in a review of the literature on women and mentoring suggest that women may face a number of barriers that retard equal access to organizational mentoring relationships. These barriers include tokenism, cross-gender relationship taboos, and persistent negative attitudes and stereotypes about women.

Thomas (1990) conducted a study examining the influence of race on protégés experiences with respect to the formation of developmental relationships among black and white managers. Thomas found that white protégés rarely had developmental relationships with persons of another race. On the other hand, black protégés appeared to form sixty-three percent of their developmental relationships with whites. This study also found that blacks were more inclined to form relationships outside the formal lines of authority and outside their departments. Moreover, same-race relationships provided significantly more psychosocial support than cross-race relationships.

McGuire (1999) used a structuralist approach to examine the effects of employees' race and sex in accessing help from their mentors. Data were collected regarding employees' informal networks and their mentoring relationships. McGuire found that male protégés received significantly more instrumental help from their mentors than did female protégés. Female protégés received significantly more psychosocial or socioemotional help than male protégés. McGuire also found that men received more instrumental help (getting one's work recognized) than women. McGuire's findings with respect to race suggest that white employees obtained significantly more instrumental help from their mentors than did minority employees. Additionally, minority protégés received significantly more socioemotional help than did white employees. Data obtained from the sex composition of mentor-protégé relationships indicated that both male and female protégés received significantly more instrumental help from their male mentors than from their female mentors. Conversely, both male and female protégés received significantly more socioemotional help from their female mentors than from their male mentors.

Smith, Smith & Markham (2000) conducted a study exploring the nature and impact of diversified mentoring relationships among university faculty. Their study spanned three specific areas common to the mentoring phenomenon. (A) mentoring across diverse groups, (B) mentoring functions and (C) mentoring outcomes. The findings for this study suggest that women reported being in more mentoring relationships than men. Minorities are not successful in acquiring mentors even though they attempt to find mentors inside and outside their organizations; moreover their opportunities are even fewer if they desire a same race mentoring relationship. With respect to mentoring functions, it was found that there was no significant difference in the levels of career and psychosocial support behaviors for diversified mentoring dyads as compared to homogeneous mentoring dyads. In regards to mentoring outcomes, whites reported that mentoring produced higher affective commitment and lower intent to turnover. Minorities reported no significant impact in their levels of affective commitment and intent to turnover based on an increase in mentoring.

Discussion

The findings relevant to the three policy questions in this review suggests that minorities (women and people of color) and whites of the same organization have different mentoring experiences. White protégés only have White mentors. Minority protégés generally have white mentors, rarely have minority mentors and often have to seek mentoring relationships outside of their functional areas. Same race mentoring dyads wherein both mentor and protégé are White produced significantly more instrumental help than same race mentoring dyads where the mentor and protégé were both minority. Generally, these minority mentoring dyads produced more psychosocial help for the protégés. In regards to gender, both male and female protégés received more instrumental help from male mentors than from female mentors. Female mentors offered significantly more psychosocial help to both male and female protégés than did male mentors. Additionally, female mentors offered more instrumental help to their male protégés than their female protégés. Based upon these findings, it appears as though mentoring outcomes are linked to the variables of race and gender. If the protégé is White and male instrumental help is virtually assured. If the protégé is female and/or a minority, (s)he will likely receive psychosocial help but not instrumental help.

The policy of organizational mentoring in its present form(s), in effect, produces disparate treatment for women and minority protégés as compared to their White male counterparts. As a consequence organizational mentoring is ineffective and contributes to the status quo. The status quo is that women and minorities are yet to achieve a critical mass within organizational settings. According to McGurie (1999), the workplace is segregated by race and gender. This means that White males occupy most positions of power within organizational settings and are therefore in positions to offer instrumental help to their protégés who are invariably white and male. In stark terms, women and minorities appear to receive little or no instrumental help from their mentoring experiences yet instrumental help is what is most needed to vertically integrate women and minorities into organizational settings. Instrumental help for women and minority protégés will create a critical mass that hopefully will render the need for specialized programs geared towards integrating women and minorities into organizational settings unnecessary.

Given the demographic trends which suggest that women and minorities will comprise a significant portion of the 21st century workforce, organizations should ask why are there disparate outcomes for women and minorities as compared to majority males engaged in organizational mentoring. The structuralist approach offer a broad understanding of the outcomes associated with organizational mentoring. According to McGuire (1999) structuralists examine how individuals' positions within a social system provide opportunities for action as well as constrain behavior--- this is known as the opportunity context. If one were to look at the opportunity context with respect to mentoring for women and minorities, one might readily understand why mentoring benefits for women and minorities manifest in the form of psychosocial and socioemotional help but not instrumental help. From the mentoring opportunity context standpoint, women and minorities are relatively new

entrants into organizational settings. As a consequence, they are yet to be fully vertically integrated into the organizations. In other words, the opportunity context for women and minorities is yet to mature where women and minorities can engage in mentoring relationships where not only psychosocial help is offered but instrumental help as well. Ragins (1997) highlights the importance of considering race and gender in mentoring relationship. These biographic categories appear to affect mentoring behaviors and ultimately mentoring outcomes.

Before concluding this section, it is necessary to address the distinctions between psychosocial help and instrumental help. It is not the intent of this paper to endorse one form mentoring help over the other. It is asserted that in most instances the protégé may view either form of help as being valuable based upon their situational context. For example, since women and minorities generally occupy low-level positions within organizational settings and; the ones who attain high-level positions within organizational settings are often in token and/or isolated positions. It is plausible to suggest that this token or isolated status may cause women and minority mentors and protégés to suffer from a latent sense of loneliness, insecurity and performance anxiety. As a consequence, minority mentors and protégés dealing with this set of circumstances may be more inclined to give and seek psychosocial rather than instrumental help.

Prescriptions for Contemporary Organizational Mentoring

Shapiro, Haseltine, and Rowe (1978) developed a gender-based mentoring typology that reflected the growing presence of women in organizations. Ragins (1997) examined the linkages between diversity and organizational mentoring using a power perspective. I propose that to truly reflect the diversity present in contemporary organizations, there should be an extension of the gender-based typology of mentor-protégé relationships to include a race and ethnicity. (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1. Gender and Race Based Typology of Mentor Protégé Relationships

	Male Mentor	Female Mentor
Majority	Majority Male Mentor & Majority Male Protégé	Majority Female Mentor & Majority Male Protégé
	Majority Male Mentor & Majority Female Protégé	Majority Female Mentor & Majority Female Protégé
	Majority Male Mentor & Non-Majority Male Protégé	Majority Female Mentor & Non-Majority Male Protégé
	Majority Male Mentor & Non-Majority Female Protégé	Majority Female Mentor & Non-Majority Female Protégé
	Non-Majority Male Mentor & Majority Male Protégé	Non-Majority Female Mentor & Majority Male Protégé
Non-Majority	Non-Majority Male Mentor & Majority Female Protégé	Non-Majority Female Mentor & Majority Female Protégé
	Non-Majority Male Mentor & Non-Majority Male Protégé	Non-Majority Female Mentor & Non-Majority Male Protégé
	Non-Majority Male Mentor & Non-Majority Female Protégé	Non-Majority Female Mentor & Non-Majority Female Protégé

Organizations using mentoring as a socialization process for its employees should first recognize that this mentoring dyad typology represents the full range of mentoring possibilities within contemporary multicultural organizations. This new typology represents a fundamental base form which one can recognize the breadth and depth of diversity present in contemporary organizations. Gender, race and ethnicity are biographic categories that can augment our understanding of other aspects of diversity such as cultural characteristics and individual differences. Recognizing these characteristics as fundamental ways in which we differ will serve as a gateway towards building global perspective within organizations.

To improve the experiences and career outcomes for women and minorities involved in organizational mentoring programs, I proffer the following six suggestions that are intended to provide a framework for the development of formal mentoring programs that produce equitable rather than disparate mentoring results.

Suggestion # 1: Provide everyone in the organization with access to the mentoring program. Formal mentoring programs have been marginalized and stigmatized as programs aimed at helping women and minorities. Formal

mentoring should be promoted as an organizational mandate where every employee is encouraged to take part. Nonrestrictive access will lessen the stigmatization associated with restrictive forms of mentoring.

Suggestion # 2: Enlarge the role and responsibilities of all managers and individual contributors who are stellar employees to include that of mentor. These individuals with high performing competencies are the best resource for socializing and instilling protégés with the right attitudes, skills and abilities.

Suggestion # 3: Use the proposed gender and ethnicity typology as a basis for informing and training all employees of the organization on the mentoring dyad possibilities and their nuances. The gender and ethnicity typology is simply a starting point from which one might learn, and develop fundamental cultural and behavioral understanding that transcends gender and ethnicity.

Suggestion # 4: Encourage mentors and protégés to develop a primary mentoring relationship with the requirement that mentors and protégés establish multiple secondary mentoring relationships that span the mentoring gender and ethnicity typology. This requirement simply promotes global perspective.

Suggestion # 5: Hold mentors and protégés accountable (through performance planning) for development. This suggestion addresses mentoring outcomes directly. Mentors and protégés must understand that they will be held accountable for producing effective and equitable mentoring outcomes that contribute to the renewal of the organization.

Suggestion #6: Create cross-functional mentoring forums where mentors and protégés can provide progress reports on the protégé's development. These organization-wide, cross-functional mentoring forums are designed to anchor mentoring squarely in organizational culture. By engaging in these open forums, mentoring best practices can be shared, and mentors and protégés can gain cross-functional exposure based upon their developmental accomplishments. These forums also enable organizational leaders to gain first-hand experience of the human capital within their organizations.

Conclusion

Organizational mentoring can be a useful tool in facilitating the socialization of employees to their organizations. However, the ongoing increase of women and minorities in the workforce has created significant challenges for organizational mentoring. Mentoring in contemporary organizations must now evolve to meet these challenges. Presently, the experiences of women and minorities engaged in organizational mentoring are not the same as majority males. These differences and disparate outcomes associated with organizational mentoring portend renewal and competitive difficulties for organizations. How organizations socialize and integrate new entrants into the workforce will directly affect their renewal and competitive survival. Policy using mentoring as a socializing tool must evolve to create mentoring programs that produce equitable outcomes for all employees regardless of gender and ethnicity.

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