

## The Role of Gender in Mentoring: Implications for Diversified and Homogenous Mentoring Relationships

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The present study examined the effects of gender composition of mentoring relationships on protégés' perceptions of the degree of role modeling and psychosocial and career development mentoring functions received. Data from 200 mentor/protégé dyads composed of working professionals from a variety of industries were analyzed using ANCOVA with planned comparisons. Results indicated that mentoring relationships involving female mentors in either homogeneous or diversified relationships provided more role modeling and less career development than relationships involving male mentors. Unexpectedly, male mentors in homogeneous relationships were associated with lower levels of role modeling than female mentors in either homogeneous or diversified relationships. Homogeneous male relationships also offered less psychosocial support than female mentors in diversified relationships with male protégés. Male mentors in diversified relationships with female protégés were associated with more career development than any other gender combination of mentoring relationship. © 2000 Academic Press

An increasing number of men and women in organizations are recognizing the benefits associated with mentoring relationships, in which individuals with advanced experience and knowledge (i.e., mentors) provide support and facilitate the upward mobility of junior organizational members (i.e., protégés) (Ragins, 1997). These benefits include increased self-esteem at work (Koberg, Boss, & Goodman, 1998), increased job satisfaction and decreased work alienation (Koberg, Boss, Chappell, & Ringer, 1994), effective socialization of young employees (Schein, 1978), promotions and increased compensation (Dreher & Ash, 1990; Dreher & Cox, 1996), career mobility and advancement (Scandura, 1992; Wilson & Elman, 1990), career satisfaction (Fagenson, 1989), career commitment (Colarelli & Bishop, 1990), job satisfaction (Bahniuk, Dobos, & Hill, 1990), and reduced turnover intentions (e.g., Koberg et al., 1998). In addition, Ragins (1989) identified mentoring as important for men but essential for women, since mentors can buffer them from discriminatory selection and treatment.

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While mentoring has been identified as a key career resource for men and women in organizations (Bowen, 1986; Dreher & Ash, 1990; Ragins & Cotton, 1991), the mentoring literature remains unclear regarding the role of gender in mentoring relationship processes and outcomes. Some research (Maniero, 1994; Ragins, 1989) has linked mentoring (primarily male mentor) relationships to advancement of female protégés, whereas other research (e.g., Dreher & Ash, 1990; Ensher & Murphy, 1997; Fagenson, 1989; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990) has failed to find associations between gender and mentoring relationship processes and outcomes. These conflicting results have prompted numerous writers (e.g., Allen, Russell, & Rush, 1994; Burke & McKeen, 1990; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990; Tharenou, Conroy, & Latimer, 1994) to call for research to expand what we know about the role of gender composition of mentoring dyad relationships and career advancement. As Ragins (1997) noted, most prior research has examined independent main effects of the mentor's or protégé's gender without considering the gender composition of the mentoring relationship. She argued that the composition of the mentoring relationship leads to unique behavioral and perceptual processes. As such, a dyadic approach is methodologically superior to previous designs and should be used to explore the influence of the gender composition of the relationship on mentoring processes and outcomes (Ragins).

A few studies have investigated the effects of gender composition of mentoring relationship on mentoring processes and outcomes, and these efforts have produced inconsistent results. Koberg et al. (1998) found that characteristics of the mentoring dyad (e.g., gender and race) and protégé characteristics (e.g., education and ethnicity) had significant effects on psychosocial mentoring. They found same-gender dyads provided more psychosocial support to the protégé than diversified dyads. However, Ensher and Murphy (1997) failed to find such results. Burke, McKeen, and McKenna (1990) found female mentors provided more friendship, counseling, personal support, and sponsorship in same-gender dyads than did any other gender composition. Female mentors provide more exposure, protection, counseling, and promotional opportunities (Burke et al., 1990) and are more willing to mentor others (Allen, Russell, & Maetzke, 1997). Yet, Burke and McKeen (1997) found that female protégés with female mentors reported greater intentions to leave an organization. Ragins and McFarlin (1990) noted that protégés in cross-gender dyads reported less role modeling and social role modeling functions received than protégés in same-gender dyads.

These ubiquitous results may be a function of methodological issues confounding meaningful comparisons across studies. Several studies had unequal gender compositions (e.g., Burke et al., 1990, 1993; Koberg et al., 1998), industry-specific samples (e.g., Koberg et al., 1998), or tested for main effects of gender while ignoring gender composition of the dyad (e.g., Allen et al., 1997). All had uneven mentor/protégé homogeneous or diversified dyad cell sizes. Accordingly, the present study's objectives were to investigate the effects of the gender composition on mentoring relationships using a dyadic approach and to attempt to increase the cell sizes by identifying a relatively equal sample of men

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