

The Benefits of Mentoring for Female Lawyers

Jean E. Wallace

Department of Sociology, The University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta T2N 1N4, Canada

The objectives of this study were twofold: to determine the effect mentoring has on a set of career and emotional outcomes for female lawyers and to determine whether female lawyers benefit more from having had a male or female mentor. All of these assessments were conducted while controlling for a set of demographic, human capital, work context, and personality disposition variables. Having a mentor appears instrumental for the career success of female protégés in terms of earnings, promotional opportunities, procedural justice, and social integration. In addition, in terms of the emotional outcomes, protégés report greater career satisfaction than nonprotégés and indicate that their expectations are met to a greater degree. While female protégés with male mentors earn significantly more than those with female mentors, those mentored by women report more career satisfaction, more intent to continue practicing law, professional expectations that were met to a greater degree, and less work–nonwork conflict than those women who were mentored by men.

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Recently, considerably more attention is being given to the benefits of mentors in the workplace. The literature suggests that mentoring functions may be especially important for female professionals' careers because they tend to face greater organizational, interpersonal, and individual barriers to advancement than their male counterparts (Kanter, 1977; Noe, 1988; Ragins, 1989; Ragins & Scandura, 1994; Wright & Wright, 1987). While numerous studies have examined the benefits of mentoring, they tend to limit their focus to only a few outcomes, such as pay and promotions, and they tend to exclude relevant control variables in their analysis (Burke & McKeen, 1997; Fagenson, 1989; Koberg, Boss & Goodman, 1998; Kram, 1985; Ragins, 1989; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990). The first goal of this article is to empirically assess the potential benefits of mentoring for female lawyers. In doing so, I control for certain individual and organizational factors that may be relevant in understanding the outcomes of mentor–protégé relationships. Two specific outcomes are introduced in this study that are expected to be particularly relevant for professional women. These include the extent to which having

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Address correspondence and reprint requests to Jean E. Wallace, Department of Sociology, The University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta T2N 1N4, Canada. E-mail: jwallace@ucalgary.ca.



been mentored enhances professional women's sense of social integration at work and reduces their work–family conflict. In addition, the literature suggests that male and female mentors may play different roles for female protégés working in male-dominated organizations or occupations (Noe, 1988; Ragins, 1989, 1997; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990). Nearly all previous research, however, has investigated the effects of mentors' gender and protégés' gender separately without taking into account the conjoint effects of the gender composition of the relationship (Ragins, 1997). The second goal of this study is to examine whether female protégés benefit more from having a male mentor or a female mentor in terms of the career and emotional outcomes examined in this paper.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Generally, mentors are more senior experienced individuals who provide career-related support, direction, and guidance to less experienced junior colleagues or protégés (Baugh, Lankau & Scandura, 1996; Javidan, Bemmels, Devine, & Dastmalchian, 1995; Russell & Adams, 1997). Research on mentoring relationships documents a number of positive outcomes that protégés may experience as a result of having had a mentor at some point in their career.¹ Following Kram (1985) these outcomes are usually tied to two distinct but related functions: career development functions and psychosocial functions.² Career functions refer to the sponsorship, coaching, protection, exposure-and-visibility, and challenging work assignments that are provided to protégés. Career functions should act primarily to enhance career advancement and should have a significant impact on protégés' compensation and promotions (Ragins, 1997). Research findings show that protégés benefit along a number of career outcomes, such as salary, promotions, performance, and perceptions of reward satisfaction and fairness, when compared to non-protégés (Burke, 1984; Dreher & Ash, 1990; Dreher & Cox, 1996; Fagenson, 1989; Scandura, 1992, 1997; Whitely, Dougherty, & Dreher, 1991). The psychosocial functions include role modeling, counseling, and friendship, which primarily enhance protégés' sense of competence, clarity of identity, and effectiveness (Kram, 1983, pp. 613–614). Psychosocial functions involve facilitating protégés' organizational or career socialization and Ragins (1997) suggests that the primary impact should be observed on such outcomes as job satisfaction, commitment, turnover, job stress, and role stress. As well, psychosocial functions may affect protégés on a more personal level that may extend beyond their work

¹ More recently, the dysfunctional aspects of mentor–protégé relationships have begun to dominate the outcomes literature (e.g., Eby & Allen, 1999; Scandura, 1998). While the negative consequences of mentoring are long overdue in receiving this attention, it is important not to lose sight that most mentoring relationships are basically healthy and result in positive outcomes for the protégés involved (Ragins, 1999).

² In addition to these two functions proposed by Kram, some researchers propose that role modeling may represent a third function that is empirically and conceptually distinct from the psychosocial function (Scandura, 1992; Scandura & Viator, 1994).

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