Mentoring others: A dispositional and motivational approach

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Abstract

Dispositional and motivational variables related to the propensity to mentor others and to the provision of career and psychosocial mentoring were examined. Results indicated that prosocial personality variables (other-oriented empathy, helpfulness) related to willingness to mentor others and also accounted for unique variance beyond variables associated with life and career stages. Other-oriented empathy related to actual experience as a mentor. Results also indicated that motives for mentoring others differentially related to psychosocial and career mentoring. © 2002 Elsevier Science (USA). All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Individuals who mentor others are widely recognized as playing a vital role within organizations. Mentors are typically defined as individuals with advanced experience and knowledge who are committed to providing support to and increasing the career advancement of junior organizational members, their protégés (Kram, 1985). Furthermore, mentors serve as a key source for ensuring the continuation of knowledge within organizations and for grooming junior employees (Kram & Hall, 1996). Mentoring relationships continue to be recognized as an important aspect of career development for both mentors and protégés (cf. Dreher & Ash, 1990; Kram, 1985;...

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Scandura, 1992; Turban & Dougherty, 1994; Whitely, Dougherty, & Dreher, 1991). Although research concerning mentoring benefits continues to accumulate, research on factors related to willingness to mentor others and mentor variation in mentoring behavior is sparse.

Given the considerable amount of time and commitment required on the part of mentors, not all individuals are motivated or inclined to assume this role. Those who do mentor others may have different motives underlying their willingness to engage in this activity (Allen, Poteet, & Burroughs, 1997; Kram, 1985). Individuals who take on a mentorship role are generally thought to provide two broad categories of behavior or functions to their protégés that are referred to as career and psychosocial (Kram, 1985). However, the extent that a mentor provides these functions can vary considerably (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Research examining variation in the provision of career and psychosocial mentoring has tended to focus on variables such as race and gender. Relatively little is known about individual differences (outside of demographic factors) that may help explain differences in mentoring behavior.

The purpose of the present study was to extend our understanding of the propensity to mentor others and the provision of mentoring functions from the perspective of the mentor. Building on social psychological and organizational behavior theories of prosocial behavior, the present study had two main objectives. The first was to identify individual difference variables related to the propensity to mentor others. Specifically, the relationship between prosocial personality characteristics (other-oriented empathy and helpfulness) with experience as a mentor and with willingness to mentor others was examined. The second objective was to examine the extent prosocial personality characteristics and personal motives for mentoring others explain variation in the provision of career and psychosocial mentoring functions.

2. Theoretical background

Historically, the conceptual foundation for research on mentoring others has been drawn from career and life stage theories (e.g., Kram, 1985). Career theory suggests that mentoring others is an important developmental component of both life and career stages (Greenhaus, Callanan, & Godshalk, 2000; Feldman, 1988; Kram, 1985). Life stage theorists such as Erickson (1963), Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, and McKee (1978), and Levinson (1986) view mentoring others as a process that occurs during the midcareer years when individuals reassess their career and life accomplishments. Mentoring others during this time provides the midcareerist with a sense of accomplishment and a means for obtaining generativity. Moreover, according to Levinson et al. mentors are often career-plateaued and receive intrinsic satisfaction from passing along wisdom to junior colleagues. Mentoring others also plays a prominent role in career stage theories. For example, in Dalton, Thompson, and Price’s (1977) four-stage model of professional career development, serving as a mentor is a key activity associated with the third stage. Taken together, these theories suggest mentors seek mentoring relationships with others primarily to serve their own developmental needs.
Prediction based on age and stage models of career development suggests willingness to mentor others should be strongest for midcareer individuals. However, Ragins and Cotton (1993) found no support for the hypothesis that willingness to mentor others would be curvilinearly related to age. Additionally, Allen, Poteet, Russell, and Dobbins (1997) found a negative relationship between age and intentions to mentor others such that older supervisors reported fewer intentions than did younger supervisors. Based on extant research, it seems that stage models (at least as operationalized by age) do not offer an adequate explanation of willingness to mentor others. Moreover, career theorists have indicated that the traditional stage models of development no longer describe most workers and in fact have limited predictive utility in today’s rapidly changing workplace (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Sullivan, Carden, & Martin, 1998). This suggests the need for additional theoretical models that can explain variance in mentoring behavior.

Stage theories imply that mentoring behaviors are primarily hedonistic. However, there may be multiple factors that explain mentoring behavior. For example, Batson and Shaw (1991) argue for a motivational pluralism in explaining human behavior that allows both self-benefit and another’s benefit to serve as ultimate goals. Indeed, one of the few studies to examine personality and the propensity to mentor others found that altruism related to motivation to mentor others (Aryee, Chay, & Chew, 1996). However, the generalizability of the Aryee et al. results remain to be tested since the sample consisted of primarily married males between the ages of 45–50 employed in Singapore. The present study extends the Aryee et al. study by examining differences between experienced and nonexperienced mentors across a more demographically diverse sample.

At this point, it should be noted that the variables included in the present study are not proposed to be the only correlates of mentoring behavior or superior to other possible predictors. Nor is it my intent to suggest mentoring others is a purely altruistic process. Rather, I propose that an examination of other theoretical approaches and constructs will extend and complement prior research. Ultimately, a more pluralistic approach should result in a more comprehensive understanding of mentoring others. The next section describes how the propensity to mentor others may relate to prosocial dispositions. How career and psychosocial mentoring may also relate to prosocial dispositions, as well as to personal motives for mentoring, follows.

3. Propensity to mentor others

Since informal mentoring is not typically mandated within organizations, serving as a mentor is a volitional activity that goes above and beyond the mentor’s formal job requirements. Indeed, Scandura and Schriesheim (1994) describe mentoring as “a personal, extraorganizational investment in the protégé by the mentor” (p. 1589). Similarly, Mullen (1994) stated “By acting as a mentor, one is performing prosocial behaviors” (p. 276). Consequently, it seems reasonable to view mentoring others as a specific form of prosocial behavior. Prosocial behavior within organizations includes behaviors performed by organizational members with the intention or expectation
that the behavior will benefit the person, group, or organization toward which the behavior is directed (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986). A considerable amount of work in the organizational behavior literature has been devoted to investigating the antecedents of prosocial behavior and related constructs such as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (e.g., Borman, Penner, Allen, & Motowidlo, 2001; Organ & Ryan, 1995; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). Moreover, social psychologists have had a long-standing interest in understanding helping behavior and volunteerism (Penner & Finkelstein, 1998; Penner, Midili, & Kegelmeyer, 1997; Schroeder, Penner, Dovidio, & Piliavin, 1995). These literatures were used to provide insight concerning variables related to mentoring behavior.

In the social psychology literature, the prosocial personality has been described as a collection of traits that predispose a person toward helpful actions (Schroeder et al., 1995). Research conducted by Penner, Craiger, Fritzschke, and Friefield (1995) suggested there are two dimensions to the prosocial personality. The first dimension is other-oriented empathy. Individuals who score high in other oriented-empathy are more likely to feel responsibility for and concern about the welfare of others. Social psychological theory posits that decisions to help others result from empathetic concern for others that is rooted in social identification processes. Indeed, in their interview study of experienced mentors, Allen et al. (1997) suggested mentoring others might relate to other-oriented empathy in that mentors seemed to describe a form of empathetic reaction in identifying with the early career challenges faced by junior colleagues. In a meta-analysis, Eisenberg and Miller (1987) found an average correlation of .17 between empathy and prosocial behavior outside of work. Empathy has also been related to acts of citizenship within organizations directed toward individuals. Specifically, McNeely and Meglino (1994) found a relationship between prosocial individual behavior and empathy, but no relationship between prosocial organizational behavior and empathy. Similarly, Settoon and Mossholder (2002) found a relationship between empathy and interpersonal citizenship behavior where interpersonal citizenship behavior was generally defined as social behavior that has the effect of helping a co-worker in need.

The second dimension to the prosocial personality is helpfulness. Given that mentoring others can be viewed as a specific form of helping behavior, it should relate to altruistic tendencies. Studies concerning the helpful or altruistic personality suggest that some individuals are consistently more generous, helpful, and kind than others (Rushton, Chrisjohn, & Fekken, 1981). As noted earlier, previous research has linked altruism with the motivation to mentor others (Aryee et al., 1996). Additionally, several studies have found that that both empathy and helpfulness correlate with self and peer ratings of OCB (Borman et al., 2001). Accordingly, it seems likely that empathetic and helpful individuals will demonstrate a greater propensity to mentor others.

Hypotheses 1: Individuals with experience as a mentor will be higher in other-oriented empathy and helpfulness than will nonmentors.

Hypotheses 2: Other-oriented empathy and helpfulness will positively relate to willingness to mentor others.
To support the utility of the prosocial dispositional approach to understanding mentoring experience and willingness to mentor others in the future, it is important to demonstrate that the dispositional variables studied contribute incremental variance beyond that contributed by variables associated with career and life stage theories. Thus, the following was proposed:

**Hypothesis 3**: Other-oriented empathy and helpfulness will account for unique variance associated with willingness to mentor others above and beyond variance associated with career and life stage variables.

### 4. Mentoring provided

Prosocial dispositional tendencies may not only relate to the decision to become a mentor, but may also relate to the amount of mentoring provided. Most of the research examining correlates of mentoring provided has focused on demographic variables such as mentor and protégé gender (see Ragins, 1999 for a review), mentor and protégé race (Feldman, Folks, & Turnley, 1999; Thomas, 1990, 1993), protégé personality characteristics (Aryee, Lo, & Kang, 1999; Scandura & Ragins, 1993; Turban & Dougherty, 1994) or on characteristics such as type of mentorship (i.e., formal versus informal) and relationship duration (Burke, McKeen, & McKenna, 1993; Fagenson-Eland, Marks, & Amendola, 1997; Noe, 1988; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Research has yet to examine how mentor dispositional tendencies relate to mentoring provided.

Providing effective mentoring to others requires a considerable time investment on the part of the mentor and can put the perceived competence of the mentor at risk if the protégé performs poorly (Mullen, 1994; Ragins & Scandura, 1994, 1999). Individuals lacking prosocial tendencies may not be as willing to provide the time and effort necessary to deliver a great deal of mentoring or to assume the risks associated with mentoring others. Support for this conjecture comes from the volunteerism and helping literature. Specifically, in a study investigating volunteerism, a significant relationship between prosocial dispositions and length of service was reported (Penner & Finkelstein, 1998). Additionally, Korsgaard, Meglino, and Lester (1997) found evidence that individuals high in concern for others were less likely to base their actions on rational calculations of expected costs or benefits. Penner et al. (1995) also reported that prosocial personality characteristics relate to how people estimate the costs associated with helping others. Thus, it seems likely that prosocial individuals may provide a greater degree of mentoring behaviors to their protégés. Additionally, it is proposed that prosocial dispositions will account for unique variance beyond that associated with career and life stage variables, demographic characteristics, and mentorship characteristics. Specifically, the following hypotheses are posed:

**Hypothesis 4**: Other-oriented empathy and helpfulness will relate to mentoring provided.

**Hypothesis 5**: Other-oriented empathy and helpfulness will account for unique variance associated with mentoring provided above and beyond variance associated with career and life stage variables.
ated with career and life stage variables, demographic variables, and mentorship characteristics.

Personal motives for mentoring others may also relate to the provision of mentoring functions. Motives are goal-directed forces within the individual (Batson & Shaw, 1991). Serving as a mentor to others can be viewed as one form of goal-directed behavior. To say that behavior is goal-directed is to say that it is motivated by a cognitive representation of some outcome. People realize that patterns of behavior are likely to produce certain outcomes (Cropanzano, James, & Citera, 1993). This approach to human behavior has been referred to as the functional approach. The functional approach recognizes that the same behavior may have multiple motives (Synder, 1993) and has been used to study volunteerism (Clary et al., 1998; Penner & Finkelstein, 1998) and OCB (Rioux & Penner, 2001). This approach may also be applicable to the study of mentoring in that individuals may mentor others because such behavior satisfies certain needs or motives. Indeed, in her seminal research on mentoring relationships Kram (1985) noted that interest in the development of others “is stimulated by both instrumental and psychological needs” (p. 89). In an effort to better understand the motives that underlie mentoring behavior, Allen et al. (1997) asked experienced mentors to indicate why they chose to mentor others. Consistent with Kram, the authors found that the reasons reported by mentors could be classified into two factors they labeled as other-focused and self-focused. Other-focused motives included the desire to help others, the desire to pass along information to others, and the desire build a competent workforce, whereas self-focused motives included the desire to increase personal learning and to feel gratification.

The different motives associated with mentoring others may explain unique variance in mentoring behavior. Moreover, it seems likely that the motives that underlie an individual’s reason for mentoring may relate to the type of mentoring provided (Allen et al., 1997). For example, mentors motivated by factors such as a desire to build a competent workforce may be more likely to engage in career-related mentoring, whereas individuals who mentor others based on the self-satisfaction that mentoring brings may be more likely to engage in psychosocial mentoring.

Hypothesis 6: Motives for mentoring others will account for unique variance associated with mentoring provided above and beyond variance associated with career and life stage variables, demographic variables, mentorship characteristics, and prosocial dispositions.

Hypothesis 7: Motives for mentoring others will differentially relate to career and psychosocial mentoring functions provided.

5. Method

5.1. Participants

Participants included 391 individuals employed in a variety of settings. Of those responding to the demographic questions, the overall sample consisted of 221
females (57.3%), average age was 45.86 ($SD = 11.10$), and the median level of education obtained was a four-year college degree. Ninety-three percent ($N = 356$) of the participants were Caucasian/white, .5% ($N = 2$) were African-American/black, and 6.3% ($N = 24$) were from other minority groups. Average organizational tenure was 10.29 years ($SD = 9.29$) and average job tenure was 5.70 ($SD = 5.64$). Of the 391 participants, 249 reported having served as a mentor. Demographics by sample source are available upon request.

5.2. Procedure

A total of 138 of the participants were members of a professional women’s business association employed in accounting-related occupations. Most respondents were employed as accountants (e.g., staff accountants, chief financial officers, controllers, etc.), but other job titles (e.g., bursar, bookkeeper) were also represented. A membership mailing list was obtained from the association. Surveys were mailed directly to the business address of 600 members from all regions of the United States and were returned to the author via postage-paid business reply envelopes. Seven surveys were returned by the post office as undeliverable, hence the response rate was 23%. Seventy-one of these respondents reported experience as a mentor. The remaining 253 of the participants were members of a professional association for individuals in engineering positions. Participants held job titles such as “Senior Project Manager,” “Mine Engineer,” and “Civil Engineer.” Surveys were mailed to the business address of 2000 members from across all regions of the United States. Eight were returned by the post office as undeliverable. A total of 259 surveys were returned for a response rate of 13%. Of those 259, 253 contained relatively complete data. One hundred and seventy-eight of these respondents reported experience as a mentor.

5.3. Measures

Experience as a mentor. Participants responded yes or no to the following question: “During your career, has there been an individual who you have taken a personal interest in; who you have guided, sponsored, or otherwise had a positive and significant influence on their professional career development? In other words, have you ever been a mentor?”

Willingness to mentor. Willingness to mentor others was measured with four items developed by Ragins and Scandura (1994) (e.g., “I would like to be a mentor.”). Internal consistency was .80. Responses were made on a five-point scale ranging from (1, strongly disagree) to (5, strongly agree). Higher scores indicated a greater willingness to mentor.

Prosocial personality. The Short-Form Prosocial Personality Battery (Penner, 2001) was used to measure other-oriented empathy and helpfulness. The short-form has a total of 38 items compared to 56 items on the long-form (Penner et al., 1995). Twenty-seven items measure other-oriented empathy (e.g., “I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.”). Responses were made on a five-point scale ranging from (1, strongly disagree) to (5, strongly agree). Internal
consistency as assessed by coefficient alpha was .83. Seven items were used to measure helpfulness (e.g., “I have, before being asked, voluntarily looked after a neighbor’s pets or children without being paid for it.”). Responses were made on a five-point scale ranging from (1, never) to (5, very often). Four additional items from the measure that assess personal distress (the tendency to experience disorientation in tense interpersonal situations) were deemed irrelevant in the present context. Internal consistency as assessed by coefficient alpha was .70. Higher scores reflected a greater degree of other-oriented empathy and helpfulness.

**Mentor motives.** Based on Allen et al. (1997) a pool of 19 items was developed to assess motives for mentoring others. Only individuals who had experience mentoring others responded to these questions. In situations where mentors may have had more than one protégé, they were instructed to base responses on their current or most recent mentoring relationship. Participants rated the extent each item motivated or influenced their decision to become a mentor on a five-point scale ranging from (1, no extent) to (5, great extent). Higher scores indicated the factor was a stronger motivator. Factor analysis was performed to identify the constructs underlying the items. Specifically, a principal axis factor analysis with oblimin rotation was conducted. Three factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 emerged that represented 13 of the 19 items. The first factor represented a motive related to mentor self-enhancement. The second factor consisted of items related to the intrinsic satisfaction of the mentor. The third factor represented a motive to benefit the organization and others in the organization. Items with factor loadings of less than .30 and/or high cross-loadings were not used to interpret the factors or to form scale scores. This resulted in the elimination of two additional items. The remaining 11 items were reanalyzed to assess the stability of the three-factor solution. The results replicated the original analysis. These factor loadings are presented in Table 1. Self-enhancement was comprised of four items ($\alpha = .82$). Intrinsic satisfaction consisted of three items ($\alpha = .81$). Benefit others consisted of four items ($\alpha = .66$).

**Mentoring functions.** Individuals with experience as a mentor reported on the extent they provided mentoring with an adapted version of Noe’s (1988) Mentor Functions Scales. The adaptation consisted of rewording items from an academic to an organizational context. This measure assesses career and psychosocial mentoring functions as initially described by Kram (1985). Participants were asked to indicate the extent that they engaged in mentoring behaviors using a five-point Likert-type response scale, ranging from (1, no extent) to (5, great extent). Seven items assessed career mentoring (e.g., “Gave your protégé assignments that increased written and personal contact with senior management”) ($\alpha = .76$). Ten items assessed psychosocial mentoring (e.g., “Conveyed empathy for the concerns and feelings that your protégé discussed with you”) ($\alpha = .84$). Higher scores indicated a greater degree of mentoring provided.

### 5.4. Control variables

To help determine if the prosocial dispositional variables added unique variance beyond variables previously linked to willingness to mentor, a number of controls
were included in the analyses. Although results of individual studies have been mixed (e.g., Allen et al., 1997; Ragins & Cotton, 1993), research has found evidence of gender differences in willingness to mentor others. Accordingly, gender was coded as a dummy variable (male, 0; female, 1). Previous mentoring experience, both as a mentor and as a protégé has been linked with future willingness to mentor others (Allen et al., 1997; Ragins & Cotton, 1993; Ragins & Scandura, 1999) so both types of experience were included as controls when predicting willingness to mentor. Three variables were used to represent life and career stages. Age was reported in years. Job tenure was reported in years and months. Four items adapted from Milliman (1992) were used to measure perceptions of hierarchical plateauing (e.g., “I am unlikely to obtain a much higher job title in [...] in the near future.”). Internal consistency for the measure was .78. In the equations predicting mentoring functions provided, I controlled for factors shown in previous research to relate to career and psychosocial mentoring. Specifically, protégé gender was dummy coded (male, 0; female, 1). Mentor race and protégé race were both dummy coded (nonminority, 0; minority, 1). Type of mentorship was dummy coded (informal, 0; formal, 1). Mentorship duration was measured in years and months. Although experience as a mentor could not be included in the equations predicting career and psychosocial mentoring because only those with experience could respond to these questions,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Factor 1: Self-enhancement</th>
<th>Factor 2: Benefit others</th>
<th>Factor 3: Intrinsic satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To enhance your visibility within the organization</td>
<td>.90336</td>
<td>−.09549</td>
<td>.01796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To enhance your reputation in the department</td>
<td>.72850</td>
<td>.02482</td>
<td>−.03174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To earn respect from others in the organization</td>
<td>.67378</td>
<td>.04124</td>
<td>.16639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To increase your support base within the organization</td>
<td>.57685</td>
<td>.07860</td>
<td>.00227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To benefit your organization</td>
<td>−.04774</td>
<td>.82829</td>
<td>−.06726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A desire to build/develop a competent workforce within your organization</td>
<td>.07364</td>
<td>.68920</td>
<td>−.15513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A desire to help others succeed in the organization</td>
<td>−.09172</td>
<td>.47482</td>
<td>.28037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To ensure that knowledge and information is passed on to others</td>
<td>.11506</td>
<td>.35357</td>
<td>.01298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The personal pride that mentoring someone brings</td>
<td>.02212</td>
<td>−.01651</td>
<td>.90313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The personal gratification that comes from seeing the protégé grow and develop</td>
<td>−.00209</td>
<td>−.02439</td>
<td>.69780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To gain a sense of self-satisfaction by passing on insights</td>
<td>.19302</td>
<td>−.01396</td>
<td>.69165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Variance (%)                                                                 | 3.21                       | 1.46                       | 1.11                            |

Table 1
Factor loadings of motive to mentor items
previous experience as a protégé was included. Finally, since participants came from two different occupational groups, occupation was controlled (accounting, 0; engineer, 1).

6. Results

Table 2 presents intercorrelations, means, and standard deviations of the study variables. Hypotheses 1 stated that other-oriented empathy and helpfulness would relate to experience as a mentor. Since the dependent variable was dichotomous (no mentor experience or mentor experience), logistic regression was used. Table 3 shows the results. For each predictor variable, the unstandardized regression coefficient and odds ratio are reported. The odds ratio for a predictor variable is computed by exponentiating its regression coefficient. In the present context, the odds ratio represents the change in the odds of having served as a mentor for a one-unit change in the predictor variable. If the odds ratio is significant and greater than 1.0, it indicates the odds of the outcome variable increase when the predictor increases. If the odds ratio is significant and less than 1.0, it indicates the odds of the outcome variable decrease when the predictor increases. An odds ratio of 1.0 indicates the two variables are statistically independent. Model $\chi^2$ assesses the overall logistic model and is comparable to the overall $F$ test for regression (Norusis, 1990). Supporting Hypothesis 1, results indicated helpful individuals were more likely to have served as a mentor to others ($\text{Exp}(B) = 2.54, p < .001$). In contrast, no significant relationship between other-oriented empathy and mentor experience was observed ($\text{Exp}(B) = 1.63, \text{n.s.}$).

Hypothesis 2 stated that willingness to mentor others would relate positively to other-oriented empathy and helpfulness. Hypothesis 3 predicted that the dispositional variables would contribute unique variance toward the prediction of willingness to mentor. Hierarchical multiple regression was used to test the hypotheses. Specifically, the controls (occupation, gender, mentor experience, protégé experience, age, job tenure, and hierarchical plateauing) were entered into the regression equation at Step 1. Other-oriented empathy and helpfulness were entered at Step 2. Results are shown in Table 4. The results indicated that the two dispositional variables added uniquely to the prediction of willingness to mentor beyond the control variables ($R^2 = .07, F = 16.36, p < .001$), thus supporting Hypothesis 3. Inspection of the individual beta weights provided support for Hypothesis 2. Specifically, individuals higher in other-oriented empathy reported greater willingness to mentor others ($\beta = .23, p < .001$). Additionally, a marginally significant relationship between helpfulness and willingness to mentor others was observed ($\beta = .10, p = .06$).

Hypotheses 4–7 concerned the extent that the dispositional variables and mentor motives would explain variance associated with career and psychosocial mentoring provided. Multiple regression was used to test the hypotheses. Specifically, the controls (occupation, gender, age, job tenure, hierarchical plateauing, protégé gender, mentor race, protégé race, mentorship type, mentorship duration, and
Table 2
Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among variables

<table>
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<th>10</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mentor experience</td>
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<td>2. Willingness to mentor</td>
<td>.35**</td>
<td>–</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Career mentoring</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Psychosocial mentoring</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>.35**</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Mentor gender</td>
<td>–2.22**</td>
<td>–2.23**</td>
<td>–2.19**</td>
<td>.14**</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Job tenure</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Plateau</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>–2.77**</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>–.03</td>
<td>.14**</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>–</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Age</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>–.11*</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.49**</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>–</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Protégé gender</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–.06</td>
<td>–.10</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>.67**</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.16*</td>
<td>.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Mentor race</td>
<td>–.01</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>–.01</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>–.03</td>
<td>–.05</td>
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<td>11. Protégé race</td>
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<td>.09</td>
<td>–.04</td>
<td>–.02</td>
<td>–.03</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.25**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Experience as a protégé</td>
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<td>.29**</td>
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1. Mentor experience
2. Willingness to mentor
3. Carer mentoring
4. Psychosocial mentoring
5. Mentor gender
6. Job tenure
7. Plateau
8. Age
9. Protégé gender
10. Mentor race
11. Protégé race
12. Experience as a protégé

** Note: The table includes correlations among variables, with significance levels indicated. The table also shows mean values and standard deviations for certain variables.
Table 2 (continued)

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N’s range from 240 to 390.

Mentor gender and protégé gender: 0, male; 1, female. Race and protégé race: 1, nonminority; 2, minority. Experience as a protégé: 0, no; 1, yes. Occupation: 0, accounting; 1, engineering. Initiation: 0, informal; 1, formal. Duration: length of mentorship reported in years and months.

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

Table 3
Logistic regression results for mentor experience

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<th>Exp B</th>
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<td>Job tenure</td>
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<td>.94*</td>
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<td>Plateauing</td>
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<td>1.04</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
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<td>Other-oriented empathy</td>
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<td>2.54***</td>
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<tr>
<td>% classification accuracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Logistic regression model (\chi^2)</td>
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</table>

b and Exp B reported from the final equation.

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

protégé experience) were entered at Step 1 of the equation. Other-oriented empathy and helpfulness were entered at Step 2. The three motives for mentoring others (self-enhancement, intrinsic satisfaction, and benefit others) were entered at Step 3. This
process was conducted for the dependent variable of career mentoring and then repeated for psychosocial mentoring. Results are shown in Table 5.

Hypothesis 4 received mixed support. Specifically, the results indicated that helpfulness related to career mentoring ($\beta = .14, p < .05$), but not to psychosocial mentoring ($\beta = .05, n.s.$). The opposite results were found for other-oriented empathy. Other-oriented empathy related to psychosocial mentoring ($\beta = .28, p < .001$), but not to career mentoring ($\beta = .00, n.s.$). Mixed support was also found for Hypothesis 5. As shown in Table 5, the prosocial dispositional variables failed to account for a significant increment in variance beyond the controls in the equation predicting career mentoring ($R^2_A = .02, DF = 1.81, n.s.$). On the other hand, the prosocial variables did account for a significant increment in the variance explaining psychosocial mentoring ($R^2_A = .11, DF = 12.40, p < .001$).

Hypothesis 6 was supported. Motives for mentoring others accounted for unique variance associated with career mentoring ($R^2_A = .15, DF = 11.75, p < .001$) and in variance associated with psychosocial mentoring ($R^2_A = .06, DF = 4.86, p < .01$) beyond the variance associated with career and life stage development variables, demographic variables, mentorship characteristics, and prosocial dispositions (see Table 5).

Inspection of the individual beta weights associated with the mentor motive variables provided some support for Hypothesis 7. Specifically, the self-enhancement motive significantly related to career mentoring ($\beta = .19, p < .05$), but not to psychosocial mentoring ($\beta = -.09, n.s.$). By contrast, intrinsic satisfaction related to
psychosocial mentoring ($\beta = .18$, $p < .05$), but not to career mentoring ($\beta = .11$, n.s.). The benefit others motive related to both career mentoring ($\beta = .30$, $p < .001$) and to psychosocial mentoring ($\beta = .19$, $p < .01$).

## 7. Discussion

Several key findings emerged from this study. First, the results provided support for the contention that prosocial dispositions are associated with the propensity to mentor others. Moreover, the results demonstrated that the dispositional variables have incremental predictive value beyond variables associated with career and life stage theories. However, it should also be noted that several of the career and life stage variables related to the propensity to mentor others, particularly to willingness
to mentor others. This suggests that instrumental and prosocial approaches should be considered complementary, rather than competing, processes related to willingness to mentor others. Mentoring research and practice may benefit by recognizing the influence that both sets of variables have on the propensity to mentor others.

The results also demonstrated that different variables relate to willingness to mentor others than relate to actual mentoring experience. For example, helpfulness related to actual experience as a mentor, but empathy did not. People who score high on helpfulness are consistently inclined to engage in actions that benefit others (Penner et al., 1995). Thus, helpfulness may theoretically map more squarely with becoming a mentor than does other-oriented empathy. Moreover, helpfulness may be a better predictor of actual mentoring-oriented decisions because it is also linked to self-confidence and self-efficacy (Penner et al., 1995). Less confident individuals may be willing to mentor others, but hesitant to actually engage in the behavior. These findings underscore the importance of comparing mentors and nonmentors for individual differences, as well as investigating willingness to mentor to fully understand the propensity for mentoring others. To my knowledge, this is the first study to compare mentors and nonmentors. Moreover, the results are not surprising given that although research has shown that intentions are often the best predictor of future behavior, the two are not perfectly correlated (Ajzen, 1991; Brett & Reilly, 1988; Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Sheppard, Hartwick, & Warshaw, 1988). Each mentoring opportunity is likely to occur within a unique set of circumstances. For example, an individual may be willing to mentor others, but when approached by a junior colleague, he or she may be under extreme work pressures that prevent him or her from taking on the role at that immediate time. An important endeavor for future studies is longitudinal research investigating how well willingness to mentor others predicts actual mentoring decisions.

The results of the present study also reveal a more comprehensive landscape of factors related to the provision of mentoring functions. The results indicate that prosocial dispositions relate to mentoring functions; however, there are differential relationships between career and psychosocial mentoring. Specifically, only helpfulness related to career mentoring while only other-oriented empathy related to psychosocial mentoring. The different patterns of relationships may be explained by several factors. Helpfulness may more highly relate to career-related mentoring because it reinforces feelings of efficacy and competence. Providing protégés with sponsorship, organizational exposure, and challenging assignments can demonstrate the mentor’s own skills and validate his or her clout within the organization (Kram, 1985). Penner et al. (1995) found that scores on other-oriented empathy strongly relate to general traits such as warmth and nurturance while helpfulness scores do not. Warmth and nurturance has a closer conceptual tie with psychosocial mentoring. Indeed, Kram (1985) noted that conveying empathy is a key aspect of the counseling function associated with psychosocial mentoring. Highly empathetic individuals may be better able to foster the intimacy and trust that is central to the psychosocial dimension. Counseling psychologists have been interested in the extent empathy can be trained as a means to foster therapeutic relationships (Duan & Hill, 1996). A similar line of
research may be helpful in promoting psychosocial functions among mentors and protégés.

This study also linked motives for mentoring others with the provision of mentoring. The results suggest that mentors motivated by different factors may provide different mentoring functions. For example, the results indicated that mentors reporting greater motivation to mentor for self-enhancement reasons were more likely to report providing career mentoring. Meanwhile, mentors motivated by intrinsic satisfaction were more likely to report providing psychosocial mentoring. One explanation for these results may be that mentors motivated by a desire to enhance their standing in the organization may see little value in providing the friendship and counseling activities that comprise psychosocial mentoring as these activities may not directly serve their own career goals. Mentoring relationships based on career functions alone are primarily instrumental in nature (Kram, 1985). By sponsoring a protégé for a high visibility assignment, the mentor may enhance his or her own career profile. On the other hand, mentors motivated by intrinsic satisfaction may acquire more satisfaction from the relational aspects of the mentorship and thus be more likely to provide psychosocial mentoring. The results also revealed that mentors motivated by the desire to benefit others might be most likely to provide both types of mentoring. This makes sense when considering that the other-focused mentor desires to help the organization and the individual achieve success. This may best be achieved by providing both types of mentoring. As noted by Kram (1985), mentoring relationships that provide both types of functions are more indispensable and critical to protégé development.

The results have several implications. One is that protégés may need to try and determine what motives underlie a prospective mentor’s willingness to engage in a mentoring relationship to ascertain whether the relationship will meet their needs. For example, a protégé who has little need for the psychosocial aspects of mentoring might fit well with a mentor motivated to mentor for self-enhancement reasons. On the other hand, a protégé desirous of greater emotional intimacy and relational depth may be unhappy with such a mentor. This information could prove useful to those charged with matching mentors and protégé in formal mentoring programs. One direction for future research is an examination of how mentor motives for mentoring others relate to other dynamics associated with the mentorship such as protégé career and learning outcomes.

Another implication of the results is that variables such as a relationship duration and demographic characteristics may have limited value when trying to explain mentoring functions provided. With all the study variables accounted for, none of the demographic or mentorship characteristic variables remained significant. The present research suggests that researchers should move beyond the focus on surface level characteristics such as gender and consider deeper level characteristics that may better explain variation in mentoring behavior.

The present study opens the door to several other avenues of research from the focal point of the mentor. Ragins and Scandura (1994, 1999) have investigated the relationship between perceived costs and benefits with willingness to mentor others. In future research, it would be interesting to examine the extent prosocial
dispositions relate to perceived costs and benefits. For example, it may be that individuals high in prosocial tendencies would be less likely to perceive costs and more likely to perceive benefits associated with mentoring others. Moreover, additional research examining how perceived costs and benefits may mediate the relationship between dispositions and the willingness to mentor others may increase our understanding of initial mentoring processes. Other recent research has investigated mentor information-seeking (Mullen & Noe, 1999). It seems likely that mentor motives may relate to the extent a mentor seeks feedback and information from his or her protégé. That is, mentors primarily motivated for self-enhancement purposes may be more likely to utilize the protégé as an information source.

Continued research concerning how mentor personality relates to various aspects of the mentoring relationship seems warranted. For example, individual difference variables such as Machiavelliasm might relate to self-focused motives for mentoring others, particularly self-enhancement. This type of personality-motive combination may be more likely to produce some of the negative or dysfunctional mentoring behaviors mentoring researchers have begun to investigate (Eby, McManus, Simon, & Russell, 2000; Scandura, 1998). Additionally, organizational variables such as how mentoring others is rewarded in the organization are likely to explain variance associated with both a general willingness to mentor others and motives for doing so. Organizational variables may be particularly important to understanding the enactment of the self-enhancement motive for mentoring. For example, Kram (1985) notes that organizational reward systems can detract from a mentor’s willingness to mentor others. It may be that organizations that offer no rewards inhibit the mentoring activities of individuals primarily motivated for self-enhancement purposes. On the other hand, mentors driven more by intrinsic satisfaction may not be concerned with whether or not their mentoring efforts are rewarded by the organization.

Understanding the dynamics related to the propensity to mentor others also has practical implications. The information can be used to help organizations encourage developmental relationships. The functional approach to motivation advanced by social psychology research on volunteerism posits that understanding the motives that are most important to an individual can help in attempting to elicit the desired prosocial behavior by developing an appeal that matches the motive (Clary et al., 1998; Penner & Finkelstein, 1998). Since willing mentors are important to succession planning, information-sharing, and organizational learning, it is imperative that organizations recognize the importance of motivating individuals to assume mentoring roles. Appealing to both the altruistic and instrumental motives of individuals may help organizations maintain a stable of ready and willing mentors.

7.1. Strengths and limitations

The present study has several strengths. Specifically, a comprehensive range of theory driven predictors were included. This allowed me to ascertain that the prosocial personality and motive variables related to mentoring behavior after adjusting for other theoretically linked variables. Additionally, this research moved beyond
examining willingness to mentor only, by also examining characteristics that distinguish mentors and nonmentors. Strengths aside, limitations to the study should be noted. Cause and effect inferences cannot be made regarding the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Although proposing that the direction of the relationship is one where personality and motives precede mentoring behavior is theoretically sound, the design precludes firm causality inferences. Additionally, since the data were based on self-reports, common method bias is a possible influence on the results. However, common method variance is an unlikely explanation for the differential pattern of relationships observed. Moreover, the objective nature of the experience, no experience as a mentor variable renders it less vulnerable to common method bias (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). Finally, this study was limited to two occupational groups who were members of a professional association. The extent that the findings generalize to other occupations and settings remains to be tested.

Limited systematic research has been conducted examining the propensity to mentor others, and even less has focused on motives that underlie mentoring behavior. Organizational restructuring during the past decade has resulted in fewer mid and upper level management positions. Consequently, there are fewer individuals in senior level positions who can take on the responsibility for mentoring others. Continued research designed to delineate the variables that influence and motivate organizational members to assume the challenging task of mentoring others should lead to a better overall understanding of mentoring relationships and help organizations develop more effective strategies for their facilitation.

References


