EASTERN UNIVERSITY

# MENTORING EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN EXECUTIVES IN THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY: A PHENOMENOLOGY

**by**

**Patricia Bleil**

A dissertation submitted to the

Campolo School of Graduate and Professional Studies

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

# MENTORING EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN EXECUTIVES IN THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY: A PHENOMENOLOGY

Patricia Bleil

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Eastern University

Advisor: Beth Birmingham, Ph.D.

Women continue to be underrepresented in the top leadership positions in the largest business organizations in the United States. One of the many strategies suggested to help women overcome the challenges to their advancement is mentoring. Unfortunately, although many more women now report they have had a mentor, little progress is being made in advancing women to leadership positions. In order to understand mentoring from a woman's perspective and to investigate the impact it has on women's careers, this phenomenology study explored the mentoring experiences of eight women in leadership positions in the sales and marketing sector of the U.S. pharmaceutical industry. The women in this study helped the researcher understand that mentoring for women is not substantially different than mentoring for men. Women value the same functions that help them develop skills that will lead to superior performance. They value the advice and feedback a mentor can give them and the introductions, interviews, and opportunities mentors create. What is different is the array of individuals they identify as mentors. Women define mentors broadly, with the common element being someone who helps them advance their career. A mentor may

take the traditional form of someone senior to them in the organization who provides an array of mentor functions, or it may be a peer, a supervisor, or a family member who provides one or two critical functions when they are most needed. All are equally valued. Mentors have played important roles throughout their careers. Mentors helped them get started, took a chance on them, and gave them their first break. Mentors continue to help them gain and refine the skills they need to be top performers.

## DEDICATION

To my husband Gordon, who has always believed in me more than I believed in myself. You were there with me at the beginning, through the middle, and at the end. Although the road was rockier than either of us ever expected, God has lifted us up, given us courage and hope and with His help, you have seen me through to this end. We have crossed this finish line together and now *soar on wings like eagles* as we begin the next journey. Thank you for helping me to take this remarkable step and for giving me the courage to continue in the face of your own challenges. And thank you for your love that has upheld me throughout this journey.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank my committee chair, Dr. Beth Birmingham, for giving me confidence early in this doctoral program and for her constant support throughout the dissertation process. My thanks go to Dr. Heewon Chang, my qualitative mentor, who introduced me to qualitative research and helped me to hear the voices behind the numbers. And to Dr. Efrain Rivera, for helping to ground the dissertation process in the real world of business.

In addition I thank the women who agreed to participate in this study, for finding time in their busy schedules to talk about the people who made a difference in their careers. I hope I have done justice to your stories and that your success will inspire and guide the women leaders who will follow you.

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# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

The underrepresentation of women in business leadership positions is widely acknowledged. Many of the obstacles that have been identified as contributing to this problem, such as gender stereotypes, are societal issues that have changed very little in decades (Powell, Butterfield, & Parent, 2002). Organizations that wish to impact the gender balance of their leadership teams have increasingly turned to mentoring as a tool to address the developmental needs of their women managers (Lewis & Fagenson, 1995). Recently, however, the effectiveness of this tool has been called into question as more women are being mentored but few are achieving the leadership levels for which they strive (Ibarra, Carter, & Silva, 2010). In addition, recent meta-analyses have challenged the definition and measurement used in past research. To better understand how the benefits of mentoring accrue to women, this qualitative study explored the experiences successful women business leaders had with mentoring. It examined their perceptions of the benefits of mentoring, their definitions of mentoring, and the impact of those experiences on their career progression.

## Background

Two constructs formed the conceptual framework for this study: mentoring and challenges to women's leadership and advancement. Many theories have been presented to explain or rationalize why women are underrepresented in the top echelons of business organizations. They range from gender bias to leadership style to insufficient experience.

Many solutions have also been proposed to help women overcome these challenges. This study looked at one strategy often cited to help women achieve the career success they seek; mentoring. This study showed how mentors help women development important skills, give them advice, and create opportunities that facilitate the use of other key strategies that will help women advance to higher levels in the organization.

**Challenges to Women's Leadership and Advancement**

Over 25 years ago Carol Hymowitz and Timothy Schellhardt (1986) coined the term *glass ceiling* in an article for the *Wall Street Journal* as a metaphor for the invisible barrier that prevented women from advancing to high-level leadership positions in organizations. The concept so captured the public's interest that the U.S. Congress established a commission to investigate the phenomenon (Eagly & Carli, 2007a). Although some progress has been made, it is clearly not the progress we had hoped to see. The latest statistics from Catalyst (2010a), a nonprofit organization working to expand opportunities for women and business, show the barrier is still firmly in place. Women represent nearly 50% of the workforce. However, in 2010, they held only 15.7% of board seats, 14.4% of executive officer positions, and 7.6% of the top earner positions, and a mere 2.6% of CEOs in *Fortune* magazine's list of the top 500 U.S. organizations were women. A few women have found a way through the glass ceiling but many more face a barrier as solid as it was when it was first identified.

The reasons given for this lack of progress are wide and varied. Some people believe women just do not want the responsibility and are choosing instead to stay at home with their families (Rhode & Kellerman, 2007). Others point to such things as gender stereotypes and bias that prevent women from being seen by others as leaders

(Eagly & Carli, 2007b; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Giscombe, 2007; Heilman, 2001; Powell et al., 2002; Rudman & Glick, 2001; Schein, 1973). Differences in style, lack of general management experience, exclusion from informal networks, and lack of role models are also frequently cited as reasons for the lack of women in top leadership positions (Catalyst, 2004, 2010b; Chugh & Sahgal, 2007). Some CEOs still believe women do not have enough time in management positions to be considered for higher leadership (Catalyst, 2003).

In this study, the participants did not identify gender as a challenge to their career progression although they acknowledge their male colleagues have an advantage in terms of access to informal networks. Many of them hold advanced degrees and all gained line management experience early in their careers. By many standards they have been very successful in their careers rising to the level of executive director or vice president. All continue to seek promotions to higher levels of leadership and none have yet to reach the ultimate level at the top of the organization.

**Mentoring**

Various strategies have been proposed to help women overcome the challenges they face to advancement. They include enhancing performance in current positions, gaining experience in the core business sector, and holding senior leaders responsible for women's advancement. One of the strategies cited most often for women is to obtain a mentor (Catalyst, 2003).

Mentoring is often defined in the literature as a more experienced senior individual in an organization providing career guidance and counseling to a less experienced junior member in the organization, identified as the protégé (Kram, 1988).

The mentor may provide introductions and entry into important social networks in an organization, offer advice on career paths, and serve as a role model for the protégé.

A mentoring relationship may develop informally when a senior leader identifies a younger individual with potential. There is a personal commitment on the part of the mentor to provide career guidance and support to the identified protégé. Such a relationship may last many years. Since women tend to be excluded from informal organizational networks and since most senior-level leaders in organizations are male, women may have fewer opportunities than men for informal mentoring to occur (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Because of these barriers, many organizations are developing formal mentoring programs often aimed specifically at high-potential women. Although formal mentoring programs may not be able to provide women with the friendships and interpersonal relationships that can aid them throughout their careers, they can help decrease the conscious and unconscious gender bias that may be holding women back. If a woman is paired with a powerful man in the organization, he will convey reflected power to her through the relationship, which will help reduce the prejudice against her and open doors that otherwise would be firmly closed (Lewis & Fagenson, 1995).

Although most articles on mentoring begin with statements extolling the benefits of mentoring to career advancement, recent research is questioning this conclusion. Two separate meta-analyses (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004; Underhill, 2006) found that although mentoring leads to objective career outcomes such as increased compensation and promotions, the effect size—that is, the difference between individuals who have been mentored and those who have not—is small. They found a stronger relationship between mentoring and more subjective career benefits such as career

satisfaction, career commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover intent. In addition, findings suggest some difference between benefits of formal and informal mentoring.

Many authors confine their definitions of mentoring to the classic hierarchical relationship between a senior and a more junior employee. Kram (1988), however, used a broader definition. She used the term *developmental relationship* and explored those relationships that had significance to the individual. She saw the many different relationships that provide developmental functions to an individual as a constellation consisting of bosses, peers, subordinates, friends outside work, and even family members. This broader view was used in this study to let the participants' experiences create the definition of mentoring.

As will be discussed in Chapter 5, the participants in this study used this same broad definition of mentoring. They found advice and help from a variety of types of individuals such as supervisors, peers and family members creating their own unique constellations which will be see in Chapter 4. Nearly all their mentoring relationships were informal and initiated by the mentor, not the protégées. The gender of their mentors was not important to the women. Instead, they preferred someone who had been successful in their own right and could impart knowledge and advice to help them advance to higher levels of leadership and responsibility.

## Purpose Statement and Research Questions

If mentoring is going to be used as a tool to accelerate the advancement of women leaders, we need to better understand the benefits as seen by women themselves and better understand how they define the experience in order to design continued research and more effective development programs.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the mentoring experiences of women business leaders who have reached a significant level in their organizations. The study sought to understand their experiences and perceptions of the role mentoring played in their career success. Participants were women who are or have been directors or executives in the sales and marketing divisions of U.S. pharmaceutical manufacturers. At the start of this study mentoring was tentatively understood to be the process of a more experienced individual giving advice to a less experienced one with the broader view Kram (1988) defined as developmental relationships. As Creswell (2009) explained, the definition of the phenomenon was broad at the beginning, recognizing that the goal of the study was to understand the shared experience of the participants and how they define it.

The following research questions were used to guide the exploration of the shared experiences of mentoring and the impact of those experiences on the career paths of executive women in the U.S. pharmaceutical industry:

- What types of mentoring experiences did the participants have, both positive and negative?
- How did their mentoring experiences impact their career paths and career decisions?

## Research Method

A phenomenological approach to qualitative inquiry was used in this study. Phenomenology seeks to explore a particular phenomenon, in this case mentoring, by delving into the shared or common experiences of a small group of individuals (Creswell, 2007). This study explored the experiences of successful women in order to understand

how mentoring may have contributed to their career advancement. It also sought to understand the types of individuals these women identified as mentors, what they believed they learned from their mentors, and it investigated any differences between types of mentors as well as different types of mentoring. Moustakas (1994) stated that phenomenology looks at a specific topic in an unencumbered way, seeking findings that can lead to further research and reflection. This method was used to understand mentoring in a fresh way, capturing the benefits as perceived by those who have experienced the phenomenon, the protégées.

Wolcott (2009) reminded us that the subjects of our studies are humans, not objects. As such, the researcher approached this project as conducting research *among* women, not *on* them. In order to verify the data, drafts of the individual descriptions were shared with the participants as they emerged from the analysis. This ensured that their stories were accurately represented. Conklin (2007) said this step provides some level of validity and working with the participants helps to determine the goodness of fit of the description.

Van Manen (1990) explained that phenomenology starts with someone, the researcher, being interested in a phenomenon, or an aspect of human life. The process seeks to understand that phenomenon not as someone else has written about it but rather by going back to the original lived experience. Much has already been written about mentoring, and researchers have tried to reduce it to basic constructs and measure the outcomes of career development and psychosocial support. However, current research is challenged by the small effect size between those mentored and those not mentored. This study sought to understand the process of mentoring and its outcomes—that is, the lived

experience of being mentored and its impact on the career progression of executive women. Rather than establishing cause and effect, this method was designed to discover the meaning of the experience for the participants: how did they understand the impact mentoring had on their career success? A more in-depth discussion of phenomenology and the design of this study will be presented in Chapter 3.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

An unstructured approach was used for in-depth interviews employing a few prepared and open-ended questions, in an informal manner as described by Patton (2002). This offered the most flexibility to explore the career paths the women have followed and their mentoring experiences. Each participant was interviewed at least twice in order to gain the necessary depth of information. Additional interviews continued until data saturation was achieved.

There is no single prescribed approach to data analysis for phenomenological research. Rather, it is characterized by flexibility in order to focus on the participants. Therefore, two different approaches to phenomenological data analysis were used to guide this phase of the study. Moustakas (1994) described an approach for transcendental phenomenology, and Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) described an approach to interpretive phenomenological analysis.

The analysis used an inductive approach, looking for patterns and themes in the narratives. The themes were then compared to existing frames and theories (Patton, 2002). Although theory was not used in the manner of a quantitative study, it was used as an interpretive framework as described by Lopez and Willis (2004). The identified themes were compared to the mentoring experience as discussed in the literature for

additional insights. An important step was to share the findings with the participants for validation. The interaction of researcher and participants is a key element of phenomenology. Heidegger (1962, as cited in Wojnar & Swanson, 2007) saw the process as a "circle of understanding" (p. 175).

**Participant Characteristics and Selection Process**

Purposeful sampling and snowball sampling were used to identify eight participants who met the criteria for the study. Women were initially selected from the membership of the Healthcare Business Women's Association (HBA). Initial participants were then asked to recommend others who met the criteria. The demographics of the study participants are presented in Appendix A. Criteria for selection were:

- Must be female.
- Must have experience as a marketing or sales director or in a higher-level position with a U.S. pharmaceutical manufacturer. This level is defined as leading a marketing team of individuals responsible for the promotional campaign of an existing brand or managing a team of sale managers.
- Must be currently or previously employed in the U.S. pharmaceutical industry.
- Must be able to identify at least one individual who has had an impact on her development and career.
- Must commit to and be available for at least two face-to-face interviews of one hour or more and follow-up interviews as necessary during the period October 2011 to June 2012.

## Rationale and Significance of the Study

Research has shown that there is a link between gender diversity in top leadership teams and financial performance (Giscombe, 2007). Many organizations are putting energy and capital into development programs targeting high-potential women leaders for the future. Mentoring is a critical component of these programs (Lewis & Fagenson, 1995). Eighty-three percent of women now report they have had a mentor at some time—higher than what men report (Ibarra et al., 2010). Why, then, do fewer women receive promotions than men? Is mentoring not as effective as the literature has led us to believe? In addition, recent meta-analyses have raised questions about the link between mentoring and career benefits such as promotion (Underhill, 2006). Inconsistencies have been identified in how researchers are defining mentoring, which makes aggregating the data for meta-analysis difficult (Dougherty & Dreher, 2007). Kram's early work in 1985 defined the construct of mentoring and identified benefits associated with it (Ragins & Kram, 2007). Researchers recognize that changes have occurred since then that have impacted organizations, work relationships, and the demographics of the workforce. They call for a much clearer understanding of the benefits of mentoring, which are often stated as a well-established fact in much of the literature. This study more clearly defines mentoring from a woman's point of view and adds to the literature by better understanding how protégées see the benefits leading to their career success.

The traditional route to the top leadership position in a U.S. pharmaceutical organization begins with a position in sales which then leads to the marketing field, increasing levels of responsibility and leadership in sales and marketing, and eventually to president or CEO (DeMan, 2012). The leadership ranks of most commercial departments in U.S. pharmaceutical organizations are populated by white men. Research

tells us this is why many women have difficulty finding mentors: there are not many women at upper levels in business organizations who can mentor other women (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). A few studies have tried to compare same-gender and cross-gender mentoring as well as formal versus informal mentoring. In light of the current disappointing research by Catalyst (Carter & Silva, 2010b) that identified a gap between the objectives of mentoring and career advancement outcomes for women but not men, it is important to hear from successful women themselves how mentoring contributed to their career advancement. The findings from this study inform the current understanding of mentoring relationships and can be used to guide organizations in developing better programs to prepare women for higher levels of leadership. The study also contributes to leadership theory by advancing the definition of the construct of mentoring for women.

## Organization of This Dissertation

A review of current literature was conducted to understand the core constructs central to this study: challenges women face in career advancement and mentoring. Chapter 2 presents an overview of relevant research that has been done in these two areas. Although much of this work was done prior to data collection, the literature review was augmented as the interviews revealed new areas of mentoring to explore, such as peer mentors and family members as mentors.

Chapter 3 presents a more detail account of the design of this study with a review of the phenomenological method. It also contains an overview of the researcher's own experiences with mentoring.

The first products of data analysis in a phenomenological study are the individual descriptions of the phenomenon. These are presented in Chapter 4 along with visual

schematics, pictures of the protégées mentoring constellations, which will help the reader visualize the range of types of mentors discussed by each participant. As a summary to this chapter, the stories are combined to find the commonality or essence of mentoring for the participants in the study.

Two separate chapters present the discussion and analysis of the data. First, in Chapter 5, the definition and types of mentors are explored. Themes were identified across the individual stories and then compared to current theory as reported in the literature. The various functions provided by the mentors are discussed and analyzed in Chapter 6, also using current literature as a theoretical framework. A picture is also presented, along with a visual representation, of how in this study mentoring led to the career success of the participants.

A discussion of the relevance of organization context and gender is presented in Chapter 7 along with overall conclusions drawn from the research and recommendations for future study. The author also provides recommendations for organizations seeking to implement mentoring programs for future women leaders and for women themselves. Chapter 7 closes with some final reflections from the author on the research process and the topic of mentoring.

# CHAPTER 2

## LITERATURE REVIEW

For the last 10 to 15 years, the conversation on the scarcity of women leading organizations has been one of acknowledgment and reassurance. Yes, it is true that progress has been made. However, although women represent nearly 50% of the workforce, they still account for only 14.4% of executive officer positions, 7.6% of the top earner positions, and a mere 2.6% of CEO posts in the *Fortune* 500 (Catalyst, 2010a). Women are earning more advanced professional degrees. Organizations are working to implement programs that will fix the underrepresentation, and more women than ever are ready to enter the top ranks in organizations (Carter & Silva, 2010b). Unfortunately, the barriers women face have changed very little since the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission released its report in the 1990s: differences in style, differences in effectiveness, and gender stereotypes and bias (Northouse, 2007). Strategies to overcoming these barriers have not changed much either and there is growing doubt about their effectiveness (Catalyst, 2004; Lewis & Fagenson, 1995).

This literature review examines the two major constructs that are central to this study: challenges to women in leadership and mentoring. Following are explorations of key themes that surround this research topic, including barriers to women in leadership, gender stereotypes and bias, leadership style, organizational issues, work structure and opting out, and exclusion from informal networks. Reviewing mentoring, the following themes are explored: definition, mentoring factors, mentoring process, outcomes, same-

gender versus cross-gender mentoring, informal versus formal mentoring, the negative side of mentoring, and gender issues in mentoring.

## Challenges to Women's Leadership and Advancement

Catalyst, a nonprofit organization, seeks to understand issues of importance to women in the workplace. Examining the issues that keep women from advancing to top positions in business organizations is a central and ongoing Catalyst project. In 2004, Catalyst conducted a study of 705 senior-level women and 243 senior-level men in *Fortune* 1,000 companies (Catalyst, 2004). The men and women respondents to that survey had many things in common. They had similar goals and aspirations and used similar strategies to get ahead, but they faced very different barriers to their careers. Nearly half of the women cited gender-based stereotypes and exclusion from informal networks as barriers to advancement. In addition, 43% cited a lack of role models, 25% said they had challenges finding a mentor, and 24% reported an inhospitable corporate culture as problems they faced. Thirty percent said a behavioral style that was different from the organization norm was a barrier for them.

A search of the literature revealed many of these same themes. By far, gender-based stereotypes and the associated bias have been written about most often (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Powell et al., 2002). These are issues that continue to plague women, organizations, and society, with little change in views over the last few decades. Difference in style is another recurring theme in research studies and articles. Do women lead differently than men, and is that good or bad? The literature is mixed on this topic (Eagly & Carli, 2007b; Pittinsky, Bacon, & Welle, 2007; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007; Rosener, 1990; Vecchio, 2002). Issues of organizational

culture are often written about from a feminist perspective, questioning the construction of work around the male worker model (Acker, 2009; Rutherford, 2001). In some cases, the challenge is so great that women opt out of leadership positions or the workforce altogether (Hewlett & Luce, 2005; Shapiro, Ingols, & Blake-Beard, 2008). Finally, this literature review examines the issue of informal networks that play a role not only in finding a mentor but also in learning organizational politics (Perrewe & Nelson, 2004; Sabattini, 2008).

**The Pharmaceutical Industry**

Very little has been written about women leaders in the pharmaceutical industry. Most of the information that is available is from an industry organization for women, the Healthcare Business Women's Association. In a study to benchmark recruiting, advancement, and retention of women in the top levels of pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, Pettersson, Talley, Pritchard, and Karbe (2007) found women represented 17% of senior management positions and 34% of middle management positions. Although senior executives believe they are working to support women's advancement in their organizations, these numbers have not changed in 5 years.

In an earlier study (Youdovin, Eldridge, Maher, & Madell, 1999), pharmaceutical women identified many of the same barriers to advancement that scholarly researchers have identified: lack of line management experience, lack of mentoring, exclusion from informal networks, and inadequate employee development. Seventy-seven percent of the women surveyed believed women did not have equality with the men in their organizations. Over half the men surveyed believed the women had achieved equality, a view held most often by male executives in the largest companies. Equality was defined

by the women as equal pay, similar opportunities for exposure to senior management, and equal representation in top leadership positions. Three out of four women believed their companies undervalued women, and more than a third believed there were better opportunities for women in companies other than their own.

**Gender Stereotypes and Bias**

In nearly every article or research study on women and leadership, gender bias has been identified as a major barrier to women. Research done in the 1970s demonstrated that women as well as men believed the characteristics necessary to be a successful manager were those traits more often associated with men (Schein, 1973, 2001). These characteristics, termed *agentic,* include assertiveness, competitiveness, decisiveness, forcefulness, and independence. Women are more often associated with social and service-oriented traits, termed *communal,* such as being kind, helpful, nurturing, sympathetic, and gentle (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Heilman, 2001). Schein coined the phrase *think manager–think male* to characterize her findings, which drew an association between being a manager and being male. The bias that arises from this association can result in prejudice against women when selecting individuals for promotion to higher levels of leadership. It might be expected that these views would change as more women entered the workforce. Twenty years later, in a repeat of her earlier work, Schein (2001) found that female managers saw women as well as men as possessing the necessary characteristics for managerial success. Men's views had not changed. "[The men] continue to operate with blinders on when it comes to the influence of gender stereotyping on decision making" (p. 684).

By the late 1990s close to 50% of managers in the United States were women. This was a significant increase from the 35% in the mid-1980s and the 21% reported in the mid-1970s. It would be expected that the think manager–think male mindset would fade and a more androgynous model of leadership would emerge. However, studies continue to show the same results as those from gender stereotype research conducted in the 1970s. In a study of undergraduate and graduate MBA students, Powell et al. (2002) found that both male and female students—regardless of age, education, or work experience—described a good manager as someone possessing agentic masculine traits.

More than just a U.S. phenomenon, think manager-–think male is a global issue that transcends cultural differences, as confirmed by studies in Germany, the United Kingdom, China, and Japan (Schein, 2001). For more than thirty years, men and some women have held the belief that men possess more of the characteristics needed to be a successful manager than women do. The global nature of this stereotype is a concern given the expanding importance of global leadership. In light of the strength and inflexibility of this stereotype, Schein has called for increased research into how and why the sex-typing of business leaders continues, as well as effective ways to change these kinds of attitudes.

The gender stereotype that Schein (2001) described leads to a bias against women that prevents them from advancing in organizations. Expectations of how women should behave result in lower performance appraisals and denial of their contributions to organizational success (Heilman, 2001). Two different types of bias result from gender stereotypes at work. The first, *descriptive bias*, results from preconceptions of how women should behave. Conflicts between the communal characteristics that describe

what women are like and the agentic traits required for upper-level jobs lead to the "expectations that women will be unable to perform such jobs effectively" (Heilman, 2001, p. 670). Decision makers in the organization form preconceptions about women's lack of competence, devalue their work, or attribute women's success to something other than their skills and abilities, such as luck, special circumstances, or others in the organization.

Gender stereotypes also set up prescriptive expectations for suitable behavior in men and women. These expectations include positive and negative behaviors. The negative expectations for one sex are the positively expected behavior for the opposite. Therefore, what is prescriptive for a woman contains positive expectations for communal attributes as well as negative expectations for agentic behavior. Management and executive-level jobs are thought to require the type of tough-minded, aggressive behavior that is associated with male stereotypes and in opposition to the expected behavior of women. Therefore, women who succeed at male-gendered roles, such as leadership, violate expectations of women's behavior and receive negative social sanctions such as "personal derogation and dislike" (Heilman, 2001, p. 671), which can lead to negative judgments and decisions that will hinder their continued advancement.

The conflict between a male-gendered view of the manager or executive role and the prescriptive female behavior results in a perceived lack of fit between the woman and the job. Women are therefore expected to fail. This expectation not only impacts selection for the role but also negatively influences perception and judgment of how the woman does her job if she is selected. If a woman is deemed successful in the manager or executive role, the conflict between her actual behavior and what is expected can lead

to a less favorable evaluation, which in turn impacts the social acceptance necessary for effectiveness at higher levels in organizations. Negative sanctions are often brought to bear on women who display agentic characteristics. Their competence is found unattractive. Terms used to describe them carry personal connotations (Heilman, 2001).

Eagly and Karau (2002) developed their theory of role congruity to further explain how gender stereotypes result in prejudice and bias against women leaders. When an individual holds a stereotype about a social group, such as women, the potential for prejudice exists if that stereotype is in conflict with the requirements for success in a particular role. Gender roles arise from socially shared expectations for behavior and characteristics that apply to men and women. Studies have repeatedly shown that individuals identify manager or leadership roles with agentic attributes. Therefore, prejudice toward women as leaders arises from the conflict between the perceptions about the characteristics of women and the requirements for being an organizational leader.

Eagly and Karau (2002) used the terms *descriptive* and *injunctive* to describe the types of prejudice female leaders face. The first type of prejudice arises from the descriptive aspects: women are perceived as having less leadership ability than men. The second comes from the injunctive aspects: women receive less favorable evaluations when exhibiting the characteristics of a leader because that behavior violates the female gender role. The two types of prejudice lead to "less favorable attitudes toward female than male leaders, greater difficulty for women in attaining leadership roles, and greater difficulty for women in being recognized as effective in these roles" (p. 589).

The term *double bind* is used to describe this peculiar bias women face (Eagly & Carli, 2007a). If women exhibit traditional female characteristics, they are considered

not tough enough. If they display assertive male characteristics, they are criticized for being cold, hard, and controlling. In either case, women are rejected for not having the right stuff to be a leader. When women assert themselves in meetings, they are called control freaks whereas men who act the same way are labeled passionate. The woman is either too feminine or not feminine enough, too soft to make the tough call or too aggressive (Rhode & Kellerman, 2007). It seems like a no-win situation.

Haveman and Beresford (2012) developed a model describing the impact of cultural expectations and gender stereotypes on the vertical gender gap in management. Using human capital theory, they examined three areas of proposed differences between men and women that may explain the disparity in the number of men and women in leadership roles: educational attainment, job preferences, and accumulated work experience.

Reviewing the trends of degrees awarded over the last 40 years, Haveman and Beresford (2012) showed that women have not only made up the difference in numbers of higher degrees awarded but have actually surpassed men in this regard. However, examining the awarding of MBAs more closely reveals that women are less likely to focus on finance and on the science and technology fields from which senior leaders are chosen to head top corporations. In addition, women represent a smaller proportion of students graduating from the top U.S. business schools. This also puts them at a disadvantage relative to their male colleagues for landing prestigious jobs. In exploring the second area, job preferences, Haveman and Beresford found little difference between the genders in the type of job characteristics they prefer. Regarding work experience, they found that even though equal numbers of men and women now enter the workforce,

"women tend to accumulate less of the work experience that is needed to get into management than men do" (p. 120). This is primarily due to women interrupting their careers to raise children.

Although some evidence is found to support gender differences due to human capital theory, Haveman and Beresford (2012) contended these differences are compounded by cultural expectations and gender stereotypes that influence choices men and women make. Women continue to bear most of the responsibility for child rearing and housekeeping, and they struggle with stereotypes that hold they are not good at math and science. There is little evidence for this last point. Nonetheless, this widely embraced notion still influences students' beliefs about performance and participation in these key fields. The societal gender stereotype think manager–think male continues to influence not only organizations' choice of leaders but also whether women themselves aspire to leadership positions.

**Leadership Style**

In light of the challenges posed by gender stereotypes and bias, it comes as no surprise that many women struggle to find a leadership style that will balance their natural tendencies with the expectations people have of leaders. In a Catalyst (2003) study of women corporate leaders, women cited behavior style as a barrier to their advancement 16% of the time. In the same study, CEOs cited difference in behavior as a barrier for women 10% of the time. But in other studies, over 80% of the women surveyed claimed they cultivated a leadership style with which their male colleagues would be comfortable (Catalyst, 2004; Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998). It would appear that women themselves believe they lead differently than men. Research on this

issue is mixed. Differences found in laboratory situations tend to overstate what is found in the field (Pittinsky, Bacon, & Welle, 2007).

Female leadership is generally characterized as more participatory than male leadership. Women are more likely to exhibit interpersonal skills by being empathetic, supportive, and collaborative (Rhode & Kellerman, 2007). Results from a survey sponsored by the International Women's Forum revealed a style of leadership characterized by encouragement, participation, and the sharing of information and personal power (Rosener, 1990). The participants in the survey emphasized wanting their employees to feel valued. They believed this style of leadership came naturally to them; it did not need cultivation. Heim and Golant (2005) described another basic difference between men and women: how they view the world. Men look at the world hierarchically and focus on who is above and below them on the corporate ladder. Women see the world horizontally, with all things and people being equal. This latter view facilitates women's participative, power-sharing approach to leadership. A collaborative leadership style may also enable women to get results without resorting to an autocratic style of leadership, which is often ineffective for them (Eagly & Carli, 2007b).

It can be said that men created the modern organization and the leadership role. They have certainly held positions of leadership longer than women and therefore defined the style most people associate with the leader's role (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). The tendency, then, is to focus on what is different about women leaders; they attract attention due to their scarcity (Eagly & Carli, 2007a). Style theories of leadership concentrate on the behavior and actions of the leader. Researchers generally look at two

kinds of behavior: task and interpersonal (Northouse, 2007). Since women are seen as having communal attributes, it would be expected they would also exhibit greater interpersonal behaviors in their leadership style. In a meta-analysis of studies comparing men and women on task and interpersonal skills, Eagly and Johnson (1990) found no difference in task behavior. They found a very small difference in interpersonal style, which was more pronounced in laboratory and assessment studies. Men were also found to have a more autocratic style, whereas women were more participative. Eagly and Johannsen-Schmidt (2001) contended this use of participation may enable women to overcome the resistance they encounter as leaders. One criticism of style theories addressed by Northouse (2007) is the inability of researchers to associate style with performance. These theories merely describe how a leader behaves in a specific context; they do not assess whether a particular style is effective.

Burns (1978) led the evolution of style theory toward a focus on aspects of effective leadership that he termed *transformational* and *transactional*. Bass and Riggio (2006) furthered the development of this theory into *full-range leadership theory* that included laissez-faire leadership at the opposite end of the continuum from transformational leadership. Using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, Eagly and Johannsen-Schmidt (2001) investigated the correlation between gender and the nine subscales of full-range leadership theory. They found small but significant gender differences. Women exceeded men on three measures of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and individual consideration. These differences have the potential to transfer into greater organizational performance since a relationship has been found between transformational leadership and perceived leader

effectiveness (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003). Unfortunately, this potential advantage is overridden by the continued reluctance to place women in higher leadership positions. Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt and van Engen contended it may be due to men's reluctance to embrace this new vision of leadership, which is contrary to their autocratic style. It may also be due to the embedded tendency to evaluate women's effectiveness less positively due to gender stereotypes.

Eagly et al. (2003) stated that a transformational style of leadership may allow women to overcome the problem of role incongruity. Women can avoid the association with male agentic traits by embracing contingent reward behavior along with the elements of transformational leadership, which tends to be more congruent with the communal behaviors of caring and support. In their meta-analysis of 45 studies of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership, Eagly et al. found again that women leaders scored higher than men on idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation, as well as on individualized consideration and contingent reward. Male leaders scored higher on active and passive management by exception and laissez-faire leadership. It is a puzzle why a group that demonstrates higher scores on what is accepted as a more effective style of leadership would continue to be excluded from the ranks of organizational leadership. Eagly et al. suggested that women are more often newly appointed leaders and as such may exhibit more contemporary styles of leadership, such as transformational leadership, than their male colleagues. This newer style of leadership may be in conflict with the hierarchical ideal of leadership that men in the organization embrace, thus threatening established management practices. Clearly, the meta-analysis showed male managers have not altogether embraced the spirit of

transformational leadership. The skepticism of established leadership may be reflected in their reluctance to place women who display a different style of leadership in positions of greater responsibility.

Not every researcher is enamored of gender difference in leadership theory. Although some find small but meaningful differences between genders in leadership style, others contend that there are no differences and that therefore neither sex can claim the "best leader" prize. Vecchio (2002) argued that the female gender advantage claimed by virtue of higher transformational leadership scores is overstated. He admitted that men and women exhibit different social behaviors; however, he asserted that these differences are less pronounced in the workplace. Vecchio reminded us that there is overlap in the range of styles exhibited by men and women. After reviewing a variety of studies of gender differences in leader behavior, Vecchio concluded the differences are negligible. He stated that we should be looking for leaders who have the ability to exhibit a range of behaviors from autocratic to democratic depending on the context and need.

Billing and Alesson (2000) agreed with Vecchio and voiced concern that promoting an ideal of feminine leadership could be "misleading and risky in terms of gender equality and social development" (p. 144). They called for restraint in the use of masculine and feminine concepts of leadership and advocated for more diversity of orientation in leadership studies. Embracing a feminine leadership style runs the risk of continuing the bias against women. Furthermore, it is unreasonable to believe that those characteristics that once disqualified women from leadership now are the ones that will lead to success. Over a decade ago, women argued equality with men. Now, they argue

that their difference makes them superior. Instead, women should be seeking better ways to understand leadership in general.

Carli and Eagly (2007) held that although the differences may be subtle, women and men do lead differently. They agreed that the demands of the job would result in men and women exhibiting similar behavior in the workplace, but they argued that the unique challenges women face due to gender stereotypes cause them to choose different leadership styles. Finding themselves torn between the agentic behaviors of leadership for which they are criticized and the communal female behaviors that are deemed too soft, women seek a middle ground. Transformational leadership helps them find it.

Yoder (2001) also expressed a belief that the context in which leadership is enacted can lead to a gendered view of the construct. She saw a continuum with male-dominated, task-focused, hierarchical power at one end and an environment that values influence and empowerment at the other. Power is the differentiating element on this continuum. Women attempting to lead in the male-dominated context are disadvantaged, since power and social status are linked to gender. She suggested that women focus on increasing their competency on the tasks involved in order to increase their influence as leaders. Women operating in a context that is open to transformational leadership are freed from the need to perform at a level higher than their male colleagues because the emphasis is on empowering others.

Fine (2009) found that women see leadership through a moral and ethical lens, which may be different from the way men perceive leadership. In a narrative study of 15 women, she observed that women approach leadership as a way to make a positive impact on the world and that they emphasize teamwork and communication. The focus

on values such as participation, communication, and nurturing is aligned with an ethic of caring, which Gilligan (2003) conceptualized. Gilligan found that men and women often have different perspectives relative to moral decisions. Women tend to consider interpersonal aspects in decision making rather than relying only on notions of fairness and justice. An ethic of justice is centered on fairness—impartially applying rules and standards in decision making. An ethic of care considers the feelings of others and the effect decisions may have on relationships among individuals (Simola, 2003). An ethic of care incorporates values such as empathy, sensitivity, trust, and responsiveness, characteristics that are similar to the communal traits associated with women. The narratives in Fine's study emphasized leadership characterized by honesty and trust. Failures of leadership occurred when the study's participants strayed from their ethical code of conduct.

Held (2008) explained that the ethic of care has grown out of a feminist approach to valuing the labor women expend in caring for others, such as children, other family members, and the ill. This labor is often undervalued or devalued in a society or organization that embraces individualism and the application of impartial justice. Held was careful to state that the ethic of care does not replace justice; it simply incorporates more caring and consideration of the value of individuals.

The leadership role includes responsibility for followers. Ciulla (2009) reminded us that leaders must be both ethical and effective and that they have a particular duty to care for followers during times of crisis. Whether caring comes from true emotions or from a learned sense of duty is not important; the leader has the responsibility to convey confidence, which can often be a source of comfort to followers. Although an ethic of

care may be demonstrated more often by women, an individual's cultural background is a more accurate indicator of a care or justice orientation in business interactions (Simola, 2003).

**Organizational Issues**

Organizations are formed when the production of goods or services requires the coordination of effort from a group of individuals. Collectively, the individuals can produce more value than each can alone (Jones, 2010). Most organizations are designed by men, and most organizational leaders are men. This results in a culture as well as processes and policies that flow from the preferences and precedents of the men who created the organization. It also produces a culture that tends to be foreign to most women (Mann, 1995).

Bolman and Deal (2003) explained that as an organization grows and develops, patterns of behavior emerge that help the organization solve problems, adapt to a changing environment, and ultimately achieve its goals and objectives. Taken as a whole, these ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving form the organization's culture. When women enter this culture shaped and created by male leaders, they come into conflict with barriers that undermine their ability to advance in the organization. Indeed, Heim and Golant (2005) contended the world of business is so different that women should view it much as they would view a foreign land with an unknown language and strange customs.

**Work Structure.** Acker (2009) used the term *unencumbered worker* to describe the model of an employee totally dedicated to work and without other responsibilities such as family and children. This traditional view of the male worker who will spend

more than eight hours at work is the expectation that most organizations have of their employees. The higher an individual climbs in an organization the longer her hours may become. Rather than making work more efficient, technology has increased the expectation of round-the-clock communication. A willingness to work long hours, delay vacations, and put the organization ahead of anything else is often a necessity in order to rise to a higher organizational level. Part-time or flex-time positions, which many organizations use as an attempt to address women's concerns about work-family balance, can actually increase gender inequalities. Women who take advantage of such positions may be thought of as not being serious about their work or committed to the organization.

The totally dedicated worker model came into being when most women were full-time homemakers. Unfortunately, in most dual-income homes today, women still assume the majority of responsibilities for childcare and tending aging family members. There are ways to deal with the long work hours. Some couples share the childcare responsibility, and others hire help. In 2003, *Fortune* found that one-third of the individuals on its list of the 50 most powerful women in business had a new strategy: stay-at-home husbands (Sellers, 2003). Regrettably, decision makers often simply assume that women's family responsibilities will prevent them from taking on the heavy time demands of higher-level leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2007a).

Rutherford (2001) found that a long-hours culture was a barrier to women's progression in two UK organizations. Most individuals expect to work an eight hour day, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Managers, however, are expected to work as long and hard as required to get their jobs done. In a study of an airline, Rutherford found a "philosophy that long hours demonstrated hard work, commitment and loyalty to a company and

workplace culture" (p. 264). Managers needed to be visible and therefore spent the day in meetings, which gave them valuable *face time*. But then, they needed to stay late in order to get other work done. The expectation was for managers to work a 12-hour day. Rutherford's study also included a merchant bank with the same type of culture, where working late was considered a sign of commitment to the organization. Working these long hours is particularly difficult for women with children. Although some of the individuals in Rutherford's study found a way to combine work and family, results showed that at senior levels, fewer women than men had children. Due to the unequal burden the long-hours culture places on women, Rutherford saw it as a way to exclude women from higher levels in the organizations.

**Opting Out.** Many women cite the long hours and the hostile work environment of the unencumbered worker model as reasons to leave the path to higher responsibility or to never pursue leadership positions. These women encounter a different type of double bind. Women who choose a nontraditional career path are "seen as deficient, invalid and wrong" (Shapiro, Ingols, & Blake-Beard, 2008, p. 310). Terms such as *opting out*, *off-ramping,* and *mommy track* are used prejudicially against women who are deemed to lack the desire, ambition, or drive to reach the top and do the job. Women who choose to focus on their careers are rebuked for neglecting their families. Those who choose to focus on their families are disparaged for wasting their educations or are criticized for not being sufficiently ambitious or committed. This is a classic example of a gender dichotomy wherein the male model of *career first* is viewed as the norm and a woman's choice to balance her life is labeled deviant. Lack of commitment is now the accusation hurled at women who struggle to meet the demands of a workforce built on

the model of the unencumbered worker. Forty-four percent of women who leave the workforce do so for family reasons (Hewlett & Luce, 2005).

**Exclusion from Informal Networks**

Understanding the rules in an organization is vital for individuals seeking to advance. Some information is quite explicit, such as that contained in employee handbooks and organizational policies. Other information is not easily obtained. The unwritten rules are often the most difficult to decipher and understand. A primary source of this type of information is the informal network. Unfortunately, Catalyst research has shown that exclusion from informal networks is a major barrier to many women (Sabattini, 2008). Almost one-half of women in the Catalyst study cited this exclusion as a barrier for them—the same fraction who cited gender-biased stereotypes. They described men getting together to play basketball or poker or going to a cigar bar after a meeting, activities in which women are not inclined to participate. Others cited the example of the men making decisions while in the bathroom, obviously another place where women would be excluded (Catalyst, 2004).

Networks are important sources for career opportunities. Personal contacts made in networks account for almost half of all management jobs (Mann, 1995). Through these "good old boy networks," individuals bond, gain valuable career advice, build trust, and receive support and sponsorship for greater responsibility. But women are excluded because they are different. Men feel more comfortable with others like themselves; they connect around talk of sports and shared experiences that exclude women. Experiences may be shared over drinks after work, which may be difficult to do for women with family responsibilities (Perrewe & Nelson, 2004).

Informal networks are a key source of political understanding in an organization. Through these informal groups, individuals find mentors, learn what is really going on in the organization, and form valuable alliances. Ibarra (1993) identified two types of informal networks: expressive networks, which provide social support and friendship, and instrumental networks, which provide work and developmental resources. Informal networks tend to be composed of socially similar individuals. Due to the smaller numbers of women in business organizations, particularly at influential levels, opportunities for participating in effective informal networks are limited for women. Since women tend to hold positions of less power in the workplace, their informal networks will also be less effective in helping them navigate to higher levels in their organizations. Furthermore, even if women are able to penetrate informal networks in the organization, the ties they forge will be weaker and less effective in providing continuing career and development support because of the cross-gender nature of such relationships.

## Mentoring

The second construct that is of importance to this study is mentoring which is one of the top five strategies women utilize to overcome obstacles to career success. These top strategies have not changed in almost a decade (Catalyst, 2004; Ragins et al., 1998). Consistently exceeding performance expectations is still the number one strategy women use to advance their careers. Seeking high-visibility assignments, developing a style with which men are comfortable, and networking are also high on the list. Over half of the women surveyed listed having an influential mentor as an important strategy. In a study of women executives of *Fortune* 1,000 companies, Ragins et al. (1998) found that over

90% reported having a mentor at some time during their careers. Over 80% said their mentors were fairly important to critical in terms of their advancement. Results from a Catalyst study (Carter & Silva, 2010a) of 4,000 MBAs from Asia, Canada, Europe, and the United States showed mentoring had an impact on career advancement throughout an individual's career. Having a highly placed mentor in an organization resulted in more promotions and higher compensation.

Mentors are valuable for anyone attempting to advance to a higher level in an organization, but they are particularly valuable for women. High-placed, influential mentors can open doors to inner circles for women. They can provide key insights into organizational decision making and inside information. Their advice can help a woman navigate the treacherous waters of a challenging political culture and provide a buffer against those who may attempt to derail her. Male mentors can convey acceptance and power to a woman, and female mentors can help by conveying understanding and improving the woman's self-esteem, something that may have been eroded during early career battles (Ragins et al., 1998).

**Definition of Mentoring**

In her seminal work on mentoring Kram (1988) defined mentoring as a relationship between a younger, inexperienced individual and an older, more experienced person who supports and guides the younger worker. The purpose of mentoring is to help develop the protégée and advance her career (Ragins & Kram, 2007). Although many have adopted this definition, it is important when reviewing mentoring studies to pay attention to how individual authors and researchers characterize mentoring. As Kram discovered, the term is used in many different ways. For her research, she used the

phrase *developmental relationships* and asked participants about significant relationships with more senior managers who took an interest in them and their careers. Recently, there have been some questions raised regarding the definition of mentoring used by researchers and the directions given to participants in mentoring studies. Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, and Lima (2004) found some researchers asked participants to think about their most recent mentors, some asked them about their most influential mentors, and others asked about their total mentoring experiences. Dougherty and Dreher (2007) discussed an unpublished manuscript by Dougherty, Turban, and Haggard that explored definitions of mentoring. Although some researchers gave a detailed definition, others simply asked participants if they had mentors. In the majority of the studies that provided a definition of mentoring, that definition implied a single mentor. Some researchers indicated the mentor was an individual who had "more" experience than the participant. Others were more specific in identifying the mentor as someone at a higher level in the organization, using words such as "influential, higher-ranking, senior and position of power" (Dougherty and Dreher, 2007, p. 75). A few studies included peers as possible mentors. Some included supervisors as mentors, but others specifically excluded them.

Dougherty and Dreher (2007) agreed that it would be difficult at this early point in the study of mentoring to find one uniform definition that could be agreed upon by everyone. They recommended gathering data on a variety of developmental relationships, as Kram (1988) described in her original research. Kram used the term *constellation* to describe the variety of people who contribute to an individual's development, including peers, subordinates, bosses, family members, and people outside work. Although commonality of definition is important for meta-analysis, McKeen and

Bujaki (2007) cautioned that our current definition may not fit or reflect women's experiences and needs. That definition takes a masculine hierarchical approach rather than a feminine reciprocal relationship approach.

Kram's (1988) definition may also not fit in some business contexts. Gibson (2004) discussed the challenge in a business context of separating the supervisor role from the mentor role. Whether a relationship is considered a mentoring one depends on the perspective of the individuals involved. A subordinate may view her supervisor as a mentor, but the supervisor may not perceive the relationship in the same way. Kram noted that mentoring in this context can range from simply providing advice to an intense developmental relationship. Many business organizations look to mentoring to help women and minorities gain access to the informal networks that can help them navigate an often puzzling environment. Rather than adhere to a strict hierarchical model of primary mentoring, business organizations are expanding the view of mentoring to include peer mentoring and group mentoring, and they are using technology to increase access to mentoring. In this way, business organizations have customized mentoring to the needs of their employees and the work environment. The expectation is that mentoring may look very different from one organization to another and possibly from one individual to another.

**Mentoring Functions**

Another way to define mentoring is by the functions that mentors provide to their protégés. Kram (1988) identified two different types of functions: career and psychosocial. Career functions help prepare a protégé for advancement in the organization and include sponsoring an individual for advancement, increasing the

individual's visibility to important decision makers, coaching, providing protection, and securing challenging assignments. Psychosocial functions, the second type, are focused more on the individual's personal growth and include offering acceptance and confirmation, providing counseling, establishing a friendship, and role modeling (Ragins & Kram, 2007). The career development aspects of mentoring flow from the mentor's power and position in the organization. The interpersonal or psychosocial aspects of mentoring include helping to build the protégé's self-confidence as well as professional and personal development. These aspects of mentoring depend on the interpersonal relationship between the mentor and the protégé (Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

Noe's (1988a) factor analysis confirmed Kram's model. The first factor Noe identified represented the psychosocial functions, and the second one apparently represented career functions. Only the items measuring friendship did not load on one of the two factors. Together, these two factors explained 82% of the variance in mentoring, and there was strong internal consistency for both factors. Noe's scale has been used in a number of quantitative studies (Allen et al., 2004).

An additional mentoring function identified by Blass, Brouer, Perrewe, and Ferris (2007) is political skill development. Bolman and Deal (2003) described organizations as "living, screaming political arenas that host a complex web of individual and group interests" (p. 186). Political skills become more critical at higher levels in an organization and include networking, interpersonal influence, social awareness, and sincerity. However, women are reluctant to engage in politics due to their lack of confidence, lack of skill, and failure to understand the importance of the political process. Mentoring offers women the best opportunity for overcoming these deficits (Perrewe &

Nelson, 2004). Blass, Brouer, Perrewe, and Ferris (2007) contended that one primary role for mentors is to help their protégés understand the organizational culture. Therefore, political skill development should be a critical mentoring factor.

**Mentoring Process**

Mentoring studies emanate from a wide variety of disciplines, among them economics, philosophy, organizational behavior, sociology, and psychology, referencing theories such as social learning theory, contingency theory, and human capital theory. Many more studies however, simply refer to Kram's seminal work (Hansford, Tennent, & Ehrich, 2002). Yet several different processes have been identified through which mentoring impacts career success for a protégé. Dreher and Ash (1990) described two processes by which mentoring benefits a protégé's career success. First, mentors provide access to social networks that may be closed to individuals at lower levels in an organization. This is particularly true for women. The information gained through these types of networks can help a protégé identify the "subtle signals about what behaviors [the organization] expects" (Sabattini, 2008, p. 3). In addition, access to social networks allows the protégé to gain visibility and build relationships with powerful leaders in the organization. The second process is role modeling. The protégé learns behavior and acquires skills by observing the mentor in numerous situations (Allen et al., 2004).

Dougherty and Dreher (2007) discussed a framework developed by Ramaswami and Dreher (in press) that outlined five pathways through which mentoring influences career outcomes. The protégé's work-related knowledge and skills are enhanced through the *human capital path,* leading to benefits such as increased salary and advancement. Through the *movement capital path,* a mentor provides the protégé with information

about opportunities inside and outside the organization. The protégé may find a better organization or a better position match through such information, leading to greater career success. The *social capital path* provides the protégé with increased visibility to key decision makers. The mentor makes senior leaders aware of the protégé's potential, leading to new opportunities for development and advancement. A mentor may also impact a protégé's motivation through *path-goal clarity* by increasing self-efficacy and self-awareness. In addition, a mentor can provide valuable opportunities for the protégé to reflect on career and life choices. The mentor can help the protégé develop realistic expectations about goals and make difficult decisions related to work-family balance and other personal and family goals. This *values clarity path* may be particularly useful for women trying to find the balance between work and family.

**Outcomes of Mentoring**

Since mentoring relationships are designed to impact the growth and development of the protégés, studies exploring the connection between mentoring and its designated outcomes of career success are important to validate the impact of these relationships. Allen et al. (2004) conducted a meta-analysis of two types of studies: those comparing outcomes of mentored versus non-mentored protégés and those relating mentor function to protégé outcomes. Career success can be measured by objective as well as subjective outcomes. Allen et al. included both. Objective measures of career success include promotions and compensation. Subjective outcomes include less tangible measures of career success, such as career satisfaction, expectations for advancement, career commitment, job satisfaction, and intent to stay with the organization. In the analysis by Allen et al., individuals who had been mentored reported higher compensation and more

promotions, and they were more satisfied with their careers than those without mentors. They also believed they would advance in their careers, and they were more committed to those careers, more satisfied with their jobs, and more likely to stay with their current employers.

Allen et al. (2004) also found differences in outcomes related to the type of mentoring received: career-related versus psychosocial. Objective outcomes were somewhat more highly correlated to career mentoring than to psychosocial support, and satisfaction with the mentor was more highly correlated with psychosocial support. Although the researchers found general support for the claim that mentoring leads to career benefits, the effect size was small. They concluded that mentoring has a greater impact on career and job satisfaction than on objective measures of career success.

Similar results were seen in a meta-analysis by Underhill (2006). Using only studies that compared mentored to non-mentored individuals, she found a significant positive relationship between mentoring and career outcomes. Like Allen et al. (2004), Underhill found that the relationship between mentoring and subjective outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and perceived opportunities for advancement appeared to be greater than for objective measurements of income and number of promotions. Although protégés may have an advantage over non-protégés in terms of career advancement, it seems to be a small one.

Using studies that reported original findings, Hansford et al. (2002) explored positive outcomes that were associated with mentoring in a business context. In more than half the studies reviewed, protégés reported they "were satisfied with or motivated about, their chosen careers, or received career planning advice or promotions" (p. 108).

The next most frequently cited benefits included coaching, feedback, and strategies. Benefits related to psychosocial functions such as counseling, listening, providing support, understanding, and offering encouragement were also reported.

Dreher and Ash (1990) used four measurements of outcomes—total income, number of promotions, pay-level satisfaction, and benefits satisfaction—along with a global measurement for mentoring practices to determine the role mentoring played in career outcomes. Individuals who were mentored received more promotions and higher compensation, and they had greater satisfaction with their pay and benefits. Men and women reported the same amounts of mentoring, but men reported significantly higher annual incomes.

A recent Catalyst study (Carter & Silva, 2010a) showed both men and women benefited from mentoring relationships early in their careers. Those who had mentors started their first jobs after completing their MBAs at higher levels than those who did not have mentors. Men with mentors were 93% more likely to start at a mid-manager level or above. Women were 56% more likely to start at such a level. Both men and women with mentors had higher compensation than their colleagues without mentors, although men benefited more than women.

Simonetti, Ariss, and Martinez (1999) found more women than men reported having a mentor, which led them to conclude that women were being more proactive in finding this vital resource. Nearly 50% of the respondents said mentoring was beneficial in attaining their current positions. The increased knowledge they gained about the company culture gave them the confidence to handle the next level of responsibility in their organizations. In addition, their mentors exposed them to opportunities they would

not otherwise have known existed. Although over half the women and two-thirds of the men said they could have achieved the same success without a mentor, they realized it would have taken longer. All agreed that "'mentoring may get you invited to the party, but it doesn't mean you'll get asked to dance'" (p. 60). In other words, performance and hard work are still integral parts of career success, but mentoring can help facilitate the process.

A meta-analysis of gender differences in mentor- and protégé-reported experiences by O'Brien, Biga, Kessler, and Allen (2010) produced similar results. Although there were no differences between men and women in the amount of mentoring they received, female protégées again reported receiving more psychosocial support. O'Brien et al. theorized that men and women may need different types of mentoring. Due to their lower power status and the barriers they face in organizations, women may need and want more psychosocial support than men. In addition, because of the communal traits, women may be more comfortable with this type of mentoring than men. The authors acknowledged that mentor gender may moderate the relationship between protégé gender and mentoring functions. The same is true for the type of mentoring: formal versus informal.

Men often describe how their mentors help them plan their next career moves and prepare for the new roles. Women receive some career advice from their mentors as well, but they more often describe how mentors have helped them understand themselves, their leadership style, and how that style may need to change with increased responsibility (Ibarra et al., 2010).

A recent dissertation investigated the mentoring experiences of female pharmaceutical executives, who were defined as individuals having a bachelor's degree, management experience, and who had individuals reporting to their directly or indirectly (Burr, 2011). Of those who had a mentor, all described positive experiences. However, 20% of the participants in this phenomenology study had no experience with a mentor. Several described being mentored or given coaching by their supervisor. Once the researcher defined mentoring for the participants, it was determined that these experiences did not meet the criteria of mentoring for future leadership growth. Participants discussed their experiences with both formal and informal mentoring, identifying informal mentoring as more desirable. Participants also discussed both male and female mentors, with 80% describing positive role modeling by male mentors. However, 20% did describe negative experiences with male leaders who hindered the careers of women. It is unclear whether these men were mentors or simply leaders in the organization. In conclusion, the author stated the women with mentoring experiences believed their mentors helped them achieve their levels of career success and those without mentors experienced a type of glass ceiling effect.

**Same-Gender versus Cross-Gender Mentoring**

Due to the paucity of women at higher levels in organizations, many women find it difficult, if not impossible, to find female mentors. Therefore, many women in business organizations end up with male mentors (Noe, 1988b). A number of studies have been conducted comparing mentor dyad composition and the effect on mentor functions and outcomes (Burke & McKeen, 1996; Ragins, 1997; Ragins & Cotton, 1999;

Ragins & McFarlin, 1989). There are advantages and disadvantages to this cross-gender arrangement, just as there are with same-gender dyads.

Differences in same-gender versus cross-gender mentoring are most often noted in the area of psychosocial functions. Ragins and McFarlin (1989) found protégées in cross-gender mentoring relationships were less likely to participate in social activities with their mentors after work. However, protégées in both types of mentoring relationships were equally likely to view their mentors as friends. Social interactions for protégées in cross-gender mentoring relationships may be limited to the work environment in order to minimize sexual concerns. Surprisingly, the researchers also found no difference in how men and women viewed male mentors as role models. This may be due in part to the think manager–think male model being central to business organizations. Female protégées who were fortune enough to have female mentors found the role-modeling function particularly beneficial. Being able to learn strategies for navigating an organization and balancing work-family issues from another woman is particularly valuable.

Role modeling is an area of particular concern in cross-gender mentor relationships. The challenges young women face in balancing work and family are unknown to the male mentor. In addition, the strategies that men have used to advance their careers may be inappropriate or ineffective for their female protégées (Ibarra et al., 2010; Kram, 1988).

Burke and McKeen (1996) used four development functions—providing career planning, teaching skills, offering sponsorship, and giving feedback—to compare the experiences of women who had male mentors with the experiences of those who had

female mentors. In over 80% of the relationships, the mentor was the protégée's direct supervisor, and 69% of the mentors were male. Very few differences were found between the two groups. But again, the researchers found that women with female mentors reported greater psychosocial support. The female mentors also tended to be younger and at lower organizational levels than the male mentors. Ibarra et al. (2010) found this to be a problem for many women protégées because these mentors had less organizational power than their male counterparts. This is an important downside that should be considered when selecting a female mentor. Male leaders generally hold more power in organizations than female leaders. As mentors, they have the ability to convey part of their organizational power to their protégés by signaling to the organization the potential identified in the individuals they mentor. This process also helps to decrease prejudice against women (Lewis & Fagenson, 1995).

The more power a mentor has in an organization, the more career development opportunities and outcomes the mentor can provide for the protégé (Ragins, 1997). Since men are recognized as having greater organizational power than women, they have more potential to provide career development opportunities and outcomes. A study by Ragins and Cotton (1999) confirmed this observation. Protégés with a history of male mentors received greater compensation and more promotions than those with female mentors. Male protégés with male mentors reported the greatest compensation. Although female protégées with male mentors received greater compensation than those with female mentors, they still received less than their male counterparts. In addition, female protégées with male mentors received more promotions than their male counterparts but less compensation, suggesting gender bias and discrimination in the organizations

studied. As in previous studies, the female protégées in same-gender mentor relationships reported more after-work social interactions with their mentors.

Interpersonal comfort offers one explanation for the differences in same-gender versus cross-gender mentoring (Allen, Day, & Lentz, 2005). Same-gender mentoring is marked by greater interpersonal comfort due to shared identities and experiences. Allen et al. measured interpersonal comfort by having participants respond to three statements: "I felt like I could freely talk to my mentor about anything, I completely trusted my mentor, and there was a great deal of open communication between my mentor and I" (p. 160). As expected, protégés in same-gender mentor relationships reported greater interpersonal comfort than those in cross-gender dyads. Interpersonal comfort also acted as a mediator between gender and mentoring provided. As has already been seen, studies have shown that protégés in cross-gender mentoring relationships report less psychosocial support. The increased comfort found in same-gender dyads clearly impacts the mentoring received.

In addition to these differences in same-gender versus cross-gender mentoring, Kram (1988) identified a number of other challenges to the cross-gender relationship. Male mentors and female protégées will tend to rely on traditional sex-type roles in this kind of relationship. Reliance on gender stereotype roles may diminish the visibility of the female protégée's competency and cause the male mentor to be overprotective, reducing the value of the working relationship. Limitations on role modeling will leave the female protégée without an important resource for strategizing how to handle both organizational and personal challenges. Mentor and protégée alike may be challenged by the intimacy of the relationship. In some cases, the public scrutiny of their relationship

can lead to rumors or resentment in the organization. The stress of having to manage these challenges may lead one or both participants to withdraw from a potentially beneficial relationship.

**Informal Mentoring versus Formal Mentoring**

Women may find it difficult to initiate a mentor relationship due to their exclusion from informal organizational networks or the reluctance of some men to engage in mentoring women because of a fear of sexual harassment issues (Hansman, 2003; Noe, 1988b). Therefore, many organizations are turning to formal mentoring programs as a way to decrease the barriers for women in accessing this vital resource (Lewis & Fagenson, 1995). Nonetheless, formal programs may not be as effective as the informal type because of a number of issues, including a lack of commitment by the mentor or the protégé (Kram, 1988).

Although informal mentoring develops spontaneously, formal mentoring relationships arise from a deliberate process initiated by an organization. Informal mentoring relationships may last for many years, but formal mentoring relationships are usually limited to a term of less than one year (Allen et al., 2005). During the initiation phase of the informal mentoring relationship, protégés and mentors find similar goals and interests, which in turn leads to mutual attraction with positive expectations from both parties (Kram, 1988). Mentors select protégés with high potential, and protégés look for mentors who can be role models. By contrast, formal mentor dyads are typically paired by someone in the organization on the basis of application forms. Thus, it is not surprising that the depth of the relationship may be missing in a formal dyad (Blake-Beard, 2001). Goals for formal mentoring programs are established at the beginning of

the relationship, and times and locations for meeting may be set by a contract signed as part of the formal program. Informal mentoring goals develop over time, and members meet as needed as the relationship evolves to suit the needs of both parties (Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

Due to the differences in these two types of relationships, it would be expected that different outcomes would result. With the longer time invested in informal mentoring, the relationships that develop might be characterized by more psychosocial and career development functions. If protégés in formal mentoring relationships believe their mentors spend time with them only because of the program, they may not develop the trust needed for effective mentoring. Formal mentoring programs tend to be more visible to the organization than informal ones, since they may be accompanied by internal communication and publicity. There are also several benefits to the organization for formal programs: socialization of new employees, expected enhanced performance from the protégés, and identification of management and leadership talent (Baugh & Fagenson-Eland, 2007). Data on the type of mentoring provided in these two different kinds of mentoring relationships are mixed.

Noe (1988a) found that protégés involved in assigned mentoring programs experienced more psychosocial benefits than career function benefits. These individuals reported experiencing acceptance and confirmation and felt they had an opportunity to explore personal as well as work-related challenges, receiving valuable feedback from their mentors. Benefits such as sponsorship, coaching, and protection, however, were lacking. The formal mentoring programs were also limited in terms of time span. Time

constraints, conflicts with work schedules, and physical distance were noted as reasons for the limited interaction.

Chao, Walz, and Gardner (1992) found that protégés in informal mentoring relationships experienced greater career functions than those in formal mentoring. Both groups reported equal amounts of psychosocial support. The authors suggested these differences may be due to how formal mentoring and informal mentoring occur. In terms of the outcomes measured—organizational socialization, job satisfaction, and salary—there were no significant differences between the two groups. Comparing the mentored group to the non-mentored group, however, revealed that there were significant differences in all three outcome measurements. Since both the formally and informally mentored protégés reported positive outcomes, the authors suggested formal mentoring may be a good substitute when informal relationships are not available.

There are some reported differences in these studies of informal and formal mentoring, but no study has concluded that protégés in formal mentoring programs receive superior support as compared to those in informal relationships. Baugh and Fagenson-Eland (2007) suggested that it may be inappropriate to judge formal mentoring by the measures developed for informal mentoring. They contended that formal and informal mentoring are not the same phenomenon. Protégés' expectations for formal mentoring may be lower due to the assigned parings, but their expectations for career outcomes may be higher due to being singled out by the organization for this experience.

As expected, Ragins and Cotton (1999) found that protégés in informal mentoring relationships reported more career development functions and more psychosocial functions than those in formal relationships. They also reported greater satisfaction with

their mentors. Individuals who had a history of informal mentors also reported greater compensation, but no significant differences were found between the formal and informal groups regarding promotions. The authors theorized that protégés who are chosen for informal mentoring may be better performers with higher potential than those identified for formal mentoring.

Allen et al. (2005) found slightly different results. Although protégés in informal mentor relationships reported more career mentoring than their colleagues in formal programs, individuals in both groups reported the same amount of psychosocial mentoring and role modeling.

Ragins, Cotton, and Miller (2000) found the quality of the relationship between protégé and mentor had more impact on job and career attitudes than the type of mentoring provided. Protégés who reported being highly satisfied with their mentoring relationships also reported more positive attitudes compared to non-mentored individuals. Individuals who reported their relationships were dissatisfying had the same level of job satisfaction as non-mentored individuals. Satisfaction with the relationship had a greater correlation to work attitudes than whether that relationship was formal or informal. In addition, protégés who were highly satisfied with their formal mentoring relationships were more positive about their work than protégés who were in dissatisfying informal relationships.

Successful mentoring can lead to benefits for both the mentor and the protégé, but it must also be recognized that dysfunctional mentoring can be destructive. Ragins et al. found that women were less satisfied with their formal mentoring relationships than their male counterparts and reported less career commitment. Since many formal mentoring

programs are specifically developed for women in organizations, caution needs to be used to ensure the quality of the mentors so that the relationships will deliver the desired results.

**Peer Mentoring**

The traditional definition of mentoring—a senior, more experienced individual in an organization giving advice and guidance to someone younger—has been the focus of most of the research on mentoring in the literature. In reality, however, individuals use a variety of relationships for personal and professional development and support (McManus & Russell, 2007). Kram (1988) suggested that individuals rely on a network of relationships for career guidance and support. This constellation, as she called it, may include supervisors, family members, friends, subordinates, and peers. Individuals who have multiple sources for development and support have been found to be more successful and to have greater job satisfaction (McManus & Russell, 2007).

Peer mentoring relationships differ from traditional mentoring relationships in a number of ways. Traditional mentors are usually at a higher organizational level than their protégés and have work experience and skills that they can pass on to the younger individuals. In a peer relationship, both individuals are usually at or near the same level in the organization. They may find complementary strengths in each other that they want to develop. In other words, they mirror each other. Since their skills and needs for development are roughly similar, they are able to provide each other with psychological, emotional, and developmental support in pursuing career objectives. Individuals who are engaged in peer mentoring relationships find they complement each other and can support each other emotionally and tactically in a way that traditional mentors cannot.

Another difference is in the type of reciprocity experienced in traditional versus peer mentoring relationships. In a traditional relationship, the mentor may exchange exposure and visibility for loyalty from the protégé. By contrast, peer mentors are more likely to provide similar benefits to each other, such as friendship and advice about career strategies. Since both individuals are at similar levels in an organization, there is a perception of greater psychological safety because their interactions are less likely to have career implications as opposed to interactions with superiors or others who are higher in the organization. When there is greater psychological safety in a relationship, deeper learning can take place because the individuals will not fear reprisals. Therefore, peer mentoring relationships may be characterized by greater learning for both individuals (McManus & Russell, 2007).

Although many peer mentoring relationships have a two-way exchange of benefits, some may be unidirectional in nature. In these cases, whether formal or informal, a more experienced worker provides guidance and support for a less experienced one. This often occurs when new employees are assigned to others who are more experienced. The result is often greater organizational socialization and psychosocial support for the protégé (McManus & Russell, 2007).

Individual differences such as gender may play a key role in the satisfaction and quality of traditional mentoring relationships (Ragins et al., 2000). McManus and Russell (2007) suggested that similarity is a driving force behind the formation of peer mentoring relationship. Since there tend to be few women at high levels in the organization to serve as traditional mentors, women seeking developmental relationships may turn more often to their peers.

Due in part to the scarcity of women in senior leadership roles, women's exclusion from informal networks, and the increasing complexity of business, Allen and Finkelstein (2003) suggested that women may begin finding "alternative sources of career development support" (p. 347). In their study of 88 non-faculty university employees, they sought to identify alternative sources of career development—that is, sources other than mentors. They also asked participants to identify the development functions that were provided. Using content analysis, they identified nine categories of alternate development support: coworkers, education and training, membership in professional associations, family members, outside friends, self-instruction, supervisors, subordinates and support staff, and religion. All five of the relationships Kram (1988) described as part of the constellation of relationships were identified in this study. In addition, these alternative sources for development provided many but not all of the mentoring functions identified in Kram's work. Those lacking include sponsorship, exposure, and protection, all of which are associated with a traditional mentor in a protégé's organization. Although Allen and Finkelstein did not find support for their hypothesis that more women and older individuals would be more likely to report using alternative sources of development, this is a topic that should be explored on a broader population scale. Regardless of whether there is a difference between the sexes in the use of these non-traditional mentors, it is important to understand the role peers play in mentoring to fully understand the experience.

Female physicians seeking to advance in either clinical or academic medical organizations also identify a constellation of types of mentors. Just like women in business organizations, these doctors face an uphill battle. Since 2003, admissions at

medical schools have been equally divided between men and women. However, only 18% of full professors and 13% of department chairs are women. In their qualitative study of women leaders in medicine, Salas-Lopez, Deitrick, Mahady, Gertner, and Sabino (2011) found mentorship once again was a key strategy women used to help themselves advance in their organizations. The types of mentors the women identified again mirrored Kram's (1988) constellation. "Mentors were identified as parents, friends, clergy, professors, professional colleagues or superiors" (Salas-Lopez et al., p. 39). Trust was an important part of the mentor relationship, as was receiving negative as well as positive feedback, establishing confidentiality, and seeing the mentor as a role model. Gender of the mentor was not as critical as a match in terms of "position and personality" (p. 39).

A diverse network of mentors was found to be a prominent success factor by de Janasz, Sullivan, and Whiting (2003). As business becomes more complex and turbulent, having multiple mentors can facilitate more learning. No one individual can be expected to have all the answers. And as an organization's structure and power base shifts, a single mentor can become obsolete. A network of mentors can provide different perspectives on a situation and bring different skills and knowledge to the mentoring process. Different viewpoints can bring new approaches to existing problems, as well as potential career opportunities the protégé may not be exposed to with only one traditional mentor. For mentoring to be most effective, the protégé needs to be more proactive in the process. This includes maintaining contact with mentors who may be extremely busy. A variety of types of mentors can also be effective, among them a type of peer mentor de Janasz et al. called a *co-mentor*. They described co-mentors as "a pair of close, collegial

friends committed to facilitating each other's development who take turns mentoring each other at particular stages of their careers/lives" (p. 85).

An interesting model of peer mentoring was described by Withers and Stringer (1999). Women entrepreneurs often have difficulty finding individuals to problem solve and provide advice. For these women, the traditional model of an older mentor instructing a younger protégée does not work. Women enrolled in a program started by Simon Fraser University and the Scotiabank Resource Centre for Women Entrepreneurs learn from their entrepreneurial peers who have struggled with similar business and personal issues. These individuals exchange "ideas, perspectives and experiences through a deep level exchange to gain new insight and clarity into the business and personal issues and opportunities they face" (p. 52). One participant said the support she received gave her more confidence to run her own business. This is similar to some of the psychosocial benefits Kram (1988) identified from traditional mentoring.

Small business owners need to broaden their ideas about where mentors can be found. Ryckman (2010) said they should consider "industry and trade groups, alumni or entrepreneurs' organizations, government-run small-business development centers or online communities" (p. 1). Online mentoring gives small business owners access to many more mentors than traditional mentoring does. The small business owner seeking a mentor needs to realize that she is in control of the process. Although in a traditional mentoring relationship the mentor dispenses wisdom and knowledge about the organization, a small business owner should set the agenda according to her individual needs. A trusting relationship needs to be built on honesty. Small business owners should therefore avoid competitors as a source of mentoring. Often, contracts can be

used to ensure confidentiality and avoid a conflict of interest on the part of the mentor. It is also important to have multiple mentors, since no one individual can be an expert in every facet of the business.

**The Negative Side of Mentoring**

Marginal, dysfunctional, and destructive are words that are used to describe mentoring relationships that do not work (Eby, 2007). In order to fully understand the mentoring experience, we must also examine the problems associated with mentoring. As Scandura (1998) observed, "Since mentoring relationships are often close personal relationships, the consequences of negative interactions could be detrimental to mentors, protégées and the organization" (p. 450). Problems can arise with performance appraisals, and dysfunctional mentoring can derail succession planning if the protégé has an ineffective mentor. Ragins et al. (2000) found that protégés in unsatisfying mentoring relationships not only had less positive work and career attitudes than those in satisfying relationships but also had a greater intention to leave the organization than non-mentored individuals. Needs were not being met, goals of the mentoring were not being achieved, or there may have been negative personal interactions.

Using a social psychology approach, Scandura (1998) developed a model of dysfunctional mentoring and its outcomes. Protégés and mentors may bring characteristics to the interchange that lead to a dysfunctional relationship. Differences in age, gender, or race can cause problems of communication and understanding. Lack of skill or training can lead to disappointments. An overly dominant or submissive personality can result in poor outcomes. Poor interpersonal skills on either individual's part can cause relationship issues. Dysfunctional mentoring relationships may end in

termination or, if they are maintained, other negative outcomes for both the protégé and the mentor. The protégé who stays in a dysfunctional mentoring relationship may experience low self-esteem, decreased job satisfaction, increased stress and anxiety, or increased absenteeism and turnover. Negative impacts to the mentor may include increased stress and anxiety as well as increased feelings of jealousy and betrayal. Both parties may experience a decreased desire to participate in mentoring in the future. All these outcomes have negative implications for the organization in terms of productivity.

In order to better understand dysfunctional mentoring relationships, Eby, McManus, Simon, and Russell (2000) looked at negative mentoring experiences. Though each member of a dyad may contribute to the problems, their study looked at the issue from the perspective of the protégé. Due to the asymmetrical power relationship in a mentoring arrangement, the potential for abuse rests more with the mentor. Over half the protégés surveyed reported having negative mentoring experiences. Negative experiences were most likely to occur when the protégé perceived his or her mentor to have different attitudes, values, and beliefs. Five broad classifications were found for the negative experiences: match within the dyad, distancing behavior, manipulative behavior, lack of mentor expertise, and general dysfunctionality.

Mentor neglect was the most frequently occurring negative experience, cited by 30% of the respondents. Exploitative behavior, such as inappropriate delegation, tyranny, credit taking, and sabotage, occurred 21% of the time. Mentor competency was cited as an issue in 17% of the negative experiences. This study is a good example of why care should be taken to ensure that a good match is made between protégé and

mentor. Organizations should also examine any potential mentor's motivation and competency.

Mismatch between mentors and protégés was again noted as the most common problem in a study of formal mentoring programs (Eby & Lockwood, 2005). Participants described the relationships as uncomfortable or awkward. The mismatch may have involved differences in background, age, interests, or personality. Scheduling difficulties and geographic distance were also noted as problems. Other protégés reported the mentoring did not meet their expectations. Some mentioned mentor neglect. As previously discussed, this neglect represents a perceived lack of commitment on the part of the mentor, a mentor who is disinterested, or a mentor who does not take the relationship seriously. Some protégés also mentioned problems when the mentor retired or took on a new assignment, thereby having with less time for mentoring.

Reviewing 151 articles related to mentoring in a business context, Hansford et al. (2002) identified various problems protégés reported with their mentoring relationships. In the top position were problems stemming from gender and race differences, cited in 12 of the studies. In some cases, cross-gender and cross-racial pairings were found to hamper the mentoring process. In 11 of the studies, protégés felt their mentors pressured them to conform to a model that was problematic for them. The protégés believed that rather than helping them develop, these mentors were stifling their growth. Other issues identified were untrained or ineffective mentors; mentors who took credit for their protégés' work; mentors who blocked the protégés' career advancement; and mentors who were disinterested, unsupportive, did not have sufficient time, were critical, or had negative attitudes.

Rarely is a relationship all positive or all negative. It may be helpful to look at the problems with mentoring relationships on a continuum, as proposed by Eby (2007). On the low end of severity are *minor relational problems*. These types of problems would include skill deficiencies such as low job performance or poor communication skills. Also in this category would be situations where personal problems interfere with work and therefore impact the mentoring relationship as well. These types of problems could limit the personal and professional growth of the participants. Such relationships are characterized by superficial interactions, a below-average level of interaction, and unmet expectations. On a more serious level are *taxing relational problems,* which stem from the parties' difficulty in relating to each other. Problems of mismatch between mentor and protégé fall into this category. These relationships will have a negative impact on personal and professional growth. The participants will be minimally engaged, and they will experience disappointment and regret. The most severe problems fall into the *serious relational problems* category. These are extreme problems such as sabotage, exploitation, harassment, deception, and manipulation. Although not often reported, such problems can undermine an individual's personal and professional growth, lead to hostile interactions, and result in career and personal damage as well as violating an individual's expectations. The more severe the problem, the less frequently it occurs; minor relationship problems occur most often.

Some of these relational problems are easier to solve than others. Organizations can take a variety of steps to try to prevent them and make mentoring relationships more effective for both parties. At the top of the list is clarification of program objectives and goals. The mentor and protégé need to set out clear goals for the relationship, whether it

is formal or informal. For formal mentoring programs, care needs to be taken to ensure mentors and protégés are well matched for values, beliefs, and work ethic. Providing training can help prevent feelings of inadequacy on the part of mentors and frustration on the part of protégés (Eby & Lockwood, 2005). This is particularly true in cross-gender dyads where the protégée is a female. Male mentors need to better understand the issues their female protégées face regarding acceptable style.

**Gender Issues in Mentoring**

Just as in issues of career advancement, women face some unique challenges in mentoring. They often find their mentors' advice conflicts with their own personalities. Most high-level mentors in business organizations are men, and they do not always understand the role-conflict issues women face. The advice they give their male protégés may not be feasible for women. Having never faced the double-bind themselves, male mentors are sometimes at a loss to provide advice to their female protégées (Ibarra et al., 2010).

In a study of MBA graduates, Levesque, O'Neill, Nelson, and Dumas (2005) found that men and women generally shared the same perceptions about which mentoring functions are most important. In two areas, however, they differed. Women placed higher importance on championing—publicly advocating a protégée's ability and potential. Levesque et al. suggested the difference is due to gender discrimination and other barriers women face that men do not. Women also reported acceptance and confirmation as being more important than men did, although these functions were not listed among the *most* important mentoring functions.

Women often report more challenges to finding mentors than men do. The shortage of women in high ranks in business organizations translates to a shortage of women mentors. Therefore, most women are required to develop cross-gender relationships in order to obtain mentors. Even though women may be just as likely to obtain mentors as their male counterparts, they perceive greater barriers to the process. Prospective male mentors may be unwilling to enter into the cross-gender relationship due to anticipated negative reaction from the organization. Women are also concerned that individuals in the organization will misinterpret their approaches to male mentors as sexual advances. Foremost, however, is the continuing issue of women's lack of access to networks of high-ranking males in the organization who may be potential mentors (Ragins & Cotton, 1991).

**Mentoring as a Developmental Tool**

In reviewing leadership development practices, Day (2001) discussed how mentoring can be part of an effective development program in context. He described a survey of over 350 companies that reported mentoring, action learning, and 360-degree feedback as parts of the most effective developmental programs. "The opportunity to observe and interact with members of senior management is an especially critical part of mentoring because it helps develop a more sophisticated and strategic perspective on the organization" (p. 594). Mentoring combines elements of coaching, modeling, and feedback. One challenge in mentoring programs is inconsistency in the quality of mentors. Those characteristics deemed most desirable in mentors are listening and communication skills, patience, knowledge of the organization and industry, ability to read and understand others, and honesty and trustworthiness. It is expected that mentors

who display these characteristics will provide a more beneficial mentoring experience for their protégés. Whether the mentoring relationship is formal or informal, it develops "from a mix of opportunity and intent" (p. 593). Organizations desiring to use mentoring as a developmental tool for women should investigate not only how to identify these key characteristics in potential mentors but also how to create the opportunity for developing relationships between possible mentors and women identified for promotion.

Management development programs can be costly. As with any other investment, an organization is looking for a good return in this regard. It is vital, then, to evaluate and choose those elements that most effectively help women to develop the skills necessary to move into leadership positions. Lewis and Fagenson (1995) reviewed the effectiveness of three types of management development programs: women-only training programs, mixed-sex training programs, and mentoring programs. Mixed-sex training programs are an effective way for women to learn the leadership skills they need to advance in an organization. Women-only training programs have the disadvantage of further isolating women in the organization. Mentoring programs have been shown to be beneficial in advancing the careers of women, although finding mentors can be challenging. Often, the ideal mentor for a woman may be outside her work group. Opportunities for the prospective protégée to meet and form a relationship with her potential mentor may be limited.

Organizations have responded in a variety of ways. Procter and Gamble created corporate mentoring programs open to all employees but focused on women and minorities, individuals who may not have the same access to informal networks as white male employees. The company's human resources department matches mentors and

protégées and provides training and guidelines to promote the success of the program. Nynex took a very different approach, creating mentoring circles that consist of six to ten protégés and two to four mentors. These types of programs have been shown to help women increase their technical skills and adjust to challenging corporate cultures. Cross-gender mentoring facilitated by the organization helps increase women's exposure to and interaction with high-powered leaders in the organization.

The only disadvantage seen with mentoring programs is the slightly reduced effectiveness of formal programs as compared to informal programs. Therefore, to be most effective, the organization is advised to establish programs designed with the objective of "creating an environment that supports the natural development of mentor relationships" (Lewis & Fagenson, 1995, p. 49). This may also include creating a culture that values developing others.

According to Bennett, Harriman, and Dunn (1999), mentoring is a prominent part of leadership development for corporate executives. "Proven leaders within the organization who 'walk the walk' and live the vision of the culture" (p. 7) can be used to support and develop future leaders. These individuals can spend quality time with top-potential talent to convey the values embraced by the organization that go beyond business skills and networking. They also recognize that job rotations and assignments are the most important tools for developing CEOs for the future. Continually rotating jobs can be an impediment to ongoing mentoring relationships, but even if traditional mentoring programs are not practical, using current organizational leaders to pass on the organization's values and vision is vital to the success of any leadership development program. Organizations like GE under Jack Welch have found that leadership training

can be a central part of their strategic management. At PepsiCo, Roger Enrico personally mentored nine of Pepsi's top executives every year as part of an intensive development program that focuses on "Pepsi's leadership principles, receiving intense feedback and developing a personal vision" (p. 12) along with a personal change initiative. Leadership development programs need to be tailored to the needs and culture of the organization. Mentoring by committed, successful leaders can be an effective part of developing future leaders who understand and embrace the organization's values and vision for the future.

## Summary

It has been well documented that women are in short supply in the higher levels of business organizations (Carter & Silva, 2010b; Catalyst, 2010a). Numerous studies have explored the variety of issues that represent barriers to women in their quest for greater leadership roles. These barriers range from societal stereotypes to gender bias and prejudice to differences in style and ethics to work and organizational structures that do not mesh with women's complex lives.

Gender stereotypes depict women as nurturing, kind, and caring—possessing so-called communal traits. Men are identified as aggressive, decisive, and commanding. These traits, called agentic, are also those associated with a managerial or leadership role (Eagly & Carli, 2007a; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001; Powell et al., 2002; Schein, 1973). Women are often caught in a double bind due to the incongruity of gender stereotypes and the leadership role. If they display communal traits, they are not seen as leadership material. But if they display the agentic male leadership traits, they are criticized for being too hard (Eagly & Carli, 2007b).

Women's leadership style is also often identified as a barrier to their advancement (Catalyst, 2004), although the literature is mixed on this topic. Some researchers believe women's communal nature makes them more collaborative leaders (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001); others have shown women to rank higher in the transformational leadership behaviors that are thought to comprise a more effective style of leadership (Eagly et al., 2003). In addition, women appear to exhibit an ethic of care rather than an ethic of justice, which includes concern for the individual in leadership decision making (Fine, 2009; Simola, 2003). This style is different from the male style based on an ethic of strict adherence to justice.

Organizations themselves often erect barriers that make it difficult for women to work in leadership roles. The model of the unencumbered worker assumes a work-first priority that is often at odds with women's family responsibilities (Acker, 2009). In addition, researchers have shown that the overemphasis on a long-hours culture and the expectation that managers will put in extended workdays are burdens for women but not for their male colleagues (Rutherford, 2001). Some authors have even demonstrated how these types of organizational cultures cause women to suffer additional bias and prejudice as they struggle to find a balance between their work and family lives (Hewlett & Luce, 2005; Shapiro et al., 2008).

Women also report being excluded from informal networks, which are a primary source of organizational political information (Sabattini, 2008). Inside information obtained through these types of networks often leads to securing important managerial positions (Mann, 1995). In addition, informal networks provide coaching, sponsorship,

and mentoring. Exclusion from such networks is often cited by women as a reason for being unable to find a mentor (Perrewe & Nelson, 2004).

Many strategies have been proposed to help women surmount these barriers. One of the strategies most often discussed is mentoring. Mentoring is usually defined as a more highly placed and experienced individual giving advice and counsel to someone younger and inexperienced in the organization (Kram, 1988). Both men and women cite the importance of mentors to their career success. The lack of access to highly placed mentors is a critical disadvantage for women (Perrewe & Nelson, 2004). Women who have successfully navigated an organization and broken into the higher ranks describe mentoring as an integral part of their success. Access to inside information, critical decision support, and help in fighting internal battles are some of the benefits often cited in this regard (Laff, 2007).

Mentoring theory identifies two types of support given to protégés: career functions and psychosocial functions. Career functions include those behaviors that support the career development of the protégé, such as coaching, sponsoring, exposing the individual to senior leaders, and providing challenging assignments. The psychosocial functions relate to the protégé's professional and personal growth by offering acceptance, counseling, friendship, and role modeling. Outcomes associated with mentoring are usually measured in terms of career success: compensation, promotions, and job satisfaction (Kram, 1988; Ragins & Kram, 2007). However, meta-analyses have cast doubt on the strength of the relationship between mentoring and career progression (Allen et al., 2004; Underhill, 2006). Researchers suggest that benefits may

be more subjective (for example, career and job satisfaction) than actual promotions and increased compensation.

A mentoring relationship can occur informally when a more senior employee identifies a younger one with potential. It can also occur in a more deliberate way as part of a formal program designed by the organization. Research shows that informal mentoring is more highly related to career outcomes than formal mentoring (Allen et al., 2005; Baugh & Fagenson-Eland, 2007; Ragins et al., 2000).

The gender mix of the mentoring dyad has also been studied to determine if cross-gender mentoring and same-gender mentoring achieve the same results. Research has shown that protégés receive the same level of career support regardless of the gender of their mentors. However, female protégées have reported less psychosocial support from male mentors than from female mentors (Burke & McKeen, 1996; O'Brien et al., 2010).

Although most mentoring experiences are very positive for the protégés, some downsides have been reported. Most often, dysfunctional mentoring is the result of a poor match between the mentor and the protégé. This can be due to differences in background, age, values, and attitudes (Eby & Lockwood, 2005; Hansford et al., 2002). Mentor neglect has been cited when mentors are not committed to the relationship and find it challenging to fit mentoring sessions into a busy schedule. Mentor competency is another often cited issue when training is not provided as part of a formal mentoring program (Eby et al., 2000).

Women find great value in mentoring, but they have challenges their male counterparts do not face. Having never confronted the type of double bind that women leaders are subject to, male mentors are often at a loss to give guidance to their female

protégées. Their advice may also run counter to the style female protégée know is most acceptable to their male colleagues (Ibarra et al., 2010).

Little has been written about women in leadership positions in the pharmaceutical industry. Just prior to the turn of the millennium, less than 10% of senior managers in the pharmaceutical industry were women. More than a decade later, little has changed (Rand, 2007). There is still no U.S. or European pharmaceutical organization headed by a woman (DeMan, 2012). Senior executives in these organizations believe they are supporting women's advancement (Pettersson et al., 2007). Once again, mentoring has been recommended as a strategy to advance women to higher positions in this industry. This study will help fill the gap in the understanding of how women in this sector view mentoring and the role they believe it has played in their career success.

Current mentoring theory, with its narrow definition of career success, may be inadequate to explain how mentoring functions for women. This study adds to the literature and body of knowledge on mentoring by specifically looking at mentoring from a woman's perspective. It begins to address the gap identified by current researchers who call for expanded research into the feminine perspective (McKeen & Bujaki, 2007). It leads to a better understanding of how women define and experience mentoring by exploring who a mentor is, what functions mentors provide, and how mentoring aids a woman's ascent to higher levels of leadership.

# CHAPTER 3

# METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the mentoring experiences of women business leaders who have reached a significant level in their organizations. The study examined their experiences and perceptions in order to understand the role mentoring played in their career success. This chapter describes the research design and examines why phenomenology was the appropriate qualitative method to answer the research questions. It also discusses the participants, their section process, and the data-collection method. Issues of confidentiality and data storage are also addressed, along with the process used for data analysis and presentation of the study findings.

## Research Design

Qualitative inquiry covers a diverse array of methodologies. It is generally characterized by studies that are conducted in a natural setting as opposed to the laboratory and that explore human or social problems. Rather than seeking causality, correlations, and generalizable conclusions, qualitative research seeks to understand how people make meaning through the richness of their own words. Qualitative research is subjective and uses an inductive approach to analysis, building understanding from the ground up. It is used when a detailed understanding of an issue is needed, and the level of detail is gained by talking directly to people who experience the phenomena being studied (Creswell, 2007; Klenke, 2008).

**Phenomenology**

One of many qualitative methodologies, phenomenology is considered to be a philosophy as well as a research method. As a philosophical perspective, phenomenology seeks to understand the human experience. Husserl (1970, 1980), considered to be the founder of phenomenology, lamented the objective positivist focus of physical science and its inability to answer questions about reason or the meaning of human existence. The science of psychology could not use natural science methods to understand human issues. He called for a new perspective centered on experience, arguing that what people perceive and how they consciously experience a phenomenon should be the starting point for science. The goal of Husserl's phenomenology is to provide a description, not an explanation or a cause. Husserl believed that the meaning of life experiences could only be understood by direct interactions between the researcher and the participant. He assumed there were underlying features of any experience that were common to all people who had lived that experience. By identifying those features, he could arrive at the universal essence or eidetic structures (Lopez & Willis, 2004). To focus on the participants and uncover the shared experience, researchers needed to be able to set aside their own lived experiences in order to effectively describe the pure essence of the phenomenon under investigation (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

Transcendental or descriptive phenomenology closely follows Husserl's work, but hermeneutical or interpretative phenomenology comes from the work of Heidegger (1962). Phenomenology becomes hermeneutical when it includes interpretation beyond pure description. Heidegger believed meaning could not be discerned outside of culture and context. He used the term *lifeworld* to illustrate that individuals' experiences are

influenced by the world around them. Therefore, hermeneutical phenomenology addresses the context along with the way of being or experience (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Heidegger recognized that researchers come to a topic with preexisting assumptions and understandings. He called this a *forestructure* of understanding—an expression of how an individual perceives the world that influences how a researcher might interpret reality. Rather than setting aside experience and knowledge, Heidegger said, researchers should reflect on their experiences in order to integrate their preconceptions with the participants' stories. Meaning would then be discovered through a convergence of the researchers' understanding and the information gained from the participants (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

This study used a phenomenological approach to capture the essence of mentoring and its benefits as perceived by those who experienced the phenomenon and its outcomes—the study participants, women protégées. The term *mentoring* was applied in a broad sense that encompassed many different types of developmental relationships, as Kram (1988) described. The study uncovered the meaning of the experience for the female participants: how they defined mentoring, who they identified as mentors, and the impact they believed mentoring had on their career success. The phenomenological reduction of their shared experience was analyzed using current mentoring theory, and the conclusions identified areas for future research.

Phenomenology starts with someone, the researcher, being interested in a phenomenon, or an aspect of human life. The process seeks to understand that phenomenon not as someone else has written about it but by going back to the original lived experience (Van Manen, 1990). Researchers have tried to reduce mentoring to

basic constructs and measure the outcomes of mentoring functions: career development and psychosocial support. Career success is noted as one of the outcomes of mentoring and is usually measured by number of promotions and compensation. However, as current research has shown, mentoring is not living up to its promise as a tool to help women advance to higher levels in organizations (Ibarra et al., 2010). Recent mentoring literature has also begun to question whether the current definition of mentoring as a hierarchical relationship addresses the nature of women's experiences. Questions are raised about whether men and women define career success in the same way and whether the variables being used in quantitative mentoring studies are relevant for women (McKeen & Bujaki, 2007). Others contend that current mentoring theory is gendered and devalues women's experiences (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007). Still other researchers want to understand the factors women consider important which could include other types of developmental relationships (Dougherty & Dreher, 2007). Moustakas (1994) stated that phenomenology looks at a specific topic in an unencumbered way seeking findings that can lead to further research and reflection. Clearly, a fresh perspective on women and mentoring is needed.

**Philosophical Assumptions**

Phenomenology aligns with a social constructivism paradigm. Individuals develop meanings of their experiences in order to understand the world in which they live and work. The researcher seeks to discover the diversity and complexity of the meanings participants assign to their experiences. A pattern develops through the process of induction rather than from existing theory. Broad questions are utilized to capture the

participants' meaning, rather than imposing a meaning on these individuals (Creswell, 2007).

Although the goal of phenomenology is to find the essence of the shared experience from an ontological perspective, it is understood that each participant has their own understanding of mentoring. The qualitative researcher accepts these different realities and highlights them by using the participants' actual words to enrich the description (Creswell, 2007). Instead of focusing on one external reality that exists apart from the individual, qualitative research emphasizes that reality is socially constructed and interpreted within a specific context by an individual (Klenke, 2008).

Knowledge is gained directly from the participants. The goal is to reduce the distance between the researcher and the participant. Due to the importance of context in qualitative research, data are collected in the field. In this study, many interviews were conducted at the participants' places of work. Interviews were conducted face to face whenever possible to better understand the nuances communicated through facial expressions and body language. With hermeneutical phenomenology, the researcher uses her experience to interpret the experiences communicated by the participants. The researcher's role is that of an insider, not a distant observer.

## Epoche and Reflection

In undertaking this phenomenology study, the problem was not that "we know too little about the phenomenon we wish to investigate but that we know too much" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 46). This epoche captures the researcher's own experiences with being mentored and her career progression in the same industry as the participants in order for readers to understand her personal perspective and the foreknowledge she brought to this

phenomenology. It also helped her to be able to access this foreknowledge during the interpretive process.

Several unique individuals influenced the researcher's career, from her father, who constantly told her she could be anything she wanted to be, to her husband, who helped her learn better decision making and challenged her to always take on more responsibility. In addition, there were a few wonderful women she worked with who listened and advised even as she listened and advised them on how to survive in a company dominated by white males. From inside the organization, she had one individual who was a mentor to her for many years. He was not her direct supervisor but worked in the same office. When she went to the office to meet with her supervisor, this individual would always take time to talk to her about how she was doing. The two of them built a strong relationship that lasted for years. He exposed her to the other parts of the organization, beyond the area in which she worked. At a time when the organization was undergoing major restructuring, he acted as a sponsor and champion for her, helping her to secure a position in a different division and saving her career as well as her job. She credits that move with the start of her career and progress to vice president of sales.

As a vice president, the researcher was also part of a formal mentoring program developed and implemented by the company's human resource department. She was assigned to be mentored by the president of the division in which she worked. The program lasted for six months, and although she learned a few things from him, the relationship did not lead to any career benefits. In many ways, it was a good example of what *not* to do in a mentoring program. The president never would have chosen to

participate in this type of a mentoring program on his own, and although he made time for her on his schedule, she did not feel he was ever truly committed to the program.

If the researcher had to describe her own approach or philosophy of mentoring, it would be summed up in her personal mission statement. People matter to God; therefore, they matter to her. They are the most precious resource in an organization and the world at large. It is our duty to do the most we can to help everyone be the best they can be. The researcher would consider mentoring part of every job she does, and she has always approached her job as a servant leader. She learned early on, when she first became a manager, that her job was no longer about herself but about those who worked for her. Her job was to make them the best they could be. If that meant helping them see that a current job was a bad fit, she would help them find something more appropriate.

The researcher has had the good fortune to reach the executive level in a major global pharmaceutical company, one of the *Fortune* 100. She does not attribute much of her success to mentoring. If she had had better mentoring earlier in her career, she may have made different decisions and her career path may have been smoother.

**Worldview**

The researcher's underlying paradigm or worldview has an impact on her analysis and interpretation of the data. Although phenomenology is shaped by social constructivism, she also holds a pragmatic worldview. As a business practitioner, the researcher seeks solutions to problems. This study acknowledged the failure of increasing numbers of women to achieve positions of significant leadership in business organizations. The researcher's philosophical view blends theory with practice and seeks practical application as an outcome of the research (Creswell, 2007; Klenke, 2008). One

of the goals of this study was to utilize the research to help organizations design and conduct more effective mentoring programs for future women leaders. Phenomenology is an appropriate methodology, since it illuminates the experiences successful women have had and helps to identify best practices that can be used by other organizations.

Much of the literature on women's leadership is influenced by feminist theories that view issues through the lens of gender (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001; Schein, 1973, 2001). Although gender plays a role in business organizations where women are underrepresented and although mentoring theory appears to be based on a male view of career success and relationships, this study was not guided by a feminist worldview. The study highlighted the continuing challenges of being a woman leader in a male culture and the role that mentoring can play in helping women to overcome those challenges. The researcher did not expect the study to provide the key to changing the societal stereotypes that define gender. The pragmatic goal of her research was to understand the role mentoring played in the careers of highly successful women in hopes that the knowledge might be used more effectively by organizations and women today, as well as pointing the way for future mentoring research. This knowledge contributes to the issue of social justice for women by adding to the body of evidence about the lack of equal opportunities for women in business organizations.

## Research Questions

In order to understand the shared experience of mentoring and the impact of mentoring experiences on the career paths of executive women in the U.S. pharmaceutical industry, the following research questions were posed:

- What types of mentoring experiences did the participants have, both positive and negative?
- How did their mentoring experiences impact their career paths and career decisions?

## Participant Selection and Sampling

The chief criteria for participants in a phenomenology study are to have experienced the phenomenon being investigated and to be willing to talk about their experiences (Creswell, 2007; Laverty, 2003; Van Manen, 1990). Therefore, for this research, a purposeful sampling approach was used to select eight participants who could inform the study through a discussion of their experiences with mentors. The participants were drawn from the population of women leaders in the U.S. pharmaceutical industry. Scant research has been done on women in this industry; consequently, this study also addressed this gap and contributed to current knowledge on women's leadership and mentoring by exploring this population.

Context is important for hermeneutical phenomenology, and organizations may have many different cultures forming a "mosaic of organizational realities" (Morgan, 2006, p. 132). Different functional areas may share their own languages and cultures, which are more alike than those of the rest of the organization. The commercial business units of pharmaceutical organizations—sales and marketing—are very different from the research and development unit. The commonality of function, the highly competitive environment, and the highly regulated work all impact the culture, which crosses organizations. Therefore, participants were recruited from similar business units in this industry. This is an important sector of the industry to study because it is the population

from which presidents and CEOs are most often chosen. The usual path to the top starts with an entry-level sales position, then leads to the marketing area, from which the individual progresses through greater leadership and responsibility roles until the level of president and possibly CEO is achieved (DeMan, 2012).

Participant selection began by contacting members of the Healthcare Business Women's Association, an organization for women in the pharmaceutical industry, who were listed as vice presidents of sales or marketing. Other members of this organization who were known to be marketing or sales directors were also contacted. Once an individual agreed to participate in the study, she was asked to identify additional candidates who met the criteria. This snowball approach to sampling was quite useful in identifying additional participants. Participants committed to a minimum of two interviews during which they discussed their careers and their mentoring experiences in depth. Of the eight participants, half had reached the level of vice president in their organization. The others were currently assistant or executive directors. All had been in the pharmaceutical industry for a minimum of 15 years. The demographics of the study participants can be found in Appendix A.

**Participant Selection Criteria**

- Must be female.
- Must have experience as a marketing or sales director or in a higher-level position with a U.S. pharmaceutical manufacturer. This level is defined as leading a marketing team of individuals responsible for the promotional campaign of an existing brand or managing a team of sale managers.
- Must be currently or previously employed in the U.S. pharmaceutical industry.

- Must be able to identify at least one individual who has had an impact on her development and career.
- Must commit to and be available for at least two face-to-face interviews of one hour or more and follow-up interviews as necessary during the period October 2011 to June 2012.

**Data Collection**

Initial contact was made by an e-mail introducing the researcher as well as the study and its purpose. A synopsis of the study was also sent to give the individual a chance to review the study parameters. If the potential participant expressed interest, a phone conversation was then scheduled to explain the study further, answer any questions, and gather information to qualify the individual for participation. This initial contact was helpful in beginning to build a relationship with the participant. The participant was asked to choose a location for the interview in which she would be comfortable discussing her career and mentoring or developmental experiences. A date and time were also chosen.

The written consent form, found in Appendix B, was presented at the first face-to-face meeting. Once the participant had read and signed the form the initial in-depth interview began. This interview was unstructured in order to allow the most flexibility for the participant to discuss her unique experiences, but it was guided by questions that had been sent to the participant in advance. A list of these questions is presented in Appendix C.

First, the participant was asked to give a brief description of her career, with highlights from various positions she had held. This helped the participant become

comfortable talking about herself with the researcher. Next, the researcher asked the broad question "Tell me about those people who had an impact on your career." Additional questions that were used to guide the interview were: "What did you learn from this person?" and "How did that experience influence decisions you made about your career?" Throughout the interview, the researcher provided encouragement to the participant by the use of nonverbal communication, such as head nodding and maintaining eye contact. Questions for subsequent interviews were determined after reviewing this initial interview and as data analysis progressed.

With the permission of the individual as noted in the written consent form, the interview was recorded, using two separate digital recorders. The electronic files were stored on recorders as well as on the researcher's password-protected personal computer. Electronic copies of the interviews were transcribed into Word documents by an online transcription service. The completed transcription was read twice and then read again while the researcher listened to the audio file. This enabled the researcher to make corrections to the written transcription where necessary. All files were stored on the researcher's computer. Participants, mentors, and organizations were assigned codes, and a list of the codes was stored separately from the data in order to maintain confidentiality. An external backup system was also used during the process of preparing this dissertation. Access to all electronic devices was password protected. Computer and backup were kept secured in the researcher's residence.

## Ethical Issues

Wolcott (2009) reminded us that the subjects of our studies are humans, not objects. Therefore, the approach to this project was to conduct research *among* women,

not *on* them. Researchers need to maintain respect for the people they study by not taking them or their stories and experiences lightly. The subjects' privacy and time must be respected by conducting interviews and research at their convenience, not the researcher's. For this study, each participant was asked to identify a location for the interview in which she would feel comfortable discussing her mentors and her career. The participant also chose the time and date for the interview in order to minimize the disruption to her busy work schedule.

Although the subject matter of this study did not appear to be personally sensitive on the surface, the researcher remained sensitive to the information that was shared. Concern was taken to ensure that no participant was harmed physically or emotionally in any way from this study. Quotations were carefully chosen so that the individuals' stories were told without revealing information that could identify them or their organizations. A variety of confidential information was collected during this study and was coded to safeguard participants' names and demographic information, names of mentors, information about organizations, and performance information relevant to the protégée or the organizations. The researcher also was mindful of how the information gathered could be used in the future. In addition, the researcher made sure women in general would not be harmed by the research. Therefore, the data were reviewed from a variety of perspectives.

The participants understood they could withdraw from the study at any time if they desired. Each woman was invited to review the draft of her description to ensure it accurately represented her story, clearly identified themes, and accurately portrayed her experience (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Some participants gave feedback and worked

with the researcher to further mask their identities by making small changes to their stories. These changes did not affect the substance but made the participant more comfortable with the information being made public. As Conklin (2007) observed, such steps provide some level of validity, and working with the participants helped to determine the goodness of fit of the description that emerged.

Since this study involved human subjects, review and approval was received from the Eastern University Institutional Review Board prior to any data collection. The review of the study and its approval ensured that the research was conducted ethically and that participants were treated justly. It also ensured that the study was designed to promote the common good and that it maximized benefits and minimized harm to the individuals involved. It also made sure individual rights were respected ("Conducting Ethical Research," 2011). Elements of the approval included a description of the study, the study population, and the sample method; details on what type of data would be collected; an overview of the process for data storage; and an assurance of confidentiality. No at-risk population was utilized for this study, but caution was taken to be certain that participants were not exposed to physical or emotional harm.

## Data Analysis

Descriptive phenomenology uses a process of identifying significant statements made by the participants to construct descriptions of their experiences. Meanings are then identified among the individual descriptions, and these are clustered into themes. These themes may be shared with the participants in a process of validation, as described by Moustakas (1994). New information is integrated into the descriptions until a final description is arrived at that captures the shared essence of the experience for all

participants—those things that are in common and without which the experience does not exist (Creswell, 2007; Laverty, 2003; Moustakas, 1994).

Husserl required the phenomenological researcher to bracket their prior experience and understanding of the phenomenon through the process of *epoche*. Doing so enables the researcher to suspend their own judgment, preconceived ideas, and theory and see the experience in a fresh way (Moustakas, 1994). Heidegger felt it was not possible to set aside prior experience, since description involves interpretation. Instead, hermeneutical researchers need to be reflexive about their prior knowledge and integrate it into the interpretation of what is being studied (Finlay, 2009). Therefore, the researcher in this study captured her experiences of being mentored in order to access them during the interpretation phase of data analysis. That reflection is contained in this chapter under the heading "Epoche and Reflection."

There is no single prescribed approach to data analysis for phenomenological research; rather, it is characterized by flexibility so that the focus will be on the participants. The researcher was guided by a model described by Moustakas (1994), as well as one from Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009). The goal was to produce a rich description of each individual participant as well as the shared experience and to identify key themes common to the experiences of all participants. The individual descriptions of mentoring for the participants and the combined description are found in Chapter 4. These stories and themes were then interpreted using the researcher's own experience as well as current literature and theory. The analysis and interpretation are presented in Chapters 5 and 6.

Moustakas (1994) described a step-by-step process of data analysis for phenomenology that he modified from work done by van Kaam (1959, 1966). The process begins by identifying statements from the participants that are relevant to the experience. Moustakas called this *horizonalization*. The expressions are then examined to identify those that add to the understanding of the experience. Next, the expressions are clustered into themes. These themes are then checked against the original data to ensure an accurate depiction of the experience as described by the individual participant. A description is then developed that captures the meaning and essence of the experience. The process is repeated for each participant, after which all the descriptions are combined into a shared description that represents the group.

Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) described an approach to *Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis* (IPA) that moves from the individual perspective to the shared experience and from description to interpretation. They shared a set of steps intended to guide the researcher though a reflective process of engaging with the research data: reading and rereading, initial noting, developing emergent themes, searching for connections across emergent themes, moving to the next case, and looking for patterns across cases. They also suggested listening to the audio recording of the interviews as a way to get in touch with participants during the subsequent readings.

For this study, the researcher began by reading the transcriptions of the interviews several times in order to become familiar with the data. Next, the researcher listened to the audio recordings while following along with the written transcriptions. This step added the richness of tone, nuance, and emotion to the words. In a process described by both Moustakas (1994) and Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009), the researcher identified

passages, words, and phrases that described the experience of mentoring for an individual participant. Husserl (as cited in Moustakas, 1994) instructed the researcher to "come back to the things themselves" (p. 70). Accordingly, any material not pertaining to mentoring was set aside. However, using the researcher's experience with the phenomenon and the industry, some of this material was identified for use in the interpretive and analysis phase because it pertained to organization culture and gender issues. Notes were also made that reflected the beginning of interpretation at a conceptual level as the researcher moved between the participants' descriptions and her own experience.

The highlighted passages, what Moustakas called *horizons,* were then organized into themes in a manner that began to describe the phenomenon for the first individual. This initial description was checked against the full transcripts of the individual's interviews to ensure it reflected an understanding of the participant's words. Some changes were made to make sure the researcher felt it fully described the mentoring experience of this individual. This draft was then sent to the participant for her review and comment. A copy of the instructions that were e-mailed with the draft is found in Appendix C. Although some participants did not respond, others asked to have elements changed to further mask their own identities or the identities of the organizations. These slight revisions did not impact the meaning or essence of the experience, and making the revisions was a key step in the process, as described by Moustakas.

Once the first case had been completed, the researcher moved to the next bracketing, setting aside the ideas and themes that emerged in order to treat the second and subsequent participants with equal importance. There was similarity among the

cases, but new themes emerged as each individual case was reviewed. In phenomenology, each individual's experience is equally important and is given the same weight in the development of the shared experience. The final set of individual descriptions of the experience of mentoring for the study participants is presented in Chapter 4.

Description and interpretation came together in the next stage. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin's (2009) process was used as a guide to identify themes across the individual descriptions. The texts of the individual descriptions were entered into NVIVO, a software program for qualitative analysis, and coded for themes that reflected the experience of the individual. The goal was to identify the significant elements of the phenomenon for all participants. Some themes were common to all, whereas others pertained to only a few. The researcher looked for similarities and identified patterns that clustered the themes into the broad categories of mentors, mentoring functions, and the mentoring relationship. Once the process of exploring the themes was complete, the combined experience was developed. This description, found at the end of Chapter 4, reflects the essence of mentoring for this study's participants.

After the themes were identified, they were analyzed using current mentoring theory. Although theory is not used in the manner of a quantitative study, it can be used as an interpretive framework for hermeneutical phenomenology (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Current mentoring theory, which identifies the functions of mentoring as career development and psychosocial support and the outcomes of mentoring as objective and subjective measurements of career success (Ragins & Kram, 2007) was used along with the researcher's experience in the interpretation and analysis of the data. The goal was to

explore if current theory captures the essence of mentoring for women. Therefore, the last step in the data analysis was to compare the themes that emerged against the existing literature.

Each theme was explored through the literature and the experiences of the individuals. Conclusions were made as to whether this study supported or refuted existing theory. In addition, the organizational context was discussed as it related to mentoring, since Kram (1988) identified organizational culture as having an impact on the quality and availability of mentoring. Finally, the issue of gender was investigated, as described by the women in this study.

The results from this analysis add to current theory and the understanding of how mentoring may be different for women, and they point toward areas for further research. Although current mentoring theory did not influence the design or methodology of this study, it added to the depth of interpretation and understanding that emerged from the themes and the shared experience of the participants.

# CHAPTER 4

## MENTORING STORIES OF WOMEN EXECUTIVES

The following stories are distilled from multiple in-depth interviews with the women who participated in this study. They represent the individual essence of mentoring for each woman. Every story is unique, based on the woman's career journey and the people she identified who played a role in helping her acquire a new job, learn a new role, and climb to higher levels of responsibility in her organization. Names have been changed to ensure anonymity. Although the descriptions of the participants' mentoring experiences may appear to be linear, they are not necessarily presented in a chronological order. These relationships tend to interweave over time; as a result, nothing should be read into the order of the events or experiences. Rather, the descriptions reflect an effort to organize the data collected during the interviews and convey the essence of the experience for the individual women.

Following each participant's story is a visual representation of the mentoring network of that individual. Like the maps of constellations, these maps show the connections between the various mentors and the protégée. She is placed at the center of the constellation, with arrows showing the flow of mentoring and advice from the mentors to the woman. Mentors who are shown above the protégée at the center are internal to the organization; those below are external. The number in the center of each figure represents the order in which the mentor was discussed in the narrative. A legend accompanies each map to identify the type of mentors represented: supervisors,

traditional mentors, senior leaders, peers, networks, formal mentors, and family members. A *supervisor mentor* is defined as the participant's direct supervisor who provided mentoring beyond the expected management function. *Traditional mentor* denotes a mentor who provided multiple functions over an extended period of time. The term *senior leader* is used to set apart a mentor who occupied one of the highest leadership positions in the organization. As will be seen, most of the participants' mentors were one to two levels above them in the organization. *Peers* refers to individuals at the same level as the participant, and in some cases where noted, the term may be used to describe networks of peers. *Formal mentors* were mentors assigned to the participant as part of an organization-driven mentoring program. Finally, the term *family members* encompasses husbands, parents, siblings, or other close members of a participant's family who provided mentoring functions. These types of mentors will be further discussed in Chapter 5, and the functions they provided will be discussed in Chapter 6. The figures are merely representations of the different types of mentors identified by the study participants. No conclusions should be drawn based on the number or variety of mentors in the constellation.

**Lisa – Sales Vice President**

What was mentoring like for Lisa? She never approached anyone to be her mentor, but a few people during her career took an interest in her or recruited her for a position. She had a number of different roles in the pharmaceutical industry, medical education, operations, sales, and marketing at two different companies. Lisa reached a level few women attain in this industry, rising to vice president. Reflecting on her career and the mentors who helped her along the way, she made an interesting discovery. "All

the mentoring that I had was a long time ago. . . . You get to a certain level, and there is no more mentoring unless you're in some special program."

**A Supervisor Mentor Takes a Chance**

Early in her career with her first pharmaceutical company, Lisa had a boss who helped by taking a chance on her. Her early roles had been in support functions for smaller ancillary products. The more important roles in this industry are in the commercial business unit, in marketing and selling prescription products. Lisa had been working in the training department when this early mentor hired her into a junior marketing role, even though she had no background or experience in marketing. "He was a marketer. I was not, and so I learned a whole lot from him, and he continued to just appreciate my willingness to learn, the initiative I had and he was willing to work with me."

**A Supervisor Mentor**

Another mentor Lisa had at this company was instrumental at several points in her career. She worked for him in an early sales management role; then, knowing the quality of her work, he chose her for a key sales operations role. He was an advocate for her, identifying her for future leadership positions in the organization. When she made the decision to leave for another company, he did his best to talk her out of doing so. He had arranged for Lisa to have lunch with the president of the pharmaceutical division, but when that meeting did not go well, he tried again on his own to keep her from leaving. Although he wanted to retain her, he had her best interests at heart, and she left knowing he respected her reasons for departing. She stayed in touch with him, following his career with many different companies. When she heard he had lost a prominent role, she

called him to offer help or support and was surprised that she was able to get through to him after so many years.

**An Important Traditional Mentor**

Lisa's most important mentor worked with her in two different companies. She met him at her first pharmaceutical company when she was in a marketing role managing other marketers. The individuals who reported to her were part of an MBA development program. He helped her learn how to manage these high-potential individuals on her team: they had very specific expectations about their own career paths, expectations that were often difficult to handle in light of the everyday work the team had to perform.

More significantly, when this mentor left that organization, he stayed in touch with Lisa and eventually recruited her to join him at one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in the industry. It was a difficult transition for Lisa. Most people at her new organization had begun their careers there; few were hired from outside. And those hired into a senior role often did not make it. Although Lisa's mentor made a point of taking her around and introducing her to key people, his mentoring also included tough feedback. When she told him she was having a hard time with the transition, he advised her, "You got to prove yourself. You got to realize this is very different for the company [because] they don't bring a lot of people from the outside. . . . You've got to show some accomplishments, you've left all that behind. . . . You're going to have to repeat a couple of roles that you did to show them what you're about." Lisa did what he suggested and was eventually promoted to vice president. Now as a peer, he helped her find the keys to success in this new executive role.

This man was unusual in such a male-dominated culture. He not only was comfortable with women but also went out of his way to mentor them. His mentoring relationship with Lisa included social contact, which can be very important. "He invited me and my family to go with his family to the New Jersey shore," she reported. He also included her in other social gatherings with people from work. She stated he was different from other men with whom she had worked. "Many men weren't comfortable with women especially women in higher levels . . . but he was always someone that was very comfortable with women and appreciative of women and wanted to help women. . . . He had a strong wife and of his three kids, two were girls."

**A Peer Mentor Gives Tough Advice**

Most of Lisa's mentors have been men, but one mentor who was assigned to her when she started with a new company was a woman and a peer. Lisa and this woman had similar backgrounds, both coming into this organization from outside, they were at the same level in the organization, and worked for the same person. She helped Lisa more than anyone else with the transition to the new organization. "I would never have survived had this woman not been there because she helped with the acronyms and the language and the politics and the who-knows-who, and how to handle certain situations, it was just invaluable." She also gave Lisa tough advice. If Lisa was complaining about something, her mentor would say, "If you want love, go home. . . . I'm sorry but it's true . . . you have to realize that this is about business, this isn't about you." The two became good friends, and their relationship continues even though the woman has left the organization.

**Her Husband as Her Mentor**

Lisa's discussion of mentors would be incomplete without mentioning an especially important person in her life, her husband. Not only has he supported her in their personal life, he has also served as a voice of reason. "He's been someone I can come home to and he will give me very straight advice about things." He empathizes with her as her husband but also understands that she takes things very personally and helps her make objective decisions.

Lisa believes mentoring is critical to a woman's success in the pharmaceutical industry. She has benefited from the mentoring she received and now gives back by mentoring others, both male and female. "I spend about 15% of my time in mentoring discussions. It is often stated that mentoring is a two way relationship and I can attest to the benefit that I receive while trying to help others. I love to learn from the next generation."

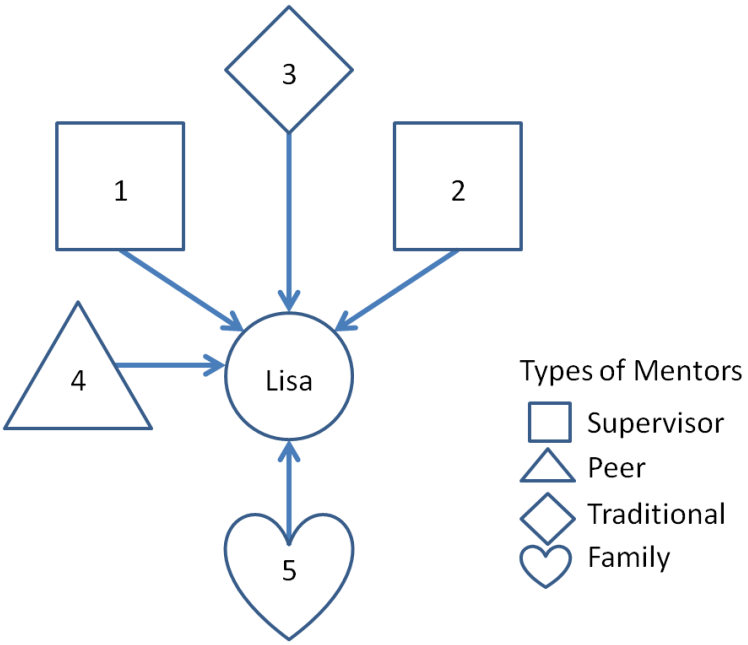


*Figure 1.* Lisa's constellation of mentoring relationships

## Nancy – Sales Vice President

The most significant thing about mentoring for Nancy is the relationship. She must develop trust with the individual who will mentor her. "There are two core things for me that are important in life, trust and respect, and I think in any professional or personal relationship if you don't have those two behaviors as a mutual relationship then it doesn't work." Taking a special interest is another recurring theme in her discussion of mentors who gave her special projects to stretch her and push her out of her "comfort zone."

### Her Father, Her First Mentor

Nancy discussed a few people who contributed to her professional development and helped her rise to a vice president position in the pharmaceutical industry, but none was more important than her first mentor: her father. Their relationship went beyond a typical father-daughter connection as he taught her about business and instilled confidence in her. "He wanted me to know I could do anything . . . there was no reason why I couldn't do anything I wanted to do and I could still get married and could still have kids but there was a whole world out there . . . he took a special interest and frankly no matter how much your self esteem goes when your own father believes in you there was nothing more powerful than that for me." He was a successful businessman, an executive vice president of marketing with global responsibilities, for a large corporation. He eventually became disheartened with the direction of the organization he worked for, so he left to form his own company, eventually representing over twenty-five firms as an international trade consultant. Nancy worked for him during the summer when she was not in school and learned his business. Together, they explored the Sunday paper,

discussing different job opportunities and industries. He showed her how to organize files on those companies she was interested in and helped her by proofreading the letters she sent to prospective employers. He took her to business dinners, introducing her to prominent business contacts. She traveled around Europe with him one summer, watching him work and learning from him. Tragically, he died in a car accident when she was just beginning her leadership career. But the foundation he gave her, the confidence he instilled in her, and the vision he gave her of doing anything she wanted to do set the course for the rest of her career.

**A Supervisor as a Mentor**

When she began her career in pharmaceuticals, Nancy found a mentor in her first district manager. A woman, this mentor would give her stretch assignments such as managing the district when the mentor was on an extended leave and taking on additional roles. "She like took special interest in getting me out of my comfort zone, gave me more to do. She made me feel like there's a purpose for what I do." Nancy learned about leadership and how to manage people by "playing to their strengths." She also observed how the organization treated this woman differently from the men in similar positions, and she began to see the impact of power and politics at work. Their careers overlapped and intertwined over many years. They became peers. Then, after achieving a higher level of leadership, Nancy was able to play the mentoring role, helping the woman secure a key position.

**A Supervisor as a Traditional Mentor**

At the time her father died, Nancy was working for another mentor who she said, took on the role of her father. "He established a trust with me, and he looked after me. . .

. He reminded me of my father, very stern, very respected, but also wanted to see me do well." She admits she was young and perhaps naive on coming into the corporate environment. He gave her the guidance and counseling she needed to survive. He also gave her tough advice. When a colleague stole her work and presented it as his own, her mentor told her, "You have to understand this is what happens. You're in a corporation now [and] this is what goes on and you got to protect yourself." He had an interesting approach, using stories and parables to give her the type of guidance and counseling she had previously received from her father. One story that had a major impact on her was about a man who rescued a frozen snake. After he cared for it and nursed it back to health, the snake bit him. When the man asked why the snake did this after all he had done, the snake replied, "You knew I was a snake when you picked me up." Nancy recalled, "So I thought about that all the times when I was in meetings. That one's a snake, they do things like that, why would you invest in someone like that?" The mentor never told her who the snakes were; he let her figure that out herself. "He wanted to see what I thought. It actually helped me to discover a human dynamic, or lack thereof, in corporate America." She used this story often over the years with people she mentored, helping them understand some not-so-trustworthy individuals. He also established a safe place for her to learn. "He made it okay for me to disagree, respectfully disagree, and tell him why." If he did not like her answer, he would tell her why she needed to act in a certain way and helped her learn how to stand up for herself. This relationship spanned 20 years, continuing long after the mentor left the organization and evolving into a deeply personal relationship.

**A Protégée as a Mentor**

Nancy also had an interesting mentor/protégée relationship in which her protégée became her mentor for a time. She had been asked to mentor a young woman as part of a formal organizational mentoring program. Nancy put as much effort into this formal program as she did with the informal mentoring relationships she started on her own. She built a strong relationship with the woman coaching and counseling her on how to navigate her way through the organization. One day when Nancy was really down due to a lost promotion, her protégée took on the role of mentor, helping to rebuild her confidence by telling her all the things she admired in Nancy.

**A Formal Mentor**

Nancy's mentoring relationships all took place early in her career. As she climbed the corporate ladder, she maintained those key mentoring relationships, but no new ones were formed. Nancy instead focused on mentoring others. At the end of her career, she participated in a formal coaching program developed by the organization. This was as close to having a formal mentor as Nancy ever got. The woman who became her mentor was from outside the organization, and although she learned a few things about how to deal with a difficult work relationship, Nancy says the mentoring was not very productive for her. "I don't know if I like the mandate of having someone be a mentor/coach to me unless I pick them and investigate it first. I think again it's a very touchy thing." Shortly after the end of this coaching/mentoring program, Nancy left the organization to form her own consulting business.

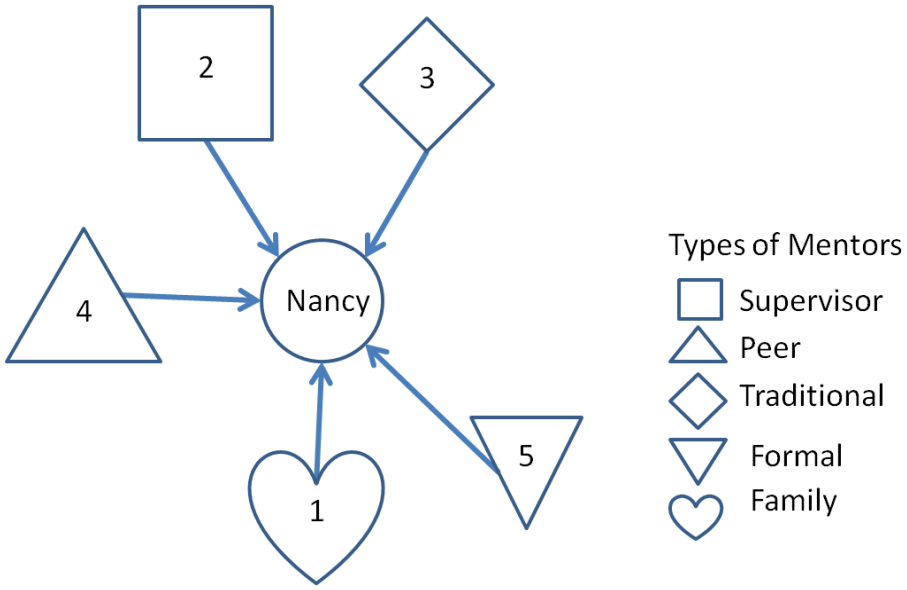


*Figure 2.* Nancy's constellation of mentoring relationships

**Jennifer – Executive Director of Marketing**

The quality of the relationship is the most important element of mentoring for Jennifer. If she "hits it off" with someone, the mentoring will be very valuable and the relationship will last many years. Indeed, she is still in touch with many of the individuals she describes as mentors throughout her career. Although she has had both male and female mentors, her most significant mentors have been men. She feels she has learned more about leadership from her male mentors and more about how not to lead from many women she has observed. Some mentors played the role for a short time in a very situational context. Other mentoring relationships have lasted for years, deepening into meaningful personal as well as professional relationships that extend well beyond any single job or company.

**A Peer as an Important First Mentor**

Jennifer's experiences with mentoring started very early. At her first job out of college she was assigned a peer mentor who helped her integrate into the company. The

two women were a perfect match, in age, in life stage, and in being at the same place in their careers. Jennifer describes it as one of the more important relationships in her life, not just in her career. "We learned from each other, helped each other, and would talk to each other about what we wanted to do, where we wanted to go, bounce ideas off each other, and we were very supportive of each other, and I think encouraged each other." Although their careers went in different directions, they stayed in touch.

**A Supervisor Mentor**

At the next step in her career, working for a market research firm, Jennifer met an individual who served as a counselor and a coach. Under his guidance, she developed her skills in managing clients, matured in her business knowledge, and learned a lot from observing how he operated. He treated her as an equal, as a peer, even though she eventually worked for him as her career advanced. He was equally supportive when she gave him her resignation after deciding to move to the next level in her marketing career.

**A Peer Who Modeled How Not to Do It**

When Jennifer moved to a new company and a new role, she had a brief but significant relationship with a peer. She learned new skills from him—"what are the right studies, what are the variables to evaluate, what's the right way to present data." But in addition, she learned a few things about what *not* to do and how *not* to say things. "He was brilliant, but he had no filter, I think it limited his career. . . . I observed things he did that I didn't necessarily want to do, so I learned from him in that way."

**A Traditional Mentor, a Different Type of Woman**

Although Jennifer generally prefers to work for and be mentored by men, there was one woman she considered an important mentor. She described the woman as a

great role model and a genuinely nice person, not a phrase Jennifer would use for most women in senior leadership positions. But she respected how even-tempered this woman was and how she could acknowledge the strengths of her people while also helping them see where they needed development. She was truly interested in helping Jennifer further her career; she advocated for her and helped her break into marketing. Another thing Jennifer mentioned about this mentor was the way she balanced a family with her career, not an easy thing to do with such a high-caliber job and not something most men can model for their female protégées.

**An Important Traditional Mentor**

Perhaps one of her most valuable mentoring relationships started when Jennifer was hired into a more senior marketing role in an area in which she had no experience. This mentor took a chance on Jennifer. Again, the relationship was critical: "We just hit it off from day one. . . . We clicked as friends. . . . It was one of those very natural relationships." He gave her open feedback about what skills she needed to work on, offered advice on career paths she might take, and served as a key advocate for her. Although Jennifer moved on to other roles in the company, she maintained her relationship with him, and she worked for him again in a different position. Their association deepened into a personal relationship that existed outside work as well.

Jennifer eventually reached an executive level in a marketing support role and was seeking to move back to product marketing. However, because of downsizing in the organization and because she was outside the mainstream marketing organization, she found herself cut off from her support network. It was then that she faced the biggest political challenge of her career—a boss who did not support her and isolation from her

support network. She remembers venting to her mentor about the situation, but she either did not think she needed advice or did not hear the advice he was giving. Nonetheless, at what became the lowest point in her career as she was facing a crisis of confidence, this special mentor helped prop her up, saying, "This is a blip on the radar, this is not representative of who you are or what you're capable of."

**An Ineffective Formal Mentor**

Although most of Jennifer's mentoring relationships can be classified as informal, she did participate in one formal mentoring program. She was assigned to a woman in another division of the organization in a geographic location distant from where Jennifer worked. She was pleased to be considered for the program, but she was surprised about the mentor to whom she was assigned. "My perception is that your mentor should be somebody who is familiar with the dynamics of your career track or at least your part of the organization, can help coach you to do things that you want to do, and you have kind of a mutually beneficial relationship, it's just kind of odd that I got that assignment with someone in a completely different division and function." The mentor was able to expose her to a different part of the business than Jennifer had been involved in previously. But in the long run, although the mentoring was not a negative experience, Jennifer did not see it as very productive.

**A Network as Mentoring**

Jennifer has started a new career at a new pharmaceutical organization. She has not yet built a strong network at her new company, but she still has a group of people she can call on for advice. "I put in a call to him and said hey, can we have lunch, I just want to pick your brain a bit. Here's a situation I'm in, what suggestions do you have?" At

one point, after an introduction had been made, Jennifer reached out to a more senior woman in the new organization, but she was not able to build the trust that she must have to establish a mentoring relationship. She understands she needs mentors in her life for her professional growth and development, so rather than settle for someone with whom she did not connect, she is planning to reach out to two men she worked with earlier. "I do see myself probably going back to them for advice." Mentors have played significant roles in Jennifer's career and will continue to do so.

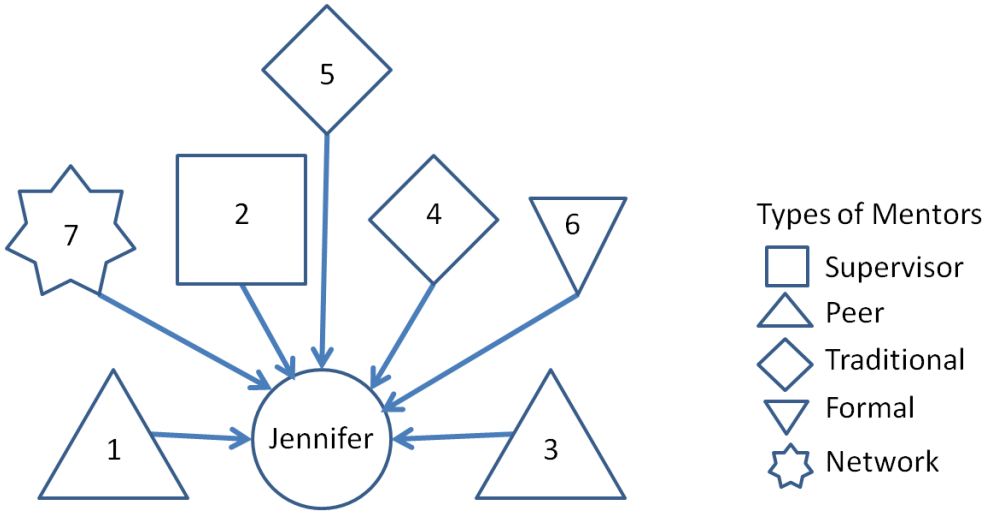


*Figure 3.* Jennifer's constellation of mentoring relationships

**Donna – Executive Director of Marketing**

Mentoring for Donna is all about business and career advice. She has noticed that her own definition of mentoring has changed as she has progressed in her career. Early on, it was about getting into line positions, such as marketing. Mentors opened doors, made phone calls on her behalf, and helped her secure an important role. These relationships did not last long: "It's, you know, a couple of phone calls here and there that help you get through." Later, the focus of her mentoring relationships turned to more organizational and political issues. She has had both male and female mentors but does

not think gender is important, and in some cases, she has found that male leaders are better role models than female ones. Donna thinks of mentoring in the fairly traditional sense of someone more senior to her in the organization who has had a major impact on her, giving her advice and counseling. There are also a few others from whom she took advice that she does not necessarily call mentors.

**A Mentor Opens a Door**

Donna's first mentoring relationship did not last long but was critical in helping her move from a support role into a marketing position. She met this first individual during an interview. Although he did not hire her, he clearly saw potential in her. At a follow-up meeting over coffee, she told him her career goals and spoke of her desire to work in marketing. Unbeknownst to Donna, he made a phone call that secured her a position on the launch team for a major new product. Unfortunately, soon after opening this door for Donna, the man left the organization. What started as a traditional mentor role ended before it could develop.

**A Woman Supervisor as a Mentor**

During her second marketing rotation, Donna met a woman who would become a key mentor to her. She recognized Donna's ability and recruited her into a higher-level job, taking a chance on her. "A lot of times you just need a shot, you need a chance to show you can do it in a relatively safe environment." Donna describes this woman as both a great mentor and a great leader who understood how vital it was to get off to a good start in a new role. "She was really close during those first 90 to 100 days then pretty much gave me the freedom to run the business . . . .She gave people the ability to fail and not worry." When Donna proposed making a change to a program, her mentor

asked good questions, pointed out potential pitfalls, and then let Donna make the decision to pursue the change. Unfortunately, it did not work out so well, and Donna had to make the modifications her mentor had originally suggested. But rather than saying "I told you so," her mentor responded, "That was a good learning experience for you." Donna has never forgotten the experience and uses the same approach now with her own team, giving them the opportunity to learn new skills in a safe environment.

Although Donna moved on to other roles in the organization, she maintained her relationship with this important mentor. "I've talked with her throughout the years if I needed advice or help." However, the relationship is not as productive as it once was. "I have engaged with her since then but obviously it's been years since I have worked directly for her, so I think her ability to counsel me and my ability to really get time with her have diminished quite a bit." Donna is a little reluctant to reach out to this individual now, acknowledging how limited her time is. The relationship has also changed: "It's not the same, it doesn't flow as easily and I think she feels like she can't help as much as she could previously." Not being in Donna's direct line has reduced the woman's ability to mentor her and to give the kind of direct feedback to others in the organization that she once could provide.

**An Important Traditional Mentor**

Donna described another traditional mentoring relationship she had that spanned a number of different jobs over several years. She worked for this mentor in an early marketing role, and then later in her career, he recruited her for his team, filling his own vacant position when he was promoted to a higher level. Over several years, Donna participated in what they called the "Friday afternoon chat." It was a mutually beneficial

relationship; she gave him insight on what was happening in the trenches, and he coached and counseled her on a variety of issues. These sessions continued even when she no longer worked for him. When she had an important presentation to do, she asked him to review it. "He said 'oh my, that's a disaster, you can't start the story that way.' He literally took out a blank piece of paper and said 'ok, why don't you tell me what are the key things you want to communicate' and he helped me sketch it out." She took his advice and reworked the presentation. After she gave the presentation, he sent her an e-mail saying, "Congratulations, phenomenal, that was exactly on target." Although he has taken a position outside the United States and they no longer have their Friday chats, he will occasionally send her a note asking, "How's it going?" His communications keep the relationship going and let Donna know he is still there to help her.

**Being Mentored by a Senior Leader**

Donna also had an interesting role working for the president of her company's U.S. business, handling communications and public affairs. It was a short-term assignment but gave her the opportunity to build a relationship with a very influential individual in the organization. He has since risen to even higher levels of leadership. She would not call him a mentor today, but Donna knows she can contact him for advice. Yet she is hesitant to do so: "He is so busy and he has risen to a level that it seems odd."

When she became frustrated with her lack of career progress in a prior position, she contemplated calling him. She discovered one of her male colleagues easily made appointments with him for advice. Donna was amazed and remembers "kicking myself that I hadn't done it earlier." Perhaps the hesitancy came from a reluctance to admit she needed help. "There is that small sense of doubt that you are embarrassed, and you feel

like you shouldn't have to ask for his help or her help." The organization has also set up barriers to access to individuals at his level. "There is this hierarchy thing. I would need to call my boss and my boss's boss to let them know I was going to call him. It makes you think, oh, maybe I'm not supposed to be doing this. The climate and the culture of the organization reinforces that you shouldn't do that."

Eventually, they did meet, and he asked her good questions, gave her his perspective on the organization, and discussed what he felt would be beneficial in the long term. He asked, "What do you really love? I think you need to get global experience, I think that will be more beneficial to you in the long run. I think that's where we need to focus our efforts." She says he is very discreet, working behind the scenes when it comes to talent management and letting his team members make their own decisions. "People will say he happened to mention you in a talent session, so you know he's working it but he's more careful he knows he could push it through but he doesn't." As much as she respects that as well as the advice he provides, she says, "You think to yourself man I wish he would make that phone call and cut through some of this." Is that mentoring or simply being a good contact at a high level? Either way, the advice or counsel is valuable.

**A Peer Mentor**

Donna does not currently have a mentor, although she does have a friend she will go to for advice. Their relationship started 15 years ago. He was a colleague on a brand team who was in a more senior position and had more experience. She would ask his advice on a variety of business issues. When she took on a position in an area of the business that was new to her, she asked for his help. "It was the first time I had marketed

in that customer segment. I had a lot of questions about the data and those kinds of things. He helped with that." They have both moved on to new roles, and she considers him more of a friend than a mentor. He is her boss's peer and a senior leader in the organization. She continues to seek his advice, but the focus has changed. "Most recently it's more of the organizational type. I'm having conversations with senior leadership or this is what I heard, you know, what's the perceptions and those kinds of things." He responds quickly to her requests and gives her good feedback on how to approach a senior leader or how to present a particular issue. "He will fire off an email, 'I think you are right' or 'no, probably don't do it that way, do it like this.'" As Donna states, maneuvering at higher levels can be tricky, particularly with the challenges in this highly regulated industry.

She definitely feels the lack of a mentor at this point in her career and has decided for the first time to make obtaining a mentor part of her formal development plan and seek input from her current boss. She has also thought about hiring a coach from outside the organization. She feels there is less willingness for individuals in the organization to commit to mentoring than there was in the past. Perhaps the intense pressure in the organization makes it more difficult. "I don't know if it's the state of the industry, it's dog eat dog, everyone's under pressure and everyone no matter what your level is scared they're going to lose their job. There's just not a lot of time for people." This is true even with her peers. "Before you would go to one of your colleagues but it's gotten so competitive. I have a few good friends but even then if we are eyeing the same job you feel uncomfortable."

Although her organization has a formal mentoring program, it is focused at levels both above and below Donna's. She participates as a mentor but not as a protégée. There has been some discussion in the organization about gender, but the program is open to everyone. The emphasis is on top talent in the organization. She questions whether she has reached an age where the organization does not benefit from investing in her. "I wonder is it really I'm a female and not breaking through or I'm a certain age at a certain level at my career, and it really doesn't help the organization necessarily to groom me to move forward." Nevertheless, she continues to devote time to mentoring both as part of the formal program and informally with a few people she has recognized as having potential that should be developed. Speaking of one of these people, Donna says, "She is just somebody that I kind of keep my eye on, and she asked me why I spend the time and I said, 'I think it's my job.' I actually think at this level this is what we are supposed to be doing. I walk the talk. She is sharp and she is relatively new in her career. She needs help managing politics."

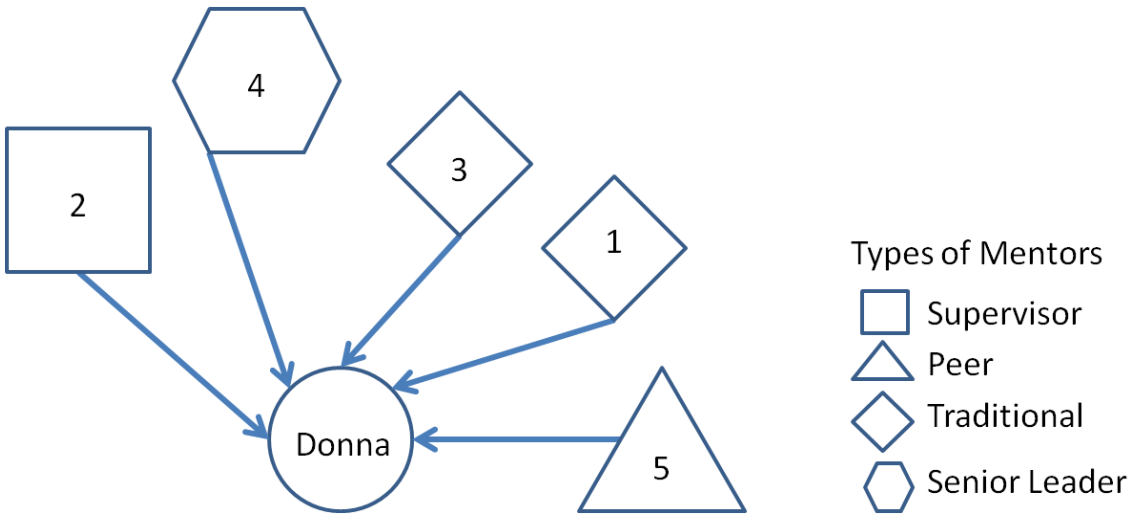


*Figure 4*. Donna's constellation of mentoring relationships

### Julie - Executive Director of Marketing

The words Julie uses most often in describing her mentors are *supportive* and *positive.* She believes strongly that you need to find your own mentor and that the protégée should drive the experience. She takes advantage of mentoring wherever it presents itself. "Utilize people either at your level or above, whatever fits. Learn, seek advice then take it back and see how it fits into your plan." What is important in a mentor in her opinion? "Besides giving guidance and talking things out, my mentors led by example. They made me love what I do either marketing or sales." Although most of her mentors have been men, gender has never been an issue. "I love being one of the boys. It doesn't bother me, hasn't been an issue."

**Family Members as Mentors**

For Julie, mentoring begins with her family. She identifies several successful male family members who encouraged her and were supportive of her career. "Any time I would talk to them about business, or a promotion, they would say 'go for it.' . . . They were always very positive and supportive." An older cousin who had a successful business said he was extremely proud of her work in pharmaceuticals. His support was important to her: "You don't want anybody saying 'well, you can't do that.'" Julie's brother, also a successful businessman who owns his own company, was very supportive of her career choice and her success. Perhaps most important, Julie's parents were always encouraging and supportive in her pursuit of her career. She would talk to them about her work, the good times as well as the frustrations, and they were always quite proud of her accomplishments.

**A Network of Peer Mentors**

Julie's first mentors at work were a group of peers who formed a supportive network and mentored each other. They were all at the same level in their careers and had the same goals. "We were all driven, and we would support each other. You had a confidant that you can talk to that isn't out for your job or isn't going to compete with you, but yet is your peer, I mean they're going through the same thing you are."

As individuals in the network moved up in the organization, they would identify opportunities for each other, help to open doors, and secure interviews, one of which led to a key promotion for Julie at company headquarters. "I remember her [a peer mentor] calling and saying 'there are openings, come on in.'" Julie recognizes the benefit of having a network of friends and peers in different places in the organization who know her work ethic and capabilities and can put in a good word for her or help open doors at times. However, she also emphasizes that being successful goes beyond mentoring. "I have to say, again, it was back to performance, your reputation and work ethic."

**A Short-Lived Sponsor**

When Julie was trying to make that first big transition into marketing, she found a powerful mentor who helped push open those doors. He advised her, "If you want to be successful, you need to have marketing." When she secured a sought-after spot on a launch brand after the interviewing for the position had closed, she recognized it was this mentor who made that happen. When she saw this high-ranked mentor again, she acknowledged how critical his advice had been. "It really opens your eyes to different things." Unfortunately, he soon left the company, cutting short a potentially powerful mentoring relationship.

**A Supervisor Mentor**

Julie also sometimes looked to her bosses as sources of mentoring. But these were not always positive experiences. "Some were good, some weren't. One was like a cancer; they were not supportive and had their own agenda. They would utilize you and your talents, instead of promoting you, they would use you to get themselves to their next job." One of the best supervisor mentors, however, taught her a lot about marketing. "In 30 days he taught me more about marketing than I learned from my previous boss in a year and a half. He just loved to teach, loved you to understand things." She knew he was always concerned with her development, giving her constructive feedback and keeping an open door. Their relationship was built on trust and developed into a friendship. Although she has moved on in her career and no longer works for him, she knows she can always call on him, and he looks out for her. She is starting to look for a new position in the company and met with him recently. "He almost like worries about me. He says 'what are you going to do, where are you looking?'" She realized she still had his support when he said, "You know I'd hire you right now if I had an opening."

**A Traditional Mentor**

Another prominent mentor hired Julie into her first marketing role. He moved on shortly after that into another position, yet he kept track of her and a few years later asked her to work for him again. Not only was he supportive, he was also very empowering. He would present Julie with a problem and allow her to develop and implement a solution. It was a safe environment. "If it wasn't right that was ok, at least I tried." Most important, they had a relationship built on mutual trust. "I felt like I could confide in him. He was my boss but he kept things very close to his vest, he's not a corporate gossiper. There are other people I would never talk bluntly about my feelings. I

respected him both ways as my boss and a mentor." He has since risen to a major leadership role in the organization, and she understands how important it is to maintain her relationship with him. She schedules "quarterly one-on-ones with him just to keep it going."

He has always been a strong advocate for her, making phone calls on her behalf and giving her advice on career moves. Once, when she did not get a job she interviewed for, she scheduled a meeting with him to get feedback and some perspective on what she was missing. "He's always kind. He always starts with what my strengths are, what I bring to the table, and he offered some good career counseling." Since listening to him, she has crafted a new career approach in order to acquire broader experience.

**A New Mentor, a Successful Peer**

Julie has had a successful career in both sales and marketing, but she wants to go further and expand on her marketing skills. Rather than leaving matters to chance, Julie has identified a woman she would like as a mentor. She has always admired her skills and her success and wants to learn from her. "So I made an appointment with her. I said 'look, I know you from years ago and I've only heard great things about you, and I'd really just like to meet with you and just talk about stuff. I'll bring the agenda, talk about business, talk about career paths.'" Julie has clearly identified how she would benefit from meeting with this new mentor: "I want to learn what she is doing, what her career path has been. What can I do to develop?" But at the same time, Julie questions what benefits she brings to her mentor. "I think she's flattered in a way, I hope she is."

Mentoring has played a role in Julie's career success, but she is quick to say it is not the only factor. "It still comes down to performance." Currently, it is more difficult

to find mentors in her line organization. The climate of the industry has changed, as has her company. With so many mergers and the accompanying downsizing in jobs, the climate and people just seem different.

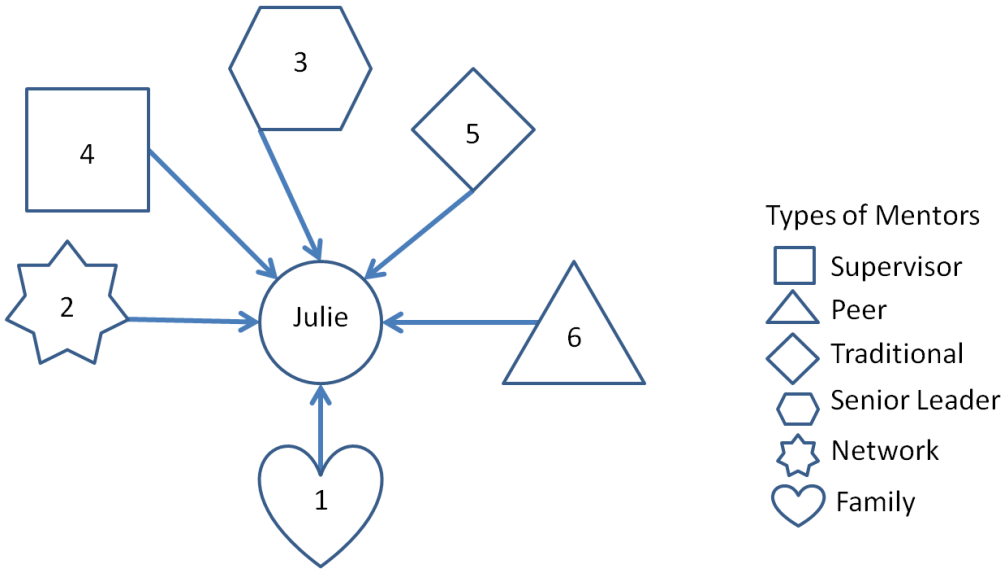


*Figure 5.* Julie's constellation of mentoring relationships

**Karen – Executive Director of Marketing**

Karen says her career progressed more by happenstance than by planning. After graduating from college, she did not have a clear idea of what she wanted to do. "I just had a job to make money. I didn't feel passionate about I'm going to be this business woman or career woman, I just was sort of going along at the time." Karen makes a point of saying she was never in a formal mentoring program. However, she had several key individuals who helped guide and shape her professional development and career over the years.

**Her Father, a Business Mentor**

Karen's father has been a powerful influence in her life and her career. As a successful engineer who became an executive with a large corporation, he encouraged his

daughter to follow in his path. She had an aptitude for math and science, and her father felt engineering would offer her many opportunities. Although she began that course of study, Karen changed to economics, with a minor in math. Eventually, she would follow her true desire and make a career in marketing. Even though Karen did not follow his advice, her father is still a strong supporter and mentor for her. She uses him like any traditional mentor, "running ideas by him for career or just you know business ideas, strategy ideas, you know workplace dynamics." He continues to push her to be more assertive about her career, asking her, "What's the next job? Who's your boss now? Where are they going?" She knows that he sees she probably needs to be pushed out of her comfort zone.

**Supervisor, Coach, Advocate, Mentor**

Her first workplace mentor recognized her potential while she was in a support function and recruited her into his organization. He told her, "I think you're short-selling yourself career-wise, because I think you should be in product management and you have to ask yourself what your future is in your current role." She made the transition into marketing and found it to be an area in which she thrived. Even so, she did not have the same overt career ambition that her colleagues had. Her mentor continued to give her stretch assignments and created opportunities for her to get exposure to executive management. He was a hands-on coach, helping to prepare her for key presentations. "We spent so much time rehearsing and practicing. Not in like a rote kind of way but like what's your story, you know? What are you really trying to communicate? And I feel like those things have prepped me for any job much better. That kind of discipline and that kind of preparation is invaluable." Not only did her mentor advocate for her, he

also pushed her into taking on bigger roles: "I kind of got moved up the chain. . . . I was being pulled up . . . even before I was 100% ready." Her mentor recognized her potential and saw that she needed encouragement. He seemed to be telling her, "We really want you to be in a position to shine, so we're going to put you in these stretch roles," and that, she said, "kind of helped me to understand what I could achieve, and become more comfortable taking on stretch assignments." She felt protected. "I did feel sort of like I had a network of people who knew me and that if something happened to the brand I was working on . . . someone would've said 'we really need to keep Karen we can put her over here.'"

Her mentor also encouraged her to continue her education. He recognized the industry and company were changing and knew it would be more important in the future to have an MBA if she wanted to move up in the organization. "He was like, 'just work it in . . . you can do it.'" She has not yet taken his advice and today feels some exposure as a result.

**A Senior Leader Mentor**

Another individual who played a significant role for Karen propelled her into a different working environment that was not quite as friendly as that under her old mentor. She began receiving feedback that she needed to move to a new part of the organization to broaden her experience. This senior leader was responsible for getting Karen assigned to a special project that gave her broader visibility to key people in other parts of the marketing organization. He also gave her tough feedback when a project she was working on was not well accepted by top management. "He was kind of like 'hey, welcome to the big league, you need thicker skin. You know, you can't take these things

personally' and he was right. It was a good learning experience." In spite of the project setback, he recognized her potential and recruited her into his business area, saying, "You need to be on my team."

The organization has changed, and she sees that the environment is not as conducive to getting the type of stretch assignments and the exposure that she had received before. She does not have a current mentor. Recently, Karen was chosen to lead a project, working under an executive she does not know well. Although she does not have a mentoring relationship with him, she is learning a new style of leadership by observation. "He's never been really a mentor force in my life, but he's a great leader and I will take something from this experience too." Karen realizes the organization has changed, and she understands that she needs to think about networking outside the organization in the event that opportunities dry up for her. When asked if she would consider approaching someone like the executive she is working with on her current project to be her mentor, she responds, "No, that's just not something that I feel is part of my personality."

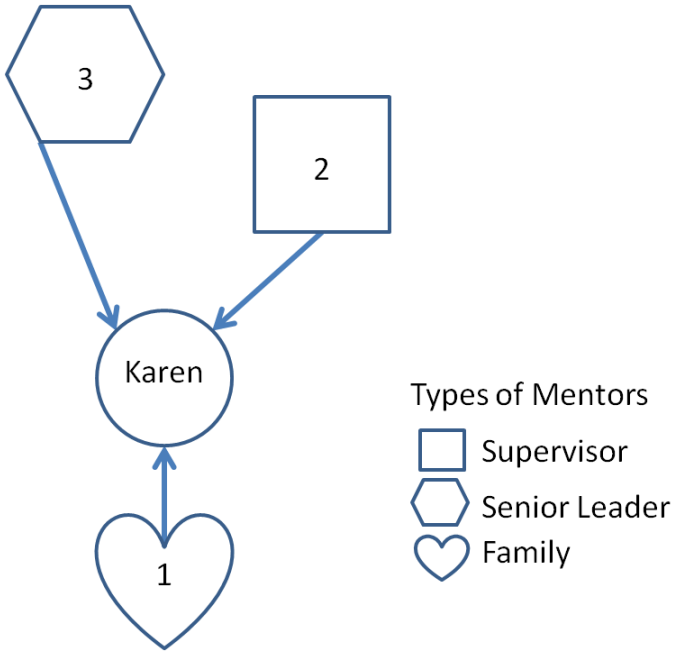


*Figure 6.* Karen's constellation of mentoring relationships

**Katie – Marketing Vice President**

It is not easy for Katie to identify mentors in her professional life. This may be because of her perception of the mentor/protégée relationship. She sees it as a definite reciprocal relationship. Describing the relationship the mentor has with the protégée, she says, "You have a vested interest in their well-being, and you kind of look out for them as much as you can because I guess it's for two reasons. You have that relationship. There is reciprocity to it, and as I say you're genuinely wanting that person to do well, and it's just a nice way to give and to give back." It seems that Katie has rarely had that type of relationship as a protégée herself.

**Traditional Mentor, Lifelong Relationship**

Katie met her first mentor through a program that combined work experience with earning an MBA. She describes the experience of working for him as life changing. At a very young age, she received both professional and personal support from this mentor.

"He was definitely very interested in people's career and well-being, like just genuinely helpful and like you always felt if you had an issue, or if you had a business issue or personal issue, you can sort of reach out to him." She says that trust is one of the most important things in a mentor relationship. "There is a huge element of trust . . . it's the foundation for everything else after that." This early mentor created opportunities for her to present new business ideas to senior leaders in the organization and to gain exposure to many different parts of the business. When she expressed an interest in working in the training department, he facilitated the opportunity. She also learned how to be solutions oriented rather than focusing on problems.

**Supervisor or Sponsor**

Katie identifies another key individual in the pharmaceutical industry whom she worked for in a variety of roles. She describes him as a sponsor, the type of mentor that is often hard to find. He would give her advice about career moves, but their's was not an overt mentor relationship. She believes he often opened doors for her and advocated for her to others in the organization and recruited her to work in his business unit.

**A Senior Leader as a Mentor**

Her previous mentor undoubtedly helped facilitate her move into a significant role as assistant to the president of the organization. She learned much about the organization's business while in this role, but what should have been an important formal mentoring relationship never worked too well. She learned that she was doing a good job when he did not give her bad feedback. "You have to learn by observation from him . . . he is really not good at mentoring at all." This man has left the organization, and she

tries to keep in touch with him. Unfortunately, he does not close the loop even though she has heard he asks other people why she has not stayed in touch with him.

**Peer Mentors**

Peers became important for Katie when she was promoted into a sales leadership role. "I used that network a lot more than I had ever used any other network before because I was literally coming into that very fresh and green."

**Family Members as Mentors**

Katie admits she is not good at reaching out for help at work and describes her family as a valuable source of support, especially at highly stressful times. She says her husband is "probably my number one mentor." With a strong business background himself, he can be objective about the issues she faces at work and can "give really solid advice" because he is removed from the situation. Katie admits that, like many women, she is not good at the political part of her job. When relationships start to drive her crazy, she says, "It's great to have someone that you can bounce things off of, so they can literally tell you this is how you should deal with it." But it was her mother who helped her through a very stressful merger with another company. "I found the whole thing really difficult, so I was reaching out to lots of different people, like my parents . . . they provided some really, really objective perspective, like at one point in time I was like, 'I can't do this anymore, I'm going to quit,' and my mother was like, 'don't be ridiculous' . . . it's like [having] someone to give you a little slap across the face and say 'wake up.'"

Having survived the merger and assimilated into the new organization, Katie still has ambitions to move up in the company. She knows where she wants to go but is

unsure how to get there. A good mentor could definitely help, but she does not have one at the moment, and as she has said, she is not good at reaching out to others.

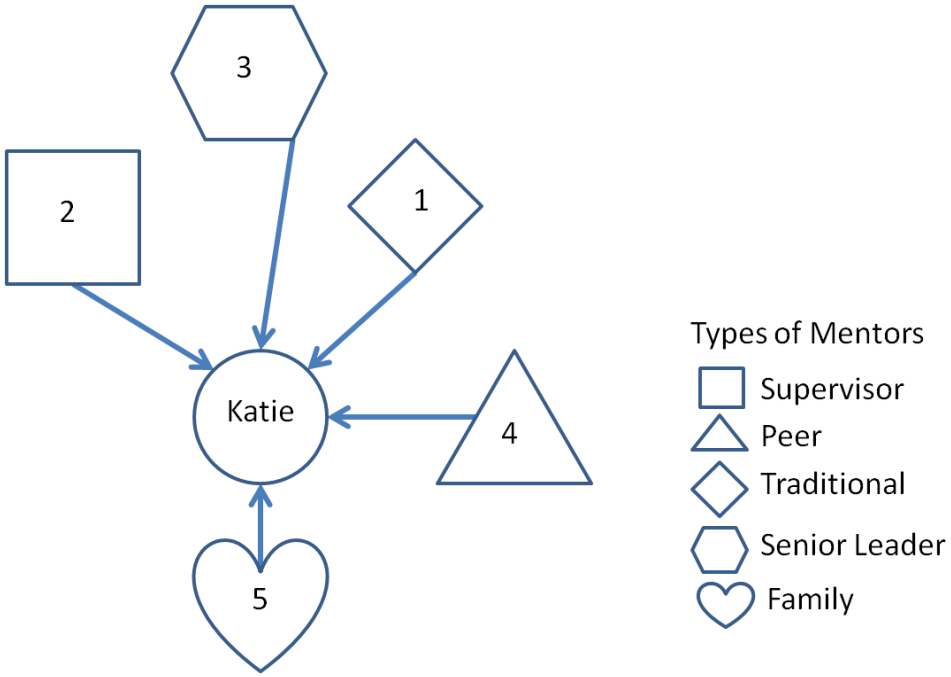


*Figure 7.* Katie's constellation of mentoring relationships

**Audrey – Marketing Vice President**

Career advice and opening doors are constant themes in Audrey's stories about her mentors. She says most of her mentoring relationships have been informal, and looking back, she wishes she had taken more advantage of these key relationships. All of Audrey's mentors at work have been men. She does not consider that a problem. "I don't think you should look at it as a gender thing. . . . You have to look at what is making people successful. . . . Who is going to be open and honest to you, who has been successful and you look at their skills and you respect them. So you want to get somebody like that."

Trust is another topic Audrey discusses. She says she is not a very trusting person, and so, reaching out to people is difficult for her. "You have to know that what

you bring forth isn't going to be held against you or someone you are talking about. You have to compartmentalize. I'm mentoring this person instead of managing them."

**Her Mother, an Important Early Mentor**

Audrey begins her discussion of mentors with someone extraspecial to her—her mother. She says her mother had a vital role in shaping who she has become and how she conducts business. "My parents shaped me in that regard, to be honest and to work hard and you know just value people. My mother was very, very honest, she believed in treating people fairly." This early modeling and mentoring helped to shape Audrey's career and leadership style.

**An Ineffective Early Supervisor**

Not all the career advice Audrey has received has been positive. One of her earliest mentors advised her to take a position that was equivalent to a secretary in their firm, telling her she could easily progress to a higher level in time. Taking this job later became a stumbling block as she attempted to rise to a position of greater responsibility. "The guy was really nice. I don't think he meant harm, but when I look back, I honestly cannot imagine that he would ever tell a man to do that job."

**An Early Supervisor Mentor**

One of Audrey's first mentors recruited her from market research into product marketing and then mentored her through the beginning of her career and encouraged her to obtain her MBA. In the process, Audrey learned about leadership and valuing the unique contribution each individual can make to a project or an organization. She learned by "observing how he treated me, not him giving me advice." Although he was senior to her, he treated her with respect as an expert in her field. She saw how his

approach to people motivated them to give 110 percent. She did not stay in touch with him once she left the organization and often wishes she had, as he eventually became CEO of the organization.

**A Traditional Mentor**

Audrey's next mentoring relationship crossed two different companies and many different jobs. It began as a peer relationship, when she and the mentor shared a set of cubicles. As they worked on the same product, they would exchange ideas on the best ways to do things. A friendship and trust developed that were easy to pick up again when, after going their separate ways, they once more found themselves at the same organization.

This mentor eventually rose to a very high level in the organization but always had time for her and was proactive about giving her feedback, career advice, and insights on how to be successful in her current position. She would seek out his advice when she needed someone who knew the players and the political situation, and he would give her feedback on what others in the organization were saying about her. "I always respected him, you know, so I knew if he gave me advice, I would feel comfortable following it because it would meet with those things that were ingrained in me from my mother." His advice was often blunt, but she appreciated his openness. "He would tell me 'this is what you are doing wrong,' but also what [I could] do to fix it and he was available to talk about it." Whenever he was in the audience for one of her presentations, he would hand her a note as she was leaving to give her feedback.

**A Supervisor Mentor, Mixed Experience**

One of Audrey's negative experiences came at the hands of a mentor who only wanted to tell her what she did well. When Audrey was passed over for a promotion, this man finally told her what she was doing wrong. "I said 'how long have you known this?' He goes, 'well, over like the last couple of years.'" She learned a valuable lesson from that, which shaped how she gave feedback to people who worked for her. "I don't think people always liked having reviews with me but I always tell them their negatives. I said this is where you need to work and I always felt I had to do that because I did not ever want anybody to have the experience that I had and I think too many people were not good about telling you your weaknesses."

In spite of this negative experience, this mentoring relationship was mostly positive. She describes her mentor as a "cheerleader kind of guy. It's his personality. He was probably one of my best advocates." He helped her move through several positions in his business group, and most important, he helped her secure a coveted spot comparable to chief of staff to the president of the organization. She had told him from the beginning that she wanted that type of position. "Those positions weren't posted, so when they came available he put my name in the hat."

**Mentored by a Senior Leader**

The role of assistant to the president gave Audrey the opportunity to observe the leadership styles of many of the top leaders in the corporation. She could watch these individuals as they interacted in meetings, and she often gained insight into the proceedings afterward. Although he was very busy, the president would take advantage of teachable moments, instructing her on how to engage a group as they worked on presentations she prepared for him. During this time, she was able to build a network

across the organization that was helpful to her later in her career. "I was able to navigate across business units, built connections with other people in the organization." She had been selected for development, and when the time was right, this mentor handpicked her for her next role, vice president of marketing. But even though his door was open for her, she rarely met with this important mentor over the next five years.

Audrey had risen to the level of vice president in marketing, a level few women attain in the pharmaceutical industry. Unfortunately, she fell victim to the downsizing that was occurring across the industry. She admits she did not use her mentors as much as she could have, even though several rose to extremely high levels in their organizations. She says she does not want to bother people: "I actually probably did not take advantage of networking and mentoring as much as [I should have], I was not really taught that. So, I probably actually missed out on that . . . a lot of people . . . used their networking to keep their jobs. . . . I don't necessarily think that they necessarily are the smartest or most talented but I know that they are connected. And I probably missed out on that." So, although her mentors often opened doors for her, recruited her into new positions, and promoted her to levels other women only dream of, in the end her mentors could not save her job, perhaps because they did not know she was being laid off until it was too late.

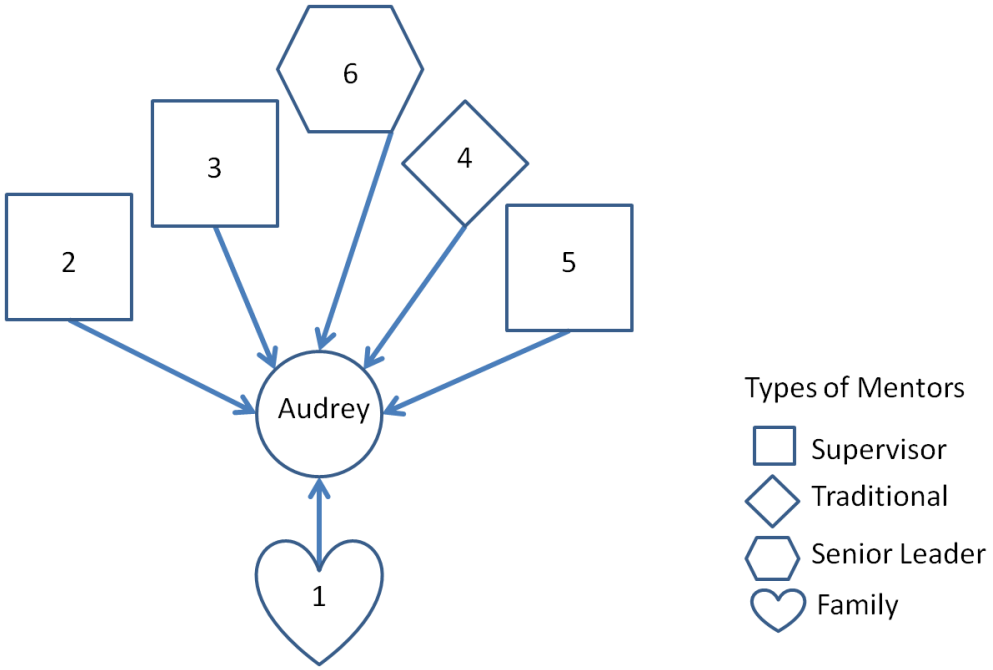


*Figure 8.* Audrey's constellation of mentoring relationships

## The Essence of Mentoring

An important end goal for phenomenology is the development of a composite description of the phenomenon under study. This composite combines the individual experiences of the participants into one description that captures the essence of the experiences of the phenomenon and represents the group as a whole. Common themes and types of mentors are combined to give a single voice to the eight participants in this study. As a research method phenomenology concentrates on the experience, not the individuals.

## The Shared Experience – A Single Voice

Her experience with mentors begins early, before the start of her career. Her family was crucial in the development of the type of leader she would become. Values learned from her parents instilled in her the importance of treating people with respect and honesty, being truthful. They gave her confidence in who she was as a woman and

as a future leader in business: yes, she could do both. They encouraged her, supported her, and told her she was doing a great job and doing the right thing. Family would continue to be a key source of mentoring as her career progressed, often shifting from her parents and siblings to her husband. Her husband played a significant role in helping her to problem solve, grounding her when the workplace became tumultuous, loving her as his wife, and helping her as a businessperson himself.

Early in her career, one individual stood out. Someone took a chance on her, recognized her potential, and helped start her on a career path that would lead to higher levels of leadership and responsibility. Along the way, a variety of mentors wove in and out of her path. Many were her direct supervisors or in her line management. These individuals helped her develop the skills needed to turn in the type of superior performance that would get her noticed by upper management. Some of them helped open doors and create opportunities for her for promotions. Others gave her advice and often the type of tough feedback growing leaders need, a reality check.

One special individual stood apart from all the rest. This special mentor had such an impact on her that their relationship grew over the years to become more personal rather than merely job related. The relationship was built on trust and respect and spanned many years and many different jobs for her and for the mentor. She knew he would always be there for her. Yes, this mentor, this confidant, this friend was a man. He helped her develop new skills and advised her on different job choices. He created new opportunities for her by opening doors, making recommendations, and sometimes working behind the scenes without her knowledge in a way that is sometimes called sponsoring. He made it safe for her to learn but did not shelter her from the realities of

corporate work. Occasionally, he gave her tough feedback, but he also picked her up when she was down and set her back on the road to success. Although one or the other of them may have left the company or industry, the relationship continues.

She has since reached a level few women attain in this industry, as marketing director, sales director, or vice president. But now, the mentoring is over. She is left to wonder if the organization still values her. Has she reached the highest point in her career? Perhaps those who have known her best have left as the industry undergoes intense downsizing. Now, who will tell others new to the organization, perhaps acquired in a merger, about her stellar performance from the past? Competition is fierce.

What role did mentors play in her success? They certainly helped. They assisted her in acquiring important skills, took a chance on her, and put in a good word on her behalf. But in the end, mentoring is only a piece of the puzzle. It is her performance that ensured her success.

# CHAPTER 5

## DISCUSSION OF TYPES OF MENTORS

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the mentoring experiences of women business leaders who have reached significant levels in their organizations and to understand their experiences and perceptions of the role mentoring played in their career success. Mentoring has been suggested as a strategy for women who aspire to higher levels of leadership in business organizations. Although many women report having had a mentor during their career few are achieving the goals of a senior leadership position in a business organization. This chapter and the next present the findings from the studies that answer the following research questions:

- What types of mentoring experiences have the participants had?
- How did their mentoring experiences impact their career paths and career decisions?

After reducing the interview data to the individual descriptions found in Chapter 4 this chapter now turns to examining the themes that emerged across participants, themes that begin to form the picture of the shared experience of mentoring as investigated in this study. This chapter will explore themes focused on the types of mentors the participants discussed, along with the mentoring relationship itself. Chapter 6 will look at the functions their mentors provided and the impact of mentoring on the careers of the women in the study.

Researchers do not seem to agree on how many mentors an individual can have. Some use a definition of a single mentor (Dougherty, Turban, & Haggard, as cited in Dougherty & Dreher, 2007); others use a variety of configurations, such as most recent mentor, most influential mentor, or a composite of all mentors (Allen et al., 2004). Participants in this study discussed a range of three to seven mentors who guided and advised them during their careers. It is nearly impossible for any one individual mentor to provide all the guidance and development an aspiring leader will need over the course of her career (de Janasz, Sullivan, & Whiting, 2003). The study participants described mentors who provided different types of development. In addition, leaders who recruited them for new positions became mentors to help them become proficient in their new jobs.

Although most researchers focus on the traditional definition of a senior organizational member as a mentor, some are beginning to find that individuals, women in particular, are looking to other types of people for mentorship (Salas-Lopez et al., 2011). Reflecting Kram's (1988) model of a constellation of individuals making up a developmental network, the participants in this study discussed an array of mentors that included family members, supervisors, peers, and organizational leaders. So, although it has been said that women have difficulty finding mentors due to the lack of senior women in their organizations and their exclusion from informal networks (Ragins & Cotton, 1991), women in this study, as in others, are finding new places and new avenues for the mentoring they need. Table 1 displays a summary of the number and types of mentors described by each participant.

Table 1

*Frequency of Types of Mentors Discussed by Participants*

| Participant | Types of Mentors Discussed | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Supervisor | Traditional | Peer | Family | Network | Senior Leader | Formal |
| Lisa | xx | x | x | x | | | |
| Nancy | x | x | x | x | | | x |
| Jennifer | x | xx | xx | | x | | x |
| Donna | x | xx | x | | | x | |
| Julie | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| Karen | x | | | x | | x | |
| Katie | x | x | x | x | | x | |
| Audrey | xxx | x | | x | | x | |
| Number and percent of total | 13 of 42 31% | 9 of 42 21% | 7 of 42 17% | 6 of 42 14% | 2 of 42 5% | 5 of 42 12% | 2 of 42 5% |

*Note:* Each x represents a mentor or group of mentors, in the case of "Family" and "Network," that were discussed by the participant.

## The First Mentor

Early in each woman's career, she encountered someone she called a mentor who helped set her on the path that led to her current successful career. Often, it takes just one person to recognize the potential in an individual and take a chance on them. These early mentors played many roles. They taught the women vital skills, advocated for them to others in the organization, and made phone calls that opened doors previously closed. "He was a marketer, I was not and so I learned a whole lot from him." "She took a special interest in getting me out of my comfort zone." "It's, you know, a couple of

phone calls here and there that help you get through." These were short-lived relationships but important ones that put the women on the path to success. These early mentors were at many different levels in the organizations. Some were direct supervisors, others were peers, and still others were at higher levels. The women met these early mentors on the job or sometimes through an interview, and each participant recognized the significant role her first mentor played. Perhaps this mentor gave her the opening she was hoping for, having already formed the desire to pursue a career in marketing. In other cases, the individual recruited the woman into a position she might not have thought of or pursued on her own.

**Supervisors as Mentors**

Some researchers discount supervisors as mentors. However, nearly one-third of the mentors discussed by the study participants were their managers at the time. At various times in the women's careers, these mentors played an important developmental role. They helped the women develop skills that added to their performance. They gave them stretch assignments that built the women's confidence and created opportunities that brought their protégées to the attention of senior leaders in the organization. These mentors often assumed the role of coach, encouraging the women to take on new positions and giving them advice about possible career moves. In some cases, the mentors encouraged the protégées to continue their education by pursuing an MBA. It was a time of development, during which the women gained and refined the skills that would take them to higher levels. The supervisor/mentor/coach encouraged, motivated, and sometimes pushed them into bigger and more visible roles.

It is not unusual in a business context for a supervisor to act as a mentor (Gibson, 2004). In a study of women business graduates, over 80% of their mentors were their direct supervisors (Burke & McKeen, 1996). However, not every supervisor is a mentor. One participant in this study noted that some of her supervisors were not interested in her development. They were only focused on using her work product to further their own careers.

Supervisors are most familiar with the individual's work product and can give the best recommendation when asked about a person's potential and readiness to do a new job. Another participant lamented the fact that a senior woman who was a great mentor earlier in her career could no longer give her solid recommendations because it had been a number of years since they worked together. Organizations want recent feedback regarding readiness rather than impressions from five year ago. This is a good reason for those who are looking to advance their careers to be sure they have mentors at all times who will speak up for them.

If researchers are looking for a uniform definition of mentoring, the decision to include or exclude supervisors in that definition is an important one. In this study, participants clearly saw their immediate supervisors as a natural source of mentoring. As researchers have noted, supervisor mentors may provide more coaching and challenging assignments, but they cannot always provide the level of sponsorship or exposure that a more senior organizational leader can offer (Dougherty & Dreher, 2007). This study's participants found supervisor recommendation to be an important function, yet few of the supervisors possessed the power or were at a high enough organizational level to be truly called sponsors.

## Traditional Mentors

Trust, friendship, and deep respect mark the relationships that nearly every woman in this study reported having with at least one individual who could be classified as a traditional mentor. These relationships meet all the definitions that we think of when the term *mentor* is used. It is a hierarchical relationship, with the mentor in a senior position to the protégée. It grows from a developmental relationship focused on helping the woman achieve her career goals into a deep personal relationship that extends beyond work. Often, the relationship spans several companies and possibly even different industries. These traditional mentors initiated the relationship, as did most of the mentors discussed in this study. Along with guidance and counseling, they often gave their protégées tough feedback and advice. "He was kind of like, 'hey welcome to the big league, you need thicker skin. You know, you can't take these things personally.'" "You've got to prove yourself. You've got to show some accomplishments . . . show them what you're about." Traditional mentoring relationships are often described as life changing, inspiring, and "giving us the courage to do the things we cannot do" (Ragins & Kram, 2007).

A prominent feature of these mentor relationships is the depth of feeling expressed by the protégées. Their faces lit up as they discussed these special people in their lives and careers and the impact their mentors had on them. "He established a trust with me and he looked after me." "We just hit it off from day one . . . we clicked as friends. . . . It was one of those very natural relationships." "I felt like I could confide in him."

The women reflected on how the mentors made it safe for them to learn by allowing them to make mistakes, giving them room to develop their own solutions to problems, and building confidence in their abilities. "He wanted to see what I thought. . . . He made it okay for me to disagree, respectfully disagree and tell him why." "A lot of times you just need a shot, you need a chance to show you can do it in a relatively safe environment . . . rather than say 'I told you so,' she said 'that was a good learning experience for you.'" The protégées described these mentors as great role models, and they themselves often adopted approaches to leading or managing that they learned from these valuable mentors.

**Senior Leaders**

A few of the women had the opportunity to be mentored by very senior leaders in their organizations. These formal positions were used to develop individuals who were identified as having high potential for future promotions in the organization. The women functioned somewhat like chiefs of staff to these high-ranking leaders. Mostly, they learned by observation, gaining business acumen and making important contacts across the organization that would be valuable in future positions.

Little has been written about top leaders in an organization mentoring aspiring women. The literature does not differentiate in level of the mentor other than to say a mentor is someone senior to the protégée. These relationships were usually formal job arrangements, and the women served as assistants of a sort to the high-ranking individuals. The mentoring relationship more closely resembled formal mentoring. The literature is mixed on the effectiveness of these types of mentors (Allen et al., 2005; Baugh & Fagenson-Eland, 2007; Kram 1988). Similarly, the experiences of the three

participants in this study were mixed. One found the mentoring very valuable and believed it was a step to a significant executive-level position. The others found they learned about their organizations and gained knowledge by observing the leaders they supported but received no further benefits from this important relationship. Indeed, one participant expressly commented that the leader she worked with was not a good mentor.

All three women struggled with maintaining what should have been a valuable relationship. They generally did not want to bother the prior mentor because he was so busy. In contrast one participant found her male colleagues routinely met with this senior leader for advice while she did not. This new knowledge emboldened her to schedule time with him to seek vital career advice. Another was told by her mentor to stay in contact, but her next meeting with him occurred several years later when she went to say goodbye as she left the company as part of a downsizing. She believes he did not know her job had been eliminated until she told him, and she wonders to this day if he could have done something to prevent that outcome.

Bureaucratic organizations such as these large pharmaceutical companies have many layers and barriers in place to limit access to those at the top (Jones, 2010). These barriers were cited as one reason why the women did not maintain contact with their important mentors. A hesitancy to capitalize on a relationship may be another. As two of the women put it, they did not want to be a bother. Perhaps their relationships had not developed the level of trust that the women needed in order to ask for the type of support they required at critical points in their careers.

## Formal Mentors

Although some of the women's organizations had formal mentoring programs, none of the participants had taken part in them as a protégée. These programs were only developed in recent years and were not available early in their careers. Several were currently involved as mentors, but most of the women made a point at sometime during the interview to emphasize they had never had formal mentors themselves. One participant had been assigned by her supervisor to a formal mentor in another part of the organization. Although she gained new knowledge about a part of the business she was unfamiliar with, the relationship was not productive for her personal development. She did not feel it was a good match or that the mentor knew enough about her and her business unit to be able to coach and develop her. Still another woman participated in a program that used external executive coaches in a type of developmental program for leaders in the organization. She received a few tips about managing a challenging work relationship, but she did not feel the program benefited her professional or personal development or aided in her career progression.

These results are not dissimilar from some of the reports in the literature. In general protégés in informal mentoring relationships are much more satisfied with their mentors than those in formal mentoring programs (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). This may be due to the quality of the relationship (Ragins, Cotton & Miller, 2000). Certainly the relationship was a differentiating factor for women in this study who participated in formal mentoring arrangement. As one participated noted, she expected her relationship with her mentor to be mutually beneficial. This was not the case with the formal mentor she was assigned to. Another woman said she was uncomfortable being appointed a

mentor. It was an uncomfortable relationship. The benefits and outcomes of mentoring were clearly linked to the bond created between the mentor and protégée in these cases.

## Peers as Mentors

Peer mentoring is another nontraditional mentoring relationship that is generating a lot of interest in the business community. Over half the participants in this study cited a specific peer or referred to a peer network as a source of mentoring. Peer mentoring can offer friendship as well as learning and support as part of the relationship. Individuals are usually closely matched in terms of age, job level, and career aspirations (McManus & Russell, 2007). Study participants discussed peer mentors who helped them assimilate into an organization and others with whom they exchanged career advice and feedback. Either as individuals or as part of a network, peers are a valuable element in the mentoring constellation of many women. In some cases, the peer mentor was formally assigned to help the woman integrate into the organization.

Unlike the examples of hierarchical formal mentoring programs, these peer mentors were very well matched to the protégées. They were the same age, they were at the same level in the organization, and they worked for the same person. The peer mentors helped the women understand how to get things done, to know who was who, and in general to grasp the organization culture. It became a two-way relationship, with the peers supporting each other, exchanging ideas, and encouraging each other in their career pursuits. "I would not have survived had this woman not been there because she helped with the acronyms and the language and the politics and the who-knows-who, and how to handle certain situations, it was just invaluable." "We learned from each other, helped each other, would talk to each other about what we wanted to do, where we

wanted to go, bounce ideas off each other and we were very supportive of each other and I think encouraged each other."

As peers in the network moved into new positions they looked out for their friends, often telling them of upcoming jobs or putting in a good word about their ability and work ethic. They remained dedicated to helping each other over a span of more than 15 years. Researchers refer to this type of peer mentors as "co-mentors" (de Janasz et al., 2003). These are peers or friends who are committed to helping each other develop. Peers are often referred to as an alternative to traditional mentors when those mentors are not available (Kram, 1988). By labeling them "alternatives," researchers place them on a lower level, diminishing the value of the relationship. The participants in this study made no distinction in terms of the importance to their careers of these peer mentors versus other organizational mentors. They were a valuable source for support and skill development.

Other types of peer mentoring can come from formal employee networks. Although no participant in this study mentioned them, women's leadership networks are becoming established in some large corporations (Laff, 2007). A few of the women in this study mentioned such groups in their companies but they did not include them as part of their mentoring resources. Formal networks may play a role in skill and knowledge development but some women are reluctant to join a group that is exclusively focused on women. The researcher established an informal women's network earlier in her career and one higher placed woman turned down the offer to join because she thought it would make her look weak to her male supervisor. Other women find women's networks

valuable sources of support for the challenges they face in navigating a male dominate culture.

Professional associations are also suggested as alternate sources of mentoring for women (Allen & Finkelstein, 2003). The Healthcare Businesswomen's Association, which many of the women in this study belong to, has recently implemented a mentoring program for its members. The mentoring takes place in small groups with two mentors and three to five mentees with the objectives of advancing career goals, developing leadership skills, broadening peer networks, and exploring solutions to work related situations (Healthcare Businesswomen's Association, 2012). Perhaps because of the intense competitive nature of this industry and the importance of protecting proprietary intellectual capital none of the study participants engaged in this program.

**Family Members as Mentors**

Parents and spouses are not often discussed as mentors in the literature, although they have been noted as sources of career and psychosocial support (Allen & Finkelstein, 2003; Isabella, 1982, as cited in Kram, 1988). Mothers, fathers, siblings, and husbands all played key roles as mentors for the women in this study. Parents instilled values and served as role models for future leadership. "My parents shaped me in that regard; to be honest and to work hard and you know just value people." In addition, as businesspeople themselves, family members were able to impart business wisdom and help the women with problem solving. "[I run] ideas by him for career or just you know business ideas, strategy ideas, you know workplace dynamics." Family also served to build confidence. "He wanted me to know I could do anything . . . there was a whole world out there . . . he

took a special interest and frankly no matter how much your self esteem goes when your own father believes in you there was nothing more powerful than that for me."

Siblings and other extended family provided encouragement and support. They expressed pride in the women's accomplishments and encouraged them to do more, cheering them on as they climbed the corporate ladder. "Anytime I would talk to them about business, or a promotion, they would say 'go for it.'"

Families can be particularly important during stressful times at work. Husbands not only give business advice but can also help their spouses be more objective about the often emotionally charged political issues at work. "It's great to have someone that you can bounce things off of, so they can literally tell you this is how you should deal with it." "He's been someone I can come home to and he will give me very straight advice about things."

One study (Allen & Finkelstein, 2003) found that individuals who reported having a traditional mentor were less likely to report an alternative source of support such as a family member. That was not the case in this study. The six participants who described a family member as a mentor were as likely to have traditional mentoring sources as those who did not mention family. Once again, rather than relegating family mentors to the category of "alternative source," these women placed a very high value on the mentoring they received from them, often discussing the family mentor before any business source mentor. Parents, siblings, and husbands were a part of the development network, not a second-best alternative because no one else was available.

## Negative Mentoring Experiences

Only a few women described any negative experiences with mentors, although some arrangements were clearly less than productive, such as the formal mentoring programs that a few described. Mostly, they felt these formal mentors could not provide the type of support they found in individuals with whom they had true trusting relationships that developed over time. One woman described some extremely bad advice she was given early in her career. She was advised to become a secretary, which later became a stumbling block as she attempted to secure a higher-level position. She also described a mentor who did not give her balanced feedback, leading to the loss of a promotion due to a shortfall in her experience. Ultimately, these negative experiences actually helped shaped the women's leadership abilities and influenced how they managed others more effectively.

The most frequently discussed negative aspect of mentoring is occurring now as the pharmaceutical industry is going through constant reductions in personnel. The intensified competition due to the reduced number of positions is resulting in a lack of focus on mentoring in all organizations. "Everyone's under pressure and everyone, no matter what your level, is scared they're going to lose their job. There's just not a lot of time for people." Still others find that the higher they rise in an organization, the less mentoring occurs. "All the mentoring that I had was a long time ago . . . you get to a certain level, and there is no more mentoring unless you're in some special program."

### Gender of Mentors

Gender of the mentor was never mentioned as an issue for any of the women. There are few women in leadership positions in the pharmaceutical industry (Rand, 2007; DeMan, 2012), and therefore, it is not unusual for a woman to work with and be

mentored by men. Several of the women expressed their disappointment with the women leaders they had encountered and said they would rather work for and be mentored by a man. Women at lower levels in the organization hope for women leaders who will nurture and befriend them. They hold the same communal expectations of women leaders as their male counter parts. When women leaders violate those female attributes by being powerful and aggressive, other women are disillusioned and often upset by their behavior (Heim, Murphy & Golant, 2001). The participants in this study like many individuals expressed more comfort with male leaders whose gender traits are aligned with the expectations of leaders. For the most part, the women in this study just wanted someone who would help them develop, give them advice, and be an advocate for them. "I don't think you should look at it as a gender thing. . . . You have to look at what is making people successful. Who is going to be open and honest to you, who has been successful and you look at their skills and you respect them. So you want to get somebody like that."

## Summary

The women in this study described situations reminiscent of Kram's (1988) constellation of developmental relationships. They found mentoring in a variety of places and in diverse individuals during their careers. Supervisors, peers, senior leaders in their organizations, and even members of their own families provided the guidance and support the women needed to advance their careers to a level very few women reach in the pharmaceutical industry.

Many of the participants described individuals who could be called traditional mentors. These people were senior to them in the organization, and the mentoring

relationships that were formed were initiated by the mentors and lasted many years over job changes, company changes, and even industry changes. Such relationships were quite special to the women, evolving beyond business into a deep personal level.

Other mentors were found in immediate supervisors. Although fostering development is part of a manager's ordinary responsibilities, these individuals singled out the women for more in-depth development, which the study participants identified as mentoring. Peers also provided mentoring, either individually or as part of a network. A few participants had formal mentors assigned to them from within their organizations or as external coaches.

Finally, mentoring was often found at home, provided by parents, siblings, or husbands. Researchers may question whether these people can fulfill the mentor role, but the women in this study often discussed members of their families before mentioning anyone at work when identifying individuals who had an impact on their careers.

The gender of the mentor was insignificant to them. The women were simply looking for someone who had been successful and could help them be successful as well. Occasionally, they may have received bad advice or negative mentoring, but on the whole, their experiences were very positive. Their mentors provided a full range of career development and support, which will be explored in the next chapter.

No difference was found in the type or number of mentors identified by women who reached the level of vice president level versus director. Higgins and Kram (2001) developed a model to evaluate the strength of an individual's mentor network. Those with more diverse mentors, particularly from outside their organization, were expected to be more successful. Their model does not hold true for the participants in this study. The

only mentors outside the organization were family members and yet these women were very successful in their industry. The participants had from three to seven mentors representing a variety of types. The vice president group ranged from five to six mentors in four or five of the seven categories. The director group ranged from three to seven mentors in three to six of the categories. Both groups averaged five mentors. The missing mentor type which the literature is now espousing for success (Alsever, 2012; Hewlett, 2012; Ibarra et al, 2010) was the sponsor. Three of the women, two vice presidents and one director, were mentored by very high placed leaders in their organizations. These are the type of individuals who could make powerful sponsors, but all three of the women failed to nurture the relationship with the mentor to their advantage. The lack of initiative in maintaining a relationship with one of the most powerful leaders in the organization appeared to have more to do with the women's reluctance to ask for help. The reluctance may stem from their lack of confidence in their own ability and performance or simply a reflection of being raised as one participant discussed (Alsever, 2012; Flynn et al, 2011).

# CHAPTER 6

## DISCUSSION OF MENTORING FUNCTIONS

One way to define mentoring is to examine the functions that are provided. Many researchers have utilized the model proposed by Kram (1988) which includes two broad areas: career development and psychosocial support. Career functions include sponsorship, exposure and visibility, coaching, protection, and challenging assignments. The psychosocial functions are role modeling, acceptance and confirmation, counseling, and friendship. Career functions flow from the mentor's experience, rank, and influence in the organization, whereas psychosocial functions come from the interpersonal relationship that develops between the mentor and the protégé (Kram, 1988).

Which functions are present in a mentoring relationship reflects a combination of the needs and interpersonal skills of the protégé and the mentor. Kram (1988) said that exploring the types of developmental support that are present is of more value than trying to put a definition on the act of mentoring itself. Some classic mentoring relationships may offer the full range of career and psychosocial support while others may provide only one or two mentoring functions.

In this study the participants discussed career support functions almost exclusively. This could be due to the study's focus on the impact of mentoring to their career progress. The researcher did not specifically ask about mentoring for personal development. In the work environment and given a very bureaucratic culture, mentoring would naturally be focused on work product and progress and not necessarily on personal

challenges or development. Although there were some mentoring experiences that displayed elements of friendship and confidence building, mentors primarily provided developmental support directly related to the job and advancement. Five broad functional themes were identified: skill development, creating opportunities, feedback and advice, building confidence, and friendship. As seen in Table 2, of the 76 mentoring functions identified across all participants and their mentors, nearly 80% supported career development: skill development (25%), creating opportunities (22%), and feedback and advice (32%).

Table 2

*Frequency of Mentoring Functions Discussed by Participants*

| Participant | Mentoring Functions Discussed | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Skill Development | Creating Opportunities | Feedback and Advice | Building Confidence | Friendship |
| Lisa | xx | xxx | xxx | | x |
| Nancy | xxx | | x | xx | x |
| Jennifer | xxxx | xx | xx | | x |
| Donna | xxx | xx | xxxx | xx | x |
| Julie | xxx | xxx | xxxxx | x | xx |
| Karen | x | xx | xx | | |
| Katie | xx | xx | xxx | | x |
| Audrey | x | xxx | xxx | | x |
| Number and percent of total mentions | 19 of 76<br>25% | 17 of 76<br>22% | 24 of 76<br>32% | 5 of 76<br>6.5% | 8 of 76<br>10.5% |

*Note:* Each x represents a mentor who provided the specific function to the participant as identified through an analysis of the interviews.

**Skill Development**

One of the aims of this study was to understand how mentoring impacted the careers and decisions of the participants. Exceeding performance expectations was and continues to be the most frequently cited strategy women use to advance their careers (Catalyst, 2004). In a discussion with the 18 women CEOs of *Fortune* 500 companies, Bussey (2012) found support for the Catalyst study. Maggie Wilderotter, CEO of Frontier Communications, said, "Unless you are delivering value, there is no right to move forward." It is no surprise then that 25% of the functions provided by mentors involved helping the protégée develop critical skills. The skills may have been pertinent to a current job or needed to progress to another level.

Coaching is one of the career development functions recognized by Kram (1988), but it falls far short of the breadth of skill development described by this study's participants. In this study, mentoring often revolved around learning the complex technical and business skills required to be a successful marketer in the pharmaceutical industry: working with ad agencies, knowing what studies to use, understanding what variables to evaluate, being familiar with legal and regulatory issues, and knowing how to present data.

Some mentors taught their protégées about leadership, how to manage a team, and the importance of valuing people. They taught them how to interact with high level leaders in the organization and how to navigate an often highly competitive environment. Skill development continues to be an important focus as an individual climbs the

corporate ladder, but the skills needed may shift from technical areas to areas of leadership and politics. A few women specifically asked their mentors for insights into organizational politics and received valuable feedback regarding the organization's perception of their leadership. "Most recently it's [the mentoring] more of the organizational type. I'm having conversations with senior leadership or this is what I heard, you know, what's the perception and those kinds of things."

In the intensely competitive culture of pharmaceutical sales and marketing, it is not a good idea to take risks and make highly visible mistakes while learning a new role. Mentors created a safe place for their protégées to make mistakes and learn from them. "If it wasn't right, that was okay, at least I tried." One mentor challenged his protégée by having her explain decisions and conclusions to him before she implemented them or presented her ideas to others. Still another woman described her mentor as giving her advice but allowing her to make her own mistakes. "[She] gave me the freedom to run the business [and] the ability to fail and not worry."

Another type of skill development involved pushing the protégée outside her comfort zone. Kram (1988) used the term *challenging assignments* to describe this mentoring function, which enables learning and skill development to take place. In only two cases did participants specifically mention stretch assignments that their mentors gave them in order to help them advance and to recognize their own potential for more responsibility. However, some mentors would give their protégées special assignments, such as managing the team while the leader was out of town. At other times, the women were asked to create solutions to challenging business problems. In a few cases, the mentors pushed their protégées to be more assertive about their career choices and gave

them special projects in order to expose them to senior leadership. "She like took special interest getting me out of my comfort zone, gave me more to do." "I was sort of being, it's a bad expression, but like pulled up by the hair . . . even before I was 100% ready." Throughout their careers, mentoring for skill development was very valuable to the study participants. It enabled them to develop the competencies that would lead to superior performance, a key asset for further promotion.

### Creating Opportunities

Mentors created opportunities for their protégées in many different ways. Sometimes they recruited the woman into the organization or the business unit after recognizing her potential and then became a mentor to her, helping her develop the skills needed for superior job performance and advancement to the next leadership level. At other times, a mentor might make key introductions or phone calls that opened doors to important job opportunities. They might advocate for the protégée to others in the organization, either as part of a formal succession planning session or by informally contacting a potential hiring manager. The mentor would highlight the protégée's accomplishments, skills, and potential for future advancement.

Many participants discussed mentors who recruited or hired them into key positions, perhaps taking a chance on them and giving them the break they needed to advance to new levels of leadership or into critical line positions. Some described mentors they met in early jobs who stayed in touch with them even when one or the other of them changed organizations. These mentors recognized their protégées' special potential and later recruited them into key positions. In some cases, this was the move that set them on the path toward their current leadership position. "[He said] 'I think

you're short-selling yourself career-wise, because I think you should be in product management and you have to ask yourself what your future is in your current role.'"

One common way that mentors created opportunities for their protégées was by opening doors. Sometimes, this entailed making phone calls and putting in a good word by recommending the protégée for a position. They may have ensured the protégée received an important interview, again making a critical recommendation often unbeknownst to the protégée. Some of the women reported they suddenly found themselves being interviewed for positions that had not been posted or after the job postings were closed. "I found out later he was the one who made the phone call, based on the lunch we had together." "I got one of the last spots on the team and it was like after the interview was closed. I think he said you have to interview this person." "Those positions weren't posted. When it became available, he put my name in the hat."

Mentors also created opportunities for the women to become visible to senior management. It could have been as part of a special project or by creating the opportunity for the protégée to make a presentation at a leadership meeting. "He was able to actually enable that conversation at the senior leadership level and the presentation to senior leadership. What he basically created was visibility." "He would try to create those opportunities like you know . . . 'I'm going to set up a meeting and I want you to walk him through this.'" Other women found their peer networks also opened doors by identifying job openings and helping to set up interviews for key positions. "I remember her calling and saying 'there are openings, come on in.'"

*Sponsorship* is a term that is currently being used in the practitioner press to describe a type of super mentor who goes beyond coaching taking a strong stand on an

individual by advocating for them to the organization. The protégé may only hear of these actions from others or see the results when they land a choice assignment. "People will say he happened to mention you in a talent session, so you know he's working it." As it is being used today, the term may include accountability for the protégé's readiness and advancement (Ibarra et al., 2010). Although one participant in this study used this term to describe a mentor, the researcher did not see evidence of this type of organizational accountability in any of the participants' experiences.

Some researchers (Ibarra et al., 2010) have contended that one reason women are being mentored but not promoted is due to the lower organizational rank of the women's mentors. This may be a result of women's exclusion from informal networks, where an individual may meet and build a relationship with a more highly placed potential mentor (Sabattini, 2008). These researchers have not explored whether women chose lower-power mentors intentionally or whether they were the only ones available to the women protégées. In this study, most organizational mentors were one or two levels above the women. And even though very few of the women discussed specifically pursuing a mentor, they took advantage of an opportunity for mentoring when it presented itself to them.

### Giving Advice and Feedback

Another role played by mentors in this study was that of advisor. Often, the advice mentors provided revolved around career paths and next moves. When one participant was frustrated by her lack of career progress, she decided to visit a prior mentor. He gave her perspective on a career decision she was trying to make by helping her see the bigger picture of the organization's talent needs. "I think you need to get

global experience, I think that will be more beneficial to you in the long run. I think that's where we need to focus our efforts." Still another mentor helped a participant see the path to advancement more clearly. "If you want to be successful, you need to have marketing." More often, the mentor helped the protégée understand her choices and pushed her to take a proactive role in her career moves. "[He asked] 'what are you going to do, where are you looking?'" "'What's the next job? Who's your boss now? Where are they going?'"

Every now and then, people need to hear feedback that is not so easy to take. For many of the women in this study, their mentors provided the balanced but tough feedback that developing leaders need to hear. They helped their protégées understand the sometimes cruel reality of corporate life. "If you want love, go home. I'm sorry but it's true, you have to realize that this is about business, this isn't about you." "You're in a corporation now this is what goes on and you've got to protect yourself [and your work]." "He was kind of like 'hey, welcome to the big league, you need thicker skin. You know you can't take these things personally.'"

The closest thing to this function described in the literature is what Kram (1988) termed *counseling*. However, she described a process that is focused more on helping the younger individual resolve the personal conflicts, fears, and anxieties that may be associated with success or failure in the workplace. In the case of this study, a participant received feedback that was more of a wakeup call initiated by a mentor. This type of advice can be very valuable. Ryckman (2010) said women may be unaware of their own weaknesses and need to cultivate a variety of mentors who can give them this type of feedback.

## Building Confidence

Mentors often played a critical role in helping their protégées overcome a lack of confidence or in finding the confidence they needed to succeed at higher levels. Early mentors, often family members, supported the participants in their dreams of achieving greatness. "He wanted me to know I could do anything." "Any time I would talk to them about business or a promotion, they would say 'go for it,' they were always very positive and supportive."

Where does an aspiring female leader go when she has a crisis of confidence? When setbacks and challenges resulted in a lack of confidence for the women in this study, mentors often played an important role in lifting up the women. For one woman, her mentor helped her recover from a crisis in confidence by telling her, "'This is a blip on the radar, this is not representative of who you are or what you're capable of.'" In another situation, a protégée of one of the participants became a mentor to her, helping to restore her confidence. "One day I was supposed to meet her and I said 'look I'm not in a good way I went for this job and I didn't get it' and we sat there for like an hour and a half in the cafeteria and she walked me through things that she admired in me."

This was one of the few examples of psychosocial functions that study participants discussed, and it was limited to three of the eight women. It could be compared to Kram's (1988) *acceptance and confirmation*. Kram stated that positive self-image flows from the increase in competence that the protégé experiences. However, in these cases, the confirmation came first, which allowed the protégée to achieve the level of competence. Women will turn down a job for which they totally qualified because they are afraid they would be unable to do it well. Men, on the other hand will apply for

a job for which they are only partially qualified, saying, "Sure I can do that"("Do women shy away from promotions," 2012; Flynn, Heath & Holt, 2011; Shellenbarger, 2012). This early confidence-building function is critical for helping some women to jump-start their careers or take that big step that leads to higher leadership. A mentor often recognizes talent in the woman that she herself may not see. One participant discussed a mentor who had to push her to take roles of greater responsibility. He had more faith in her than she had in herself. His early support gave her the drive that she needed to achieve higher-level leadership and success. The mentor's support can give the woman the confidence she needs to take a risky step.

## The Mentoring Relationship

Perhaps the most significant theme that was repeated by all the participants in every interview was the importance of the relationship between the protégée and her mentor. *Trust* and *deep respect* were the words most often used to describe the type of relationship they had with their most significant and influential mentors. In cases where the relationship was forced or artificial, arising from a formal mentoring program, the women described a mentoring relationship that was ineffective and unproductive. When the relationship developed naturally over time, a two-way, caring relationship grew and included the woman, her work, and often her family. These deep relationships lasted many years, surviving job changes, industry changes, organization changes, and retirements.

### Trust

Trust is clearly the most critical component in these relationships. It is the basis of not only mentoring but also professional relationships. "There are two core things for

me that are important in life, trust and respect and I think in any professional relationship if you don't have those two behaviors as a mutual relationship then it doesn't work." "There is a huge element of trust; it's the foundation for everything else after that." Protégées wanted to be able to talk about their challenges, their weaknesses, and their failures. They needed to be able to discuss problems they had with direct reports or with others in the organization without fear that their words would be used against them or against another person. "You have to know that what you bring forth isn't going to be held against you or someone you are talking about. You have to compartmentalize. I'm mentoring this person instead of managing them."

Trust was the foundation, the very beginning of the relationship. Without it, mentoring could not occur. The protégées knew their mentors had their best interests at heart, would protect them, and would keep their confidences. "He established a trust with me, and he looked after me . . . [he] wanted to see me do well." "He was definitely very interested in people's career and well being, like just genuinely helpful and like you always felt if you had an issue, or if you had a business issue or personal issue, you can sort of reach out to him." "We had a mutual trust [and] I felt like I could confide in him."

When mentoring was more formally arranged, the trust was not always there and the relationship was often uncomfortable and unproductive. "I don't know if I like the mandate of having someone be a mentor coach to me unless I pick them and investigate it first. I think again it's a very touchy thing." "I respect what she's done, but I just didn't click with her. I don't see a good kind of strong mentoring relationship developing there."

**Friendship**

A few of the best relationships developed beyond the strictly professional and entered the realm of friendship. The mentoring literature says these types of relationships are mostly lacking in cross-gender mentoring (Ragins & McFarlin, 1989). For the women in this study, however, there were a few relationships that entered this rarified realm. "Many men weren't comfortable with women especially women in higher level [jobs], but he was always someone that was very comfortable with women and appreciative of women and wanted to help women. He had a strong wife and of his three kids, two were girls. . . . He invited me and my family to go with his family to the New Jersey shore." "We just hit it off from day one, we clicked as friends, it was one of those very natural relationships."

Many studies of cross-gender mentoring note the absence of psychosocial support functions provided by male mentors to female protégées (O'Brien et al., 2010, Ragins & McFarlin, 1989). Though these functions have less impact on career advancement, they have been shown to increase job satisfaction. In general, women rarely mention socializing outside of work with their male mentors. A few participants in this study did mention socializing, but when socialization outside of work occurred, it usually included the protégée's family.

Although 70% of the mentors in this study were male, nearly every participant discussed a mentoring relationship that developed into a long-lasting friendship. This is not unusual. Other researchers have also noted that women as well as men identified their male mentors as friends (Ragins & McFarlin, 1989). The quality of the relationship was a driving force in every mentoring encounter discussed by the participants, so it is not surprising for these women to have described their most important mentors as friends.

## Impact of Mentoring on the Career Paths of the Participants

As seen in Table 2, the three mentoring functions provided most often by the mentors of the study participants were: feedback and advice, skill development, and creating opportunities. In some cases, the mentor was directly responsible for a job opportunity or a promotion by recruiting the protégée into that position. In others cases, the mentor acted as an advocate by putting in a positive word for the woman to others in the organization. This often occurred during talent or succession planning meetings. Sometimes, the mentor opened doors through key introductions. The mentor often played the role of coach, helping the protégée develop skills that would lead to the superior performance needed to advance to higher leadership levels. These three themes fall into the category of career functions as defined by Kram (1988) and are most often associated with career progression (Carter & Silva, 2010a; Dreher & Ash, 1990).

Every protégée had at least one mentor who helped her develop the skills that enabled her to achieve superior job performance. According to research by Catalyst (2004), this is the top strategy suggested by CEOs for women desiring advancement in an organization. In addition, the women all received some type of advice on career moves as well as feedback on personal performance and style. Finally, every woman but one noted a mentor who played a critical role in opening a door, advocating for her to others in the organizations, or recruiting her into a key position in the organization. All three of these themes can be tied directly to career choices that lead to higher-level promotions.

Mentoring helped all of the women in this study advance their careers. For some it was and continues to be a very deliberate process of seeking advice and help from individuals around them. For others, mentors found them and often needed to push in

order for the women to take the next big step in their careers. No association was found between types of mentors or number of mentors and the level of position achieved by the individual women, director versus vice president. However they all credit various mentors to helping them on the road to success. As seen in Figure 9, mentoring was the foundation. The skills mentors helped their protégées develop, the opportunities they created, advice and feedback they gave while helping to build the protégées confidence and offering friendship enabled the women to build the strategic pillars that lead to career success.

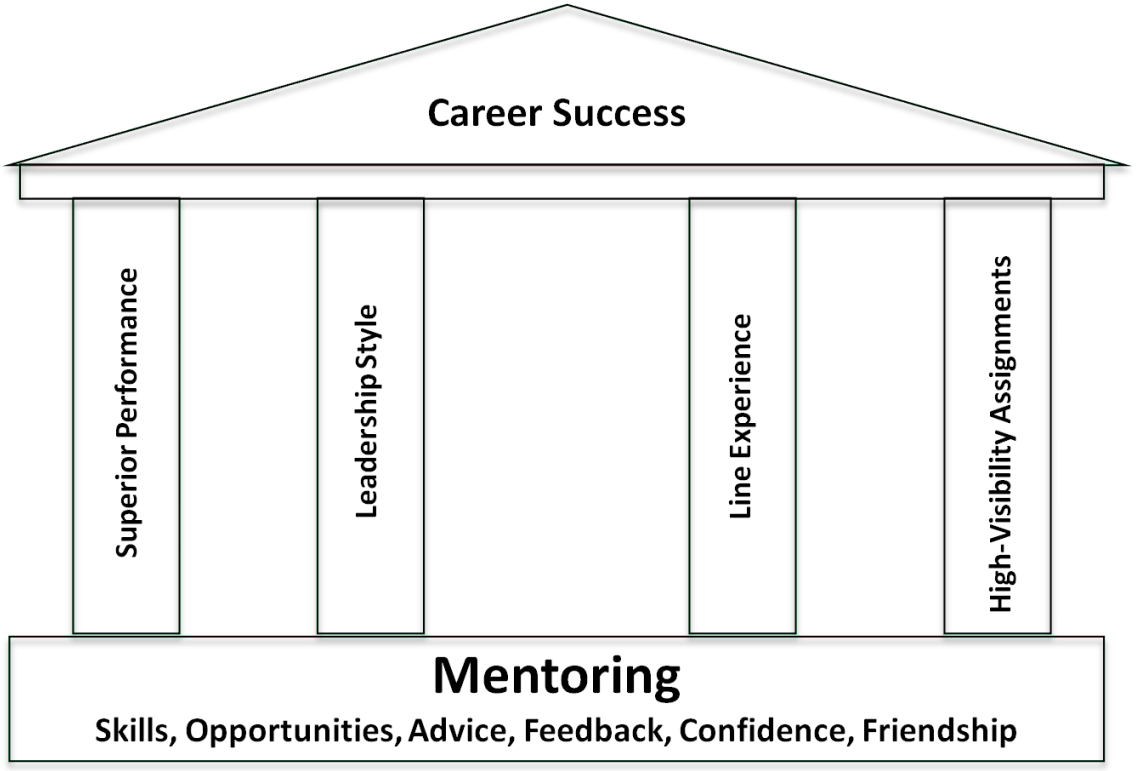


*Figure 9.* How mentoring leads to career success

**Summary**

What types of experiences did women in this study have with mentoring? Although one or two noted mentors who did not give them good advice, the experiences

were positive on the whole. Their mentors provided many of the same types of functions described in the mentoring literature. Of the mentors discussed by the women in this study, 32% provided some type of advice and feedback. The advice ranged from what their next career moves should be, what skills they needed to work on, the importance of pursuing their education, or tough feedback on their leadership styles or the realities of corporate life. Skill development was also a critical function provided by the mentors, and 22% of them played a role in creating an opportunity for their protégées directly or indirectly. In addition to these central career functions, the women's mentoring experiences were marked by a few relationships that became deep personal friendships. Only a small number of the participants made a point of saying their mentors helped them develop confidence in themselves. This type of mentoring was more often associated with the mentoring provided by family members.

How did their mentoring experiences impact their career decisions and progress? The experiences certainly played a prominent part. But mentoring is only a tool, a strategy. It must be coupled with superior performance, managerial skill, and hard work (Catalyst, 2004) in order to lead to the type of career success demonstrated by these women in the commercial pharmaceutical industry. Success cannot be attributed to any one individual factor.

# CHAPTER 7

# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For decades researchers have been trying to explain why women are underrepresented in leadership positions in organizations. Although some small progress has been made, there are still too few women leading our largest business organizations. Many theories have been advanced as to why women have not achieved parity with the male gender, and many suggestions have been offered to help them close the gap. This study was designed to examine just one of those strategies, mentoring. The purpose of this study was to explore the mentoring experiences of women in leadership positions in the pharmaceutical industry and to examine the role mentoring played in their career success. This chapter presents some final conclusions on the definition of mentoring as revealed by the participants' stories, and it considers the impact of organizational culture and gender as related to this study. Recommendations for organizations seeking to use mentoring as a developmental tool for future women leaders and for women themselves are also included. The chapter concludes with some final reflections from the researcher on the topic and the research process.

To date, no U.S. or European pharmaceutical organization has been headed by a woman. A rarefied few females have risen to senior leadership positions, but none has yet made it to the CEO rank. The researcher chose to study women who have already been successful to see if there are lessons to be learned from these unique women, lessons that other women could embrace or that organizations could adopt to make their

mentoring programs more effective. The commercial sector of the pharmaceutical industry is an important one to examine as this is traditionally where future leaders are found in this industry.

## Mentoring Defined

The phenomenological approach to qualitative research is unique in that it does not impose a definition of the subject that is under study. Meaning is derived from the descriptions of the experiences provided by the participants. Prejudgments are set aside in an effort to be open to the picture that emerges (Moustakas, 1994). Most people agree that mentoring involves one individual giving advice or help to another for the purpose of development. However, many variations of this definition exist. Some researchers insist on a strict hierarchical relationship; others include peers and alternative types of mentors (Allen & Finkelstein, 2003; McManus & Russell, 2007). In this study, the researcher used the terms *mentoring* and *developmental relationship* interchangeably in order to encompass all the important relationships and experiences that had an impact on the careers of the participants.

As seen in this study, it is particularly important in a business setting to view mentoring broadly. In a business context it can be difficult to separate the role of manger and the role of mentor (Gibson, 2004). Although the subordinate may view the manager as a mentor, the manager may not describe things in the same way. Often, when the participants in this study discussed mentors, they paused and asked, "I don't know, is that a mentor?" The researcher would respond, "What do you think?" Most often they decided the relationship and interchange constituted a significant developmental experience for them. But if the individual dispensing the advice were asked if they were

the participant's mentor they might say no. As Maggie Wilderotter, CEO of Frontier Communications, said, "I had many mentors, and they didn't know it" (Bussey, 2012). Successful women take mentoring in any form and wherever they can find it, even if the dispensers of the advice do not know they are operating as mentors.

Mentoring appears to be defined by the individual on the receiving end. If researchers hold to a traditional definition of mentoring as the relationship between an older, experienced individual and a younger, inexperienced one that has the purpose of career advancement, then we must coin a new term for the experiences of the women in this study and others like them. To exclude these experiences would deny us a rich understanding of how women in particular find the help and guidance they need in order to advance their careers in a traditionally male-dominated environment. It would also perpetuate the gendered view that currently defines mentoring hierarchically rather than considering other types of relationships that the women in this study valued.

The researcher did not ask the participants for a definition of mentoring. Instead, she let their stories speak for themselves and let the definition emerge from the collective essence of the shared experience. *Mentoring occurred when someone, such as a family member, manager, senior leader, or peer, gave advice or feedback, assisted in the development of critical skills, or helped facilitate a new opportunity that often led to advancing the woman's career and position in the organization.* Gathering data on a variety of experiences leads to a richer description, albeit not a definitive definition, of mentoring (Dougherty & Dreher, 2007). The individual and combined descriptions in this study convey the essence of mentoring for these participants only; others may have a different definition and different experiences.

## Organizational Context

Culture and context are two critical factors to consider when searching for meaning through hermeneutical phenomenology. The experiences of individuals are influenced by the world in which they live and in which the experiences take place (Heidegger, 1962). Therefore, it is important to explore the culture of the organizations or industries in which the protégés worked. Organizational context can have a direct impact on the developmental or mentoring relationships through the culture, hierarchical structure, performance evaluation system, and reward system (Kram, 1988).

Although the leaders of most pharmaceutical organizations, like nearly all business organizations, say they value innovation and support a culture that rewards and encourages diversity and collaboration, the numbers speak for themselves. A study of the top 10 pharmaceutical companies revealed that only 12% of executive positions are held by women and that three companies have no women executives at all (Rand, 2007). Further, as noted earlier, no woman heads a major U.S. or European pharmaceutical organization (DeMan, 2012). An individual following the traditional path to the top of a pharmaceutical organization starts with a sales rep position, rotates into marketing, then moves through increasing levels of responsibility in sales and marketing leadership before rising to president and CEO. Unfortunately for women, their progress stops short of the top spots. They come up against some of the same barriers that women in other industries have identified, including lack of mentors and lack of role models (DeMan, 2012).

Industry and the business environment play an important role in shaping the culture of an organization (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2008). That culture can have an impact

on the prevalence and quality of the mentoring that is available (Kram, 1988). The regulations and controls that govern the industry have a great influence on the culture of pharmaceutical organizations. Even an area such as marketing, which should be characterized by creativity and originality, is subject to strict controls and constant review and approval by legal and regulatory committees. These committees must approve all marketing materials, programs, and promotional messages. Things as seemingly insignificant as the size, font, and placement of generic and brand names on printed material must meet absolute specifications. Such controls stem from regulations imposed by the Food Drug Administration (FDA). Violation of these regulations can cost the organization billions of dollars in fines (Thomas & Schmidt, 2012). So it is not surprising that the cultures of the organizations are, in reality, very hierarchical and controlling. This control extends to the flow of information and affects access to senior leaders, and it further complicates mentoring and developmental relationships. One participant described the approval process that was needed in order for her to contact a highly placed leader who had been a prior mentor. The existence of such a policy led her to believe she was not entitled to contact this mentor for ongoing advice. The study participants' approach to mentoring also reflects, to some degree, this very rigid structure. Only a few have ever initiated a mentoring relationship themselves. Their organizational mentors have been limited to those leaders they have had day-to-day contact with and the relationships have arisen because someone has taken an interest in their development. Opportunities to meet with and develop relationships with leaders in other parts of the organization or at significantly higher levels in the organization are extremely limited. The culture of the organization therefore acts as an additional barrier

to mentoring for women, particularly as it relates to obtaining a sponsor with sufficient power to help them break through the glass ceiling.

## Gender Issues

Mentoring literature and leadership literature continue to try to find differences between men and women. Numerous studies have looked at differences in the gender makeup of mentoring dyads, differences in functions received, and differences in outcomes (Burke & McKeen, 1996; O'Brien et al., 2010; Ragins, 1997; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Ragins & McFarlin, 1989). The few differences identified suggest that less psychosocial support is given by a male mentor to a female protégée, and there is some indication that women with female mentors receive lower salaries than their male counterparts. In addition, some research points to the lower organizational levels of female mentors. The researchers contend these mentors have less organizational power than male mentors and that this could be a hindrance to their female protégées (Ibarra et al., 2010; Lewis & Fagenson, 1995). Others have concluded that there is little difference in the mentoring functions that men and women receive (O'Brien et al., 2010).

Participants in this study confirmed what has been found by others (Salas-Lopez et al., 2011): gender does not matter. Having a male mentor can be beneficial in learning to navigate through a male-dominated environment. The most critical thing to them was the success record and ability of the mentor, and many expressed disappointment in the women leaders they had observed in their organizations. In addition to these attributes, the relationship was deemed most important. The protégées wanted mentors they could trust. If a relationship did not develop, the mentoring was ineffective. There are few women in leadership positions in the pharmaceutical industry (DeMan, 2012; Rand,

2007), so it would not be unusual for these women to work for and be mentored by men. They are comfortable working with men, and a few feel more at home as "one of the boys" than they do working with women.

Access to mentors is another gender issue often discussed in the literature (Ragins & Cotton, 1991). Based on the number and diversity of mentors discussed in this study, the participants were able to find the mentors they needed. However, if examined more closely, the data show that nearly one-third of mentors were the participants' supervisors, six of the eight participants described family members as mentors, and five noted peers as important sources of mentoring. The women in this study could all be classified as successful in the pharmaceutical industry due to the levels of responsibility and leadership they achieved. Perhaps access to more influential individuals as mentors could have propelled them further in their careers. Still, these successful women found the mentoring and developmental assistance they needed in nontraditional places, which helped to propel them to positions of leadership in a very male-dominated industry. Heather Bresch, CEO of Mylan, says that women start out at a disadvantage in the leadership race. "What I found was that expectations of women were simply lower and this resulted in being overlooked for certain opportunities" (Bussey, 2012). Men may have the luxury of sitting around with their mentors or sponsors and planning their next career moves (Ibarra et al., 2010). Women must work harder to make their mark and show their achievements through superior performance.

Some researchers have hypothesized that due to the unique challenges women face, such as coping with work-life balance or gender discrimination that they would receive more psychosocial support than their male colleagues (O'Brien et al., 2010).

Although the challenges are very real, this study's participants rarely discussed such issues with their mentors. Showing what could be perceived as weakness in a tough competitive environment was not deemed a good strategy for anyone wanting to advance. When they occasionally complained about workplace issues, they were hit with tough feedback and advice on the realities of corporate life. More often, these women used family members to vent to and to give them the type of psychosocial support needed to continue in the face of often challenging situations.

Although some women questioned the effort of their organizations to increase the number of women in senior leadership positions, none used their gender as a reason for not progressing further or faster. They recognized their male colleagues may have advantages over them in terms of connections, but none of them used this as an excuse. Consequently, gender was not considered a factor in mentoring for them. They wanted their mentors to be successful individuals who could give them good advice and whom they could trust. None expected mentors to shield them or cover up for their shortcomings.

If, as has been suggested many times over, mentoring is a strategy to help women advance to top positions in their organizations, then why is there such disparity in the numbers of men and women in the top echelons? Some researchers have suggested that women have mentors who are not powerful enough or that what women really need are sponsors. Others wonder if there is something missing in the way mentoring has been understood and researched over two decades (McManus & Russell, 2007). An important aspect that may be overlooked is that mentoring is just a tool—one strategy among many to help those with talent, skills, and drive to reach their full potential. Mentoring alone

will not help a woman climb to the top of the organization. Mentors can help women identify opportunities, can introduce them to important people, can help them develop critical skills and can push them to take on greater responsibility. But at the end of the day, women need to take the advice, work hard to develop the skills take advantage of the opportunities and turn in the performance that the organization demands.

## Study Conclusions

The women in this study helped the researcher understand that mentoring for women is not substantially different than mentoring for men. Women value the same functions that help them develop skills that will lead to superior performance. They value the advice and feedback a mentor can give them, and obviously, they value the introductions, interviews, and opportunities mentors create. What may be different is the array of individuals they identify as mentors. They define mentors broadly, with the common element being someone who helps them advance their careers. A mentor may take the traditional form of someone senior to them in the organization who provides an array of mentor functions, or a mentor may be a peer, a supervisor, or a family member who provides one or two critical functions when they are most needed. All are equally valued.

Mentoring is a tool to help the women advance. The most important element for advancement is still sustained superior performance. Therefore, all mentoring is focused on those things that can advance performance and career: skills, opportunities, advice, and feedback. If the mentoring fails to live up to their standards, as some formal programs do, the women do not even consider the individuals they are paired with as mentors; instead, they are just people they were "assigned to" at some point. When they

need other types of personal support, it is mostly found in family members and peers. Rather than lean on a mentor in the organization for support when the competitive and political climate becomes overwhelming, the women turn to family and friends or peers. They need to be confident at work, demonstrating their readiness to take on more responsibility.

The most successful mentoring is informal. The relationship is a key element. Trust and respect must be present in order for the protégées to discuss their weaknesses and challenges and to be able to learn and sometimes fail in a safe environment. Formal mentoring programs are not designed to facilitate the development of long-term relationships. Organizations have only developed formal mentoring programs in the last few years, and they are targeted at levels below or above the women interviewed for this study. Consequently, though these women have participated as mentors developing future leaders for their organizations, they wonder if the organizations still value them enough to invest in their development.

Certainly, mentors have played pivotal roles throughout their careers. Mentors helped them get started, took a chance on them, and gave them their first breaks. Mentors continue to help them gain and refine the skills they need to be top performers. But they owe their success to their own hard work. Mentoring was a tool that helped them on the road.

## Recommendations for Organizations

Organizations wishing to augment the mentoring available to women need to pay particular attention to facilitating the development of relationships between potential mentors and potential female protégées. Formal mentoring programs can be made more

effective if the mentor/protégée dyad is well matched. It is the quality of the relationship that makes mentoring effective for women, and having common values and interests can help the relationship develop. The relationship cannot be ignored and replaced simply with process. Mentors need to be given the training to equip them for their role. Goals and expected outcomes for the program need to be well defined and communicated to everyone involved.

One of the challenges that have been identified for women is the lack of access to senior leaders who would make the best mentors. Organizations should focus on creating opportunities for their upcoming talent and their senior leaders to meet and interact. They should help the relationships develop naturally by creating ways for the parties to continue to interact. Special attention should be given to placing high-potential women on special assignments and committees that will bring them into contact with the type of senior leaders who may become sponsors. Additional avenues for overcoming women's exclusion from informal networks should be identified.

**Recommendations for Women**

The benefits of having a mentor are well known. The challenges women face in finding mentors are also well established. The contacts and connections are not as prevalent as they may be for male colleagues. Women in this study have shown that mentoring for career advancement can be found in many different places. Lately in both the academic and particularly the practitioner press, much emphasis has been placed on having the right mentor, a high-placed mentor, a powerful mentor or a sponsor. Great! But what if such an exemplary individual does not come along? Mentoring is still only one strategy that can help a woman climb the ladder of success. Performance and ability

are crucial to advancement. A recent article outlined things a woman can do to increase her likelihood of attracting a mentor (Alsever, 2012). Performance is at the top of the list. Without some proven ability, it is unlikely someone will take a chance on her. However, women should not fall into the trap of thinking their performance will speak for them. They need to volunteer and seek out challenging, visible assignments in their organizations. They must increase their network of contacts and build relationships with multiple individuals who can all offer advice and coaching and hopefully evolve into trusted mentors over time. Building and displaying confidence can help attract more powerful mentors who want potential protégées with the drive to succeed.

## Study Limitations

As with all qualitative research, this study was not designed to draw conclusions or make generalizations beyond the experience of the study participants. Are they representative of other women in the pharmaceutical industry or women in other business industries? That can only be determined by exploring these same issues in larger populations. The essence of mentoring as described in this study reflects the integration of the researcher's own experience and that of the study participants. It is influenced by the researcher's own perspective and the time in which the participants discussed their own experiences. Therefore, it is reflective only of this time and place, these participants, and this researcher (Moustakas, 1994). However, the central findings from this study—that women define mentoring broadly and have had a variety of mentors during their careers who aided them in their career success—provide a beginning for future research to understand women's experience of mentoring further.

## Recommendations for Research

Researchers have noted there is a gap between the research on mentoring and the practice of mentoring (Ragins & Kram, 2007). This is clearly seen in the expanded definition of a mentor embraced by the participants in this study. Much of the research over the last 20 years in mentoring has used the model developed by Kram (1988). Due to research by organizations such as Catalyst which have highlighted mentoring as an important strategy for women to advance in leadership business organizations have embraced the concept. This has lead to the expansion of mentoring using formal mentoring programs for top talent in organizations. Women themselves understand the importance of having a mentor, and they will find the support and development they need to advance their careers through what some have labeled *alternative mentors.* To use a term other than *mentor* devalues not only the relationship but also the lessons learned. If the term *mentoring* continues to be used in a narrow sense, theory and practice will continue to be out of sync.

In order to continue to understand how mentoring may be different for women, more research needs to be done on the types of mentors woman find most useful, beyond the currently accepted hierarchical mentoring relationship. Though mentoring for women is not substantially different from mentoring for men, there *are* differences in how and where each group finds mentors. Rather than relegating different types of mentors to second-class status as alternative sources of development, research should focus on the specific value and functions these types of mentors contribute to a woman's career development. In addition, understanding the importance of different mentoring functions and different types of mentors at different points in the woman's career may also help us understand how mentoring supports her career as it advances. The same type of research

could be valuable to in assessing if mentoring is expanding for men as well. Do men recognize these same types of individuals as mentors, and do the mentors provide the same type of career support? It may be that the differences between the genders are much smaller than we think.

A particular type of mentor that warrants more research is the professional organization and the network. Professional organizations are suggested as sources of mentoring for women who do not have access to mentors within their organization (Allen & Finkelstein, 2003; Rykman, 2010). This is particularly true for women in small businesses and entrepreneurs. In some situations there could be issues with competition or confidentiality but this is an area that deserves more exploration. Also, employee networks such as women's leadership groups may offer mentoring within an organization that should not be overlooked (Laff, 2007). Some women are reluctant to embrace a women's only network wanting to associate with more powerful individuals in the organization who tend to be men. For other women however, this type of network could be a source of problem solving and resources to help them with the work-life balance issues that are unique to women.

Practitioners have recently adopted the word *sponsor* to describe a type of super-mentor who does more than coach and counsel. The notion of sponsorship generally refers to a mentor at a much higher level in the organization than the participants in this study discussed. Functions provided include opening doors and ensuring the protégé gets the interview and eventually gets the job. Although this sounds like just a new word for a mentor who provides the full array of mentoring functions, more research into this area could be helpful to organizations. Hewlett (2012) found that in the United Kingdom,

women with sponsors were more likely to be satisfied with their rate of advancement, were more likely to ask for a raise, and were less likely to plan on leaving their organizations within one year. Very few of the women in this study had mentors who were highly placed leaders in their organizations. Those who did have highly placed mentors did not cultivate their mentoring relationships or use them effectively. More research into the true benefits of having this type of mentor is needed, as is research into how women secure sponsors rather than waiting for mentors to recognize them or for their work and results to speak for themselves. Is this a gender issue? Perhaps it is. A comparison of the types of mentors successful men and women have had could shed light on this issue.

Existing mentoring theory holds that career success is one of the benefits mentoring provides. As is currently defined, success is measured by compensation and by number of promotions. If we are truly interested in advancing women and understanding the role mentoring may play, it would also be valuable to understand how women define career success. Work-life balance issues continue to be a challenge for women climbing the ladder of leadership. Some women opt out of pursuing senior leadership positions due to the conflict between what it takes to be successful at work and what is important to life in general. Ilene Gordon, CEO of Corn Products, says that women have the skills to be successful in both arenas. However, Deanna Mulligan, CEO of Guardian Life Insurance, says a woman may not always have both at the same time. Women have to understand their own priorities and make choices (Bussey, 2012). How a woman measures success may have an impact on understanding how mentoring contributes to that success beyond the traditional measurements.

## Final Reflections

As a member of the population from which the participants for this study were selected, I had my own ideas on mentoring and its impact on my own career in the pharmaceutical industry. I was able to set aside my own experiences and hear what my participants had to say. The breadth of individuals they named as mentors and the types of support they received prompted me to revisit my own career and remember some key people who may not have called themselves mentors but certainly had an impact on the choices I made.

I was dismayed at first at the difficulty I had finding women who met my criteria and would agree to participate in this study. It brought home to me how few women have actually risen to a leadership level in the commercial sector of the pharmaceutical industry. This study was just a beginning attempt to understand the impact mentoring can have on a woman's career and, even more, to see what is lacking: high-level mentors who are invested in women's development and leadership progression.

Women have a responsibility in this as well. The few who had the amazing good fortune to be mentored by a president or a CEO should have done more to cultivate such important relationships. Too often, women are reluctant to ask for help, or they think they have made it and do not need any more help. Others now find themselves wondering if their organizations have passed them by. The good news is that because of this study—and the participants' reflections on mentors from the past and the value they have added—several women have begun to actively cultivate relationships with key individuals who may develop into mentors. Others have made it an objective to find mentors who can help them develop to new levels. In the end, although performance is

still the ticket to entry, mentors can help open the doors and speak for protégées when they cannot speak for themselves. No matter what level in the organization, leaders need to continue to cultivate mentoring relationships.

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# APPENDIX A - Demographics of Study Participants

**Demographics of Study Participants**

| Participant | Organization Level | Age | Years in Industry | Marital Status | Number of Children | Education |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lisa | Vice President | 50-59 | Over 25 | Married | 2 | Masters |
| Nancy | Vice President | 40-49 | 21-25 | Divorced | 1 | Bachelors |
| Jennifer | Executive Director | 40-49 | 16-20 | Married | 2 | Masters |
| Donna | Executive Director | 40-49 | Over 25 | Married | 3 | Masters |
| Julie | Executive Director | 40-49 | 21-25 | Single | 0 | Bachelors |
| Karen | Senior Director | 40-49 | 16-20 | Divorced | 2 | Bachelors |
| Katie | Vice President | 40-49 | 21-25 | Married | 2 | Masters |
| Audrey | Vice President | 50-59 | 21-25 | Married | 2 | Masters |

# APPENDIX B - Written Informed Consent Form

## Written Informed Consent Form

My name is Patricia Bleil. I am a PhD candidate at Eastern University. For my dissertation I am undertaking a study of successful women in the pharmaceutical industry to examine the role mentoring type relationships played in their career success. The information in this consent form is provided so that you can decide whether you wish to participate in this study. It is important that you understand that your participation is completely voluntary. This means that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at anytime or to decline to participate in any portion of the study without penalty.

As a participant you will be asked to participate in a minimum of two face to face interviews which will each last at least 1 hour with me, the sole researcher, to discuss your career and various mentoring relationships you have had. All interviews will be audio recorded. The interviews will be transcribed by a contracted service. The audio files and transcriptions will be stored on my password-protected personal computer which is secured in my home. Only I and my dissertation committee will have access to the interview data. The information will be kept until December 2015 and then destroyed/erased. There is some probability that the information you provide will also be used by me for an article to be published in a professional or academic journal and for a future book. Interviews will be scheduled at a time and place convenient to you. Further interviews may be requested to clarify information you provided or to explore some information in greater depth. These interviews may be done in person or on the telephone depending on your availability.

This study poses no known risks to your health and your name will not be associated with the findings. Your name, the name of the organizations you have worked for and anyone you discuss during the interview will be kept confidential throughout the study and in the final written document.

This study uses a phenomenological approach to understanding the experiences the women participants have had with mentoring type relationships. One of the goals is a composite description of those experiences. You will have the opportunity to review the draft of this part of the study if you desire. If you feel any of the information is inaccurate or would cause you embarrassment or risk of identification it will be revised. Your participation in this study will help identify how mentoring can be used to advance the careers of other women, and will enable organizations to develop more effective programs for women's leadership development.

Please note, no form of compensation will be offered. Your participation in this study will be purely voluntary. If you have any questions not addressed by this informed consent form, please do not hesitate to ask. A copy of this form will be made available to you. You are encouraged to keep it for your records.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Eastern University Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions or concerns about this research project, you can contact the Chairperson of IRB at IRB@eastern.edu.

Thank you for your time.

Patricia Bleil, PhD Candidate Eastern University
pbleil@eastern.edu
610-287-0306
CONSENT STATEMENT:

I have read the above comments and agree to participate in this study. I give my permission to be audiotaped, under the terms outlined above. I understand that if I have any questions or concerns regarding this project I can contact the investigator at the above location or the Eastern University Institutional Review Board at IRB@eastern.edu.

_____ _____
(participant's signature) (date)

# APPENDIX C - Questions for First Interview

## Questions for First Interview

Tell me about the people who have had an impact on your career. Some people might refer to these types of individuals as mentors or as developmental relationships.

1. Who were they? (Inside or outside of organization, position, relation to participant, gender)
2. How did the relationship develop? (formal versus informal, who initiated the relationship, length of time)
3. What did you learn from this person?
4. How did they impact your career?
5. How did they impact decisions or choices you made about your career?
6. Have you had any negative experiences with mentors?

   What happened?

   Tell me about that relationship: Who were they, how did it develop, and what impact did it have on you?

# APPENDIX D - Instructions to Participants on Feedback

**Instructions to Participants on Feedback**

Hi Lisa

As I told you when we started this project, part of this type of methodology is creating a summary of the experiences for each individual. Another important part is giving each participant the opportunity to read their "story" and give input. It is your story after all and I want to accurately portray your experiences as we discussed them. So, here is the draft I have, it begins with a short introduction that sets up this section. Please have a read and let me know if you are ok with it, or if there are things you would like added or left out or changed. You can do this by "tracking changes" in the document or you can write it up separately if you like. I'm hoping you can get this back to me by next week. Thanks again for your participation, the next step is for me to combine all eight and develop a composite that I analyze against past and current research. All needs to be done by mid April. Hope all is well with you, if you have questions about this please feel free to call me.

Also, as you will see, I've give you a pseudonym "Lisa" you may select a different name if you like. Thanks again for your participation. This study could not take place without you.