

Further Investigation of Protégés' Negative Mentoring Experiences

PATTERNS AND OUTCOMES

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Negative mentoring experiences encountered by 242 protégés across their career histories were examined. Negative mentoring experiences clustered into two factors: Distancing/Manipulative Behavior and Poor Dyadic Fit. Protégés' reports of the impact that these experiences had on them further suggested that several types of negative mentoring experiences were related to job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and stress. Finally, protégés in formally initiated mentoring relationships reported the most negative experience as having more of an effect on turnover intentions and stress than protégés in informal relationships. The results are discussed in the context of broadening the focus of mentoring research and implications for applied practice.

Mentoring is an intense long-term relationship between a senior, more experienced individual (the mentor) and a more junior, less experienced individual (the protégé) (Kram, 1985). Mentoring relationships represent important developmental experiences for protégés because the receipt of mentoring has been linked to positive work outcomes such as promotions, pay level, and job satisfaction (Chao, 1997; Fagenson, 1989; Scandura, 1992; Whitley, Dougherty, & Dreher, 1992). However, although there are clearly potential benefits of mentoring for protégés, recent research has begun to explore the dysfunctional or negative aspects of mentor-protégé relationships.

An earlier version of this article was presented at the 1999 meeting of the Academy of Management, Chicago, Illinois. Thanks to Belle Ragins and Kathy Kram for their constructive comments on an earlier version of this article. Address all correspondence to Lillian T. Eby, Applied Psychology Program, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia 30602; e-mail can be sent to leby@arches.uga.edu.

Group & Organization Management, Vol. 27 No. 4, December 2002 456-479

DOI: 10.1177/1059601102238357

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In a theoretical paper, Scandura (1998) proposed several forms of relationship dysfunctions that were differentiated by either good or bad intentions on the part of the mentor or protégé and whether the problem was psychosocial (relational) or vocational (career related). Relational dysfunctions described by Scandura include negative relations, sabotage, difficulty, and spoiling, in addition to sexual harassment, submissiveness, and deception. Empirical work on the topic has also recently emerged in the literature. Eby, McManus, Simon, and Russell (2000) used qualitative accounts of mentoring relationships to develop a taxonomy of negative mentoring experiences from the protégé's perspective. Negative mentoring experiences reported by protégés varied from specific mentor behaviors and actions (e.g., sabotage, taking credit for the protégé's work) to compatibility issues (e.g., personality clashes, different value systems) to patterns of interactions with protégés (e.g., not being available and accessible).

Although these two studies represent first steps at understanding the negative aspects of mentoring relationships, many questions remain unanswered. The current study further investigates this new research domain by pursuing three objectives. First, we identify the factor structure underlying different negative mentoring experiences to ascertain whether a meaningful pattern of covariation exists among experiences. Second, the relationship between specific negative mentoring experiences and several protégé outcomes is examined. Finally, using research on mentorship initiation as a guide, we investigate whether protégés in formally initiated relationships are more affected by negative experiences than those in informally initiated relationships.

Accomplishing these objectives contributes to both theory and applied practice. Mentoring researchers have urged others to broaden the study of mentoring to consider the full range of experiences, from positive to negative, that characterize what might be otherwise viewed as a positive or healthy interpersonal relationship (Eby et al., 2000; Kram, 1985; Scandura, 1998). The current study answers that call for research. In addition, there have been some studies that have questioned the benefits of formal mentoring relationships (e.g., Green & Bauer, 1995; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Comparing the outcomes of negative mentoring experiences across formal and informal relationships contributes to the growing literature on mentorship initiation. In terms of practice, the findings have utility for training mentors and protégés, designing and evaluating mentoring programs, and developing strategies to remediate or prevent negative mentoring experiences.

THE NATURE OF NEGATIVE MENTORING EXPERIENCES

Although only recently the subject of focused attention, the idea that mentoring relationships could have negative aspects is not new. Early research described incidents in which the mentor-protégé relationship became destructive over time (Kram, 1985; Levinson, Darrow, Levinson, Klein, & McKee, 1978). This included accounts of verbally abusive and excessively critical mentors, controlling mentors, and jealous mentors who became resentful of their protégés' successes (Kram, 1985; Levinson et al., 1978). Ragins and Scandura (1997, 1999) also found evidence of jealousy, overdependence, and dysfunctional relational patterns in the context of relationship terminations and mentors' perceptions of the costs of being a mentor. Heeding similar warnings, the practitioner literature notes that unhealthy relationship dynamics can develop, including using the protégé as a "go-for" or lackey and instances when the mentor behaves as a power-monger, saboteur, or sexual harasser (Hurley & Fagenson-Eland, 1996; Myers & Humphreys, 1985).

Although it may seem counterintuitive that a mentoring relationship could be marked by negative experiences or dysfunctionality, social psychological research laments that all relationships are marked by both positive and negative experiences (Duck, 1981, 1982, 1984; Huston & Burgess, 1979; Levinger, 1979, 1983; Wood & Duck, 1995). Furthermore, researchers' almost exclusive focus on the positive aspects of relationships grossly oversimplifies their complexity and makes the negative aspects of relationships seem aberrant and pathological, rather than a natural and common aspect of relational experiences (Wood & Duck, 1995).

Because the current study aims to better understand problems in mentoring relationships as reported by protégés, Eby et al.'s (2000) taxonomy of negative mentoring experiences was used as a framework. This taxonomy is particularly appropriate in the present study for several reasons. First, the taxonomy deals with negative mentoring experiences from the protégé's perspective. Second, it outlines specific experiences that can occur in mentoring relationships that protégés may perceive as negative. Third, the taxonomy encompasses a wide variety of experiences including specific incidents or events, mentors' characteristic manner of interacting with protégés, and mentor characteristics that may limit their ability to fulfill mentor functions.

This taxonomy of negative mentoring experiences is based on narrative accounts of negative mentoring experiences content analyzed into 5 metathemes. Match within the mentor-protégé dyad reflects mismatches in terms of mentor-protégé personality, values, and work styles. A second

metatheme includes mentors who lack technical or interpersonal skills and is labeled lack of mentor expertise. Distancing behavior involves mentor actions that reflect lack of interest in the protégé's career such as neglect, being self-absorbed in one's own career, and excluding the protégé from important events and sources of information. Manipulative behavior consists of mentor behavior that is exploitative or politically motivated. This includes inappropriately delegating work, sabotaging the protégé, and taking credit for the protégé's hard work, among others. A final metatheme, general dysfunctionality, includes mentors who have personal problems, such as a bad attitude toward the company or family problems. Within each of the 5 metathemes are more specific themes, and in some cases subthemes, for a total of 15 different types of negative mentoring experiences. These 15 experiences are shown in Table 1, along with an operational definition of each based on Eby et al. (2000).

This taxonomy is a useful organizing framework and is consistent with existing research on the types of problems encountered in interpersonal relationships (e.g., Duck, 1981, 1992; Levinger, 1979; Marshall, 1994). However, as a simple categorization system it does not provide information about how negative mentoring experiences may be related to one another or ascertain the underlying factors that best represent negative mentoring experiences. Such information would provide important construct validity evidence and provide information about how the 15 specific negative mentoring experiences can be reduced to a parsimonious set of covarying experiences. Given that the current study is based on the work of Eby et al. (2000), the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Five factors underlie protégés' negative mentoring experiences: Match Within the Mentor-Protégé Dyad, Lack of Mentor Expertise, Distancing Behavior, Manipulative Behavior, and General Dysfunctionality.

OUTCOMES ASSOCIATED WITH PROTÉGÉS' MOST NEGATIVE MENTORING EXPERIENCE

Another important question is whether or not specific negative mentoring experiences are related to protégé outcomes. Although there are many possible outcomes that could be examined, three were investigated in the present study representing affective and behavioral domains. Triangulating protégé outcomes in this manner is consistent with social psychological research on relationships that notes the importance of examining affective and action-oriented (behavioral) outcomes in the study of relationships (Kelly et al., 1983).

TABLE 1
Taxonomy of Negative Mentoring Experiences^a

<i>Type of Negative Experience</i>	<i>Operational Definition</i>
Match within the dyad	
Mismatched values	Bad fit in the mentor-protégé relationship due to different personal and/or work-related values (e.g., political views, social views, views on what success is).
Mismatched personality	Bad fit in the mentor-protégé relationship due to differences in personality.
Mismatched work styles	Bad fit in the mentor-protégé relationship due to differences in work styles (e.g., one person pushes for closure and the other wants to keep generating ideas).
Distancing behavior	
Intentional exclusion	Mentor intentionally excludes the protégé from important meetings, is not accessible to the protégé, and/or keeps the protégé "out of the loop" on important issues.
Neglect	Mentor does not express interest in the protégé's career, does not provide direction or support, and/or does not do things to help the protégé develop professionally.
Self-absorption	Mentor is preoccupied with his or her own career progress, behaves in a self-serving manner, and/or exhibits an exaggerated sense of self-importance.
Manipulative behavior	
Inappropriate delegation	Mentor delegates too much work to the protégé and/or does not provide the protégé with enough responsibility for important tasks.
General abuse of power	Mentor abuses his or her power and authority over the protégé. For example, the mentor may intimidate the protégé, put the protégé down, and/or constantly remind the protégé of the mentor's control over him/her.
Credit taking	Mentor takes undue credit for the protégé's accomplishments. For example, a mentor may take credit for a report that a protégé wrote or a protégé's professional accomplishment even if it was not related to the mentor's efforts.
Sabotage	Mentor does something to intentionally hinder the protégé's career progress or reputation. The act may be malicious or it may be to cover up the mentor's own performance problems.
Overt deceit	Mentor lies to the protégé by providing him or her with inaccurate information and/or telling him or her one thing and doing something different.
Lack of mentor expertise	
Technical incompetence	Mentor lacks the job-related expertise to provide guidance to the protégé.
Interpersonal incompetencies	Mentor lacks skills in dealing effectively with the protégé on an interpersonal level (e.g., communicating, providing feedback, empathizing).

TABLE 1 (continued)

<i>Type of Negative Experience</i>	<i>Operational Definition</i>
General dysfunctionality	
Bad attitude	Mentor has a negative attitude about the organization, the job, and/or is generally bitter or unhappy.
Personal problems	Mentor has personal problems that interfere with his or her ability to mentor effectively (e.g., marital problem, health problem, drinking problem).

a. Category labels are from Eby, McManus, Simon, and Russell (2000). Corresponding definitions were developed based on information contained in that study.

In the affective domain, the outcome of job satisfaction is examined. Job satisfaction refers to the degree of pleasure an individual obtains from his or her job. As such, it represents a global affective reaction to many aspects of one's work including job challenge, promotions, pay, and working conditions (Cranny, Smith, & Stone, 1992). Negative mentoring experiences are expected to influence protégé job satisfaction inasmuch as mentors have the ability to significantly affect protégés' job experiences through daily interactions, job assignments, and working conditions (Kram, 1985). As mentioned previously, mentors also have influence over protégé pay and promotions, both of which influence job satisfaction (Cranny et al., 1992). Thus, it is expected that:

Hypothesis 2: Negative mentoring experiences are negatively related to job satisfaction.

Behavioral intentions, specifically turnover intentions, may also be influenced by negative mentoring experiences. Theory and research on interpersonal relationships suggest that individuals continually assess a relationship in terms of whether or not it is satisfying and beneficial to them (Levinger, 1979). Characteristics that tend to lead to positive assessments of a relationship include intimacy and closeness, trust, mutual attraction, and complementarity (Levinger, 1983). Thus, if the mentor and protégé do not develop a sense of mutual attraction or intimacy (e.g., there is a mismatch in values or personality or the mentor engages in distancing behavior), the mentor breaks the protégé's trust (e.g., engages in manipulative behavior), or the mentor cannot provide necessary guidance to the protégé (e.g., is viewed by the protégé as lacking technical or interpersonal competencies), it follows that the protégé may report a desire to leave the situation. As such, it is expected that:

Hypothesis 3: Negative mentoring experiences are positively related to turnover intentions.

The final protégé outcome examined in the current study is perceived stress. Many different types of organizational stressors exist. However, Kahn and Byosiére's (1992) theoretical framework of organizational stress depicts two primary types, those related to task content and those associated with role properties. Of interest here are role properties—social aspects of the job, specifically interpersonal relationships. Using this theoretical framework as a guide, it stands to reason that mentoring relationships marked by negative experiences might engender stress reactions. The interpersonal relationships literature also supports this conjecture in that stress occurs when one member of the dyad perceives he or she is being mistreated (Duck, 1992, 1994; Marshall, 1994). Mistreatment can come in many forms, and in the context of negative mentoring experiences it may manifest in overt mistreatment (e.g., manipulative behavior), neglect (e.g., distancing behavior), or strained interpersonal interactions (e.g., mismatches between mentor and protégé, general dysfunctionality). The relationships literature also notes that when one member of a dyad perceives that there is little to gain from the relationship (e.g., mentor incompetencies in the social or technical arena), the relationship is likely to become strained (Sprecher, 1992). This leads to the following prediction:

Hypothesis 4: Negative mentoring experiences are positively related to stress.

RELATIONSHIP INITIATION IN RELATION TO NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES

A final purpose of this study was to examine how relationship initiation may affect how much negative mentoring experiences influence protégé outcomes. Of interest was how the mentoring relationship was formed: whether it was formally arranged or developed spontaneously (Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992; Green & Bauer, 1995; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Two streams of research are useful here in making predictions with respect to relationship initiation, the mentoring literature, and social psychology research on relationships.

Mentoring literature. Research on mentoring notes several differences between formally and informally initiated relationships that may influence how much negative experiences affect protégé outcomes. First, because organizations often extol the career-related benefits of mentoring to encourage participation in formal programs, protégés in formal relationships may

have unrealistic and inflated expectations about mentoring. Further heightening protégé expectations is the common practice in formal mentorships of specifying goals and expected outcomes in a sort of contract between the mentor and protégé (Murray, 1991; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Zey, 1985). If these goals and expectations are unmet, as may be the case where negative mentoring experiences occur, the protégé may experience more pronounced negative outcomes. Recent research on the role of expectations in mentoring relationships lends support to this prediction (Young & Perrewé, 2000).

Another factor that may contribute to negative experiences having more of a negative effect on protégés in formal rather than informal relationships is the visibility of formal mentorships (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Companies often publicize formal mentoring programs, have the endorsement and involvement of top management, and formally recognize and reward participation in such programs (Burke & McKeen, 1989; Catalyst, 1993; Kram, 1986). This heightened visibility may make it more difficult for protégés to terminate a relationship that is having trouble and leave protégés feeling trapped in a marginally effective, or ineffective, mentorship. As such, the outcomes associated with negative mentoring experiences may be exacerbated in formal, as opposed to informal, mentoring relationships.

Social psychology literature. Research on interpersonal relationships also suggests that negative mentoring experiences that occur in formal mentoring relationships may lead to more pronounced negative outcomes than those that occur in informal ones. Similar to predictions from mentoring research, relationship scholars discuss unmet needs and expectations as important predictors of distress and dissatisfaction (Levinger, 1979; Sprecher, 1992). Furthermore, surface relationships, marked by less intimacy and relational depth, tend to be more exchange oriented and less resilient to problems than long-term deep relationships (Levinger, 1979; Scanzoni, 1979). Relational depth and intensity is also discussed as a buffering agent for relational problems, stresses, and strains (Scanzoni, 1979). These notions of intimacy and depth are important because formal mentoring relationships tend to be shorter in duration, and it has been suggested that this may inhibit the development of relational depth, trust, and the provision of psychosocial mentoring functions (e.g., friendship, counseling) (cf. Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

Taken together, these two bodies of research suggest the following:

Hypothesis 5: Negative mentoring experiences have a greater negative impact on job satisfaction in formal than in informal mentoring relationships.

Hypothesis 6: Negative mentoring experiences have a greater negative impact on turnover intentions in formal than in informal mentoring relationships.

Hypothesis 7: Negative mentoring experiences have a greater negative impact on stress in formal than in informal mentoring relationships.

METHOD

SAMPLE AND PROCEDURE

Data for the current study were obtained from a larger study examining developmental relationships at work. It should be noted, however, that the variables examined in this study have not been examined elsewhere and no previously published work exists from this database. Part of the sample was obtained via a membership mailing list obtained from a professional women's business association, specifically, individuals employed in accounting-related occupations. The majority of respondents were employed as accountants (including staff accountants, chief financial officers, controllers, etc.), but other job titles (e.g., bursar, bookkeeper, payroll) were also represented. Surveys were mailed directly to the business address of 600 members from across all regions of the United States. Seven surveys were returned as undeliverable by the post office. A total of 138 surveys were returned for a response rate of 23%. The rest of the sample consisted of members of a professional engineering association. Job titles included senior project manager, mine engineer, civil engineer, and director of environmental engineering. Surveys were mailed to the business address of 2,000 members from across all regions of the United States. Eight were returned by the post office as undeliverable. A total of 259 surveys were returned for a response rate of 13%. Of those 259, 253 contained relatively complete data.

Of the combined group of 391 individuals returning completed surveys, 242 reported experience as a protégé. Sixty-seven were from the accounting sample and 175 were from the engineering sample. Thirteen percent of the engineering sample were women, whereas 100% of the accounting sample were women. Taken together, the sample was 63% female. Ninety-five percent of the protégés were Caucasian, with an average age of 44.18 years ($SD = 11.13$) and a median education level of a 4-year college degree. Protégés reported an average job tenure of 5.45 years ($SD = 5.70$) and organizational tenure of 9.85 years ($SD = 8.61$). Only the 242 individuals reporting experience as a protégé were included in the analyses performed for this study.

Analyses were conducted to examine whether it was appropriate to combine the two samples for data analysis. Analyses of variance indicated only one significant difference between the two samples in terms of the reported frequency of the 15 negative mentoring experiences (sabotage; $F(1, 233) = 16.14, p < .001$; M accounting sample = 1.90, M engineering sample = 1.34).

The two groups also did not differ with respect to several characteristics of the mentorship. No significant differences were found with respect to mentorship duration, relationship initiation (formal, informal), frequency of interaction with the mentor, mentor level within the organization, or protégé level within the organization. Because the two samples reported similar types of mentoring relationships and reported experiencing negative mentoring experiences to a very similar extent, the samples were combined for data analysis.

MEASURES

Protégé experience. Of interest in the present study were respondents with experience as a protégé. The following question was used to screen participants on this career experience: "During your career, has there been an individual who has taken a personal interest in your career; who has guided, sponsored, or otherwise had a positive and significant influence on your professional career development? In other words, have you ever been a protégé?"

Frequency of negative mentoring experiences. Participants were provided with the list of the 15 negative mentoring experiences described by Eby et al. (2000) along with a detailed definition of each (see Table 1). They were asked to indicate how frequently they had experienced each of the described experiences across all of their mentoring relationships to date using a 7-point scale ranging from *never* (1) to *almost all the time* (7). An *other* category was also provided to allow respondents to indicate other negative experiences they may have had.

Most influential negative experience. Next, participants were presented with the same list of 15 experiences and asked to identify the experience(s) that made the most impression on them or had the greatest overall effect. The following instructions were provided: "Please think about the one experience that made the most impression on you or had the greatest effect. Thinking about this situation, please answer the following: What type of mentor behavior did this experience involve? (check all that apply)." The 15 negative mentoring experiences were provided in a checklist-type format where participants were instructed to check as many of these experiences as applied to the experience. Participants were allowed to check multiple negative experiences if applicable because it was expected that in some cases, the most influential experience overall might include more than one of the 15 specific experiences (74% of the sample checked three or fewer experiences).

Outcome measures. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which the most influential negative mentoring experience (described in the previous section) negatively influenced three outcomes. All outcomes were measured on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) Likert-type scale with higher scores indicating more of a negative impact on the outcome. Job satisfaction ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.17$) was assessed with three items similar to the three-item Overall Job Satisfaction scale from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1979). A sample item from this scale was "This experience impacted how much I generally liked my job." Coefficient alpha for this scale was .91. A three-item measure assessed turnover intentions ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 1.31$) (e.g., "After this experience, I often thought about quitting my job"). Coefficient alpha for this measure was .90. Finally, stress ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 1.06$) was measured by a four-item scale adapted from House and Rizzo (1972). A sample item from this scale was "This experience increased my job-related tension" ($\alpha = .88$). A factor analysis was conducted on the items composing these three measures using principal components extraction and an oblique rotation. Three factors emerged explaining 52%, 18%, and 12% of the total variance. All items loaded on their a priori factor (Job Satisfaction, Turnover Intentions, Stress) and cross-loadings were negligible. The correlations between these three outcomes were moderate, ranging from $r = .27$ for job satisfaction-stress to $r = .56$ for job satisfaction-turnover intentions. A full report of these analyses is available upon request.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

Participants who reported having a negative mentoring experience provided additional information regarding the nature of the relationship associated with the experience having the greatest effect. Participants indicated the organizational level of the mentor in comparison to themselves. This item was measured on a 4-point scale ranging from *three or more levels above* to *at your same level*. The median response was two levels above oneself ($MD = 2.00$; $SD = 0.83$). In terms of relationship formation, participants indicated if the relationship was initiated formally (based on an assignment made by someone else in the organization; 45%) or informally (spontaneously developed, 55%) as well as how many years the relationship had lasted ($M = 5.28$, $SD = 4.61$). Participants indicated how frequently they interacted with this mentor (1 = *very infrequently* to 4 = *very frequently* [daily or almost daily]). A total of 79% of the protégés reported that they interacted with this mentor

very frequently. Finally, 88% of the mentors were male and the average mentor age was 45.20 years ($SD = 8.77$).

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics associated with the 15 negative mentoring experiences are shown in Table 2. Generally speaking, respondents indicated that negative mentoring experiences occurred very infrequently to somewhat infrequently across their career histories. However, the sizable standard deviations associated with each experience indicated that some respondents reported little to no experience whereas others reported repeated experiences. Table 2 also presents the frequency distribution across the 15 negative experiences. Due to the very small number of respondents using the *other* category ($n = 9, 3.6\%$), this information is not included in the current study. It is interesting to note the percentages associated with the "never experienced" category in Table 2. These data illustrate the variability in base rates across the different negative experiences studied here. For example, around 70% of the respondents had never experienced mentor sabotage or deceit, whereas the majority had experienced inappropriate delegation (87%) or interpersonal incompetence (75%) on the part of a mentor.

To test Hypothesis 1, a factor analysis was conducted on this frequency-based measure using principal components extraction and oblique rotation. Examination of the scree plot and eigenvalues suggested that two factors underlie the data. The first factor had an eigenvalue of 7.85 and explained 52.3% of the variance whereas the second factor had an eigenvalue of 1.26 and explained an additional 8.4% of the variance. The results of the factor analysis are shown in Table 3. The first factor represented negative experiences related to mentor distancing behavior and manipulation. This included experiences such as sabotage, credit taking, and intentional exclusion, among others. This factor was labeled Distancing/Manipulative Behavior. The experiences loading on the second factor exemplified those associated with a poor fit between the mentor and protégé due to specific mentor characteristics. This included experiences such as personality mismatches, mentor interpersonal incompetencies, differing work styles, and so on. As such, the second factor was labeled Poor Dyadic Fit. Given that a two-factor, rather than a five-factor, solution was found, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Hypotheses 2 to 4 were examined by correlating the negative mentoring experiences noted as having the greatest impact (coded 0 = not part of most

TABLE 2
Means and Percentages of Reported Frequency of Negative Mentoring Experiences

<i>Experience</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Never (%)</i>	<i>Very Frequently to Somewhat Infrequent (%)</i>	<i>Somewhat Frequently to Frequently (%)</i>	<i>Very Frequently to Almost Always (%)</i>
Mismatched values	2.03	1.11	35.0	56.3	7.1	1.7
Mismatched personality	2.09	1.07	31.3	58.0	10.5	0.4
Mismatched work style	2.24	1.16	29.0	55.5	14.3	1.3
Intentional exclusion	1.90	1.10	45.8	44.6	8.7	0.8
Neglect	1.91	1.14	45.4	42.9	10.9	0.8
Self-absorption	2.26	1.45	37.9	45.8	11.7	4.6
Inappropriate delegation	2.77	1.24	13.3	59.2	25.1	2.5
Abuse of power	1.99	1.23	43.3	46.2	7.9	2.5
Credit taking	2.25	1.33	34.6	49.2	12.6	3.7
Sabotage	1.50	0.99	68.8	25.8	4.2	1.2
Deceit	1.43	0.91	71.7	24.6	2.9	0.8
Technical incompetence	2.08	1.28	39.6	48.0	9.2	3.3
Interpersonal incompetence	2.39	1.28	25.4	58.7	12.9	2.9
Bad attitude	1.73	1.00	52.3	42.7	4.2	0.8
Personal problems	1.78	1.14	51.5	40.8	5.1	2.5

NOTE: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

TABLE 3
Factor Analysis Results for Negative Mentoring Experiences

	<i>Factor 1: Distancing/ Manipulative Behavior</i>	<i>Factor 2: Poor Dyadic Fit</i>
Deceit	.853	.134
Sabotage	.787	.036
Credit taking	.768	-.086
Intentional exclusion	.739	-.087
General abuse of power	.733	.026
Inappropriate delegation	.570	-.182
Self-absorption	.503	-.400
Neglect	.473	-.377
Mismatched values	-.131	-.932
Mismatched personality	-.036	-.892
Interpersonal incompetence	.028	-.839
Personal problems	-.010	-.730
Bad attitude	.110	-.626
Mismatched work styles	.305	-.557
Technical incompetence	.294	-.479

NOTE: Factor loadings are rotated using an oblique rotation. Bold indicates primary factor loadings.

negative experience, 1 = part of most negative experience) with the three outcome variables of job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and stress. The results of these analyses are shown in Table 4, providing partial support for Hypothesis 2 (job satisfaction), Hypothesis 3 (turnover intentions), and Hypothesis 4 (stress). Specifically, intentional exclusion, general abuse of power, mismatched personality, and interpersonal incompetencies were significantly correlated with all three outcomes. In addition, mismatched values was also significantly related to turnover intentions and mentor personal problems was related to stress (see Table 4).

Also related to protégé outcomes are Hypotheses 5 to 7 concerned with comparisons of protégés in formal and informal mentoring relationships. These hypotheses were tested using *t* tests. Although the trend was as expected, Hypothesis 5 was not supported. No significant difference in how much the most negative experience affected protégé job satisfaction was found between those in formal ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.08$) versus informal ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 1.25$) mentoring relationships ($t(148) = -1.41$, n.s.). However, Hypothesis 6 ($t(148) = -2.56$, $p < .05$) and Hypothesis 7 ($t(148) = -2.81$, $p < .01$) were supported. Protégés in formal mentoring relationships reported a significantly greater effect of the most negative mentoring experience on

TABLE 4
Correlations Between Negative
Mentoring Experiences and Protégé Outcomes

<i>Negative Experience^a</i>	<i>Job Satisfaction</i>	<i>Turnover Intentions</i>	<i>Stress</i>
Deceit (6)	.02	.09	.03
Sabotage (7)	.11	.12	.10
Credit taking (41)	-.05	.11	.01
Intentional exclusion (32)	.18*	.26**	.19*
General abuse of power (25)	.22**	.23**	.35**
Inappropriate delegation (40)	.11	.01	.02
Self-absorption (37)	-.09	.01	.14
Neglect (30)	.10	.03	.09
Mismatched values (23)	.09	.19*	.12
Mismatched personality (29)	.17*	.29**	.26**
Interpersonal incompetence (36)	.20*	.21*	.29*
Personal problems (24)	.07	.10	.22**
Bad attitude (22)	.06	.13	.00
Mismatched work styles (40)	.11	.13	.07
Technical incompetence (38)	.02	.13	.06

NOTE: Numbers in parentheses indicate how many respondents reported each negative experience as being associated with the experience that had the greatest effect or left the most lasting impression on him or her.

a. Negative experience coded as 0 = not part of most negative experience, 1 = part of most negative experience.

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

turnover intentions ($M = 2.93$, $SD = 1.29$) and stress ($M = 2.67$, $SD = 1.11$) than did protégés in informal mentoring relationships ($M = 2.38$, $SD = 1.28$, and $M = 2.20$, $SD = 0.93$, respectively).

DISCUSSION

The current study extends recent research on negative mentoring experiences by investigating the underlying factor structure associated with negative mentoring experiences, linking specific types of negative experiences to affective and behavioral outcomes, and examining whether relationship formation is related to the effect that negative experiences have on protégé outcomes.

Results of the present study indicated that negative mentoring experiences can be meaningfully clustered into two categories, Distancing/Manipulative Behavior and Poor Dyadic Fit. Although five underlying dimensions did not

emerge as predicted, our findings are somewhat consistent with Eby et al. (2000). Specifically, the clusters of negative experiences identified by Eby and colleagues map onto the two factors found in the present study. The behaviors included in Eby et al.'s metathemes of distancing behavior and manipulative behavior were all contained in the first factor, whereas the negative experiences associated with the metathemes of match within the dyad, lack of mentor expertise, and general dysfunctionality were all contained in the second factor (see Table 3). This suggests that the five metathemes uncovered by Eby et al. (2000) may be represented more parsimoniously by two higher level constructs.

These two factors can be linked to research and theory in the area of interpersonal relationships and ethical leadership. Both Distancing/Manipulative Behavior and Poor Dyadic Fit partially correspond with Scandura's (1998) typology of dysfunctional mentoring relationships, which is based on Duck's (1994) typology of the dark side of close interpersonal relationships. According to Duck (1994), relational problems can be differentiated in terms of whether there is good or bad intent on the part of one or both parties, as well as whether the problems are inherent in the relationship from the start or emerge over time.

With respect to the current study, the experiences labeled Distancing/Manipulative Behavior appear to be marked by bad intent on the part of the mentor. In other words, these experiences reflect the protégé's perceptions of poor conduct by the mentor whereby he or she sabotages, deceives, takes credit, neglects, or otherwise abuses the relationship (see Table 3). In contrast, the experiences associated with Poor Dyadic Fit do not reflect a perception of malice or bad intent on the part of the mentor. Rather, these experiences encompass situations in which there is simply a misfit between the mentor and protégé, which in turn hinders the mentoring relationship. Factors that contribute to poor relational fit include personal characteristics such as dissimilarity (e.g., mismatched personalities, values, work styles), poor relationship skills (e.g., technical or interpersonal skills on the part of the mentor), or difficulties experienced by one member of the dyad that prohibit him or her from developing a close relationship with the other individual (e.g., mentor personal problems) (Duck, 1982, 1984).

Our findings are also consistent with research and theory on ethical leadership (thanks to an anonymous reviewer for directing us to this literature). Specifically, the experiences associated with the first factor of Distancing/Manipulative Behavior reflect unethical behavior on the part of the mentor (e.g., deceit, credit taking, abuse of power). In contrast, the experiences constituting the second factor, Poor Dyadic Fit, are ethically neutral (e.g., mismatched values, personal problems). Much has been written in the

leadership literature about the potential for unethical behavior among leaders due to the power inherent in their position (e.g., Hitt, 1990; Howell & Avolio, 1992; Kelly, 1987). Inasmuch as mentors have substantial power over protégés (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989), it stands to reason that there may be parallels between their behavior and the unethical behavior displayed by some leaders.

Leader behavior has been characterized as unethical when an individual is driven by self-interest and relies on manipulation, deception, and dominance to meet one's own goals (Hitt, 1990; Howell & Avolio, 1992; Kelly, 1987). This orientation is consistent with the negative mentoring experiences of deceit, sabotage, credit taking, inappropriate delegation, and abuse of power. Another component of unethical leader behavior is self-aggrandizement and self-centeredness, also fueled by the desire to attain personal goals (Howell & Avolio, 1992). Tepper (2000) discussed a similar tendency with respect to characteristics of abusive supervisors. The remaining experiences in the Distancing/Manipulative Behavior factor exemplify this orientation (intentional exclusion, neglect, self-absorption).

Another way to view negative mentoring experiences emerges from the relationship between specific negative experiences and protégé outcomes. Most notably, the present study found that some negative experiences relate to protégés' job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and stress. In terms of Distancing/Manipulative Behavior, protégés that felt intentionally excluded from important meetings and communications and did not have access to their mentor tended to report less job satisfaction, higher turnover intentions, and greater stress. A similar pattern of effects existed for protégés who reported being involved in an abusive relationship whereby the mentor used intimidation or fear tactics with them. This is consistent with recent research illustrating that abusive supervision, defined as "the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact" (Tepper, 2000, p. 178), is associated with lower job satisfaction, voluntary turnover, and psychological distress.

Protégés that reported a poor fit between themselves and their mentor in terms of personality, or difficulty interacting with their mentor interpersonally, also tended to report less satisfaction in their job, stronger intentions to leave the organization, and higher levels of stress. A mismatch of values between the mentor and protégé is also associated with higher turnover intentions, again suggesting that difficulty relating to one's mentor may be a catalyst for searching elsewhere for employment. Finally, protégés who reported that their mentor was having personal problems such as marital difficulties or a drinking problem also reported higher stress. Since relationships by definition are interpersonal in nature, incompatibility between mentor and protégé

or external factors that strain interpersonal interactions tend to contribute to negative protégé outcomes (Duck, 1981, 1982; Levinger, 1979, 1983).

The differences in outcome severity across formal and informal mentoring relationships is also noteworthy and substantiates several scholars' concerns that formal mentoring programs have potential pitfalls and may not be surrogates for informally developed relationships (e.g., Kram, 1985; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). The interpersonal relationship literature indicates that factors such as attraction, similarity, and liking are important precursors of relationship development (Levinger, 1983) and may be notably absent in the initiation of formal relationships (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Furthermore, unmet expectations is one of the primary reasons for relationship dissolution and breakup (Duck, 1984) and formal relationships may foster unrealistic expectations through the recruitment of protégés and marketing of mentoring programs in organizations.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH ON WORKPLACE MENTORING

Existing research on mentoring has typically taken a positive twist on mentor-protégé interactions. However, the current study, along with research by Eby et al. (2000) and Scandura (1998), illustrates that this predominately positive emphasis may be somewhat misguided. Protégés' accounts suggest that a variety of negative experiences occur in mentoring relationships and that some of these experiences relate to important protégé outcomes. This indicates that mentoring researchers to date have not fully captured the nature of mentor-protégé interactions—most notably, the ineffectual and possibly dysfunctional aspects of developmental relationships at work.

Over a decade ago, Kram (1985) discussed the importance of looking carefully at mentoring relationships and recognizing that they may not always be personally fulfilling and pleasant experiences. Unfortunately, research to date has focused almost exclusively on the career-enhancing and fulfilling aspects of mentoring. The findings of the current study suggest that we may need to rethink some of our taken-for-granted assumptions about mentoring relationships and consider modifying our theoretical orientations to consider the full continuum of mentoring outcomes, from positive, to ineffectual, to negative. In so doing, research and theory on close relationships, particularly relationship dissolution, decline, and termination will be important theoretical bridges (e.g., Duck, 1982, 1994; Levinger, 1979; Ragins & Scandura, 1997).

In future efforts to more fully capture the domain of mentoring experiences, several specific suggestions for research are offered. Investigating

negative mentoring experiences in the context of specific mentoring relationships seems like an especially important next step. This would require the development of a measure of negative mentoring experiences completed by protégés in thinking about their current mentor and would shed light on the relationship among different negative experiences within a given mentorship. For example, do mentors who engage in neglect also tend to be those that engage in general abuse of power and credit taking? Do mismatches in mentor-protégé personality tend to covary with mismatches in work styles and values? Along similar lines, it is important to examine the empirical relationship between negative experiences and overall relationship quality, career-related mentoring, and psychosocial mentoring. This will provide important information on the extent to which generally positive relationships are marked by negative mentoring experiences.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study underscore the importance of training mentors and protégés on what to expect in mentoring relationships. Upon entry into a relationship, both mentor and protégé should realize that, like all close interpersonal relationships, things may happen that are perceived as unfair, unpleasant, or disappointing. Temporary problems and difficulties are to be expected and it is unrealistic to expect any relationship to be problem-free (Wood & Duck, 1995). Likewise, not all relationships develop into mutually beneficial ones (Duck, 1992). Communicating this information may help alleviate the fear and stigma associated with terminating a mentoring relationship that is no longer beneficial or ending a fledgling relationship that is not working out.

Another suggestion to help create realistic expectations is to remind protégés that mentors are no different from other organizational members; they have their own concerns, aspirations, and unique stresses. Protégés should not expect that mentors will consistently have only their interests in mind. At times, mentors may inappropriately delegate to meet important deadlines, neglect protégés due to competing demands, or exclude protégés from important meetings or decisions due to logistical issues such as scheduling problems or time constraints. Protégés can be given guidance on how to recognize the difference between infrequent, stress-induced negative experiences with mentors and abusive and exploitative behavioral patterns. Mentors can be informed of the value of communicating to protégés the reasons behind their decisions to reduce misperceptions of their motives.

Other steps may be taken to help mitigate the more serious problems that may occur between mentors and protégés. Some potential mentors might not

know *how* to be an effective mentor or realize the time commitment involved in such a role. By providing this information, some individuals may appropriately self-select out of these roles and others may gain important information on how to help protégés develop in their career (Kram, 1986). Once the decision to become a mentor is reached, additional training might focus on interpersonal and mentoring skills. This seems particularly important because many negative mentoring experiences are related to inappropriate interaction styles with protégés (e.g., abuse of power, intentional exclusion, inappropriate delegation, interpersonal incompetencies). Organizations might also be advised to monitor mentoring relationships through upward feedback systems or program evaluation, depending on whether the mentoring relationship is formal or informal (Kram, 1985). This may build safety nets into the mentoring relationship such that at early signs of relational problems issues can be dealt with. It should also increase a sense of individual accountability among mentors and protégés, which in turn may reduce the likelihood of some negative mentor behaviors.

LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Like all research, this study has limitations. Although reminders were sent out following the initial mailing in an effort to increase response rate, the final response rate was still lower than desired. Even though we are unable to compare respondents to nonrespondents, it is worth noting that the percentage of respondents reporting experience as a protégé (62%) is similar to other research on workplace mentoring using professional employees (e.g., Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Ragins & Scandura, 1999; Viator & Scandura, 1991). This suggests that systematic bias is not likely to be operating in the present study. On a positive note, by surveying members of two professional organizations, we obtained a highly diverse cross-organizational sample in terms of gender, age, company tenure, job type, and geographic location.

There are several limitations associated with the decision to focus solely on the protégé's perspective. The first relates to obtaining information from only one member of the mentor-protégé dyad. We acknowledge that mentors may have a different recollection of the mentoring experience as reported by protégés, as well as unique negative mentoring experiences (McManus, Eby, & Russell, 1999). Although it was beyond the scope of the present study to incorporate the mentor's perspective, this is an important step for future research. Furthermore, future research is needed using matched dyadic data from both mentor and protégé to better understand the dynamics of the mentor-protégé relationship. This also highlights another limitation of the current study: namely, the inability to draw conclusions about the behavioral

patterns or sequences of events in specific mentoring relationships. Kram's (1985) seminal work on mentoring, where in-depth interviews were used to uncover mentor-protégé relationship patterns, provides an excellent starting point for researchers interested in pursuing this line of inquiry.

The use of retrospective accounts of negative mentoring experiences may also be viewed as a limitation. The base rates associated with the negative experience that had the most effect and left the most lasting impression varied considerably across types of experiences (see Table 4). Thus, some of the correlational analyses lacked statistical power to detect effects and where effects were found, the results should be interpreted cautiously. It is also possible that protégés make attributions about why certain relationships have trouble or reasons why relationships fail rather than accurately report specific occurrences in these relationships. To try to reduce the likelihood of this effect, instructions were provided that asked respondents to focus on specific experiences they may have had as protégés, detailed behavioral examples of each type of negative mentoring experience were given, and an escape option (i.e., *never*) was included for each negative mentoring experience. Furthermore, the questions regarding negative mentoring experiences were part of a larger study of developmental relationships at work where a variety of career-related information was obtained, not just negative mentoring experiences. Although we cannot be sure of the accuracy of protégés' perceptions, it is important to recognize that protégé perceptions merit investigation. In fact, some argue that perceptions of what transpires between two individuals is actually more critical than the veracity of the account since members' perceptions strongly influence the future course of a relationship (Hinde, 1981). Likewise, given the difficulty of studying relationships as they unfold in the real world, a common methodology in the study of interpersonal relationships involves self-reports of what happened in a given relationship (cf. Hinde, 1997).

Notwithstanding these limitations, the current study provides an important extension of the mentoring literature by further investigating the negative aspects of mentoring from the protégé's perspective. With organizations' continued implementation of mentoring programs and the encouragement of more senior employees to take others "under their wing," mentoring relationships are likely to continue to be a part of employees' career development. Thus, understanding the not-so-pleasant side of mentorships is important to help both mentor and protégé develop realistic expectations for the relationship and to develop effective strategies to reduce the chance that the relationships will eventually become dysfunctional for one or both parties. We hope that future research continues to explore this

important topic and provide further insight into the potential costs, as well as benefits, of mentoring relationships.

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