


**Women's Perceptions of Barriers That Prevent Advancement in the Workplace**


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**Introduction**

**Focus of the Study:**


- ✓ To examine the perceived career barriers of women formally and informally mentored in entry-level and mid-management level positions.



**Research Hypotheses**

**Hypotheses:**


- **Alternative Hypothesis # 1:** Women formally mentored will report they received more opportunities for challenging assignments than woman informally mentored.
- **Alternative Hypothesis # 2:** Women formally mentored will more likely report a lack of cultural fit than women informally mentored.
- **Alternative Hypothesis # 3:** Women formally mentored will more likely report limited access to informal networks than women informally mentored.
- **Alternative Hypothesis # 4:** Women formally mentored will more likely report a lack of mentoring functions than women informally mentored



**Research Hypothesis Cont..**

**Hypotheses:**


- **Alternative Hypothesis # 5:** Women formally mentored will less likely report limited career planning guidance than women informally mentored.
- **Alternative Hypothesis # 6:** Women formally mentored will less likely report difficulty in increasing their upward mobility than women informally mentored.
- **Alternative Hypothesis # 7:** Women in entry-level positions will report more career barriers than women in mid-management level positions



**The Purpose of the Study**

**Purpose of the Study:**

- To examine six perceived barriers that women encounter in advancing their careers, as follows:
  - Lack of cultural fit,
  - Isolation from informal networks,
  - Lack of mentoring,
  - Poor organizational career management processes,
  - Difficulty in getting challenging assignments, and
  - Difficulty obtaining opportunities for geographic mobility.



**Conceptual Framework(s)**

**Conceptual Frameworks for this study:**

- A combination of two theories were used:
  - (1) The leader-member exchange theory and (2) The social-exchange theory
- These two theories note that the core of mentoring is the exchange of behaviors that takes place throughout the relationship that drive and sustain the relationship (Young & Perrewe, 2000b).

### Literature on using Mentoring to Advance Women

- Mentoring can help to facilitate promotions, increased salaries, and increased job opportunities; therefore, mentoring, is considered an important resource to increase the advancement opportunities for women .
- There is also research that reports women have greater career barriers to advancement than men (Lyness & Thompson, 2000).

### Literature on Mentoring

- The overall benefit of mentoring is for mentors to offer support and guidance to protégés' that will develop a protégé professionally and enhance his/her career path (Burke & McKeen, 1996; Chao, 1992).
- Over a third of the nation's major companies have developed mentoring programs to assist in the career development of employees (Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Soonhee, 2003).

### Functions of Mentors

#### Two Mentor Functions:

- (1) Career guidance— mentors provide sponsorship, exposure, coaching, protection, and challenging assignments (Chao, 1997;Chao & Walz, 1992).
- (2) Psychosocial support— mentors provide mentoring, acceptance, confirmation, counseling, and friendship (Chao, 1997;Chao & Walz, 1992).

### Formal Mentoring

- **Formal Mentoring Characteristics:**
  - Short-term (6 months to a year)
  - Assigned relationships (can cause discontent, anger, resentment and suspicion) (Kizilos, 1999).
  - Little room for psychosocial development
  - Formal mentors sometimes view protégés as unworthy of their time and guidance
  - Focus on present and organizational goals
  - Sometimes reluctant to engage in certain behaviors
  - Sometimes seen as ineffective when compared to informal mentoring

### Informal Mentoring

- **Informal Mentoring Characteristics:**
  - Long-term (3 to 6 years), sometimes longer
  - Formed by chance or through interactions with senior or junior level employees
  - Typically both parties exhibit mutual feelings for the relationship and have similar career goals
  - Focus on establishing a successful career path
  - Viewed as more effective than formal mentoring

### Benefits of Mentoring

#### Overall Benefits:

- ♦ Promotions
- ♦ Compensation
- ♦ Bonuses
- ♦ Rewards
- ♦ Job Satisfaction
- ♦ Career Satisfaction
- ♦ Retention

## Career Barriers

### Career Barriers:

Career barriers can be classified into two main categories:

- (1) Internal (personality and trait variables)
- (2) External (situational and structural variables)
  
- Career barriers are often described as factors that make it difficult to advance (Melamed, 1995; Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990).

## Research Variables

### Dependent Variables:

- The dependent variables were the series of questions of the survey that are divided into six categories.
- (1) lack of cultural fit,
- (2) isolation from informal networks,
- (3) lack of mentoring,
- (4) poor organizational/ career management processes,
- (5) difficulty getting challenging assignments, and
- (6) difficulty obtaining opportunities for geographic mobility.

## Research Variables Cont..

### Independent Variables:

- Style of Mentoring
  - Formal
  - Informal
- Organizational Rank
  - Entry-level
  - Mid-management level

## Participants

### The targeted demographics of participants:

- (1) Minority women,
  - (2) Women between the ages of 30 – 45,
  - (3) Women in male-dominate fields,
  - (4) Educated women (i.e. master's level or above).
- Participants were recruited from professional organizations and from individuals who maintain listservs of professionals in a variety of industries.

## Data Collection & Analysis

### The following questions were studied:

- Is there a relationship between mentorship (i.e., formal and informal mentoring) and perceived career barriers?
- Is there a relationship between organizational rank (i.e., entry level and mid-management level) and perceived career barriers?
- Is there an interaction between mentorship and organizational rank (i.e., does the effect of one factor change over the levels of the other factor)?

## Sample Demographics

### Sample Demographics on Style of Mentoring:

- 76% reported having experienced informal mentoring.
- 24% reported having experienced formal mentoring.

## Sample Demographics Cont..

### Sample Demographics for Organizational Level:

- 49% reported being in Mid-management level positions.
- 32% reported being in entry-level positions.
- 19% reported 'other' for the organizational rank.

## Sample Demographics Cont..

### Sample Demographics Racial Backgrounds:

- 130 completed the survey. Of those who responded,
- 65% were African-American,
- 27% were Caucasian
- 3% were Hispanic,
- 2% were Native American, and
- 6% were of other racial backgrounds.

## Sample Demographics Cont..

### Sample Demographics Age Ranges:

- 52% were between the ages of 26 and 35
- 22% were between 36 to 45
- 13% were between 46 to 55
- 20% were between 21 to 25
- 5% were between the ages of 56 and over.

## Sample Demographics Cont..

### Sample Demographics Educational Background:

- 44% held Bachelors degree,
- 33% held a Masters degree,
- 6% held a high school diploma,
- 5% held a Doctoral degree, and
- 12% listed 'other' for their educational background.

## Sample Demographics Cont..

### Sample Demographics Work Industry:

- 26% reported other
- 15% reported business/finance
- 12% reported healthcare
- 12% reported education
- 10% reported legal/governmental
- 8% reported engineering
- 8% reported transportation
- 5% reported manufacturing
- 4% reported information technology

## Results

### Study Results:

The MANOVA revealed that there was only one category with significant difference between-subjects and their responses to the survey questions.

- The only category that showed significance was Category 3: Lack of Mentoring (.048 at the .05 level) and "style of mentoring received."

## Results Cont..

### Contrast Estimates:

- Contrast estimates were derived and used to give results of contrasting and comparing of the mean scores between each factor by category (i.e., mentorship style and organizational rank).

## Interpretation of the Findings

- The findings indicated that the respondents answers' to the majority of the questions career barriers scale were not significant.
- Therefore, style of mentoring and organizational rank really did not influence how the participants' viewed the career barriers being studied.

## Implications for Social Change

### The short-term benefit of this study include:

- Knowing what are the barriers that women face in advancing

### The long-term benefits include:

- Women and organizations learn to use mentoring more effectively:
  - To decrease barriers, and
  - Provide more advancement opportunities
- This research can initiate increased practices of equal treatment for women in the workforce

## Recommendations for Action


- Women should continue to seek out mentors to advance their careers.
- Women need to take a more active role in their career planning/development.
- Organizations need to structure professional development (i.e., mentoring) to be more beneficial to women protégés.

## Recommendations for Further Study

- An investigation on differences in perceived career barriers between women who have not been mentored and those who had formal or informal mentoring relationships
- Future research should also seek to use a longitudinal design with a larger sample and more variance in the demographics of ethnicity, age-range and industry.


## Recommendations for Further Study

- Examine how downsizing and mergers impact women's careers.
- Future research could also study variances in protégés' outcomes in career advancement based on protégés' and mentors' abilities.
- Additional studies on how to close the gap in the research of mentoring and the practice of mentoring



### Concluding Statement

- As women continue to make strides in the workforce, it is important that they are equipped to succeed and have equal opportunities for advancement. More importantly, women should be viewed as good sources of employment, continue to be given the opportunity to lead, and to pioneer new opportunities for other women.



### Questions???