

Mentoring African American men: A study of job satisfaction and organizational commitment.
Qualitative

This study tested a theoretical model of the relationship between mentoring, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. The data were collected via online surveys from 364 African American men in a business setting. The hierarchical multiple regression analysis suggested age and mentoring were statistically significant predictors of organizational commitment. The mediation analysis indicated that mentoring's influence on the dependent variable was mediated through job satisfaction as well. Overall, the data supported the theoretical model.

Introduction

Eby, McManus, Simon, and Russell (2000) suggested, "...obtaining a mentor is an important career development experience for individuals" (p. 1). Studies conducted by Chao (1997), Dreher and Ash (1990), Fagenson (1989), Scandura (1997), and Whitely, Dougherty, and Dreher, (1991) indicated mentored individuals perform better on the job, advance more rapidly within organizations, report more job and career satisfaction, and express lower turnover intentions than non-mentored individuals.

Mentoring can be traced back to Greek mythology in an epic titled, *The Odyssey of Homer* (Butler, 1944). In *The Odyssey of Homer*, King Odysseus was away from the land and while he was away, Athene, a Greek goddess, acted as a guide and counselor to his son, Telemachus. Mentoring as defined by Carmin (1988):

Mentoring is a complex, interactive process, occurring between individuals of differing levels of experience and expertise that incorporates interpersonal or psychosocial development, career, and/or educational development, and socialization functions into the relationship. This one-to-one relationship is itself developmental and proceeds through a series of stages which help to determine both the conditions affecting the outcomes of the process. (p. 10)

Mentoring is important to organizations and professionals in the private and public sector because of the benefits and outcomes it provides to both protégés and mentors. Many researchers examining mentoring focus on the outcomes of mentoring related to the protégé, specifically, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, intent to turnover, and career outcomes in terms of compensation and advancement (Aremu & Adeyoju, 2003; Baugh & Scandura, 1999; Donaldson, Ensher, & Grant-Vallone, 2000; Fagenson, 1989; Joiner, Bartram, & Garreffa 2004; Mobley, Jaret, Marsh, & Lim, 1994; Seibert, 1999; Stallworth, 2003). However, mentors too receive benefits such as increased job satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment from fostering the development of the younger adult (Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

Organizational commitment and job satisfaction were examined in this study because these are two variables that have been negatively correlated to employee's intent to leave the organization (Lu, Lin, Wu, Hsieh, & Chang, 2002; Stallworth, 2003). According to Holton and O'Neill (2002), these variables are important because organizations incur costs associated with recruiting, socializing, and training new hires. Therefore, instead of using monies to recruit, train, and socialize new employees, these monies may be useful in recruitment and retention interventions, such as mentoring, as a means to retain current employees.

Summary of the Problem

According to the United States Census Bureau (2000), the black population in the United States increased faster than the total population between 1990 and 2000. A report from the United States Census Bureau indicated the Black population increase during these years was between 15.6% and 21.5% in comparison to the total population increase of 13.4%. Because of the rapid increase, no longer can researchers remain satisfied with research examining one population and generalizing findings to the total population, in this case mentoring. As Ensher and Murphy (1997) suggested:

While mentoring has been shown to be very helpful for the career development of White males, upon whom most of the research has focused, only in the last few years have researchers begun to examine the importance of mentoring for women and people of color. (p. 461)

The review of literature revealed few articles related specifically to African American men and mentoring (Campbell-Whately, & Algozzine, 1997; LaVant, Anderson, & Tiggs, 1997; Utsey, Howard, & Williams, 2003), however, the majority of articles were non-empirical. Graham (1992) indicated that 3.9% of empirical research articles were where African Americans were the population of interest. Sue (1999) suggested that the explanations for such a lack of empirical research on minority groups are because few researchers are interested in researching the population and this lack of interest is unexposed. Since researchers began to empirically research mentoring in

the early 1980's (Burke & McKeen, 1996), one group that is underutilized in the empirical mentoring research literature is African American men. It is this group that this study examined. Specifically, the study examined mentoring among African American men working in corporate settings and their level of job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Purpose of the study

Sue (1999) suggested "that there is a lack of psychological research on ethnic minority population and that research on ethnic minority groups is uneven" (p. 1070). Dreher and Cox (1996) and Thomas (1990) conducted empirical mentoring studies where, collectively, Black and White men were the population studied. However, because of the lack of mentoring research designed to examine minority groups and specifically examine mentoring as it relates to African American men, this empirical study is the first of its kind to exclusively examine mentoring among African American men and its relationship to their organizational commitment and job satisfaction in a corporate setting.

A problem that may exist for African American men, in regard to mentoring, is the availability or access to mentors. Viator (2001) conducted a study to examine whether African Americans were able to obtain mentoring support in the public accounting profession and found that African Americans were more likely to perceive barriers to obtaining a mentor than their White counterparts. These factors lead to the researcher to investigate the following research questions.

Research questions. This study examined the mentoring experiences of African American men to determine how their mentoring experiences influence their job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Specifically, the study answered the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between mentoring and job satisfaction?
2. What is the relationship between mentoring and organizational commitment?
3. After controlling for select demographic variables, what is the relationship between mentoring, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment?

The first research question examined the strength and direction of the relationship between mentoring and job satisfaction among African American men. The second research question examined the strength and direction of the relationship between mentoring and organizational commitment of African American men. According to a review of the literature, researchers found positive relationships between mentoring, job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Baugh & Scandura, 1999; Fagenson, 1989; Mobley, Jaret, Marsh, & Lim, 1994; Seibert, 1999), yet statistically nonsignificant ones between mentoring and job satisfaction (Aremu & Adeyolu 2003). The third research question examined the unique relationship between mentoring, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment after statistically controlling for select demographic variables, (age, tenure, etc).

Theoretical framework. This study used Bandura's (1994) social learning theory as its foundation to assist in explaining the construct of mentoring. Bandura indicated that, "Social learning theory emphasizes the prominent roles played by vicarious, symbolic, and self-regulatory processes in psychological functions" (p. vii). The four distinct features of social learning theory are: attention, retention, motivation, and motor reproduction. According to Bandura, the vicarious process involves: (a) observation, direct experience, and fosters developing patterns in which the individual continually learns through observing; (b) the symbolic process involves the ability to analyze the conscious experience, to plan, create, imagine, and engage in foresightful action; and (c) the self-regulatory process involves self-generated inducement and consequences to influence human behavior.

How does this relate to mentoring? The two functions of mentoring are: career development and psychosocial development (Kram, 1983). These functions involve coaching and role modeling for the protégé, which may include learning through modeling. For example, a mentor may need to coach and provide feedback to a protégé on the correct way to develop a budget or the mentor may find an opportunity for the protégé to observe and engage in hands-on learning in developing a budget.

Methodology

Sample Selection

The participants in the study were African American men who worked in various industries and/or were chapter members the National Black Masters of Business Administration Association (NMBAA). This study used purposive sampling methods to select the participants. The number of subjects in this study was 364.

This study used Dillman's (2000) online survey protocol to administer the Web-based survey. A pre-notification e-mail with an explanation of the research study was sent to all chapter presidents. Two days after sending the pre-notification, the researcher sent an e-mail containing the Web-link and a request to forward the Web-link and preamble to the potential participants. Three days later, a reminder e-mail was sent to the presidents

with the same protocol as the second e-mailing to increase the response rate. Lastly, two days later, a thank you/reminder e-mail was sent to the presidents with an additional request to remind the participants to complete the survey if the participants had not already done so. Because the researcher did not have direct access to the member's information, the presidents were used as the mediator. Also, since the researcher did not have direct access to potential participants and did not know the exact or estimated number of members per chapter, an exact survey response rate could not be calculated.

Research instrumentation

There were four sections to the survey. The demographic section of the survey gathered data of the participants (gender, race, organizational tenure, job tenure, organization size, industry, advance degree attainment). The mentoring section gathered data pertaining to the participant's mentoring experiences, which included the race and gender of the participant's mentors, frequency of meetings between the mentor and protégé, and whether the mentoring relationships developed naturally (informally) or through the organization (formally).

To measure organizational commitment, the researcher used Mowday, Steers, and Porter's (1979) Organizational Commitment Questionnaire. The researcher measured the 15-item scale on a 7-point type Likert-type agreement scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *moderately disagree*, 3 = *slightly disagree*, 4 = *neutral*, 5 = *slightly agree*, 6 = *moderately agree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Mowday et al. (1979) reported internal consistencies (coefficient alpha) ranging from .82 to .93. The Cronbach's alpha for the scale in this study was .90.

The researcher used Spector's (1998) Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS) to measure job satisfaction. The JSS is a 36-item scale and the researcher measured the scale on a 6-point Likert-type agreement scale to measure employee attitudes about their job and aspects of their job (1 = *disagree very much*, 2 = *disagree moderately*, 3 = *disagree slightly*, 4 = *agree slightly*, 5 = *agree moderately*, 6 = *agree very much*). For the 36-item Job Satisfaction scale Cronbach's alpha was .94. These exceeded the criterion of .70 that is often used by researchers (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Data collection and analysis procedures

To address the research questions in this quantitative correlational designed study, the researcher used multiple linear regression. This statistical procedure allowed a test of the relationships among the predictor variable (mentoring) and the dependent variables (job satisfaction and organizational commitment). The multiple regression analysis also allowed a mediation analysis to test if job satisfaction mediates the effect of mentoring on organizational commitment or that mentoring directly affects organizational commitment without any mediation by job satisfaction. The researcher used procedures described by Berger (2004) to perform the mediation analysis. Table 1 shows the regression coefficients that were used for the analysis.

Table 1

Source of Regression Coefficients for Mediation Analysis

| <u>Regression coefficient</u> | <u>Number of regression equation and effect of predictor variable on dependent variable</u> | <u>Step of equation</u> |
|-------------------------------|---|-------------------------|
| a | 1. Mentoring predicting Job satisfaction | 1 |
| c | 2. Mentoring predicting Org. Commitment | 1 |
| c' | 2. Mentoring predicting Org. Commitment, controlling for Job satisfaction | 2 |
| b | 2. Job satisfaction predicting Org. Commitment, controlling for Mentoring | 2 |

Note. Notation for regression coefficients derived from Berger (2004).

Results and Findings

Research Question 1

It was found that being mentored was significantly related to job satisfaction ($B = .337, p < .01$). The variance accounted for in job satisfaction by mentoring was $R^2 = .032$ (adjusted $R^2 = .028$) indicating a small effect size. In step 1 of the analysis, it was found that being mentored was significantly related to Organizational Commitment ($B = .508, p < .01$). The variance accounted for in organizational commitment by mentoring was $R^2 = .035$ (adjusted $R^2 = .032$) indicating a small effect size. Table 2 displays the results of the hierarchical regression analysis.

Table 2

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Job Satisfaction Predicted by Mentoring (N = 256)

| <i>Variable</i> | <i>B</i> | <i>SEB</i> | <i>β</i> |
|-----------------|----------|------------|----------|
| Mentored | .337 | .116 | .179** |

Note. Total variance accounted for by the predictor is: $R^2 = .032$ (adjusted $R^2 = .028$).
** $p < .01$.

Research Question 2

In step 2 of the analysis, it was found that, controlling for job satisfaction, being mentored was not significantly related to organizational commitment ($B = .134, NS$). It was also found that controlling for being mentored, job satisfaction was significantly related to organizational commitment ($B = 1.108, p < .01$). Table 3 reveals the results.

Table 3

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Organizational Commitment Predicted by Mentored and Job Satisfaction (N = 256)

| <i>Variable</i> | <i>B</i> | <i>SEB</i> | <i>β</i> |
|------------------|----------|------------|----------|
| <i>Step 1</i> | | | |
| Mentored | .508 | .166 | .188** |
| <i>Step 2</i> | | | |
| Mentored | .134 | .107 | .050 |
| Job Satisfaction | 1.108 | .057 | .772** |

Note. Total variance accounted for: In Step 1 is $R^2 = .035$ (adjusted $R^2 = .032$). In Step 2 is $R^2 = .613$ (adjusted $R^2 = .609$).
** $p < .01$.

Research Question 3

The mediation analysis indicated being mentored has a direct effect on organizational commitment (from regression 2, step 1, $B = .508, p < .01$). Therefore, if a participant was mentored, the person had higher organizational commitment. However, when job satisfaction was controlled, the regression coefficient for being mentored on organizational commitment became non-significant (from regression step 2, $B = .134, p > .05$). In step 1 of the hierarchical regression three demographic variables were entered (membership, age, years in position) and mentoring and job satisfaction were entered in step 2. The regression indicated age was significantly related to organizational commitment ($B = .285, p < .01$). This suggests that the older the participant is, the more likely he or she will be committed to the organization. The variance accounted for in organizational commitment by age was $R^2 = .043$ (adjusted $R^2 = .032$) indicating a small effect size. In step 2 of the analysis, while controlling for three demographic variables (membership, position tenure, age) and mentoring, it was found that job satisfaction was a significant predictor of organizational commitment ($B = .059, p < .01$). The variance accounted for in organizational commitment by job satisfaction was $R^2 = .616$ (adjusted $R^2 = .608$) indicating a large effect size. Job satisfaction was the only significant predictor variable in step 2.

Discussion

Study's Strengths

Prior qualitative and quantitative studies where researchers investigated the mentoring outcomes of organizational commitment and job satisfaction indicate a positive relationship with those variables and mentoring (Baugh & Scandura, 1999; Mobley, Jaret, Marsh, & Lim, 1994; Orpen, 1997; Raabe & Beehr, 2003; Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). However, whether the effect of mentoring is direct or indirect was not investigated. In this study, in addition to the regression analysis, the mediation analysis allowed the researcher to investigate if the effects of mentoring on organizational commitment all direct effects, or are some or all of the effects indirect, through the variable job satisfaction.

According to a review of the literature, researchers found positive relationships between mentoring, job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Baugh & Scandura, 1999; Fagenson, 1989; Mobley, Jaret, Marsh, & Lim, 1994; Seibert, 1999), yet statistically nonsignificant ones between mentoring and job satisfaction (Aremu & Adeyoju 2003). The results from the mediation analysis showed that job satisfaction is a mediator of the effect of mentoring on organizational commitment. Being mentored has a direct effect on organizational commitment (from regression 2, step 1, $B = .508, p < .01$). Therefore, if a participant was mentored, the person had higher organizational commitment. However, when job satisfaction was controlled, the regression coefficient for being mentored on organizational commitment became non-significant (from regression step 2, $B = .134, p > .05$). In other words, the effect of mentoring worked through job satisfaction. If someone was mentored, he or she was more satisfied with his or her job, and this in turn was associated with greater organizational commitment.

As Atkinson, Casas, and Neville (1994) indicated, "Despite the widely acknowledged benefits to both protégés and mentor, mentoring has been restricted to a limited population, namely White men" (p. 37). This study examined an underrepresented population and found that as an African American man, having access to a mentor, whether formal or informal, can influence positively their job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In particular, finding ways to improve mentoring relationships may increase job satisfaction, which in turn would strongly influence commitment to the organization. Thus, for organizations that want to increase the retention of African American men, it might be useful for managers of organizations to more clearly identify job-related tasks, activities, and goals that would foster better job satisfaction for the purpose of increasing organizational commitment. These findings are encouraging to the mentoring literature and workplace learning and performance professionals.

Study's Limitations

While this study examined the effects of mentoring involving African American men, the first limitation of the study is that it excluded other minorities and minorities who are women, which could extend the research for these populations as well. Because of the diversity in the United States and within organizations, researchers should further their research to exclusively examine specific groups such as, Asian American females, Hispanic males, for example. The second limitation is related the use of a questionnaire. Because the study retrieved its data from questionnaires exclusively, there may be issues associated with common method variance (Doty & Glick, 1998). Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) suggested the following strategies to minimize common method variance: (a) avoid implying that one response is preferred over another, (b) make all responses of equal effort, (c) pay attention to details of item wording, (d) use items that are less subject to bias, (e) provide clear instructions, and (f) independently assess sources of expected bias. A third limitation is the use of electronic surveys and the variability

of response rates. According to Schonlau, Fricker and Elliott (2002), Web-based survey response rates range from 6% to 68%. While there is a wide range for response rates, Shannon and Bradshaw (2002) reported that it takes an average of 9.13 days to receive a survey response by mail compared to 3.21 days for Web-based surveys, which appears to be an advantage of mailed surveys. Again, because the researcher did not have direct access to potential participants and did not know the exact or estimated number of members per chapter, an exact survey response rate could not be calculated.

Implications for Practice and Research

As indicated in previous studies, there is a lack of empirical research on African American men in the mentoring literature, and based on the findings of the study, there is evidence that continuing research on minorities, specifically African American men, may be beneficial to extending the mentoring literature and the impact it has on their job performance and organizational learning. This study provides seminal results. The following provides the researcher's suggestions for future research.

Because the findings of the study indicated mentoring is a predictor of job satisfaction and organizational commitment of African American men, more mentoring research should be conducted on other minorities exclusively, (e.g., Hispanic men and women, Asian men and women, African American women) to test the model presented in this study further. As proportional minority representation in the United States increases, it would be very useful for researchers to focus more of their efforts on these populations to examine the impact on organizational learning and job performance.

A second suggestion pertains to formal and informal mentoring. As indicated by Haynes (2003), "Prevailing trends suggests that formal mentoring and informal mentoring programs will continue to be used by organizations..." (p. 119). The demographic portion of the survey used for this study asked participants to identify whether their mentoring experience was formal, informal, or non-mentoring (no mentoring experiences). For the purpose of analyzing the data, formal mentoring and informal mentoring were combined. This allowed the data to be dichotomized into two categories: mentored and non-mentored. The results indicated that mentoring, whether formal or informal, was a significant predictor of job satisfaction and organizational commitment to African American men. Additional studies should be designed specifically to collect data from far more participants to afford informal and formal mentoring experience comparisons among African American men, and to examine its impact on job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

A third suggestion pertains to the job performance of the protégé in the mentorship. The career function of mentoring involves: sponsorship, protection, coaching, exposure and visibility, and challenging assignments (Kram, 1983). As this career component specifically involves challenging assignments and coaching, do these functions lead to greater job performance of the protégé? Examining how mentoring, specifically the career function, impacts the job performance of African Americans and other non-majority participants would be a productive extension of the mentoring literature. In regard to job performance, this study did not examine the mentoring experiences of African American men and compensation. Additional studies should examine this mentoring outcome as well as comparing the compensation of formally and informally mentored protégés.

Fourthly, the mentoring literature consists largely of quantitative research. Thus, the mentoring literature could benefit from additional qualitative research that might identify heretofore unexamined variables related to mentoring in the research literature. For example, a researcher might ask what mentoring actually means to members of specific groups (e.g., women, men, minorities), which could be used in future mentoring studies when operationally defining mentoring for survey development purposes.

The final suggestion involves examining the psychosocial and career functions of mentoring more extensively. Because several studies investigating the impact of race in mentoring relationships found mixed results related to race and mentoring (e.g., Dreher & Chargois, 1998; Dreher & Cox, 1996; Ensher & Murphy, 1997; Thomas, 1990; Viator, 2001), it would be interesting to conduct a quasi-experimental study to systematically investigate the mentoring outcomes of African American protégés when paired with same-race and different race mentors.

Workplace learning and performance

The findings of the study are important to the field of mentoring and workplace learning and performance because it provides new information to the mentoring literature examining African American men in corporate a setting. Additionally, it adds to existing research on two organizational outcomes linked to mentoring: job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Specifically, in regard to the significance to workplace learning and performance, the career and psychosocial tenets of mentoring can have a significant impact on the organizational learning and job performance of the protégé. These functions involve coaching and role modeling for the protégé,

which may include learning through modeling. For example, a mentor may need to coach and provide feedback to a protégé on the correct way to develop a budget or the mentor may find an opportunity for the protégé to observe and engage in hands-on learning in developing a budget.

The theoretical framework that guided this research study was Bandura's (1982) social learning theory, which suggests that engaging in observations and direct experiences can be powerful means to job-related learning and performance. The career component of mentoring involves a number of functions likely to be strongly influenced by social learning experiences, including sponsorship, protection, coaching, exposure and visibility, and challenging assignments (Kram, 1983). This career component involves specific developmental tasks to assist in the employee's learning and job performance, which can impact their career advancement (e.g., promotions, salary increases, greater job responsibilities) where the protégé may observe the mentor and/or gain experience through various assignments for improved performance. For example, Dreher and Chargois (1998) found that graduates participating in a mentorship received \$10,000 more in annual compensation than those not in a mentorship. This increase in compensation potentially can be related to the protégé's job performance.

Additionally, the psychosocial function of mentoring includes role modeling, by which the mentor provides a standard to be measured. This role modeling function can impact the protégés learning and ability to perform at an acceptable level and likelihood to remain in an organization. For example, Burke (1984) found that mentors performing the role model function had greater influences of a career nature. Thus, through a social learning theory lens, both the career and psychosocial functions of mentoring lend themselves to providing protégés (mentors can benefit as well) in particular significant opportunities to learn through a process of engaging in ample observational and experiential activities related to adapting to one's job, work group, and organization.

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