

# Deriving a Framework to Create a Successful and Effective Mentor-Protégé Relationship – Lessons Learned from Formal and Informal Cases<sup>1</sup>



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## **Abstract**

Conventional wisdom reminds us to have a mentor to guide and support our career development. It is still a challenge to researchers and practitioners when searching for a strategy, process, or structure to create and maintain a successful and effective mentor-protégé relationship in different work environments. This paper summarized the characteristics of mentors, role and responsibilities of protégés, and suggested a framework to establish a successful and effective mentor-protégé relationship based on existing literature. Four case studies were introduced to shed some lights on innovative approaches that might enhance the relationship between a mentor and a protégé in formal or informal scenarios. Finally, some discussions about gaps and opportunities in conducting future research on a successful and effective mentor-protégé relationship were proposed, adding lessons learned from the case studies into existing literature.

**Keywords:** mentorship, mentor-protégé relationship, mentoring programs

## **Introduction**

We begin our life by observing and learning from our parents. After reaching school age, we start following and mimicking our teachers and peers. There is a famous saying in Chinese history, "*Mencius' mother, three moves*" referring to a devoted mother who raised her son alone while seeking the most beneficial learning environment for Mencius to acquire knowledge and skills. Mencius' mother moved three times to find the best neighborhood to raise her son – the first neighborhood was nearby a graveyard, the second neighborhood was close to a slaughterhouse, and finally, they settled in a neighborhood including a school. Mencius is one of the most recognized and respected philosophers in Chinese history, whose principals of learning emphasized on thinking as a scholar, behaving as a scholar, and being wise as a scholar. Mencius' mother is still a model of maternity in Chinese culture for her vision and dedication to her son's welfare. In reality, everyone has encountered more or fewer influences from our mentors in an explicit or implicit manner through parents, teachers, peers, relatives, friends, neighbors, or other prominent figures.

Scholars have discussed various dimensions of mentoring across personal growth, career development, performance evaluation, social aspects, cultural differentiation, and gender gaps (Aryee et al., 1996; Baker et al., 2014; Blackburn et al., 1981; Donaldson et al., 2000). Lewis, 2003; Ragins and Cotton, 1999). Some researchers have targeted specific functions and outcomes of mentor-protégé interactions (Allen et al., 2006; Allen et al., 1997; Chao et al., 1992). Existing literature all agree on one thing – a successful and effective mentor-protégé relationship leads to positive outcomes for both mentor and protégé (Schrubbe, 2003; Scandura, 1992). A mentor is different from a role model, according to many researchers. Everyone can identify a role model based on self-proclaimed knowledge or idolization of an individual who could be a famous public figure. A mentor offers guidance to inspire, motivate, and drive others to expand their capability, competency, and skills to achieve personal and professional goals. Many surveys, interviews, and studies of accomplished individuals have revealed the importance of influential mentors in their career success (Schrubbe, 2003). The United States Office of Personnel Management (2008) described key reasons for anyone to have a good mentor:

- To learn and reflect on learning.
- To receive balanced and unbiased comments and critiques for improvement.
- To validate our ideas and decisions before implementation.
- To develop our mentoring ability and capacity for others.

This paper begins with a summary of existing literature concerning mentorship, mentor-protégé relationship, and factors influencing the success or failure of a mentor-protégé relationship in professional development. Four case studies are introduced to represent different approaches and outcomes given four different pairs of mentor-protégé relationships. Finally, a recommended framework is presented to integrate findings of the case studies into existing knowledge of the paths, procedures, and factors relating to a successful and effective mentor-protégé relationship. This paper introduces

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a novel approach to re-think about the mentorship and its impacts on our lives. It is not the author's intention to generalize findings and conclusions. Each individual is unique, and each mentor-protégé case is unique.

## Materials and Methods

The word "mentor" comes from Homer's *Odyssey*. When the king of Ithaca, Odysseus, fought in the Trojan War, he entrusted Mentor to serve as a teacher for his son, Telemachus. Over time, a mentor is often recognized to provide help, guidance, support, and advice based on her/his knowledge and experience to oversee the growth and development of another person (Kram, 1983; Ragins, 1999; Scandura, 1992). Many commonly adapted terms to describe a mentor include faithful, trusted, or wise (Gentry et al., 2008). Some might expect a mentor to be a senior member in a family, community, or professional organization; although there has been no science-based evidence that age is a significant factor for being a successful mentor. Several authors have described the characteristics of successful mentors (Schrubbe, 2003; Van Eps et al., 2006; Straus et al., 2013):

- From a work-related perspective, a mentor often has the following characteristics:
  - Knowledgeable within an organization or across comparable disciplines.
  - Competent in achieving goals and supporting others with clear orientations.
  - Capable of creating and maintaining a constructive interpersonal relationship, sharing reliable and balanced information, and promoting positive outcomes.
  - Confident and supportive of others to develop their interests and goals within their own limit.
  - Successful and respected by peers for achieving leadership or prestige.
- From a personal view, a mentor often has the following characteristics:
  - Trustworthy and respectful.
  - Encouraging, motivating, and inspiring.
  - Committed to supporting others.
  - People-oriented with good listening and communication skills.
  - Willing to invest time, effort, and energy to create and maintain a mentor-protégé relationship.

Most of the articles exploring and examining mentorship have appeared in medicine or nursing journals. Physicians and nurses tend to establish a more structured mentor-protégé relationship through education, practicum, and other professional development opportunities. For example, Van Eps et al. (2006) described a year-long mentorship program in an undergraduate nursing curriculum, and they confirmed the value of mentorship in an early nursing career with emphasize on improving skill competency and serving as future mentors in the nursing field. Dunham-Taylor et al. (2007) discussed the importance of mentorship from the perspectives of faculty retention in nursing schools. While most of the clinical and teaching faculty could be overwhelmed in their daily responsibilities, it is critical to establish a continuous and productive mentorship program within the discipline to support new faculty entering a challenging era of shortage in medical professionals. This may be true across all disciplines.

## What are the Protégé's Role and Responsibilities?

Few scholars have explored the role and responsibilities of the protégé. Making the most of a mentor seems to be the essential responsibility for a protégé. Zerzan et al. (2009) generated a guide for protégés to participate in a successful mentoring relationship focusing on initiation and cultivation stages. Anyone who is seeking a mentor needs to be prepared in terms of knowing one's plan, goals, values, purposes, and levels of commitment. It is equally important for each individual to recognize personal style in work/life scenarios, communication, and other characteristics that might influence our match with a mentor.

The Research Foundation of the State University of New York issued a one-page statement describing the role and responsibilities of a protégé: "*A protégé is a partner in the learning process with the mentor. Protégés are expected to play an active role in their development by identifying their own needs, making those needs specific, soliciting mentor's assistance, and making effective use of that help to increase their productivity.*" A protégé should exhibit similar expectations as a mentor, including a commitment to self-development, independent working capacity, and time and energy to establish a meaningful mentor-protégé relationship. A list of protégé roles and behaviors described by the Research Foundation SUNY includes:

- Identifying and sharing needs.
- Being receptive to information and feedback.
- Setting realistic expectations with the mentor.
- Asking questions and practicing active listening.
- Communicating problems clearly.
- Challenging assumptions in self and others.
- Searching for ways to achieve an individual's objectives, and contributing ideas about options for solving particular problems.

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- Providing feedback to the mentor, including a willingness to discuss failures as well as successes, and leveling about feelings that are important and/or strong.
- Following through on commitments and seeking help when necessary.
- Learning and practicing self-empowering behaviors.
- Demonstrating humility, an insatiable curiosity, and the courage to trust.

## A Framework to Create and Establish a Mentor-Protégé Relationship

There are many ways to create and establish a mentorship process. Many professional associations and consulting firms offer strategies and models to design, develop, and implement a mentorship program for different types of institutions. Scholars have presented stages of developing a mentoring relationship: initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition (Kram, 1983; Kram, 1988; Chao, 1997; Crisp, 2009; Baker et al, 2014), and many have adopted this process in describing a faculty mentoring continuum (Dunham-Taylor et al., 2007). Successful mentoring programs require proper understanding, planning, implementation, and evaluation. (United States Office of Personnel Management, 2008). In reality, the process of forming a mentor-protégé relationship begins with the awareness of needs, purposes, and expectation (Baranik et al., 2010; Cherian, 2007; Singh et al., 2009).

Combining steps and strategies presented in existing literature, a framework is established to support systematic analysis in understanding and examining the mentor-protégé relationship – discovery, initiation, cultivation, planning, implementation, validation, revision, reflection, and separation.

### Discovery

An individual often begins with self-exploration to identify a need to seek a mentor. Not everyone knows if it is necessary to have a mentor in any particular situation. Just because everyone else believes that we should have a mentor, therefore we all have to find a mentor. It is necessary for each individual to ask a few questions before we barge into the quest:

- Why do I need a mentor?
- What will be my goals to accomplish with a mentor?
- What types of personality and characteristics do I want for a mentor?
- What will be the value-added benefits for me to have a mentor?
- Do I need a mentor for a specific scenario in my life and/or in my career?
- How do I handle conflicts and challenges with my mentor?

### Initiation

Once an individual completes the self-assessment, there are a variety of opportunities for one to find a mentor:

- Attending institutional programs – many private and public institutions offer formal mentorship programs, such as schools, corporations, and government agencies. These formal mentorship programs have structured instructions and requirements for mentor and protégé to follow, including types and frequencies of interactions.
- Attending professional events – professional associations sometimes offer mentorship programs through annual meetings, conferences, or other gathering opportunities. Sometimes professional associations offer formal mentorship programs as a part of professional development. More often, these annual meetings and conferences offer social events for networking and the formation of an informal mentor-protégé relationship.

### Cultivation and Planning

In the planning phase, both mentor and protégé need to layout clear goals and objectives to fulfill the expectations together. Existing literature suggested to consider the following:

- Creating an agreement for common rules and conflict resolution.
- Identifying purposes, priorities, goals, and objectives that need to be specific, measurable, achievable, reasonable, and timely.
- Establishing a communication strategy between mentor and protégé to include methods, frequency, and discussion points.
- Documenting and tracking accomplishments according to a benchmarking system against goals and objectives.

### Implementation

Both mentor and protégé need to follow and execute the plan together promptly following some strategies, such as:

- Discussing progress, challenges, and alternatives in routine meetings.
- Agreeing on a stream of outputs or deliverables to demonstrate productivity.
- Executing the plan while being cautious about a variety of institutional policies, constraints, and potential conflicts, which might hinder the productivities of the protégé.

### Validation and Revision

Sometimes, the plan needs to be modified due to unforeseen situations, such as personal issues or financial challenges at an institution. The protégé must share information with the mentor when there is a need to change the plan, so both mentor and protégé can work together quickly to revise the plan and move forward. Existing literature suggested a few things to consider:

- Discussing the nature of the needs to revise the plan, and seeking alternatives for change.
- Defining a revised set of goals, objectives, and benchmarks accordingly.
- Moving forward with the continuous support and encouragement from the mentor.

### **Reflection and Separation**

Limited information in the existing literature discussed the timeframe of a mentor-protégé relationship. For a pair does not get along well, this relationship could end sooner than expected. Some successful mentor-protégé relationships may last a lifetime. Scholars have suggested creating an exit strategy for mentor and protégé to physically and emotionally separate from the relationship (Kram, 1983), and further develop a friendship or a collegial relationship. It will be more important for mentor and protégé to reflect on the relationship, shared experiences, and move forward in a mutually agreed new format.

## **Results**

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This section will introduce four cases to demonstrate various successful and effective mentor-protégé relationships. All of these cases are in the United States. Individual's identity will be represented by case number (1, 2, 3, 4) and code (M-mentor, P-protégé). Age, ethnicity, career rank, and other specific information for each individual will not be shared for confidentiality reasons. Although some literature discussed the potential impacts of ethnicity in mentoring (Sanchez, 1999; Anaya and Cole, 2001), there has been very limited science-based evidence to argue potential influences of age, gender, and career ranks/positions in mentor-protégé relationships (Ragins and Cotton, 1999; Scandura and Williams, 2001; Lewis, 2003; Einarson and Clarkberg, 2010; Fuentes et al., 2013). The information presented in the cases were gathered from in-person interviews with each individual. This study instrument was reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, and the IRB determined that this study did not require IRB approval.

### **Case 1**

M1 (male) and P1 (female) did not know each other and had never met each other in their field. M1 and P1 came from two different disciplines, worked in two different institutions in two different geographic locations. They met in a social event hosted by a professional conference. M1 and P1 shared some information about their career interests and goals. M1 was a senior faculty and an administrator who had achieved the highest rank in the institution. P1 was a newly hired assistant professor in her first academic position. P1 realized the potential challenges and barriers for her to establish a successful career path in a new environment. She hoped to find someone who could offer guidance and support (Discovery). M1 was an established professor with more than 30 years of academic/practitioner experience. When P1 and M1 met, they discovered something in common – they were both interested in expanding the boundaries of research in a new subject and wanted to achieve the highest recognition of their career. Even though M1 was already at the peak of his career, he was willing to guide P1 and join P1 to continue the journey of discovering new sciences. M1 and P1 shared similar personality and characteristics, and they were both very focused on career development. M1 generously offered P1 an opportunity to be her mentor and to support P1 to achieve her career goals. And her goal was very simple – to become an outstanding educator and scholar just like M1! (Initiation) The purpose of this relationship was to provide guidance and support to assist P1 successfully achieve academic tenure and promotion status from assistant professor to professor within a reasonable timeframe. M1 worked with P1 to design and create a feasible Plan in career development. Key items included in the plan were: (1) a clearly defined and integrated research, teaching, and service agenda; (2) a step-by-step strategy to achieve tenure and promotion within a reasonable time frame including benchmarking deliverables such as a number of peer-reviewed articles; (3) a structured personal and career enrichment model through training, leadership education, and outreach activities; and (4) a well-crafted teaching and research strategy to achieve high scholarship. This plan covered approximately ten years of goals, objectives, actions, and deliverables. M1 shared his own career development strategies with P1 – focus, work hard, prioritize, appreciate students, be creative and innovative, turn challenges into opportunities, and find alternatives to resolve tension and negativity. P1 often challenged M1 in her own way due to her constant struggles in balancing life and career. M1 candidly shared his own demons when he was building a career – depression and family conflicts. (Implementation) In 10 years, P1 was able to trust M1 with whom she could follow, listen, observe, collaborate, and execute her plan.

M1 and P1 kept in touch at least once a week to work on developing manuscripts, teaching ideas, research design, data analysis, and training materials for outreach activities. A few times, P1 needed to adjust her plan due to lack of interests in certain projects and miscommunication with her administrators (Validation and Revision). M1 patiently guided P1 through these setbacks and supported P1 continuing her journey to success. This mentor-protégé relationship lasted ten years, and P1 successfully achieved her goals. M1 and P1 re-energized their professional relationship for another ten years as colleagues supporting others. (Reflection) M1 shared a comment to reflect on this 20-year mentoring

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experience: *“when P1 is building her career, I am building my second career. My intellectual curiosity has been considerably enhanced through this mentoring relationship.”*

### Case 2

M2 (female) and P2 (female) participated in a structured one-day mentorship workshop supported by a professional association within their own discipline. M2 and P2 did not know each other even though they shared the same discipline. M2 and P2 worked in two different institutions in different geographic locations. P2, a junior faculty in her institution, signed up to participate in the structured mentoring program with her aim to accomplish tenure and promotion. M2, a mid-career faculty in her own institution already successfully achieved tenure and promotion, signed up to serve as a mentor with her aim to support junior colleagues. (Discovery and Initiation) M2 and P2 went through a matchmaking process, and the rubric of matchmaking was generated by a mentoring consulting firm hired by the professional association to conduct this day-long mentorship training workshop. One of the questions in the matching process was asking all protégé applicants to identify an individual in the mentor pool to work with them. M2 and P2 become a pair of mentor and protégé, and they met the first time in the one-day mentoring workshop during the professional conference period. M2 and P2 and other mentor-protégé teams worked with the consulting firm to complete a formal, guided process in identifying career goals, actions to achieve goals, a reasonable timeline to achieve goals and steps to establish a reliable communication strategy (Plan and Cultivation). Key elements in the plan included (1) clearly articulated resume revision to highlight significant accomplishments, and to present more numbers and tables to show key statistics in publication and teaching outcomes; (2) re-defined career orientation to balance personal, family, and work responsibilities; and (3) actions to improve personal and career development strategies such as broaden networking capacity across disciplines. After this one-day workshop, M2 and P2 returned to their own institutions and began a one-year commitment as a mentor-protégé team. They shared monthly updates following P2's plan carefully.

P2's priority was to secure tenure and promotion in her institution. (Implementation) In the process of preparing materials for tenure and promotion review, P2 shared her resume and dossier with M2 for a comprehensive review. M2 provided constructive suggestions for P2 to improve the presentation of her resume and dossier – use more charts and tables to document values, numbers, and impacts; be creative and concise with narratives; tell a strong story about commitment, impacts, and contribution, etc. (Validation and Revision) Once P2 revised her resume and dossier, P2 realized that she might have a better opportunity to apply for another position in a different educational institution. So P2 moved forward with her application to the new position, and she successfully secured the new position during this mentor-protégé relationship. In her new institution, P2 continued working with M2 to improve and enhance her career performance. M2 has supported P2 to serve in a variety of leadership positions and grant collaborations. (Reflection) This mentor-protégé relationship is still on-going, and eventually, P2 has evolved into a strong mentor for others – this is her dream for the future!

### Case 3

M3 (female) and P3 (female) signed up to participate in a structured day-long mentorship program organized by a professional association within their own discipline. M3 and P3 came from two different institutions in different geographic locations, and had never met each other before attending the mentorship workshop. M3 and P3 were matched as the 'official' mentor-protégé pair assigned by the matchmaking rubric provided by a consulting firm who conducted the workshop. P3 was a new faculty member in her institution, hired by an interdisciplinary program, and desperately needing support and validation among peers (Discovery). P3 had a very heavy teaching load plus the pressure of publishing, services, and acquiring grants. P3 was surrounded by colleagues with totally different education and training background, and often had a sense of isolation and loneliness.

M3 was an achieved scholar in her institution, successfully achieved tenure and promotion through ranks, with a strong recognition at the regional and national level. When P3 approached M3 for mentoring, they identified a few things in common: they both shared similar struggles in early career (Initiation). P3's priority was to establish and sustain a balance between personal, family, and professional life. Given P3's heavy teaching load and class preparation, she was constantly tired and stressed out. P3 needed to commute at least one hour each way between home and school every day. Driven by her strong commitment and passion for work, the biggest struggle for P3 was her guilt of not being able to share quality time with her family every day. M3 had similar experiences in her early career as a new assistant professor when facing the pressure to establish innovative programs and attain national recognition (this statement is probably one of the most commonly cited information from academic job descriptions across all ranks) while raising her daughter as a single parent. M3 and P3 drafted a plan together as a roadmap for P3 to be successful, relaxed, and happy (Plan). The plan described clear steps and strategies for P3 to execute one step at a time – how to handle difficult situations at work and in a classroom, how to transform unpopular course subjects to energize learners, how to delegate responsibilities among peers and family members, and how to set aside quality time focusing on family welfare. M3 and P3 had monthly meetings to check on progress, performance, and outcomes for one year. Their conversation often focused on family life and family activities. After one year, P3 contacted M3 a few times when issues and questions occurred. P3 had significantly improved her sense and ability to balance life and work. P3's teaching assessment among students and peers received high marks, and she actually enjoyed integrating teaching with her research and service activities. Eventually, P3 successfully achieved tenure and promotion goals as planned. P3 revealed her satisfaction and

appreciation of this mentor-protégé relationship: “M3’s name was all over my tenure and promotion documents. Her devotion and commitment to my family and I became a powerful influence in my life.”

#### Case 4

M4 (female) and P4 (male) had never met in their career paths. They worked in the same discipline, but they worked with different types of organizations in two different geographic locations. P4 was seeking an opportunity to enter an academic institution as an assistant professor, after working in a non-academic job for more than five years. P4 had never had any experience with mentoring in his career, and he wanted to find someone who could help him secure his dream job. (Discovery) M4 was a well-established senior scholar and an administrator in an academic institution with more than 20 years of experiences in research, teaching, and outreach services. P4 identified M4 to be an ideal mentor via professional networks and online news release. P4 contacted M4 (Initiation) directly and requested respectfully for M4 to be a mentor in his job searching process. In the first phone conversation, M4 and P4 spent one hour discussing a few things about P4 and his goal – to identify job openings and application requirements, geographical locations of these job openings related to P4’s personal and family needs, tradeoffs between academic and non-academic jobs, family mobility, and other factors that might influence P4’s decisions in choosing and switching into an academic job.

Once P4 applied to several job openings and received confirmation for campus interviews, P4 and M4 spent two hours over the phone working on interview preparations such as attire, addressing colleagues in professional manner, presentation materials (number of slides, design and format of the slides, information presented in each slide, sequence of slides, and appended information for Q&A), mock Q&A with different types of administrators and colleagues, effective and controlled sense of humor, and testing personality/characteristics. The day before P4 participated in one campus interview, M4 reminded P4: “A job interview is like a matchmaking game. Just be yourself. Don’t overdo it. And relax! Whether you get the job or not, you will gain new friends and collaborators in your career.” P4 received an offer as the result of this interview, which was his dream job. The next two phone conversations between P4 and M4 were about negotiation and family move – salary, benefit, start-up package, school systems for kids, spouse employment opportunities, research agenda, and advising students. Throughout the whole mentor-protégé relationship, M4 and P4 had never met in person.

#### Conclusions and Discussions

The mentor serves as a guide, a listener, and a supporter. Many scholars agreed that a successful, effective mentor-protégé relationship would substantially improve one’s career mobility and opportunities (Scandura, 1992; Straus et al., 2013; Malmgran et al., 2010; Kram, 1988). Some studies concluded many benefits to have a mentor in our career development (Chao et al., 1992; Cherian, 2007; Singh et al., 2009).

Discovery, initiation, cultivation, planning, implementation, reflection, and separation have been discussed in the literature to guide the mentorship development. We need to know when and why we need a mentor, under what circumstances that a mentor could help (or hinder) us in career development, and what we would like to accomplish with the mentor’s guidance. Once we complete a deeper soul-mind-heart searching about our own needs, we can take advantage of professional events and networks to identify a mentor. The most important thing to work with the mentor is to draft a plan that is acceptable for both mentor and protégé. Included in this plan, there needs to be specific actions and benchmarks for outcomes and reporting. If there is a need to change the plan, both mentor and protégé should work together to identify or adjust priorities, goals, and activities for protégé to follow and move forward. Through routine meetings and discussions, mentor and protégé will document discussions, outcomes, challenges, and strategies to support the protégé to achieve goals effectively.

The four cases described in this paper uncovered several elements concerning establishing a successful and effective mentor-protégé relationship that had not been thoroughly discussed in the existing literature.

1. Information mentorship has not been thoroughly examined in the body of literature (James et al., 2015). Scholars recognized the perceived value of information mentorship, and the mentors of an informal mentorship seemed to be more accessible to protégés than formal mentorship (Smallwood and Tolley-Stokes, 2012; James et al., 2015). Two of the four cases in this paper described successful and effective mentorship due to the nature of informal connections. More research is needed to explore and analyze characteristics, perceived values, and success and failure of the informal mentorship.
2. Patience and compassion were clearly presented in all four cases, and patience and compassion were not mentioned in other studies. Mentors in the four cases were extremely patient with their protégés and, and showed compassion in sharing experiences. Each individual has her/his own path when it comes to career development. Some people are more aggressive, while others might be more laid back and taking their time. These different attitudes towards career development could relate to an individual’s personality or other circumstances. The four mentors in our cases presented high quality of being patient and compassionate with their protégés in the planning and implementation phases. Especially when protégé decided to change the plan and career orientation, the mentor allowed protégé to modify the plan with sufficient time to work on new tasks.
3. Is it really important to match personalities to create a successful mentor-protégé relationship? Our cases did not reveal each’s personality. However, there seemed to be very limited research-based evidence to support

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this matching theme. In a professional environment, we work with a variety of personalities with whom we really don't have much power to choose. Seeking a mentor in our career is about finding a person who understands our career paths, who have accumulated experiences in similar career orientation, and who would be willing to share and guide without conflict of interest. There needs to be more research on the aspects of matching versus non-matching personalities between mentors and protégé, and how the personality dynamic influences the development of a successful and effective mentor-protégé relationship.

4. Some studies have described crucial elements to create and sustain a successful and effective mentor-protégé relationship including trust, confidence, competency, and honesty (Wanberg et al., 2007; Straus et al., 2013). Honesty has not been fully explored and examined in mentorship literature. In our cases, none of the mentors and protégés were from the same institution or the same geographic locations. The level of physical separation shielded both mentors and protégés from potential conflicts within their own institutions. Therefore, mentors and protégés in our cases felt comfortable to share honest perspectives. There is a benefit to have a mentor in our own institution, who might have more knowledge about internal politics. Unfortunately, many factors might hinder an internal mentor-protégé relationship. For example, a mentor and a protégé at the same institution apply for a grant separately from the same source and not telling each other due to fear of competition. Potential outcomes from the competition would be either the mentor or the protégé or both receive the grant. Some mentor- protégé teams might experience tension and power struggle for this team, while others might celebrate the success of grant applications no matter who receives the grant. To avoid tension and awkwardness, it could be easier for colleagues from different institutions in different locations to support each other and be very honest with each other throughout the relationship. Honesty and its correlation to trust, confidence, and competency deserve further analysis in a mentor-protégé relationship.
5. Ethnicity and personal background in our four cases were not revealed due to confidentiality. Literature shared some discussions about the importance of understanding and accommodating cultural diversity in mentorship programs (Anaya and Cole, 2001; Kim and Sax, 2009; Einarson and Clarkberg, 2010; Kim, 2010). Diversity has become more important in organizational structure and management due to increasing access to the international labor force. There needs to be more research about the influence and impact of ethnicity, inclusion, and diversity in creating and maintaining a successful and effective mentor-protégé relationship.
6. The cold call is not a conventional approach to identify mentors, and impacts and outcomes of a cold call strategy have not been examined in the existing literature. Most of us probably would not think about calling on someone whom we had never met. In one of our cases, the cold call made a significant difference in establishing a successful and effective mentor-protégé relationship. Fear of rejections and failures might be the barriers to using a cold call strategy. Most of the senior members in our profession are kind and gentle with professional requests. Retirees sometimes are our best assets in acquiring knowledge and experiences. It will be interesting to conduct more research on the influences and outcomes of a cold call strategy comparing with other approaches to establish a successful and effective mentor-protégé relationship.

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