Effects of Cross-Gender Mentoring on Women Executives

Brittany L. Lester

Trinity Washington University

I have adhered to the Trinity Washington University policy regarding academic honesty in

completing this assignment.

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Abstract

Although, traditionally mentoring was exclusively viewed as a benefit for males, the number of female mentorship participants began to rise concurrently as the work environment diversified. As the number of female joining the workforce continued to rise, gender biases also became more apparent. The overarching aim of the study is to draw on the participants' experiences to explore how gender biases impact cross-gender mentoring. The researcher will use a qualitative phenomenological approach to answer the following research questions: (1) Do gender biases effect the success of cross-gender mentoring in mentorships involving women executives?; (2) How does gender impact the protégés experience as a participant in the mentorship?; and (3) How does gender impact the mentor's experience as a participant in the mentorship? This study revealed that the following key themes influence success of cross gender mentoring in women executives: Benefits of Mentoring Relationships, Motivation to Seek Mentoring, Factors Influencing Selection and Perceived Barriers. In addition, it was determined that gender stereotypes are not as prominent as previous research suggested. Lastly, the data showed that similarity-attraction is more influenced by non-physical similarities than race and gender.

Keywords: Women executives, cross-gendered mentoring, Similarity-Attraction Theory.

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Introduction

Mentoring has increased greatly in popularity in recent years and organizations have begun to recognize its value in helping to achieve desired organizational culture. When executed properly, mentoring has been proven to increase employee job performance and improve socialization, motivation and loyalty in new hires and existing employees. Additionally, organizations experience improved leadership skills and job satisfaction in individuals choosing to serve as mentors, and improved organizational succession planning and preparation. Further organizations find there is a reduction in turnover, feelings of job dissatisfaction and plateaued career paths. Current literature defines mentoring as a relationship in which in which two people experience mutual growth as an experienced veteran helps to shape or guide a newcomer (Brown, 1990). Literature also acknowledges that gender biases and stereotypes within the workplace may compromise the functionality of the relationship and may lead ultimately to the termination mentorship. Dysfunctional mentorships can have a large impact as career development and growth is directly linked to the availability of mentoring opportunities.

Statement of the Problem

Traditionally the benefits of mentoring have been reserved exclusively for men as females were excluded from executive social groups. By segregating mentoring opportunities in turn, opportunities for women to advance into roles of decision making and influence are also limited. However as the work environment began to shift and the amount of female workers (particularly in executive positions) increased, organizations were forced to address the issue. In an effort to increase opportunities for women, organizations began implementing formal mentoring programs. Despite organizational support biases within the mentoring framework

remain prevalent. Therefore, opportunities for growth and advancement for women in a male dominated working world also remained limited.

Purpose

The intent of this phenomenological study is to examine how gender biases impact cross-gender mentoring through the perspectives of female executive leaders. The study explores the factors that influence successful cross gender mentoring and its impact on the advancement and growth of women executives.

Significance

The study of career-related limitations for female executives as a result of gender biases in the work environment is important for a variety of reasons. First, despite the popularity of literature on mentoring, research specific to examining cross-gender mentoring is limited. Secondly, there is a lack of research focusing on the mentoring experiences of female executives. Thirdly, the underlying factors do not just effect women, but the entire dynamic of the working environment. Additionally, information gained through may help organizations and human resources professionals make more informed and conscientious decisions when developing and implementing formal mentoring programs. Last, this study can help to educate male and female mentorship participants therefore, improving the likelihood that the relationship is successful.

Theoretical Perspective

Following a qualitative approach, this study focuses on how the participants "interpret their experiences, construct their words and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). As a fundamental theoretical perspective for this research, the similarity-attraction theory was used. The phenomenon of similarity-attraction has been studied in several contexts including: personality, attitude, and attractiveness similarity (Devendorf & Highhouse,

2008). Kalbfleisch (2000) asserts that we are attracted to those who perceive to be similar to ourselves. Similarly, Devendorf & Highhouse (2008) state that the similarity–attraction paradigm predicts attraction to another based on perceived similarity between themselves and the other person. Furthermore, as individuals begin to self-categorize themselves in particular social groups, they also begin to "embody the identity" that is congruent with the stereotypical perceptions of self and others" (Devendorf & Highhouse, 2008.) Lastly, it can be concluded that based on social group self-identification, individuals assert similarity or dissimilarity to another. It can also be inferred that mentoring participants establish selection preferences based on similarities and dissimilarities. Using this theory as a guide, the researcher explores the degrees to which individuals select mentors or protégés based on perceived similar social identities.

Research Method

The study employs a phenomenological approach as it is designed to match the researcher's goal to better understanding the lived experiences of the participants. Phenomenological research is based on the assumption that there is an essence to shared experience which holds core meanings mutually understood through commonly experienced phenomena (Merriam, 2009, p. 25) therefore, data must derive directly from the source to identify theoretical patterns (Speigelberg, 1965, p. 658). In this study, data collection is executed through a series of phenomenological, semi-structured interviews. Next, data analysis consists of the following six stages of analysis: epoche, prewriting, two cycles of coding, triangulation and post-coding. While somewhat strenuous, this approach is very beneficial to the researcher as it allows the researcher to remain flexible when analyzing data as key concepts and patterns are discovered.

Delimitations

There are many areas of research related to the topic of mentoring. However, rather than research such a broad area, this study focuses on exploring the experiences of female executives and examining the effects of gender biases. Research on all of the related areas is not feasible due to the limited amount of time allotted for the study. Secondly, a qualitative approach involving semi-structured interviews of a small amount of participants was used. Data collection does not include any surveys and analysis does not provide any longitudinal data. Instead phenomenological data collection has been selected and data analysis results in a descriptive examination of the experiences of the participants.

Limitations of the Study

Due to the time constraints of the study, the researcher uses a small population of participants. In addition, the study is limited to a very specific area of research without extensive research on other related areas. As a result, the findings may reflect limited perspectives and experiences. Although the process of epoche is used, it is possible that in the stage of data analysis the researcher's personal experiences and bias can affect outcome and final analysis.

Summary

Following the qualitative doctrine, the researcher explores how gender biases effect cross-gender mentoring. By conducting phenomenological, semi-structured interviews, the researcher learns about the *living* experiences of female executives. After several stages of analysis factors influencing the success of cross-gender mentoring a descriptive examination of the experiences of the participants can be developed.

Literature Review

Mentoring has increased greatly in popularity in recent years and organizations have begun to recognize its value in helping to achieve desired organizational culture. The use of both formal and informal mentoring relationships may provide a variety of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards to mentors, protégés and organizations. These rewards may include: increase employee job performance, socialization, motivation and loyalty, improved leadership skills and job satisfaction in individuals choosing to serve as mentors, organizational succession planning and preparation, and reduce in turnover and feelings of job dissatisfaction and plateau.

Traditionally, mentoring in the workplace was regarded as a benefit reserved exclusively for male employees. However, this all changed once the work environment began to shift. As more women entered the workforce, the dynamics of mentoring relationships in male dominated industries changed. Concurrent with the rise of women entering the workforce, there was an increase of females employees seeking mentorship. However, the diversification of the workplace further exposed the prevalence of biases within the mentoring framework. The literature included below defines mentoring as a phenomenon and explores the cognitive, psychosocial process that may lead to biases, dysfunctional mentoring and ultimately the termination of otherwise successful relationships.

Mentoring

The concept of mentoring has increased greatly in popularity in recent years. However despite its popularity, researchers have struggled to determine a universal definition. Appelbaum, Ritchie, and Shapiro (1994) define mentoring as an evolving relationship between two individuals: a mentor and protégé, as a well as to an organization. It is also described as a relationship in which two people experience mutual growth as an experienced veteran helps to

shape or guide a newcomer (Brown, 1990, as cited by Appelbaum, et al, 1994). Mentoring is often confused with the related concept of coaching, however a general dissimilarity distinguishes mentoring as "person-focused" based on its emphasis on the well-rounded development of the individual rather than being role or skill focused (Corporate Leadership Council [CLC], 1999).

As its definition suggests mentoring relationships can be beneficial for all parties involved including: protégés/mentees, mentors, and their organizations (Karacay-Aydin, 2009). Specifically, protégés who participate in such relationships may benefit in positive career outcomes such promotion and compensation, increase in job support and satisfaction, improved socialization, improvement in confidence and esteem (Karacay-Aydin, 2009; Chao, Waltz, & Gardener, 1992; Appelbaum, et al, 1994; Allen, Russell, Maetzke, 1997). Mentors have the opportunity to gain leadership experience and managerial skills, as well as increase personal satisfaction (Karacay-Aydin, 2009). Kram (1995) states that individuals who serve as mentors also report increased competence, confidence in their own abilities, and esteem among peers.

Lastly, Appelbaum et al. (1994) compared mentoring to dynamic leadership, regarding it as a tool to achieve desired organizational culture and a means to improve employee job performance, employee socialization, and succession planning and preparation, motivation and employee loyalty. Benefits also occur on two levels: psychosocial and career related. Psychosocial mentoring gives emphasis to role modeling, acceptance, confirmation, counseling and friendship (Chao et al, 1992). It is through psychosocial mentoring that mentors support protégés and seeks to encourage sense of competence and effectiveness (CLC, 1999). The psychosocial function relates to activities that enhance the protégés career success and include increasing exposure and visibility within social networks, championing, protection and

strategizing (O'Neill & Blake-Beard, 2002). It is important to note that both functions are essential to the success of the mentoring relationship; however an emphasis on a specific function may occur naturally depending on the needs or preferences of the participants (CLC, 1999).

Mentoring can structured either as formal or informal relationship. Formal mentorships are relationships that emerge from the organization's social network and are internally managed (Farrow, 2008; Chao et al., 1992). Conversely, informal mentoring relationships are spontaneous and are not managed, structured or formally recognized by an organization or external party (Chao et al., 1992). Its distinction is determined in the first phase of the relationship – the initiation phase. This phase is characterized by "the match between prospective mentors and protégés" (Chao et al., 1992, p. 621). Chao (1992) further states that informal mentorships arise because of a desire to mentor and in the willingness and openness to receive assistance. It is in this time that biases and preferences most come into play as mentors typically chose protégés based on similarities and the protégé must first prove his or her worthiness.

Gender differences and stereotypes. Traditionally mentoring was only a viable option for men. However, the work environment began to change as the rate of women entering managerial positions began to rise (O'Neill & Blake, 2002). As this number continued to rise, the biases within the current mentoring framework became increasingly more apparent. Catalyst (2013) reported that women comprise of 46.8% of the United States' workforce, yet women occupy only 8.1% of Fortune 500 top earning executive officer positions.

Despite the implementation and efforts of Equal Employment Opportunity laws, women as leaders in industry, business, and the public sector continue to be underrepresented (Noble & Moore, 2006; Probert, 2005; Probert, Ewer, & Whiting, 1998). Leutwiler and Kleiner (2003)

projected through regression analysis, that wage imbalance between men and women would not be equalized until the year 2193. Besen and Kimmel (2006, p. 174) attribute "the disproportional representation of women in managerial positions is due to the glass ceiling: blocked opportunities for women, while some argue it is due to the sticky floor: keeping women in lower paying jobs". Whereas, other scholars identify five major elements obstructing women from breaking through the glass ceiling including: stereotypes and perceptions, mentoring and networking availability, discrimination in the workplace, family issues, and funding availability (Bible & Hill, 2007; Cai & Kleiner, 1999).

Gender role stereotypes are more prevalent in traditionally masculine occupations which results in women often receiving less pay, job-relevant standards in performance evaluation, and opportunities to advance (Nadler & Stockdale, 2012). Similarly, Eagly and Karau (2002) found that women in masculine roles were rated lower than men in the same roles and both men and women associated men with high authority roles and women with low authority roles (Rudman & Kilianski, 2000). While explicit gender discrimination is on the decline, there is still evidence that a significant bias against women in both upper management positions and in compensation (Jarrell & Stanley, 2004) still exists.

Relational demography. Tsui and O'Reilly defined relational demography or the "comparative demographic characteristics of members of dyads or groups who are in a position to engage in regular interactions (as cited by O'Neil & Blake-Beard, 2002). Relational demography is directly related to the gender biases that exist when attempting to establish mentorships, as the underlying premise suggests that people are drawn to others based on shared or similar demographic characteristics, attitudes or activities (O'Neil & Blake-Beard, 2002). This

concept also lays an integral role in the selection of mentorship participants. Mentors often select protégés with whom they share similar qualities and realities (O'Neil & Blake-Beard, 2002).

Social networking. One of the key factors in long-term career success is based on involvement and visibility in organizational social networks. Unfortunately, women often lack access to key information networks and therefore are excluded from informal relationships with male counterparts (Burke, Bristor, & Rothstein, 1996; Chao et al, 1992). Exclusion from these networks puts women at a high disadvantage since they may be missing out on several career advancing factors such as knowledge, information, resources, support, advice influence, power, allies, mentors, sponsors and privilege (Burke et al., 1996). Burke (1996) identified three key types of networks: workflow, communication and friendship. Position in each network is directly related to the influence an individual is perceived to have; unfortunately, there is very little integration and cross-networking between men and women. Therefore, women are often regarded as less influential within organizational social systems.

Gender stereotyping and mentoring. Stereotyping is rooted in the "classification of individuals into groups according to visible criteria like sex, age, and race" (O'Neil & Blake-Beard, 2002, p. 55). Sex is often used to characterize individuals and guide interactions and expectations (O'Neil & Blake-Beard, 2002), however, it is these stereotypes that lead to unfair biases for women who wish to establish success mentoring relationships. With little to no personal information about a woman beyond her gender characteristic, her abilities may not be fairly assessed due to potentially inaccurate perceptions about her qualifications and assumed dissimilarities. Gender stereotyping may negatively impact the formation of cross gender mentoring relationships (O'Neil & Blake-Beard, 2002), and can be used to justify prejudice choices made by male and female participants (Okurame, 2006). While research tends to focus

on biases placed on women, similarly, women may be hesitant to mentor men due to stereotypes surrounding traditionally 'masculine' characteristics. Both sexes raised fears regarding the mentorship being misconstrued as sexual in nature (Okurame, 2006).

Dysfunctional mentoring relationships

The majority of research conducted on mentoring has focused on the positive effects with little regard for the analysis of the potential relational dysfunction that exists within the relationship (CLC, 1999). Kram (1985) however, identifies dysfunctional or 'destructive' mentoring relationships and explores their potential to become dissatisfying as individual or organizational needs and circumstances shift. Similarly, Scandura (1998) identifies three characteristics that may lead to dysfunction within mentorships: personal (*eg.* dominance or submissiveness), demographic (*eg.* sex or age), and skill (*eg.* interpersonal) (as cited in CLC, 1999). Ragins and Scandura (1997, p. 87) explored terminated mentoring relationships and found the following causes.: destructive relationship characterized by jealousy, with mentor stifling progress; dependency and suffocation within the relationship; and mentor's unrealistic expectations and subsequent lack of support.

Similarity-Attraction Theory

The similarity-attraction theory suggests that we are attracted to those who are perceived to be similar to ourselves (Kalbfleisch, 2000). Kalbfleisch asserts that protégés seek mentors whom they most closely see as a model of professional and personal success. Although there are multiple factors that influence attraction, researchers identify sex similarly as a primary motivator for similarity attraction. Sex similarity directly influences mentoring relationships as research shows that while females and makes are both more likely to mentor protégés of their own gender.

As individuals begin to self-categorize themselves in particular social groups, they also begin to *embody the identity* that is congruent with the stereotypical perceptions of self and others" (Devendorf & Highhouse, 2008.) Furthermore, Ibarra (1993) also identifies sex as an important source of identity group affiliation. Based upon social group self-identification, individuals assert similarity or dissimilarity to another, additionally, mentoring participants establish selection preferences based on perceived social identities.

This can have direct adverse effects on women employed in male dominated industries where power is centralized by male executives. Similarly, Ibarra (1993, p. 61) defines *homophily* as the "degree to which pairs of individuals that interact are similar in identity of organizational group affiliations". However, due to the demography of North American organizations, "homophilus ties are less available, have less instrumental value, and require more time and attention for women than for men (Ibarra, 1993, p. 68). In agreement, Markiewicz, Devine & Kausilas (2008) suggests that work relationships with females will be experienced as less desirable, less rewarding, and provide less potential assistance for career advancement.

Theoretical Construct

Throughout the research process several variables consistently surfaced. Each of these variables (as emphasized in Figure 1) directly link to the functionality of the mentoring relationship at various stages.

Similarity-attraction theory. The similarity–attraction paradigm serves as a conceptual foundation for understanding how perceived similarities impact the development of the mentoring relationship (Ensher, Grant-Vallone & Marelich, 2002). We are attracted to those who we perceive to be similar to ourselves (Kalbfleisch, 2000). Additionally, interpersonal similarity and attraction can be interpreted as the law of attraction (Byrne & Nelson, 1965).

Scientists attribute judgments based on attraction to the similarity effect further influenced by attitudes, personality traits, physical attractiveness, demographic characteristics and hobbies (Michinov & Michinov, 2001). In addition, researchers have also identified moderating factors that influence attraction including: social group membership, measures of attraction, context of interaction, and individual variables related to differences in the processing of social comparison information (Chen & Kenrick, 2002; Novak & Lerner, 1968; Michinov & Monteil, 2002; Montoya & Insko, 2008; Smith & Kalin, 2006).

Gender stereotypes and bias. There are many federal mandates in place to eliminate gender biases and prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender. Despite these regulations gender biases in the work place still greatly affect career growth and advancement. Women "fare worse then men on most measures of economic equity, including income, unemployment, and occupational distribution" (Trentham & Larwood, 1998, p. 1).

Psycho-social support. As one of the two key function of mentoring, psycho-social support focuses on providing counseling, friendship and confirmation to eh protégé (Corporate Literature Council, 1999). The psycho-social paradigm can prevent, reduce, and aid in effectively coping with career-related stress (Allen, Russell, & Maetzke, 1997). From this perspective, the responsibility of the mentor may also include the socialization or integration into the culture of the organization and promoting a feeling of belonging (Allen, Russell, & Maetzke, 1997).

Career related support. As a key function of mentoring, career related support focuses on increasing the protégés visibility to decision makers (Corporate Literature Council, 1999) through the introducing the protégé to beneficial social networks. Applebaum, Ritchie & Shapiro (1994) identify access to social and information networking as a critical issue effecting cross-

gender mentoring. It is through inclusion in these important networks where career advancement and growth is most realized. There are clear differences in the composition of these networks. In general women are particularly disadvantaged in informal networks opposed to formal networks that are managed by organizations (Markewicz, Devine, & Kausilas, 2000). As a result, women unsuccessfully rely on the "formal application processes of promotions, while men tend to take advantage of informal connections for faster and more frequent job promotions" (Markewicz, Devine, & Kausilas, 2000, p. 2).

Termination of relationship. Given the strong interest in mentoring and the vast body of knowledge of the topic, research focused on the negative implications of mentoring is limited. Kram (1985, as cited by Corporate Literature Council, 1999) terms *dysfunctional mentoring relationships* as mentoring relationships that have become dissatisfying and destructive as the needs of the individual or organization change. Scandura (1998) identifies personal, demographic and skill as characteristics that lead to dysfunctional relationships. Similarly, Raggins and Scandura (1997) contribute the termination of mentoring relationships to jealousy, interference in another participant's progress or growth, dependence on the mentoring relationship, unreasonable expectation of the other participant, and lack of support.
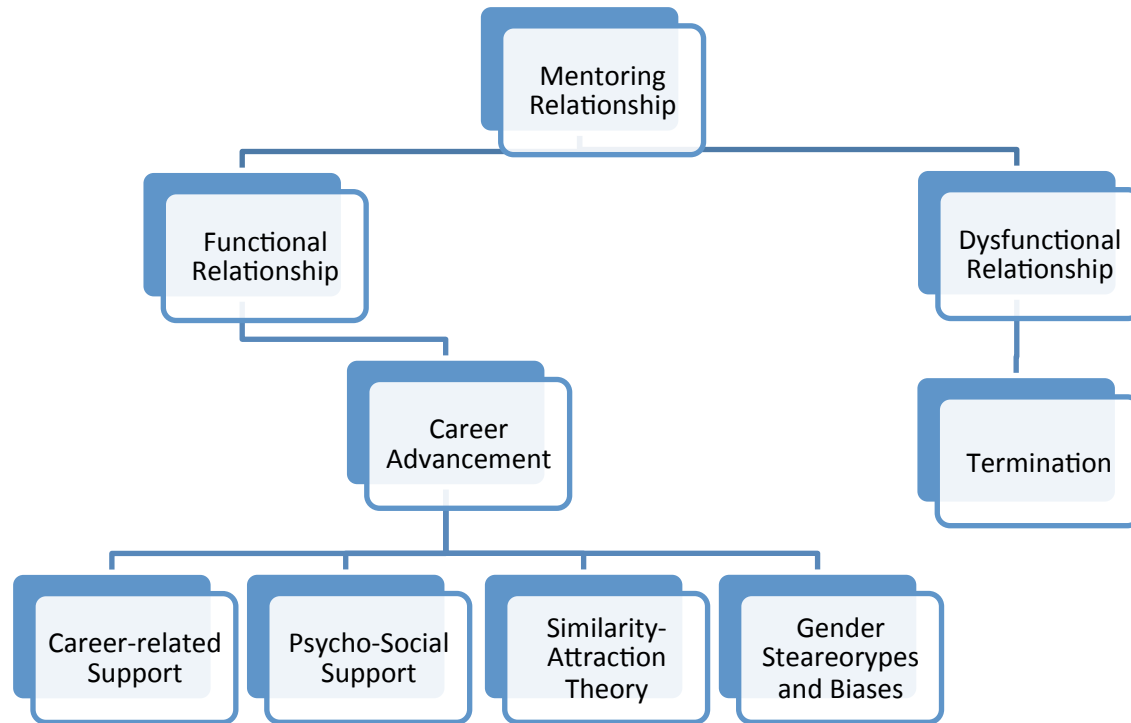
Figure 1. Qualitative theoretical construct of the relationship between the factors and the mentoring relationship.

Summary

The literature reviewed in this study explores mentoring as a cognitive, psychosocial process in which two people experience mutual growth as an experienced veteran helps to shape or guide a newcomer (Appelbaum, et al, 1994). The literature also discusses the role gender biases serve in influencing the functionality and success of the mentoring relationship (as illustrated in figure 1).

Research Methodology

The overarching aim of the study is to draw on the experiences of the participants to identify biases that impact cross-gender mentorships with a focus on the perspective of female executives. To fulfill the intent of the research, the procedure follows a qualitative research design. Further, this study uses a phenomenological approach to explore and understand the effects of gender biases on cross-gender mentoring involving female executives.

Following the doctrine of qualitative research, the study is "concerned with the understanding how people interpret their experiences, construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). Similarly, Patton asserts that qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as a part of a particular context and the interaction there (as cited by Merriam, 2009, p. 14). Additionally this research follows the qualitative, philosophy of interpretivism which Prasad suggests that that all interpretive traditions emerge from a position that takes human interpretation as the starting point for developing knowledge about the social world (as cited in Symon & Cassell, 2012, pgs. 20-21).

More specifically, this research prescribes to the paradigm of phenomenology in which the researcher focuses on the experience itself and how it's transformed into consciousness (Merriam, 2009) while also emphasizing the 'lived experience' (Van Manen, 1990, p. 9). Phenomenological research required the researchers to go directly to the source and identify theoretical patterns (Speigelberg, 1965, p. 658) and is based on the assumption that there is an essence to shared experience which holds core meanings mutually understood through commonly experienced phenomena (Merriam, 2009, p. 25).

To get to the *essence* or *core meanings* of the shared experience, the researcher uses phenomenological interviews as the primary data collection method. Prior to conducting interviews with participants, the researcher focused on epoche, or the process of exploring personal experiences to identify personal prejudices, viewpoints, assumptions, and everyday meanings (Merriam, 2009, p. 25).

This research design is appropriate since the responses of the participants, free from any prior assumption of the researcher, are used to infer the validity of the research proposition. The phenomenological structure is best suited for this research as it matches the researcher's goal to better understand the lived experiences of the participants.

Research Questions

The researcher seeks to examine the relationship between gender-biases in the work environment and its effect on cross-gender mentoring from the perspective of female executives. Based on information gained through content analysis, the following research question and proposition was formulated.

Research question one (RQ1): Do gender biases effect the success of cross-gender mentoring in mentorships involving female executives?

Proposition one (P1): The success of cross-gender mentoring is affected by gender stereotypes, assumptions influenced by similarity-attraction, and fear the relationship being perceived as sexual.

Research question two (RQ2): How does gender impact the protégés experience as a participant in the mentorship?

Proposition two (P2): Gender and gender stereotypes influences how the mentorship is developed and impacts the protégé's expectation and the overall experience of the mentorship.

Gender also has an effect on other factors such as willingness to participate, level of dedication, and long-term success of the mentor-protégé relationship.

Research question three (RQ3): How does gender impact the mentor's experience as a participant in the cross-gendered mentorship?

Proposition three (P3): Gender and gender stereotypes influence how the mentorship is developed and impacts the mentor's expectation and the overall of experience. Gender also has an effect on factors such as willingness to participate, level of dedication, and long-term success of the mentor-protégé relationship.

Setting

Potential participants were recruited using the online social networking site for professionals LinkedIn. Snowball sampling was utilized. This approach involves locating participants who meet the criteria and asking for referrals to other individuals who would also meet the criteria of the study (Merriam, 2009). The researcher included participants from a variety of backgrounds and experiences to avoid quick saturation of data.

Population

The researcher sought a voluntary sample of participants who were: female, hold employment in an executive level position, and have participated in a mentoring relationship. Participants were recruited through outreach conducted through emails to contacts identified through network sampling referrals and LinkedIn. The company's website states that "LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network with 250 million members in over 200 countries and territories around the globe" ("About Us", 2014). Additionally, the website provides that their mission is to "connect the world's professionals" ("About Us", 2014). Therefore, LinkedIn served as a resource to allow the researcher to recruit a wide range of participants for the study.

Ethical Considerations

Due to potential public publication of this study, the identity of all participants was excluded. Identification of participants may have adverse effects on their work life and person lives as the nature of the interview questions inquire about personal experiences. To protect the privacy of participants and to maintain confidentiality the following measures all participants were: notified in writing the purpose of the research and advised that their participation is completely voluntary and may withdraw their participation at any time, given a written consent form (See Appendix B), informed of all data collection methods and activities and of any provisions made to maintain the confidentiality of data collected.

Research Design

To identify potential participants, the researcher utilized LinkedIn's people search tool. The search tool identified individuals who met the minimum qualifications for the study. The researcher contacted potential participants through the messaging tool in the LinkedIn platform by sending the pre-written recruitment email (see Appendix A). If the individual elected to participate in the study, the researcher then sent a follow up email that delineates their privacy rights and protections and consent information and coordinate a date, time and location.

In person interviews were conducted and recorded in a quiet, semi-private location where the participants' privacy is protected and they are free from danger, intimidation, or coercion. In the event that an interview is conducted over the phone, the researcher utilized a private conference call line.

On the eve of the interview, the researcher sent a reminder email to re-confirm the date, time and location of the interview. On the day of the interview, the researcher met the participant at the confirmed location or dialed into the conference call. Prior to commencing the interview

the researcher followed the attached script (see Appendix C) to first thank the participant for dedicating their time to participate in the study. Next, the researcher reviewed the population criteria set for the study and ask the participant to confirm that they meet all criteria. Next the researcher thoroughly reviewed the terms of the privacy right and consent agreement. The researcher highlighted that participation is completely voluntary and they are free to end their participation at any moment. After which, both the researcher and the participant signed two copies of the consent form. Each party kept a copy of the signed form for their records. Next, a pseudonym was assigned to any additional parties and organizations mentioned during the course of the interview. Lastly, the researcher began the interview.

Following the interview the researcher asked the participant if they have any additional questions, confirm whether the participant is available for any follow-up questions should any information need to be clarified. Before exiting the interview location, the researcher provided her contact information to the participant, and thanked the participant for their time.

Interview Instrument and Protocol

DeMarrais defines an interview as "a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study" (as cited by Merriam, 1998, p. 87). The main focus of an interview is to "obtain a special kind of information" (Merriam, 2009, p.87) and to assist the researcher in discovering "what is on someone else's mind" (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) also explains that we interview people to learn "things we cannot directly observe" (p. 340). For example, we cannot observe feelings, thoughts, intentions, behaviors that have already taken place, how people have organized the world and importantly, the meanings they attach to what goes on (Patton, 2002).

Interviews can be conducted using a variety of formats, however for the purpose of this study, phenomenological interviews conducted in person and over the phone was utilized. All interviews consisted of a series of open-ended questions and semi-structured questions. The combination of unstructured and semi-structured questions provided the researcher flexibility to obtain rich and in depth information that does not drift from the focus of the research. Unstructured or open-ended questions are used when the researcher does not know enough about a phenomenon to ask relevant questions or when the respondents define the world in unique way (Merriam, 2009). As an example, the following open-ended question may be used:

In what way do you think gender stereotypes and gender biases influence cross-gender mentoring?

Additionally, the semi-structured interview is in between the informal and structured interview as it includes a mix of more and less structured questions (Merriam, 2009). The semi-structured interview is conducted by using structured questions to obtain specific information from participants and less structured questions to "respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to the new ideas on the topic" (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). An example of a structured question may include:

Have you personally benefited professionally from a mentoring relationship?

Respondents commonly used jargon or other language in their response that was not obviously clear to the researcher. Therefore, it is important to use probing or clarifying questions to ensure that the appropriate meaning is assigned to responses. For example:

Probe 7: If so, in what ways and how have you accounted for the change in the relationship?

In person interviews were be recorded using a physical tape recorder and phone interviews were recorded through a private, password protected conference line. Both recordings

were then transcribed for an in depth analysis. All data including: recordings, transcripts and coded documents were saved to a USB drive and will remain in a sealed and locked location for three years.

Data Analysis Strategy

In qualitative research the collection and analysis of data is a simultaneous process (Merriam, 1998). Data analysis involves 'peeling back the layers' of data, therefore allowing the researcher to aggregate data into a small number of themes to for analysis (Creswell, 2014). In this study, data segmentation and analysis will occur by using coding methods.

Saladna (2009) defines coding as a *heuristic* or an "exploratory problem-solving technique without specific formulas to follow" (p. 8). In general, coding is "primarily an interpretive act" that can be used to summarize data (Saldana, 2009, p. 4). Analysis through coding involves more than just labeling data. Richard & Morse (2007, p. 137) state that it leads the researcher from "the data to the idea, and from the idea to all the data pertaining to the idea". Through this 'journey' the researcher assigned a code, or "a short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data (Saldana, 2009, p. 3).

Coding is a cyclical act (Saldana, 2009) that occurs both during and after data collection (Miles and Huberman, 1994). However, some researchers attest that coding and analysis are not synonymous (Basit, 2003, p. 145). There has also been some debate on the difference between *coding* and *categorizing*. While some researchers use the two terms interchangeably, Saldana (2009, p. 8) argues that "even in combination...they are in fact two separate components of data analysis. Codifying by definition is to arrange data in a systematic order or to make part of a system through classification or categorization (Salanda, 2009, p. 8.). Grbich (2007, p. 21)

further explains that codifying permits data to be segregated, grouped, re-grouped and relinked in order to consolidate meaning an explanation.

Typically involving a least two levels of analysis, this study comprised of six stages of analysis including: epoche, prewriting, first and second cycles of coding, triangulation and post-coding. In the first cycle data ranging from a single word to a full sentence to an entire page of text is coded; whereas, the second cycle of coding includes similar portions of data or reconfiguring codes that have already been developed (Saldana, 2009). Creswell (2014) states, the first level of analysis should involve a general procedure in analyzing data. The second cycle is meant to recode data in an effort to further manage, filter, highlight, and focus the salient features of the qualitative data for generating categories, themes and concepts, grasping meaning, and/or building theories (Saldana, 2009, p. 8).

Epoche. Phenomenological research designs focuses on the analysis of significant statements, the generation of meaning, and the development of an 'essence description' (Creswell, 2014). Phenomenological analysis "attends to the ferreting out the essence or basic structure of the phenomenon" (Merriam, 2009, p 199). Prior to beginning the coding process, the researcher first completed epoche or the process of exploring personal experiences to identify personal prejudices, viewpoints, assumptions, and everyday meanings (Merriam, 2009). Epoche is a critical component of the phenomenological analysis as it allows the researcher to "set aside their personal point-of-view in order to see the experiences for itself" (Merriam, 2009, p. 199). After undergoing the epoche process, the researcher moved on to the next stage of analysis.

Precoding. The first step in the researcher's data analysis process was to pre-code the data. Layder (1998) stressed the importance of pre-coding as a way to circle, highlight, bold, underline or color significant information that has been collected. Saldana (2009) also

recommends coding begin as data is collected and formatted. For the purpose of this study, the researcher assigned preliminary codes during the initial recording and transcription of the interview notes. The preliminary codes consisted of words or phrases that will later be developed into final data categories.

First level analysis. Taxonomy coding is an analytical method in which the researcher "relies primarily on extensive interviews composed of strategic questions to discern categories of meaning" (Saldana, 2009, p. 133) and to discover the cultural knowledge people use to organize their behaviors and interpret their experiences (Spradley, 1986).   Taxonomies refer to hierarchical lists of things that are grouped together on the basis of shared attributes and classified together under a domain word (McCurdy, Spradley, & Shandy, 2005, pp. 44-45). The researcher reviewed the collected data to identify key terms and codes within the literature. Next, these *key codes* were narrowed down to represent the participants' experiences and the researcher's understanding of the data. Next, categories with overlapping meanings were combined to reduce excess and redundancy.

Second level of analysis. The second level of analysis involves a second cycle of coding which allows researchers to re-organize and re-analyze data coded during the first cycle (Saldana, 2009). Furthermore, Saladana (2009) states, "the primary goal during the second cycle is to develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization from your array of first cycle codes" (p. 124). In this study, the researcher used axial coding in the second level of analysis. Strauss & Corbin (1998) state that axial coding is used to strategically reassemble data that were split or fractured during the coding process. In axial coding, the categories discerned from the first coding cycle serve as the axis. Based on the axis, the researcher is able to determine *if, when, how and why* something happens (Saldana, 2009, p.

159). This process is done by grouping similarly coded data and re-labeling them into conceptual categories (Saldana, 2009, p. 160). Glaser & Strauss (1967), stress that categories should not too abstract, yet still abstract enough to develop a theory.

In the second level analysis of this study, the researcher used axial coding to cross-compare each category to identify any new codes and combine all overlapping categories. The researcher analyzed how one category relates to another until all categories have been examined. Strauss & Corbin (1988) state that one of the goals of axial coding is to analyze data until no new properties, dimensions, conditions, etc. are found. Last, the researcher drafted a brief narrative that summarizes the meaning found in the final categories. This narrative was used in the third level of analysis, triangulation.

Third level analysis. Creswell (2014) suggests that researchers incorporate validity strategies into the data analysis process as a method to assess the accuracy of themes and findings. To help establish credibility and validity of research, the researcher then used triangulation or the use of multiple methods, sources of data, investigators, or theories to confirm emerging findings (Merriam, 2009). The researcher used the previously drafted narratives to compare against the raw data and triangulate the findings. By comparing the two, the researcher found deeper meaning and understanding in the data, to be reflected and presented in the findings section.

Post-coding. Post-coding is the "transitional analytic process between coding cycles and the final write up of your study" (Saldana, 2009, p. 185). It is in this final stage of data analysis that the researcher employs strategies to intentionally focus the parameters of the study to find its core (Saldana, 2009). To prioritize the number of codes and meanings found within this study, the researcher utilized a focusing strategy referred to as *codeweaving*. Saldana (2009) stressed

that "one of the most critical outcomes of qualitative analysis is to interpret how the individual components of the study weave together" (p. 187).

Codeweaving is used to integrate key code words and phrases into narrative reflecting how the segments of data fit together. Therefore, researchers can utilize codeweaving as a "heuristic to explore the possible and plausible interaction" between the codes (Saldana, 2009, p. 187). In this study, the researcher used the final codes developed in the previous stages to develop a final extended narrative that explains the observations of the study in detail. This narrative was used as a template or springboard for the findings report.

Summary

This study uses a phenomenological approach the study is to draw on the experiences of female executives to explore the effects of gender biases on cross-gender mentoring. Following the doctrine of qualitative research and the phenomenological paradigm, interviews were conducted for the purpose of answering the following research question: in what way does gender-biases effect the success of cross-gender mentoring in mentorships involving female executives? Data analysis occurred in a series of six stages of analysis including: epoche, prewriting, first and second cycles of coding, triangulation and post-coding.

Findings

In this study on the experiences of female executives in cross-gender mentoring, an array of data analysis techniques were utilized in the coding and analysis of responses. Specifically, data analysis occurred six stages of analysis including: epoche, prewriting, first and second cycles of coding, triangulation and post-coding.

Participants

The researcher selected participants by convenience and through snowballing or recommendations from other participants. By using snowballing recruitment, more participants from a variety of backgrounds were included. A total of four individuals participated in this research study. Specifically two interviews were conducted in person and two were completed over the phone. Each of the participants were women that hold senior-level or executive position in their respective organizations. The average number of years at the executive level was more than five. The participants were from a variety of backgrounds including: business/management, organizational development and non-profit management.
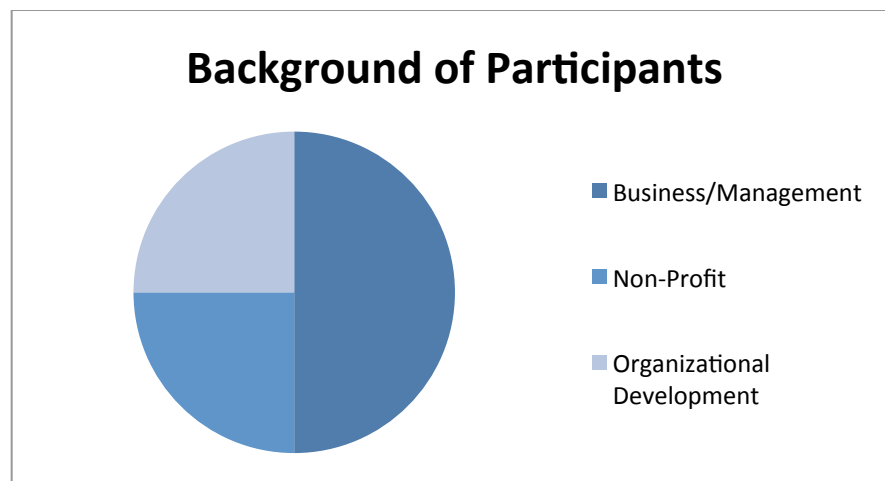

Figure 2. Background of participants.

In addition, all of respondents have participated in a mentoring relationship. All of the women reported that they served as a mentor to a protégé of the opposite sex, three out of the four had a male mentor.
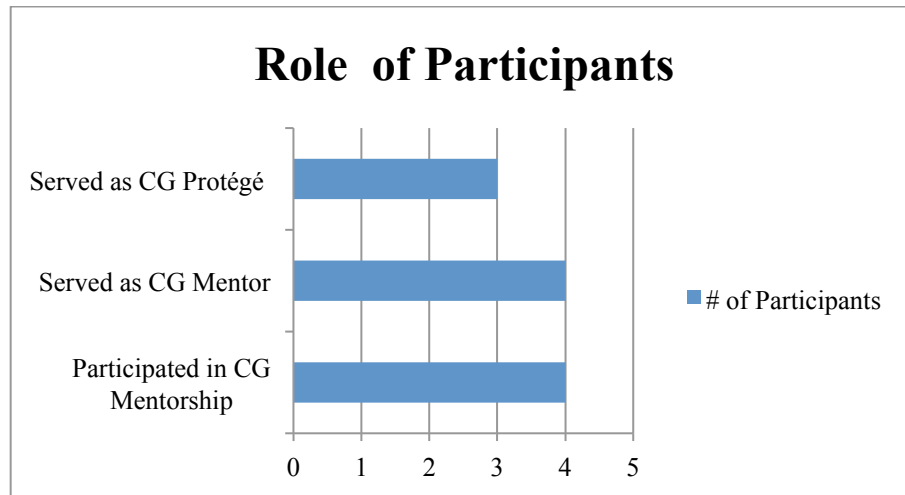

Figure 3. Role of participants.

Data Analysis and Coding

Data analysis is a critical component of a research study, as it allows the researcher to analyze and gain an understanding of the raw data collected. In this study, The researcher completed three stages of coding in the data analysis process. To begin, *taxonomy coding* was used to identify key themes within the data. Next, the researcher used *axial coding* to complete the second level of coding and to eliminate any redundant categories. Third, Triangulation was used to help establish credibility and to create a narrative that summarizes the data collected.

Primary level coding. The initial coding phase was completed through the process of Taxonomy coding. The researcher used field notes from the raw data to classify information into taxonomies, or "hierarchical lists of things that are grouped together on the basis of shared attributes" (McCurdy, Spradley, & Shandy, 2005, pp. 44-45). As the researcher completed the primary level coding highlighting keywords and phrases that stood out or found to be a common

theme across the responses.   Then the researcher grouped the themes into categories that appropriately represented the participants' experiences. Next, taxonomic categories were compared against each other to eliminate taxonomies with overlapping meanings.

Table 2. Taxonomic Categories

Key Words and Phrases	Resulting Category
Formal, organization assigned, informal, happened naturally, I would not have sought relationship on my own, we did not connect	Factors Influencing Initiation
Gained more skills, challenged myself, learned from mistakes, grew network, found a confidant, changed my view/outlook of my career, built confidence, identifies strengths and weaknesses, strength in collaboration,	Benefits of Mentoring Relationships
Coworker inspired me, manager challenged me, personal growth, pay raise, make connections,	Motivation to Seek Mentoring
Admiration, skills that I lack, was my manager, we were same color and gender, assigned to me, gumption, skill, feel bad for them, trust, leadership, care about the underdog, equal opportunity for women	Factors Influencing Selection
Glass ceiling, women doubt themselves, lack of women in executive positions or positions of power, women are risk adverse, men are more willing to take chances, confident to act without the tools	Perceived Barriers

After completing the categorization process, the researcher developed meta-memo that reflects my understanding of the data so far.

During the first level of analysis consisting of Taxonomy Coding, key themes began to surface and started to develop and were grouped into taxonomies. Key themes that were identified in the initial coding stage include: Factors Influencing

Initiation, Benefits of Mentoring Relationships, Motivation to Seek Mentoring, Factors Influencing Selection and Perceived Barriers.

Secondary level coding. The second level of analysis involves a second cycle of coding which allows researchers to re-organize and re-analyze data coded during the first cycle (Saldana, 2009). To analyze the relationships between the themes resulting from the primary level coding, axial coding was used. In axial coding, the categories discerned from the first coding cycle serve as the axis. Based on the axis, the researcher is able to re-label and regroup similarly coded data into conceptual categories (Saldana, 2009, p. 160).

Upon re-examining the raw data and reviewing the previous theme, it was determined that one of the categories overlapped. To reduce redundancy, the researcher combined the *Factors Influencing Initiation* and *Factors Influencing Selection*. The following final four major themes remain: Benefits of Mentoring Relationships, Motivation to Seek Mentoring, Factors Influencing Selection, and Perceived Barriers.

Benefits of Mentoring Relationships. The data analysis revealed the participants believed that there were many benefits to participating in a mentoring relationship. The consensus shared amongst the participant was that mentoring was strongly linked to their personal and professional growth and advancement. One participant noted that through mentoring she was able to be challenged and take risker assignments. These opportunities allowed her to grow from her successes and learn from her failures. Another participant stated that her mentor helped to build her confidence through providing support and counseling. A third participant stated that she benefited from her mentors' large network, as she was able to interact on a higher level with executives in her organization.

Motivation to Seek Mentoring. Through reviewing the responses gathered the researcher determined that participants commonly shared similar reasoning in deciding to

participate in the mentoring relationship. These motivations included potential for professional advancement, opportunities for promotion, increase in compensation and growth of network. In addition, participants shared that they were motivated by other intrinsic benefits such as personal achievement, development of skills, and added meaning to work. For example, Participant 2 stated that she saw an improvement in the quality of her work. Participant 3 shared that she felt a heightened sense of collaboration when working with her mentor, which also added more meaning to her daily work. All participants agreed share similar contribute the receipt of a pay increase or promotion to the success of the mentoring relationship.

Factors Influencing Selection. During the interviews the researcher asked questions to gain insight into the factors that influence the selection of mentors or protégés. The participants' agreed that similarities heavily impacted their selection. Participant 1 indicated that she is likely to participate in a mentoring relationship based on the similarity attribute of proximity. In other words, if the person works in the same department, field of work or organization it increases chances of initiating a mentorship. Participant 4 stated that she seeks mentors that look similar to her in gender and race. Alternatively, Participant 3 shared that she does not base her decision making on physical similarities, instead she focuses on attitude, behaviors and skills that she aspires to possess.

Perceived Barriers. The literature asserted that the existence of high barriers was very prevalent in today's work environment. Similarly, the reviewed literature supported that gender based stereo-types created negative perspectives in the workplace that reduced mentoring opportunities in women; therefore reducing opportunities for career advancement. Despite the strong evidence supported in previous literature, the participants of my study did not experience significant bias in cross- gender mentoring. All of the participants reported to have participated

in cross-gender mentoring. According to Participant 3, male mentors have been the most integral to her career development and success. Participant 2 stated that men were always willing to show her the ropes and cultivate her business knowledge which helped to propel her career. Participant 4 shared that "in a male-dominated arena, women put themselves at a disservice if the fail to seek mentoring relationships with males".

Although my research shows there is a low prevalence of gender biases in the workplace, it is not non-existent. Participant 1 commented that she once had a manager who was reluctant to mentor her because he didn't believe women make good leaders. Similarly, Participant 3 commented that her leadership skills were often called into question because women are stereotypically regarded as *overly emotional*. After completing second level of coding, the following meta-memo was drafted.

> During the second level of analysis consisting of Axial Coding, the researcher found that two of the key themes overlapped. To improve categorization, the two overlapping themes were combined, leaving the remaining key themes to represent the data. These terms include Factors Influencing Initiation and Factors Influencing Selection. Data analysis also led to other significant findings. Such as the assertion that gender stereotypes still exist in todays; working environment, however they are not as prominent as previous research suggested. Also, the data showed that while perceived similarities do influence selection; participants also heavily rely on non-physical attributes.

Triangulation. Researchers often face the difficult burden of providing evidence of the validity of their study. To help establish validity, techniques such as triangulation or the use of multiple methods, sources of data, investigators, or theories to confirm emerging findings (Merriam, 2009) is often included in the analysis process. In this stage of analysis, the previously drafted meta-memos were compared against the raw data. By comparing the two, a deeper

meaning and understanding of the data can be found. Following triangulation the following narrative was created:

> During the first level of analysis consisting of Taxonomy Coding, key themes began to surface and started to develop and were grouped into taxonomies. The initial key themes identified in the first stage of analysis include: Factors Influencing Initiation, Benefits of Mentoring Relationships, Motivation to Seek Mentoring, Factors Influencing Selection and Perceived Barriers. The second level of analysis consisting of Axial Coding, identified overlapping themes; therefore leaving the following remaining themes: Benefits of Mentoring Relationships, Motivation to Seek Mentoring, Factors Influencing Selection and Perceived Barriers. To improve categorization, the two overlapping themes were combined. Analysis also led to other significant discoveries, such as the assertion that gender stereotypes still exist in today's working environment; however gender stereotypes are not as prominent as previous research suggested. In addition, the data showed that perceived similarities have an influence on the selection of mentoring participants; however, selection is highly influenced by non-physical characteristics.

Summary

In the data analysis process taxonomical coding, axial coding and triangulation was used to categorize data and develop themes help describe the meaning of the data. Similarly, through data analysis a narrative was developed to explain the significant findings within the research. From this stage the researcher has gained an understanding of the data to further discuss the results of the research and make recommendations.

Discussion

The research questions below were used to guide my research. In this section the researcher will address each of the research questions. Further, the researcher will discuss connections between the reviewed literature and the data that emerges from the study. In addition, the researcher will provide my recommendations for future research.

Research Questions

Research question one (RQ1): Do gender biases effect the success of cross-gender mentoring in mentorships involving female executives?

The literature reviewed for this study provided strong evidence that gender stereotypes in the workplace created barriers for women seeking cross-gender mentors. The literature suggested that male executives typecast women as possessing feminine traits, such as overly emotional, passivity, lack of assertiveness, etc. These feminine stereotypes impact the likelihood men will mentor women to prepare them for leadership roles.

In contrast to previous literature, the researcher found that gender stereotypes in the workplace are not as prominent as previous research suggested. In fact cross-gender mentoring is far more common than previously suggested. This is not to say that stereotypes and its associated barriers are non-existent, however, the researcher assert that the work environment has shifted to a point where individuals and organizations are more open-minded in terms of

Based on the shared views from volunteers who participated in the study, this research identified factors that impacted the decision to participate in the mentoring relationship. The data showed that perceived similarities have an influence on the selection of mentoring participants; however, selection is highly influenced by non-physical characteristics. The researcher found

that a stronger preference exists for mentors or protégés with similar attitudes, behaviors, quality of work, and potential for success rather than physical characteristics such as race and gender.

Research question two (RQ2): How does gender impact the protégés experience as a participant in the mentorship?

The study revealed that individuals may experience biases because their gender, though it is not a common occurrence. Initially it was believed that gender significant impacted the protégés ability to attract a male mentor. However, the findings shows that other factors often outweigh gender preferences in selection decision-making. Congruently, this also lessens the impact gender has on the protégés overall experience.

Instead, the mentor's experience is significantly influenced by the following factors: readiness, similarity in non-psychical attributes, and level of commitment and participation. Similarly, the research also showed that the attainment of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators largely impacts the protégés experience in the mentorship.

Research question three (RQ3): How does gender impact the mentor's experience as a participant in the cross-gendered mentorship?

The study revealed that individuals may experience biases because their gender, though it is not a common occurrence. Instead, the mentor's experience is significantly influenced by the following factors: readiness, similarity in non-physical attributes, and level of commitment and participation. This suggests that decisions are based on work place ethics rather than discrimination. Nonetheless, there are still individuals that discriminate on the basis of gender, therefore it is important for the organizations to remain mindful and promote diversity and a culture that tolerates zero discrimination.

Conclusions

The literature reviewed for this study reported that women executives face additional barriers against career advancement than their male colleagues. The literature reported that women face workplace discrimination in the form of gender stereotypes which impacts their ability to attain upper ranked positions and higher compensation. Despite these assertions, my research provides a current outlook on the gender dynamics in today's work environment. 100% of the participants reported that they either mentored a male protégé and/or had a male mentor.

Previous research sought to explain these biases using the similarity-attraction theory, which states that we are attracted to those who perceive to be similar to ourselves (Kalbfleisch, 2000). Individuals can be similar in a variety of ways beyond gender. For instance, individuals may be attracted to another based on shared experiences, attitudes, values, and goals. Perhaps, preferences for other executive traits such as experience, education, performance, expertise and preparedness, as opposed to gender. When sharing their experiences, the participants acknowledged that they experienced no difficulty in connecting or identifying with their male counterparts, which in accordance to the research, were able to discover similarities based on non-physical traits. While I do not seek to prove that gender stereotypes no longer exist, I do however, assert that in today's work environment non-physical traits often outweigh gender preferences.

When noting the factors that influence successful mentoring relationships, it became clear that communication, role modelling, mutual accountability and benefit and are key. First, communication is greatly important as it is essential that the mentor and mentee are able to accurately convey what they wish to gain from the relationship. Proper communication helps to reduce possible feelings of inadequate support, lack of preparedness, and lack of progress.

Similarly, feedback is a significant function of communication in mentoring. Feedback allows the mentor and protégé to have purposeful dialogue about the protégés advancement, and provides an outlet to give constructive criticism. In addition, communication can be used to identify other similarities that may strengthen the relationship between the two parties.

A common theme within the research was the notion of a role model. Participant 1 stated that she often learns best by simply watching her mentor in action and noting how they manage situations. Participant 3 stated that she gained the confidence to take on riskier projects after witnessing her manager continuously go after challenging work and it paying off. Role modeling often connects an image to the words. Instead, of the mentor consistently giving the protégé feedback sometimes the protégé gains more through witnessing the behavior first-hand.

The next key factor influencing successful mentoring is mutual accountability and benefit. In order for the relationship to be successful, the mentor and protégé must both be held accountable for staying actively engaged in the relationship. This includes having a commitment to the other person and to fulfill the duties of the delegated role. Both parties are expected to remain in communication and to follow-through on tasks and requests. Engagement is increased when there is a recognized benefit for each participant. Participant 4 stated that having a mentor has been beneficial to her because they have pointed out her areas of weakness and helped to create action plans to improve in those areas. Participant 1 shared that her mentors benefited her because they helped to connect her to make high level contacts and grow her network. Often times, what is not as obvious are the benefits of serving as a mentor. If a manager mentoring choosing to mentor their employee, the relationship can lead to greater productivity and assist the organizational with succession planning. Also, a mentor can use the opportunity to mentor to

strengthen what they have already learned. Participant 3 shared that she feels a greater sense of collaboration when she mentors and helping others adds more purpose to her career.

Overall mentoring is powerful tool that can be used by individuals and organizations to better develop and utilize their human capital. Therefore, the researcher believes it is important to understand the factors that cultivate successful mentoring. The model below illustrates the components discussed above and its role in successful mentoring and can be used to improve cross-gender mentoring relationships.
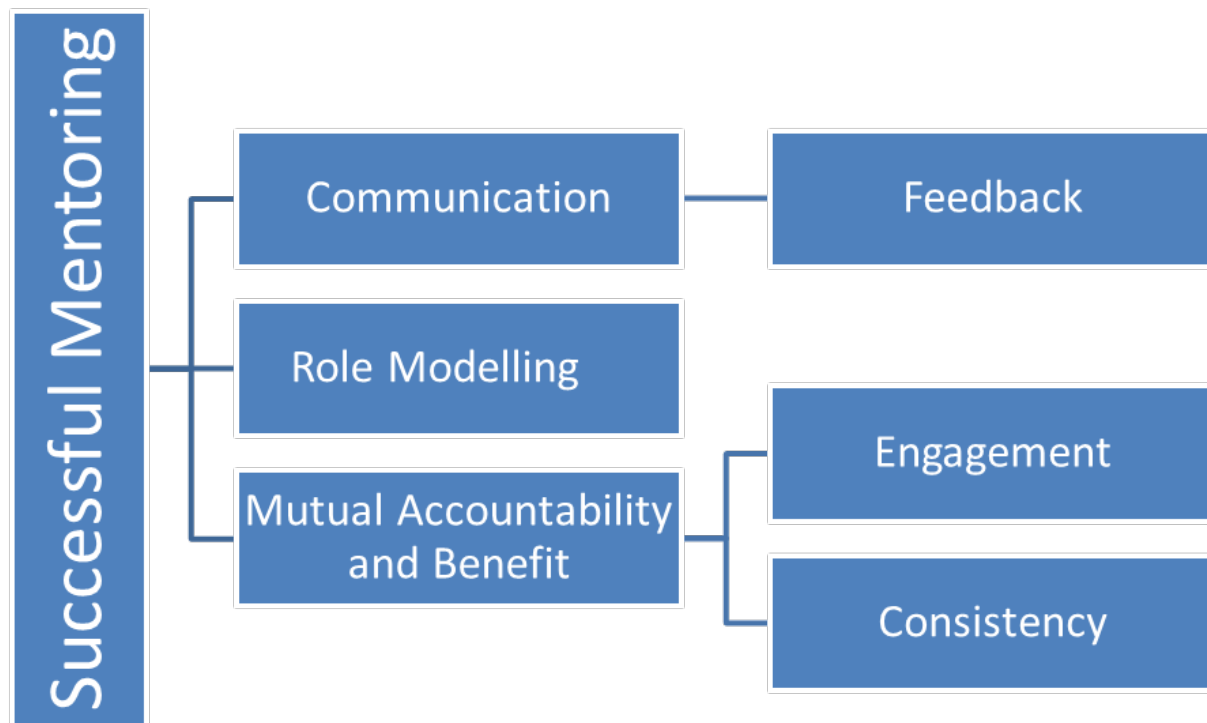
Figure 4. Model for Successful Mentoring.

Recommendations and Implications

All of the participants of this study were female executives who have participated in a mentoring relationship. It is the researcher's recommendation that future research include

participants who are male and in a variety of career levels. Similarly, the researcher recommends expanding the population to include a larger number of participants. As a result, the research will include a more diverse collection of responses; in turn, providing significantly richer and in-depth information.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to draw on the participants' experiences to explore how gender biases impact cross-gender mentoring. The researcher pursued to answer the following research questions: (1) Do gender biases effect the success of cross-gender mentoring in mentorships involving women executives?; (2) How does gender impact the protégés experience as a participant in the mentorship?; and (3) How does gender impact the mentor's experience as a participant in the mentorship?

The target population for the study was executive level females who have participated in a mentoring relationship. Participants were recruited through outreach conducted through emails to contacts identified through network sampling referrals and LinkedIn. The final population sample consisted of four participants. The approach of this study was guided by the philosophy of phenomenology. Data for this study was collected through the use of phenomenological, open-ended and semi-structured interviews. Next, data analysis consisted of the following six stages of analysis: epoche, prewriting, two cycles of coding, triangulation and post-coding.

This study revealed that the following key themes influence success of cross gender mentoring in women executives: Benefits of Mentoring Relationships, Motivation to Seek Mentoring, Factors Influencing Selection and Perceived Barriers. Analysis also led to other significant discoveries, such as the assertion that gender stereotypes still exist in today's working environment; however gender stereotypes are not as prominent as previous research suggested.

In addition, the data showed that perceived similarities have an influence on the selection of mentoring participants; however, selection is highly influenced by non-physical characteristics. Instead, selection is significantly influenced by the following factors: readiness, similarity in non-physical attributes, and level of commitment and participation.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment Email

Dear [subject's name]:

My name is Brittany Lester and I am a graduate student at Trinity Washington University in Washington, DC. As a master's candidate in the School of Professional Studies, I am required to complete a research study. The purpose of the email is to request your participation in a study entitled "Effects of Cross-Gender Mentoring in Women Executives". This research aims to identify how gender biases may impact cross-gender mentoring.

If you agree to participate, I will interview you for about thirty to forty minutes in-person or over the phone. During the interview, you will be asked questions related your experience as a mentor, as well your experience as a protégé. The purpose of the study is simply to add to the body of knowledge on the topic. To be eligible for participation you must meet the following requirements: be female, hold employment in an executive level position, and have participated in a mentoring relationship.

As the primary researcher, I will take extreme caution in maintaining the confidentiality of your identity. Further explanation of your rights as a participant is clearly outlined in the attached document. Please read the material carefully. By agreeing to participate in the study, it is implied that you have read and understand your rights.

Should you agree to participate in the study, please provide a date, time and location that works best for your schedule. I greatly appreciate your time and I look forward to hearing from you soon. If you have any questions, please feel free to call or email me.

Sincerely,
Brittany Lester
MSA Candidate, Trinity-Washington University
Lesterb.students@trinitydc.edu

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

<u>Cross-Gender Mentoring in Women Executives</u>

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study examining the mentoring relationships of women executives, which will add to the knowledge related to cross-gendered mentoring and women's career success. My name is Brittany M. Lester, Master's Candidate, and the data collected in this interview will help fulfill the requirements for a Master of Science in Administration in Human Resources Management and Organizational Development at Trinity Washington University. I am under the supervision of my faculty advisor Dr. Kelley D. Wood. You may contact me at lesterb@students.trinitydc.edu, or Dr. Wood, woodke@trinitydc.edu if you have any questions or concerns.

Participation Requires of You: To be interviewed, which will take 45 to 60 minutes of your time. There is no planned use of deception involved in this study. There is no compensation for participation in this study.

Your Privacy: Your participation in this study and your responses will be kept confidential. Any reference to you will be by pseudonym, including any direct quotes from your responses. This document and any notes or recordings that might personally identify you as a participant in this study will be kept in a locked place that only the researcher will have access to. Only the researcher and the research supervisor might know who has participated in this study. Three years after the completion of this research study all personally identifying information will be destroyed.

Risks to you: There are five acknowledged risks generally associated with participation in research studies such as this one: Physical, psychological, social, economic, and legal. The researcher foresees minimal risk for those who choose to participate in this study. There are no foreseen physical risks associated with this study; other risks might include the following:

You might experience anxiety, discomfort, or negative emotions as a result of responding to the questions asked of them in this research study. If you experience a negative reaction, you may choose to skip the question, to withdraw from the study, or you may contact my faculty advisor or the SPS Institutional Review Board, especially if your discomfort continues after the study. See the contact information on the page below.

You might experience social, economic, or legal implications if you share your responses or your participation in this study with others. If you choose to participate in this study, you are encouraged to keep your participation in this study and your responses confidential. The researcher will maintain your confidentiality throughout the study, and will destroy the records of your participation three years after the study is complete.

Benefits to You: There are not foreseen direct benefits to you regarding participation in this study beyond the general knowledge that you are assisting in furthering the knowledge related to this research topic, and assisting the researcher in completing the MSA degree requirements. There is no compensation associated with participation in this study.

<u>Cross-Gender Mentoring in Women Executives</u>

This document acknowledges you understand of your rights as a participant in this study, which the researcher has explained to you prior to signing this document.

I acknowledge that the researcher has explained my rights, the requirements of this study, and the potential risks involved in participating in this study. I understand there is no compensation for, or direct benefit of participating in this study. By signing below and providing my contact information I am indicating that I consent to participate in this study, that I am at least 18 years of age, and I am eligible to participate in this study.

You may withdraw from this study at any time by notifying me by email. If you have any concerns regarding your participation in this research study you may contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Kelley Wood, or the SPS IRB committee. The SPS Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversees the ethical practice of research involving human participants conducted by students of the trinity Washington University School of Professional Studies. You may ask for a copy of this document for your own records.

Signed Name: _____ Date: _____
Printed Name: _____

Thank you for your participation,

Brittany Lester

MSA in Organizational Development

Trinity Washington University

lesterb@students.trinitydc.edu

Research Supervisor: Dr. Kelley Wood

MSA Program

Trinity Washington University

(202) 884-9620, or

woodke@trinitydc.edu

SPS Institutional Review Board Committee

(202) 884-9620, or SPS@TrinityDC.edu with SPS IRB in the subject line.

Appendix C: Interview Script

Hello (Participant). How are you? I'm great, thanks for asking. Thank you for taking the time to participate in my study. Before we begin I want to give you a little background on myself and my research. My name is Brittany Lester and I am a graduate student at Trinity Washington University here in DC. As a requirement of my degree program, I am research on the effects of gender biases on cross-gender mentoring in female executives. Today's interview will consist of a series of open-ended questions regarding your experiences in mentoring as a female executive.

I would like your permission to tape record this interview, so I may accurately document the information you convey. If at any time during the interview you wish to discontinue the use of the recorder or the interview itself, please feel free to let me know. I also so would like to assure you that all of your responses will remain confidential. A copy of this study may be published, however, it will not include any identifying components.

At this time I would like to remind you of your written consent to participate in this study. As the responsible investigator, specifying your participation in this research. You and I have both signed and dated each copy, certifying that we agree to continue this interview. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If at any time you would like to pause or terminate participation, please let me know. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin?

Great! Then with your permission we will begin the interview.

Appendix D: Interview Questions

Question Category A: Demographic. These questions will be used to re-confirm that the participant meets the criteria of the research and to provide demographical information for later analysis.

1. What is your gender?

2. Out of the following three categories, which best describes where you fall professionally?

   a. Early Career Professional

   b. Mid-level Career Professional

   c. Executive Professional

   d. Retired/Other

3. Why did you choose that particular category?

   Question Category B: Professional History and Relationships.

1. How many years would you say you have been at that particular level professionally?

2. What does being an executive mean to you?

3. Thinking about your professional history, what experiences stand out for you?

   Probe 1: What kinds of experiences have been the most important?

4. Looking over your career what particular obstacles stand out to you?

   Probe 1: Were they important to you?

   Probe 2: If so, why?

5. Thinking about your professional history, what professional relationships have been the most important?

   Probe 1: Who was influential in helping to shape you professionally?

Probe 2: Can you tell me in what ways did those particular relationships help shape your career or you professionally?

Probe 3: What about those particular relationships did you value most?

Probe 4: How would that other person describe the relationship?

Probe 5: Do you still have contact with that person?

Probe 6: If so, did the relationship change at all?

Probe 7: If so, in what ways and how do you account for the change?

6. Tell me something about your current professional relationships?

Probe 1: What do you value most about your current professional relationships?

Probe 2: What do you find most challenging?

Question Category C: Mentoring.

1. Would you consider any of your professional relationships to be a mentoring relationship?

Probe 1: If so, in what ways?

Probe 2: Are you the mentor or the protégé?

Probe 3: How did the relationship initiated

Probe 6: In what ways would you change the current relationship?

2. Have you personally benefited from a mentorship?

Probe 1: If so, in what ways?

Probe 2: What do you value most from your mentorship?

Probe 3: What do you find most challenging?

3. Have you ever had a mentor or protégé of the opposite sex?

Probe 1: If so, what factors influenced your decision?

Probe 2: Can you tell me how the relationship was initiated?

Probe 3: Would you consider the mentorship to be successful?

Probe 4: What did you value most from the relationship?

Probe 5: What did you find challenging?

Probe 6: if not, what factors influenced your decision?

4. In your opinion, should there be formal (organization implemented) mentoring programs?

Probe 1: If so, why?

Probe 2: If not, why not?

Question Category D: Gender.

1. What does being an female executive mean to you?

2. Looking back over your career, have you experienced any prejudice or bias due to your gender?

3. What does it take for a female to achieve a top leadership position within today's work environment?

Probe 1: What factors can advance a woman upwards?

Probe 2: What obstacles must female executives overcome?

Probe 3: In your opinion, in what ways do these obstacles differ for men?

4. In your opinion, do gender stereotypes exist in today's work environment?

Probe 1: Have you personally experienced or observed them?

Probe 2: Did you experience any stereotypes associated within your cross-gender professional relationships?

Probe 3: If so, can you describe them?

Probe 4: If so, how do you overcome them?

5. In what way do you think gender stereotypes and gender biases influence cross-gender mentoring?

Question Category E: Conclusion.

1. If you had the opportunity to speak informally to other female executives about your personal career experiences, what advice would you give them?

2. Are there any questions or topics that you wished I would have covered that would help me better understand the factors that impact female executives and cross-gender mentoring relationships?

3. Should I have any follow-up questions, is it okay if I contact you?

4. Do you have any other contacts that may also qualify for the study and would be willing to participate?

At this time I would like to conclude the interview. Should you need to contact me I can be reached via email at lesterb.students.trinitydc.edu. Also, questions concerning this research may be addressed with the SPS Institutional Review Board Committee at (202) 884-9620, or SPS@TrinityDC.edu. Thank you again for your participation.