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### **Behavioural Indicators of Effective and Ineffective Mentoring: An empirical study of mentoring relationships within a major UK public sector organization.**

Refereed paper

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#### **Abstract:**

Most mentoring research has investigated the antecedents, outcomes and benefits of mentoring and also the characteristics of mentors and mentees, but little attention has been given to the quality of the mentoring process or the effectiveness of mentoring relationships (Fagenon-Eland et al, 1997; Young and Perrewé, 2007). Yet for formal work-based mentoring programmes it is important to identify what differentiates ‘more effective’ from ‘less effective’ mentoring relationships (Ragins et al, 2000, Wanberg et al, 2007), particularly the behaviours of mentors and mentees that contribute to both ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ mentoring experiences (Eby et al, 2000; Bozeman and Feeney, 2007).

This study investigated the mentoring component of a leadership development programme within a major UK public sector organization in order to identify the behavioural criteria of mentoring effectiveness from both the mentor and mentee perspective. Concrete examples of ‘effective’ and ‘ineffective’ mentor and mentee behaviours as observed respectively by mentees and external mentors were collected using the Critical Incident Technique (Flanagan (1954). These were analysed, reduced and classified using content and thematic analytic methods. From 167 usable critical incidents so obtained 187 discrete items of behaviour were identified. Of these 81 related to positive (effective) and 22 to negative (ineffective) mentor behaviour and 68 to positive (effective) and 16 to negative (ineffective) mentee behaviour. These were then grouped and classified into analytic categories which resulted in 11 positive and 4 negative mentor behavioural categories (criteria) and 9 positive and 3 negative mentee behavioural categories (criteria) being identified..

The results lend support to Kram’s (1985) ‘two-function’ model of mentoring and to the recent emergent concepts of ‘negative’ and ‘marginal’ mentoring (Eby, et al, 2000; Eby and McManus, 2004). They also provide further empirical insights for HRD practitioners concerned with developing guidelines and interventions to enhance the effectiveness of formal mentoring programmes.

This study is an inquiry into organizationally based formal mentoring relationships in which the mentors have been drawn from other organizations (Young and Perrewé, 2000). It has been located in both the ‘mentoring’, ‘coaching’ and ‘human resource development (HRD)’ literatures for two main reasons. Firstly, although various writers claim ‘mentoring’ is different from ‘coaching’ (Cranwell-Ward, Bossons and Gover, 2004; Grant, 2001), the terms ‘mentoring’ and ‘coaching’ are often used interchangeably in many organizations with many people unable to make a clear distinction between them (D’Abate, Eddy and Tannenbaum, 2003; Klasen and Clutterbuck, 2002). The second reason is that for several decades coaching, mentoring and other forms of workplace learning have been core roles of HRD professionals (See Davis, Naughton and Rothwell, 2004; Hezlett and Gibson, 2005; Plunkett and Egan, 2004). Furthermore, increasingly, mentoring has been recognized as a powerful HRD intervention that assists employers in career advancement, serves as a form of on-the-job-training, and helps create learning organizations (Hegstad and Wentling, 2005).

## **Theoretical Context**

Generally, organizationally based mentoring programmes have been initiated to enhance the career development and performance of management-level employees (Douglas and McCauley, 1999). However, as Wanberg, Welsh and Kammeyer-Mueller (2007) argue, mentoring relationships can prove challenging and problematic due to the fact that at the outset mentors and mentees typically do not know each other, and their respective dyad relationships have to develop from scratch in the context of what are essentially limited-duration programmes. Furthermore, some mentors may disappoint their mentees, either in the way they mentor, or by not meeting some or even most of the mentee’s development needs. Ragins, Cotton and Miller (2000) define this as *marginal mentoring*, which can result in the mentoring relationship falling somewhere along a continuum ranging from ‘highly satisfying’ and ‘marginally satisfying’ to ‘dissatisfying’ and even ‘dysfunctional’. According to Scandura (1998), mentoring relationship dysfunction results in a continuum from ‘disregard’ to ‘disliking’ to even ‘anger and hostility’, and she argues it occurs when the mentoring relationship is not working for one or both of the parties, whether in terms of their respective needs not being met, or one or both of them suffering distress as a result of being in the relationship. A similar conceptualisation is that of *negative mentoring* which Eby, McManus, Simon and Russell (2000) define as specific incidents that occur between mentors and mentees, mentors’ characteristic manner of interacting with mentees, or mentors’ characteristics that limit their ability to effectively provide guidance to mentees.

Although mentoring has been the focus of much research, most has investigated the antecedents, outcomes and benefits of mentoring, or the characteristics of mentors and mentees, with little attention having been given to identifying and illustrating what is required to ensure the quality of the mentoring process and the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship (Fagenon-Eland, Marks and Amendola, 1997; Young and Perrewé, 2007). Yet for organizational work-based formal mentoring programmes it is important to identify what differentiates ‘more effective’ from ‘less effective’ mentoring relationships (Ragins et al 2000, Wanberg et al, 2007). Drawing upon Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz and Lima (2004) and Wanberg, Welsh and Hezlett (2003), Hezlett and Gibson (2005) claim that although recent reviews of research on mentoring have indicated there has been some maturing of the mentoring knowledge base, there are many questions that remain poorly answered or have yet to be thoroughly investigated. In general, relatively few studies have been directed specifically toward understanding formal mentoring

relationships, or toward evaluating how different programme characteristics affect programme effectiveness. For example, Fagenon-Eland et al (1997) noted there has been little systematic attention paid to specific mentor-mentee factors that affect the process and quality of the mentoring provided. Allen and Poteet (1999) suggest the effectiveness of any formal mentoring programme may hinge upon the characteristics of the individual mentors who participate in the programme, and also on whether mentors and their mentees know how best to take advantage and make the most of the opportunities that mentoring relationships can afford. More recently, Wanberg et al (2003) report little research has been done to explore the dynamics of mentoring, particularly those concerning the nature of the interpersonal processes involved within the dyadic relationship, whilst Hezlett and Gibson (2005) argue more research is required to gain a better understanding of the interpersonal processes that create the conditions under which mentoring relationships are maximally supporting, satisfying, and optimally effective. A further observation is that most mentoring relationship research has focused on the positive experiences and the beneficial outcomes derived from the mentoring process. However, as Noe, Greenberger and Wang (2002) argue, negative experiences, which may or may not lead to the actual failure of such mentoring relationships, are inevitable. That mentoring and other types of interpersonal relationships are susceptible to problems has been a long-held theoretical contention (Kram, 1985; Duck, 1994). But little empirical research has been done to address this issue (Eby, McManus, Simon and Russell, 2000; Eby and McManus, 2004), or to explore specifically the 'negative' behaviours of both mentors and mentees that contribute towards the creation of 'negative mentoring' experiences (Eby et al, 2000; Bozeman and Feeney, 2007).

### **Theoretical Framework:**

Most theories proposed for describing effective mentoring relationships within organizational contexts focus on behavioural, perceptual, power and/or demographic patterns, and the implications of these for mentors and mentees. The theories considered most relevant to the present study are Kram's (1985) behavioural 'two-function' model of [positive] mentoring which has been further developed by other researchers (Noe, 1988; Ragins and McFarlin, 1990; Scandura, 1992), and the taxonomies of 'negative mentoring' experiences suffered by mentors and mentees within mentoring relationships, as offered by Eby et al (2000) and Eby and McManus (2004) respectively.

According to Kram (1985), mentors provide two broad functions to mentees over the phases of the mentoring relationship, namely 'Career Development' and 'Psychosocial Support'. Career Development (CD) functions (role behaviours) include 'sponsorship', 'exposure', 'coaching', 'protection', and providing 'challenging assignments' with the aim of helping the mentees progress in their careers. In contrast, Psychosocial Support (PS) functions (role behaviours) include 'counselling', 'friendship', 'role-modelling', and 'acceptance/confirmation' with the aim of enhancing the mentees' self efficacy, personal development, identity, and work-role effectiveness.

According to Eby et al (2000), mentors can be the cause of a 'negative mentoring' experience for mentees through being an inappropriate 'Match within the Dyad' because of their different *values*, *work-style* or *personality*; through 'Distancing Behaviour' such as *neglect*, *self-absorption* or *intentional exclusion*; through exhibiting 'Manipulative Behavior' such as 'position power' that leads to *tyranny* and *inappropriate delegation* and by 'politicking' that leads to

*sabotage, credit-taking and deception*; through the ‘Lack of Mentor Expertise’ as reflected by *interpersonal* and/or *technical in-competency*; and through a ‘General Dysfunctionality’ caused by *bad attitude* and/or *personal problems*. Conversely, Eby and McManus (2004), drawing upon Scandura’s (1998) seven specific ‘dysfunctions’ that may occur in mentoring relationships, have conceptualized a *continuum of relationship problems with protégés* [mentees] that result in ‘marginally effective’, ‘ineffective’ or ‘dysfunctional’ types of relationship caused by ten ‘meta-themes’ of mentee behaviour, as follows: Marginally Effective Relationships are caused by mentees exhibiting *performance below expectation* or through an *unwillingness to learn* as manifested by ‘unresponsiveness’ or ‘defensiveness’; Ineffective Relationships are caused by mentees being *difficult* or through *spoiling* or *benign deception* behaviour or *submissiveness*; whilst Dysfunctional Relationships come about through *negative relations* caused by ‘exploitative’ or ‘ego-centric’ behaviour, and through *malevolent deception, sabotage or harassment*.

## **Research Purpose and Questions**

The purpose of this study has been (i) to enhance understanding of those specific behaviours judged to be critical in enabling or inhibiting the development of quality mentoring relationships and effective mentoring within the case study organization, and (ii) to search for empirical evidence that might support the various ‘theoretical’ conceptualizations of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ mentor and mentee behaviours that lead either to ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ experiences during the process of the mentoring relationship. Consequently, within the context of the formal mentoring programme of the case study organization, and with the above review of current theory and research in mind, the following research questions were addressed:

- 1) How have the behaviours of the external mentors been manifested, and which of these have been perceived and judged by mentees to be examples of either positive (effective) or negative (least effective/ineffective) mentoring ?
- 2) How have the behaviours of the mentees been manifested, and which of these have been perceived and judged by the external mentors to have had either a positive or negative impact upon the quality and effectiveness of the mentoring relationship?
- 3) To what extent do the examples provided by mentees of the positive experiences with mentors lend empirical support to Kram’s (1985) ‘two-function’ model of [positive] mentoring?
- 4) Can the examples of negative mentor and mentee behaviour identified by Questions 1 and Question 2 be classified into one or more categories comprising the Eby et al (2000) and Eby and McManus (2004 ) taxonomies of ‘negative mentoring’ experiences?

## **Research Methodology**

The present research relates only to the ‘start up’ and ‘on-going’ stages of mentoring relationships experienced by external mentors and mentees participating within the formal mentoring scheme of the collaborating case study organisation. This is a well known UK public sector organization which, for reasons of anonymity, is referred to as ‘PSO’. The study was conducted with the active sponsorship and support of The Work Foundation (TWF), a ‘not-for-profit’ company that works in partnership with private and public/corporate sector organizations to help them ‘find best ways of improving both economic performance and quality of working life’.

TWF had had a long standing relationship with 'PSO' supplying expertise, advice and skills for policy development, delivering training on many aspects of leadership and management, and providing one-to-one coaching. Part way through the first course of a newly designed intensive leadership development (ILD) programme, which was first introduced in 2005 and in which mentoring was a key component, with ILD participants being either allocated a 'PSO' manager as their internal mentor or opting to select their own external mentor, an evaluation was undertaken that revealed this aspect of the programme to be one of its weaker features. Consequently, for the second cohort of employees who joined the ILD programme in 2006, the TWF offered to resource the planned mentoring relationships with external mentors who had strong success in organizational leadership and/or as mentors. The 'PSO' accepted this offer, and agreed with TWF that the proposed external mentoring service should be evaluated in some depth to explore the qualitative differences, if any, in the relative effectiveness of the two types of provision-internal and external.

In addressing the research questions the researchers worked from a neo-empiricist perspective (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000) by assuming a critical realist ontology, and an epistemology falling between post-positivism and constructivism-interpretivism (Fleetwood, 2005; Flick, 2002; Ponterotto, 2005). The study was comprised of four stages as follows:

*Stage 1:* Concrete examples of specific positive (effective) and negative (least effective/ineffective) behaviours as exhibited and observed respectively by mentors and mentees in various dyadic mentoring relationships of the 2006 'PSO' mentoring scheme were obtained. The method used was the well established Critical Incident Technique (CIT) of Flanagan (1954), as applied by Hamlin (2004) for a series of replica behavioural studies of managerial and leadership effectiveness within various UK public sector organizations. Critical incidents (CIs) were collected from a self-selecting sample of ten (10) TWF affiliated external mentors and ten (10) ILD participants. Ten of these self-selecting participants were mentors and mentees who were in a dyadic mentoring relationship with each other. The remaining five (5) TWF affiliated external mentors and five (5) ILD participants were in dyadic relationships with other ILD mentees and TWF affiliated external mentors who had declined to participate in the research. Eighteen of the twenty self-selecting informants were interviewed face-to face in strict accordance with well established 'ethical codes' for conducting qualitative research, with each CIT interview lasting between 1 to 1.5 hours. However, telephone interviewing had to be used for two of the informants.

*Stage 2:* The critical incidents resulting from *Stage 1* were subjected to a variant of content analysis involving first-level open coding (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Flick, 2002) to 'disentangle' the key words and phrases comprising each CI. This led to the identification of a larger number of 'units of meaning' which the researchers called 'items of behaviour' (IBs).

*Stage 3:* The IBs resulting from the *Stage 2* analysis were subjected to thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke (2006) using second-level open coding (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Flick, 2002) in search of themes and patterns of behaviour. All of the IBs were examined for evidence of sameness, similarity and congruence of meaning, and accordingly collated into analytic categories comprised of IBs that appeared to cohere together meaningfully to form discrete coherent patterns (themes). Each category was explored to identify the 'essence' of what the category was about. Labels were created to 'capture' and fully describe the overarching

meanings. These labels were attached to the respective analytic categories which could then be used as behavioural indicators of mentor and mentee effectiveness and least effectiveness/ineffectiveness.

*Stage 4.* The behavioral categories resulting from *Stage 3* were compared and contrasted against Kram's (1985) 'two-function' model and the taxonomies of 'negative mentoring' experience as offered by Eby et al (2000) and Eby and McManus (2004) respectively. The method used for this comparative analysis was a variant of open coding (Flick, 2002). Whereas the first three stages of the study were conducted by one of the two authors (Sage, 2007), the *Stage 4* research was carried out jointly.

*Ensuring Internal Consistency and External Validity.* Due to certain limits of time that could be allocated by Sage to her study of mentoring relationships within the 'PSO' (*Stages 1, 2 and 3*) the TWF provided her with two auxiliary researchers who had had considerable experience as practicing managers at a high level, as well as having gained a Masters degree within their own field. This enabled robust 'triangulation' strategies to be built into the research design as recommended by Flick (2002). To ensure the chosen research methods were applied in the same way by all three researchers, guidance notes were produced that set out in detail a protocol for the individual collection and analysis of CIT data. The content of the guidance 'manual' was strongly informed by the CIT protocols previously adopted by Hamlin (2004). To ensure and enhance the external validity of the 'PSO' research outcomes in terms of their plausibility, trustworthiness and credibility, a form of 'investigator triangulation' (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 1991) was adopted for the *Stage 2* and *Stage 3* analyses. This involved Sage and her two co-researchers initially working independently of each other, and then jointly through face-to-face and digital meetings. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss their individual first- and second-level coding, reconcile differences of perception, agree upon their identified behavioural categories, and jointly create descriptive labels that could be attached to them. Overall there was general agreement between their respective judgments and interpretations of the data at each stage, with minor differences being resolved through critical examination and discussion to reach a consensus. A similar procedure was followed for *Stage 4*.

## **Results and Findings**

At *Stage 1* a total of 173 CIs were obtained from the 20 informants, but six had to be discarded for various reasons. Of the remaining 167 CIs, 68 were positive and 22 were negative examples of mentor behaviour as perceived by the mentees. The other 77 CIs were comprised of 61 positive and 16 negative examples of mentee behaviour as perceived by the mentors. At *Stage 2* the first-level open coding of the 167 CIs resulted in a total of 187 units of meaning (items of behaviour-IBs) being identified of which 81 and 22 related respectively to effective and least effective/ineffective mentor behaviour, and 68 and 16 to effective and least effective/ineffective mentee behaviour. However, when it became apparent that 6 of the 22 mentor least effective/ineffective behaviours offered by some of the 'PSO' mentees as examples of negative mentoring related to the 'closing stage' of their mentoring relationship with non-TFW mentors, these were removed from the data set leaving 16 IBs for further analysis. From the *Stage 3* analysis 11 effective (positive) and 4 least effective/ineffective (negative) mentor behavioural categories were identified, plus 9 effective and 3 least effective/ineffective mentee behavioural

categories. These categories were deemed to be the behavioural indicators of mentoring relationship effectiveness and ineffectiveness, as judged from the perspective of mentors and mentees respectively, and are presented in Tables 1 & 2. The number of IBs underpinning each of the identified behavioural categories have been indicated in brackets.

The result of the *Stage 4* comparative analysis of positive (effective) mentor behaviours from *Stage 3* against Kram's (1985) 'two-function' model of [positive] mentoring, revealed significant degrees of overlap and commonality. These findings have been reported elsewhere (Hamlin and Sage, 2008) and, consequently, the rest of this paper will focus on the *Stage 4* findings relating to 'negative mentoring'. But before presenting these latter findings, we consider it desirable to illustrate how the descriptive labels of the least effective/ineffective mentor and mentee behavioural categories reflect the overarching meaning that links all of the IBs comprising each respective category. For this purpose, two IBs from each category (typed in *italics*) are shown in Table 2

Table 1. Behavioural categories of effective (positive) mentoring from the mentee and mentor perspective

Categories of Effective Mentor Behaviour <i>Based on the perceptions of mentees</i>	Categories of Effective Mentee Behaviour <i>Based on the perceptions of mentors</i>
1) Uses own networks and contacts to help the mentee [2] 2) Creates a 'neutral' and safe environment of acceptance and trust [11] 3) Shares own knowledge and experience ("Self-disclosure") [10] 4) Challenges the mentee's self perception-takes them outside their comfort zone[3] 5) Shares practice advice and suggestions [9] 6) Allows the mentee to think through issues and make their own decisions [4] 7) Uses own 'tool-kit' of models to facilitate and enhance the mentee's learning [8] 8) Proactively ensures meetings are arranged at times and places which are mutually acceptable [9] 9) Ensures expectations of the mentoring relation and agendas for meetings are clearly established [12] 10) Encourages and supports the development of the mentee's self awareness [9] 11) Encourages and supports the development of the mentee's self esteem[4]	1) Takes joint responsibility and acts as an equal with the mentor [10] 2) Takes organizational initiative and shows organizational skills [11] 3) Shares 'inner depths' with the mentor[7] 4) Initiates the content of the mentoring session and takes ownership of what he/she wants to work on and what has been learned [14] 5) Engages openly during the sessions and responds to ideas from the mentor [8] 6) Gives the mentor feedback on both the value of the sessions and what they are achieving [7] 7) Will challenge the mentor[3] 8) Contributes to the establishment of a healthy mentoring environment-is open, honest, friendly, good natured and good-humoured [5] 9) Wants the mentor to understand his/her context and puts the organization into context without being asked [3]

The *Stage 4* comparative analyses of the *Stage 3* negative (least effective/ineffective) mentor and mentee behaviours against the behavioural content of the 'negative mentoring' taxonomies offered by Eby et al (2000) and Eby and McManus (2004), have revealed significant degrees of overlap and commonality. Table 3 presents the results of comparing the behavioural construct of the four identified categories of least effective/ineffective mentor behaviour against the content of Eby et al's (2000) taxonomy of mentor behaviours that cause 'negative mentoring experiences' for mentees. Over 81% (13 of 16) of the negative mentor behaviours were found to be similar to, or had some congruence of meaning with five (5) of the eight (8) 'themes' of specific mentor behaviour comprising three (3) of Eby et al's (2000) five (5) broad categories of

negative mentoring experiences. No commonality was found with the ‘themes’ relating to ‘Manipulative Behavior’ or ‘General Dysfunctionality’.

Table 2. Behavioural categories of least effective/ineffective (negative) mentoring from the mentor and mentee perspective with indicative examples of items of behaviour underpinning each category

Category of Least Effective/Ineffective Mentor Behaviour <i>Based on the perceptions of mentees plus indicative IBs</i>	Category of Effective/Ineffective Mentee Behaviour <i>Based on the perceptions of mentors plus indicative IBs</i>
<p>1) Fails to establish or maintain appropriate contact with mentee [4]- ‘never made contact at all’; ‘failed to include arrangements for initiating meetings’.</p> <p>2) Gives insufficient time to the mentoring relationship and/or gives it insufficient priority [3]-;” ‘mentor too busy at [own] place of work, so agreed to meet there where we had a friendly pleasant chat’; “ availability difficulty in making an initial appointment-long time lapse due to operational commitments for 3 months”</p> <p>3) Fails to provide focus/structure/purpose to the relationship [5]- “no push from mentor for mentee to deliver”; “ no preparation”</p> <p>4) Allows own perceptions to take precedence [4] “mentor’s values completely opposed to those of the mentee”; “ used what they felt should be a mentor’s perspective, inhibiting genuine engagement</p>	<p>1) Demonstrates lack of forethought or preparation for the meeting and/or consideration for the mentor [4]- “actions demonstrated lack of either reading and/or understanding mentor’s instructions, despite precise detail for the meeting place’; “failed to make contact when 25 minutes late”.</p> <p>2) Is unable to make or sustain commitment to the relationship [7]- “made first e-mail contact but then lacked follow-through on mentor’s reply”; “doesn’t like to commit to a next date”</p> <p>3) Inhibits the development of the mentoring conversation by predominantly exhibiting a negative mind-set [5]- ‘is very problem-focused and responds to suggestions with negativity’; “ ‘can give quickly dismissive comment on specific points”.</p>

Table 3 Identified least effective/ineffective mentor behaviours compared against Eby et al’s (2000) taxonomy of negative mentoring

Eby et al (2000) Taxonomy <i>Broad categories and themes of negative mentoring experiences</i>	Present Study <i>Mentor behaviours perceived by mentees as least effective/ineffective mentoring</i>
<p><u>Match within the Dyad</u> Values,  Work-style</p> <p><u>Distancing Behaviour</u> Neglect,  Self-absorption,</p> <p><u>Lack of Mentor Expertise</u> Interpersonal in-competency</p>	<p><u>Category 4</u>: “Mentor’s values completely opposed to those of mentee”; “Used what they felt should be a mentor’s perspective-inhibiting genuine engagement”.</p> <p><u>Category 2</u>: “ Mentor too busy at place of work, so agreed to meet there where we had a friendly pleasant chat”; “</p> <p><u>Category 3</u>: “No push from mentor for mentee to deliver”; “ No preparation”; “ Like two girls meeting for a chat”</p> <p><u>Category 1</u>: “Never made contact at all”; “Failed to include arrangements for initiating meetings”; “Meeting place could have been better in terms of convenience”</p> <p><u>Category 2</u>: “Availability and difficulty in making an initial appointment-long time lapse due to operational commitments for 3 months”; “Met with the mentee [only] the day before being due to meet the HR manager to ascertain how the mentoring was going”</p> <p><u>Category 4</u>: “Self promotion-boosted own self esteem before starting a new topic”</p> <p><u>Category 3</u>: “Covered same ground over and over again”;</p>

Similarly, a comparison between the behavioural construct of the three identified categories of least effective/ineffective mentee behaviour against the Eby and McManus (2004) taxonomy of mentee behaviours, which cause ‘negative mentoring relationship experiences’ for mentors, has also revealed a significant degree of overlap and commonality as illustrated in Table

Table 4 Identified mentee behaviours causing negative mentoring experiences for mentors compared against Eby and McManus’s (2004) taxonomy of negative mentoring

Eby & McManus (2004) Taxonomy <i>Types of mentoring relationship experiences, ‘meta-themes’ and ‘themes’ relevant to present study</i>	Present Study <i>Mentee behaviours causing negative mentoring experiences for the TFW external mentors</i>
<p><u>Marginally Effective Relationships</u></p> <p>Performance below expectation</p> <p>Unwillingness to learn <i>Unresponsiveness</i></p> <p><i>Defensiveness</i></p> <p><u>Ineffective Relationships</u> <i>Difficult</i></p> <p><i>Spoiling</i></p>	<p><u>Category 1:</u> : “Actions demonstrated lack of either reading and/or understanding mentor’s instructions despite precise detail for the meeting place”;</p> <p><u>Category 1:</u> “ [Exhibits] lack of knowledge around purpose of the relationship, value of a mentor or their role as a mentee”</p> <p><u>Category 2:</u> “Made first e-mail but then lacked follow-through on mentor’s reply”; “ Very slow to make contact”; “ Lack of any contact until mentee is ready for another meeting”; “ Doesn’t like to commit to a next date” “ it took months for mentee to contact me”;</p> <p><u>Category 3:</u> “Is very problem-focused and responds to suggestions with negativity”; “moves into ‘blame game’ and demonstrates a lack of self awareness and self belief”; “can give quickly dismissive comment on specific points”.</p> <p><u>Category 1:</u> [Was] “late for meeting but sent no message”; “Failed to make contact when 25 minutes late”</p> <p><u>Category 2:</u> “ Cancelled a mentoring session for another meeting and did not reset-despite 3 or 4 emails and messages left [there was] no response”; “ A roller-coaster relationship-the highs are really high and the lows are really bad</p> <p><u>Category 3:</u> “Evaluated the national Vocational Qualification on the negative aspects only”; “ Evaluated the changes to the leadership development programme to have a disproportionate negative effect”</p>

All sixteen (16) negative mentee behaviours (100%) were found to have some degree of similarity and congruence of meaning with certain ‘meta-themes’ and ‘themes’ comprising the ‘marginally effective’ and ‘ineffective’ classification of problems that mentors can have with mentees. No evidence of the ‘Dysfunctional Relationships’ type of ‘negative mentoring’ experiences emerged from the present study.

## Discussion

As can be seen from Table 1, the vast majority of identified positive (effective) mentor and mentee behavioural categories were comprised of between three to fourteen IBs. This indicates that most of the observed behaviours were not idiosyncratic but widely exhibited by mentors and mentees in many of the ‘PSO’ mentoring relationships. The only exception was the mentor behaviour “Used own networks and contacts to help the mentee” which was underpinned by only

two IBs. From a critical realist perspective these two IBs were considered by the researchers to represent a '*real entity*' because they had been identified from empirically derived critical incidents that clearly have *causal efficacy*, have *an effect on behaviour* and *make a difference* (Fleetwood, 2005). Furthermore, these two IBs were perceived to be distinctive features associated with external as opposed to internal mentors, and consequently were deemed to be significant. All of the negative (least effective/ineffective) mentor and mentee behavioural categories were comprised of between four (4) and seven (7) IBs which cohered together meaningfully into discrete thematic patterns.

The results of this study lend support to several parts of Kram's (1985) 'two-function' model of 'positive mentoring', namely two (2) out of the four (4) 'psychosocial' and three (3) out of the five (5) 'career development' mentoring functions, as reported in Hamlin and Sage (2008). They also provide strong empirical support for the taxonomies of 'negative mentoring' experiences offered by Eby et al (2000) and Eby and McManus (2004) respectively. Additionally, they provide clear empirical evidence demonstrating the long held theoretical contention that the interpersonal relationships of mentoring are susceptible to problems (Kram, 1985; Duck, 1994), and that negative mentoring experiences which may or may not lead to the actual failure of the mentoring relationship, are inevitable (Noe et al. 2002). The findings highlight the critical importance of mentors establishing and maintaining 'appropriate and timely contact' with their mentees; giving 'sufficient time, priority, focus, structure and purpose' to the mentoring relationship; and not allowing their own 'values and perceptions' to take precedence which can inhibit genuine engagement within the relationship. Additionally, they reveal the importance of mentees taking responsibility for the success of the mentoring relationship by 'giving forethought to and preparing' for each meeting and to 'contact the mentor' if they are to be late for or have need to cancel the meeting. Furthermore, mentees need to demonstrate a willingness to 'make and sustain commitment' to the mentoring relationship and to avoid exhibiting a 'negative mind-set'.

*Limitations of the study.* There are three main limitations to this study that need to be addressed. Firstly, although the number of CIT informants (N=20) interviewed falls within the range of sample size for a qualitative study as recommended by Cresswell, Plano Clarke, Gutmann and Hanson (2003), and the fact that on average each informant offered around seven (7) critical incidents which yielded a total of 167 usable CIs and 187 discrete IBs, it is possible there has been a degree of under-sampling. This could mean there are other types of 'critical' mentor and mentee behaviour that the present study has not identified. Consequently, replica research should be undertaken with another sample of external mentors and 'PSO' mentees not only to search for additional behaviours observed with mentoring relationships, but also to triangulate and further validate the present findings. Secondly, the data collection phase of the present study could only take place during the 'start-up' and 'on-going' stages of the mentoring cycle. This meant no CIT data were actively obtained relating to the 'dissolving' stage. Consequently, other behavioural categories of mentor or mentee effectiveness and ineffectiveness may exist relating specifically to the latter phase of the mentoring cycle, which ought also to be explored. Thirdly, because the research design adopted case study methodology and a single case approach, there is a risk the results may be idiosyncratic and context specific to the 'PSO'. Hence, other replica studies in different organizational settings are needed to test the transferability and generalizability of these findings to other specific contexts, and to search for

evidence of the existence of generic behavioural indicators of positive and negative mentoring within formal mentoring schemes.

### **Contribution to new knowledge in HRD**

The present study not only provides additional empirical insights into the type of positive (effective) behaviours that mentors and mentees need to exhibit within their respective dyadic mentoring relationships in order for the experience to be successful and satisfying for both, but it also reveals the specific type of negative (least effective/ineffective) behaviours that each need to avoid exhibiting. As such the research adds to what, as yet, is a small empirical base to an increasingly important component of management development and HRD practice. More research of this kind is now needed to further demonstrate empirically the relevance and validity of Kram's (1985) 'two-function' model of *positive mentoring*, and the two taxonomies of *negative mentoring* offered by Eby et al (2000) and Eby and McManus (2004) respectively

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