Perceived support for mentoring: A multiple perspectives approach

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Abstract

Two studies were conducted to examine how perceptions of support for mentoring relate to mentoring attitudes and outcomes for both protégés and mentors, over and above established predictors. In study 1, protégés provided information on their perceptions of support for mentoring and mentoring received. As expected, perceived management support for mentoring was positively related to career-related and psychosocial support; and perceived mentor accountability for mentoring was negatively related to mentoring problems. In study 2, we examined mentors’ perceptions of support for mentoring in relation to their willingness to mentor others in the future and the extent to which they viewed their current relationship as complementary. Mentors’ perceptions of management support for mentoring were positively related to their belief that mentoring relationships were mutually beneficial. However, consistent with theories of self-determination, as mentors’ perceptions of their own accountability in the relationship increased their willingness to mentor others in the future decreased. Implications for mentoring theory, future research, and applied practice are discussed.

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1. Introduction

Mentoring is an interpersonal relationship between a senior, more experienced individual (the mentor) and a junior, less experienced individual (the protégé) (Kram, 1985). Mentors provide various types of assistance to protégés, including career-related (e.g., coaching, sponsorship) and psychosocial (e.g., acceptance and confirmation, counseling) support. Mentoring is related to favorable work and career attitudes, lower intentions to leave the organization, higher pay, and faster promotion rates (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004). Given the links between mentoring and protégé outcomes, a substantial body of research exists on the predictors of career-related and psychosocial mentoring (for a review see, Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezlett, 2003). While less extensively studied, some research has also focused on the mentor’s perspective by identifying predictors of mentoring provided and willingness to mentor, as well as identifying the potential benefits of mentoring for mentors (see Wanberg et al., 2003).

Notably absent in mentoring research are protégés’ and mentors’ perceptions of workplace support for mentoring. This is surprising given Kram’s (1985) discussion of the pivotal role that organizational agents, most notably managers, play in encouraging, shaping, and reinforcing values which support the development and sustenance of mentoring relationships. Moreover, the work environment can facilitate ineffective mentoring dynamics. For instance, managers may display competitive behavior and reinforce strict status differences among individuals, both of which may deter effective mentoring. Research exists on managerial and organizational support for learning and development as predictors of employee participation in developmental activities (e.g., Birdi, Allan, & Warr, 1997; Mauer & Tarulli, 1994) and employee use of skills learned in training (Rouiller & Goldstein, 1993; Tracey, Tannenbaum, & Kavanaugh, 1995). However, no research that we are aware of has examined perceived support for mentoring from the protégé’s or mentor’s perspective. Two studies were conducted to address these gaps in the literature.

Study 1 examined the relationship between protégés’ perceptions of support for mentoring and their report of both positive (e.g., career-related and psychosocial mentoring) and negative (e.g., mentor distancing behavior, mentor manipulation) mentoring experiences. Examining both positive and negative aspects of mentoring is important given their conceptual and empirical distinctiveness (Eby, Butts, Lockwood, & Simon, 2004), as well as the increasing recognition that mentoring can provide both positive and negative experiences for protégés (Eby & Allen, 2002; Eby, McManus, Simon, & Russell, 2000). In Study 2, data were collected from mentors. This allowed us to examine how mentors’ reports of support for mentoring related to the extent to which they found the relationship to be beneficial as well as to their willingness to mentor others in the future.

1.1. Perceived support for mentoring

Several areas of research suggest that the construct of perceived support for mentoring may be an important omitted variable in existing mentoring research.
This includes mentoring theory, social learning theory, and social information processing theory. Each of these perspectives is described below, followed by an integration of these theories and the development of study-specific hypotheses.

1.1.1. Mentoring theory

Seminal work by Kram (1985) discusses how the culture of an organization plays a powerful role in encouraging or, conversely, discouraging mentoring relationships. Since mentoring exists in the broader context of an organization, she argues that it is “essential to understand how an organization’s structures and processes influence behavior in order to maintain those features that encourage supportive relationships and to modify those that impede them” (p. 16). In an organization that supports mentoring, managers encourage mentoring activities and as such individuals are more likely to invest the time and energy to develop relationships that support others’ professional and personal growth (Kram, 1985). Therefore, in organizations where managers encourage the formation of mentoring relationships, make employee development a priority, and offer rewards to those who engage in mentoring, conditions are created that are favorable to the provision of mentoring, and there is an increased likelihood that mentoring relationships will benefit both mentors and protégés.

More recent qualitative (Allen, Poteet, & Burroughs, 1997) and theoretical (Wanberg et al., 2003) work reinforces Kram’s ideas about the potentially powerful role that organizational norms and values have on mentoring relationships. Allen et al. (1997) found that perceived support for employee learning and development was the most commonly reported facilitating factor for mentoring relationships as reported by mentors. Also consistent with Kram (1985), a competitive or highly political environment was discussed by some mentors as inhibiting mentoring relationships (Allen et al., 1997). Further, Wanberg et al.’s (2003) conceptual framework for formal mentoring discusses how mentoring is embedded within the goals and values of the organization, and how this may influence mentoring processes and outcomes.

1.1.2. Social learning theory

Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) proposes that one mechanism by which individuals learn is the observation of others in their social environment. Such imitative learning is most likely to occur if the role model is relevant, credible, and knowledgeable, and if the behavior is rewarded by others (Noe, 2002; Wexley & Latham, 1991). In order for learning to occur, individuals must observe appropriate behavior; if there are no role models for the desired behavior then individuals are less likely to learn. Further, once the behavior is learned, reinforcement is necessary in order for it to be maintained. Social learning theory also provides an explanation for inappropriate organizational behavior. When sanctions for misbehavior do not exist it is more likely that inappropriate behavior will occur (Bandura, 1977). In the context of mentoring, managers serve as particularly powerful social referents since they are credible, control both reinforcements and punishments, and tend to serve as mentors for others.
1.1.3. Social information processing theory

Social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) also proposes that individuals develop expectations about appropriate behavior based on information from their social environment. Aspects of the social environment that serve as behavioral cues include co-workers and managers. These individuals serve as filters for incoming information and help individuals interpret their work environment. As such, this theory suggests that reality is construed on the basis of relevant and salient information in the social environment. The social information processing perspective also attests that consequences not only shape future behavior, but also beliefs about the social context. In other words, people reach conclusions about appropriate and inappropriate behavior based on the rewards and sanctions associated with their own behavior as well as the behavior of others. O’Leary-Kelly and colleagues use social information theory to help explain antisocial and aggressive organizational behavior, arguing that individuals learn what is regulated by the organization based on the extent to which misbehavior is monitored and subsequently punished by managers (O’Leary-Kelly, Griffin, & Glew, 1996; Robinson & O’Leary-Kelly, 1998). Moreover, while formal sanctions can deter misconduct (Hollinger & Clark, 1983; Tittle, 1977) managers can condone inappropriate behavior by failing to take employee complaints seriously or not having grievance processes in place. Research on sexual harassment illustrates the powerful role of inaction, finding a higher incidence of sexual harassment and a lower likelihood of reporting offenses in organizations where harassment claims are minimized and not taken seriously by managers (Bergman, Langhout, Palmieri, Cortina, & Fitzgerald, 2002; Fitzgerald, Drasgow, Hulin, Gelfand, & Magley, 1997).

1.2. Integration and proposed dimensionality of perceived support for mentoring

The focal variable in the present study is perceived support for mentoring. Since managers are key representatives of the organization and play an important role in transmitting organizational values and beliefs to employees (Chao, O’Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992), we focus on employee perceptions of management support. Two specific dimensions of support are considered. The first is perceived management support for mentoring and is defined as beliefs that agents of the organization recognize the importance of mentoring, that managerial role models for appropriate mentoring behavior are available, and that mentors are rewarded for their mentoring efforts. As discussed in Kram’s (1985) seminal work on mentoring, as well as in social learning theory and social information processing theory, managerial attitudes and actions shape employee perceptions about the organization’s values, priorities, and goals. Thus, we argue that perceived management support for mentoring sets the tone for mentoring behavior within the organization. A second aspect of support for mentoring is perceived accountability for mentoring. This includes the belief that mentors are held accountable for their behavior and that policies are in place to effectively deal with problems that may arise between mentor and protégé. This is conceptualized as a distinct component of perceived support for mentoring based on the theories just reviewed. Specifically, these theories suggest that
sanctioning and regulating behavior to reduce misconduct is a different process than rewarding appropriate behavior.

While perceived support for mentoring seems conceptually similar to perceived organizational support (POS) (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986), there are important differences between these constructs. POS is much broader; it captures general support perceptions and beliefs that the organization values one’s contributions and cares about one’s well-being. Our construct is more specific by referring only to perceptions of support for mentoring. Perhaps more importantly, the referent in support for mentoring is the mentoring relationship, not the employee or organization. Another distinction is that POS reflects an employee’s affective reaction to the organization whereas support for mentoring does not have an affective orientation. Support for mentoring is more cognitive in nature, reflecting the extent to which individuals believe that managers reinforce employee development through mentoring in their day-to-day behaviors and implementation of organizational practices. A final difference is that POS emphasizes the social exchange between employee and the organization. Perceived support does not carry with it the idea of reciprocity between protégé and mentor or between protégé and the organization. We decided to examine perceived support for mentoring rather than POS in this research given our interest in understanding attitudes and behaviors relevant to mentoring relationships, rather than general work attitudes and employee outcomes.

2. Study 1

Mentoring theory, social learning theory, and social information processing theory suggest that when protégés perceive greater management support for mentoring, there should be more mentoring role models and stronger beliefs that mentoring is a valuable endeavor. In turn, this should lead to higher levels of reported mentoring received by protégés. Thus, we propose:

**Hypothesis 1.** Protégés’ perceptions of management support for mentoring are positively related to the receipt of career-related mentoring.

**Hypothesis 2.** Protégés’ perceptions of management support for mentoring are positively related to the receipt of psychosocial mentoring.

Social learning theory and social information theory also suggest that protégés’ perceptions of mentor accountability may be a deterrent of negative mentoring experiences. Examining negative experiences with mentors is important in light of recent empirical research indicating that such experiences do occur (Eby & Allen, 2002; Eby et al., 2000, 2004). Eby et al. (2000) identified several types of negative experiences as reported by protégés. Perceived accountability for mentoring is expected to relate to three of these: mentor distancing behavior, mentor manipulative behavior, and lack of mentor expertise.

Distancing behavior refers to mentors who neglect or intentionally exclude their protégés from important meetings or events, as well as mentors who are perceived as
self-absorbed and do not have time for their protégés. This is one of the more common types of negative experiences and may be related to lack of motivation to mentor (Eby et al., 2000). Manipulative behavior includes tyrannical mentor behavior, inappropriate delegation, and mentor self-interested political behavior (Eby et al., 2000). This describes a particularly severe type of negative mentoring experience (Simon & Eby, 2003) which is conceptually similar to other forms of interpersonally-oriented negative workplace behavior, such as abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000) and workplace bullying (Hoel, Rayner, & Cooper, 1999; Keashly, Trott, & MacLean, 1994). Like other types of interpersonal deviance, manipulative behavior may be more likely if no sanctions exist for misbehavior. A final negative mentoring experience examined in this study is lack of mentor expertise. This concerns situations where the mentor lacks the interpersonal and technical expertise necessary to provide effective mentoring. This type of problem may occur more often in situations where there is little follow-up to assure that protégés are receiving mentoring assistance or lack of awareness among higher level managers about the quality of mentoring relationships. Taken together, this leads us to predict that:

**Hypothesis 3.** Protégés’ perceptions of accountability for mentoring are negatively related to mentor distancing behavior.

**Hypothesis 4.** Protégés’ perceptions of accountability for mentoring are negatively related to mentor manipulative behavior.

**Hypothesis 5.** Protégés’ perceptions of accountability for mentoring are negatively related to lack of mentor expertise.

To provide a strong test of Study 1 hypotheses, we investigate the extent to which perceived support for mentoring adds incremental variance over and above other established predictors. There is a growing body of research on the predictors of career-related and psychosocial support from which we drew relevant predictors (see Wanberg et al., 2003). To facilitate comparisons across criteria the same predictors were used in testing Hypotheses 1–5. Ten established predictors were included in Study 1. Since gender diversity has been investigated extensively as a correlate of mentoring received (cf. Ragins, 1999), we included the predictors of protégé gender, mentor gender, and gender composition of the dyad (same-sex vs. cross-sex). We also examined protégé extraversion, self-esteem, and negative affect since there is evidence that the first two positively relate, and the latter negatively relates, to some mentoring functions (Aryee, Lo, & Kang, 1999; Turban & Dougherty, 1994). Some research also finds a relationship between protégé education level and mentoring received (e.g., Godshalk & Sosik, 2000; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000a, 2000b) as well as protégé tenure and mentoring received (e.g., Gilbert & Ivancevich, 1999; Wayne, Liden, Kraimer, & Graf, 1999) so both were in included Study 1. Two characteristics of the mentoring relationship were also examined as predictors. Kram (1985) discusses how mentoring received varies by the phase of the mentoring relationship so this variable was examined. Relationship initiation was also included since research consistently finds more mentoring reported in informal versus formal mentorships (e.g., Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992; Ragins & Cotton, 1999).
2.1. Method

2.1.1. Participants and procedure

A survey was sent to 2250 alumni of a large southeastern university who graduated in 1995. This graduation date was selected in an effort to capture individuals in the early career given that those in this career stage are most likely to be protégés. It is also important to note that while participants graduated about 10 years prior to data collection, they were not necessarily reporting on mentorships that were 10 years old. In fact, the majority (63%) of respondents were reporting on current mentoring relationships.

Surveys were sent to participants’ home addresses along with a self-addressed stamped envelope to return completed surveys. Following Dillman’s (2000) suggestion, both a pre-notification postcard and a follow-up postcard were also sent to each participant. Four hundred and fifty-eight completed surveys were returned and an additional 201 surveys were returned as undeliverable. In calculating a response rate it is important to note that we were not able to target employed graduates, yet our survey was only applicable to these individuals. Thus, our response rate of 22% is conservative.

To identify individuals with experience as a protégé, the following question was asked, “One type of work relationship is a mentoring relationship. A mentor is generally defined as a higher-ranking, influential individual in your work environment who has advanced experience and knowledge and is committed to providing upward mobility and support in your career. A mentor may or may not be in your organization, and she/he may or may not be your immediate supervisor. Have you ever had a mentor? (yes or no)” (adapted from Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Two hundred and forty-three respondents had experience as a protégé, and only these respondents were used in subsequent data analysis. The average age of protégés was 30.8 years ($SD = 5.4$), 43% were male, and 97% were Caucasian. In terms of the highest education level received, 67% reported a Bachelor’s degree, 26% reported a Masters degree, and the remaining 7% reported a doctorate or equivalent. Respondents had worked in their job an average of 3.4 years ($SD = 2.4$) and for their organization an average of 4.9 years ($SD = 5.2$). There was substantial variability in reported salaries with the average being $68,811. Respondents represented a wide range of job types (e.g., sales, executive/managerial, clerical/administrative) and were employed in a variety of industries (e.g., manufacturing, retail trade, service).

Respondents were also asked a series of questions about their mentoring relationship. The average age of the mentor was reported as 43.6 years and most mentors were men (59%). Seventy-five percent of protégés reported being in same-sex mentoring relationships. A slightly modified version of Ragins and Cotton’s (1999) measure of relationship initiation was used which provided a definition of a formal versus informal mentoring relationship and asked respondents to indicate which best described their mentorship. Twenty-nine percent of protégés reported being in formal (assigned) mentorships. Eighty-eight percent answered “yes” to the question, “Does/Did your mentor work in your company?”
2.1.2. Protégé measures

2.1.2.1. Perceived support for mentoring. Since a measure of organizational support does not exist, one was developed for the present study. The following definitions were used to guide item writing: (1) the belief that management recognizes the importance of mentoring, that managerial role models for appropriate mentoring behavior are available, and that mentors are rewarded for their mentoring efforts (Perceived management support for mentoring), and (2) the belief that mentors are held accountable by management for their behavior and that policies are in place to effectively deal with problems that may arise between mentor and protégé (Perceived accountability for mentoring). Three individuals with experience in the area of mentoring and scale development independently wrote items. The items were then combined and those identified as best representing the constructs of interest were retained. Seven items captured the construct of perceived management support and four items were used to measure perceived accountability for mentoring.

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) proposing a two-factor model was conducted to support the validity of the newly developed measure. The results from this initial CFA revealed a low standardized factor loading for one of the perceived management support items (i.e., .47 compared to .58–.86 for all other items) as well as poor overall model fit ($\chi^2(43) = 221.97, p < .01$). Furthermore, several commonly used goodness-of-fit indices (GFIs) had values lower than the critical values recommended by Hu and Bentler (1998, 1999). Thus, a second CFA was conducted on the revised 6-item perceived management support scale (dropping the item with the poor factor loading) and the 4-item perceived accountability scale. Although the $\chi^2$ was significant ($\chi^2(34) = 138.50, p < .01$), the Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) were higher than the generally accepted .90 cutoff for acceptable fit and were approaching the recommended .95 by Hu and Bentler (1998, 1999; NNFI = .92, CFI = .94). The standardized root mean square residual (SRMSR) also indicated good model fit (SRMSR = .07), surpassing the ≤.08 recommendation by Hu and Bentler (1998, 1999). In order to test the plausibility of alternative models, we compared the fit of the proposed two-factor model to an alternative model with one factor. This one-factor model fit the data significantly worse than the proposed two-factor model ($\Delta \chi^2(1) = 95.09, p < .001$), providing additional validity support for our measurement model. Coefficient $\alpha$ for the 6-item perceived management support scale was .86 and .84 for the 4-item perceived accountability scale. Higher scores indicate greater perceived accountability and greater perceived management support for mentoring. The items associated with protégé perceptions of these two dimensions of support for mentoring appear in Appendix A.

2.1.2.2. Other established predictors. Background characteristics included protégé gender (coded 1 = male, 2 = female), mentor gender (coded 1 = male, 2 = female), gender composition of the dyad (coded 0 = same sex, 1 = cross sex), protégé organizational tenure (measured in years), and protégé education level (1 = bachelors, 2 = masters, 3 = doctorate or equivalent). Several dimensions of protégé personality were also included. Extraversion was measured with Goldberg’s (1992) 8-item scale ($\alpha = .75$), self-esteem was measured using Rosenberg’s (1965) 10-item scale ($\alpha = .87$), and
negative affect was measured with Watson, Clark, and Tellegen’s (1988) 10-item scale ($\alpha = .86$). Mentoring phase was assessed using Eby et al.’s (2004) measure. Relationship initiation was measured as described previously.

2.1.2.3. Dependent variables. Career-related support and psychosocial support were assessed using Ragins and McFarlin’s (1990) measure of mentor functions which includes the following career-related mentoring scales: sponsor, coaching, protection, challenge, and exposure. These 15 items were averaged to represent Overall career-related support ($\alpha = .92$). Likewise, the 15 psychosocial items representing friendship, acceptance and confirmation, social, role modeling, and counseling were averaged to represent Overall psychosocial support ($\alpha = .92$). Three types of negative mentoring experiences were assessed using Eby et al.’s (2004) measure. Distancing behavior was measured by seven items (e.g., “My mentor seems to have ‘more important things to do’ than to meet with me”; $\alpha = .89$). Eleven items measured mentor manipulative behavior (e.g., “I am intimidated by my mentor”, “My mentor has undermined my performance on tasks or assignments”; $\alpha = .94$). Lack of mentor expertise was measured using seven items (e.g., “My mentor can’t teach me anything I don’t already know”; $\alpha = .87$).

2.2. Results and discussion

Correlations among study variables are shown in Table 1. Preliminary support was found for Hypotheses 1 and 2; protégé perceptions of management support were positively related to career-related and psychosocial mentoring received. In addition, initial support was found for Hypotheses 3–5 in that perceived accountability was significantly and negatively related to all three types of negative mentoring experiences (distancing, manipulation, lack of expertise).

To examine the unique contribution of protégé perceptions of management support and accountability to the prediction of mentoring experiences, hierarchical multiple regression was used. Since directional hypotheses were proposed, one-tailed significance tests were adopted for interpreting standardized $\beta$-weights. In step 1 the established predictors were entered. In step 2 perceived management support and accountability were added. To facilitate comparisons across dependent variables, both perceptions of management support and perceived accountability were included in all analyses.

The results for positive mentoring appear in Table 2. The established predictors accounted for 14% of the variance in career-related support and the individual predictors of relationship phase and relationship initiation were significant. Greater career-related mentoring was reported in the earlier relationship stages ($\beta = -.14$, $p < .05$) and among those in informal mentoring relationships ($\beta = .33$, $p < .01$). The addition of support perceptions in step 2 resulted in a significant change in $R^2$ and 6% more variance in prediction. Hypothesis 1 was supported since, as perceived management support for mentoring increased, so did reports of career-related mentoring ($\beta = .18$, $p < .01$). In terms of predicting psychosocial support, the established predictors accounted for 11% of the variance, and both extraversion and relationship
Table 1
Means, standard deviations and correlations among Protégé variables

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<td>1.74</td>
<td>1.67</td>
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</table>

Note. N = 224 – 242 due to missing data. Underlined values indicate p < .05. Protégé and mentor gender coded 1 = male, 2 = female. Gender composition coded 0 = same sex dyad, 1 = cross-sex dyad. Relationship phase coded 1 = initiation, 2 = cultivation, 3 = separation, 4 = termination. Relationship initiation coded 1 = formal, 2 = informal. Higher scores indicate greater extraversion, self-esteem, negative affect, perceived management support, and perceived accountability for mentoring.
Initiation were significant. Consistent with previous research, protégé extraversion was positively related to the receipt of psychosocial support ($\beta = .15$, $p < .05$) and greater psychosocial support was found in informal mentorships ($\beta = .23$, $p < .01$). The change in $R^2$ for step 2 was significant for psychosocial support and the $\beta$ weight associated with perceived management support for mentoring was positive and significant ($\beta = .14$, $p < .05$). This provides support for Hypothesis 2.

The results for negative mentoring appear in Table 3. In step 1 of the regression sequence, the established predictors explained 10% (distancing), 12% (manipulation), and 14% (lack of expertise) of the variance in prediction. Examination of significant $\beta$ weights indicates that protégés with male mentors are more likely to report distancing behavior ($\beta = -.20$, $p < .01$) and manipulation ($\beta = -.22$, $p < .01$). In terms of protégé personality, protégés with lower self-esteem are more likely to report manipulation ($\beta = -.19$, $p < .01$), and those with higher negative affect tend to report more mentor manipulation ($\beta = .13$, $p < .05$) and lack of mentor expertise ($\beta = .14$, $p < .05$). In terms of relationship predictors, both distancing behavior and lack of
mentor expertise were more common among those in formal mentorships ($\beta = -0.13$, $p < .05$ and $\beta = -0.17$, $p < .01$, respectively). Finally, protégés in the latter phases of their mentorships were more likely to report lack of mentor expertise ($\beta = -0.16$, $p < .01$). In step 2, the addition of the support variables added significant variance to prediction ($\Delta R^2$s of .10, .06, and .04 for distancing, manipulation, and lack of expertise, respectively). Full support was found for Hypotheses 3–5. As expected, greater perceived accountability for mentoring was related to lower reports of distancing behavior ($\beta = -0.30$, $p < .01$), manipulative mentor behavior ($\beta = -0.20$, $p < .01$), and lack of mentor expertise ($\beta = -0.16$, $p < .01$). Taken together, our findings provide strong support for the argument that perceived support for mentoring may increase the quality and quantity of mentoring as reported by protégés, as well as reduce the likelihood that protégés will report problems with their mentor.

One unexpected relationship deserves mention. While not hypothesized, we found that as perceived accountability increased, so did psychosocial mentoring ($\beta = 0.30$, $p < .01$).

\begin{table}
\centering
\caption{Hierarchical regression analyses for negative mentoring among protégés}
\begin{tabular}{llll}

\hline
 & Distancing | & Manipulative & Lack of mentor expertise \\
 & behavior $\beta$ & behavior $\beta$ & \\
\hline
\textit{Step 1} & & & \\
Protégé gender & .02 & .08 & .00 \\
Mentor gender & -.21** & -.22** & -.12 \\
Gender composition & -.07 & -.14 & -.11 \\
Protégé extraversion & -.02 & .02 & .00 \\
Protégé self-esteem & -.10 & -.19** & -.11 \\
Protégé negative affect & .10 & .13* & .14* \\
Protégé education & -.10 & -.06 & -.12 \\
Protégé org. tenure & -.10 & -.07 & -.05 \\
Relationship phase & .12 & .10 & .22** \\
Relationship initiation & -.13* & -.10 & -.17** \\
\hline
\multicolumn{3}{c}{F (10,174) = 1.90*} & \multicolumn{3}{c}{F (10,174) = 2.29*} & \multicolumn{3}{c}{F (10,174) = 2.65**} \\
\multicolumn{3}{c}{$R^2 = .10$} & \multicolumn{3}{c}{$R^2 = .12$} & \multicolumn{3}{c}{$R^2 = .14$} \\
\textit{Step 2} & & & \\
Perceived management support for mentoring & -.07 & -.09 & -.08 \\
Perceived accountability for mentoring & -.30** & -.20** & -.16** \\
\hline
\multicolumn{3}{c}{F for $\Delta R^2 = 10.45**$} & \multicolumn{3}{c}{F for $\Delta R^2 = 5.69**$} & \multicolumn{3}{c}{F for $\Delta R^2 = 3.61*$} \\
$\Delta R^2 = .10$ & $\Delta R^2 = .06$ & $\Delta R^2 = .04$ \\
Total $R^2 = .20$ & Total $R^2 = .18$ & Total $R^2 = .18$ \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textit{Note:} Protégé and mentor gender coded 1 = male, 2 = female. Gender composition coded 0 = same sex dyad, 1 = cross-sex dyad. Relationship phase coded 1 = initiation, 2 = cultivation, 3 = separation, 4 = termination. Relationship initiation coded 1 = formal, 2 = informal. Higher scores indicate greater extraversion, self-esteem, negative affect, perceived management support, and perceived accountability for mentoring. $\beta$s reported are from each step of the hierarchical sequence. 

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$. 

- \begin{align*}
- \text{Hierarchical regression analyses for negative mentoring among protégés}
- \text{Table 3}
- \end{align*}

- \begin{align*}
- \text{Step 1}
- \text{Protégé gender} & .02 & .08 & .00 \\
- \text{Mentor gender} & -.21** & -.22** & -.12 \\
- \text{Gender composition} & -.07 & -.14 & -.11 \\
- \text{Protégé extraversion} & -.02 & .02 & .00 \\
- \text{Protégé self-esteem} & -.10 & -.19** & -.11 \\
- \text{Protégé negative affect} & .10 & .13* & .14* \\
- \text{Protégé education} & -.10 & -.06 & -.12 \\
- \text{Protégé org. tenure} & -.10 & -.07 & -.05 \\
- \text{Relationship phase} & .12 & .10 & .22** \\
- \text{Relationship initiation} & -.13* & -.10 & -.17** \\
- \text{F (10,174) = 1.90*} & \text{F (10,174) = 2.29*} & \text{F (10,174) = 2.65**} \\
- \text{R² = .10} & \text{R² = .12} & \text{R² = .14} \\
- \text{Step 2}
- \text{Perceived management support for mentoring} & -.07 & -.09 & -.08 \\
- \text{Perceived accountability for mentoring} & -.30** & -.20** & -.16** \\
- \text{F for $\Delta R² = 10.45**$} & \text{F for $\Delta R² = 5.69**$} & \text{F for $\Delta R² = 3.61*$} \\
- \text{$\Delta R² = .10$} & \text{$\Delta R² = .06$} & \text{$\Delta R² = .04$} \\
- \text{Total $R² = .20$} & \text{Total $R² = .18$} & \text{Total $R² = .18$} \\
- \end{align*}
This effect is similar to the significant effects for accountability and negative mentoring since both psychosocial support and negative mentoring emphasize interpersonal rather than career-related exchanges. Specifically, psychosocial mentoring includes acceptance and confirmation, counseling, and friendship (Kram, 1985), and distancing behavior includes mentor behavior which is interpreted as uncaring, disinterested, and self- rather than other-focused. Moreover, both mentor manipulation and lack of expertise contain interpersonal elements; tyranny and deceit (aspects of manipulation) inhibit trust and relational closeness, and one aspect of expertise involves lack of interpersonal skills and sensitivity (Eby et al., 2000).

Thus, our pattern of findings support the idea that both formal (e.g., explicit policies and procedures) and informal (e.g., disapproval, taking complaints seriously) sanctions may both deter relationship problems and facilitate closeness in mentoring relationships.

3. Study 2

Study 1 demonstrated the importance of protégé perceptions of management support for mentoring and mentor accountability. However, mentors also play a pivotal role in the mentoring relationship and therefore it is important to consider their perspective as well. Mentors working in an organization where managers are perceived to be supportive of mentoring may be more likely to report that the relationship is fulfilling to both them and their protégés. This may be because in such organizations managers encourage self-disclosure, trust, and open communication among employees (Kram, 1985) and these interpersonal processes foster healthy, satisfying relationships (Huston & Burgess, 1979). Kram discusses this idea of mutual benefit as relational complementarity, arguing that even though the focus of a mentoring relationship is protégé growth and development, mentors’ developmental and personal needs can also be met through mentoring. In situations where both individuals’ needs are met, the relationship is described as complementary. Allen et al. (1997) found some initial support for the idea that management support may enhance mentoring relationships for both individuals by finding that mentors reported manager and co-worker support for mentoring as a factor that facilitates mentoring relationships. Thus, we propose:

**Hypothesis 6.** Mentors’ perceptions of management support for mentoring will be positively related to their reports of relational complementarity.

Likewise, mentors’ perceptions of management support may influence their willingness to assume the role of mentor in the future. Since there are typically few tangible rewards for mentoring others and protégés are the primary beneficiaries of the relationship (Kram, 1985), it is important that organizations maintain a cadre of individuals who are willing to serve as mentors. Experiences in the organization shape individuals’ beliefs about the appropriateness of developing organizational relationships and can encourage interpersonal interactions across departments and hierarchical levels (Kram, 1985). Thus, perceptions of support for mentoring may strengthen mentors’ willingness to mentor others. This leads us to predict:
Hypothesis 7. Mentors’ perceptions of management support for mentoring will be positively related to willingness to mentor others in the future.

So far the hypotheses related to the relationship between support for mentoring and mentoring attitudes and outcomes have been similar for protégés and mentors. However, this is not the case when considering how perceived accountability for mentoring behavior might influence mentors. A substantial body of research indicates that individuals have more negative reactions to a task when they believe that their behavior is controlled by others and is not freely chosen (for a review see Ryan & Deci, 2000). The explanation typically provided is that individuals have a strong need for self-determination and conditions which reduce one’s sense of freedom to act minimize enjoyment of, and motivation toward, an activity (Deci & Ryan, 2000). More specific to the construct of perceived accountability for mentoring, research demonstrates that the mere presence of an evaluator or surveillant can reduce both one’s sense of self-determination and motivation (Harackewicz, Abrahams, & Wageman, 1987; Pittman, Davey, Alafat, Wetherill, & Kramer, 1980; Plant & Ryan, 1985). Since accountability for mentoring assesses the degree to which mentors’ behaviors are monitored and evaluated as appropriate by higher level managers, we expect the following:

Hypothesis 8. Mentors’ perceptions of accountability for mentoring will be negatively related to relational complementarity.

Hypothesis 9. Mentors’ perceptions of accountability for mentoring will be negatively related to their willingness to mentor others in the future.

3.1. Method

3.1.1. Participants and procedure

A survey was sent to 1552 non-faculty employees of a large southeastern university. Each survey packet contained a cover letter, mentor survey, and return envelope. Following Dillman’s (2000) suggestion, both a pre-notification e-mail and a follow-up e-mail were also sent to each participant. 133 completed mentor surveys were returned. In calculating a response rate it is important to note that we were not able to identify mentors for survey distribution, yet our mentor survey was only applicable to such individuals. To provide a more accurate estimate of our mentor response rate we went to the literature and determined that approximately 53% of those initially sent surveys were likely to be mentors (e.g., Allen, 2003; Allen, Lentz, & Day, 2003; Ragins & Scandura, 1999). We adjusted our denominator accordingly before calculating a mentor response rate. As such, a conservative estimate of mentor response rate is 16% (133/823). To identify individuals with experience as a mentor, the following question was asked, “One type of work relationship is a mentoring relationship. A mentor is generally defined as a higher-ranking, influential individual in your work environment who has advanced experience and knowledge and is committed to providing upward mobility and support in the protégés career. A protégé may or may not be in the mentor’s department or unit, and she/he may not be your
immediate subordinate. Have you ever had a protégé? (yes or no)” (adapted from Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

The average age of mentors was 44.9 years (SD = 10.4), 43% were male, and 98% were Caucasian. In terms of the highest education level received, 33% reported a Bachelor’s degree, 39% reported a Masters degree, and the remaining 28% reported a doctorate or equivalent. Respondents had worked in their job an average of 7.4 years (SD = 5.8) and for their organization an average of 11.7 years (SD = 8.0). There was substantial variability in reported salaries with the average being $59,614. Respondents represented a wide range of job types (e.g., administrative unit head, manager, administrative associate, technical/para professional) and were employed in academic, administrative, and athletic units on campus. Twenty percent of the mentors reported being in a formal (assigned) mentorship and 64% were currently on-going. The average age of the protégé was reported as 31.9 years and most protégés were women (75%).

3.1.2. Mentor measures

3.1.2.1. Perceived support for mentoring. The measure developed in Study 1 was slightly modified for use in Study 2 so the items were applicable to a university context (e.g., replacing “my organization” with “my university”). As in Study 1, Perceived management support for mentoring was assessed by seven items and Perceived accountability for mentoring was assessed by four items. To support the dimensional-ity of the two scales, a proposed two-factor model was tested using CFA. The results from the CFA indicated two standardized factor loadings below the generally accepted .40 cutoff applied in factor analysis (Ford, MacCallum, & Tait, 1986); one of which was the same perceived management support item that had a low factor loading from the protégé’s perspective and the other was an item from the perceived accountability scale. The model also had a significant $\chi^2$, $\chi^2(43) = 267.88$, ($p < .01$) and unacceptable values for GFI$\;\text{s (NNFI = .75, CFI = .80, SRMSR = .12). The two items with unacceptably low factor loadings were dropped, and a subsequent CFA was conducted using the revised 6-item perceived management support scale and the revised 3-item perceived accountability scale. Although the $\chi^2$ was significant ($\chi^2(26) = 83.17$, $p < .01$), the NNFI and CFI demonstrated acceptable fit (NNFI = .92, CFI = .94) Also, the resulting SRMSR value of .06 easily surpassed the ≤ .08 recommendation by Hu and Bentler (1998, 1999). The fit of the proposed two-factor model was then compared to the fit of an alternative one-factor model. This one-factor model fit the data significantly worse than the proposed two-factor model ($\Delta \chi^2(1) = 14.19$, $p < .001$), thus providing additional validity support for our measurement model. Coefficient $\alpha$ for the 6-item perceived management support scale was .86 and .69 for the 3-item perceived accountability scale (see Appendix A).

3.1.2.2. Other established predictors. Several established predictors were also measured to examine the incremental contribution of support perceptions to prediction. The background characteristics examined included mentor gender (coded 0 = male, 1 = female), mentor age, mentor organizational tenure, mentor job type (nonsense coded), and mentor educational level, based on research linking these variables to
willingness to mentor. Two relationship variables were also included: relationship length (measured in years) and a 6-item measure of the overall quality of previous mentoring relationships (α = .89), again based on previous research.

3.1.2.3. Dependent variables. Relational complementarity was measured by four items adapted from Eby et al.’s (2004) measure (e.g., “This mentoring relationship responds to both my needs and my protégé’s needs”, α = .83). Willingness to mentor in the future was measured by Ragins and Scandura’s (1999), 4-item measure (α = .92). The items were modified slightly to reflect the desire to mentor in the future [e.g., item “I intend to be a mentor” was changed to “I intend to be a mentor again” (emphasis added)].

3.2. Results and discussion

Means and standard deviations among study variables are shown in Table 4. Preliminary support was found for Hypotheses 6 and 9. Mentor perceptions of management support for mentoring were significantly positively correlated with relational complementarity (Hypothesis 6) and perceived accountability significantly negatively related to willingness to mentor in the future (Hypothesis 9). A significant correlation was not found between management support for mentoring and willingness to mentor (Hypothesis 7) or between accountability for mentoring and relational complementarity (Hypothesis 8).

To examine the unique contribution of mentors’ perceptions management support and accountability to the prediction of mentor outcomes we used hierarchical multiple regression. Since directional hypotheses were proposed, one-tailed significance

Table 4
Means, standard deviations and correlations among mentor variables

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<td>1.91</td>
<td>2.80</td>
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</table>

Note. N = 131-136 due to missing data. Underlined values indicate p < .05. Mentor gender coded 0 = male, 1 = female. Mentor job type nonsense coded where 1 = institutional or chief functional officer, 2 = department head, chair, director, 3 = professional with academic rank, 4 = administrative unit head, 5 = manager, 6 = administrative associate, 7 = other professional, 8 = clerical/secretarial, 9 = technical/paraprofessional, 10 = other (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Higher scores indicate longer mentoring relationships, higher quality previous relationships, greater perceived support, and more accountability for mentoring.
tests were adopted for interpreting standardized $\beta$-weights. In step 1 the established predictors were entered and in step 2 we added perceived management support and accountability. Table 5 presents the results of these analyses. The established predictors accounted for a significant amount of variance in both relational complementarity ($R^2 = .24$) and willingness to mentor ($R^2 = .14$). Mentor job type had a significant negative $\beta$ weight and follow-up analysis of covariance was used to determine the nature of these effects since job type is a categorical variable. Results indicated that mentors working in the unidentified “other” job category reported significantly less relational complementarity than those working in all other types of jobs (e.g., manager, administrative associate, director), except clerical/secretarial jobs, for which there was no significant difference. In terms of willingness to mentor, those working as department heads/chairs/directors reported more willingness than managers, administrative associates, or technical/paraprofessionals. Likewise, those working as professionals with academic rank (e.g., librarian) reported higher willingness to mentor than managers or technical/paraprofessionals. The quality of previous mentoring relationships also related positively to both relational complementarity ($\beta = .42$, $p < .01$) and future willingness to mentor ($\beta = .21$, $p < .01$). Finally, male mentors reported higher willingness to mentor in the future than did female mentors ($\beta = -.22$, $p < .01$).

Table 5
Hierarchical regression analyses for mentoring outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Relational complementarity $\beta$</th>
<th>Willingness to mentor in future $\beta$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor gender</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.22**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor age</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor organizational tenure</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor job type</td>
<td>-.16*</td>
<td>-.24**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor education level</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of relationship</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of previous relationships</td>
<td>.42**</td>
<td>.21**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$F (7,128) = 5.54$</td>
<td>$F (7,126) = 2.75^*$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$R^2 = .24$</td>
<td>$R^2 = .14$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived management support for mentoring</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceived accountability for mentoring</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.30**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$F$ for $\Delta R^2 = 4.29^*$</td>
<td>$F$ for $\Delta R^2 = 4.07^{**}$</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$\Delta R^2 = .05$</td>
<td>$\Delta R^2 = .06$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total $R^2 = .29$</td>
<td>Total $R^2 = .20$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Mentor gender coded 0 = male, 1 = female. Mentor job type nonsense coded (Cohen & Cohen, 1983). Higher scores indicate longer mentoring relationships, higher quality previous relationships, greater perceived support, and more accountability for mentoring. $\beta$s reported are from each step of the hierarchical sequence.

* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$. 
The change in $R^2$ was significant for both dependent variables when the two support variables were added in step 2 ($\Delta R^2 = .05$ for complementarity and .06 for willingness to mentor). Two of the four hypotheses were supported. As perceptions of management support increased so did relational complementarity ($\beta = .26, p < .01$; Hypothesis 6). In contrast, as perceived accountability increased, willingness to mentor in the future decreased ($\beta = -.30, p < .01$; Hypothesis 9). Support was not found for management support and willingness (Hypothesis 7) or accountability and complementarity (Hypothesis 8).

These findings reinforce the importance of support for mentoring as a means to enhance mentoring relationships. However, our findings also highlight a dilemma with respect to setting up accountability systems to deter mentoring problems as reported by protégés. Study 2 demonstrated a potentially negative side effect of enhanced accountability for mentor behavior; namely that this may decrease mentors’ motivation to mentor others in the future.

4. General discussion

The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationship between protégés’ and mentors’ perceptions of support for mentoring and mentoring outcomes. Four general conclusions can be reached. First, support for mentoring is predictive of protégé and mentor outcomes, over and above other established predictors. Second, support for mentoring is a multidimensional construct. Third, perceived management support for mentoring appears to be particularly important in predicting positive outcomes for both parties, whereas perceived mentor accountability relates to fewer reported mentoring problems among protégés, yet lower intentions to mentor among mentors. Finally, both perspectives on support for mentoring are important; protégé perceptions of mentoring support related to positive and negative mentoring experiences, and mentor perceptions of support related to perceived complementarity and future willingness to mentor.

The results of Study 1 and Study 2 support Kram (1985) and others’ (e.g., Allen et al., 1997) suggestion that mentors’ and protégés’ beliefs about support for mentoring relates to important mentoring behaviors and reactions. Our findings are also consistent with the tenets of social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) and social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), which state that the social milieu can exert a powerful influence on behavior and perceptions.

Both studies also support the assumption that support for mentoring is a multidimensional construct. We found support for the proposed two dimensional structure of our measure in both studies. Two other pieces of evidence further demonstrate the distinctiveness of these two constructs. First, perceived management support and accountability are differentially related to both protégé and mentor outcomes. Second, the variance shared by these two dimensions of support is moderate (18 and 36% for protégés and mentors, respectively). It is also noteworthy that the correlation between perceived management support for mentoring and perceived accountability is significantly stronger from the mentor’s perspective ($r = .60$) compared to the
protégé’s perspective ($r = .42$, $z = 2.20$, $p < .05$). In light of these findings, we encourage future research to take a multidimensional perspective on support for mentoring and obtain both parties’ perspective.

Our findings also indicate that several other variables are associated with the protégé and mentor outcomes examined in the present study. Furthermore, in several cases the established predictors entered in set 1 explained more variance in the study criteria than did support perceptions. For protégés, other significant predictors included the personality variables of protégé extraversion, self-esteem, and negative affect, as well as the relationship variables of mentor gender, relationship phase, and relationship initiation. For mentors, other significant predictors included mentor job type, mentor gender, and the quality of previous mentorships. These findings supplement the growing literature on the predictors of protégés’ mentoring experiences and mentors’ reactions to mentoring relationships.

4.1. Implications for research and theory

Several implications for research and theory emerge from our findings. Mentoring theory and research should consider mentor and protégé perceptions about the extent of support for mentoring within the organization. While Kram (1985) identifies the organization as an important element in mentoring, very little research or theory development has considered perceptions of the work environment. We encourage future research to expand upon our initial findings by considering other aspects of the context, such as physical space and proximity among organizational members, rewards and performance management systems, and broader organizational climate issues such as organizational competitiveness or learning orientation of the organization. These contextual conditions are discussed by Kram (1985), Allen et al. (1997), Eddy, Tannenbaum, Alliger, D’Abate, and Givens (2001) but have yet to be examined as correlates of mentoring. Another area for future research is examining the extent to which more general perceptions of organizational support relate to mentoring outcomes.

Our findings also make a theoretical contribution by adding to recent empirical research on negative mentoring (Eby & Allen, 2002; Eby et al., 2000, 2004; Feldman, 1999; Scandura, 1998) by identifying additional predictors of relational problems between mentors and protégés. This includes the focal variable of perceived accountability for mentoring as well as mentor gender, relationship initiation, relationship phase, self-esteem, and negative affect. The different pattern of relationships between the two dimensions of support for mentoring and positive versus negative mentoring provides is also noteworthy and adds additional support to the claim that positive and negative mentoring are distinct relational experiences (Eby et al., 2004).

Finally, the present study opens up the possibility of exploring levels of analysis and dyadic issues in mentoring research. While we focused on individual perceptions of support, in the spirit of research on psychological climate perceptions, support may represent a unit, department, or organization-level phenomenon (James, 1982; James & Jones, 1974). It may also be informative to examine climate strength, or the extent to which there is within-group agreement among individuals within a
collective (Schneider, Salvaggio, & Subirats, 2002), as a correlate of mentoring outcomes. Moreover, since mentoring relationships are dyadic, examining mentor-protégé agreement on perceived support as a predictor of mentoring outcomes is an obvious next step. Other avenues for future research include examining other protégé and mentor outcomes as well as identifying moderators of the perceived support-mentoring outcome relationship. For instance, the relationship between protégé perceptions of management support and mentoring received may be stronger when mentors also perceive the organization as supportive of mentoring relationships.

4.2. Implications for practice

Our findings also have practical applications. Given the consistent effects for perceived management support for mentoring, top management is encouraged to publicly communicate the company’s commitment to developmental work relationships and encourage managers to role model effective mentoring behaviors. As our findings suggest management support and role modeling appears to increase career-related mentoring for protégés and may increase psychosocial mentoring. Further, the belief that management is supportive of mentoring is associated with mentors’ reports of complementarity; as complementarity increases, so does mentors’ willingness to mentor in the future.

Recommendations to increase (or decrease) mentor accountability are more difficult to make. On one hand, increased accountability reduced the likelihood that protégés reported problems with their mentors, suggesting organizations might want to take steps to foster accountability. On the other hand, as mentors perceived greater accountability for their behavior, they expressed less interest in mentoring others in the future. The negative relationship with mentor willingness to mentor, coupled with the likely low base rate of serious problems with mentors, suggests that increasing mentor accountability may backfire on organizations by turning off some potentially good mentors to mentoring. However, it is important to remember that we are measuring perceptions, and it is possible that mentor and protégé perceptions of mentor accountability are not highly correlated. Until the correlation between mentor and protégé perceptions of accountability are established any recommendations remain tentative.

4.3. Limitations and conclusions

For both Study 1 and Study 2, data were collected with the single administration of a survey. This raises concern about common method variance and artificially inflated correlations among study variables. However, the magnitude of the correlations and varied pattern of effects across positive and negative mentoring argue against this. We are also unable to draw cause-and-effect inferences and rule out reverse causality. While this seems unlikely for some obtained effects (e.g., accountability is unlikely to be a consequence of mentoring received) it is possible for other effects. For instance, as more mentoring is reported by protégés, perceptions of management support for mentoring may be improved since there are more role models
available. Or, mentors who report being in more mutually beneficial relationships may come to believe that management is more supportive of mentoring. Additional research using longitudinal designs is an important next step to tease apart such issues. Generalizability of our findings is also a concern given our modest response rates and use of convenience samples. Another methodological concern is that some protégés and mentors were reporting on previous mentoring relationships. This raises the possibility of retrospective recall bias. While this source of bias cannot be ruled out completely, retrospective data is not biased if the measures used are reliable and valid (Miller, Cardinal, & Glick, 1997). Other ways to help ensure the validity of retrospective data involve using knowledgeable informants, asking specific questions, not asking questions about the distant past, and motivating individuals to respond accurately by assuring confidentiality and explaining the usefulness of the research to participants (Miller et al., 1997). Since our study meets all of these conditions it is unlikely that recall bias poses a major threat to the validity of our findings.

Another limitation is the relatively small number of items used to assess each dimension of organizational support for mentoring and the fact that some scale trimming was necessary to increase the fit of the measurement model. However, the modified factor structure that emerged from protégés in Study 1 generally fit well in the second sample of mentors. Moreover, in both samples, the revised two-factor model fit the data significantly better than a general one-factor model. Nonetheless, additional construct validity work is needed with our measures.

While we took a multiple perspectives approach, a final limitation is that we did not examine mentor-protégé dyads. Yet, mentors and protégés may have different perceptions about the extent to which managers support mentoring relationships. Moreover, one member’s perception of support may account for unique variance in the other’s outcome. For instance, a mentor’s perception of management support for mentoring may predict protégé reports of career-related mentoring over and above the protégé’s own report of management support. Or alternatively, while we found that protégés’ reports of mentor accountability related to greater psychosocial support and less mentoring problems, mentors who feel highly accountable for their behavior may actually withhold mentoring support due concerns that their mentoring behavior is being “watched” or monitored by others in the organization. This may happen because less personal control in a situation can lead to decrements in motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000) or because mentors may have concerns that psychosocial mentoring will be misconstrued as favoritism or inappropriate emotional connectedness with their protégés (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Clearly, obtaining dyadic data represents an important next step for this line of research.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the present study makes several contributions to mentoring theory and research. We provide an initial glimpse at how perceived support for mentoring relates to protégés’ mentoring experiences and mentors’ reports of relational complementarity and willingness to mentor. Our study also provides an initial multidimensional measure of perceived support for mentoring which can be expanded on in future research. As mentoring continues to grow in popularity among practitioners and researchers alike, understanding conditions that foster positive exchanges and minimize negative relational dynamics is increasingly important.
We hope this present study serves as a platform for future research and theory on the role of perceptions of support in mentoring relationships.

Appendix A

A.1. Perceived managerial support for mentoring (protégé perspective)

1. Top management in this organization serves as a role model for mentors.
2. The organization encourages employees to be mentors.
3. This organization promotes mentoring opportunities.
4. There are few rewards available in this organization for mentoring others (reverse scored).
5. Mentors in this organization receive little recognition for their efforts (reverse scored).
6. Mentoring relationships are not reinforced by the leaders in this organization (reverse scored).

A.2. Perceived accountability for mentoring (protégé perspective)

1. The organization is aware of how mentors behave toward protégés.
2. Mentors are held accountable for their treatment of protégés.
3. Top management would be willing to look into protégés’ claims of problems with their mentor.
4. The organization would take steps to remedy a protégé’s dissatisfaction with a mentor.

A.3. Perceived managerial support for mentoring (mentor perspective)

1. Upper administration in this university serves as a role model for mentors.
2. The university encourages employees to be mentors.
3. This university promotes mentoring opportunities.
4. There are few rewards available in this university for mentoring others (reverse scored).
5. Mentors in this university receive little recognition for their efforts (reverse scored).
6. Mentoring relationships are not reinforced by the leaders in this university (reverse scored).

A.4. Perceived accountability for mentoring (mentor perspective)

1. The university is aware of how mentors behave toward protégés.
2. Mentors are held accountable for their treatment of protégés.
3. The university would take steps to remedy a protégé’s dissatisfaction with a mentor.
References


