

Role of Mentoring in Development of Leaders: Is There a Difference Between Latina and Latino in Mentor Selection Criteria?

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Introduction

If current trends continue, the population of the United States will rise to 438 million by the year 2050 from 296 million in 2005. The White population will decline from 67% of the population to 47%, one in five Americans will be an immigrant, Hispanic population will grow from 42 million to 128 million becoming the largest minority with 29% of the population, Asian population will grow from 5% to 9% and African Americans will maintain their present share of 13% (Passel & Cohen, 2008). According to the Saenz from Carsey Institute, 9.6% of Latino are in management, professional and related occupations as compared with 19.3% Latina. To develop future leaders for the business world these changes in demographics has to be recognized, understood, and appropriate changes must be implemented.

Importance of mentoring in developing leaders is well documented in the literature. Influential factor in the development of both senior and junior professionals. This awareness has been manifested in organizations in fields as diverse as business, educational institutions, and social services (Kanter 1977). Many business organizations employ formal mentoring processes for all their new employees.

Literature indicates that mentors have a very positive impact on a protégé's career. Research on mentoring clearly shows that having a mentor is much more advantageous than not having one. Individuals with mentors receive more information (Dreher & Ash, 1990, Scandura, 1992, Ragins and Kram, 2007), have higher incomes (Dreher & Ash 1990; Whitely, Dougherty, and Dreher, 1991), and tend to have more career satisfaction (Fagenson, 1988). They are associated with a more positive job experience, and perceive having more employment alternatives (Baugh, Lankau, and Schandura, 1996).

Mentors provide career support as well as psychosocial support to their protégés. Career functions include, but are not limited to, preparing the protégé, for career advancement through sponsorship, promoting increased visibility of the protégé, coaching, helping the protégé to develop career strategies, providing feedback, and making challenging work assignments available to the protégé. Psychosocial functions help to develop a protégé's sense of competence, self-esteem, identity, and aspirations through demonstrated belief and

trust in the protégé, a supportive and encouraging relationship with the protégé, and give them hope for success. Mentors also serve the protégé as a prototype of appropriate values, attitudes, and behaviors that lead to higher levels of accomplishments. The protégés identify with their mentors and seek to emulate them in their own performance.

Hegstad (1999), suggests that along with psychosocial support and career development for the protégé, successful mentoring also impacts organizational outcomes. Hegstad (1999, 388), states that

“Mentorship contributes to improved employee motivation, performance, commitment, and retention. A successful mentorship expedites leadership development and can be an effective means of identifying talent. Organizational culture and philosophy can be promoted as mentors relay norms and values. Mentoring also develops human resources by functioning as a form of on-the-job training, thus building a competent workforce. The long-term effects of mentoring for organizations may have substantial impacts on their bottom lines, however research in this area is yet to be developed.”

Factors That Influence the Mentoring Relationship

Mentoring relationships are intense interpersonal exchanges, and thus provide rewards to both mentors and protégés (Ragins and Schandura, 1994). There are theories and research studies that have examined the individual and organizational factors that influence the success of mentoring relationships. Social identity theory suggests that individuals respond to, and select their mentors from, their own ethnic, age, and sex groups. Some research studies indicate that protégés have an internal locus of control, a higher level of job involvement, an increased level of engagement in their own career planning, and a greater level of importance given to the relationships with peers and supervisors, and there is a positive correlation with mentors spending more time with their protégés (Noe, 1988). A protégé’s characteristics, such as, past performance and marriage status of male and female protégés have also been found to affect a manager’s interest in mentoring the protégé (Olian, Carroll, and Giannantonio, 1993)

The availability of same race mentors has been seen as having an impact on mentoring as well. Historically, availability of greater numbers of white professionals in the workforce has led to the thought that professionals of color are less likely to be mentored than white professionals (Thomas, 1993). The gender of the protégé is found to effect the accessibility of mentors. Women perceive that mentoring relationships are less accessible to them than their male counterparts (Noe, 1988; Ragin and Cotton, 1991; Ibarra, 1993). Kram (1985) suggests that communication and interpersonal skills of the mentor and protégé critically influences mentoring relationships and the mentoring process.

The Impact of Culture on the Mentoring Relationship

There is limited research available in the field of gender and mentoring. Existing literature on the question of race in mentor relationships is even more limited. Ibarra (1993) hypothesized that the organizational context in which interaction networks are embedded, produce unique constraints on racial minorities. Thomas and Alderfer (1989) found that racial minority groups experience difficulties in gaining significant social and instrumental support in the workplace.

In their exploratory study, Davis and Thakur (1999) found that African Americans placed higher importance on a mentor of the same race with similar life experiences. For Hispanic Americans, the willingness of the mentor to spend time to develop a personal relationship with the protégé was more critical. They stated that spending personal time with the mentor provided them with psychological and social support. Hispanic Americans considered psychological and social support an important aspect of the mentoring process. Asian Pacific Islanders looked up to their mentors that had proven accomplishments and had the respect of their community. Further research on the impact of subculture variations on mentoring relationships can be of assistance in the development of an effective mentoring process.

Significance of the Study:

This study is designed to generate information about differences in criteria used for the selection of mentors in Hispanic American male and female respondents. With rising population of Latino it has been more important to identify what is important to them in a mentor. This aspect of ethnic differences has not yet been explored in research studies. This information has the potential for many significant implications. Some of these include:

- To develop a better understanding of the variables those are important to the Latino sub-culture of this country.
- To develop effective communication and formulate mutually beneficial relationships between the members of Latino sub-cultures with other sub-cultures.
- To help organizations to meet needs created by the demographic changes.
- To institute more effective mentoring programs for Latino and Latina employees.

Research Question:

This study is seeking answers to the following question:

1. Is there significant difference between Latino and Latina respondents rate as important in their mentor as based on the following criteria?
 - a. Age of the mentor
 - b. Gender of the mentor
 - c. Same race/cross race of the mentor
 - d. Personal time spent with the mentor
 - e. Professional accomplishments of the mentor
 - f. Mentor's ability to support the protégé's career advancement
 - g. Similarity of life experiences between the mentor and the protégé
 - h. Mentor's ability to provide psychological support
 - i. Number of mentors sought
 - j. Importance of having a mentor

Methodology

All the data for this study was obtained by administering a twenty-four item questionnaire based on a six-point Likert scale, to 78 undergraduate Latino respondents (37 male and 41 female) from six private universities located in Southern California. The questionnaire was administered in three upper division business classes in each institution. Before starting the research, this researcher, along with, Dr. Sharon K. Davis, had conducted focus group to identify factors that were relevant to Hispanic Americans in their selection of a mentor. This focus group was ethnically exclusive and unstructured. The information obtained from the focus groups was used to develop the initial questionnaire. The initial instrument was field tested and validated before administering it to the sample group.

Data was collected and analyzed with the SPSS package using ANOVA, the t Test, and the LSD statistical technique. The results were organized in a way, which allowed the researcher to identify the significant variables, and then they were analyzed for their implications.

Summary of Findings

In order to identify the differences between the responses of the Latino and Latina respondents, the t test for independent samples was administered. Only the results with a 0.05 significance level are reported in this section.

The t test found significant differences between the Latino and Latina respondents in the ranking of three statements. The two groups significantly differed (at .032 level) in their responses to the statement, "Mentor's age is not of any importance". These results are stated in Table 1.

TABLE 1
RESULTS OF T TABLE FOR LATINO AND LATINA RESPONDENTS RESPONSE TO THE
STATEMENT "MENTOR'S AGE IS NOT OF ANY IMPORTANCE"

t	df	<u>Level of Significance</u> (2-tailed)	<u>Mean Difference</u>
2.181	75	.032	.7866
Latino \bar{X} = 4.25, Latina \bar{X} = 3.46			

Thirty-six Latinos and forty-one Latinas responded to this statement. The mean response for the Latinos was 4.25. The mean response for the Latinas was 3.4634. These results indicate that a mentor's age is less important to Latina respondents than it is to Latino respondents.

The t test also identified that the Latino and Latina respondents had a significant difference (at the .025 level) in their responses to the statement, "I want to have a close personal relationship with my mentor". These results are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2

RESULTS OF t TEST FOR LATINO AND LATINA RESPONDENTS RESPONSES
TO THE STATEMENT "I WANT TO HAVE A CLOSE PERSONAL
RELATIONSHIP WITH MY MENTOR"

t	df	Level of Significance (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
2.373	75	.020	.5203
Latino $\bar{X} = 2.67$, Latina $\bar{X} = 2.15$			

Thirty-six Latinos and forty-one Latinas responded to this statement. The mean response rate for the Latinos was 2.6667, where as the mean response rate for the Latinas was 2.1463. These results indicate that Latinas would prefer to have a closer personal relationship with their mentors than the Latino respondents.

The t test found significant differences (at the .042 level) between Latinos and Latinas in their responses to the statement, "It is important for a mentor to support a protégé's self-esteem". These results are presented in the Table 3.

TABLE 3

RESULTS OF t TEST FOR LATINO AND LATINA RESPONDENTS RESPONSE TO THE STATEMENT
"IT IS IMPORTANT FOR A MENTOR TO SUPPORT A PROTÉGÉ'S SELF-ESTEEM"

t	df	Level of Significance (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
2.073	75	.042	.4214
Latino $\bar{X} = 2.06$, Latina $\bar{X} = 1.63$			

Thirty-six Latino and forty-one Latina respondents responded to this question. The mean response for the Latino respondents was 2.0556. The mean response for the Latina respondents was 1.6341. These results indicate that it is more important to the Latina respondents that their mentors support their self-esteem.

Discussion and Conclusion

This section presents the summary, conclusions, recommendations, and implications of this study based on this data analysis.

There are gender differences in what protégés look for in a mentor. These differences are more of degree rather than direction. For example, a mentor's age is less important to Latina than to Latino respondents. Latina want more personal relationships and psychological support from their mentors than Latinos. These differences may be the result of gender differences within each ethnicity.

Genders, as a group by itself, and as subgroup of the ethnicity, demonstrate power differences. According to Ragins (1997, 487),

"An individual's group membership influences his or her ability to develop inter and intraorganizational resources for power. Based on an integration of sociological and organizational perspectives on power, power resources are defined as control over persons, information, and organizational resources, which also involve the development of authority, credibility, and perceived expertise."

Power differences between mentors and protégés tend to increase the influence of the mentor over the protégé. Hence, it is likely that protégés seek mentors that have power over them. In the Hispanic culture Latinos have a higher power base than Latinas. Latinos are more likely to work with the same gender mentors and may see the age of the mentor as an important component of the power differences between their mentors and themselves. Latinas, on the other hand, are more likely to work with cross-gender mentors. The gender difference in itself brings a difference of power within that relationship. Hence Latinas may not be as concerned about having a mentor that is older than them, as are the Latinos.

According to Tarver Behring, Cabello, Kushida, and Murguia (2000, 355), the Hispanic culture portrays clear sex role differences. McEachern and Kenny (2002, 42), describe these differences in the following words:

"Men are described as proud, authoritarian, controlled, vengeful when dishonored, and possessive in relationships....Traditionally, daughters are raised to be submissive, respectful, and obedient toward their fathers because father is the ultimate authority in the family. The daughter's role is to be cooperative, please the family, and avoid conflict."

These differences may indicate that Latinas may have a higher need for personal relationships and psychosocial support from their mentors than Latinos. Latinos, on the other hand, may be seeking higher career support from their mentors than Latinas. This finding leads to the conclusion that Latinos and Latinas may have different degrees of need for psychosocial support from their mentors.

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