



DYNAMICS OF MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS IN INDIA: A QUALITATIVE, EXPLORATORY STUDY

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To supplement the extant mentoring literature that has taken a predominantly Western/U.S. perspective, the present study examined the nature of mentoring relationships in a highly power-distant and collectivistic culture such as India. Twenty-nine Indian masters of business administration (MBA) students participated in a qualitative study (using in-depth interviews) regarding Indian conceptualizations of mentors, the dynamics of mentoring relationships, their mentoring experiences in India, and the practice of mentoring as a career management tool. Content analysis revealed that while some aspects of mentoring seem culturally invariant, other aspects might be influenced by careers and socio-cultural contexts. The findings are discussed from relational and cultural perspectives with theoretical and practical implications for cross-cultural management and human resource practice. © 2010 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

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Introduction

Following Hall and Associates (1996), researchers are increasingly taking a relational approach to career development. The fact that we live in a “relationship-rich” environment (Hall & Associates, 1996, p. 4) necessitates examining interdependent work and non-work relationships that contribute to one’s growth. One such relationship is mentoring (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007; Kram, 1996). Mentoring is an intense reciprocal interpersonal exchange between a senior experienced individual (the mentor) and a less experienced individual (the

protégé). This relationship is characterized by guidance, advice, counsel, feedback, and support provided by the mentor for the protégé’s personal and professional development (Eby, Rhodes, & Allen, 2007; Kram, 1985).

In keeping with the relational view of careers, researchers and practitioners have found it valuable to examine how mentoring intertwines with individuals’ careers, to the extent that mentoring has been deemed as a key employee development and career management tool in organizations (Finkelstein & Poteet, 2007). Mentoring enhances employee skills, aids socialization to a new work setting, and improves career outcomes. Recent

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meta-analyses have also confirmed the positive relationship between mentoring and protégés' career outcomes such as salary, promotions, career satisfaction, and perceptions of advancement opportunities, to name a few (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004; Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & Dubois, 2008; Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005). Perceived and actual *mentor* benefits include improved job performance, recognition and visibility, sense of fulfillment, and having a loyal support base (Eby, Durley, Evans, & Ragins, 2006; Ragins & Scandura, 1999). These benefits reinforce the mutuality and reciprocity in such relationships (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007; Kram,

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1996). Potential *organizational* benefits include higher organizational attraction among job applicants (Allen & O'Brien, 2006), organizational commitment (Payne & Huffman, 2005), and talent pool development, performance, and productivity (Ramaswami & Dreher, 2007). Despite the voluminous mentoring literature (see Noe, Greenberger, & Wang, 2002; Wanberg, Welsh, & Hezlett, 2003; Allen & Eby, 2007; Ragins & Kram, 2007) and the above-noted benefits for protégés, mentors, and organizations, there have been few attempts to understand mentoring in cultures other than the U.S. This brings into question the relevance of current knowledge of mentoring relationships, gained

primarily from the U.S., to other cultures (Allen & Eby, 2007; Clutterbuck, 2007; Scandura & Pellegrini, 2007). This is particularly important because career development needs to be understood holistically; that is, taking individuals, their interpersonal interactions, and their social contexts into account (Kram, 1996; Tams & Arthur, 2007).

Moreover, globalization has increased the need to successfully manage employees and businesses internationally (Woldu, Budhwar, & Parkes, 2006). It has therefore become imperative for organizations and human resource (HR) professionals to consider the context-specific nature of work relationships and HR prac-

tices (Bhawuk, 2008b; Budhwar & Bhatnagar, 2009; Budhwar & Khatri, 2001; Sanchez-Burks & Lee, 2007; Von Glinow, Drost, & Teagarden, 2002; Walumbwa & Lawler, 2003). This necessity is reinforced in mentoring given that existing theories lack appreciation for the multiple contexts within which mentoring relationships operate (Allen & Eby, 2007; Clutterbuck, 2007). The need to examine mentoring in other cultures has encouraged researchers to understand indigenous mentoring systems that differ from those in the U.S. (Bright, 2005; Cheng, Chou, Wu, Huang, & Farh, 2004). Furthermore, researchers have expressed a need for more cultural studies on psychology and management in India (Adair, Puhan, & Vohra, 1993; Bhawuk, 2008a, 2008b; Pandey, 2004). Given the pervasive influence of socio-cultural, economic, and political factors in Indian management and interpersonal relationships (Baruch & Budhwar, 2006; Bhawuk, 2008b; Budhwar & Khatri, 2001), mentoring relationships could differ between India and the West. Consequently, this research used a qualitative approach to examine the schemas and conceptualizations of mentoring as well as the dynamics of mentoring relationships as Indians perceived and experienced them. This research thereby uncovers possible similarities and differences compared to what the Western literature has shown. Undoubtedly, examining the mentoring relationships in India has important implications for managing Indian employees, multinational companies, and expatriates. Understanding cultural differences in the relational aspects of developmental activities and an increased emphasis on localizing HRM in India could buttress an organization's international management strategy. This study's findings will therefore be of interest to HR researchers and practitioners in India and elsewhere.

Why Examine Mentoring in India?

Despite the increase in Indian management research since liberalization in the early 1990s, literature on Indian HRM is still perceived to be lacking (Bhawuk, 2008b; Budhwar & Bhatnagar, 2009; Pio, 2007). Growing business investments from the West, combined with India's

economic growth (Budhwar & Bhatnagar, 2009; Kapur & Ramamurti, 2001), make it relevant to examine career development practices such as mentoring (Aryee, Chen, & Budhwar, 2004; Baruch & Budhwar, 2006; Budhwar, 2000, 2001). During a time when cross-border employee assignments, especially between the U.S. and India, are a business reality (Budhwar & Khatri, 2001; Varma, Srinivas, & Stroh, 2005b; Varma, Toh, & Budhwar, 2006), the lack of studies on mentoring in India precludes our cultural understanding of this developmental relationship and career management system. With a large number of global companies entering the Indian market, the “war for talent” has significantly intensified among Indians, who now have a plethora of organizational options from which to choose, leading to an interesting problem of employee motivation, commitment, and retention. For these reasons, it is vital for managers and employers to focus on career and talent management strategies such as mentoring (Bhatnagar, 2007). Before specifying this study’s research questions, we review Indian mentoring research and related concepts such as the *guru-shishya* (teacher-disciple) relationship, nurturant-task (NT) leadership, and the cultural factors that could potentially influence the relational aspects of mentoring in India.

Literature on Mentoring in India

The scarcity of mentoring research among Indians is ironic given that the importance of mentors for individual and organizational leadership is recognized in the symbolic title of Shri Narayana Murthy’s position as “Chief Mentor” of Infosys Technologies Limited. We found only three studies (Baruch & Budhwar, 2006; Budhwar & Baruch, 2003; Gentry, Weber, & Sadri, 2008) that referred to workplace mentoring in India. Budhwar and Baruch (2003) examined career planning and management (CPM) practices in 108 Indian organizations. They found that mentoring was not so common as performance appraisal in career planning, but both clustered with appraisal committees and lateral moves to form one CPM factor that was highly correlated with an internal labor market strategy

and an open and dynamic organizational climate. Using the same data set, Baruch and Budhwar (2006) compared Indian CPM practices with those in 194 British companies. They found that Indian companies reported having more formal mentoring programs than did the British. Gentry et al. (2008) conducted a cross-cultural examination of mentoring using samples from 33 countries in the GLOBE study. Although they did not separately examine mentoring in India, Indian respondents were included in their multi-level analysis. They found that societal emphasis on performance orientation moderated the relationship between subordinates’ reports of career mentoring provided by their managers and the performance ratings of managers reported by the managers’ bosses. Among the 33 countries included in their study, India ranked 12th in performance orientation, suggesting a moderate-high value (relative to other countries) placed on training and development and feedback for performance improvement. Gentry et al.’s (2008) results suggested that cultures that value performance orientation (such as India) view mentoring positively. This is also reflected in the increasing emphasis on employee development in India (Budhwar, 2003; Pio, 2007).

While the nature and scope of mentoring programs or relationships in India were not the focus of these studies, they are still noteworthy in that they were the first to examine such an HR practice and developmental relationship among Indians and Indian organizations. Although references to historically and culturally rooted mentoring relationships in India, such as the *guru-shishya* relationship, are found in other literatures (Neki, 1973; Raina, 2002), we found no systematic examination of the dynamics of

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Neki (1973) and Raina (2002) explained in detail the dynamics of traditional *guru-shishya* relationships in psychotherapeutic and educational contexts, which can be extrapolated to organizational contexts. The *guru* is someone who guides the *shishya* in his or her journey of self-discovery and mastery by building skills, enhancing knowledge, and understanding oneself (Neki, 1973; Raina, 2002). While the relational view of organizational mentoring also emphasizes such processes and outcomes (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007; Kram, 1996),

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in a *guru-shishya* relationship, the focus is more on the protégé's transformation and less on the guru. This type of traditional *guru-shishya* relationship can be found in performing arts *gurukuls* or *gharanaas* (the teacher's family, school, or home) such as *Kalakshetra*, *Veda Patashalas*, which are specialized institutions for training in the performing arts, and religious texts, respectively, which emphasize strong mentor-protégé relationships for learning.

Also relevant to mentoring in Indian organizational contexts is Sinha's (1980) concept of NT leadership, that accounts for the cultural values and needs of Indian employees. NT leaders blend the roles of a nurturer who shows affection and benevolence and a task-oriented leader who focuses

on productivity and goals. Such a leader guides and motivates subordinates who depend on them for direction and emotional support. While this type of leadership style would suit subordinates who may depend upon and seek guidance from an authority figure, it is also possible for the NT leader to use a leadership style appropriate for both the situation and subordinate, moving from authoritarian to participative styles (Suar, Tewari, & Chaturbedi, 2006).

Furthermore, both theoretical and methodological reasons exist for continuing to ex-

amine mentoring in India. The existing literature points to cultural differences between India and the West (Hofstede, 2001; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004) with implications for career management (Baruch & Budhwar, 2006; Pio, 2007). The characteristics that help establish and sustain mentoring relationships in Asia suggest fundamental differences in mentoring between Indian and low power-distant or low collectivistic cultures. Despite intra-cultural variance in cultural values (Au, 1999), individuals within a culture are still exposed to the same shared values and norms at a societal level, which influence their interpretation of life's daily events. As Varma et al. (2005b) noted, Indian socio-cultural diversity in languages, castes, and religions challenges the idea of a single specific Indian management style. General trends are observed in Indian organizations, however, such as low uncertainty avoidance; high power-distance due to the importance of caste and status that leads to paternalistic management styles; the importance of the family and group, which leads to a medium collectivist orientation; low masculinity with moderate assertiveness and ambition; and a strong long-term time orientation. Other orientations and mind-sets associated with Indians include submissiveness, emotional and personal dependence proneness, inaction, corruption, fatalism, in-group/clan orientation, status/hierarchy/power consciousness, materialism, and holistic orientation (Amba-Rao, Petrick, Gupta, & von der Embse, 2000; Garg & Parikh, 1986; Pradhan, Mishra, Mathur, 2001; Sinha & Kanungo, 1997; Sinha & Pandey, 2007).

While modernization and the diversity in India may limit the extent to which these characteristics are actually manifested, they remain influential and are pertinent to organizational relationships (Pio, 2007; Varma et al., 2005b). They could also have implications for the formation and dynamics of mentoring relationships. For example, Clutterbuck (2007) noted that two values particularly relevant to the dynamics of mentoring across cultures are power-distance and individualism/collectivism. Given that traditional forms of mentoring are hierarchical, the high power-distance

and collectivistic orientation, combined with Indians' propensity to be dependent and engage in clannish behavior, might influence mentors' and protégés' perceptions of each other's role and the social exchange processes and behaviors (Bhawuk, 2008b) that underlie mentoring relationships (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007). Further, collectivistic orientation, personalized relationships, strong family ties, and extended family relations (Kanungo & Mendonca, 1994) may result in mentoring relationships formed within cohesive in-groups, with implications for the kinds of career-related support that protégés receive.

Researchers have also noted that HR management in India is becoming rationalized and egalitarian, increasingly divorced from the socio-political cultural norms based on status, inequality, and in-group/out-group bias noted above (Amba-Rao et al., 2000; Baruch & Budhwar, 2006; Budhwar & Baruch, 2003; Budhwar & Khatri, 2001). Given these changes, and considering that research on career management systems (specifically mentoring) in India is limited (Baruch & Budhwar, 2006; Budhwar & Khatri, 2001; Pio, 2007), we do not know if Indians' views, expectations, and experiences of mentoring are still influenced by socio-cultural factors and whether they differ from Western experiences and reports. Such knowledge is useful for developing appropriate management practices that could have implications for expatriate training and success in the Indian context (Gopalan & Stahl, 1998). Furthermore, from a methodological perspective, Pellegrini and Scandura (2005) emphasized the prerequisite of construct comparability for examining cross-group differences. This would be particularly important for cross-cultural comparisons, because studies on mentoring among Asians (e.g., Aryee, Lo, & Kang, 1999) have only used Western mentoring conceptualizations and measures.

Thus, the lack of mentoring research among Indians motivated us to investigate this topic. Specifically, the research questions addressed in this paper are: (1) How do Indians characterize a "mentor" and an "ideal mentor"? (2) Who serve as mentors in India? (3)

How are mentoring relationships formed in India? (4) How do mentor behaviors as reported by Indian respondents correspond with existing Western taxonomies of mentor behaviors (e.g., Kram, 1985)? (5) What do Indian respondents consider the benefits and pitfalls of mentoring? and (6) What factors do Indian respondents report as contributing to the success or derailment of mentoring relationships?

We chose to conduct a qualitative study before conducting any quantitative examinations of mentoring in India because we do not have any substantial body of mentoring literature upon which to base relevant and testable hypotheses. Below we describe in detail the methodology and the content analysis of interviews addressing each of our research questions.

Methodology

Sample

This study was conducted among Indian MBA students enrolled at a large midwestern university in the U.S. Among the 68 students enrolled in the first and second years invited to participate, 36 responded favorably (53%). Reasons for not participating included students who were born and raised in the U.S., no work-experience in India, or schedule conflicts. Of the 36 participants, seven identified themselves as having lived mostly in the U.S. with little Indian work experience; they were thus removed from analysis. The remaining 29 participants (76% male, average age of 27.5 years) had an average of five years of work experience in India (50% had more than five years experience) in both Indian and multinational organizations in multiple industries. Students reported having worked in

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large, cosmopolitan cities (e.g., Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata) and relatively smaller cities (e.g., Belgaum, Coimbatore). Two students had been to the U.S. on short work-related projects before the MBA program began. An ideal sample would have been Indian employees currently residing in India. At the time of data collection (October–November 2006), however, the participants had been in the US for only two months (first-year MBA students) to a little over a year (second-year MBA students). All students were raised and educated in India and had resided in India for at least 25 years, with continuing social and organizational ties. Staying in the U.S. for two months to a year could not have possibly erased more than 25 years of Indian socialization, outlook, and experiences. Recent research also suggested that the basic value orientations of Indians who live in India and Indians who have lived in the U.S. for at least five years are largely similar and resist change (Budhwar, Woldu, & Ogbonna, 2008). Moreover, the participants were reporting on their mentoring experiences while working in India and not while in the U.S. The implications of the sample on study results and generalizability are discussed later.

Procedure

Interviews

Indian MBA students, taking mainly a protégé's perspective, were interviewed on their conceptualizations of mentoring and mentoring experiences in India. Interview questions (available from the authors upon request) were chosen based on reviewing the mentoring literature. To avoid between-interviewer variance in interviewing experience and the conduct of interviews, the first author conducted all interviews. Respondents were given a description of the study and were asked to fill out a personal information sheet requesting demographic information. They were then presented with the same set of open-ended questions in a semi-structured interview format addressing the study's research questions. As noted by Allen, Poteet, and Burroughs (1997), respondents' answers

might be based on beliefs and opinions rather than real behaviors or practices. For this reason, respondents were probed, as deemed necessary, for further explanation and examples that added breadth and depth to their answers. Participants were assured of confidentiality of all information provided. Each interview lasted for about an hour. Interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed.

Content Analysis

Following the procedure advocated by Glaser (1992), Krippendorf (2004), and Weber (1990) and also used by Allen et al. (1997), Eby and Lockwood (2005), and Eby, McManus, Simon, and Russell (2000), all applicable comments for each content area (addressed by research questions) were selected and grouped into "themes" that reflected the comments' underlying meaning. All comments reflected respondents' unique ideas; if a respondent repeated an idea, it was counted only once. For all content areas, except mentor behaviors, an inductive approach was used, whereby the comments were grouped into dimensions of content areas, based on the underlying meaning they reflected, with keywords representing dimension labels (Glaser, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Krippendorf, 2004). The grounded theory perspective suggests that theory should evolve from the data rather than applying *a priori* or potentially biasing theoretical models and frameworks to interpret the data (Glaser, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Krippendorf, 2004). Similar dimensions, derived from the statements, were collapsed into abstract meta-themes—"superordinate" constructs—and were labeled based on representative statements. For mentor behaviors, a deductive approach was used, as suggested by Eby and McManus (2004), because this study's aim was to examine whether Indian mentors' behaviors mapped onto existing taxonomies of mentor behaviors and whether there were new dimensions that emerged from items beyond those in existing taxonomies. Respondents used "mentee" and "protégé" interchangeably; here we use just "protégé" for consistency in reporting content analysis results.

Coding Accuracy

The authors consulted one another regarding accuracy and agreement on all classifications throughout the content analysis process. Final dimensions and meta-themes for each content area were given to two OBHR doctoral students (one American and one Indian, neither of whom was associated with the study), who verified and reclassified the first-order dimensions (with constituent statements) under appropriate second-order meta-themes. Content areas were divided between the two students. The percentages of dimensions on which there was initial agreement are provided in the findings for each content area. The authors and doctoral students discussed and resolved disagreements. Below we describe the content analysis findings in detail. Percentages in parentheses in the findings denote the percentage of statements composing a specific dimension, unless explained otherwise.

Findings

Who Is a Mentor? Who Is an Ideal Mentor?

Interviewees made 153 statements in response to the questions "How would you define a 'mentor'?" and "Who is a 'mentor' to you?" These 153 statements were categorized into 23 dimensions (Table I), which were grouped, in turn, into four meta-themes: (1) mentor defined by behaviors, (2) mentor defined by personality-related characteristics, (3) mentor defined by protégé's interaction with mentor, and (4) mentor defined by work-related characteristics. Respondents most often described a mentor as someone who:

- they felt comfortable talking and sharing apprehensions with ("someone you are comfortable with," 11% of statements)
- guides them and shows them how to reach goals ("path clarifier," 9%)
- builds their skills and competencies ("coach," 7%)
- identifies their strengths and weaknesses and helps them realize their potential ("personal SWOT analyst," 6.5%)

- helps them make career decisions ("career counselor," 6%)
- has more experience than the protégé ("experienced," 6%)

While there was 100% agreement with one of the doctoral students on the classification of first-order dimensions into second-order meta-themes, a change in the name of one dimension was suggested to represent the constituent statements more appropriately.

In addition, interviewees made 87 statements describing an ideal mentor. Twenty categories emerged from these statements and were grouped into four meta-themes: 1) seniority and competence, 2) personal qualities, 3) cultural and personality similarity, and 4) work history similarity (Table II). The most commonly mentioned characteristics of an ideal mentor included:

- someone who has a similar work background (10.3%)
- has a similar cultural background (9%)
- was four to five years older than the protégé (9%)
- has a career path similar to the one the protégé wishes to pursue (8%)

Again, 100% agreement with a doctoral student on the classification of first-order dimensions into second-order meta-themes was achieved. Changes in the names of three dimensions were made, on further discussion, to represent constituent statements better.

Who Serve as Mentors for Indian Employees?

Most respondents had developmental networks rather than just one primary mentor. Eighty percent of the respondents indicated that they had either a formal or an informal mentor in India. Seventy percent of the respondents indicated that their mentors were immediate supervisors or team leaders who were either formally assigned or informally chosen. Forty percent indicated that their mentors were family members including parents, siblings, cousins, uncles, or aunts; about 33% of the respondents indicated that their close friends and peers were also their men-

TABLE I Characterization of Mentor

Dimensions (Number of Statements)	Sample Statements
Mentor defined by behaviors (N = 79)	
Path clarifier (14)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I need to know where I want to be and that person will help me think whether the track I am pursuing is the right track.
Coach (11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Somebody who coaches you through.
Personal SWOT analyst (10)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make me understand what I was strong at and what I was weak at.
Career counselor (9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Someone who can give advice whenever you want to make a career choice.
Feedback giver (8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives me feedback both positive and negative.
Personality molder (8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps you develop into something more than what you are not already.
Wisdom broker (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you summarize a lot of years of experience ... like giving key insights...
Resource locator (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point me in the right direction as to who may know the right answer.
Perspective giver (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As you are growing, people are there to give pros and cons of things that are happening.
Vision provider (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help give you a vision to create that vision or maybe that feeling that you should think broadly.
Mentor defined by personality-related characteristics (N = 28)	
Empathetic (8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You've got to put yourself in the protégé's shoes and see what the protégé is seeking.
Willing to help (7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the willingness to help you grow.
Has interest in protégé (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Someone who has a genuine interest in me, [that] I achieve my goals and the way I achieve them.
Trustworthy (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal problems, if you have something you cannot solve then you just go to people whom you trust.
Supportive friend (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More importantly has to be a friend.
Forthcoming (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should come forward and tell him these are the things more popular here ... these are the things you shouldn't do.
Mentor defined by protégé's interaction with mentor (N = 25)	
Someone you are comfortable with (17)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who I can look up to ask some questions ... that you wouldn't ask someone in an open forum of 100 people.
Someone you are in regular touch with (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Someone I can be in touch with and let them know what I am doing and where I am.
Someone you can connect with (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kind of person who should be in sync with you.
Mentor defined by work-related characteristics (N = 21)	
Experienced (9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He's been there, done that.
Has industry or functional knowledge (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has to have good skills in terms of industry knowledge.
Has same work background (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He has to be in the same profession as I am; I won't choose a mentor from another profession.
Senior (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is higher in a setting or who has higher responsibility.

TABLE II Characteristics of an Ideal Mentor

Dimensions (Number of Statements) Sample Statements

Seniority and Competence (N = 27)

- 4-5 years older (8)
 - If [I am] 25 and [my] mentor [is] 45 then we might click, but the talk will be different if they have a work experience different from mine, and you kind of develop respect even if someone has 2-3 years work experience more than you do, but with someone 20 years more experience, you have that respect. But you are kind of more hesitant in asking them questions, because you feel that they feel it is kind of stupid that we are asking them these questions, so I would say somebody who is probably the same age group, 4-5 years older.
 - At least twice or more years, experience than I have.
 - First of all he should have the qualities of a mentor, i.e., be successful in whatever he does in the field.
 - Clarity in communication, what I feel is a good mentor if he has good communication skills, he will be able to communicate better his ideas as to what I should be doing.
 - She has to be very knowledgeable; it is about whether you constantly seek knowledge and learning in day-to-day activities.
 - What I look for is the person has to be like a role model for me.
- More experienced (6)
- Accomplished (4)
- Good communication skills (4)
- Knowledgeable (3)
- Role model (2)

Personal Qualities (N = 27)

- Approachable (5)
- Nonjudgmental (5)
- Empathetic (4)
- Physical proximity (3)
- Trustworthy (2)
- Friendly (2)
- Genuine interest in protégé (2)
- Will to succeed (2)
- Unbiased (2)
- A person to whom I can walk across to and share my thoughts and apprehensions.
- So he makes you feel like ok he's not going to judge you ... but he's trying to just improve you as a person.
- Has to have empathy.
- He is nearby, approachable, proximity.
- Another thing that is most important for me is that I should trust that person.
- It should be [a] person who will be friends with me.
- S/he should have personal involvement in me, genuinely care about my progress.
- I would like to have somebody who is passionate and aggressive about his work.
- You can be biased if you are not from the same background, so the key thing is to be unbiased.

Cultural and Personality Similarity (N = 17)

- Similar cultural background (8)
 - It does help having someone from your own culture, who knows where you are from what your roots are to help you and guide you with your stuff ... he truly understands what sort of problems you may be going through because he may also be going through that at some point in his career.
 - Unless I can connect with the person or the person [can] connect with me, maybe he has genuine interest, but the way he communicates doesn't synchronize with my thought, there would always be a barrier....
 - Someone who has similar interests.
- Connection and sync (6)
- Similar interests (3)
- **Work History Similarity (N = 16)**
 - Similar work background (9)
 - Similar career path (7)
 - He has to be in the same profession.
 - Ideally I would like to have a mentor who is at a position I would like to be five years from now.

tors. Of the 24 respondents who had mentors, 11 (almost 50% of participants) mentioned having important mentors both at work and among friends and family.

What Behaviors Did the Indian Mentors Display?

Kram (1985) classified mentors' support behaviors into two broad categories—career functions and psychosocial functions, modeled as proximal outcomes of a mentoring relationship for the protégé (Noe et al., 2002). Career functions include coaching, sponsoring, providing challenging assignments, protecting the protégé from organiza-

The five most commonly mentioned behaviors were coaching (21%), followed by counseling (17%), friendship (12.5%), challenging assignments (10.7%), and sponsorship (10%).

tional politics, and fostering visibility to key organizational or industry players. These are functions intended to help the protégé navigate the organization and advance his or her career. Psychosocial functions, on the other hand, relate to more personal aspects of the relationship, intended to build protégé self-worth, feelings of competence, and personal and professional identity through role modeling, acceptance, confirmation, friendship, and counseling. While Kram's (1985) two-dimensional conceptualization of mentoring functions has been largely accepted in the literature, some have suggested that role modeling (Scandura, 1992; Scandura &

Ragins, 1993) and networking (Tenenbaum, Crosby, & Gliner, 2001, who used graduate student-adviser pairs) are distinct factors. To categorize the behaviors of respondents' primary workplace mentors, we used all major categories of mentoring functions existing in the literature as target categories for the current study.

Respondents with *workplace* mentoring relationships made 112 statements describing the behaviors displayed by their key organizational mentors (a respondent may have described more than one important developmental relationship). In line with this study's objectives, these statements were classified

into Kram's (1985) mentoring functions taxonomy, including networking, to examine how the behaviors of Indian mentors compare to those of Western mentors. Table III indicates that mentors in India perform career, psychosocial, role modeling, and networking functions. While behaviors of Indian mentors fell into preexisting Western categories, a few behaviors within each dimension seem to be slightly culturally idiosyncratic, as will be explained in the discussion. The five most commonly mentioned behaviors were coaching (21%), followed by counseling (17%), friendship (12.5%), challenging assignments (10.7%), and sponsorship (10%). In addition, more career-related and instrumental behaviors were mentioned (68 statements) than were behaviors related to socio-emotional/psychosocial functions (44 statements). The classification of mentor behaviors was verified between authors and discrepancies were resolved through discussion. Because existing taxonomies of mentoring functions were used to classify mentor behaviors, the doctoral students were not asked to reclassify first-order dimensions into the second-order meta-themes.

How Do Mentoring Relationships Form or Develop Among Indians?

Of the 24 respondents who had multiple mentoring relationships, six (25% of respondents) indicated that the mentoring relationship was formed through family or business connections. In addition, eight respondents (33%) indicated that they had a company representative direct them to a formal or informal mentor. Notably, many respondents indicated that although their companies did not have a formal mentoring program, HR representatives or supervisors informally assigned them as protégés to senior employees. In other words, an organizational intervention occurred for relationships not guided by a formal mentoring process. Eleven respondents (46%) indicated that their relationships developed naturally through repeated interactions with immediate superiors, while four respondents (17%) had mentors initiate the relationship. Finally, two respondents



(8%) described how common demographic backgrounds with senior managers helped develop mentoring relationships. (Note that the percentages do not add to 100 because many respondents described relationships with more than one mentor.) Aside from relationships initiated through organizational intervention or through the mentor's initiative, 80% of respondents characterized their mentoring as "naturally occurring." Many respondents who had mentors among their family or friends did not specifically describe how the relationship was formed; however, one can assume these relationships developed naturally. These findings, therefore, suggest that most mentoring relationships in India are likely to be naturally occurring or informal mentoring relationships. Because respondents made relatively fewer statements related to this content area, only the first author classified the statements because only she was aware of the context within which such statements were embedded in the interview transcripts.

What Are the Benefits and Pitfalls of Mentoring?

Respondents made 189 statements regarding the benefits of mentoring for the protégé (83 statements), the mentor (53 statements), and the organization (53 statements). Statements regarding protégé benefits yielded 15 dimensions, which we grouped into four broad meta-themes: 1) performance-related gains, 2) knowledge gains, 3) socio-political gains, and 4) relational gains (Table IV). Statements regarding mentor benefits were also classified into 15 categories, which were grouped into five meta-themes similar to those for protégé benefits: 1) skill development; 2) knowledge gains; 3) identity/contentment; 4) networking/social capital gains; and 5) performance-related gains (Table IV). Statements on organization benefits were classified into 11 categories and four meta-themes: 1) performance-related gains, 2) culture-related gains, 3) employee attitudes/affect, and 4) networking/social capital (Table IV). The most commonly mentioned benefits to the protégé, the mentor, and the organization, respectively,

were "tap others' experiences" (13% of protégé benefits statements), "satisfaction and pride" and "getting different perspectives" (both 11% of mentor benefits statements), and "reduce employee inefficiency" (20% of organization benefits statements). There was 100% agreement between the authors and a doctoral student on the classification of dimensions into meta-themes. Changes to the names of two dimensions were made to represent the constituent statements better.

Compared to the statements made regarding the benefits of mentoring, fewer statements were made regarding the pitfalls of mentoring (40 statements), all of which were related to pitfalls for the protégé (31 statements) or the organization (nine statements). Although respondents made statements regarding the pitfalls of mentoring for the mentor, they were mostly one-off statements, which could not be grouped meaningfully, and hence were excluded from classification. Table V includes the categories of protégé and organization pitfalls alone. The seven subcategories of pitfalls for the protégé were classified into three meta-themes: 1) interpersonal issues, 2) personal growth issues, and 3) quality of advice from the mentor. Of the seven protégé pitfalls categories, the most often mentioned problem was the potential abuse of information exchanged between mentor and protégé (30% of statements). The nine statements made regarding pitfalls for the organization were classified into three categories with three statements each: 1) favoritism, 2) culture corruption, and 3) performance losses. There was 100% agreement with a doctoral student for the classification of dimensions into meta-themes. The name of one dimension was changed based on suggestions and feedback from the student.

What Are the Relationship Facilitating and Derailing Factors?

If the same idea was mentioned as a facilitating factor and the lack of that idea an inhibiting factor, it was classified as either a facilitating or an inhibiting factor depending on the number of statements made. For

TABLE III Mentor Behaviors

Career Functions: Those Aspects of the Relationship That Enhance Career Advancement

Dimensions (Number of Statements)	Sample Statements
<p>Sponsorship: Nominating the protégé for promotions, lateral moves, and other career opportunities (10)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were other people also who were fighting for the same [US assignment] slot and he I think made it a point that I was pushed for this one ... but I got to know this through someone else ... they said ABC had basically fought for you ... and that's how I came to US.
<p>Exposure and visibility: Assigning responsibilities that allow the protégé to develop relationships with key figures in the organization who may be able to judge the protégé for further advancement (7)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So this mentor was someone who truly acted as bridge between me and higher-ups ... he broke the ice many times. Then good projects came up, I was always put on the best projects in the company.
<p>Coaching: Enhancing the protégé's knowledge and understanding of how to navigate effectively in the corporate world, and build skills to achieve work objectives (24)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He would try to guide me, saying this is what I think you should be doing, this is whom I think you should be talking to, this is how I think you can do your job well, these are how many hours I think you should put into your job because he knew that kind of business and he has been doing that all his life.
<p>Protection: Shielding the protégé from untimely or potentially damaging contact with other senior officials (7)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Then he took initiative to make sure my delivery manager approved my visa petition. He took me into the project and one month before the project he allowed me [to take] leave ... I was [officially] going on a medical leave, but he knew what I was going for [taking the GMAT].
<p>Challenging assignments: Assignment of challenging work, supported with technical training and ongoing performance feedback to enable the protégé to develop specific competencies and to experience a sense of accomplishment in a professional role (12)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was needed for me to have certain skill sets, so he put me into training ... which would enable me to show my skill or prove that yeah I am competent to make this move as well. Gave me responsibilities.
<p>Networking: How often mentors helped protégés make connections (8)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He had certain contacts in the US ... he said send me an e-mail and I will forward that to my friends, and once they get in touch with you, you can maintain contact with my friends... She put me through the right contacts.

Psychosocial Functions: Those Aspects of the Relationship That Enhance Sense of Competence, Identity, and Effectiveness in a Professional Role

Dimensions (Number of Statements)	Sample Statements
<p>Role-modeling: Involves the mentor consciously or unconsciously setting a desirable example for the protégé to identify with (6)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The way they had approached things and went about things really influenced me. Looking up to her ... I really liked the way she organized herself and I really like the way she took risks to progress.
<p>Acceptance and confirmation: Providing support and encouragement to the protégé to experiment with new behaviors (4)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give them inputs without being derogatory in pointing out the right direction in which they would/ should be going. He would also value my inputs that I have on that particular thing.
<p>Counseling: Providing a safe forum for the protégé to explore personal concerns that may interfere with a positive sense of self in the organization and career advancement (20)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give me advice related to my overall career aspirations. I went and talked to him and asked if it is natural not to feel like this.
<p>Friendship: Mutual liking and understanding and enjoyable informal exchanges about work and outside-work experiences (14)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We used to play cricket together for LMN Company We will go out to movies together.

TABLE IV Benefits of Mentoring

Dimensions (Number of Statements)	Sample Statements
PROTÉGÉ BENEFITS (N = 83)	
Performance-related gains (N = 30)	
Quicker learning curve (8)	
Achieve path-goal clarity (6)	
Career opportunities (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is good for the protégé because he can start delivering faster ... hit the ground running. Someone who can probably lay out a path in front of me. If it is a big organization then you need to find some levers to move up the ladder or find opportunities so that relationship can give some guidance for the person. Mentor would have gone through the same situation in his life, he doesn't want the protégé to commit the same mistakes. I mean the point is if you manage to get the connect with that person it increases their motivation to perform. Give learning or feedback which would help them in the career when they join [the] company.
Avoid mistakes (4)	
Increased motivation (4)	
Get feedback (4)	
Knowledge gains (N = 29)	
Tap others' experiences (11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sometimes people have more experiences and have more information and knowledge on things than you do ... and you can tap from those experiences and you can benefit from their failures or successes. Get the protégé to know about another way to think about things. More knowledge about industry. A lot of times we think we are perceived in a way and that's not true ... so this person might be that check point and say no you need to get back and do it the other way.
Get different perspectives (8)	
Technical knowledge (6)	
Personal awareness (4)	
Socio-political gains (N = 11)	
Sense of security and protection (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He gets a sense of security, ok fine there is someone to take my case forward and I am not left alone.
Building connections (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This person is your connection point to a lot of resources which if you had to do yourself it would take a lot of time.
Workplace socialization (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Really helps the person understand [the organization] better and accept it and be part of it much sooner rather than [to] [hit] himself against [a] wall and figure what works and what doesn't.
Relational gains (N = 13)	
Emotional support (9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sometimes you just need somebody like a bouncing board, someone whom you can discuss and trust.
Have role models (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You kind of have an example for your career path.
MENTOR BENEFITS (N = 53)	
Skill development (N = 14)	
Motivation skills (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivating skill goes inside it ... personal skill goes inside it.
Leadership skills (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity to develop leadership skills.
Communication skills (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He will enhance people skills, communication skills.
Emotional intelligence (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentor also starts empathizing ... emotional quotient is also developed.
Knowledge gains (N = 14)	
Get different perspectives (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He is trying to understand things from the protégé's perspective.
Learn and share knowledge (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a chance to help someone out so that you can learn and share the knowledge.
Self-understanding (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He'll get to know a lot of weaknesses within himself, when you say something to person, he will come back with a question or two and that will make you sit back and think ok were my ideas right.

Continued on next page

TABLE IV Benefits of Mentoring (Continued)

Dimensions (Number of Statements)	Sample Statements
Identity/contentment (N = 11)	
Satisfaction and pride (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal satisfaction that he has made a change to someone's life.
Identification with protégé (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify with protégé, because he has considerable experience and has gone through something.
Sense of responsibility (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a person who is just one or two [years] younger; that is a huge responsibility for him.
Performance-related gains (N = 7)	
More output (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the protégé is working for him that is an advantage for him since the output is much better.
Find successor (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If I [as mentor] want to move into a different position and I am trying to hire for my team I can find someone to do that.
Networking/social capital gains (N = 7)	
Visibility (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The more people you impact in the organization, the more people know you and that partly plays into your success right.
Get inside information (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> She needs to know what is going on at my level. I can give her feedback.
Develop relationships (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being able to work with others and interact with others who don't know as much as [he does].
ORGANIZATION BENEFITS (N = 53)	
Performance-related gains (N = 29)	
Employee efficiency (12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your senior folks are helping junior folks; that would help kind of saving more time doing rework, [or] committing same mistake
Employee performance (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When both mentor and protégé are performing better obviously the organization also benefits.
Talent development (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plus he [mentor] is helping develop some good talent in the organization.
Organizational growth (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a company needs to grow organically, it has to start from the bottom ... every person needs to be involved.
Culture-related gains (N = 18)	
Employee socialization (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The organization wants that you should not get lost ... a person who comes into the system so he should be taken forward.
Culture maintenance and development (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The organization basically makes sure that when protégé comes in and has a question they help direct him to the right person, and stop him from making assumptions, stop him from tapping general knowledge which is not always correct.
Camaraderie and bonding (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the company wants certain behaviors or characteristics to promote, mentor can have direct influence in promoting those behaviors. If they have pyramid structure with one guy at top [having mentors] is easy for whatever vision or mission they want to promote ... [with] one guy [it] is difficult to promote ... he creates fifty people like him to train others below them whichever fashion they want, which will help [the organization].
Employee attitudes/affect (N = 9)	
Employee satisfaction and commitment (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It helps in the development of camaraderie. You become more strongly connected with each other.
Sense of security among employees (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you [have] someone else in the same organization who is interested in you then I will think this is a great place for me to work since there are people interested in helping me out here.
Networking/social capital gains (N = 9)	
Collaboration and team work (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Also give a kind of internal support system.
Employee exchange and networking (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If mentor has good relationships with protégés, and aligns protégés with team objectives, assuming that the right people with the right framework [are there], then it truly forms a great team.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great for the organization in terms of networking ... people get to know each other.

example, if respondents made *five* distinct statements regarding the presence of trust as a facilitating factor and only *two* mentioned the lack of trust as an inhibiting factor, then “trust” was classified as a facilitating factor. Thus, all positively and negatively worded statements were counted toward the total statements made on the issue of trust. A total of 116 statements were identified that described factors that would facilitate a satisfying mentoring relationship or derail a mentoring relationship. Twenty-eight dimensions were identified from these 116 statements. Rather than classifying these 28 dimensions into broad categories of facilitating or derailing factors, they were classified into six meta-themes, each of which had both facilitating and derailing factors (Table VI). The six meta-themes included: 1) mentor characteristics, 2) protégé characteristics, 3) mentoring process-related issues, 4) mentor-protégé interaction dynamics, 5) mentor-protégé personality dynamics, and 6) mentor attitude towards protégé. The most commonly mentioned derailing factors were protégés’ unresponsiveness to or ignorance of mentor’s advice (stubbornness, unresponsiveness, 11%), mentor’s overinvolvement (7%), both mentor and protégé not taking the relationship seriously (mentoring taken for granted, 7%), and lack of mentor-protégé fit (mismatch, 6%). Commonly mentioned facilitating factors included the mentor and protégé having a connection or understanding between them (7%) and open, transparent communication (5%). There was 100% agreement with a doctoral student on classifying the dimensions into meta-themes. Two dimensions were collapsed into one because they seemed to represent similar content areas, and the names of two dimensions were changed to represent the constituent statements better.

Discussion

While abundant research exists on Western mentoring conceptualizations and practices, mentor role and relationship schemas may differ based on the context within which the relationship exists. This study examined the relational dynamics of mentoring among In-

dians. Although this study addressed many content areas, we discuss only some findings on Indian mentoring that are similar to Western mentoring and some aspects of Indian mentoring that seem socio-culturally influenced. Rather than discussing each finding in the order presented in the Findings section, we discuss some that seemed to have a similar underlying explanation.

Findings Similar to Those in the Western Literature

The participants’ perceptions and expectations of mentor roles and benefits were similar to those expressed in the Western literature. Indian respondents’ descriptions of mentors (Table I) do not differ from those present in the Western literature, where a mentor is described as a guide, coach, counselor, developer, and so forth (Eby et al., 2007). Participants’ descriptions of a mentor’s ideal characteristics were also similar to those reported by Allen and Poteet (1999), although their study interviewed mentors and not protégés. This study’s and Allen and Poteet’s (1999) results show that ideal mentor characteristics include listening and communicating, knowledge of work area, patience, empathy, understanding, genuine interest in the protégé, and trustworthiness, to name just a few. It would suffice to say that Indian and Western descriptions of “mentor” and “preferred ideal mentor” characteristics are similar.

Findings with respect to the benefits of mentoring were also similar to the findings of research using Western samples. Commonly identified benefits of mentoring (Table IV) for the protégé included faster learning curve, tapping others’ experiences, having a sense of security and protection in the organization, and receiving emotional support. For the mentor, the most often mentioned benefits included gaining a different perspective from the protégé, satisfaction and pride in helping someone junior, improving motivation skills,

Indian and Western descriptions of “mentor” and “preferred ideal mentor” characteristics are similar.

and increasing work output. Common benefits for mentors and protégés included getting a different perspective and self understanding/personal awareness. The Western literature also found similar results regarding mentors' and protégés' perceived benefits of mentoring. Eby and Lockwood (2005) found that mentors and protégés in formal mentoring relationships reported learning as a benefit, either by understanding the organization better or by gaining a different perspective from the protégé. Mentors in Eby and Lockwood's study also reported benefits such as developing a personal relationship with protégés, personal gratification, enhanced managerial skills, and self-reflection. While the

[Seventy percent] of respondents had supervisory mentors who also evaluated their performance. This is probably also why mentor judgment bias emerged as one of the main pitfalls for the protégé.

relative emphases of these benefits may differ between the findings of this study and those of Eby and Lockwood, the categories of benefits that respondents perceived are very similar. This study's findings also suggest that respondents perceive pitfalls similar to those perceived by Western samples (e.g., Allen, Poteet et al., 1997; however, only mentors were interviewed in this study), such as favoritism.

The findings also suggested that developmental support for Indians is provided by workplace and non-workplace individuals such as relatives and friends. Western researchers have pointed to individuals having "growth enhancing relationships outside work" (Parker, 1996) and "relationship constellations" or "developmental networks" (Higgins, 2000; Higgins & Thomas, 2001), rather than just one primary mentor. Allen and Finkelstein (2003) found that non-faculty university employees had multiple sources of developmental support beyond their primary mentor, including coworkers, family members, friends, supervisors, subordinates, and support staff. This is similar to the findings in this study. While more research is needed on the relative influence of workplace and non-workplace mentors in India versus the U.S., this study's findings

indicate that in India, informal supervisory mentors primarily provide workplace mentoring. When supervisors are unavailable, relatives and peers play a key role in one's personal development and educational and career decisions (e.g., Agarwala, 2008).

These findings have positive implications for multinational corporations (MNCs) and expatriate managers. The similarity in mentoring conceptualization between Indian and Western samples suggests that both groups perceive the roles and purposes of a mentor similarly. Similar perceptions regarding mentoring benefits suggest that Indians, while acknowledging the costs of such a relationship, do not contest its value. Indigenous organizations and MNCs operating in India might, therefore, find Indians open to mentoring programs or a mentoring-oriented culture. Such converging trends might be due to the exposure that Indians and their organizations have to mentoring through Western management practices and educational tools (Baruch & Budhwar, 2006).

In the following sections, we elaborate on this study's findings that suggest the influence of career practices and cultural values, norms, and expectations in mentoring relationships.

Influence of Indian Career and Cultural Contexts

More interesting and important to note are themes that emerged from the findings on who served as mentors, the characteristics of ideal mentors, how the mentoring relationships were initiated, mentor behaviors, and the facilitating and derailing factors of a mentoring relationship.

Supervisory Mentoring

There seem to be similar explanations for the following findings. First, 70% of respondents had immediate bosses, supervisors, or team leaders as workplace mentors, while only 23% had non-supervisory mentors, some of whom were formally assigned. Second, coaching and challenging assignments were important career functions (Table III). Third, judg-

TABLE V Pitfalls of Mentoring

Dimensions (Number of Statements)	Sample Statements
PITFALLS FOR PROTÉGÉ (N = 31)	
Interpersonal issues (N = 12)	
Judgment bias (9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the mentor knows too much about you then ... there is a job and you are one of the candidates and then he knows too much about you and then he thinks maybe [you] cannot handle it ... so that's the danger.
Conflict of interest (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will be put in situation to do something that you don't like.
Personal growth issues (N = 10)	
Dependency on mentor (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are losing focus trying to follow the mentor rather than thinking on [your] own ... it can go the other way also.
Over reliance on mentor (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are just relying on that person and you don't know what the other person will say or think ... then [he] can take you for a ride.
Low personal learning (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Again, if it is a person with same attributes, he might not be able to find the negative side of (protégé), areas of improvement appropriately ... blind spots due to personal relationships.
Quality of Advice from mentor (N = 9)	
Biased advice (7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't know how far it is true but they could kind of mold you into what they think about the organization or about specific people if you like get friendly with them and if they don't like specific people....
Wrong advice (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the person who is a mentor is giving you wrong [advice].
PITFALLS FOR ORGANIZATION (N = 9)	
Favoritism (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When mentorship takes a negative role when someone is favored over a much more potential candidate for the organization.
Culture corruption (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If mentor is not satisfied in the organization, the protégé who is assigned to mentor can imbibe the same qualities from the mentor ... so sometimes that can handicap the organization.
Performance losses (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If things don't go well [between mentor and protégé], there is enormous financial loss, [employees] don't do task, productivity goes down.

ment bias by the mentor emerged as the main relationship derailing factor (Table VI). Indian CPM systems and the importance of friendly relations with superiors for career advancement in collectivistic cultures (Kanungo & Mendonca, 1994; Pandey, 2004; Sinha, 1998; Varma, Pichler, & Srinivas, 2005a) may explain these results. In Indian organizations mentoring and performance management tend to be clustered under the same career management category (Budhwar & Baruch, 2003); therefore, it is not surpris-

ing that 70% of respondents had supervisory mentors who also evaluated their performance. This is probably also why mentor judgment bias emerged as one of the main pitfalls for the protégé. Reflecting Pio's (2007) review of career management in India as taking mainly the form of performance management, one respondent said,

In Indian terms, mentorship is just performance evaluation. In companies, I haven't had any personal mentorship,

TABLE VI Factors that Facilitate and Derail Mentoring Relationships
Dimensions (Number of Statements) Sample Statements

Mentor characteristics (N = 30)

- Overinvolvement (6)
 - When [you] kind of get too close to your protégé, rather than giving the person perspective, you start getting involved in their life ... you want to know about everything ... that's how Indians generally think....
 - Maybe giving advice that cannot be implemented ... giving big level stories on do this and do that without giving a clear path on how to reach there.
- Incompetence (5)
- Authoritarianism (5)
 - It shouldn't be like if I am telling you something you have to listen ... it has to be more free-flowing and so that the other person in front of you doesn't get defensive ... that, a mentor should be aware of.
- Disinterest (4)
 - If the mentor is not too interested and they don't spend time in clearly identifying the weaknesses, and misguides the protégé.
- + Accessibility (3)
- Ulterior motives (3)
 - The mentor should be accessible most of the time.
 - If the mentor has ulterior motives, then it could influence [the] other person to blindly follow or take whatever path he has suggested.
- Personal issues (2)
 - It is not that he won't help you out but he may have hundreds of his own problems.
- Intrusiveness (2)
 - Someone who is sort of intrusive, micro-managing.

Protégé characteristics (N = 26)

- Stubbornness, unresponsive (13)
 - The mentor wants to really develop the protégé and the guy or girl is not receptive or is not working on that then it could be frustrating; then they might lose interest and that may reflect on somebody else, and that's how I see it.
- Unrealistic expectations (5)
 - The mentor is there to help you and show you the way ... he won't carry you along ... he will show you the door, you will have to walk through the door; he considers that his responsibility and then you think you have a mentor so he is there to hand hold me.
- Lack of confidence in mentor (4)
 - If you can continue to have the confidence in your mentor, that he is guiding you in the right direction, and not feeling that he misguided me or took me in the direction that was hurting me.

Mentoring process-related issues (N = 22)

- Mentoring taken for granted (8)
 - When it becomes flaky and when it becomes just another "big" thing you are doing, and who is you mentor, and it becomes a big thing if you have a mentor or something ... it is a signal that it is actually not working out or something. The protégé and mentor should take it seriously.
- Lack of clear guidelines or purpose (3)
 - If the mentor and protégé don't know what to do and they cannot connect then there is no use of a mentor-protégé relationship. If both entities don't have an idea of what is happening.

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TABLE VI Factors that Facilitate and Derail Mentoring Relationships (Continued)

Dimensions (Number of Statements) Sample Statements

- + Mentor selection (3)
 - Sometimes you may be with a mentor who was not sought but who was assigned to you and then you may not be able to relate to that mentor ... so the whole process is defeated.
 - If you are having a formal mentoring program, then there will be this popular people with whom people would like to sign up, and then there might be people, in fact, there might be some good people, but because they are not in that position there may not be any takers for them ... you are not taking people who are coming forward and are overloading people who already have enough work due to their position...
 - The mentor also needs to be trained well ... you should not assign a manager and say "ok go mentor" ... mentors also need coaching in terms of ok if I am to mentor somebody, what do I have to do ... that can be aided by processes in the organization ... if you have processes or guidelines for a mentor and you have a developmental plan for a protégé ... and checklists that you should follow.
 - In business settings if there is a tangible gain that both of them can get out of the relationship then it will really get it going.

Mentor-protégé interaction dynamics (N = 21)

- + Open communication (6)
 - Communication has to be very smooth and honest between the mentor and the protégé ... I would say transparency; I would see it as a very, very big factor and understanding.
- + Time commitment (4)
 - If the mentor doesn't have the time you really need from him ... if he is not there when you want him, then tough luck.
- Romantic involvement (3)
 - Maybe it might turn into a personal relationship.
- Personalization of issues (3)
 - Putting personal issues into it.
- + Trust (3)
 - Working with someone whom I can relate and trust.
- + /- Personal touch in relationship (2)
 - There should be some personal touch to the relationship.

Mentor-protégé personality dynamics (N = 18)

- + Compatibility and connection (8)
 - The mentor should at least understand where the protégé is coming from ... they can't be two aliens to each other; at some level they need to relate to each other.
- Mismatch (7)
 - A lot of times, when the fit is not there I think that sharing the actual knowledge transfer or exchange of ideas doesn't take place.
- Competition, ego, enmity (3)
 - Egos can derail a mentor-protégé relationship.

Mentor attitude towards protégé (N = 4)

- +/- Confidence in protégé (2)
 - Mentor has to be encouraging and feel good about me ... a person who reassures me of my capabilities.
- + Genuine care for protégé (2)
 - Mentor should also genuinely care about protégé.

Notes: + = facilitating factor; - = derailing factor.

and I guess 80% of the [working] population is of the same type.

While some respondents' organizations were noted as having mentoring programs with non-supervisory mentors, they were mainly MNCs trying to standardize HR practices across all their offices or were infusing Western HR practices into the Indian CPM systems, suggesting "crossvergence" (Baruch & Budhwar, 2006). Baruch and Budhwar noted that while CPMs, such as mentoring, exist in developing countries such as India,

they are still "catching up" on applying best practices from organizations in developed countries. One respondent noted:

On the career level, I think it is just starting to pick up. There are [a] lot of MNCs coming in and some of the best practices are getting pulled in, but it's one thing to try and have certain behaviors and another thing to reach that level.

Respondents' judgment bias concerns may therefore stem from the importance placed on like-dislike personal relationships between superiors and subordinates in the collectivistic Indian context (Pandey, 2004; Sinha 1998), given its implications for appraisals and career advancement (Varma et al., 2005a). Social and friendly relations are important for Indian employees (Sinha, 1990; Takalkar

& Coover, 1994), perhaps to avoid superiors' mistrusting or misjudging subordinates and protégés (Sparrow & Budhwar, 1997). Given that hierarchy and inequality are deep-rooted in India (Jain & Venkata Ratnam, 1994), it is important that subordinates have and build good relations with their supervisors. One respondent noted,

Given the scenario, it has to start with personal [relationship] first ... people are emotionally sensitive ... if they don't like something, that's it—you are gone from

both personal and professional perspectives.

Because most mentors were supervisors who directly oversaw their protégés' performance, mentors were also reported as providing more career functions such as coaching, challenging assignments, and sponsorship. In addition, mentors were reported as providing more counseling and friendship than other psychosocial functions. This combination of task orientation and counseling and friendship suggests NT mentorship noted earlier. While non-work interaction in either content or context may be influenced by the age difference between mentors and protégés, involving the protégé in family activities seems culturally accepted and common among Indians.

Family/Business Connections and Mentor-Protégé Cultural Similarity

Other findings with a similar underlying explanation included 1) natural bonding, in that family and business connections were a primary way relationships were initiated, 2) the importance of demographic similarity in mentor-protégé bonding, 3) mentor-protégé mismatch emerging as the most frequently mentioned relationship derailing factor (Table VI), and 4) compatibility and connection emerging as the most commonly mentioned contributor to a satisfying relationship (Table VI).

There may be different foundations for similarity-attraction and social identification in highly traditional and collectivistic cultures compared to cultures low on these attributes (Farh, Tsui, Xin, & Cheng, 1998). In Zhu, Bhatt, and Nel's (2005) study on how culture affects the meaning and formation of business relationships, Indian interviewees mentioned two keywords in Hindi—*jan pehchan* and *sambandh*—meaning "who you know." This reinforces the importance of "familiarity" and "right connections" for furthering one's business interests through implicit mutual obligation and assurances. This is similar to the Chinese concept of *guanxi*, or "particularistic ties" between people within

While non-work interaction in either content or context may be influenced by the age difference between mentors and protégés, involving the protégé in family activities seems culturally accepted and common among Indians.

the same or extended networks (Tsui & Farh, 1997). On the same lines, *apane log* connotes “one of us” or “in-group,” while *paraye log* means “strangers” or “out-group” (Sinha et al., 2004).

In India, *jan pehchan* is based on trust in interpersonal networks that have been woven among family, common friends, and life experiences, including having attended the same school, originating from the same geographical region, and speaking the same mother tongue. Those with such connections are categorized as in-group members and others will compose the out-group. Consequently, Indians emphasize group affiliation and social obligation (Tripathi, 1990) and can sometimes seem cliquish (Sinha et al., 2004). These connections create shared group identity and a powerful mechanism to obtain information and support in business situations. Thus, Indian collectivism leads to strong factions and a clear differentiation between in-groups and out-groups. This results in a strong tendency to categorize people and treat them accordingly (Varma et al., 2005b), even for HR decisions such as hiring and promotions (Rao, 2004; Budhwar & Boyne, 2004).

India is a prototypically collectivistic culture with a general tendency toward interdependent self-construal. In other words, people view themselves as bound within the same collective and value relationships, connectedness, and social context over individuals' separateness and uniqueness (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994). As such, the tendency to prefer interacting with and promoting *apane log* (or in-group members) may be natural for Indians. Consequently, mentoring may be initiated with in-group rather than out-group members, and favors, interpersonal relationships, and career-related resources are provided to in-groups rather than out-groups. Zhu et al. (2005) mentioned that their interviewees seemed to be caught between *jan pehchan* and “professionalism,” indicating that Indian managers are still influenced by cultural norms (Budhwar & Baruch, 2003; Pearson & Chatterjee, 1999). The importance of connections and connectedness in forming and developing mentoring relationships is highlighted by these respondent quotes:

She spoke the same mother tongue as I did and that is probably how we interacted first.

In a lot of ways we shared common demographic profiles.... He was also a Tamilian, come into [name of company] who had the same kind of educational background ... Kerala Brahmin ... so we had a lot of connections that way.... So we started talking about that and he was very happy to see someone like me in that organization.

Respondents also highlighted the importance of mentor-protégé match in reporting factors detrimental to a mentoring relationship. In their study on negative mentoring experiences, Eby et al. (2000) found categories of negative mentoring experiences very similar to those respondents mentioned in this study as factors that derail a mentoring relationship. Factors that Eby and colleagues and this study identified include mentor-protégé personality and values mismatch, interpersonal incompetency, technical incompetency, bad attitude, and personal problems.

*She spoke the same
mother tongue as
I did and that is
probably how we
interacted first.*

Paternalism and Hierarchy

Another set of findings that seem to be related include 1) mentors initiating the relationship, 2) mentor's overinvolvement and protégé's stubbornness emerging as relationship derailing factors (Table VI), 3) dependency on the mentor as a pitfall of mentoring for the protégé (Table V), and 4) respondents' preference for mentors who were about four to five years older. The concepts of NT and paternalistic leadership, power-distance, and characteristics associated with Indian mindsets such as hierarchy orientation and dependency proneness (Kakar, 1971; Sinha & Pandey, 2007) may explain these findings.

Power-distance is the extent to which individuals expect and accept unequal distribution of power (Hofstede, 2001). Cultural values such as power-distance, autocratic

leadership, and top-down communication define the nature of relationships and authority structures in traditional hierarchical cultures such as India (Robert, Probst, Martocchio, Drasgow, & Lawler, 2000; Triandis, 1998). In such cultures, relationships with superiors are based on respect, deference, and loyalty. In addition, given that collectivism and being prone to dependence were found to be two main facets of the “Indian mindset” (Sinha & Pandey, 2007), the relevance of the NT leader (Sinha, 1980) cannot be ignored in the context of workplace mentoring. Related to the NT leader is the concept of paternalistic leadership (Aycan, Kanungo, &

Sinha, 1999; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008). Paternalism is a salient characteristic of Indian society, where superiors assume the role of parents who are nurturant and considerate of employee well-being. Paternalistic managers set specific goals with employees rather than dictating what to do and how to do it in an authoritarian manner (Sinha, 1980).

Superiors’ initiating mentoring relationships and mentors’ “overinvolvement” in a protégé’s life may be understood from the perspective of paternalistic leadership (Cheng et al., 2004; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008). While there are multiple reasons a senior employee might approach a junior employee to start a mentoring relationship,

from the respondent’s transcripts it appears this occurred because mentors assume a nurturant/paternalistic/parental role in the relationship, wanting to “take care” of junior employees. With India being a traditionally hierarchical society, it may not be surprising that some mentors assume a benevolent parental role in India and feel obligated to protect junior employees and be involved in their work and non-work lives (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008; Sinha, 1980).

Apart from mentors’ abusing information and giving biased advice, dependency on the mentor emerged as the most commonly mentioned pitfall of mentoring for

the protégé. This parallels respondents’ concerns about being unable to individuate themselves from their mentors. In their study on mentors’ perceptions of protégés’ contribution to negative mentoring experiences, Eby and McManus (2004) identified unresponsiveness as a negative protégé characteristic. Many of this study’s respondents also perceived protégés’ stubbornness and unresponsiveness to mentors’ suggestions as leading to relationship derailment. This could be symptomatic of protégés’ reactance (Brehm, 1966) to authority figures. While paternalistic leadership is perceived negatively in the U.S., younger Indian professionals may also be starting to perceive it negatively. It is interesting to note that respondents mentioned that their ideal mentor should be about four to five years older, but not much older because they may not be able to relate to the mentor. This study’s respondents, with an average age of about 28 years, seem to want to break away from a traditional paternalistic style of mentoring to a more egalitarian, two-way approach. Research also supports inter-generational differences in managerial values and practices among Indians (Mellahi & Guermat, 2004). Younger, professionally educated Indians are becoming more individualistic and market-oriented and adopting a protean career orientation and a weaker preference for traditional or paternalistic leadership styles (Agarwala, 2008; Ramamoorthy, Gupta, Sardesai, & Flood, 2005). Such individuals may prefer self-management, self-directedness, and more participative mentoring.

Implications and Future Research Directions

We discuss implications and future research ideas around two broad issues: 1) mentoring in relation to *guru-shishya* relationships and NT/paternalistic leaderships and 2) the relational and social-exchange processes between mentors and protégés in a highly power-distant and collectivistic culture such as India.

Guru-shishya relationships have been extolled as traditional mentoring relationships in Indian culture (Neki, 1973; Raina, 2002).

This study’s respondents, with an average age of about 28 years, seem to want to break away from a traditional paternalistic style of mentoring to a more egalitarian, two-way approach.

Interestingly, none of the participants described mentors using the word *guru*. Given the similarity in descriptions of mentors and *gurus* (Neki, 1973; Raina, 2002), and the inherent learning component in both mentoring and *guru-shishya* relationships, future research could examine if Indian professionals identify mentors as *gurus*, or if that term is reserved for more special, intense, and longer-term mentoring relationships. That is, what relational aspects of mentoring separate organizational mentors from *gurus*, and what implications do they have for the quality and outcomes of mentoring relationships? Perhaps more research on *guru-shishya* relationships in traditional performing arts schools (e.g., dance, music, and martial arts) will help us draw parallels between such relationships and mentoring in Indian organizations.

Relatedly, NT and paternalistic leadership seem particularly relevant to the mentoring dynamic in the Indian context, although Scandura and Pellegrini (2007) suggested that mentoring must be differentiated from paternalistic leadership. They distinguished between “leader-based” and “follower-based” (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) approaches to development, with the former focusing on leaders’ behaviors (paternalistic leadership) and the latter focusing on developing followers’ skills (mentoring). Another distinction they noted between mentoring and paternalistic leadership is that paternalism almost always involves a hierarchical relationship with little latitude in decision making for the junior person. Mentoring, on the other hand, can occur between peers in a team or network within a more participative environment. Given that Indian culture is more hierarchical and less egalitarian than Western cultures such as the U.S., it is not surprising that, in general, mentors/supervisors would have a paternalistic orientation toward their protégés/subordinates, while also being task-focused (Ayca et al., 1999; Sinha, 1980; Sinha et al., 2004). Future research could examine the conceptual differences among mentoring, paternalistic leadership, and NT leadership. Are they just semantic differences, or are there nuanced

distinctions on issues of dependency and hierarchy in various cultures?

These issues also have implications for the mutuality and reciprocity in mentoring among Indians. The Western mentoring literature has suggested that the expectation of deference to authority or a senior mentor could preclude forming high-quality relationships based on intimacy, closeness, and friendship (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007; Kram, 1985). It is possible that protégés’ deference to authority and expressed power-distance values work in their favor due to the fit between their cultural values and normative expectations in a culture such as India. The role of cultural values such as power-distance and collectivism in developing high-quality mentoring relationships in India and contrasting cultures merits further empirical examination.

Kram (1996) noted that individuals and cultures vary in the extent to which they see dyadic relationships as relational and as sites for personal growth and learning. This study’s results revealed that Indians prefer mentors who are older than they are, but not much older. Given Indian professionals’ preferences for a hierarchical relationship, yet an egalitarian mentoring style raises interesting questions about whether organizations can challenge hierarchical mentoring relationships and promote effective and high-quality peer mentoring or even reverse-mentoring among Indians. Can two-directional co-learning between mentors and protégés—the hallmark of high-quality growth-in-connection relationships (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007; Kram, 1996)—take place in India? Do interdependence in Indians’ self-construal and interdependence in social relationships also translate into interdependence in learning through mentoring? Does the mentor-protégé dynamic in India limit what protégés can do for their mentors’ growth and learning?

This study’s findings also have implications for similarity-attraction and social-exchange processes in mentoring relationships. Social-identity and relational demography

These issues also have implications for the mutuality and reciprocity in mentoring among Indians.

theories suggest that Indians' preferences for socio-demographic and culturally similar mentors and protégés lead to more identification, interaction, positive attitudes, and support. Given the collectivistic nature of social exchange in India (Bhawuk, 2008b), the relative importance of similar socio-demographics, cultural values, and personalities for developing trust, relationship quality, leader-member exchange, and mentor support needs to be further examined.

Because individuals can categorize themselves in many different ways, research on mentor-protégé similarities and dissimilarities that lead to effective relationships may be valuable.

From a practitioner perspective, the utility of mentoring as an employee developmental tool pivots on the dynamics of the mentor-protégé relationship. One of the common problems mentors and protégés reported in formal programs pertains to matching (Eby & Lockwood, 2005; Finkelstein & Poteet, 2007). Preferences for similarities in cultural background and in-group orientation have implications for matching based not only on personality and work values, but also on socio-demographics including language, regional origin, and education, to name a few. Managers in India must consider such factors that foster comfort, trust, and contin-

ued interaction, and consequently positive outcomes for mentors and protégés.

For international managers, this study's results also suggest that approaches to developing and managing people will be different in India. Indians working abroad may invest their time and energy building personal relationships with their mentor and managers with the hope of gaining access to better mentoring and resources. Similarly, expatriates working in India may not immediately understand the importance of like-dislike relationships in access to mentoring and career opportunities. Such differing experiences from what one is accustomed to could jeopardize performance and careers (Varma et al., 2005a). The implications of in-group and similarity preference and attitudes towards diverse "out-group" members for mentor-protégé

learning also need attention. Hence, managers need to focus on mentor-protégé arrangements that go beyond their comfort zones and foster continuous growth and development. Because individuals can categorize themselves in many different ways, research on mentor-protégé similarities and dissimilarities that lead to effective relationships may be valuable.

Convergence on some aspects of mentoring (mentor's role, mentoring benefits, mentor behavior categories) suggests that transporting the concept of developmental practices may not be difficult. To be effective, however, managerial practices and their implementation depend on the cultural fit between the values and assumptions of the practice and those of the people practicing them. This is especially true if the practices were created in a culture unlike the ones to which they are exported (Robert et al., 2000). Knowledge gained about culturally similar aspects of HR practices would help MNCs, expatriate managers, and HR professionals design career management or development initiatives that carefully consider employees' cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, Bjorkman and Budhwar (2007) recently found that MNCs in India that adapt their HR practices to suit local cultural norms had a positive relationship with organizational performance, with implications for local acceptance and legitimacy. Bjorkman and Budhwar suggested that organizations must carefully consider how HR systems are implemented at different inter-related levels of analysis (individual, organizational, and cultural). Von Glinow et al. (2002) also emphasized the "polycontextuality" (national culture, organizational culture, and strategy) of HR practices.

Finally, to advance the research agenda from a methodological perspective, creating new measures of mentoring or validating Western measures of mentoring and mentor behaviors in other cultures would allow cross-cultural comparisons.

Conclusions

The current study sampled a diverse group of Indian professionals who recently came

to the U.S. to advance their studies and had lived in the U.S. for either two or 14 months at the time data were collected. While culturally socialized beliefs and values seem resistant to change (Budhwar et al., 2008), it is possible that the respondents' perspectives regarding mentoring were influenced by their exposure to the American system. Replicating this study with Indian employees currently residing in India would help validate the content analysis, allowing researchers to supplement this study's findings. This study also relied on responses primarily from a protégé's perspective. Given the intergenerational differences in managerial values among Indians (Mellahi & Guermat, 2004), future research examining the "the other" side of the mentoring story, that is, the mentor's perspective, would provide further insights into similarities and differences in mentoring schemas and experiences of Indian mentors and protégés. Our participants were also predominantly male, reflecting the average gender split of students in a business school. While the sample was too small to examine the role of gender in mentoring relationships in India, it seems particularly relevant given the low gender-egalitarianism in Indian culture (see GLOBE study). Fletcher and Ragins (2007) noted that relationality is not gender neutral. It is possible that same-sex mentoring pairs have qualitatively better relationships than cross-sex mentoring pairs (Dienesch & Liden, 1986). This approach will also account for differential power relationships between male and female mentors (and protégés) and the types of support they offer.

While some respondents reported being in touch with their mentors, respondent reports of mentoring relationships and mentor behaviors may still be limited by their ability to recall events or by a general willingness to reveal them, despite assurances of confidentiality. In addition, mentor behaviors that were content analyzed were based on behavior descriptions of only organizational mentors and not non-workplace mentors. Future research, especially on mentoring relationships in highly collectivistic and traditional

cultures, could examine the different types of mentoring provided by workplace and non-workplace mentors. Finally, the process of coding and analyzing interview data, like the data collection itself, is a selective process in terms of determining what to add and what to leave out (Hutchings, 2003). Preconceived notions and expectations of those conducting the content analysis may have influenced the process.

Given the paucity of research on career management practices such as mentoring in India, this study sought to address this gap by conducting a qualitative study on mentoring relationships among Indians. This study revealed that Indians conceptualize the role and behaviors of mentors and the benefits and pitfalls of mentoring in ways similar to Western samples. A global concept such as mentoring, however, also melds with local norms to form a "glocal" type of mentoring. Certain aspects of the mentoring relationship (who the mentor is, how the relationship formed, mentor support and involvement, and protégé expectations vis-à-vis mentor's relational style) seem to be influenced by the prevailing career management system, the predominance of supervisory mentoring, the importance of socio-demographics and family and business connections, and mentor-protégé generational differences in the preference for power-distance and paternalistic behavior.

Notwithstanding the above noted limitations, this study represents a step toward more indigenous research on mentoring and allied career management practices and opens avenues for developing theory surrounding Indian mentoring. This study's findings will be helpful in understanding and designing mentoring programs for Indian employees or for international students and employees from high power-distant and collectivistic cultures. We hope that the theoretical explanations for the findings and the suggestions for future research will stimulate more research in this area.

A global concept such as mentoring, however, also melds with local norms to form a "glocal" type of mentoring.

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