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EFFECTS OF MENTORING ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP SELF-EFFICACY AND POLITICAL SKILL

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EFFECTS OF MENTORING ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP SELF-

EFFICACY AND POLITICAL SKILL

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master's of Science at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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EFFICACY AND POLITICAL SKILL

By Suzzette M. Chopin, B.A., M.A., M.B.A.

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This study considered the effects of mentoring on protégés' beliefs in their abilities to

be leaders and on their development of interpersonal skills. This study explored, in 260

business graduate students, the relationship between (a) mentoring and leadership self-

efficacy and (b) mentoring and political skill. Participants completed surveys including

the Self-Efficacy for Leadership Scale, the Political Skill Inventory, and the Mentoring

Functions Questionnaire. Comparisons between non-mentored and mentored

individuals showed that having a mentor is associated with increased political skill ($p <$

.05) but not increased leadership self-efficacy ($p > .05$). Among mentored individuals,

higher quality mentoring relationships are associated with significantly higher leadership-self efficacy ($p < .01$) but not with significantly higher political skill ($p > .05$). The presence of a mentor is important for protégé development of political skill, but the quality of the mentoring relationship is important for protégé development of leadership self-efficacy.

Introduction

As we continue to move toward a knowledge-based rather than industrial economy, successful organizations must evolve and adapt not only to the market but also to the changing wants and needs of their employees. Employees represent the most expensive—and valuable—asset. This is especially true for organizations in service or technology-based industries, In those, it is argued, information and knowledge acquired by employees is critical to organizational success and competitive advantage (Iftikhar, Eriksson, & Dickson, 2003). Limiting employee turnover directly affects the bottom line. The loss of top performers can lead to decreased quality and customer satisfaction and to increased hiring costs for replacement employees (Abbasi & Hollman, 2000). Employee development and retention expenditures can reap significant long-term gains for employers who maintain an educated and stable workforce not only by limiting turnover-associated expenditures, but also by developing employees into leaders.

Retaining key employees, and developing them into the next generation of leaders, is especially crucial now. Organizations face a wave of retiring baby boomers and a dearth of strong successors. Globally competitive companies are investing in strategies to train the next wave of leaders. They use a process termed succession planning or, more recently, talent management (Gakovic, & Yardley, 2007; McCauley, & Wakefield, 2006; Pepe, 2007). Leadership in the 21st century, however, will look very different from how it has

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previously been—and is currently—conceptualized. Blass and Ferris (2007) argue that the current focus on technical competence is outdated and leader potential should be assessed by an individual's interpersonal savvy and influence ability.

The nature of work, organizational charts, and organizational behavior have also evolved dramatically in the past 20 years. Corporations have moved away from hierarchical organization to flatter designs (Rajan & Wulf, 2006; Semadar, Robins, & Ferris, 2006). This organizational flattening reduces the number of levels of management, widens the span of control, and puts fewer layers between employees and top management. The goal is to reduce salary expenses, facilitate the exchange of ideas and promote open organizational cultures (Harris & Rativ, 2002). With the advent of virtual work teams, self-managed groups, and other paradigms, the concept of clearly defined organizational hierarchies is facing increased scrutiny. Many argue that its rigid structure represents a roadblock to organizational success and rapid decision-making ability (Ehin, 2000; Friesen, 2005).

The fluidity and informal nature of today's organizations have been discussed theoretically in terms of the changing nature of business (Ahearn, Ferris, Hochwarter, Douglas, & Ammeter, 2004; Semadar et al., 2006) and both employees and organizations must adapt to the informal structure to enhance employee satisfaction and performance in order to maximize shareholder wealth. Successful employees must be both technically competent and interpersonally savvy if they are to actively facilitate their own career development and, more broadly, organizational success. As organizations become leaner and face increasing competition, fluidity in knowledge and skill become more valued in

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employees. An increasing emphasis on worker flexibility and knowledge (Blass & Ferris, 2007) means that organizations have a vested interested in finding individuals with these soft skills. Traditionally, these soft skills were not considered significant, at least not as important as technical competence. However, it is argued that strictly technical skills are now becoming less valued, as organizations realize that intelligent, adaptable people can be trained to master many tasks, but true organizational success and sustainable competitive advantage often hinge on less traditional, more interpersonal skills—those which may not be taught in even the most respected business schools (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005).

The ability to work with diverse groups, to be culturally and interpersonally sensitive, and to have the skill to develop and maintain a strong reputation among both upper management and subordinates are highly valued. Being interpersonally savvy as well as a strong network-builder are both critical elements to advancement within organizations (Semadar et al., 2006). Establishing programs that will foster interpersonal and networking skills would benefit not only the individual, but also the organization. Employees who view their employer as invested in employee development are likely to be retained. Further, the organization reaps the benefits of the accrued knowledge of those employees while avoiding costs associated with hiring and training new employees. In a theoretical paper on different mentor/protégé structures, Eby (1997) argues that learning from more experienced workers through mentoring relationships is one method for employees to develop soft skills to adapt to the rapidly changing organizational structure.

As companies are acquired, merge, or outsource, employees find their jobs constantly changing, with new skill sets needed on a regular basis. Cross-departmental

teams form and dissolve based on specific projects, and employees must navigate complex work situations in a dynamic environment. In this fluid corporate environment, what skills do employees need to ensure both personal and corporate success? Having a strong belief in one's abilities, or a sense of self-efficacy, is argued to be important to individuals who find themselves in these changing roles and who face new coworkers and tasks regularly (Gist, 1987). Although it has become cliché to say that change is the new constant, workers' realities are consistent with the cliché.

Individuals who thrive on stability and clearly defined work roles are likely to find today's workplace bewildering and anxiety-provoking, while those comfortable with ambiguity and fluidity are becoming the next generation of leaders. Semadar and colleagues (2006) note that as leaders assume new, more facilitative roles in their organizations, psychologists have increasingly focused on identifying and measuring critical social constructs for organizational success. Both academic and popular attention has turned to constructs such as emotional intelligence, self-monitoring, self-efficacy, and, more recently, political skill, as ways of conceptualizing individual organizational behavior and predicting job performance. Along with other similar constructs, these constructs comprise social effectiveness, an "umbrella term, which groups a number of moderately-related, yet conceptually distinctive, manifestations of social understanding and competence" (Ferris, Perrewe, & Douglas, 2002, p. 50). These social effectiveness constructs represent an operalization of the soft skills individuals need to advance. When organizations employ many people with high levels of these skills, it represents a form of competitive advantage and contributes to success.

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Paglis and Green (2002) argue that identifying individuals who are comfortable leading change is key to organizational success and also that leadership self-efficacy plays a critical role in motivation for leading such changes. Research on predictors of job performance has focused intently on social constructs, both defining and measuring them, and determining how—and if—they can be transmitted or are innate.

Definitions of Terms

To provide clarity, the key constructs for this discussion will be defined in the following ways:

Mentoring is "a one-to-one relationship between a more experienced and senior person (the mentor) and a new entrant or less-experienced person (his/her protégé) in the organizational setup. The mentor need not be the immediate supervisor or department head and not necessarily from the same department. A mentor can generally be defined as an influential individual in your work environment who has advanced experience and knowledge and who is committed to providing upward mobility and support to your career" (Scandura & Williams, 2004, p. 455).

Self-efficacy can be defined as "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave" (Bandura, 1994, p. 71.). Because self-efficacy is domain-specific, a more thorough discussion of the construct, as well as leadership self-efficacy in particular, will follow.

Political skill is "the ability to effectively understand others at work, and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal and/or organizational objectives" (Ahearn et al., 2004, p. 311).

Statement of Problem

Organizations are constantly seeking ways to train and develop talent with an eye toward long-term retention of top performers. Today's business environment is categorized by ambiguity, constant change, and a flattened hierarchy, all of which demand employees who are not only task-proficient, but also interpersonally savvy and confident in their abilities to lead others. Developing self-efficacy for leadership is a necessary antecedent of leader development. Political skill represents a recent social effectiveness construct with tremendous potential to affect everything from job performance to leader reputation (Liu, Ferris, Zinko, Perrewe, Weitz, & Xu, 2007; Semadar et al., 2006). Mentoring has traditionally been an informal system in which a less experienced person, the protégé, benefits from a mentor's years of experience. The relationship provides an avenue for the protégé to learn not only specific job task skills, but, perhaps more importantly, organizational socialization skills such as political skill. Such skills can ultimately differentiate among those who may be technically excellent but lacking in interpersonal and influence skills and those who either already possess or can learn technical skills but have the advantage of increased political skill, which businesses need in their next generation of leaders. Limited research exists that examines whether having a mentor can influence a protégé's self-efficacy for leadership and political skill. Similarly, the link between protégé ratings of an existing mentoring relationship and political skill and self-

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efficacy for leadership has been only weakly documented. Thus, the current study examined the relationship between mentoring and both leadership self-efficacy and political skill. The following chapter reviews the literature relevant to mentoring, self-efficacy, leadership, and political skill in order to examine past research and provide a context for the present study.

Review of the Literature

To fully appreciate the potential impact of mentoring on leadership self-efficacy and political skill, it is necessary to consider the research on the effects of mentoring on performance and satisfaction outcomes, as well as how the mentoring relationship is conceptualized in the literature.

Defining the Main Constructs

Mentoring

It has been suggested that increasing organizational stressors, uncertainty about the future, and increasing responsibility lead to an increased need for mentoring support (Mezias & Scandura, 2005). Mentoring relationships are dynamic and constantly evolving. Kram (1983) developed a theory conceptualizing the overall phases of a mentoring relationship. The four phases are: initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition (Kram, 1983). As the protégé moves forward in his or her career, the nature of the relationship necessarily changes to reflect the needs of both members. As protégés build a foundation of skills, they require different kinds of guidance and support. While a new employee or young worker may need basic career advice and information about how works gets done within the organization, eventually the skills required to succeed and advance become more nuanced. Simply attaining performance expectations and being well-liked are no

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longer enough to achieve recognition; thus, an individual's organizational savvy must continually expand.

It has been argued that to succeed in business today, it is not enough to know the job tasks and how an organization works (Lankau & Scandura, 2002). This resonates with Blass and Ferris' (2007) argument that a nuanced understanding of organizational politics is critical to success in today's work environment; they also believe that mentoring is a critical way in which political skill can be increased.

The Three Dimensions of Mentoring

Early theoretical conceptualizations of mentoring relationships focused on the career development and psychosocial support both members receive (Kram, 1983). Career development relates to coaching, exposure, and work-related tasks, while psychosocial support includes relational aspects (Kram, 1983). Burke (1984) found support for this theory and discussed another mentoring function, role modeling. Later work by Scandura (1992) focused more on the role modeling dimension and supported its inclusion as a separate third dimension of mentoring. Further research and scale development (Castro, Scandura, & Williams, 2006) on mentoring has confirmed that it can be considered a three factor construct, with role modeling encompassing mentor behavior that can be observed and imitated by the protégé. In a study ($N = 244$) of manufacturing managers, factor analysis supported the three-factor construct. Results of hierarchical regression analyses also supported idea that the career development and psychosocial support aspects of mentoring are significantly associated with protégés' promotions and salary levels, though similar results were not found for the role modeling aspect (Scandura, 1992). Later

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research did show a link between role modeling and skill development (Lankau & Scandura, 2002). In that study, Lankau and Scandura (2002) considered how people learned in mentoring relationships. They surveyed 440 employees in a non-profit hospital in the southeastern United States on whether they had a mentor, their degree of role ambiguity, level of job satisfaction, intention to leave, and aspects of learning in a mentoring relationship. They also included turnover levels for the hospital as a whole. Controlling for age, education, gender, organizational tenure, and job type, they found role modeling was significantly related to skill development.

In developing the revised Mentoring Functions Questionnaire, Castro, Scandura, and Williams (2006) found that the psychosocial support dimension related to job satisfaction, and that the career support and role modeling dimensions related to organizational commitment as well as job satisfaction. They also recommended further research be conducted on the role modeling dimension to confirm it as a separate dimension.

Types of Mentoring Relationships

All mentoring relationships are not the same. Within the mentoring literature, research exists on many forms of mentoring dyads, including those involving same gender and/or race mentors, supervisory mentors, inter-organizational mentors, and formal mentoring relationships. A brief review of these types of relationships follows.

Mentors and Protégés—To Match or Not to Match?

Individuals who perceive their role model as similar to themselves tend to be more strongly influenced by the role model. (Bandura, 1994). Thus, it might seem that the best

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mentor would be one who was of the same race, ethnicity, and/or gender as the protégé. In fact, as women and members of minorities groups moved into the workplace and into management, scholarly attention focused on whether mentors of the same race and/or gender—matched mentors—would be more beneficial to the protégés.

Ensher and Murphy (1997) considered the effects of race and gender similarity as well as level of contact between mentor and protégé. In their study of 104 interns ages 16 to 22 and their mentors, results suggested that protégés who see their mentors as similar to themselves tend to like them more and are more satisfied with the mentor, but that the amount of psychosocial mentoring received did not differ from protégés with dissimilar mentors. They suggested that racial matching is not critical for mentoring and also that gender is not related to psychosocial aspects of mentoring. One aspect of their study that limits its generalizability was that it was conducted with interns, and the protégés were mostly high school students. Thus, the liking aspect of the study could be related more to the age of the protégés and may not be relevant to adults in an organization. Thomas (1990) studied the effects of race on mentoring relationships among 88 black and 107 white managers at a public utility corporation. He found that African-Americans did receive more psychosocial support from same-race mentors, though career support did not differ. In a survey study assessing income outcomes among 170 business school graduates from Howard University, it was found that male and female African-American business graduates with a white male mentor had significantly higher incomes than those with a nonwhite and/or female mentor (Dreher & Chargois, 1998). The authors hypothesize that their results may be due, in part, to the increased likelihood of white male mentors having

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more access to the organizational network than their counterparts (Dreher & Chargois, 1998).

In a study on mentoring and gender with members of two professional organizations (total $N = 391$), findings similar to those on race were reported, with male mentors providing more career mentoring and female mentors providing more psychosocial mentoring (Allen & Eby, 2004). However, another survey study of 200 MBA students in a mentoring relationship found no significant differences for psychosocial mentoring or career mentoring as a function of gender (Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). In fact, male mentors were perceived to provide more career support to female protégés than to males, which the authors suggest is due to the mentors' perceived power. This study provides empirical support for the benefits of cross-gender mentoring relationships. In a ($N = 280$) survey study of female MBA graduates, few differences were found between protégés with male mentors versus those with female mentors, and mentor gender had little effect on overall mentoring functions. Female mentors tended to be younger and to have lower organizational status, and female protégés reported a trend more of the psychosocial aspects of mentoring—but also reported significantly lower organizational commitment (Burke & McKeen, 1997).

A survey study of 800 mentored and non-mentored accountants found that biological sex is not a significant predictor of mentoring, but sex role orientation is, at least in male-dominated professions. Protégés with more androgynous mentors reported significantly more mentoring that those with more stereotypically male or female mentors (Scandura & Ragins, 1993). While these studies focused more on social aspects of

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mentoring, an survey study of business school graduates from two universities ($n = 320$) focused on outcomes such number of promotions, compensation satisfaction, and amount of mentoring. Results suggested no gender differences existed on any of the measured variables between men and women; the only significant differences among these variables were found between the mentored versus non-mentored groups (Dreher & Ash, 1990). This study provides the best support for cross-race/ethnicity/gender mentoring relationships in terms of quantitative and career-related outcomes. That is, people may like matched mentors better, but research suggests that to attain more promotions and higher salaries, it is more important that one has a mentor than that the mentor be similar in terms of race/ethnicity and/or gender.

In a large ($N = 1,018$) study of MBA graduates from nine schools, a survey assessing demographic information, protégé status, and current compensation was mailed to participants. Results indicated that whites were more likely to establish mentoring relationships than African-Americans and Hispanics. It was also found that female MBAs were less likely than male MBAs to have mentoring relationships. However, among all groups (men and women, white and nonwhite), those who reported having a white male mentor tended to earn significantly higher salaries over time than those whose mentor was female and/or a minority group member (Dreher & Cox, 1996). The authors hypothesized that while the difference would ostensibly be due to white males' generally higher status in organizations, a data analysis revealed that no such differences existed among the mentors. They suggested that other reasons, such as perceptions of authority and greater organizational influence and networks instead influenced their findings.

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In light of these mixed research results, it is difficult to make a case one way or the other for matched mentoring relationships. The lack of clear empirical support for matched mentor-protégé dyads makes this line of research a compelling one for future studies. However, in the current study, responses will not be analyzed based on gender or race or ethnicity for several reasons. Practically speaking, securing a sample that is both large enough and diverse enough to consider these differences would be difficult. Further, organizations, especially those that are small or mid-size, do not have the luxury of matching their newcomers with a mentor similar in race, ethnicity, or gender, even if such a pairing held the potential for superior benefits. Potential protégés would likewise be more concerned with whether a mentor, similar to themselves or not, would be able to aid in critical skill development. Knowing whether mentoring in any context provides benefits is of more importance to organizations—and individuals—today.

More philosophically, it remains unclear what true benefits would be derived from an analysis of matched versus unmatched pairings. In today's diverse workplaces, opportunities for talented people—regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity abound. Much of the early research emerged when women and minorities were so disproportionately represented in organizations, that finding ways to promote and advance these groups took on more urgency. Although the organizational playing field is far from even, globalization and the demand for talent have created a tremendous need. Finding what makes good leaders—regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity—has emerged as the more robust, and today, urgent, research question.

Supervisors as Mentors and Considerations for Inter-Organizational Mentors

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A mentor may be someone employed by the same organization or by another organization. In intra-organizational mentoring relationships, the mentor is often a supervisor, a relationship termed supervisory career mentoring (SCM) (Scandura & Williams, 2004). Blass and Ferris (2007) suggest that when the mentor is within the organization, he or she has the benefit of both being able to work through the protégé while simultaneously observing the outcomes of his or actions.

In a study ($N = 275$) of employed MBA students using questionnaires, non-supervisor mentors were found to play a critical role in the development of their protégés and to influence work attitudes, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, though not career expectations (Scandura & Williams, 2004). Their study supported the notion that SCM can be important both to protégés and to organizations, particularly those seeking to develop talent through in-house mentoring programs using existing supervisory relationships. They defined career expectations as an individual's beliefs about how likely he or she is to advance within the current organization. The construct did not capture an individual's beliefs about more general advancement opportunities related to other organizations. In fact, Scandura and Williams (2004) noted that most career moves occur between companies now, and they suggested that future research study the effects of non-SCM mentoring on such types of advancement. They further noted that non-SCM mentoring may reduce the effect of negative mentoring experiences. They suggested that non-SCM mentoring helps reduce the between the protégé's career goals, which may include changing jobs, and the supervisor's desire to retain talented employees. One limitation of their study was that it failed to consider that with rapid movement within and

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among organizations, the mentor may be a previous supervisor who had tremendous impact on the protégé's success.

For individual career development, whether the mentor is a supervisor or not may not be as relevant. Scandura and Williams' (2004) definition of a non-supervisory mentor referred to any person who was not, at that moment, the protégé's supervisor. That definition would exclude as an SCM not only previous supervisors, but also the boss of one's superior, other members of management who may be more seasoned or highly influential. Thus the distinction between SCM and non-SCM is important, but perhaps not critical in the consideration of individual growth. Further, as Eby (1997) argues, this definition of mentoring is too restrictive to reflect today's business reality. Eby (1997) enumerates many alternative and potentially beneficial mentoring relationships, such as those between peers, those between teams, and those between employees who remain at an organization after significant layoffs.

As organizations' social structures change rapidly and with increasing technological advances, the gap between older employees and younger ones may mean that protégés would prefer mentors closer to their own age, argues Clawson (1996). Traditionally, mentoring has been considered from the perspective of the organization, which seeks to retain strong employees. Employees, in turn, seek advancement and growth opportunities in exchange for their loyalty. However, as Eby (1997) noted, continued organizational flattening means such advancement opportunities are increasingly limited. As a career coach and role model, the mentor—whether a supervisor or not—can be

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expected to significantly impact the protégé's career development path as he or she grows as a leader.

Informal and Formal Mentoring

Some organizations formalize the mentoring process, assigning individuals mentors when they enter the organization. However, in a review of mentoring literature, Scandura (1998) notes that such formal programs have received only mixed support, as informal mentoring relationships are often linked with better outcomes. In a survey study on formal and informal mentoring relationships, employees in an technology company with a four-year-old mentoring program were surveyed. The formal mentoring group ($N = 24$ mentors and $N = 30$ protégés) consisted of participants in the corporate mentoring program. The informal mentoring group ($N = 87$ mentors and $N = 16$ protégés) consisted of people who identified themselves as mentors or protégés but did not participate in the corporate mentoring program. The 18-item version of the Mentoring Functions Questionnaire was used along with a demographic survey. Results suggested that formal mentoring relationships result in less mentor/protégé communication and psychosocial support than informal relationships (Fagenson-Eland, Marks, & Amendola, 1997).

Another study on formal and informal mentoring involved alumni who completed mailed surveys. Respondents were categorized as being in an informal mentoring relationship ($N = 212$), a formal mentoring relationship ($N = 53$), or not being mentored at all ($N = 284$). Results showed that those in informal mentoring relationships had greater job satisfaction and higher salaries (Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992). These results

reinforcing the idea that while organizations should encourage mentoring systems, they need not institute formal programs in order to ensure success.

For those dyads in which the mentor is not within the organization, the mentoring relationship still provides support and guidance for navigating complex cultures. Such a mentor may also provide an expanded network of contacts to the protégé (Scandura & Williams, 2004). With people changing jobs so frequently in today's business environment, such a network is just as valuable—if not more so—than an intra-organizational one. Mentoring operates within a less formal, but perhaps more critical context than the traditional organization hierarchy, as defined by the organizational chart.

Benefits of Mentoring for Mentor and Protégé

Regardless of the type or structure of the mentoring relationship, numerous benefits have been found to result from mentoring. Kram (1983) theorizes that the relationship is mutually beneficial to both protégé and mentor; the protégé receives career support, visibility, and coaching, while the mentor is admired by his or her peers for developing junior employees and also derives personal satisfaction from the relationship. In terms of career development, mentoring provides the more experienced individual with an opportunity to become reinvigorated, to function within a new context, and to direct his or her energies into the development of someone else's career. The psychosocial aspect for the mentor relates to the personal satisfaction he or she derives from providing guidance to the protégé (Kram, 1983).

Being asked—either by the organization or a protégé—to serve as a mentor is a compliment that conveys to coworkers that one is respected and admired. Serving as a

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mentor in an informal capacity has similar benefits for the mentor, and, in the organizational context, can confer even higher status because the mentor is seen as altruistic and admired by newer employees. In the study of female MBAs previously discussed, Burke and McKeen (1997) found that women who reported more mentoring also had greater career satisfaction, but they found only weak or inconsistent associations between mentoring and work outcomes. However, that study was limited by its focus on women, which the authors acknowledged as a limitation, and by the fact that it did not compare mentored women with non-mentored women; the sample was restricted to women who reported having a mentor. Thus, it did not compare outcomes between mentored and non-mentored groups. The authors hypothesize that extra-study variables may have affected their results. In a meta-analysis ($N = 14$) of studies on mentoring representing $N = 2,835$ protégés and $N = 2,614$ non-protégés, Underhill (2006) noted the scarcity of research comparing mentored and non-mentored individuals and strongly urges that future research on mentoring include a non-mentored comparison group.

Dreher and Ash's (1990) previously mentioned study showed that the benefits to protégés include higher incomes, more promotions, increased satisfaction with pay. It has also been suggested that individuals who are mentored develop faster than their non-mentored peers and thus are more competitive (Scandura, Tejeda, Werther, & Lankau, 1996). Having a more experienced person take an interest in one's career and provide guidance along the way not only has these objective outcomes, but also establishes and/or reinforces a protégé's belief that he or she is worth investing in and is on the fast track. Underhill's (2006) meta-analysis of mentoring-related research showed that mentored

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individuals also have increased job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and perceptions of promotion opportunities than non-mentored individuals. A survey study of 125 employees (both administrative and profession) of a municipal organization revealed that mentored ($N = 61$) individuals had higher career motivation than non-mentored individuals ($N = 64$) (Day & Allen, 2004). Career motivation is a construct that consists of career resilience (the ability to be flexible as circumstances change as well as one's belief in one's self), career insight (a realistic appraisal of one's strengths and weaknesses), and career identity (how much of one's personal identity is related to one's occupation; Day & Allen, 2004).

Mentors as Models

Role modeling is an important component in the overall mentoring relationship, as it rounds out the mentor-protégé dyad to include socialization and interpersonal aspects in addition to simply career development and psychosocial support. Because the mentor serves as a role model, protégés who admire their mentor make an effort to model the mentor's behavior. In this way, the protégé's identification with the mentor, especially a valued and respected mentor, lays the foundation for the protégé's development of self-efficacy for work-related tasks, including leadership.

Dreher and Ash (1990) recognize the relevance of social learning and modeling to the mentoring relationship. By having a professional role model, protégés have the opportunity to observe and discuss what has contributed to the mentor's success as well as what served as potential career derailments throughout the mentor's professional life. The mentoring relationship allows protégés immediate and interactive access to this learning

process. Scandura (1992) has emphasized the need to consider the role-model aspect of mentoring as a critical function of mentoring. Peers are critical to the development of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994), and while a mentoring relationship is not entirely an equal one, the two participants are peers in the sense that they are both working adults with basic education and capabilities. A more complete discussion of the relationship between mentoring and self-efficacy will follow in the review of the self-efficacy research.

Mentoring and Development of Organizational Social Skills

In theory, mentoring is not limited to specific job-related tasks, and includes aspects of socialization and networking as well (Eby, 1997). One survey study of hospital employees ($N = 440$) shows that having a mentor is an antecedent of personal learning, a construct that includes both job-related information and socialization aspects (Lankau & Scandura, 2002). Thus, having a mentor provides myriad benefits to the protégé, who gains a source of information about professional and skill development, and a model for career social/organizational success.

Sosik and Lee's theoretical paper (2002) relates mentoring to social judgment, a construct that includes wisdom, social perceptiveness, and moral and social reasoning ability. These three dimensions relate to the social skills needed to succeed and advance in today's organizational environment. Social perceptiveness in particular relates to one's ability to understand social situations and modify one's actions based on accurate perceptions. Mentors are important for protégé development of social judgment skills and serve as models for protégés in terms of their behavior in social situations (Sosik & Lee, 2002). In a meta-analysis of 43 studies, Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, and Lima (2004)

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compared several different outcomes across studies representing from 561 to 3,029 participants, depending on the variable of interest. They found that mentors also provide an example to their protégés of how to attain success and learn the unwritten rules of an organization (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004). Successfully learning these unwritten rules is, in fact, a part of political skill. For someone to serve as a mentor, they are presumed to have achieved some level of organizational success and high political skill. The skills they have learned during the course of their careers can be transmitted to protégés to provide a shortcut to success.

Individuals must develop their interpersonal skills as well as a comprehensive understanding of the unwritten organizational hierarchy. Understanding subtle relationships and organizational networks requires an appreciation of the informal organizational structure that cannot be found in any company manuals or handbooks. Dreher and Ash (1990) argue that mentoring provides an entrée into those informal work networks, which provide information and relationships that is unavailable to protégés through the formal organizational avenues. The mentoring relationship serves as the gateway to success for the protégé; he or she benefits not only from the mentor's years of experience and advanced skills, but also from his or her established relationships. Many of the mentor's allies are likely to be as advanced in their careers as the mentor, and thus the mentor brings a constellation of important contacts to the relationship. Individuals who know and trust the mentor and have built a relationship with him or her over many years will be more inclined to accept an individual who is introduced to them through the

mentor. This indirect channeling of benefits offers the protégés opportunities they may have not gained on their own for many years.

Leadership

Scholars have been unable to reach consensus on the definition of leadership, but have created several taxonomies of distinct leadership styles. Two decades ago, Yukl (1989) noted the lack of scholarly consensus on defining leadership and that most conceptualizations revolve around the aspect of leadership that is under study. Despite differences in theoretical conceptualizations, researchers tend to agree that influence over others is a hallmark of leadership (Yukl, 1989). As competitive pressures have increased in business over the past two decades, the desire to understand what makes a good leader has intensified. Significant research has focused on defining and quantifying leadership style as well as linking style to performance outcomes, all in the hopes of discovering how to build future leaders to ensure continued success.

Contemporary leadership theory and research has largely focused on two styles of leadership, transactional and transformational leadership, which both originated in the 1970s. Transactional leadership relates to the leader's rewarding or punishing a subordinate for certain behaviors; the relationship is based on the idea of exchange—hence the name transactional (Bass, 1998). An important aspect of this type of leadership is the strict parameters placed around the relationship with the subordinate. The subordinate's performance is wholly dictated by the expectations he or she has for the reward, and when the reward is received, the relationship ends; there is nothing beyond the transaction that binds the leader and subordinate. (Burns, 1978).

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Transformational leadership emphasizes the human relational aspect of leadership in which leaders and followers create a partnership together that inspires each (Burns, 1978). The leader and the subordinate are working together for a common purpose and the relationship endures. To truly be a transformational leader, one motivates others to do more than they thought possible and the process becomes collaborative (Bass, 1998).

Bass (1997) argues that leaders exhibit both transactional and transformational behavior, though the former type of leader works within the established system while the latter exerts influence to change that system. Additionally, situational context can affect a leader's development and exhibition of transactional or transformational behavior (Bass, 1998). For example, stable, predictable environments are more conducive to a transactional leadership style because of its tendency to work within well-established parameters, while times of crisis and/or uncertainty demand transformational leadership (Bass, 1998).

The concept of the transformational leader has endured, as expectations of true leadership continue to evolve to include not mere task performance, but a near-mystical transcendent exchange in which the outcome becomes more than the sum of the parts of the exchange. Numerous studies have shown transformational leadership is preferable to or serves to augment the effects of transactional leadership (Boerner, Esenbeiss, & Griesser, 2007; Hater & Bass, 1988; MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Rich, 2001; Rowold & Heinitz, 2007). Hater and Bass (1988) found that subordinates ($N = 54$) in a U.S. air delivery service corporation rated transformational leaders as more effective than transactional leaders, and also that as employees become more increasingly educated and look for

meaning, not simply money, at work, transformational leadership will be the preferred leadership style because of emphasis on collaboration and inspiration.

While transactional leadership is focused on formal hierarchies and getting work done through traditional rewards, transformational leadership focuses on the inspirational relationship. That relationship is guided by striving for the best possible outcomes while building and maintaining trust and respect. Today's employees seek more from their leaders than instructions and wages, and the best leaders provide a participatory work experience that engages the whole self. The movement toward transformational leadership is consistent with the notion that leadership success requires more than technical competence and engenders interpersonal savvy, influence ability, sincerity, and other so-called soft skills.

It is important to differentiate the concept of a leader from that of a manager. Yukl (1989) argues that leaders exercise influence, while managers perform job functions and exercise authority. Paglis and Green (2002) conceptualize a leader, as opposed to a manager, as one who both influences followers and serves as a catalyst for change. For the purposes of the current study, another key distinction is the source of the individual's power: a manager is one who holds power by virtue of organizational decree; a leader holds power because others, regardless of their role in the organizational hierarchy, trust and follow him or her.

Ahearn et al. (2004) argue that leader effectiveness can be gauged by how well he or she can influence others to perform tasks outside of their job duties but which benefit the organization. Such extra-role performance is related to organizational behaviors that

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exist outside of job descriptions, but which are especially prized in business. Examples of extra-role behaviors include helping coworkers with their jobs or participating in optional corporate events (Chiaburu & Baker, 2006). Only through organizational socialization and observation do employees recognize and appreciate what extra-role behaviors are expected and/or prized—however implicitly—in their own organization or industry. Learning these extra-role behaviors and engaging in them can be seen as one aspect of political skill.

One line of research examines a specific type of extra-role behaviors called organizational citizenship behaviors, or OCBs, which are behaviors workers engage in that are not required or formally rewarded (Farh, Podsakoff, & Organ, 1990). Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine and Bachrach (2000) conceptualize seven broad categories of OCBs such as helping behaviors, organizational loyalty, and organizational compliance. In a review of the literature on OCBs, Podsakoff and colleagues (2000) discuss the notion that OCBs not only affect performance, but also managerial perceptions of employees. Part of the socialization process a new employee undergoes, and one in which leaders take a prominent role, is explicating the OCBs specific to an organization and aiding newcomers in understanding the unwritten expectations of management. Mentors can assume a tremendous role in outlining the OCBs to their protégés, and thus expedite their recognition as one who goes beyond what is expected in an organization and is a good fit for the company.

Mentoring—More than a Form of Leadership Theory

Mentoring and transformational leadership have both been shown to relate to positive attitudes and stronger performance, and having a mentor who is also one's

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supervisor, or supervisory career mentoring (SCM), leads to an even stronger association, as found in the study by Scandura and Williams (2004) previously discussed. One question in the literature was whether SCM and leader-member exchange (LMX) represented the same construct. LMX refers to a theory of leadership in which the leader and subordinate are interdependent and inhabit distinct roles; a hallmark of this theory is that the quality of the dyad is described in terms of whether subordinates are part of the leader's preferred in-group or excluded from such and relegated to the out-group (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Graen & Scandura, 1987)

In a survey study with managers and their subordinates ($N = 183$) of a technology manufacturing firm in the Midwest, Scandura and Schriesheim (1994) sought to assess whether SCM and leader-member exchange (LMX) represented the same construct. Using factor analysis, they found that the two were distinct from the supervisor's perspective, though not from the subordinate's. The authors attribute this difference to the fact that managers know their own intentions, while subordinates base their beliefs on their perceptions of managers' behavior. The study also found that SCM explained variance in raises and promotions over and above that accounted for by LMX, but LMX did not augment the affects of SCM. The authors reiterate that LMX tends to be more present-focused, while SCM is a long-term approach that can be considered developmentally.

While LMX and SCM share some commonalities in that they both involve a relationship between an employee and a more senior person, important differences remain. LMX assesses the relationship strictly in terms of the subordinate/leader, while mentoring can occur within other types of relationship, such a peers or former manager. In fact,

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Scandura and Schriesheim (1994) suggest that future mentoring research consider the influence of non-supervisory mentoring relationships

Self-Efficacy

The concept of self-efficacy is rooted in Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory. Consideration of the antecedents and benefits of leadership self-efficacy reveals it can be considered a skill-based construct, and thus subject to encouragement and development through the mentoring process. Before identifying leadership style or quantifying leadership ability, potential leaders must be identified, developed, and primed for leadership duties. Of course, prior to that stage is another antecedent: self-selection on the part of the future leaders. For people to eventually become leaders, and hopefully successful ones, they must first develop an interest in becoming a leader, and a belief in their capability.

The initial step on the path to leadership is the individual's belief in his capacity to lead others—or self-efficacy for leadership. Recently, Bandura (2007) has re-emphasized that self-efficacy is a domain-specific construct, and is not to be confused with actual ability. That is, "it is concerned not with what one *has* but with belief in what one *can do* with whatever resources one can muster. The operative nature of perceived self–efficacy is an integral feature of the procedure used to access people's efficacy beliefs" (Bandura, 2007, p. 646)

Self-efficacy's predictive power has been documented across domains as varied as personal empowerment (Ozer & Bandura, 1990), career choice (Lent & Hackett, 1987), job satisfaction and performance (Judge & Bono, 2001) and, recently, leadership (Hoyt,

Murphy, Halverson, &Watson, 2003; McCormick, Tanguma, & Lopez-Formet, 2003).

Four sources lead to the development of a sense of self-efficacy: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological state (Bandura, 1994).

Successful execution of a challenging goal is an especially potent type of mastery experience and contributes strongly to self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994). As individuals perform new and increasingly difficult tasks, their belief in their capabilities related to those tasks increases.

Though Bandura believes that mastery experiences are the most important source of self-efficacy, he also stresses the importance of vicarious experiences, or models. Observing others achieve success is a seed of self-efficacy because the individual imagines him or herself succeeding in a similar situation. It has been argued that having a strong model can cause an individual to consider his or her life path in a different way and can reinforce an individual's burgeoning self-efficacy (Pajares, 1994).

The third source of self-efficacy, social persuasion, builds self-efficacy by virtue of the empowering nature of praise and encouragement from another person, who indicates belief in one's capabilities (Bandura, 1994). Although social persuasion is believed to be a weaker antecedent of self-efficacy than mastery experiencing or modeling, it can still play an important role in one's self-perceptions.

Physiological states relates to one's mood and levels of anxiety and stress and their effects on self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994). Bandura (1994) emphasizes the importance of mood and affect in terms of how individuals judge their capabilities. Feeling stressed or

overwhelmed can lead to underestimation of ability and reduce the perception of likelihood of success.

Self-efficacy also affects how challenging the goals are that one sets for one's self. Higher self-efficacy individuals set higher goals and are more motivated to meet them (Bandura, 1994). One's self-efficacy affects motivation and underlies beliefs about why goals are or are not attained; low-self efficacious people attribute failure to their internal deficiencies while their high self-efficacy counterparts focus on their effort level (Bandura, 1994). Bandura (1994) argues that with increasing technological advances, workers will be expected to develop new career skills and consider creative solutions to problems at work.

Mentoring and Self-Efficacy

Because mentors provide two of the four sources of self-efficacy—a role model and social persuasion, it may be expected that having a mentor would increase one's self-efficacy for the skills being fostered through the mentoring relationship. In an empirical study on nurse practitioner students ($N = 238$), students with higher scores on a mentoring functions questionnaire also reported higher self-efficacy for providing patient care, a finding the author attribute to the role modeling aspect of the mentoring relationship (Hayes, 1998). A survey study of graduate doctoral students ($N = 131$) in counseling psychology found support for the idea that faculty mentoring was critical for students' development of self-efficacy for research. The authors found that their qualitative data supported the notion that faculty support and mentoring in research projects was important for students research self-efficacy. They urged additional research to quantitatively examine the link between mentoring and research self-efficacy as well as productivity

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(Love, Bahner, Jones, & Nilsson, 2007). In a study on mentoring relationships among teachers and their mentors ($N = 26$ pairs), a correlation was found between higher ratings of the mentoring relationship and the protégé's level of self-efficacy for teaching (Clifford, 1999). Similar results may be expected in the corporate setting; as Lankau and Scandura (2002) note, if a protégé sees his or her mentor lead a business meeting, the protégé is likely to model his or her own behavior after the example set by the mentor.

Day and Allen (2004) conducted one of the first studies ($N = 125$) assessing the relationship between mentoring, career success, and career self-efficacy. Through their surveys of employees in a municipality, they found that self-efficacy was positively associated with salary, career success, and performance, but not with promotions. They also found that, contrary to their hypothesis, self-efficacy did not mediate the relationship between career mentoring and career success. That study, however, used the two-factor construct of mentoring (career functions and psychosocial functions) and when the individual constructs were considered, a correlation was found between career mentoring and self-efficacy as well as between career success and self-efficacy. Consideration of the three-factor construct of mentoring outlined by Castro, Scandura, and Williams (2006), which includes role modeling, is likely to yield a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities involved in mentoring and how the different relational aspects affect protégé beliefs and behaviors.

Leadership Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy for leadership is important because of the implications for businesses and individuals. Because people generally seek activities for which they have high self-

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efficacy (Pajares, 1994), being able to assess—and enhance—leadership self-efficacy is critical for building the next generation of leaders. People with higher self-efficacy believe themselves capable of a wider variety of and more prestigious careers (Bandura, 1994), thus individuals with a well-developed sense of self-efficacy are more likely to attempt leadership positions than those with lower self-efficacy for leadership. Gist (1987) argues that assessing applicants for self-efficacy can be useful to organizations because such a determination can be predictive of performance and can aid the employee selection and promotion process.

Paglis and Green (2002) define leadership self- efficacy (LSE) in the following way: "LSE is a person's judgment that he or she can successfully exert leadership by setting a direction for the work group, building relationships with followers in order to gain their commitment to change goals, and working with them to overcome obstacles to change" (p. 217). They present a model of LSE in which individual antecedents such as mastery experience, locus of control, and self-esteem, along with subordinate, superior, and organizational antecedents all directly contribute to LSE, which they conceptualize as a three-dimension construct. In their survey study of managers ($n = 150$) and their subordinates ($n = 415$) in two corporations, they found support for their hypothesis that LSE is directly related to attempted leadership. Thus their research offers important empirical evidence for a link between an individual's belief that he or she is capable of taking on a leadership role and the actual pursuit of such opportunities. They also found that a superior's modeling did not affect on a manager's LSE, but did affect his or her leadership attempts. They offer several hypotheses for these findings, but do not address

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the quality of the relationship between superior and manager. That is, their research operates fully within the formal organizational network of superiors/managers/subordinates and does not consider any aspect of mentoring. Their research lays an important foundation for the links between LSE and leadership attempts; an equally important and compelling research direction is considering whether these findings hold for informal mentoring relationships.

With increasing competitive pressures and the strong impetus for innovation, leaders must be willing to try new ideas, even with the risk of failure. Individuals with high self-efficacy are less likely to hold defeatist attitudes and tend to view setbacks as challenges, and as Bandura (1994) points out, organizations are made stronger by a workforce that believes—individually and collectively—in its ability to successfully navigate challenges. Individuals with high leadership self-efficacy are also more likely to be rated by their peers and superiors as capable and confident (Chemers, Watson, & May, 2000). Having a positive reputation is one of the key factors for organizational success, and is closely tied to the social effectiveness construct of political skill.

Political Skill

Organizations are generally implicitly understood to be political entities, as evidenced by the casual use of terms such as "office politics," and Mintzberg (1985) was one of the first researchers to argue that organizations are inherently political entities. Despite this recognition, it is only recently that attempts to define, operationalize, and measure an individual's ability to succeed in such a politically charged environment have been made. In fact, Ferris et al. (2005) point out that while the organizational political

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environments have been studied, a dearth of research exists on those who are the politics of those who influence the environment. Thus while we recognize the existence of the political organization and understand that some individuals are better than others at navigating organizational politics, investigations on organizational politics have been somewhat restricted.

A four-dimensional construct, political skill comprises social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability, and apparent sincerity. *Social astuteness* refers to how well an individual perceives the nuances of social situations. *Interpersonal influence* is the ability to modify one's behavior appropriately to the situation. *Networking ability* is how well one builds alliances. *Apparent sincerity* is the ability to be perceived as authentic and trustworthy (Ferris et al., 2005). Thus, while one may conceive of political skill as a manipulative quality, in actuality, it is defined by the individual's true possession of the above qualities and should not be construed negatively.

In their theoretical paper on political skill, Perrewe and Nelson (2004) argue that being flexible enough to adapt is the kind of savvy needed in complex organizations and is part of political skill. As individuals move higher in an organization, specific job-related skills are less necessary; however, interpersonal and networking skills become much more important. That is, one would not continue to be promoted without some basic technical competence, and, as the supervisor role expands, one delegates more of the day-to-day operational tasks to focus on management tasks such planning, budgeting, and strategy. Career success and promotions are often based on technical talent, but after attaining a

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certain level of success, continued advancement is often a function of interpersonal skills and flexibility—that is, being a team player.

Political skill differs from organizational socialization, though the latter has a dimension related to the former. *Organizational socialization* is related to an individual's adaptation to his or her specific work environment, particularly when faced with a new or changing role within that organization. It is a process of learning and understanding the organizational nuances unique to the current workplace (Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994). Further, organizational socialization represents a stage model, in which individuals move through a defined process of socialization.

A six-factor construct, organizational socialization includes politics as one of its underlying components and defines socialization in organizational politics as "the individual's success in gaining information regarding formal and informal work relationships and power structures within the organization" (Chao et al., 1994, p. 732). In this conception, however, politics is job-specific, not person-specific. While Chao et al. (1994) found that politics was a predictor of personal income, they also found that individuals who changed jobs and moved to different organizations showed significant decreases in politics, thus supporting their notion that politics is job-specific and individuals requires re-socialization in new positions. This finding highlights an important difference between the concept of politics in organizational socialization and the independent concept of political skill. Competence in Chao's conceptualization of politics can be expected to increase and decrease as the individual changes jobs or organizations.

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Political skill is developed within the individual and would not increase or decrease as he or she changed jobs.

Political skill also differs from social skill, in that the latter is concerned with ease of communication, political skill is conceived of as individual's influence over others and ability to accomplish goals within a changing environment (Blass & Ferris, 2007). Political skill is moderately positively correlated with self-monitoring (Semadar et. al, 2006) and emotional intelligence (Ferris et. al., 2005), two important social effectiveness constructs that have been linked to job performance. Self-monitoring is the way in which people control their image by regulating their emotions and affect (Snyder, 1987). Because of the increased focus on emotional intelligence, Ferris and colleagues (2005) devoted special attention to the correlation between political skill and emotional intelligence in developing the political skill inventory to ensure that the two were not representing the same construct. Further, when considering the four dimensions of political skill independently, the correlation between each dimension and emotional intelligence ranged from .38 to .43, and the authors conclude that these correlations suggest that political skill and emotional intelligence are different constructs.

Political skill is not correlated with general mental ability (Ferris, Treadway, & Kolodinsky, 2005), and thus represents a social/interpersonal construct that cannot be accounted for by cognitive ability. These results are especially interesting in light of studies showing that neither social skill nor general mental ability is a direct predictor of job performance or salary, though there is evidence for an interaction effect (Ferris, Witt, & Hochwarter, 2001). One might expect that once employees reach a certain level within

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an organization, the differences between general mental ability would fall away; to advance into the upper echelon, general intelligence is simply not enough.

Ahearn et al. (2004) emphasize the importance of political skill as a key indicator of organizational success, over and above intelligence or even strong and determined work ethic. Their study of 100 team leaders and their 438 team members in a Midwestern child services agency included measures of team performance (measured by permanency rate, or the number of successful permanent placements of children), leader political skill, years of experience (both team leader and member), caseloads, and team empowerment. They found that even when controlling for caseload, years of experience for both team leader and member, and empowerment, leader political skill significantly ($p < .01$) predicted team performance over and above the other variables.

Thus, it is not enough to be smart or emotionally intelligent; to succeed and advance in today's organizational environment, employees must develop political skill. Leader political skill enhances team performance in a way that goes beyond empowerment (Ahearn et al., 2004) and political skill predicts job performance as well as interpersonal and career success (Liu, Ferris, Zinko, Perrewe, Weitz, & Xu, 2007). Blass and Ferris (2007) argue that, theoretically, political skill is critical to an employee's flexibility and ultimately leads to enhanced leader reputation.

The movement toward a highly mobile, highly educated workforce demands leaders who can engage, energize, and enhance. With companies continually redefining themselves, merging with other organizations, and outsourcing key functions, successful employees—and future leaders—adapt to the environment and integrate well within it.

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Blass and Ferris (2007) argue that individuals with political skill are more adaptive and will outperform their less flexible peers as uncertain economic conditions persist.

In today's work environment, leaders are not always managers; teams are fluid and come together to work on projects headed by one member, but last only as long as the project. A team leader with no organizationally-defined authority (i.e., title of manager), must use other means to lead the team to success. In industries in which employees may have more technical knowledge than their leaders, such as information technology and other highly specialized fields, what transpires in the exchange between leader and follower is more about the interpersonal—and looks more like a coaching relationship— than it is about the structured hierarchy implicit in the strict manager-subordinate dyad. Businesses need leaders who both believe they can lead and have the political skill to successfully navigate corporate culture.

It is important for organizations to identify individuals high in political skill because they are more likely to successfully navigate interpersonal relationships and have a strong sense of how to use strategy to achieve desired outcomes (Blass & Ferris, 2007). Having political skill also serves as a buffer against organizational stressors (Perrewe & Nelson, 2004) because individuals believe in their capacity to succeed under pressure and in different situations. Further, as individual employees take on additional and more diverse roles, having political skill can serve as a buffer against role overload because of the increased sense of interpersonal control associated with political skill (Perrewe, Zellars, Rossi, Ferris, Kacmar, Liu, Zinko, & Hochwarter, 2005). In a study ($N = 136$) with Australian managers in a manufacturing company using surveys and human resource data,

political skill was found to have higher validity than self-monitoring, leadership self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence. It was also the strongest predictor of job performance, with results from a hierarchical regression showing that political skill accounted for an additional 11 percent of the variance in performance when it was added to the above mentioned variables (Semadar et al., 2006).

Mentoring and Political Skill

Political skill, as its name implies, should be conceptualized as a skill; that is, something that can be learned and developed over time, rather than as an innate construct determined by personality, intelligence, or some other factor. Indeed, while Ahearn and colleagues (2004) stress that while there some innate aspects of political skill, it is also possible for political skill to be learned and developed over time. Blass and Ferris (2007) argue that the roots of political skill are within a learning process in which others can augment an individual's political skill; they specifically mention mentoring as a potential way of doing so. Kolodinsky, Hochwarter & Ferris (2004) believe that political skill can be developed through organizational policies and that individuals higher in political skill are more likely to persist in task completion and also represent the organization well. Thus political skill is not something one either does or does not have; it can be developed and considered along a spectrum, and efforts focused on social learning can build political skill.

Teaching people how to gain influence and build a reputation is an important aspect of mentoring and relates heavily to the concept of political skill, which, it is argued, can be increased through experience (Ferris, et. al, 2005). So important is the mentoring

relationship, that Blass and Ferris (2007) believe that it should be the main way in which individuals develop political skill. Their paper, however, offers a theoretical, but not empirical, argument, complete with a model of the antecedents and behaviors that lead to leader reputation. In it, mentoring is posited as an antecedent to political skill, which in turn is an antecedent to leader reputation. Empirical evidence of the relationship between mentoring and the development of political skill would lend strong support to their model.

Scandura, Tejeda, et al. (1996) argue that being aware of unwritten organizational rules can aid in the development of a protégé's career path as well as his or her rate of advancement. Perrewe and Nelson (2004) emphasize the particular importance political skill can have for women, who often are excluded from informal social networks and lack strong, high-level mentors. They argue that women in business should seek out mentors because of the myriad benefits provided to the protégé. An incentive exists for organizations to invest in mentoring programs as a long-term retention tool because of the likelihood that skilled leaders who had good mentors will recognize the benefit of such a relationship and look forward to moving into the role of mentor as they are more successful in their careers (Blass & Ferris, 2007).

Organizations seek to recruit talent and provide incentives to retain their star performers. Likewise, those top performers earn promotions and respect through continued training and education to augment and maintain technical competence; additionally, learning the unwritten rules of an organization in particular and business in general requires interpersonal savvy and emotional flexibility. Building a career and becoming a leader is about more than skill development—individuals must be able to read people and

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situations effectively as well as build a network of contacts to aid in the advancement of their goals. Taken together, these organizational social skills comprise the social effectiveness construct political skill. A study on the social effectiveness constructs emotional intelligence, political skill, leadership self-efficacy, and self-monitoring surveyed 136 managers in the Australian division of a global automotive company. Researchers found that political skill predicted performance over and above the other constructs (Semadar et al. 2006). Mentoring is one way in which newcomers can gain access to a network while learning the normative values of a business. Mentoring also provides protégés with a role model and a source of verbal persuasion, two of the sources of self-efficacy. Before attempting leadership roles, individuals must have self-efficacy for leadership, which can be built, along with political skill, through the mentoring relationship.

General Hypothesis

Mentors provide two of the sources of self-efficacy because they serve as role models and provide protégés with verbal persuasion. Mentors are generally someone in an organization with a more advanced position with experience who often functions as a leader, either formally or informally. Thus, it is suggested that having a mentor would lead to increased self-efficacy for leadership. Because not all mentoring relationships are equal, it is further suggested better mentoring relationships would be associated with higher self-efficacy for leadership on the part of the protégé.

Mentors also offer protégés access to their professional network and can provide them with guidance for navigating the political atmosphere of organizations. Political skill

is a construct that can be developed and increased. It is hypothesized that protégés will have higher political skill than non-protégés and also that quality of the mentoring relationship will affect the protégé's development of political skill.

Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1(a): Mentors are more experienced/advanced individuals who provide protégés with a model of success and also, through positive feedback, with social persuasion, two of the sources of self-efficacy. It is hypothesized that respondents who report having a mentor will report significantly higher leadership self-efficacy than those without a mentor.

Hypothesis 1 (b): The mentoring relationship provides a gateway to an informal, social network. The mentoring relationship helps protégés understand the complex social skills needed to be successful at work and with their co-workers. It is hypothesized that respondents with a mentor will score significantly higher on political skill than respondents without a mentor.

Hypothesis 2 (a): Of the respondents with a mentor, those who report a higher quality of the mentoring relationship will have significantly higher scores on leadership self-efficacy over and above the effects of the length of the mentoring relationship and how long the protégé has been a supervisor of others.

Hypothesis 2 (b): A mentor is someone who has experienced some degree of career success, which would include building a personal network of contacts and learning about the importance of unwritten organizational rules. Theory suggests that mentors provide increasingly valuable information about organizational politics to protégés as the

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mentoring relationship develops and that the mentoring relationship is one in which political skill is developed in the protégé through social learning (Blass & Ferris, 2007). Additionally, it is believed that effective mentors actively engage with their protégés to explain interpersonal interactions in such a way that increases political skill (Ferris, Treadway, Perrewe, Brouer, Douglas, & Lux, 2007). It is hypothesized that of the respondents with a mentor, those who report a higher quality of the mentoring relationship will have significantly higher scores on political skill over and above the effects of the length of the mentoring relationship and how long the protégé has been a supervisor of others.

Method

Participants

Participants were students enrolled in three graduate business programs in a large, Mid-Atlantic urban university. The three programs were the Fast Track Master's of Business Administration (MBA) program, the regular MBA program, and the Fast Track Executive Master's of Information Science (MIS) program. The fast track programs are geared toward working professionals with previous work experience; the MIS program is designed for future Chief Information Officers.

Demographic data are summarized in Table 1. The participants tended to be employed (90.1%), primarily full-time (79% of those employed). Because the participants were in a master's program, all had at least a bachelor's degree; some participants also held master's degrees (20.2%) or doctorates (1.9%). The participants were predominantly male (61.8%) and identified themselves as white/Caucasian (66%). Finally, most of the participants (63.7%) reported having a mentor.

Design

This study was a non-experimental survey design employing well-validated pen and paper self-report measures.

Measures

Participants were asked to rate themselves using the following measures:

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Demographic Data (Appendix A). Participants completed a demographic survey to indicate gender, age, race/ethnicity, education level, years of employment, and number of years of supervisory experience.

Self-Efficacy for Leadership Scale—Modified (SEL;, Murphy, 1992). (Appendix B). The SEL is an 8-item measure that assesses an individual's belief in his or her abilities to lead others. Examples of items include, "In general, I am very good at leading a group of my peers" and "I know how to encourage good work group performance." Cronbach's alpha of .86 has been reported for this measure (Murphy & Ensher, 1999). The scale has shown evidence of discriminant and convergent validity with self-esteem and perceived leadership experience (Murphy, 1992).

Because several of the questions in the SEL focus on respondents' beliefs about their performance rather than abilities, eight additional questions were added to tap into broader leadership self-efficacy. The eight additional questions were adapted from a measure of transformational leadership (Castro, 1998). Participants indicated their responses on the entire 16-item scale on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. Higher scores indicate higher levels of self-efficacy for leadership. For the current sample, the Cronbach's alpha for the 16-item scale was .87.

Political Skill Inventory (PSI; Ferris, Treadway, Kolodinsky, Hochwarter, Kacmar, Douglas, & Frink, 2005). (Appendix C). The PSI is an 18-item measure that assesses an individual's ability to be flexible and socially astute at work while maintaining a high degree of sincerity and trustworthiness. It consists of four dimensions, all workplace-

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related: social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability, and apparent sincerity. Participants indicated their responses on a seven-point Likert scale from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. Higher scores indicate higher levels of political skill. The PSI has Cronbach's alphas ranging from .89 to.90 (Ferris et al., 2005). The scale shows evidence of construct validity and was found to be moderately correlated with leadership self-efficacy (Semadar et al., 2006), as measured by the Paglis and Green (2002) leadership self-efficacy scale. That scale was not used for this study because it was theoretically conceptualized to relate to leading for change and the Murphy scale is more generally related to leadership. For the current sample, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .92.

Mentor Questionnaire (Appendix D). Following a procedure outlined by Chao (1997), participants indicated whether they have had a mentor and, if not, they did not complete the Mentoring Functions Questionnaire (MFQ-9) (Castro, Scandura, & Williams, 2006) (Appendix E). Participants who did have a mentor were asked to complete the MFQ-9 with regard to their most recent/current mentoring relationship. To ensure clarity in terms of the concept of mentor, participants were provided with Scandura and Williams' (2004) definition: "Mentoring is described as a one-to-one relationship between a more experienced and senior person (the mentor) and a new entrant or less-experienced person (his/her protégé) in the organizational setup. The mentor need not be the immediate supervisor or department head and not necessarily from the same department. A mentor can generally be defined as an influential individual in your work environment who has

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advanced experience and knowledge and who is committed to providing upward mobility and support to your career" (p. 455).

Mentoring Functions Questionnaire (MFQ-9; Castro, Scandura, & Williams, 2006). (Appendix E). The MFQ-9 is a nine-item questionnaire, refined from Scandura and Ragins' (1993) measure. Participants rated their mentor on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. The coefficient alpha ranges from .78 to.91. The authors recommend using the MFQ-9 over the 15-item measure it replaced due to its superior validity. For the current sample, the Cronbach's alpha was .87.

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Table 1

Participant Demographics

Characteristic	Value
Age (years)	
Mean (SD)	31.67 (7.86)
Range	22.0 – 56.0
Education Level (% sample)	
Bachelor's degree	77.9
Master's degree	20.2
Doctorate	1.9
Employment Status (% sample)	
Unemployed	9.9
Employed	90.1
Full time	79.0
Part time	10.7
Race/Ethnicity (% sample)	
Black/African-American	10.7
Asian/Asian-American	17.9
White/Caucasian	66.0
Hispanic	0.8
More than one	0.8
Other	3.4
Gender (% sample)	
Female	38.2
Male	61.8
Protégé Status (% sample)	
Protégé	69.1
Non-protégé	30.9

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Procedure

Data were collected over a one-month period by visiting business classes. Surveys were completed in classrooms and participation was voluntary. All participants signed a consent form and the study was approved by the IRB. Instructions included directing respondents not to complete the survey if they had done so in a different class to prevent duplication.

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Results

In this study, I examined (a) the difference between mentored and non-mentored groups in both leadership self-efficacy and political skill, and (b) the effects of the quality of the mentoring relationship on protégé's leadership self-efficacy and political skill.

Scores on the covariates and dependent variables of interest were assessed for missing data, normality, linearity, independence, and the presence of outliers. One case in which the participant had used an incorrect scale to rate his mentor was removed from the analysis. Tests for normality using skewness or kurtosis values above one showed that all variables were acceptable. Based on recommendations from Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), outliers with scores three standard deviations above or below the mean were recoded to three standard deviations above or below the mean. Specifically, years of employment had one outlier, years of supervisory experience had five outliers, length of mentoring relationship had three outliers, leadership self-efficacy had one outlier, mentoring quality had three outliers and political skill had two outliers.

Three groups were surveyed: Fast Track MBA students ($n = 43$), regular MBA students ($n = 192$), and Fast Track MIS students ($n = 25$). Means and standard deviations for each of the groups are provided in Table 2.

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Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations by Group

Variable/Group	M	SD
Years of supervisory experience		
Regular MBA	2.15	3.37
FT MBA	6.33	5.20
FT MIS	6.92	6.53
Age		
Regular MBA	28.83	5.51
FT MBA	38.83	6.95
FT MIS	41.40	9.36
Years of employment		
Regular MBA	6.17	5.69
FT MBA	15.95	6.63
FT MIS	17.67	10.46
Length of mentoring relationship		
Regular MBA	2.50	2.07
FT MBA	3.96	2.51
FT MIS	0.97	1.57
Score on SEL		
Regular MBA	88.42	8.99
FT MBA	89.91	8.38
FT MIS	87.64	9.11
Score on PSI		
Regular MBA	99.30	12.32
FT MBA	98.05	13.37
FT MIS	94.92	15.62
*Score on MFQ-9		
Regular MBA	35.89	6.14
FT MBA	34.47	5.96
FT MIS	33.13	6.11

* For those participants who indicated they had a mentor

Before combining the three groups and proceeding to the main analyses, a one-way

analysis of variance was conducted to examine between group differences on the

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dependent variables and covariates of interest. There was a statistically significant difference at the $p < .01$ level for the number of years of experience participants had as supervisors of others: $F (2, 259) = 29.10$; age, $F (2, 256) = 78.67$; years of employment, $F (2, 259) = 66.60$; and, for those with a mentor, length of mentoring relationship $F (2, 174) = 14.37$.

Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated the mean score for years of supervisory experience was significantly higher for Fast Track MIS students ($M = 6.92$, $SD = 6.53$) and Fast Track MBA students ($M = 6.33$, $SD = 5.20$) compared to regular MBA students ($M = 2.15$, $SD = 3.37$). There was not a significant difference between Fast Track MBA and Fast Track MIS students on years of supervisory experience.

Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated the mean score for years of employment was significantly higher for Fast Track MBA ($M = 15.95$, $SD = 6.63$) and Fast Track MIS students ($M = 17.67$, $SD = 10.46$) compared to regular MBA students ($M = 6.17$, $SD = 5.691$). There was not a significant difference in years of employment between Fast Track MBA and Fast Track MIS students.

Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated the mean score for age was significantly higher for Fast Track MBA ($M = 38.83$, $SD = 6.95$) and Fast Track MIS students ($M = 41.40$, $SD = 9.36$) compared to regular MBA students ($M = 28.83$, $SD = 5.51$). There was not a significant difference in age between Fast Track MBA and Fast Track MIS students.

Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated statistically significant differences at the $p < .01$ among all three groups for length of the mentoring relationship:

F (2, 174) = 14.37. The Fast Track MIS students reported the shortest mentoring relationships (M = .97, SD = 1.57), followed by the regular MBA students (M = 2.50, SD = 2.07), with the Fast Track MBA students reporting the longest mentoring relationships (M = 3.96, SD = 2.51).

Both years of supervisory experience and length of the mentoring relationship were included in the subsequent analyses as covariates. There was no statistically significant difference ($p > .05$) in dependent variable scores among the groups, so further analyses combined the three groups into one, for an N = 260, with the mentored group having n = 181 and the non-mentored group having n = 79. Correlations among study variables are reported in Table 3.

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations of study variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Years of employment	8.87	7.88	1						
2. Length of mentoring relationship	2.55	2.55	.11	1					
3. Age	31.66	7.86	.93**	.08	1				
4. Years of supervisory experience	3.29	4.52	.76**	.11	.72**	1			
5. SEL	88.59	8.90	.12**	.09	.15*	.23**	1		
6. PSI	98.67	12.86	-.00	.06	-.05	.07	.64**	1	
7. MFQ-9	35.27	6.15	-.21**	.20**	-.21**	-.15*	.20**	.12	1

Note. $N = 260$. SEL = Self-Efficacy for Leadership Scale—Modified; PSI = Political Skill Inventory; MFQ-9 = Mentoring Functions Questionnaire
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$
[a] Correlations involving MFQ-9 used only $n = 181$

To determine whether any differences existed between men ($n = 161$) and women ($n = 99$), a one-way between-groups multivariate analysis of variance was performed. There were no statistically significant differences ($p > .05$) between males and females for years of employment, years of supervision, leadership self-efficacy, political skill, or rating of mentoring quality.

Hypothesis 1(a) and 1 (b)

Respondents who report having a mentor will exhibit higher leadership self-efficacy [1(a)] and political skill [1(b)] than those who do not report having a mentor. A one-way multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted. Protégé status (whether the participant has a mentor or not) served as the independent variable, and scores on the self-efficacy for leadership scale and political skill inventory were the dependent variables. Number of years of supervisory experience served as the covariate. This was chosen as the covariate because it was assumed that some participants would already have supervisory experience and that would affect their scores on both measures.

In addition to the assumption testing previously discussed, MANCOVA-specific assumption testing was conducted. Testing to check for homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices revealed no violations. There were also no violations in homogeneity of variance or in homogeneity of regression slopes. Political skill and leadership self-efficacy were correlated at .64. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), dependent variables should be correlated with each other for optimum results in multivariate analyses. The correlation reported in the present study is within the range of acceptable correlations outlined by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007).

The hypothesis was partially supported. Means and standard deviations are reported in Table 4.

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations by Protégé Status

Variable	M	SD
Score on SEL		
Protégé	89.19	8.25
Non-Protégé	87.16	10.16
Score on PSI		
Protégé	99.91	12.59
Non-Protégé	95.84	13.10

Results indicate that the covariate years of supervisory experience had a significant effect on the set of criterion variables, Wilks' Lambda = .94, $F(2, 256) = 8.96$, $p < .01$, partial eta squared = .065, a small effect size. I examined these relationships further using two follow-up univariate analyses of variance (ANOVAs). Using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .025, the covariate years of supervision did have a significant effect on leadership self-efficacy, $F(1, 257) = 13.93$, $p < .01$, partial eta squared = .051, a small effect size. More years of supervisory experience were associated with higher leadership self-efficacy. However, there was no relationship between years of supervisory experience and political skill, $F(1, 257) = .75$, $p > .025$, partial eta squared = .00.

There was no main effect for the independent variable protégé status, with $F(2, 256) = 2.6$, $p = .076$, Wilks' Lambda = 2.6, partial eta squared = 0.2. Follow-up ANOVAs

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were used to examine the relationship between the predictor variable, protégé status, and each dependent variable.

When the results for the criterion variables were considered separately, the only difference to reach statistical significance, using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .025, was political skill, $F(1, 258) = 5.21$, $p < .025$, partial eta squared = .02, a small effect size. The mentored group reported a significantly higher level of political skill ($M = 99.9$, $SD = 12.6$) than did the non-mentored group ($M = 95.8$, $SD = 13.1$). The mentored group reported slightly higher leadership self-efficacy ($M = 89.2$, $SD = 8.3$) than the non-mentored group ($M = 87.2$, $SD = 10.2$), though this difference was not significantly different. Having a mentor was associated with increased political skill, but not with higher leadership self-efficacy.

Hypothesis 2 (a)

Protégés who reported higher quality mentoring relationships will have higher leadership self-efficacy when controlling for the effects of how long the protégé had been a supervisor of others and the length of the mentoring relationship. Hierarchical regression was employed to determine whether the quality of mentoring relationship predicted leadership-self-efficacy after controlling for the effects of how long the protégé had been a supervisor of others and the length of the mentoring relationship. As reported by Scandura and Williams (2004), the length of the mentoring relationship can be influential in assessing mentoring outcomes and should be controlled for in statistical analysis.

In addition to the general assumption testing previously discussed, preliminary analyses were conducted and no violations of the assumptions of normality, linearity,

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multicollinearity, or homoscedasticity were found. A small number of cases ($n = 6$) were missing data, so listwise deletion was used to exclude these cases, resulting in a sample of $n = 175$ people who reported having a mentor. This sample size is well above the minimum requirement of 104 + number of IVs recommended for regression (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Length of mentoring relationship and years of supervisory experience were entered at Step 1, explaining 6.1% of the variance in leadership self-efficacy. Quality of the mentoring relationship was the predictor variable entered at Step 2. After Step 2, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 11.5%, $F(3, 171) = 7.37$, $p < .05$. The predictor variable of interest, quality of the mentoring relationship, explained an additional 5.3% of the variance in leadership self-efficacy, after controlling for years of supervisory experience and length of the mentoring relationship, R squared change $= .05$, F change $(1,171) = 10.32$, $p = .002$. In the final model, only two of the predictor variables were statistically significant, years of supervisory experience and quality of the mentoring relationship. Length of the mentoring relationship did not have a significant effect on leadership self-efficacy. Thus, hypothesis 2 (a) was supported. Results are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting
Leadership Self-Efficacy [Hypothesis 2 (a)]

Variables	Beta	T	df	Partial r	R^2	F change
Step 1			2		.06**	5.60
Years of supervisory experience	.23	3.15		.23**		
Length of mentoring relationship	.06	.75		.06 ns		
Step 2			3		.12**	10.32
Score on MFQ-9	.24	3.21		.24		

Note. $\Delta R^2 = .05$**
** $p < .01$.

Hypothesis 2 (b)

    Protégés who report a higher quality of the mentoring relationship will have

significantly higher political skill; the quality of the mentoring relationship will have

predictive power for political skill over and above the effects of the length of the mentoring

relationship and how long the protégé has been a supervisor of others. Hierarchical

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regression was employed to determine if the quality of mentoring relationship predicted political skill after controlling for the effects of how long the protégé had been a supervisor of others and the length of the mentoring relationship. As reported by Scandura and Williams (2004), the length of the mentoring relationship can be influential in assessing mentoring outcomes and should be controlled for in statistical analysis.

Length of mentoring relationship and years of supervisory experience were entered at Step 1, explaining .5% of the variance in political skill. Quality of the mentoring relationship was the predictor variable entered at Step 2. After Step 2, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 2%, $F (3, 171) = 1.2, p > .05$. The predictor variable of interest, quality of the mentoring relationship, explained an additional 1.5% of the variance in political skill, after controlling for length of the mentoring relationship and years of supervisory experience, R squared change = .02, F change $(1, 171) = 2.6, p > .05$. In the final model, none of the predictor variables were statistically significant. Hypothesis 2 (b) was not supported. Results are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Political Skill [Hypothesis 2(b)]

Variables	Beta	*T*	*df*	Partial *r*	R^2	F change
Step 1			2		.01	.46
Years of supervisory experience	.05	.66		.05		
Length of mentoring relationship	.05	.61		.05		
Step 2			3		.02	2.64
Score on MFQ-9	.13	1.63		.12		

Note. $\Delta R^2 = .02$

Discussion

In the present study, the relationship between mentoring and political skill and between mentoring and leadership self-efficacy were examined in 260 participants. Hypotheses were tested in three areas: the differences in leadership self-efficacy and political skill between mentored and non-mentored individuals, the relationship between of mentoring quality and leadership self-efficacy among protégés, and the relationship between mentoring quality and political skill among protégés.

Results in this study were mixed, in that the mentored group (protégés) reported significantly higher political skill than the non-mentored group. Protégés did not, however, report significantly higher leadership self-efficacy than non-protégés. Among protégés, a higher quality mentoring relationship was associated with significantly higher leadership self-efficacy, but not with increased political skill. Thus, these results suggest that the quality of the mentoring relationship was not associated with political skill; however, the quality of the mentoring relationship was associated with leadership self-efficacy.

As hypothesized, the presence of a mentor was associated with increased political skill. These results support Dreher and Ash's (1990) argument that mentoring provides an indirect channel of learning for the protégé. The protégé learns the unwritten rules of an organization and has access to the mentor's network. By observing the mentor, the protégé can learn how to act—and how not to act, as well as identify the major organizational players. Kolodinsky, Hochwarter and Ferris (2004) have argued that political skill can be

developed through organizational policies, and the present results suggest that a mentoring program may be one such policy.

On the other hand, an equally plausible explanation for such a relationship is that people who have political savvy will generally connect with a mentor and establish a mentoring relationship. Also, it is possible that both mentoring and political skill are related to some other variable, such as personality (e.g. agreeableness, conscientiousness, etc.)

Study results were inconsistent with theories of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy comprises four sources, mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological state, the most important of which is mastery experiences (Bandura, 1994). The number of years of supervisory experience was controlled for in the analysis, and in fact, did have a significant effect on leadership self-efficacy. This finding is consistent with Bandura's theory because supervising others is a form of mastery experience that would be expected to increase one's self-efficacy for leadership.

It was somewhat surprising that the presence of a mentor was not associated with increased leadership self-efficacy. A mentor serves as a role model and, presumably, provides the protégé with verbal persuasion, two of the sources of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994). These results echo Paglis and Green's (2002) findings that whereas leadership behaviors were affected by a superior's role modeling and coaching, leadership self-efficacy was not. Because the first analysis compared mentored and non-mentored individuals without accounting for the quality of the relationship, it may be that the mentored group did not have mentors who served as role models or who provided them

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with verbal persuasion. It seems, however, that the mere presence of a mentor is not associated with leadership self-efficacy. Thus we can turn to the next set of hypotheses in which the quality of the mentoring relationship was considered in terms of its effect on political skill and leadership self-efficacy.

When the mentored group alone was analyzed, results indicated that higher quality mentoring relationships were not related to political skill. At first, this finding seems perplexing; if having a mentor is associated with increased political skill, it would seem that a better mentor would lead to increased political skill on the part of the protégé. Leading political skill scholars have argued that, theoretically, mentoring should be a key way in which an individual's political skill can be augmented (Blass & Ferris, 2007). No studies were found in which this hypothesis was tested, and the present results offer more questions than answers about the construct of political skill. Whereas past studies have indicated that political skill is associated with organizational performance (Ahearn et al., 2004; Semadar et al., 2006) and with individual success (Liu, Ferris, Zinko, Perrewe, Weitz, & Xu, 2007), the origins and development of an individual's skill remain unknown.

It may be the case that it is not the mentoring *per se* that confers benefits on the protégé. Perhaps, as Dreher and Ash argued (1990) the entrée into the mentor's network and the protégé's elevated profile are providing opportunities to build political skill. It also may be the case that people with mentors had higher political skill prior to the relationship. That is, if one has been singled out to participate in a mentoring program, it could be in recognition of the strong potential recognized by superiors. If one has an informal mentoring relationship, it may be because he or she relates well to others and developed

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such a relationship as an outgrowth of his or her political skill. It may also be the case that the mentoring relationship was punitive; an individual whose interpersonal skills were derailing his career may have been placed in a mentoring relationship in an effort to help him or her.

An interesting situation occurred during administration of the survey to one of the classes. A male student raised his hand and laughingly asked, "Are you trying to find out how arrogant we are?" It was explained that he would be fully debriefed after completing the survey, and administration proceeded uneventfully. However, this incident raises the notion that participants may have been trying to guess at the purpose of the survey and/or present themselves a certain way. Including a measure of narcissism or social desirability would be one way in which future studies could consider the effects of personality and image management on results on the PSI. There is a popular notion that men are generally more confident of their abilities than women, particularly in the business and leadership arena. The between-sex comparison, however, revealed no such differences. The fact that all of the students were graduate students in business taking evening courses during the summer suggests that this sample may have been especially driven, and thus any between-gender difference would be minimized because of the type of female student likely to take these courses. In the two fast-track programs particularly, the participants are mid-career professionals likely already in a leadership position or in a position to assume one in the near future. Had the present study been undertaken with an undergraduate population, sex differences may well have manifested. Finally, as political skill is a relatively new construct, with significant correlations with self-monitoring and emotional intelligence

(Ferris et al., 2005; Semadar et al, 2006), exactly what is being measured by the Political Skill Inventory requires further study.

The final analysis yielded similarly surprising, though not as unexpected results. In the first analysis, results indicated that simply having a mentor was not associated with increased leadership self-efficacy. However, among those with a mentor, a higher quality mentoring relationship was associated with increased leadership self-efficacy. This suggests that having a good mentor is critical to the development of leadership self-efficacy. These results were consistent with previous studies assessing mentoring quality and domain-specific self-efficacy across a variety of domains such as nursing (Hayes, 1998), research skills (Love, Bahner, Jones, & Nilsson, 2007), and teaching (Clifford, 1999). Furthermore, these results support Scandura's (1992) theory that leadership self-efficacy should follow a similar pattern.

Results also suggest that political skill and leadership self-efficacy are associated with different types of relationships. It may be the case that to develop political skill, having someone who takes an interest in one's career and serves as a mentor is more important than how effective the mentoring relationship is. To develop leadership self-efficacy, however, it may be that having a strong mentor and a good relationship are critical. That suggests that simply having someone take an interest in one's career and having access to a mentor's organizational network are not enough to increase leadership self-efficacy. The quality of the mentoring relationship appears to be key in the protégé's development of leadership self-efficacy. For organizations, these results suggest that mentoring programs aimed at developing future leaders must focus on the qualitative

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aspects of the mentoring relationship. Simply pairing two people and telling them they are in a mentoring relationship will not produce the desired results. For formal mentoring programs, ensuring compatibility between partners and providing structure and goals may help position the relationship for success. For informal mentoring relationships, both partners should focus on ensuring that the relationship remains strong and productive for the protégé to reap the most benefit.

There are several limitations to the present study. One major limitation is that the study used a cross-sectional, correlational design, and thus causality cannot be inferred. Also, the sample consisted of graduate business students at a single university, and it is unknown whether results are generalizable to the business community. Furthermore, the participants might be considered to be two or even three sets of students. Individuals in fast track programs (MBA and MIS) are likely to have more professional experience and may already being groomed for executive leadership positions. These individuals may already have higher levels of leadership self-efficacy and political skill, and thus their experience might introduce a confounding factor.

Although the three groups (Fast Track MIS, Fast Track MBA, regular MBA) did not differ on any of the criterion variables, they did differ in terms of years of supervisory experience, length of the mentoring relationship, age and years of employment. Years of supervisory experience and length of the mentoring relationship were both controlled for, but age and years of employment were not. The reason for that was that previous research (Scandura & Williams, 2004) suggested length of the mentoring relationship influenced mentoring quality and should be controlled for. Supervisory experience is a form of

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mastery experience and the goal of the present study was to consider the effects of role modeling without mastery experience. Age and years of employment were each highly correlated with years of supervisory experience, and thus adding them as either covariates or in the first step of the hierarchical regressions would have been wasteful. However, it should be considered that those variables may affect the variables of interest. One would expect that students in the two fast track programs would be older and have more experience, which was the case in the present study. Perhaps the experience that comes with age or with learning the ropes of an organization would lead to higher outcomes regardless of the effects of mentoring.

Whereas self-efficacy is a well-researched construct with significant theoretical and empirical studies supporting its antecedents and effects, political skill represents a relatively new social effectiveness construct. All data were collected via self-report measures, which increase the chances of common source method variance. However, such research is common in social and behavioral sciences. As noted by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003), many studies use self-report measures in the social sciences. Suggested remedies for common source variance due to self-report measures include obtaining information from separate sources, distributing measures at different time points, or ensuring that scales have different rating systems (Podsakoff et al., 2003). In this study, the MFQ-9 used a 5-point Likert scale and the LSE and PSI used 7-point scales. Podsakoff and colleagues (2003) recognize such remedies are not always feasible. Further, as other mentoring researchers note, since the studies are interested in individuals' attitudes, the best way to measure these attitudes is to ask the individuals. (Lankau & Scandura, 2002.).

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Despite these qualifications, the study makes a contribution to the area of mentoring research and has implications both for theory and practice. Underhill's (2006) meta-analysis found a scarcity of studies that compared mentored and non-mentored groups. Furthermore, this may be the first study on mentoring and political skill development.

Day and Allen (2004) note that the direction of the relationship between self-efficacy and mentoring may be ambiguous because people who seek mentors may already have higher self-efficacy. A study in which self-efficacy for leadership is assessed prior to initiating a mentoring relationship would yield fruitful information about the nature of this relationship and should be considered in future studies.

Initial research has proven quite promising in terms of the effects of political skill on work and interpersonal outcomes. There may be a tendency to view political skill as a natural evolution of emotional intelligence, and while they share some similarities, the two are distinctly different, most notably in terms of drivers; political skill is an externally-focused construct that relates to the individual's influence on others, whereas emotional intelligence is an internally-focused construct that relates to how the individual perceives and understands the world. (Semadar et al., 2006). Although political skill is conceived of as a positive quality, Kolodinsky and colleagues (2004) found a curvilinear relationship between political skill and job performance, and that there is a point at which political skill is maximized to its fullest extent. Thus, higher levels of political skill may not always be best for optimal work outcomes. For this reason, more research is needed to determine the

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optimum level of political skill for an individual to attain individual and organizational success. This would be a fertile area for future research.

To address some of these limitations, a longitudinal study in which new employees are randomly assigned to have a mentor or not would help in determining the effects of mentoring. In such a study, protégés would be assessed for political skill and leadership self-efficacy prior to entering into the mentoring relationship and at different time points during the relationship. Data regarding rate of promotion and salary increases would be useful in determining protégé success, as would a measure completed by supervisors and peers of the protégé assessing his or her interpersonal skills. Although this kind of a study would yield fruitful information, it would take several years and would be complicated by the rate at which people change jobs.

Despite the limitations outlined, the present study contributes to the literature on mentoring and elucidates potential ways to enhance leadership self-efficacy and political skill, a construct that is undergoing significant study in psychology and business today.

Summary

Research focused on developing the next generation of leaders has increased recently for several reasons. The need to be globally competitive drives businesses in the 21st century. Further, flattened organizational charts, increased use of project-based teams, and changed demographics have led to a new definition of what and who a leader is. Identifying and developing future leaders will be vital to many businesses, and research focused on how best to develop leaders will greatly aid organizations. Political skill represents a relatively new construct that may help identify interpersonally savvy

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individuals who can become change agents. Leadership self-efficacy is necessary for those who wish to become the next generation of leaders. A better understanding of how leadership self-efficacy and political skill are developed, as well as whether and how mentoring can develop talent will aid organizations in their training and development programs.

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Appendix A

Demographic Data

1. Gender   ☐ Male   ☐ Female

2. Age _____

3. Race/Ethnicity
      ☐ White   ☐ Hispanic   ☐ African-American   ☐ More than one

      ☐ Asian   ☐ Native American   ☐ Other

4. Highest level of education completed:

   ☐ Bachelor's degree

   ☐ Master's degree

   ☐ Doctorate

5. Are you currently employed?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

      If yes,   ☐ Full-time   ☐ Part-time

6. Number of years of full-time employment _____

7. Have you ever been a direct supervisor of others?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

      If yes, for how many years total? _____

Appendix B

Self-Efficacy for Leadership Scale—Modified

Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements.
Please write the number corresponding to your answer on the line next to each item using the following scale:

1 = Strongly disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Slightly disagree
4 = Neutral
5 = Slightly agree
6 = Agree
7 = Strongly agree

1. _____ I feel that I know a lot more than most leaders about what it takes to be a good leader.
2. _____ I know what it takes to make a work group accomplish its tasks.
3. _____ In general, I am very good at leading a group of my peers.
4. _____ I am confident of my ability to influence a work group that I lead.
5. _____ I know what it takes to keep a work group running smoothly.
6. _____ I know how to encourage good work group performance.
7. _____ I feel comfortable allowing most group members to contribute to the task when I am leading a work group.
8. _____ Overall, I believe that I can lead a work group successfully.
9. _____ I believe that I can lead others by example.
10. _____ I feel that I can mold others' desires to accomplish the unit's goals.
11. _____ I believe that I insist on only the best performance.
12. _____ I feel that I display confidence in my co-workers.
13. _____ I feel that I can promote cooperation among unit members.
14. _____ I know how to encourage others to work toward the unit's goals
15. _____ I believe that I am able to encourage others to be a "team player"
16. _____ I am capable of communicating in a manner that inspires extra effort.

Appendix C

Political Skill Inventory

Instructions:
Using the following seven-point scale, please place the number on the blank before each item that best describes how much you agree with each statement about yourself.

$$1 = \text{Strongly disagree}$$
$$2 = \text{Disagree}$$
$$3 = \text{Slightly disagree}$$
$$4 = \text{Neutral}$$
$$5 = \text{Slightly agree}$$
$$6 = \text{Agree}$$
$$7 = \text{Strongly agree}$$

1. _____ I spend a lot of time and effort at work networking with others.
2. _____ I am able to make most people feel comfortable and at ease around me.
3. _____ I am able to communicate easily and effectively with others.
4. _____ It is easy for me to develop good rapport with most people.
5. _____ I understand people very well.
6. _____ I am good at building relationships with influential people at work.
7. _____ I am particularly good at sensing the motivations and hidden agendas of others.
8. _____ When communicating with others, I try to be genuine in what I say and do.
9. _____ At work, I know a lot of important people and am well connected.
10. _____ I spend a lot of time at work developing connections with others.
11. _____ I am good at getting people to like me.
12. _____ It is important that people believe I am sincere in what I say and do.
13. _____ I try to show a genuine interest in other people.
14. _____ I am good at using my connections and network to make things happen at work.
15. _____ I have good intuition or savvy about how to present myself to others.
16. _____ I always seem to instinctively know the right things to say or do to influence others.
17. _____ I pay close attention to people's facial expressions.
18. _____ I have developed a large network of colleagues and associates at work whom I can call on for support when I really need to get things done.

Appendix D

Mentor Questionnaire

Mentoring is described as a one-to-one relationship between a more experienced and senior person (the mentor) and a new entrant or less-experienced person (his/her protégé) in the organizational setup. The mentor need not be the immediate supervisor or department head and not necessarily from the same department. A mentor can generally be defined as an influential individual in your work environment who has advanced experience and knowledge and who is committed to providing upward mobility and support to your career

1. Based on the above definition, have you had or do you currently have a mentor?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

If yes, please complete the following questions as they relate to your most recent mentor:

2. My mentor is: ☐ My same gender   ☐ Opposite gender

3. My mentor is: ☐ My same race/ethnicity   ☐ Of a different
race/ethnicity

3. My mentor is: ☐ My direct supervisor   ☐ Not my direct
supervisor

4. My mentor was: ☐ Assigned to me by my company   ☐ Not assigned to me

5. The length of time of our mentoring relationship was _____ years.

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Appendix E

Mentoring Functions Questionnaire

Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements about your most current mentoring relationship, according to the following rating scale:

1 = Strongly disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly agree

1. _____ My mentor takes a personal interest in my career.
2. _____ My mentor helps me coordinate professional goals.
3. _____ My mentor has devoted special time and consideration to my career.
4. _____ I share personal problems with my mentor.
5. _____ I exchange confidences with my mentor.   .
6. _____ I consider my mentor to be a friend.
7. _____ I try to model my behavior after my mentor.
8. _____ I admire my mentor's ability to motivate others.
9. _____ I respect my mentor's ability to teach others.

VITA

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