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Enacting Effective Mentoring Behaviors: Development and Initial Investigation of the Cuboid of Mentoring

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Abstract

Our understanding of how to maximize the benefits of mentoring relationships for employee development has been limited by a vague understanding of what effective mentors are actually doing and how they are doing it. To begin to remedy this, we conducted one qualitative interview study of well-respected mentors to uncover the breadth and detail of their behaviors, and one quantitative study to see how a subset of these behaviors would be endorsed under two moderating conditions. Our qualitative study consisted of 28 interviews followed by detailed coding and analysis, and yielded a new framework of mentoring behaviors we named the cuboid of mentoring. This framework provides a rich set of behavioral statements that could be mined for research and practice purposes. Our quantitative investigation used a policy-capturing approach to investigate the extent to which experienced mentors endorsed mentoring objectives and behaviors under different conditions. This study showed that mentoring actions are purposeful, and the methodology demonstrates a paradigm for further study of boundary conditions of mentoring behaviors and supports conclusions from the qualitative study regarding how mentors think about the objectives and behaviors of mentoring.

Keywords Mentoring · Mentoring relationships · Mentoring behaviors

Mentoring is a popular employee development tool in both public and private sectors. Mentoring refers to a developmental relationship between a more experienced mentor and a less experienced organizational member referred to as a mentee or protégé for the purposes of promoting the mentee's career (Ragins, 2016). Mentoring relationships differ from other dyadic relationships in organizations (e.g., supervisor/subordinate) in their focus on learning and development with respect to career progression (of the mentee). Mentoring continues to be a popular developmental tool in organizations (Cole, 2015; Welsh & Dixon, 2016) in part because they can be adapted to multiple organizational contexts and developmental needs. Extant research shows that employees who receive workplace mentoring at work are better compensated, more likely to be promoted, and have greater job satisfaction and career

commitment than peers who are not mentored (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004).

There are two points worth making about the existing research on mentoring effectiveness. First, several meta-analyses have indicated that mentoring produces positive effects on mentee career outcomes (Allen, Finkelstein, & Poteet, 2009; Underhill, 2006), as well as on other behavioral, attitudinal, health-related, relational, and motivational outcomes (Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2008). However, effect sizes are often weak. For example, Eby et al. (2008) reported low mean corrected correlations ($0.06 < r_c < 0.16$) between the receipt of mentoring and satisfaction, career satisfaction, competence development, and job performance. These low effect sizes suggest mentoring as a broad construct does not have a clear impact on mentoring outcomes. Second, researchers emphasize that merely having a mentor vs. not having a mentor is not satisfactorily informative for predicting or affecting outcomes; mentors range widely in their quality, their effort, and their style (Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Wanberg, Walsh, & Hezlett, 2003). The extent to which mentors perform key functions of their role (e.g., serving career-relevant and psychosocial needs) is thought to be a more critical factor (Allen, Eby, & Lentz, 2006). If what mentors *do* is

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predictive of mentoring outcomes, then the better we understand *mentor behaviors*, the better we can understand the fundamental mechanisms underlying mentoring, and the better we can support mentor development.

While there has been considerable research on mentoring over the past 30 years, specific behaviors that constitute maximally effective mentoring have not been rigorously investigated, and thus are not well-defined. Accordingly, the goals of the current research are to elucidate how mentors specifically enact mentoring in pursuit of mentee development, and to begin to explore how endorsements of mentor behaviors may be contingent on factors with respect to the mentee and mentoring relationship. Our research responds to general calls for more person-centric approaches to understanding mentoring (Allen & Poteet, 2011; Bearman, Blake-Beard, Hunt, & Crosby, 2007), as well as calls for more research to better understand (how or why) *specific mentor behaviors* create maximally satisfying and effective mentor relationships (Hezlett & Gibson, 2005).

That effective mentor behaviors have not been explicitly defined in the literature may surprise some readers. In the following section, we review prior research that *approaches* studying mentor behavior, make the case for understanding the importance of understanding mentor actions in terms of discrete action units, and summarize the benefits of understanding and documenting mentor behaviors in detail.

What Do Mentors Do?

Although research has shown that mentoring is effective at enabling learning and promoting skills, very little is known about what are the specific actions that mentors can take to encourage these positive outcomes (Eller, Lev, & Feurer, 2014). There have been two general approaches to understanding mentor behaviors. The traditional approach is through measuring mentor functions, and the other is documenting mentor effectiveness within narrow domains such as nursing and graduate mentoring.

Function Approaches

Nearly all scholarly work on mentoring gives a nod to the seminal work of Kram (1985) who introduced a model of developmental relationships that provides two key functions: career-related and psychosocial. Career-related functions are what a mentor does that directly help to advance a mentee's career (such as providing visibility, protection, and coaching), while psychosocial functions include what a mentor does to help the mentee develop a sense of competence and effectiveness through counseling and friendship. Subsequent research was devoted to developing measures of these mentoring functions and investigating the empirical viability of the model in a

variety of contexts (e.g., Ensher & Murphy, 1997; Noe, 1988). Mentor functions are assessed via short scales (e.g., Scandura, 1992; Scandura & Ragins, 1993), which facilitate their use in studying the relationships between mentor programs and outcomes (e.g., Allen et al., 2006). To be clear, we make the distinction between a mentoring function (which includes both a goal—provide support—and generic measurable activities) and mentoring behaviors, which are more specific (in the moment) and may vary depending on characteristics of the mentor, the mentee, and the context. We are not critical of mentor function research per se but recognize the need for a more detailed, nuanced description of what effective mentors do.

The reliance on functions to understand mentoring processes has fallen under critical scrutiny by several scholars including those involved in the development and use of these measures. For example, Scandura and Pellegrini (2007) and Pellegrini and Scandura (2005) suggested that relying on the standard methods of measuring mentoring functions might be obscuring distinctions between satisfying and dissatisfying relationships. Allen, Shockley, and Poteat (2010) went further and articulated that "although the investigation of career and psychosocial mentoring functions has resulted in a wealth of accumulated knowledge that has advanced the mentoring literature, an almost exclusive reliance on this framework for studying what occurs within mentoring relationships has detracted from honing in on specific mentoring behaviors" (p. 73). Lankau and Scandura (2007) lamented that "research has examined relationships between mentoring functions, job attitudes, and job performance without explicit understanding of 'what' is learned or 'how' mentors and protégés engage in learning, resulting in a 'black-box' approach that focuses on inputs and outcomes more than processes" (p. 99). Others concur that one of the most important research directions to advance the field is to drill-down on specific behaviors, processes, and microprocesses (Allen & Poteet, 2011; Bearman et al., 2007; Fletcher & Ragins, 2007; McCauley & Guthrie, 2007). Our research opens this ubiquitous "black-box" of mentoring (Lankau & Scandura, 2007).

Our point here is that while mentor function ratings may predict mentoring outcomes, we still do not really have a clear understanding of what is *actually happening* in these relationships—what the process looks like. If a mentor "gives a challenging assignment", for example, what behaviors do they carry out to do that successfully? Additionally, we don't know if those behaviors vary depending on characteristics of the mentee or contextual factors.

Domain-Specific Approaches

There have also been several attempts to document mentoring at a behavioral level within specific domains. Here, we review these studies and note the ways in which they fall short of the detailed and nuanced descriptions we hope to achieve.

Eller et al. (2014) noted the value of professional mentors to the development of novice nurses but bemoaned the lack of specific guidance as to which *specific mentor behaviors* would be the most useful. To address this gap, they sought "to investigate the mentor–protégé relationship during the mentoring experience … to discover factor (sic) protégés and their mentors perceive to be the key components of an effective mentoring relationship" (p. 816). To do so, the researchers held focus groups with both mentors and protégés, asking open-ended questions about "key components" critical to effective mentoring. Content analysis of responses revealed eight components: open communication and accessibility, goals and challenges, passion and inspiration, caring personal relationship, mutual respect and trust, exchange of knowledge, independence and collaboration, and role modeling. While these components are broader than typical mentor function models, they are specific to nursing; further, we would argue that they are still not sufficiently detailed and nuanced to understand mentor actions in general.

In the domain of academic (graduate student) mentoring, Crawford and Yob (2011); (Yob & Crawford, 2012; Crawford, Randolph, & Yob, 2014) created a theoretically based taxonomy and validated scale of mentoring built from 94 behaviors and characteristics representing four academic attributes (competence, availability, induction, and challenge) and three psychosocial attributes (personal qualities, communication, and emotional support). For present purposes, there are three problems. First, while there are similarities between academic and workplace mentoring (Eby et al., 2008; Eby et al., 2013), there are also important distinctions. For example, Eby and colleagues noted the key difference in the developmental stage of mentees across these contexts, naturally contributing to different needs and purposes for mentoring. Second, the items on the Yob and Crawford scale do contain behaviors, but also nonbehavioral characteristics such as "Holds an appropriate degree in content area" and "Has … knowledge of research design." Third, most (if not all) behaviors are insufficiently detailed to enable a clear understanding of how a mentor might enact them to support the development of a mentee (e.g., "Provides clear instruction" or "Requires professional writing.").

Finally, Hamlin and Sage (2011) examined mentoring in formal workplace programs and sought to "explore the types of mentor and mentee behaviours that are perceived as critical factors contributing to either a positive or negative mentoring experience for the mentee and the mentor" (p. 752). The researchers interviewed 10 mentees and asked them to identify an "action/behaviour which you wish all mentors … would adopt if and when faced with fulfilling these roles and responsibilities in the formal mentoring relationship" (p. 761). Subsequent coding and analysis revealed 61 specific mentor actions, which were further reduced to 11 effective mentor behaviors. Two of these behaviors are "Ensures expectations

of the mentoring relationship and the agendas for meetings are clearly established" and "Allows the mentee to think through issues and make their own decisions" (p. 763).

Hamlin and Sage's (2011) research focused on workplace mentoring, and the resulting behaviors are more detailed (and thus more easily visualized) than prior attempts. However, even at this level of detail, there might be multiple ways in which a mentor might allow a mentee to think through an issue, and someone seeking to improve their mentoring still lacks guidance on what specifically should be done. Is allowing a mentee to think through an issue accomplished by being silent, giving an assignment, verbally encouraging the action?

A second concern is that Hamlin and Sage (2011) restricted their data collection to perceptions of mentees. At least some mentor behaviors may be beyond the awareness of the mentee. For example, an effective mentor may contact a colleague to collect feedback on a protégé, or prepare for a meeting by reflecting on the developmental needs of the mentee. Finally, we believe that mentoring is a complex process and cannot be understood fully by as few as 11 behaviors. Consequently, while there has been some progress in understanding at a behavioral level what effective mentors do, there is work to be done.

In sum, while numerous researchers have called for a better understanding of what mentors do, there has not yet been a broad, systematic investigation of mentor behaviors. Further, there is no prior research on whether mentor behaviors are situationally contingent. Accordingly, the purpose of our research is twofold. First, we take an inductive, phenomenological approach to understanding what mentors do. Second, we take a deductive, experimental approach to show how mentor choices for behavior are context sensitive.

The Present Research

To better understand what effective mentors do, we conducted two studies to investigate: (a) the breadth and detail of how mentoring is enacted by mentors and (b) whether endorsements of behaviors depend on contextual factors. Our first study is a qualitative investigation with semistructured interviews of mentors known in their organizations to be effective at mentoring. This study was exploratory and descriptive in nature; we set out to capture a broad variety of mentoring behaviors while providing a level of description on detail of the enactment of these behaviors not previously encapsulated in the literature.

Study 1

Our goal in study 1 was to extract a rich set of behaviors to broadly define what good mentors do—behaviors that are

sufficiently detailed and nuanced that they are easily visualized by existing and potential mentors. We do not pose hypotheses or even research questions but apply an inductive approach to gather rich descriptions from the mentor point of view.

Participants

Participants were mentors who were recruited through one of several contacts of the first two authors. These contacts were comprised of directors of mentoring programs known to the researchers, mentoring researchers and practitioners, and other colleagues in Industrial/ Organizational (I/O) psychology and management. Contacts provided names of effective mentors who might be interested in being interviewed. Mentors indicating they were willing to be contacted received a recruitment message via email and were scheduled for an interview.

Our final sample consisted of 28 mentors. The sample consisted of 11 females and 17 males. Twenty-three mentors were Caucasian, three were African-American, one Hispanic, and one Asian. Ages ranged from 28 to 71 years, with a mean age of 48.6. Almost 80% had both formal and informal mentoring experience. The sample largely ranged from mid-level management to senior executives; industries included accounting, retail, higher education, technology, and coaching. Some interviewees worked independently, some worked for small or mid-size companies, and others worked for large multinational corporations. The 28 mentors came from 21 different organizations. Seven mentees had participated in an international accredited mentor training program and three from a professional association's mentoring interest group. Six mentors were referred from a university's mentoring program, although in our interviews, they provided critical incidents related to mentoring both students and full-time working mentees.

Our sample of 28 falls well within typical research practices and recommended guidelines for phenomenological and grounded theory research. With respect to research practices, 28 is the median number of interviews in 950 qualitative studies reviewed by Mason (2010). With respect to published guidelines, Bertaux (1981) suggested 15 as the minimum number of participants in qualitative studies, Morse (1994) recommended 35 participants in ethnographic and grounded theory studies, and Creswell (1998) recommended five to 25 participants for phenomenological investigations and 20 to 30 for grounded theory studies. Finally, Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) demonstrated empirically that saturation can be reached with as few as 12 studies. Thus, our total number of interviewees is near the midpoint of recommended sample sizes in the literature and over twice the number demonstrated to be necessary for saturation in one empirical study.

Procedure

Interview Protocol Development We elected to use a modified version of the classic critical incident technique (CIT) developed by Flanagan (1954). The notion of a critical incident closely aligns with our implicit definition of an effective mentor behavior—activity taken by mentors that had a demonstrable impact on a mentee. Flanagan defined an incident as "any observable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act" (p. 327) and further defined a *critical* incident as one that has "been demonstrated to have made the difference between success and failure" on a particular activity. The CIT also has been applied in similar investigations, e.g., differentiating effective from ineffective managerial behaviors (Borman & Brush, 1993).

Open-ended questions required mentors to specify behaviors executed that were thought to achieve specific goals related to a particularly effective mentoring incident. Additionally, we created a set of prompts to ensure that mentors were responding at the appropriate behavioral level. An example of the first question was "Tell me in as much detail as you can recall what you did during this incident that you believe had an impact on your protégé's development?" An example of clarification prompt was "When did your behavior start and stop?"

Interview Procedure Mentors completed basic background information and informed consent for the study during a brief, emailed pre-interview survey. The first two authors jointly conducted the first interview to calibrate cadence and style. The remaining interviews were split between them. Interviews took place at a location of the mentor's choice (often their workplace) or via Skype. Interviews lasted between 42 and 126 min, averaging 70 min. Interviews were recorded on a small digital device and later transcribed by a transcription service.

Data Coding Procedure Our coding procedure evolved organically with new discoveries in our data. At the first stage of coding, we utilized NVivo software. NVivo allows verbatim excerpts of any length (referred to as "references") from transcriptions to be placed into categories (referred to as "nodes") deemed meaningful by the researcher. The three authors independently reviewed the same interview transcript and placed any references judged to be descriptive of a mentoring behavior into nodes that categorized the behavior evident in the data. After completing this interview, we met to compare level of detail and look for commonalities across nodes. We then recoded the same interview with our new list of calibrated nodes and then repeated the procedure from the initial meeting. We all coded one more interview, determined that our coding was converging, and split the remainder of the

interviews so that each had two independent coders. Each coder had the freedom to independently add new nodes as new unique mentor behaviors emerged in subsequent interviews.

At the second stage of coding, we focused on the specificity of captured behaviors. In our initial review of the nodes generated at the early stage, we realized that our desired level of specificity in this study would not be possible without introducing another step to the analysis. Although our nodes provided a more specific account of mentoring than what exists in the literature, they were not as nuanced as we hoped. On the other hand, the references themselves (i.e., the direct excerpts from the mentors' interviews) were too context-specific and idiosyncratic. Our goal was to end up with something in between the two.

Moreover, we also realized here that some of our nodes were stated more as specific actions conducted in a mentoring session, some more as objectives to achieve in a mentoring session, and some a combination of those two. This was a critical insight (and an example of the benefits of inductive, qualitative research). When effective mentors are asked what they *do*, they not only talk about *what* they do, but *why* they do it. It was vital to clearly disentangle the action from the objective, as we believed that many different actions could be taken to achieve a specific objective, and likewise any specific action may be done to achieve multiple objectives.

The combination of these insights led us to conceptualize our data in a new way, leading to a model depicted by a three-dimensional space akin to a cuboid. See Fig. 1. The three faces of the cuboid allow us to characterize more specifically what is meant by a mentor behavior. The American Psychological Association's online glossary of psychological terms refers to a behavior as "The actions by which an organism adjusts to its environment" ("Glossary of Psychological Terms," 2018). We consider mentor behaviors to be comprised of both actions, and the purpose of those actions, i.e., how the mentor intends to adjust to the environment. Thus, mentor behaviors can include both a specific *action* (across the bottom of the

cuboid) and a specific *objective* to be achieved by the action (down the side of the cuboid).

Actions refer to broad categories of activities characterizing what mentors do. They are similar to the action verbs in a task statement from job analysis; when someone mentors, they might ask questions, encourage introspection, or give feedback. They demonstrate the breadth and variability of mentor activity. A mentor who gives an assignment is clearly doing something different than if they connect their mentee to a career resource. Our 33 actions represent a more thorough description of what mentors do than has been previously seen in the mentoring literature. However, they are not sufficiently detailed nor nuanced as we had hoped to achieve. Saying a mentor gives an assignment does not permit a clear, visual image in the minds of all observers. This would be accomplished by our enactments.

Objectives are the goals the mentor tries to achieve during their work with the mentee. For example, mentors may set goals of improving their relationship with their mentee, improving his or her competence, or creating opportunities for their mentee. Our 24 objectives represent a more thorough characterization of what mentors intend to accomplish than exists in the literature.

Enactments are statements of specific behaviors that clearly describe the what and how of the behavior in a sufficiently nuanced way that it can be clearly visualized. To better understand the differences in specificity between actions and enactments, consider the action *Providing reassurance*. On its own, this action is discernable from actions such as *Asking questions* or *Giving feedback*. But it would be unlikely that two mentors would visualize the same behavior called by it, nor is providing reassurance alone sufficiently instructive as to what a mentor should do. In contrast, consider three enactments nested within *Providing reassurance* in the cuboid: (1) I remind my mentee that it is ok not to know everything and that people at senior levels don't know everything either; (2) Early on I reassure my mentee that I am there to help create a support structure to help them be successful in any way that I can and it is ok to be a beginner at the beginning; and (3) In the wake of a bad day I gently remind the mentee that bad days are expected to happen sometime and that I am still confident in their ability to stick to the plans that we've built. Note each is easily visualized, distinct from each other, yet all ways of being reassuring. A mentor wanting to be reassuring could use any or all of these enactments to improve their effectiveness. The enactments are nuanced in that the context is either explicit ("In the wake of a bad day") or implicit ("it's OK to be a beginner at the beginning").

Objectives and actions (the front face of the cuboid) are crossed. Actions that emerged from coding for one objective can be different than those that emerged for another objective. Similarly, objectives linked to one action can differ from those for another action. Mentor behavior, at one level of specificity,
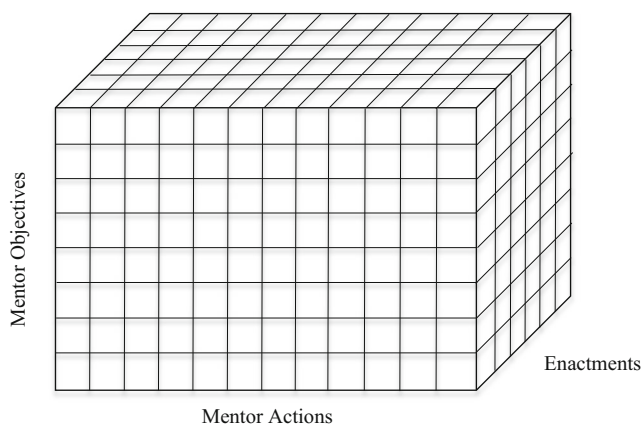

Fig. 1 The cuboid of mentoring

results from mentors carrying out an action for an objective. The enactments, nested within objective-action pairings, are nuanced, detailed descriptions of how that objective-action pairing could be carried out. The enactments currently in the cuboid are still limited by our sampling. It is likely that additional qualitative research would uncover additional enactments that would be nested in objective-action pairings.

Creating the Cuboid We executed several steps to create the cuboid. First, the nodes were reviewed to pull out distinct actions. When all nodes were reviewed, and distinct actions created, we went through one round of vetting to be sure that there was no conceptual overlap, and then created specific definitions of the actions (see Table 1). Next, nodes were reviewed for distinct objectives, using the same process. Definitions for these objectives appear in Table 2.

Next, we coded the originally agreed-upon common nodes into action/objective combinations. After these nodes were coded and we felt were sufficiently calibrated, we split the remaining nodes among the three of us and coded each into the matrix. Each node was reviewed by two coders, who met to discuss and resolve any disagreements in coding. This resulted in a matrix that had all nodes coded into action/objective combinations. As expected, several action/objective combinations in the matrix did not have any nodes in them. For example, there were no instances of mentors who provided advice (an action) to build a personal relationship (an objective), or who gave an assignment (an action) to remove obstacles (an objective).

To complete the matrix at the third stage of coding, we returned to NVivo to find all relevant references (the original language of the mentors that had been originally coded into those nodes) for each of the nodes previously categorized. Those references were used to craft enactments. They are stated in such a way that they are not so specifically unique to an action/objective paring such that they would not be generalizable across mentors and contexts.

As enactments represent a new level of specificity in describing mentor behavior, we created criteria of what constituted a good enactment. Based on our above definition of an enactment and our goal that the resulting enactments be generalizable across mentors and mentees, we created a verification system such that new enactments should be nuanced (embedded within a context), easily visualized, potentially applicable to any mentor, and potentially applicable to most mentees of any mentor.

The second author wrote enactments for each of the nodes in each action/objective combination. A separate enactment was created for each unique behavior being described, using language intended to meet our established criteria. Some enactments closely mirrored the language provided by a mentor in the sample, but most represented an amalgamation of the

Table 1   Action definitions

Being self-aware: Mentor is reflective and honest with themselves regarding their own mentoring style as well as personal expertise, skills, and what they can offer their mentee.

Being flexible: Mentor is less rigid with rules or typical process for the mentoring relationship by taking extraneous factors into consideration.

Collecting information: Mentor gathers information from personal and/or written sources to be used in interactions with mentee.

Setting expectations: Mentor lays out what is required of one or both parties, possibly including a code of conduct for communication, mentee responsibilities in the relationship, etc.

Asking questions: Mentor asks specific questions or general questions to mentee that elicit either what the mentee knows about a topic or makes the mentee think more deeply about different situations.

Assessing needs: Mentor deciding for themselves the knowledge, skills, or competencies in which the mentee requires help, or understanding the gaps in the mentee's plans.

Assessing interests: Mentor asks questions of the mentee or observes the mentee in order to understand their mentees' interests in terms of the nature of tasks and projects they would like to undertake, their goals for the future, and their personal interests.

Assessing current skills: Mentor evaluates the skill set currently possessed by the mentee. This evaluation can be reached via probing questions, or evaluating either current tasks or projects or those completed in the past.

Analyzing issues: Mentor diagnoses problems or critical weaknesses that are stopping the mentee from accomplishing goals or attaining successful completion of previously agreed-upon tasks.

Listening: Mentor actively and attentively listens to the mentee without redirecting the discussion.

Checking in: Mentor makes calls, sends emails, or visits their mentee.

Socializing with mentee: Mentor spends social time with mentee in a setting outside a work environment; this may include going out for drinks, having meals together, etc.

Making general conversation: Mentor engages in small talk about nonwork activities such as the weather, their interests in sports or other hobbies, etc.

Giving praise: Mentor commends a mentee's success or efforts that went into completing a task.

Providing reassurance: Mentor restates to the mentee that steps undertaken are in the right direction or helps to calm the mentee when things are seemingly going awry.

Encouraging introspection: Mentor encourages mentee to reflect on their past and current selves, as a person and as a professional, and to look for insights into their current situations.

Sharing stories: Mentor shares personal stories of past experiences of successes and challenges similar to what the mentee is going through currently.

Sharing inside knowledge: Mentor lets mentees know about how things work behind the scenes, introducing the mentee to how things are done in a particular workplace or business sector.

Evaluating work: Mentor monitors the work and goal progress of a mentee and makes a judgment regarding the quality and/or quantity of the work completed by the mentee.

Giving feedback: Mentor lets the mentee know how effectively a task/product was done, and/or what requires more work.

Giving praise: Mentor commends a mentee's success or efforts that went into completing a task (or the product of work).

Table 1 (continued)

Providing perspective: Mentor points out other angles of looking at an issue, or helps mentee see a problem or discrepancy from another stakeholder's point of view.

Providing advice: Mentor offers suggestions or recommendations to mentee regarding upcoming decisions or actions.

Walking through process: Mentor guides mentee in a hands-on way through various steps required to accomplish a task. This could also include listing a series of subsequent tasks in order to acquaint them to a new project.

Persuading: Mentor convinces mentee to undertake or change a course of action through reasoning or sustained effort.

Giving assignments: Mentor provides mentees with particular tasks or project opportunities. This may include tasks that help mentee improve skills, develop competencies, or strengthen expertise.

Allowing to fail: Mentor provides mentee with room to experiment with their decisions, planning, or thoughts related to prospective actions, even if they anticipate that the mentee is likely to fail given their approach.

Providing modeling: Mentor shows mentees how they would do something if they had to tackle a similar task, or acts in a way that demonstrates effective behavior to the mentee.

Providing resources: Mentor makes resources available to mentee, such as books, websites, technology, or even financial assistance in special circumstances.

Connecting to others: Mentor either requests their colleagues take mentees under their wing or makes their mentees aware of opportunities.

Protecting mentee: Mentor stands up for mentee to other stakeholders and steps in when mentee requires help. This may also include mentors directing assignments away from the mentee that are not in their best interest.

Promoting mentee: Mentor promotes the mentee in forums such as meetings in which they can talk up their mentee.

Passing on opportunities: Mentor makes mentee aware of growth opportunities in their career or occupational field.

Note: The definitions are presented in the order in which the actions appear in the cuboid of mentoring, and were arranged roughly from more general actions to more specific developmental and future-oriented actions

descriptions of more than one mentor, using language that fit the spirit of the statements.

The other two authors and a new, trained coder independently verified all written enactments against the criteria of nuanced, easily visualized, applicable to all/most mentors, and applicable to all/most mentees. Two coders reviewed 238 enactments. Any discrepancies in the coding of verification criteria were discussed between coders until there was complete (100%) agreement. After this initial review process, the first author and new coder showed perfect agreement in their coding in another subset of 50 enactments. Following this, all remaining enactments were divided between the two coders and independently verified.

The second author created 826 original enactments for review. Any enactment that met only two or fewer verification criteria was eliminated ($N = 63$). If an enactment failed just one criterion ($N = 54$), an attempt was made to rewrite the enactment to fix the issue to retain it. For example, if the enactment was worded originally such that it was not deemed to be possible for any mentor, the wording was adjusted to

Table 2 Definitions of objectives

Build personal relationship: Mentor wants a relationship with the mentee that is characterized by mutual trust, respect, and open communication.

Improve overall quality of mentoring: Mentor wants to continually improve the mentoring process or the quality of information shared with the mentee.

Know more about the mentee: Mentor wants to gain a deeper understanding of the preferences and style of the mentee so that they can alter their actions accordingly.

Relationship maintenance: Mentor wants to maintain a positive, open, and trusting relationship with the mentee over the duration of the mentoring.

Build confidence or efficacy: Mentor wants to help the mentee increase their confidence in their skills, their work, and their decisions and their efficacy to face potential challenges.

Improve emotional state: Mentor wants to reduce negative or increase positive feelings/emotions in the mentee, especially when mentees are required to undertake challenging tasks where they are likely to be emotionally flustered.

Instill accountability: Mentor wants the mentee to take responsibility for meeting their commitments and reaching their goals, even in the face of obstacles.

Promote adaptability: Mentor wants the mentee to use their skills sets in a malleable manner, and be able to identify when a course change is necessary.

Competence development: Mentor wants the mentee to build on competencies they are lacking or have not developed sufficiently.

Improve efficiency: Mentor wants the mentee to perform tasks in a time-efficient manner, with ease, fewer impediments, and better understanding.

Improve quality of work products: Mentor wants the mentee to produce work that is of higher quality.

Expertise development: Mentor wants the mentee to build on competencies in which they have already reached a sufficient level of proficiency to reach a level of expertise.

Understand the steps involved to do a task: Mentor wants the mentee to be able to work on a project or a previously agreed-upon goal by understanding the nuances and subsequent stages that lead to the final stages.

Get mentees started: Mentor wants the mentee to gain preliminary knowledge and confidence to kick start a new project.

Remove obstacles: Mentor wants the mentee to carry out tasks or assignments without having to spend unnecessary time on things that could be resolved quickly for them by their mentor.

Garner knowledge and insight: Mentor wants the mentee to be able to obtain a deeper understanding and appreciation of information needed to perform a task, make a decision, etc.

Make sound decisions: Mentor wants the mentee to be able to make informed choices using effective decision-making processes.

Instill psychological safety: Mentor wants to the mentee to feel secure such that there would not be any repercussions for failing as a result of reasonable risk-taking.

Build or expand a professional network: Mentor wants the mentee to create a network of professional contacts they can rely on to bolster their current standing and expand their career or resources.

Resolving interpersonal issues: Mentor wants the mentee overcome interpersonal conflict and have sound interpersonal relationships with other stakeholders.

Table 2 (continued)

Creating opportunities: Mentor wants the mentee to gain access to opportunities that were previously not available to them.
Prepared for life: Mentor wants the mentee attain a rounded experience so that they are better equipped to face later challenges, both expected and atypical, in and out of the workplace.
Clarify career objectives: Mentor wants the mentee to be able to iterate their objectives and plans for reaching their proximal and distal goals.
Career progression: Mentor wants the mentee to seek out and obtain roles that advance them in their careers.

Note: The definitions are presented in the order in which the objectives appear in the cuboid of mentoring, and were arranged roughly from more from those focused on the immediate relationship and needs of the mentee to more long-term objectives

increase the level of generality. This process yielded the final count of 758 unique enactments.

We then created the final matrix. To do so, each enactment that met the four criteria was placed into the matrix. The objectives were purposefully placed in an order that roughly ranged from those that were more focused on the immediate needs of the relationship, to the mentees more personal and then more skill-building needs, on to more long-term career objectives. The actions were less clearly categorized in a meaningful order and thus appear as they initially came up in coding. Additionally, each enactment was placed in any objective-action combination fit, in addition to that which it was originally designed to capture.

Results and Discussion

The fully populated mentoring cuboid is available online at Online cuboid of mentoring http://mentormatrix.colostate.edu/. A screenshot of the cuboid is shown in Fig. 2. Figure 2 shows how by hovering over an objective-action combination, a list of enactments pops up. Underlined enactments represent those that appear elsewhere in the cuboid and clicking on them reveals other objectives and actions for which they can be used. The cuboid includes 758 enactments represented in at least one place in the matrix; 449 enactments appear more than once. The cuboid consists of a front matrix of 24 mentor objectives by 33 mentor actions, with the enactments nested within objective × action cells.

We provide these counts to allow for a general understanding of the breadth of these actions, objectives, and enactments; we caution against overinterpretation of the meaning of these numbers. Recall that these enactment statements were inspired by the verbiage of the mentors we interviewed, but do not correspond verbatim to interviewees' behavioral descriptions. For instance, in some cases, several mentors reported similar types of behaviors that differed in terms of the specific context in which they emerged, and one enactment statement was written to capture the common essence of their behaviors using language that met our enactment criteria. Furthermore, this process by which enactments were created does not allow

for counts of how many times a particular mentor reported performing a behavior that depicted an action/objective combination, nor does it allow for counts of how many mentors are represented in these combinations.

Next, we provide some interpretation of the enactments and the structure that the cuboid provides to understanding mentoring behaviors. We suggest how our framework and the specific enactments within could be used to further mentoring research and practice.

Interpretation of the Cuboid Recall that the cuboid is populated with *enactments*, named such because they are descriptions of the nuanced way that our expert mentors enacted a particular *action* for the purposes of achieving a specific *objective*. The structure provides a rich set of information that can be explored in multiple ways.

Mentor Objectives First, consider the objectives. One noteworthy feature of the objectives is that they are both immediate and long term in nature. Some mentors work with their mentees to meet long-term objectives such as mentee career progression or expertise development. But mentors also set objectives in the here and now—helping to improve their mentee's emotional state today, getting their mentee started on the first step of a task later that day, or resolving an interpersonal conflict that occurred for the mentee that week. This level of detail meets calls by Dougherty and Dreher (2007) and Wanberg et al. (2003) for greater understanding of the proximal and distal criteria of mentoring.

Another notable feature of this set of objectives is that many focus on the mentoring relationship itself. Prior investigations of what mentors do have focused primarily on the effect of the mentor on the mentee, but not on the mentoring relationship. Mentors utilize several different actions to build their relationship, know more about the mentee, maintain the relationship, and improve their quality of mentoring. While many mentors in our sample set an objective to build quality, mutually trusting relationships at the start, they also recognized the dynamic nature of a mentoring relationship and set objectives to continually monitor and improve that relationship. Research echoes what these mentors seem to intuit: that a strong quality relationship is more likely to yield beneficial mentoring outcomes (e.g., Ragins, 2016; Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000).

The objective of competence development was of particular interest as it is so essential to most organizations; researchers have suggested that competence development may be an important proximal, intervening factor toward performance improvement directly affected by good mentoring (Lankau & Scandura, 2007; McCauley & Guthrie, 2007). Notably, this objective emerged as the most populated plane in the cuboid, with a large number of associated actions and the largest number of enactments. Our expert mentors reported

Fig. 2 Sample of online cuboid of mentoring. Note: The figure shows pop-up box with enactments when user hovers over the cell corresponding to "set expectation" (objective) and "instilling psychological safety" (action)

utilizing a vast and varied toolset to help their mentees develop in their areas of need and interest. However, there are other developmental objectives—mentors interviewed set other objectives including expertise development, improving quality of work product, and increasing efficiency.

Relationship to Mentor Functions

Recall that many other researchers (e.g., Allen & Poteet, 2011; Bearman et al., 2007; Fletcher & Ragins, 2007; Lankau & Scandura, 2007) have called for more detailed investigations into mentoring behaviors beyond career-related and psychosocial mentor functions. Career-related functions include five more specific functions: sponsorship, coaching, protection, challenging assignments, and exposure. Psychosocial functions include confirmation, counseling, friendship, and role modeling. If you think of a "function" of mentoring as the purpose that the mentoring serves, then an "objective" of mentoring should be a parallel concept.

Our objectives do not all easily segment orthogonally into those two general categories. For example, an objective like "instill accountability" is one that promotes a behavior that should serve one's career-related pursuits, but also contributes to the quality of the mentoring relationship itself, with a psychosocial flavor. "Building confidence and efficacy" is often done with psychosocially supportive behaviors, such as reassurance, praise, and positive feedback, but certainly contributes to the type of mentee behaviors that allow for maximizing career potential.

Mentor Actions We now focus on the actions component of the mentoring cuboid—33 categories that describe the type of behavior carried out to meet an objective. Although actions are verbs describing what a mentor is doing, they are at a higher level of abstraction than enactments (described below). They serve as categories for the more specific, nuanced enactments. We see them as closer to the level of the behaviors that have appeared in past literature. Although they are helpful for describing the general things mentors do, we see their purpose in our framework as corralling the specific, more meaningful enactments into categories.

Additionally, one can see that some (though not all) of the action verbs themselves are associated with objects. For instance, mentors do not just "assess," but rather they "assess interests" or "assess current skills"; they do not simply "analyze," they "analyze issues." One could argue these

objects are objectives in and of themselves, but we see them as more immediate and distinct targets of an act that in concert with that act form a complete action that is then directed toward an objective.

Like our objectives, the set of actions includes some that may be commonly expected as types of mentoring behaviors, such as providing advice, giving assignments, sharing stories, giving feedback, and connecting to others. Several analytical types of actions emerged, such as analyzing issues, assessing interests, assessing needs, and assessing current skills. Also, actions with a metacognitive flavor surfaced as well, including self-awareness and being flexible.

As mentioned above, our action categories seem more aligned with the specific mentor functions than our objectives, even though the idea of a "function" of mentoring seems more like an objective. Indeed, we mentioned at the start that often people use the items on the functions scale to operationalize mentor behaviors. This blurring of lines between what a mentor does and why they do it is limiting, and highlights one of the advantages of our framework.

Objective by Action Framework The resulting framework, the objective × action matrix, is a novel way to consider mentoring behaviors. Several insights can be garnered from this structure. For example, there are some actions that are quite common across multiple objectives and thus may be considered the basis for core mentoring behaviors. These include *Asking questions*, *Providing advice*, *Setting expectations*, *Giving assignments*, *Providing perspective*, and *Assessing needs*. Although there are places in the matrix where no enactments appear, this cannot be interpreted at this early stage of our framework to mean that no possible enactments exist. In some cases, they may seem unlikely or even nonsensical. It is difficult to think of a way that providing reassurance would be a strategy for instilling accountability or that socializing would be a method for increasing efficiency, but a creative mentor may beg to differ. However, we do believe that those locations in the matrix where enactments are plentiful provide specific guidance for choosing mentoring behaviors.

Overall, approaching mentoring behaviors with these individual components of actions and objectives brings a new perspective to the conversation on the processes that underlie effective mentoring relationships, a need echoed often in the literature (e.g., Allen & Poteet, 2011; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2005). The enactments themselves, at the heart of this approach, have the potential to provide a rich source of information for researchers and practitioners.

Enactments Each enactment statement was inspired by one or more mentors' detailed description of what they did in a specific mentoring episode that they believed led to positive outcomes for the mentee. These statements are in a format that describes what they did and how they carried out their behavior. For example, the enactment that reads "I framed a question about my mentee's weakness as something we should consider in terms of how it might be holding them back from achieving all that they could, to help prioritize what we most need to work on" goes beyond what would usually be described as "I asked my mentee what they thought their strengths were" or "I asked my mentee what they wanted to work on most in mentoring."

Enactments were written in a detailed enough manner that one can visualize what the mentor is doing, and that most mentors could apply the enactment to most mentees. Many critical incidents in interviews were episodes that occur in a particular job or career path. The owner of a bakery, for example, mentored a young graduate who wanted to open a pie shop, while a novelist mentored aspiring writers. Taken literally, their descriptions of their behaviors would be hard for most mentors to apply in more general contexts, so the enactments derived from their descriptions were generalized to apply to a broader population of mentees.

Some enactments include clauses describing the mentee's situation that prompted a responsive behavior in the mentor, while others were derived by the mentor initiating a mentoring objective. Two examples from the objective "promote adaptability" illustrate this difference. One enactment (under the "ask questions" action) states "When I see the same problem recurring with my mentee, I continue to ask new questions about the situation to keep bringing about new alternatives." This is a behavior prompted by the mentor noticing something happening with the mentee and responding accordingly. Another enactment (under the "give assignment" action category) states "I create environments to enhance the nimbleness of my mentee by giving them assignments without warning and with very short time frames to give them the opportunity to think on their feet. I provide some assistance and support through the assignment, but require them to figure out their course of action." This enactment describes a behavior a mentor can do at any time if they have the goal of promoting adaptability and is not directly in response to a mentee's behavior or current situation.

Utility of the Mentoring Cuboid: Research Advancements The cuboid of mentoring has multiple applications for mentoring research. Earlier we suggested that current measures of mentoring behaviors are far too general to capture the fine-grain detail in mentoring that is likely to explain meaningful variance in important individual and organizational outcomes. Our enactments can be used as the raw input into the development of measures of mentoring behaviors that allow for more discriminatory power. It is an understatement that the number of enactments in the cuboid far exceeds the number of items that should appear on a survey measure; however, one could develop items tailored to the objectives of mentoring

germane to the research context. The detail in the enactments provides new possibilities for item format as well that could go beyond more common Likert-type self-report measure to perhaps a more behaviorally anchored rating scale or other formats that utilize multiple perspectives, including that of the mentee. Prior research in specific mentoring domains may provide some guidance here (Brodeur, Larose, Tarabulsy, Feng, & Forget-Dubois, 2015; Crawford et al., 2014).

Though we highly encourage the re-exploration of commonly explored mentoring outcomes using these more detailed measures of behaviors, we also advocate for broadening the criterion space to consider mentoring outcomes derived from the objectives we uncovered. Further, we see the cuboid as useful guidance for alternative methodologies as well. For example, Allen and Poteet (2011) advocated for more person-centered experience sampling methodologies to peer into the processes of mentoring, and the cuboid framework perhaps could be used to guide the coding of audio or video recordings of mentoring occurring in vivo.

At this stage, we consider the enactments as individual-nuanced behaviors that represent a detailed action taken toward an objective, but they likely do not occur in isolation and perhaps may occur more often in particular sequences. Moreover, it may be that some enactments when used in combinations with others have not just additive but interactive effects.

Utility of the Mentoring Cuboid: Practical Applications The potential of the cuboid for mentor training and leader development programs is clear. Enactments can serve as the basis for training content in presentations, training manuals, and role-play exercises. Assessors could use enactments to develop rating criteria for role play of mentoring episodes in a leader development exercises as leaders learn mentoring behaviors as part of their leadership repertoire.

Technologically minded developers of training programs could also capitalize on the movement toward gamification in training to develop interactive training tools in which mentor trainees are rewarded for selecting properly nuanced enactments to describe what they would do when faced with mentees with different needs and objectives. A downloadable app could be created and provided as resource material for leaders to have in the future.

Limitations and Next Steps While we see the cuboid of mentoring as an initial step toward a new framework for understanding and promoting good mentoring behaviors, it has limitations that can be addressed through further research.

First, although we attempted to sample mentors across a variety of sources and representing different occupations and demographic groups, the sample is small (though within reasonable bounds for this type of interview study) and some

groups may be overrepresented. For example, some mentors came from mentoring programs that targeted recent or soon-to-graduate college students. Others came from an organization who all experienced similar mentor training, so behaviors aligned with this outlook may be overrepresented in our sample. One valuable next step would be to have an independent set of expert mentors review and rate the enactments using a content validation approach. We purposefully chose to sample expert mentors with an excellent reputation to provide the data for this study, as we were interested in *effective* mentoring behaviors. We do not yet know if either novice mentors or poor mentors would have yielded a substantially different cuboid. This might be of interest to some researchers.

Another next step would be to consider mentee perspectives: In a qualitative study, do mentees perceive mentor objectives, actions, or enactments beyond what we discovered? In a quantitative study, do mentees perceive other objectives as important or other enactments as characteristic of what mentors do under specific conditions? However, we caution that at least some of what mentors do will be outside the awareness of their mentees.

Coding qualitative data is inherently a subjective process. Another research team faced with identical interview transcripts may have selected a different approach and emerged with different conclusions. We discussed each step among the team and strove for transparency and consistency. Even with these best efforts, the conclusiveness of our findings and the generalizability and stamina of the specifics of our framework are up for empirical scrutiny.

The cuboid has been derived from data produced by mentors nominated by others in their organization as exceptionally good mentors. Our set of excellent mentors described mentoring circumstances that were exemplars of especially successful mentoring episodes. Our critical incident approach led to detailed enactments that were applied to specific contexts. We do not know whether specific enactments would be perceived as useful in different contexts. Nor do we know whether the enactments and objectives we discovered with this set of mentors would be endorsed by a different set of mentors. Thus, in study 2, we provide a subsample of mentoring enactments and objectives to larger, independent set of mentors, and systematically investigated which they endorsed under varying mentoring contexts.

Study 2

Our qualitative approach in study 1 sprung from critical incidents provided by mentors. We generated objectives, actions, and enactments as descriptions of what they did in response to a specific context, e.g., working with a mentee who needed to develop technical skills but lacked self-confidence. Thus, the cuboid implies that mentors may be deliberate in their

selection of objectives, actions, and enactments—e.g., given a particular context, what objective, action, and enactment does the mentor carry out to support the mentee?

Having developed a taxonomy of generalizable objectives, actions, and enactments using an inductive approach, in study 2, we apply a deductive approach to determine whether the objectives and enactments a mentor might choose are context-specific. Is it the case that mentors endorse certain objectives or enactments in some contexts but not others?[1] Accordingly, one purpose of study 2 was to use a deductive approach to confirm that objectives and enactments are seen as relevant under some conditions but not others. That what mentors do reflects the context may seem self-evident; for example, we know that effective leader behaviors are situationally dependent (Vroom & Jago, 2007). However, mentor behaviors as situationally dependent is not clearly established in the mentoring literature, in part because of the prior lack of specificity as to what constitutes a behavior. For example, there are data to suggest that female mentors provide more psychosocial support than do male mentors (O'Brien, Biga, Kessler, & Allen, 2010), but little data about the specific ways in which that support is provided.

By investigating the effects of situational moderators on endorsements of mentor objectives and enactments with a new sample of mentors, we can begin to answer questions such as whether some objectives are perceived as more important than others, or is it the case that some objectives are more important in one context than another? Similarly, are some enactments more likely to be carried out by all mentors, or are some enactments characteristic of what mentors do in some contexts but not others. Additionally, we believe that the methodology we use in study 2 could represent a useful paradigm for future research; thus, study 2 also serves as proof-of-concept for the policy-capturing approach we employed.

We examine two potential moderators—the perceived competence of the mentee and the stage of the mentoring relationship. This is not to suggest that these are the most important contextual factors affecting mentor behaviors, but they are two we believe matter, and two we believed we could study using an experimental paradigm. Because objectives and enactments as ways of characterizing mentor behaviors are new, there is little theory or research to direct specific hypotheses regarding these two moderators. Accordingly, we will pose general research questions (RQs) about each situational factor for both mentor objectives and enactments.

Mentee Competence

For the present study, we operationalized mentee competence as whether mentees were perceived as either average or above average in career potential, reasoning that working with a "high potential" may affect how one mentors. Allen, Poteet, and Russell (2000) found that mentors preferred, and chose (when given an option) mentees who had a high chance of ultimate success over those who may be more in need of help. Thus, we reasoned that while it was unlikely that many mentors would take on mentees below average in overall competence, but, particularly in formal mentoring programs, they may occasionally be paired with someone they perceive as only average in overall competence.

We expected that mentors could set different objectives and behave differently for mentees perceived as average or above average in career potential. This is supported by the research literature on both leadership development and high potentials. The measurement and feedback of competencies has been a hallmark of leadership development programs for decades (Day, 2009; Leskiw & Singh, 2007). Further, mentoring is also an increasingly critical component of modern leadership development programs (Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004; Petrie, 2014). Thus, given the extent to which leadership development programs are tailored to individual growth needs, it can be expected that mentors are encouraged to differentially interact with those perceived to be high vs. average in leadership competencies. With respect to strategic management programs, growth opportunities, access to high impact social networks, and developmental work experiences are all more likely to be provided to so-called high potentials than to those not so designated (Finkelstein, Costanza, & Goodwin, 2017).

Accordingly, we investigated if mentors' endorsements of objectives and enactments, as well as their endorsement of enactments given an objective, depended on whether mentees were perceived as either average or above average in career potential:

> RQ1: Do endorsements of the perceived importance of mentor objectives depend on mentee competence?
> RQ2: Do endorsements of mentor enactments depend on mentee competence?
> RQ3: Do endorsements of mentor enactments given a mentor objective depend on mentee competence?

Relationship Length

Relationship length refers to whether the mentoring was one that was at an early stage (just starting) or later stage (maturing). Our choice of this moderator was largely driven by impressions from study 1 interviews; interviewees often clarified whether their relationship with the mentee was emerging or

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[1] For purposes of this study, we ignore actions. While we are also interested in whether preferences for actions are context-specific, our research design was already very complex just for two faces of the cuboid.

established. Operationally, we explored two levels of relationship length—short and long. A short length was described to participants as 0 to 3 months. A long length was described as 9 to 12 months. While mentoring relationships often last longer and can continue to develop and change over subsequent years and stages (Kram, 1983), we believed that relationships are likely to reach some level of stability and be past a level of novelty by this time. Further, as formal mentoring programs often last a year, 9 to 12 months would mark the end of the relationship (Finkelstein & Poteet, 2008).

Logically, it can be expected that mentors could set different goals early in a relationship than late. Similarly, they might be expected to engage in behaviors more characteristic of building trust and establishing rapport than, say, introducing mentees to a broader professional network. There is support for these intuitions in both the counseling and coaching literature. With respect to the former, Hill (2005) noted that both therapist objectives and techniques evolved over four stages of the therapeutic relationship, from initial impression formation and beginning therapy to core therapy and termination. Similarly, the workplace literature contains recommendations that executive coaches tailor their actions to the stage of the coaching relationship (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Kilburg, 1996; Saporito, 1996). Accordingly, we wanted to see if mentors' endorsements of objectives and enactments, as well as their endorsement of enactments given an objective, depended on the length of the mentoring relationship:

> RQ4: Do endorsements of mentor objectives depend on relationship length?
> RQ5: Do endorsements of mentor enactments depend on relationship length?
> RQ6: Do endorsements of mentor enactments given a mentor objective depend on relationship length?

In the sections below, we describe our selection of objectives and enactments used as rating stimuli, as well as how we operationalized mentee competence and relationship length. Following this, we describe the conduct of study 2 using a panel study of experienced mentors.

Determination of Objectives and Enactments

Study 2 examined the variability in ratings by experienced mentors of the mentoring objectives and mentoring enactments. We elected to have mentors rate eight objectives and eight enactments reasoning that these would provide sufficient opportunities for mentors to show differentiation but would not unduly task them during the rating task.

Given that we had 758 enactments and 24 objectives from study 1, we needed to sample a subset of those enactments and objectives to serve as rating stimuli in this study. Ideally, these should be enactments or objectives that were both common to

the experiences of most mentors but represented qualitatively different aspects of mentoring. The following process was used to select the eight objectives and eight enactments.[2]

Mentor Objectives

In study 1, we discussed several characteristics of the mentor objectives that were of interest. First, the objectives tended to range in focus from immediate to long term. Second, some of the objectives focused on the mentoring relationship itself, while others were focused on outcomes for the mentee such as their development or career progression. Third, mentee competence development was the most populated plane in the cuboid, reflecting practical importance in many mentoring programs. Using this information, we selected eight objectives to use in study 2. These appear in Table 3.

Mentor Enactments Next, we identified actions that had multiple enactments for some objectives, but not for others. For example, the action *set expectations* had multiple enactments for the objectives *build personal relationship* and *mutual trust*, but few for *build and expand professional network* and *career progression*. While doing so increased the likelihood that we would see ratings of enactments vary by objective, we created sufficient conditions for this interaction to occur. We thus identified eight actions (*setting expectations*, *giving assignments*, *assessing needs*, *providing perspective*, *connecting to others*, *asking questions*, *walking through process*, and *providing advice*) that were differentially common to each of our eight objectives. Next, for each of these actions, we chose one enactment easily recognizable as prototypical of that action. The eight enactments are shown in Table 4.

Having selected both the objectives and the enactments for study 2, we initiated data collection. While all data were collected at once, for ease of presentation, we first present ratings of the eight objectives (referred to hereafter as study 2A) and then present ratings of the eight enactments (hereafter study 2B).

Moderators The first moderator was *mentee competence*. For all ratings of objectives and enactments, participants rated them imagining a mentee average in overall competence and imagining a mentee above average in competence. Additionally, all ratings of objectives and enactments were

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[2] Study 2 was designed prior to completion of study 1, so that objectives and enactments were chosen prior to the creation of all enactments. Thus, some of objectives and enactments in study 2 were revised in the final cuboid. However, because our intent was to study variance in ratings of objectives and enactments in general, and as the chosen objectives and enactments can be considered a subset of the universes of all objectives and enactments, we are comfortable generalizing study findings to a broader objective or enactment level.

Table 3 Objectives used in study 2

Objective name	Description provided to participant
Proximal—relationship-focused	
(1) Build personal relationship	You want to improve the quality of the relationship you have with this mentee (e.g., improve trust or respect, or improve the quality of communication).
(2) Develop mutual trust	You want to establish a relationship with this mentee that is characterized by being able to confide in one another and by confidence that neither of you will act to harm the other.
Proximal—mentee-focused	
(3) Instill accountability	You want this mentee to take active responsibility for the goals or expectations to which they have committed themselves.
(4) Build confidence or efficacy	You want this mentee, through their experiences in the mentoring relationship, to feel that they are able to trust their decisions and actions and accomplish their goals.
(5) Promoting adaptability	You want this mentee to be able to use their skill sets in a malleable manner (e.g., applying their skills in novel ways or mentally reframing a challenging situation).
Distal—mentee development	
(6) Improve mentee competence	You want this mentee to build on competencies they are lacking in or have not developed sufficiently.
(7) Build/expand professional network	You want this mentee to build a network of professional contacts they can bank on to bolster their current standing and expand their career or resources.
(8) Career progression	You want this mentee to seek out and obtain roles that advance them in their careers.

Table 4 Enactments used in study 2

Enactment	Description
Enactment(s) presumed to achieve relationship-focused outcomes	
(1) (Build personal relationship)	I would have a candid discussion with this mentee that if they are unhappy in their current career track, I would help them find experiences to position them to reach their long-term goals, even if not with their current company.
(2) (Develop mutual trust)	I would clearly communicate to this mentee that they can come to me or call me at any time, with anything—good or bad.
Enactment(s) presumed to achieve mentee-focused outcomes	
(3) (Instill accountability)	I would stress the importance of clearly developing the message that this mentee wants to send to others and working on consistently conveying that message.
(4) (Build confidence or efficacy)	I would set up a role play for an important upcoming event in such a way that the environment was simulated as best I could, and I would play the role of a difficult person this mentee would likely encounter.
(5) (Promoting adaptability)	I would ask this mentee a series of probing questions to get them to think about a current problem in ways that they hadn't considered before our interaction.
Enactment(s) presumed to achieve development-focused outcomes	
(6) (Improve mentee competence)	I would actively seek out projects with other departments and/or people to give this mentee the opportunity to grow in many different areas and have exposure to other work styles and people.
(7) (Build/expand professional network)	I would have this mentee think about all the people they knew even casually outside of a work context, and then think of what those people all did for a living to see if any of them could be thought of as resources when considered in that different light.
(8) (Career progression)	When I believe that their goals seem unrealistic, I would have this mentee spend more time doing research and thinking about how achievable these goals are, and then would have them come back to me, sit down and look me in the eye and tell me they still believe they can reach those expectations.

rated for two levels of *relationship length*, referring to how far along in their relationship they were at the current point in time. In sum, all ratings of objectives and enactments were rated for four combinations: A mentee with average competence early or late in the relationship and a mentee with above average competence early or late in the relationship.

Participants

Data were collected from experienced mentors using a Qualtrics study panel. Qualtrics study panels do not allow researchers to limit participation to "mentors," so we requested a panel of experienced managers across a variety of industries. We then placed four qualifier questions including, "Have you ever mentored anyone?" at the beginning of the survey. Respondents who answered no to that question were automatically directed to a different survey, and respondents who answered yes proceeded to ours. Thus, all respondents reported that they mentored without knowing that this was the purpose of the survey and a requirement to participate.

We received usable responses from 209 participants. Respondents were mostly Caucasian (71.8%), African-American (9.6%), Asian-American (7.7%), or Hispanic/ Latino (6.7%). Fifty-four percent of respondents were female. Respondents were on average 39.1 (SD = 10.2) years old, had been in their current position 8.0 years (SD = 5.7), and had been mentoring for 8.2 years (SD = 6.9). Forty percent had mentored in a formal mentoring program.

Design

Data for study 2A were collected in a three-factor completely crossed repeated measures ANOVA design. Within-subjects factors were mentee competence (average, above average), relationship length (short, long), and the eight mentoring objectives. Thus, participants rated eight objectives for each of four combinations of mentee competence and relationship length (32 ratings in all).

Data for study 2B were collected (concurrently) in a four-factor completely crossed repeated measures ANOVA design. Within-subjects factors included mentee competence (average, above average), relationship length (short, long), and eight mentoring objectives. The fourth within-subjects factor was eight mentor enactments. Participants thus rated eight enactments for each of 32 combinations of mentee competence, relationship length, and mentoring objective (256 ratings in all).

Measures—Scale Development Pilot Study

Given our intent to compare mentor endorsements of mentoring objectives and enactments and the fact we were measuring stimuli that had likely never been studied before,

we were thoughtful and systematic in our development of the rating scales. For mentoring objectives, we pilot-tested several options using a convenience sample comprised of contacts in the field who were experts in mentoring either through research or working with organizational mentoring programs (*N* = 26). Based on feedback from this sample, we chose the following prompt for ratings of our objectives: "Please rate the importance of each of the following mentoring objectives for mentoring this mentee." Participants provided their ratings on a five-point scale (*1 = unimportant*, *3 = important*, *5 = very important*). Because we expected most participants to rate all objectives as relatively important, we created a scale without a true neutral midpoint (e.g., neither unimportant nor important). The scale we used thus provided three anchors of five to allow respondents to differentiate between levels of importance.

Simultaneously, we also developed a set of prompts for the enactments. In contrast to prompts for the objectives, the initial pilot test revealed no clear preferences for any of our prompts. Six new pilot participants who were either experienced mentors or researchers evaluated three new prompts, after having read an enactment paired with an objective. Based on this feedback, we used the preferred scale of pilot participants, choosing the following prompt: "How closely does this enactment describe the type of behavior you use" with five response options. This scale and response was selected for study 2B. Specifically, participants were given the description of a mentee with a certain competence level and a mentoring relationship length. They then were given one objective and rated each of eight enactments as characteristic of something they would do *for that objective*. They were then given a second objective and rated each of eight enactments for that objective, and so forth. Participants provided their ratings of enactments on a five-point scale with the following anchors: *(1) It is nothing like a behavior I would do to reach this objective*; *(2) It slightly resembles a behavior I would do to reach this objective*; *(3) It has basic aspects of a behavior I would do to reach this objective*; *(4) It is very similar to a behavior I would do to reach this objective*; *(5) It almost completely captures a behavior I would do to reach this objective.* For ease of presentation, we refer to these as "characteristic of me" ratings throughout the paper.

Demographics Participants answered the following background questions: gender, age, ethnicity, job type, tenure, and experience in a formal mentoring program.

Procedure

Participants received the study link and advanced to the survey if they indicated that they had ever mentored someone. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. Next, participants watched a short

training video describing the rating process and informing them that they will be rating the same objectives for multiple types of mentees (combinations of mentor competence and relationship length) and rating the same enactments for multiple types of mentees and objectives.

Participants were presented with one combination of mentor competencies and relationship length, rated all objectives for that combination, and then rated all enactments for that objective. This was repeated for all four combinations of mentor competence and relationship length. The order of combinations was randomized across respondents. Finally, participants provided demographic information.

Results

Prior to conducting the analyses, we tested the assumption of sphericity using the Mauchly's (1940) test. Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated. Further, the Greenhouse and Geisser (1959) ε^2 values exceed 0.75 for most significance tests. Accordingly, the degrees of freedom for all significance tests were corrected using the Huynh and Feldt (1970) correction. Corrected degrees of freedom are shown in Table 5.

Study 2A Study 2A addresses the questions: Are there differences in the importance of different mentoring objectives? Do importance ratings differ depending on the competence of the mentee or the length of the relationship between mentor and mentee? A $2 \times 2 \times 8$ fully crossed repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to examine importance ratings as a function of relationship length, mentee competence, and mentoring objective. As shown in Table 5, there was a main effect for objective, $F = 12.83$, $p < 0.001$, $\varepsilon^2 = 0.058$. While the effect is significant, visual inspection of the means shows that all objectives were rated relatively highly and the range of means across objectives was small. The least important objective was *build/expand professional network* (estimated marginal mean (M) = 3.99, SE = 0.05) and the most important objective was *build personal relationship* ($M = 4.22$, SE = 0.05).

Of greater interest are the two significant interactions. There was a significant interaction between objectives and relationship length, $F = 10.00$, $p < 0.001$, $\varepsilon^2 = 0.046$. Thus, mentors differentially rated the importance of objectives depending on whether they were earlier or later in their relationship with a mentee. This interaction can be seen visually in Fig. 3; simple main effects were tested on estimated means using the SPSS COMPARE command (Field, 2005). As shown in the figure (and as anticipated), the objective *mutual trust* was more important early in the relationship ($M = 4.22$, SE = 0.05) than late ($M = 4.10$, SE = 0.06 for *mutual trust*; $p_{\text{Diff}} = 0.017$). However, mentors rated *build/expand a professional network* as more important later in the relationship ($M = 4.17$, SE = 0.06) than earlier ($M = 3.91$, SE = 0.06; $p_{\text{Diff}} = 0.005$). Early in the relationship, experienced mentors focus on building trust, while later, mentors focus on preparing the mentee for improving mentee networking beyond their relationship.

There was also a significant interaction between objectives and mentee competence, $F = 3.81$, $p < 0.001$, $\varepsilon^2 = 0.018$. Mentors differentially rated the importance of objectives depending on whether the mentee was above average in competence or only average; this interaction can be seen visually in Fig. 4. Compared to when mentees are average in competence, when mentees are above average in competence, mentors are more likely to rate as important *instill accountability* ($M = 4.14$, SE = 0.06 vs. $M = 3.92$, SE = 0.06; $p_{\text{Diff}} = 0.000$) and (mentee) *career progression* ($M = 4.17$, SE = 0.06 vs. $M = 3.98$, SE = 0.06; $p_{\text{Diff}} = 0.029$). Mentors likely perceive more payoffs and are more invested in strengthening their relationships with high potential mentees and focusing on mentee career outcomes. However, when mentees are only average in potential, mentors rate the importance of *competence development* higher than when mentees are above average ($M = 4.08$, SE = 0.06 vs. $M = 3.91$, SE = 0.06; $p_{\text{Diff}} = 0.006$). With a lower competence mentee, mentors focus more on mentee skill development.

There were no other significant results found in the analyses of importance ratings of objectives. Collapsing across objectives, there were no differences in ratings across levels of

Table 5 Effects of objective, relationship length, and mentee competence on importance ratings

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	ε^2
Objective (O)	51.74	5.60	9.23	12.83***	0.058
Length (L)	0.09	1	0.09	0.04	0.000
Competence (C)	1.21	1	1.21	0.60	0.003
O * L	26.52	5.45	4.87	10.00***	0.046
O * C	10.51	5.48	1.92	3.81***	0.018
L * C	3.02	1	3.02	1.99	0.009
O * L * C	1.02	6.41	0.16	0.47	0.002

***$p < 0.001$

Fig. 3 Interaction of importance ratings of objectives by relationship length. Note: Bld_Rel = Build personal relationship; Mut_Trst = Mutual trust; Inst_Acct = Instill accountability; Bld_Conf = Build confidence or efficacy; Pro_Adp = Promote adaptability; Imprv_Cmp = Competence development; Bld_Net = Build or expand a professional network; Car_Prog = Career progression
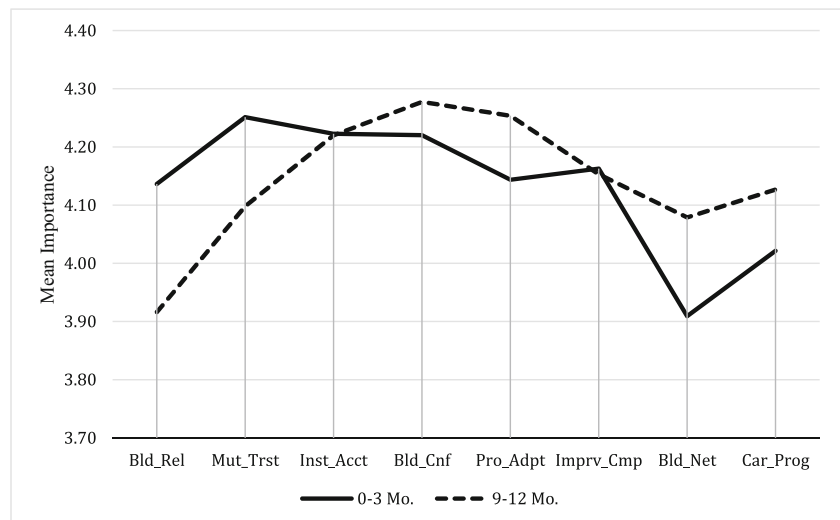
relationship length or mentee competence, nor were there any other interactions.

Study 2B Study 2B addresses the questions: Are there differences in the ratings of different mentoring enactments? Do these ratings differ depending on the competence of the mentee, the length of the relationship between mentor and mentee, or the specific objective for mentoring? Next, a $2 \times 2 \times 8 \times 8$ fully crossed repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to examine "characteristic of me" ratings as a function of relationship length, mentee competence, mentoring objective, and mentoring enactment. The results are shown in Table 6. As can be seen in the table, there was a strong main effect for enactment, $F = 18.39$, $p < 0.001$, $\varepsilon^2 = 0.081$. The enactments most characteristic of what respondents would do were: (8) "I would stress the importance of clearly developing the message that this mentee wants to send to others and working on consistently conveying that message" ($M = 4.01$, SE = 0.05); (1) "I

"I would clearly communicate to this mentee that they can come to me or call me at anytime, with anything—good or bad" ($M = 3.99$, SE = 0.05); and (6) "I would ask this mentee a series of probing questions to get them to think about a current problem in ways that they hadn't considered before our interaction" ($M = 3.96$, SE = 0.05). The enactment that was rated the least characteristic of what mentors would do was (7) "I would set up a role play for an important upcoming event in such a way that the environment was simulated as best I could, and I would play the role of a difficult person this mentee would likely encounter" ($M = 3.59$, SE = 0.07).

More interestingly, there was a significant interaction of enactments by objectives, $F = 6.90$, $p < 0.001$, $\varepsilon^2 = 0.032$. Mentors rated different enactments as more characteristic of what they do depending on the objective. This interaction can be seen graphically in Fig. 5. Some enactments were rated relatively the same regardless of the objective, e.g., enactment 7 ("I would have this mentee think about all the people they

Fig. 4 Interaction of importance ratings of objectives by mentee competence. Note: Bld_Rel = Build personal relationship; Mut_Trst = Mutual trust; Inst_Acct = Instill accountability; Bld_Conf = Build confidence or efficacy; Pro_Adp = Promote adaptability; Imprv_Cmp = Competence development; Bld_Net = Build or expand a professional network; Car_Prog = Career progression
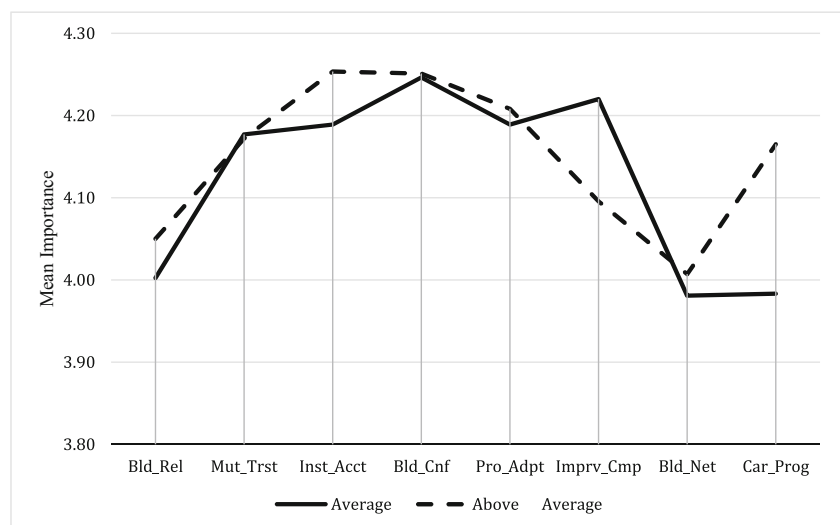
Table 6 Effects of enactment, objective, relationship length, and mentee competence on behavior match

	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	ε^2
Enactment (E)	983.83	5.15	190.89	18.39***	0.081
Objective (O)	22.79	4.66	4.89	2.56*	0.012
Length (L)	5.95	1	5.95	0.85	0.004
Competence (C)	41.16	1	41.16	5.01*	0.024
E * O	225.23	16.24	13.87	6.90***	0.032
E * L	10.78	6.38	1.69	1.88	0.009
E * C	4.68	6.29	0.67	0.69	0.003
O * L	3.05	6.24	0.49	0.60	0.003
O * C	1.65	5.43	0.30	0.60	0.001
L * C	2.37	1	2.37	0.40	0.002
E * O * L	25.96	42.54	0.61	1.12	0.005
E * O * C	18.98	41.89	0.45	0.85	0.004
E * L * C	8.17	6.48	1.26	1.44	0.007
O * L * C	2.46	6.05	0.41	0.46	0.002
E * O * L * C	30.15	40.74	0.74	1.32	0.006

*p < 0.05; ***p < 0.001

knew even casually outside of a work context") was rated low, regardless of the objective, and enactment 3 ("I would have this mentee spend more time doing research") was generally rated high for all objectives. However, the ratings of some enactments depended on the objective. For example, enactment 1 ("I would help them find experiences to position them
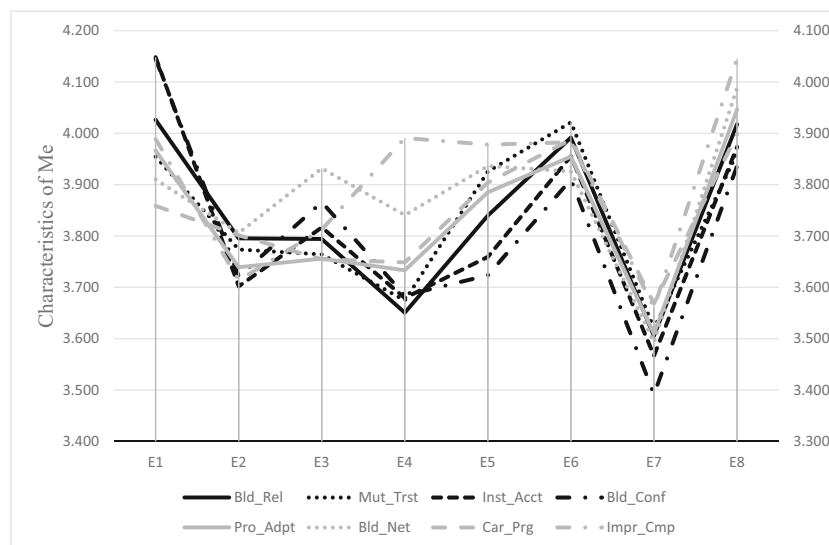

Fig. 5 Interaction of "characteristic of me" ratings of enactments by objectives. Note: Bld_Rel = Build personal relationship; Mut_Trst = Mutual trust; Inst_Acct = Instill accountability; Bld_Conf = Build confidence or efficacy; Pro_Adp = Promote adaptability; Imprv_Cmp = Competence development; Bld_Net = Build or expand a professional network; Car_Prog = Career progression. E1 = I would have a candid discussion with this mentee that if they are unhappy in their current career track, I would help them find experiences to position them to reach their long-term goals, even if not with their current company; E2 = I would clearly communicate to this mentee that they can come to me or call me at any time, with anything—good or bad; E3 = I would stress the importance of clearly developing the message that this mentee wants to send to others and working on consistently conveying that message; E4 = I would set up a role play for an important upcoming event in such a way that the environment was simulated as best I could, and I would play the role of a difficult person this mentee would likely encounter; E5 = I would ask this mentee a series of probing questions to get them to think about a current problem in ways that they hadn't considered before our interaction; E6 = I would actively seek out projects with other departments and/or people to give this mentee the opportunity to grow in many different areas and have exposure to other work styles and people; E7 = I would have this mentee think about all the people they knew even casually outside of a work context, and then think of what those people all did for a living to see if any of them could be thought of as resources when considered in that different light; E8 = When I believe that their goals seem unrealistic, I would have this mentee spend more time doing research and thinking about how achievable these goals are, and then would have them come back to me, sit down and look me in the eye and tell me they still believe they can reach those expectations

to reach their long-term goals") was rated significantly higher for *building confidence or efficacy* ($M = 4.15$, SE = 0.06) than for (mentee) *career progression* ($M = 3.86$, SE = 0.07, $p_{\text{Diff}} = 0.000$). As a second example, enactment 3 ("I would stress the importance of clearly developing the message that this mentee wants to send to others") was predictably rated higher for *build/expand a professional network* ($M = 3.93$, SE = 0.06) than for *competence development* ($M = 3.71$, SE = 0.07, $p_{\text{Diff}} = 0.000$).

Table 6 also shows a main effect for objectives, $F = 5.01$, $p < 0.001$, $\varepsilon^2 = 0.024$. This is a similar finding as reported for importance ratings, although here the prompt is for how characteristic the objective is of something the mentor would do. There were no other significant main effects or interactions found for ratings of enactments.

Discussion

Study 2 examined the extent to which endorsement of mentor objectives and enactments were situationally dependent. In study 1, we learned that when we analyze what mentors say when talking about mentoring, we see that they refer to both the objectives of mentoring and the actions of mentoring. In study 2, we investigated whether mentors' endorsements of objectives and enactments depended on contingency factors such as their relationship with the mentee or characteristics of the mentee. We explored these issues in study 2 using a subset of objectives and enactments emerging from study 1.

Summary of Study 2A Findings In study 2A, participants (experienced mentors) were presented with brief descriptions of mentees who differed on competence levels as well as two different levels of relationship length. For each mentee description, the participant rated eight objectives that varied in focus from relationship development to mentee skill development to mentee careers. We found an overall main effect for mentoring objective (accounting for 5.8% of the variance), indicating that mentors perceived some objectives as more important than others (regardless of mentee competence or relationship length). While this not surprising, it is reassuring to find that "not all objectives are created equal." Through additional empirical work building on our final cuboid, mentoring researchers can begin to make definitive statements about which, across mentors, are the most important or least important objectives. This listing would have strong practical value. For example, if a new mentor asks, "I have never mentored before, what should I be focusing on with my mentee?" accumulated evidence of importance ratings of objectives can provide an evidence-based response.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that experienced mentors also rated the importance of certain objectives differently depending on the competence of

the mentee and the relationship length. Because we chose a small subset of objectives and a subset of enactments for this study for practical purposes, it is critical to not interpret our interactions beyond what was presented in the results section above. The more important point is that the choice of objectives by experienced mentors *does depend* on characteristics of the mentee and relationship length. Additional work can be conducted with other enactments and objectives (from the cuboid), but it would also be valuable to consider additional mentee contingency factors such as age, similarity in background, and comfort being mentored, among others.

Summary of Study 2B Findings In study 2B, participants were presented with the same brief descriptions of mentees, and then, for each objective, rated each of the eight enactments drawn from study 1. We found a strong main effective for mentoring enactment, indicating that mentors perceived some enactments as more characteristic of them than others (regardless of mentee competence or relationship length). Endorsements of some enactments over others indicate general mentor preferences or mentor styles.

More importantly, we found a significant interaction between enactments and objectives and no interactions between enactments and either mentee competence or relationship length. Thus, mentors would rate an enactment as highly characteristic of them (or not) regardless of whether the mentee was above average or average in competence, or regardless of whether they were early or later in a relationship with the mentee. However, they did endorse different enactments as characteristic of them depending on the objective of mentoring. This finding is consistent with, but expands upon, what we found in study 1. While some enactments (e.g., those related to asking questions) can be applied to many objectives, many others (e.g., finding new positions for mentees if they are unhappy in their current role) are more relevant to some objectives than others. Interestingly, we originally selected the first enactment "they can come to me or call me at any time" because we thought it would map onto the objectives of relationship building and mutual trust, but mentors in our study rated as more characteristic of them for skill-focused objectives (e.g., competence development) than relationship-focused ones.

As we stated with respect to the objectives, we only sampled a subset of enactments, so rather than further interpret the interactions we found, we will again emphasize that the theoretical importance of our findings is that the endorsement of specific enactments may depend on a mentor's objectives for the mentee, but that some enactments are used for more than one objective. In contrast, the current gold standard for

understanding mentor behaviors is the framework of mentor functions, which blur the distinction between behaviors and the goals or objectives for those behaviors.

While our findings for study 2B have strong theoretical implications, we hesitate to draw too many specific practical implications given our limited sampling of enactments. Above, we have discussed the utility of delineating objectives, actions, and objectives for training mentors. Our results here suggest that when training mentors, trainers should emphasize that the choice of enactments is contingent on mentoring objectives. We can envision training programs in which novice mentors are presented with multiple mentoring objectives and asked to select (different) enactments depending on the situation.

Study Limitations and Future Research Again, this study, as with any research, has some limitations. The task we gave our participants was taxing in that we asked them to make repeated ratings of the same stimuli under continually varying conditions. We prepared them for the task carefully, giving them a realistic preview with a video that walked them through the details and demands of the task. To minimize participant fatigue, we did limit our conditions to only eight of 24 potential objectives, eight out of 758 enactments, and just two levels of two moderators. Thus, our paradigm only tested a subset of our cuboid, but it does provide some proof-of-concept for the idea that enactments vary by objective as well as some evidence for the need to consider nuances of mentoring behavior not just at the specific level of enactment (how a good mentor does something) but also under broader moderating conditions (when a good mentor does something). Thus, we have demonstrated the viability of this research paradigm for studying mentoring behaviors in a systematic fashion and endorse it for future researchers interested in exploring other enactments, objectives, and moderators that are pertinent to their mentoring program or developmental culture in their organization.

Some of our effect sizes were small. We attribute this partly to the use of minimally descriptive stimuli. Specifically, an example of a description of a mentee given to respondents prior to rating objectives and enactments is: "Mentee L is someone with whom you are: In an established relationship (e.g., 9–12 months since your mentoring relationship began). In addition, Mentee L is someone whom you have determined to be: Average in terms of career potential." This is obviously not nearly as strong a stimulus to experienced mentors as an initial meeting with a mentee or reading a real mentee's developmental goals and recent performance review. Future researchers interested in using our basic paradigm could perhaps reduce the number of conditions (perhaps with fewer objectives or enactments) but increase the richness of the context. For example, a resume, a video of a mentee describing themselves, or even a real meeting could serve as increasingly realistic stimuli to consider.

Finally, and importantly, we only asked mentors to rate the importance of objectives or how characteristic an enactment is of something they would do. This is in line with a content-related validation approach for gathering early validity evidence. We do not yet have any criterion-related evidence regarding how effective specific objectives or enactments are for facilitating mentee growth, or whether some objectives or enactments are truly more effective for some mentees than others. A natural follow-up would be to replicate our study but compare experienced or inexperienced mentors. Collecting such data on the entire cuboid would clearly be impossible in a single study but drawing objectives and enactments from the cuboid that are of particular theoretical interest of a researcher or practical interest to an organization, developing items around this subset of interest, and collecting both perceptual (from mentees and/or their supervisors) or objective data on mentee growth are both possible and encouraged.

Summary and Concluding Discussion

This research was driven by a desire to discover more about what actually was going on during quality mentoring interactions. We wanted to unveil a level of detail in what mentors were doing that was absent from the current body of literature on mentoring. By analyzing semi-structured interviews with expert mentors, we were able to not only compile a rich and vast set of examples of behaviors, but also create a new matrix framework to categorize these behaviors in a useful way. Researchers can use the framework to find behaviors to study that fit their mentoring objectives of interest, and mentors or trainers of mentors can use it to garner ideas to improve their mentoring.

We see the framework and the enactments within as a toolbox of sorts, containing useful tools to guide mentoring for a variety of purposes. We discussed these in the context of our first study. Our second study provides initial evidence that the choices of behaviors tend to not only be guided by the objective of mentoring, but in some case by characteristics of a mentee and of the mentoring relationship. As such, not all tools may be equally useful for all purposes, and there are likely some that are favorites of some mentors but uncomfortable for others. Our second study provided one research paradigm by which these possibilities can be systematically explored and tailored to the interests and needs of the researcher.

To continue the metaphor, although the toolbox has many tools to choose from, we have no reason to believe that it is full. Other expert mentors may have other behaviors that they believe work best for certain situations, and the matrix is certainly open to building and refinement. Further, mentors could

be inspired to create novel enactments by considering how infrequently used actions could be applied in new ways to meet various objectives. Distinguishing actions from objectives may allow for clearer building blocks to describing effective mentoring behaviors.

In sum, our research holds utility for organizations because good mentoring can be both a flexible and powerful means for developing employees at various stages of their career. Mentoring is a lean, field-based option for individual development across industries, but lack of clarity as to how to mentor effectively limits the power of this option. The cuboid of mentoring in its current iteration provides a new and useful tool to enhance mentoring relationships in organizations. We encourage those who use it to evaluate empirically the effectiveness of the framework and its enactments to continue to sharpen our understanding of good mentoring.

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