Exploring the benefits of mentoring activities for the mentor

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Abstract
Purpose – Mentoring is more and more studied by researchers on account of its professional and personal impact on mentees. This contribution has two main objectives. First, to empirically validate the benefits for the mentor and to test links between mentoring activities and benefits through a multidimensional analysis. Second, to incorporate two variables structuring the relationship into the analysis: the formal vs informal nature of the mentoring relationship and the gender composition of the dyad. The paper aims to discuss these issues.
Design/methodology/approach – In total, 161 French managers have been surveyed.
Findings – The results show that mentors value the personal dimension of the relationship more than the professional dimension. Moreover, informal mentoring favours the perception of a rewarding experience by the mentor, whereas formal mentoring is synonymous with improved professional performance. This research calls into question the advantage of same-sex dyads, suggesting that heterogeneity favours improved performance.
Originality/value – The originality of the paper was to focus on the homogeneity of the mentor-protége´ dyad in terms of gender.
Keywords Mentoring, Prote´ge´, Mentor, Benefits of mentoring
Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction
Although a consensus seems to be emerging from the literature defining mentoring as a relationship of fruitful exchange for both the less experienced employee (i.e. the protégé) and the more experienced person (the mentor), the majority of research has concentrated on the benefits derived by the mentee, while less attention has been given to the benefits for the mentor (Allen et al., 1997; Allen, 2007; Haggard et al., 2011). Thus, mentoring appears as a human resources management practice aimed at favouring the professional and personal development of the protégé in a privileged manner. It is synonymous with facilitated socialisation and career success, both objective and subjective.

While not the main focus of academic research on the subject of mentoring, several theoretical (Allen, 2007; Ragins and Verbis, 2007) and empirical papers (Eby and Lockwood, 2005; Murphy, 2011) have provided a better understanding of the motivations, behaviours and benefits derived by the mentor in carrying out his role. A number of results have emerged from these studies. The mentoring experience can be synonymous with the personal development of the mentor (Levinson et al., 1978;
Allen and Eby (2003), and more recently Weinberg and Lankau (2011), have underlined that mentoring can be associated with learning and personal satisfaction by virtue of the nature of the relationship. Bozionelos (2004) points out the positive effects on the mentor’s career. In the field of sales force management, Pullins and Fine (2002) showed that the mentor can derive many personal advantages from the helping relationship, particularly in terms of job satisfaction. However, although these results constitute a solid base from which we can begin to understand the mentor’s role, there is a need for further confirmatory empirical validation, notably concerning the benefits derived from the relationship by the mentor (Wanberg et al., 2006; Chandler et al., 2011). Therefore, this paper aims to reinforce emerging knowledge about the role of the mentor in mentoring. In particular, we will focus on two objectives.

First, from the mentor’s point of view, we will analyse the benefits that the latter may derive from his involvement, taking into account the different kinds of support provided. Second, we will integrate the influence of two characteristics of the mentoring relationship on the perception of benefits by the mentor: the gender homogeneity of the dyad formed by the mentor and his protégé, and the formal vs informal nature of the mentoring relationship.

This research offers two theoretical contributions. First, by clarifying the links between different mentoring activities and specific benefits, it complements existing knowledge about what exactly the mentor can gain from his role for each of his mentoring activities (Dobrow et al., 2012). In doing so, it also invites the scientific community to consider mentoring from the perception of the mentor. By underlining the existence of different benefits depending on the forms of mentoring support offered, this study seeks to add to research already undertaken by others (Chandler et al., 2011; Ragins and Verbos, 2007) to provide an in-depth understanding of the contents of mentoring. Second, by examining the influence of contextual characteristics such as the nature of the mentoring relationship and homogeneity in terms of the gender of the dyad, it also proposes a more detailed explanatory framework for the benefits of mentoring for the mentor. At the managerial level, this research calls upon organisations to rethink the characteristics of mentoring programmes, taking into account the benefits of the latter for both parties, in order to ensure that expected outcomes are met (Weinberg and Lankau, 2011). Finally, in basing our study on data collected in France, we contribute to extending the external validity of research that, up until now, has mainly been carried out in English-speaking contexts (Dobrow et al., 2012).

To attain these objectives, social exchange theory will be used as a basis for our understanding of mentoring. This theoretical framework suggests that in relationships involving professional and personal proximity, as in mentoring (Levinger, 1999), individuals have a mutual influence on one another’s behaviour and feelings. However, this essentially positive close relationship does not mean that individuals forget their personal interests and ambitions. On the contrary, Thibaut and Kelly (1959) contend that the strength of the bond created between mentor and protégé does not stop them from identifying the benefits of the relationship which, in the case of the mentor, need to be better understood.

2. Theoretical background and formulation of hypotheses

2.1 Activities and behaviours of mentors: an analysis from the perspective of social exchange theory

Gouldner (1960) states that the norm of reciprocity forms the basis of successful social exchanges. For relationship to last, it needs to be mutually enriching for both parties.
The relationship can only be maintained if both individuals feel that their commitments
to one another are being fulfilled. This leads to a reinforcement of the investment made
by the committed parties and feelings of security. The relationship is considered to be
satisfying. Without denying the existence of costs, social exchange theory suggests
that when the benefits of a relationship exceed the costs, the relationship will continue
and develop. Shore et al. (2006) emphasise the importance of investing in the quality
of the relationship so as to establish a climate of trust. The authors contend that
“social exchanges require a long-term orientation, since the exchange is ongoing and
based on feelings of obligation” (Shore et al., 2006). On this basis, it becomes apparent
that the partnership can only continue to the extent that the interests of both parties are
satisfied. These interests cannot be ignored. Yet, in the case of mentoring, by focusing
solely on the interests of the protégé and the organisation, the interests of the mentor are
disregarded. The mentor finds himself in a situation where he is asked to promote the
interests of the protégé while it is unclear what he, himself, can gain from the relationship.
In the absence of such information, social exchange theory highlights the importance
of trust (Chadwick-Jones, 1976; Gefen and Ridings, 2002). It would, therefore, be relevant
to integrate these considerations into any analysis of the activities that make up the
mentoring role.

Based on biographical in-depth interviews with 18 managers in a public-sector
enterprise, Kram (1983) discovered two central functions: vocational/task training and
psychological support. This typology is the object of a consensus (Wanberg et al., 2003;
Murphy, 2011). Studies on measurement scales (Noe, 1988; Ragins and McFarlin, 1990;
Scandura and Ragins, 1993) have allowed the contents of each to be better defined.

The term “career functions” refers to the instrumental support the mentor provides
to facilitate the career start and advancement of the protégé. This support can manifest
itself in a number of ways. It can take the form of appointments to enviable posts,
or introductions to influential people in order to increase the visibility of the protégé in the
enterprise. This will be referred to as professional exposure (Kram, 1985). The support
can also take the form of setting a challenge that leads the protégé to excel himself
professionally. The mentor can also share his ideas, give advice, and suggest avenues of
reflection that will enable the protégé to increase his efficiency when carrying out his work
tasks. This will be referred to as coaching (Noe, 1988; Wanberg et al., 2006). He can also act
as a protector by ensuring that the protégé incorporates the behavioural and ethical
norms appropriate to his activity. His aim here is to prevent the protégé from undertaking
actions that might jeopardise his image and reputation in the enterprise.

Psychosocial functions are also widely diverse. The first area covers the activity of
role modelling. The mentor serves as an example of the attitudes and behaviour most
sought after by the organisation, and passes on the values of the enterprise. A second
set of activities refers to his work in reassuring the protégé about his actions,
encouraging the latter to forge a positive image of himself. For this, he has to be
unfailing in his support and empathetic in his actions. This will be referred to as
career advice where the mentor seeks to manage the fears and anxieties of the
protégé (Noe, 1988). He also plays a third role, that of confidante, seeking to create
a space of complicity with the protégé within which the latter can freely express
his fears and anxieties. These can occur in particular as regards management of
the work-family conflict. Nonetheless, Wanberg et al. (2003) point out that the
consensus on the bidimensional character of mentoring has been questioned in
several works (Steinberg and Foley, 1999; Turban and Dougherty, 1994) in favour of
a three-dimensional working framework. The point here is to make the role
modelling a separate component on its own and not just a single activity within
the totality of psychosocial functions.

As can be seen, the richness of activities making up mentoring has led to a wide
variety of definitions in empirical studies. Although some studies, similar to the
example of Dreher and Ash (1990) and more recently Bozionelos (2004), adopt
a unidimensional approach or limit themselves to considering only the career functions
(Whitely et al., 1992), they remain the exception. Multi-dimensional working frameworks
seem to be the rule. Olian et al. (1993), and more recently Allen et al. (1997) limit their
analysis to repeating the classic distinction between career and psychosocial functions.
A number of works (Scandura and Ragins, 1993; Scandura and Schriesheim, 1994;
Allen et al., 2006) have adopted the three-dimensional perspective. Noe proposes a more
detailed interpretation of the activities and behaviour of the mentor. Based on the work
of Kram (1985), this writer breaks down each of the two functions of instrumental and
psychosocial support into four activities and behaviours. The first covers coaching,
protection, exposure and visibility, while the second comprises acceptance, confirmation,
counselling and friendship. More recent works (Thomas, 1990), in a commercial context,
have only adopted four activities: developing skills, counselling, providing exposure and
role modelling. Wanberg et al. (2003) conclude that the weakness of research on the hidden
structure of the construct does not allow any dominant perspective to be derived. The best
thing is for the researcher simply to explain his conceptual choices.

For our part, based on our wish to adopt a viewpoint giving a rich vision of the role
of the mentor which has been supported by numerous empirical tests, we will analyse
the activity of the mentor by adopting a two-dimensional definition distinguishing four
activities: professional exposure and coaching, related to career functions, and also
known as instrumental activities and career advice and role modelling activities
associated with psychosocial benefits for the protégé.

2.2 Benefits of mentoring for mentors
If the benefits of the mentoring relationship are well documented for the protégé, this is
not the case for the mentor (Noe et al., 2002). In their review of the literature, Wanberg
et al. (2003) underline that this question of benefits derived from the role of mentor has
always constituted a centre of interest for the literature, without ever being developed
in any large number of studies. The basic studies in the field (Levinson et al., 1978;
Kram, 1985) highlight that the mentor speeds up the apprenticeship process and sees
his brand image improve within his organisation. However, these benefits have long
remained theoretical hypotheses. A small number of empirical works have attempted
to validate, even refine, these initial instincts by means of typologies.

Johnson et al. (2001), like Collins (1994), have shown that being a mentor is
synonymous with career success and maximum satisfaction in the latter. Zey (1984)
identified four benefits: career enhancement, intelligence/information, advisory role
and psychic rewards, that can be easily reconciled with the three categories put
forward by Kram (1983), namely: confirmation and support from the protégé, intrinsic
satisfaction from helping a younger person and recognition and respect from others.
Furthermore, several authors (Mullen, 1994; Mullen and Noe, 1999) stress the existence
of more instrumental benefits that might take the form of information support. Based
on a series of conversations with 27 mentors, Allen et al. (1997) suggest a typology in
four categories (builds support network, self-satisfaction, job-related self-focused,
job-related other-focused) summarising the preceding contributions. The same applies
to the studies by Scandura (1992) and Ragins and Scandura (1999), who put forwards
five types of benefits: rewarding experience, improved job performance, loyal base of support, recognition by others and generativity. This research shows that the mentor, like the protégé, derives benefits both instrumental (builds support network, job-related self-focused) and psychological (job-related other-focused, self-satisfaction). Eby and Lockwood (2005) show that mentors benefit in terms of “enhanced managerial skill”. The mentor improves his understanding of the organisation and his ability to understand others (Lankau and Scandura, 2002). He is able to better comprehend the points of view of his colleagues, which increases his power of influence over his team (Dobrow et al., 2012). Similarly, the concept of relational mentoring developed by Ragins and Verbos (2007) suggests that through mentoring, the mentor enters into a dynamic that facilitates his contact with others. This approach emphasise that mentoring should be thought of as an exchange relationship that is much more balanced than previous research has indicated.

Far from being a simple unbalanced relationship of help given by an altruistic older person facing a career ceiling to a younger less experienced person, the mentoring relationship looks like a balanced exchange as described by social exchange theory. Allen et al. (1997), like Ragins and Scandura (1999), underline that the mentoring relationship is the chance for the mentor to improve his position in his organisation in two ways. First, it increases his social capital in the enterprise; the bonds of friendship created can be more or less useful to him in the short term. The protégé in turn feels he owes a debt, synonymous with help or loyalty, as the case may be (Allen and Eby, 2003). Second, as shown in the literature (Dreher and Ash, 1990; Baugh et al., 1996), as the protégé gains in recognition in the organisation thanks to the mentor, the latter also enjoys increased esteem. His brand image is improved among his peers, which may mean hierarchical promotion. This esteem will be all the greater as the protégé progresses in the organisation. The mentor thus acquires a reputation as a professional springboard that goes hand in hand with greater internal recognition. Alongside this social enhancement, the return on investment of which is necessarily short term, the mentor derives a short-term benefit thanks to the support of the technical knowledge of the protégé. Recent work on the subject of reverse mentoring reveals that the protégé can help the mentor to integrate new technical skills or update his current knowledge (Murphy, 2012). Wanberg et al. (2003) like Eby and Lockwood (2005) emphasise the importance of learning by the mentor. Wanberg et al. (2003) make a distinction between cognitive, skill-based and affective-based learning.

The psychological benefits are also all important, and here one finds one of the pillars of the mentoring relationship identified by the literature (Erikson, 1963; Levinson et al., 1978): the intrinsic satisfaction in seeing his actions contribute to the development and success of a young adult in whom he sees himself, or in whom he sees real professional potential. Eby and Lockwood (2005) found that the mentor feels a certain pride in seeing his protégé progress. Ragins and Scandura (1994, 1999) go into this satisfaction more deeply by putting forward the emergence of a rejuvenation in the mentor, who relives his professional career through the development of his protégé. To this personal satisfaction is added a dimension closely related to organisational citizenship behaviour, where the mentor ensures that key knowledge for the performance of the enterprise is passed on, thanks to the provision of qualified manpower (McManus and Russell, 1997).

In this study we will look first at the benefits of mentoring for the mentor by accepting the distinction, about which there is a consensus in the literature, between the psychosocial and instrumental components. Four dimensions will be distinguished: rejuvenation and rewarding experience evidencing implementation of psychosocial
benefits, and improved job performance and recognition by others evidencing the instrumental and professional benefits.

2.3 Relationship of activities and benefits

Although work on identifying benefits has seen a certain amount of progress over the last ten years, as testified by the above-mentioned recent empirical studies, analysis of the links between the different mentoring activities and the identified benefits needs to be investigated further.

Clearly, as several authors have pointed out (Pullins and Fine, 2002; Chandler et al., 2011), it is far from evident that all mentoring activities entail the same benefits. Although no identification of the respective influences of the psychosocial dimensions and career advice can be made, a quick survey of the literature on the subject shows that the psychological and instrumental benefits are considerably better documented than the professional ones. Wanberg et al. (2003) cite Levinson et al. (1978) to illustrate this central point: “There is a measure of altruism in mentoring […] But much more than altruism is involved: the mentor is doing something for himself. He is making productive use of his own knowledge and skill in middle age. He is learning in ways not otherwise possible” (p. 253). Numerous studies have underlined that the mentor finds himself at a difficult stage in his career (Higgins and Kram, 2001), which can lead him to cast a sceptical eye on his professional development. The activities of coaching, professional exposure and role modelling or advice all seem likely to lead the mentor to have a gratifying experience and to feel the élan of youth (Eby and Lockwood, 2005). The two directions look like ways to regain control of his professional future through the positive judgement carried by a young person whom he recognises as being of merit (Cronan-Hillix et al., 1986; Allen et al., 1997). A number of works (Klauss, 1981; Pullins and Fine, 2002) have suggested that the mentor can feel redynamised by the enthusiasm of the protégé (Eby and Lockwood, 2005; Murphy, 2011). Indeed, social exchange theory implies that the personal interests of the mentor could be satisfied through the mentoring relationship. Mentoring should no longer be thought of as an unbalanced relationship only benefiting the protégé. The norm of reciprocity put forward by social exchange theory is wholly applicable in this case. However, this needs further empirical validation.

To our knowledge, only one study (Pullins and Fine, 2002) has tried to validate this link by distinguishing several activities in the mentoring process. The results remain limited. Only the enhancement of the professional exposure of the protégé was linked to rejuvenation. The authors analyse this finding as testimony to a high level of satisfaction. Beyond this link between instrumental activities and psychosocial benefits, this mentoring activity can be thought of as allowing the mentor to be more easily recognised as a pillar of the transfer of competences within the organisation. It also replaces mentoring at the heart of the relational activity within the latter. Mullen and Noe (1999) underline that the career advice activities of the mentor give rise to a flow of return of help from the protégé that responds to the information sought by the mentor. One encounters here again the reconceptualisation of mentoring proposed by Higgins and Kram (2001), which shows that this relationship can be thought of in less unbalanced terms. The mentor, like the protégé, can learn from this relationship and derive a benefit from it in terms of improvement of his performance (Eby and Lockwood, 2005; Dobrow et al., 2012). This support from the protégé in terms of recent technical knowledge allows the mentor to maintain his competences, possibly developing new ones at a time in his career when the question can become pressing (Feldman, 1988).
More recently, in a formal mentoring context Wanberg et al. (2006) have established a double link: first between psychosocial mentoring activities and the perception of a gratifying experience, and second between career support activities and improvement of work performance. If empirical works allow us to envisage partial links between the activities, in particular the psychosocial ones, following the example of professional exposure, and the psychological benefits, like rejuvenation, an examination of the literature enables us to see the wider relationships. Sharing the story of his career with a younger person, which is the implementation of coaching, allows the mentor to acquire a feeling of generativity that can be likened to rejuvenation (Ragins and Scandura, 1999). Similarly, this closeness in advice and personal direction causes a feeling of identification to grow within the mentor that is favourable to an exchange of information and technical knowledge.

Overall, these different elements lead us to postulate that each of these mentoring activities (instrumental and psychosocial) results in both psychosocial and instrumental benefits. Thus, we propose the following hypotheses:

**H1.** The career advice activity carried out by the mentor with respect to his protégé is positively linked to both the psychological (rejuvenation and rewarding experience) and the instrumental benefits (improved job performance and recognition from others) gained by the mentor.

**H2.** The role modelling activity carried out by the mentor with respect to his protégé is positively linked to both the psychological (rejuvenation and rewarding experience) and the instrumental benefits (improved job performance and recognition from others) gained by the mentor.

**H3.** The professional exposure activity carried out by the mentor with respect to his protégé is positively linked to both the psychological (rejuvenation and rewarding experience) and the instrumental benefits (improved job performance and recognition from others) gained by the mentor.

**H4.** The coaching activity carried out by the mentor with respect to his protégé is positively linked to both the psychological (rejuvenation and rewarding experience) and the instrumental benefits (improved job performance and recognition from others) gained by the mentor.

2.4 Informal vs formal mentoring, and gender composition: dyadic structure of the relationship as moderators

At the center of studies looking at the nature of mentoring programmes, almost all of them do so from the point of view of the protégé (Noe et al., 2002). They suggest that the informal relationship is more effective for the protégé, than formal institutionalised mentoring programmes (Scandura, 1998; Ragins and Cotton, 1991, 1999). While the work of Allen and Eby (2003) and Allen et al. (2006) have opened a way to reflexion, more recent research (Eby and Lockwood, 2005; Weinberg and Lankau, 2011) has also provided useful contributions. Preliminary findings remain modest. Allen and Eby (2003) were not able to establish the influence of the type of benefit on two specific benefits: relationship learning and quality of the relationship. Allen et al. (2006) were not able to draw definite conclusions from their analysis due to insufficient data. Recent approaches have significantly added to the body of knowledge in the area.
Despite the lack of empirical results, it is reasonable to think that the mentors derive very great satisfaction from an informal relationship. In this particular case, the voluntary element is a source of confidence, and facilitated identification (Kram, 1985). Conversely, in a formal structure the fact that the mentoring link is initiated by a third party favours negative interpretations of the other party, like an unwillingness to put any effort into the relationship. Baugh and Fagenson-Eland (2007) report that the existence of a precise time period for the execution of the role can contribute to limiting the effectiveness for the protégé and also the satisfaction of the mentor. Furthermore, Allen and Eby (2003) suggest that an institutionalised involvement can be synonymous with a standardised relationship, strictly professional, which questions the affective richness of the mentoring relationship. In the context of this research, if it seems possible to affirm that the informal nature of the mentoring relationship could give rise to a greater perception of benefits for the mentor than in a formal setting, it does not seem possible to us to make a distinction between either the activities of mentors, or the benefits derived. Based on a qualitative study, Eby and Lockwood (2005) found that formal mentoring is associated with very few benefits for mentors. Chandler et al. (2011) underline the importance, for both the mentor and the protégé, of reaching an agreement on the way the mentor will operate in practice. In view of the above findings, informal mentoring would seem a better choice due to the autonomy it leaves the actors in achieving their objectives:

\[ H5. \text{Informal mentors will report greater benefits than formal mentors.} \]

As Allen and Eby (2003) note, although the gender composition of the mentor-protégé dyad has been the subject of a number of studies (Ragins, 1997; Ragins and Cotton, 1999; Chandler et al., 2011), studies taking the point of view of the mentor are rare. Noe (1988) puts forward results here which contradict what one might expect, based on the literature. It would seem that masculine dyads are synonymous with the least satisfaction for the mentor compared to feminine or mixed dyads. The literature, based on the viewpoint of the protégé, has underlined more than once (Scandura and Williams, 2001; Clawson and Kram, 1984; George and Kummerow, 1981) that the greatest benefits exist within the framework of a relationship of the same gender. Ragins (1997) explains this in several ways. She recalls that one of the essential elements in the mentoring relationship remains identification. The latter is facilitated in a homogenous relationship. A second element has been put forward by Allen and Eby (2003). They emphasise that sexual homogeneity guarantees both the mentor and the protégé a certain psychological comfort conducive to trust and complicity. This result concords with the conclusions of Feldman et al. (1999). It therefore appears that, for the mentor, both instrumental and psychological benefits are more likely in a relationship with a protégé of the same gender, even though Sosik and Godshalk (2000) did not find any difference between homogeneous and heterogeneous dyads. More recently, Weinberg and Lankau (2011) have suggested that time should be integrated into the analysis. Based on a 9-month longitudinal study, the authors found that the negative effects of cross-gender relationships disappeared over time in a formal programme. Considering the above, we propose the following hypothesis:

\[ H6. \text{Mentors in same-gender mentorship will report greater benefits than will mentors in cross-gender mentorships.} \]

Beyond this, recent reviews of the literature including empirical works underline the importance of introducing control variables into the analysis. As regards the mentor,
his age at the start of the relationship and his seniority will influence the course of the relationship. Aryee et al. (1999), like Bozionelos (2004), suggest that the particular characteristics of the enterprise and its geographical situation will influence the mentoring relationship. Although based on a cross-sectional design, our sample is homogenous in its basic educational level and in its social origins. This is why we have limited our control variables for the enterprise to the sector of activity and for the mentor to his function in the enterprise, his age at the time of starting the relationship and his seniority in the post.

3. Method

3.1 Procedure

Formal mentoring is not a very widespread human resources management practice in France. This situation makes any direct approach to enterprises futile. In this context, we decided to approach a French business school. A total of 500 questionnaires were sent by mail to a randomly selected sample of former students who had studied management between 1994 and 2004. It contained two elements.

First, a brief introductory letter outlining the purpose of the research (the practice of mentoring in France). Confidentiality and anonymity of the answers were guaranteed, as was the possibility given to the respondents to have access to a personalised return of the results of this work.

Of the 194 questionnaires returned (response rate, 38.8 per cent), 177 were usable. This response rate is comparable to that of Bozionelos (2004). It can be judged as satisfactory, given the study sample composed of individuals in professional activity, the quasi-confidentiality observed, and the absence of reminders. Following the recommendations of Chao (1997), we excluded from our analysis individuals with less than two years seniority in their posts. Our final sample included 161 observations.

3.2 Sample

Of the 161 participants, 100 were male and 51 female. In total, 15.5 per cent were in general management, 30 per cent in finance and accounts, 23 per cent in marketing, 10 per cent in production, 8 per cent in logistics, 7.5 per cent in engineering and 6 per cent in other functions. Respondents worked in manufacturing (24 per cent), banking, insurance (29 per cent), consulting (14 per cent), trade, transportation and communication (28 per cent) and other sectors (5 per cent).

3.3 Measure

Experience as a mentor. Similar to Allen and Eby (2003), the participants replied to the following question with yes or no: “During your career, has there been an individual who you have taken a personal interest in: who you have guided, sponsored, or otherwise had a positive and significant influence on their professional career development? In other words, have you ever been a mentor?” In the same way, it was specified that in a case where the person had mentored a number of individuals, they should concentrate on the most recent.

Type of mentorship. The participants indicated whether the mentoring relationship in which they were involved as mentor was informal \((n = 125)\), or formal \((n = 36)\). The relationship type was coded as informal \(= 1\) and formal \(= 2\).

Gender composition of the mentoring dyad. The gender of the participants was coded as male \(= 1\) and female \(= 2\). They also indicated the gender of their protégé, coded as male \(= 1\) and female \(= 2\). Same-gender dyads were coded as \(= 1\) \((n = 105)\) and cross-gender dyads as \(= 2\) \((n = 56)\).
Benefits of mentoring. This was assessed with 13 items on a five-point response format (1: completely disagree, 5: completely agree) from Ragins and Scandura (1999). More precisely, examination of the results by factor analysis conducted by the two authors showed that several items had significant factorial weights (>0.3, possibly even 0.4) in several directions, notably rewarding experience and improved job performance. For these reasons, we selected four items to measure rewarding experience, three for the improved job performance, three for recognition by others and three for rejuvenation. Cronbach’s α for the present sample were 0.76, 0.88, 0.80 and 0.76 for the rewarding experience, improved job performance, recognition by others and rejuvenation, respectively.

Activities and behaviour of the mentor. This was assessed with 15 items on a five-point response format (1: completely disagree, 5: completely agree) from Noe (1988). We selected items having the highest loadings in the results advanced by Noe (1988) in his factor analysis. The dimensions of advice, exposure and role modelling were each measured by four items, while coaching was covered by three items. This difference is explained by the weakness of the results concerning this dimension in the work by Noe (1988). Cronbach’s α for the present sample were 0.80, 0.87, 0.69 and 0.88 for advice, exposure, role modelling and coaching, respectively.

Controls. The age at the time the mentoring relationship started, and seniority in post, were evaluated by a single item as a continuous variable.

4. Results
4.1 Confirmatory factor analysis
Without being genuine new tools, the scales used both for the mentoring activities and their benefits do not a priori give the solid guarantees of validity of construct that the factor analyses carried out by their authors attest. It is for this reason that a confirmatory factor analysis was carried out using Amos 6 on the basis of the 161 observed data items. This work was carried out in order to validate the factor structure of the scale and ensure its dimensionality on this sample. The fit of the model to the data were examined with five goodness-of-fit indices: $\chi^2$, the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), root mean square residual (RMSR), the normed-fit index (NFI) and the comparative fit index (CFI). In the two cases, the results validate the dimensionality of the proposed scale both for the benefits ($\chi^2 = 74$, df = 59; GFI = 0.93; RMSR = 0.05; NFI = 0.92; CFI = 0.98) and the mentoring activities ($\chi^2 = 147$, df = 71; GFI = 0.89; RMSR = 0.05; NFI = 0.87; CFI = 0.92).

4.2 Hypotheses testing
Table I presents correlations, means, and standard deviations for the study variables. Multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) were conducted, since the dependent variables employed in this study were correlated.

H1-H4 explore the impact of each mentoring activity on several benefits identified by the literature. Four multivariate analyses (MANOVA) were carried out in two stages. During the first stage, we incorporated the control variables. During the second, we included the explanatory variables, namely the four mentoring activities (advice, professional exposure, coaching and role modelling). Le Box’s test of homogeneity of variance (Box and Cox, 1964) did not give any significant results ($F = 1.08$, $p < 0.226$). The results of the first stage did not reveal any significant relationship between the four control variables (seniority and age of the mentor at the start of the mentoring relationship, his function in the enterprise and the sector of activity of the latter).
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<tr>
<td>2. Gender composition</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–0.11</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Firm activities</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>–0.03</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Mentor’s functions</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–0.05</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>–0.03</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Company tenure</td>
<td>8.72</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>–0.06</td>
<td>–0.02</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Mentor’s age</td>
<td>38.85</td>
<td>8.59</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>–0.05</td>
<td>–0.02</td>
<td>–0.01</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Advice</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>–0.17</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>–0.08</td>
<td>–0.06</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Exposition</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>–0.06</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>–0.01</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Coaching</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>–0.05</td>
<td>–0.02</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Role modelling</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>–0.07</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>–0.08</td>
<td>–0.15</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Rewarding experience</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>–0.08</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>–0.10</td>
<td>–0.03</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Improved job performance</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>–0.01</td>
<td>–0.13</td>
<td>–0.07</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>–0.01</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Recognition by others</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>–0.03</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>–0.13</td>
<td>–0.05</td>
<td>–0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Rejuvenation</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>–0.16</td>
<td>–0.08</td>
<td>–0.10</td>
<td>–0.13</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: \( n = 161 \). Correlations >0.16, 0.21 are significant at \( p < 0.05, p < 0.01 \), respectively.
The results of the second stage, summarised in Table II, reveal the existence of significant links for all the activities with one or more benefits, with the exception of professional visibility. Relationships existed between rewarding experience and improvement in performance, between coaching and rejuvenation, between role modelling and rewarding experience and between improvement in performance and rejuvenation.

H5 postulates that the formal or informal nature of mentoring has an influence on the links between mentoring activities and the benefits perceived by the mentor. Again, the hypothesis was tested with a MANOVA. Box's M test of homogeneity of variance (Box and Cox, 1964) was not significant ($F = 1.12$, $p < 0.208$), which enables us to accept the null hypothesis according to which the groups do not differ. The multivariate analyses (Table III) show that the formal vs informal nature of mentoring has a moderating influence on one mentoring activity: career advice. Detailed analysis shows that these results are explained by the moderation of the links with rewarding experience and improved job performance.

To understand this moderating effect better, we repeated a MANOVA for each of the modalities of the variable “formal versus informal mentoring” in the two cases. This analysis by sub-groups shows that the association between career advice and rewarding experience is highly significant in the case of informal mentoring ($B = 0.510$, $p < 0.000$), whereas the link was not supported in the case of formal mentoring ($B = 0.238$, ns). Concerning the link between career advice and improved job performance, the results are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>n = 161</th>
<th>Advise</th>
<th>Exposition</th>
<th>Coaching</th>
<th>Role modelling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test of multivariate significance (Wilk's Lambda)</td>
<td>$F = 4.54$</td>
<td>$F = 0.971$</td>
<td>$F = 3.05$</td>
<td>$F = 4.59$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewarding experience</td>
<td>$p = 0.002$</td>
<td>$p = 0.426$</td>
<td>$p = 0.019$</td>
<td>$p = 0.002$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved job performance</td>
<td>$F = 16.77$</td>
<td>$F = 0.689$</td>
<td>$F = 1.51$</td>
<td>$F = 11.04$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition by others</td>
<td>$p = 0.000$</td>
<td>$p = 0.408$</td>
<td>$p = 0.221$</td>
<td>$p = 0.001$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejuvenation</td>
<td>$F = 5.80$</td>
<td>$F = 2.76$</td>
<td>$F = 0.460$</td>
<td>$F = 3.22$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$p = 0.017$</td>
<td>$p = 0.099$</td>
<td>$p = 0.499$</td>
<td>$p = 0.075$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table II.
Research question 1-4: mentoring activities’ effect on benefits (MANOVA results)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>n = 161</th>
<th>Advise × type of mentorship</th>
<th>Exposition × type of mentorship</th>
<th>Coaching × type of mentorship</th>
<th>Role modelling × type of mentorship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test of multivariate significance (Wilk's Lambda)</td>
<td>$F = 3.37$</td>
<td>$F = 0.468$</td>
<td>$F = 0.427$</td>
<td>$F = 1.49$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewarding experience</td>
<td>$p = 0.011$</td>
<td>$p = 0.759$</td>
<td>$p = 0.789$</td>
<td>$p = 0.208$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved job performance</td>
<td>$F = 2.61$</td>
<td>$F = 0.598$</td>
<td>$F = 0.007$</td>
<td>$F = 0.750$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition by others</td>
<td>$p = 0.100$</td>
<td>$p = 0.441$</td>
<td>$p = 0.933$</td>
<td>$p = 0.260$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejuvenation</td>
<td>$F = 4.76$</td>
<td>$F = 0.182$</td>
<td>$F = 0.005$</td>
<td>$F = 0.004$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$p = 0.031$</td>
<td>$p = 0.671$</td>
<td>$p = 0.941$</td>
<td>$p = 0.864$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$p = 0.384$</td>
<td>$p = 0.414$</td>
<td>$p = 0.212$</td>
<td>$p = 0.044$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$F = 0.010$</td>
<td>$F = 0.671$</td>
<td>$F = 0.157$</td>
<td>$F = 4.125$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$p = 0.998$</td>
<td>$p = 0.574$</td>
<td>$p = 0.910$</td>
<td>$p = 0.743$</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table III.
Results of moderated MANOVA for nature of the relation on benefits
performance, analysis by sub-group shows that it is in the case of formal mentoring
\( B = 0.714, \text{sig} = 0.006 \) that the link between career advice activity and improved
performance is the most established in comparison with informal mentoring
\( B = 0.251, \text{sig} = 0.079 \).

\( H6 \) postulates that the composition in terms of gender has an influence on the links
between mentoring activities and the benefits perceived by the mentor. Since the
homogeneity of the variances is guaranteed (non-significant Box test: \( F = 1.08, \text{ns} \)),
the multivariate results (Table IV) only validate a moderation role for the role modelling.
A detailed examination shows that this moderation is due to the links with the
improvement in performance.

We repeated our analysis here in sub-groups to pinpoint better the moderating effect
identified. The results show that role modelling has a stimulating effect in terms of
improving performance for the mentor in the context of a heterogeneous relationship
\( B = 0.578, p < 0.001 \), whereas this is not the case with a homogenous relationship
\( B = 0.110, \text{ns} \).

5. Discussion
Drawing on social exchange theory (Gouldner, 1960; Chadwick-Jones, 1976; Gefen and
Ridings, 2002), the first objective of this paper was to empirically validate the benefits
of mentoring for the mentor and to test links between mentoring activities and
benefits. The second was to incorporate two contextual variables into our analyses:
the nature of the mentoring relationship (formal or informal) and the homogeneity in
terms of gender of the mentor-prote´ge´ dyad.

In relation to the first objective, the results partially confirmed our hypotheses.
Differences appeared between psychosocial functions (career advice and role
modelling) and instrumental functions (professional exposure and coaching).
The first seem to be associated with more numerous and diverse benefits. The results for
\( H1 \) and \( H2 \) concerning psychosocial functions reveal that the mentor derives both personal
benefits (rewarding experience and rejuvenation) and professional benefits (improved
job performance).

The test of \( H1 \) shows that career advice activity is synonymous with rewarding
experience and improved job performance. The test of \( H2 \) shows that role modelling is
linked to both rewarding experience and improved job performance, but also with
rejuvenation. On the other hand, \( H3 \) and \( H4 \) concerning instrumental functions
indicate that only coaching leads to positive feelings in the form of rejuvenation. Thus, \( H3 \) is not supported, whereas \( H4 \) is supported for only one benefit.

Concerning the second objective, the test of \( H5 \) shows that the formal vs informal nature of mentoring has an impact on career advice activity with regard to the perception by the mentor of a rewarding experience and improved job performance. For \( H6 \), our results show that gender homogeneity of the dyad only has an influence on the relationship between role modelling and improved job performance.

Despite some unexpected findings, our results confirm our preliminary hypotheses. In line with the findings of Pullins and Fine (2002), the benefits perceived by mentors varied depending on the mentoring activities undertaken. Thus, differences in perceived benefits were found between activities related to psychological support (career advice and role modelling) and career support activities (professional exposure and coaching). As will be discussed below, our findings suggest that psychological support is more closely associated with perceived benefits than career support.

Our test of \( H1 \) reveals that career advice is associated with rewarding experience and improved performance. Our test of \( H2 \) indicates that role modelling activities are positively related to rejuvenation, improved performance and rewarding experience. The difference between the effect of career advice and role modelling on rejuvenation could be explained by the greater proximity involved in the former activity. The mentor feels the impact of his support work more strongly with a person that he perceives as similar to himself (Feldman et al., 1999; Allen and Eby, 2003). At the same time, this result confirms the relationship between person oriented mentoring and professional benefits (Mullen and Noe, 1999; Eby and Lockwood, 2005). The mentoring relationship includes a psychosocial dimension for the mentor. The adoption of a more balanced approach advocated by Higgins and Kram (2001) is therefore supported. These results enable us to better understand the professional benefits of mentoring. In accordance with recent work (Wanberg et al., 2006), improved job performance was related to psychosocial mentoring. However, this result could not be generalised: there was no link between psychosocial mentoring and recognition from others. This difference may be due to the informal nature of mentoring in French organisations and the existence of few formal mentoring programmes. In this case, the mentor is not recognised for a role that the organisation does not actively encourage.

To our surprise, the professional exposure of the protégé is not associated with benefits for the mentor. \( H3 \) is therefore not supported. This result contradicts the work of Pullins and Fine (2002) and of Eby and Lockwood (2005), who found a positive link between professional exposure and rejuvenation. Several explanations for this result can be put forward.

First, contrary to the account given by Philip and Hendry (2000), it may be possible that far from building up social capital by promoting the career of the protégé, the mentor runs the risk of over-soliciting his contacts within the organisation at his own personal cost. This explanation makes sense in the French context. Indeed, France is one of the European countries where individuals see their professional competence questioned the earliest, from the age of 40 (Guillemard, 2003). The average age of our sample was over 38 and this could partially explain this absence of a relationship between the professional exposure of the protégé and benefits for the mentor. In this situation professional exposure becomes a constraint associated with negative consequences for the mentor. On the other hand, it could be that this social mobilisation is not valued by the mentor to the extent that the protégé himself is personally active in this area. In this instance, our result would confirm Higgins and Kram’s (2001) view of...
mentoring where the protégé is not dependent on only one form of social support but is integrated in a network of diverse relationships and, for this reason, attaches less importance to the contribution of the mentor. This may be a perception shared by the mentor which would explain the absence of a relationship between professional exposure of the protégé and derived benefits for the mentor.

The test of $H4$ reveals that coaching is linked to rejuvenation. This result is in concordance with the literature. Noe et al. (2002) and Wanberg et al. (2003) on the one hand, and Eby and Lockwood (2005) on the other, emphasise that the mentor experiences an important specific personal benefit in helping with a young adult's personal and professional development. Through this professional proximity, the mentor sees himself in a new light which places him back in a constructive professional dynamic. The absence of link between coaching and other benefits identified in the literature could be due to the mentor's awareness of the low value placed on his professional contribution by the protégé. It may be that the more general explanation for the lack of benefits related to instrumental activities is the mentor's lack of confidence in his mentoring skills. The professional valorisation of the protégé requires the mentor to be confident about the soundness of his own professional choices. He needs to believe he possesses relevant knowledge worth passing on to others. Otherwise, as most of the literature points out, he may find himself faced with a career ceiling causing him to doubt both his professional situation and worthiness to give advice. Moreover, these results question the relational nature of mentoring (Ragins and Verbos, 2007). It appears that the mentor does not perceive a relational exchange for all the aspects of his mentoring activity.

The results of the test of $H5$, integrating the formal vs informal nature of mentoring into the analysis, invite us to reconsider previous interpretations of the influence of this variable. First, his role only appears for the advice activity. Second, his action is not homogenous. The validity of the link between this dimension of psychosocial mentoring and rewarding experience in the informal context questions the results of Wanberg et al. (2006), but reinforces the positions of Kram (1985) and Ragins and Cotton (1999) for whom, following the example of Allen and Eby (2003), an institutionalised involvement can be synonymous with standardised relationships, hardly favourable to the affective richness of the mentoring relationship (Chandler et al., 2011). This result confirms both the personal character of the relationship and its empathetic dynamics. It also recognises the conclusions of Fagenson-Eland et al. (1997) who, arguing from the basis of a population of mentors, underline that an informal context allows the development of the psychosocial functions of mentoring. The exposure, the internal recognition of his work again causes the mentor to question the satisfaction he receives. On the other hand, the results show that the mentor perceives an improvement in his personal performance more sensitively in a formal context than in an informal context. One might think that normalisation of mentoring might be synonymous with access to the greatest resources in the form of large time slots with the protégé, which facilitates access to the latter's knowledge for the mentor. This officialisation can enable the mentor as well to have access to the material or symbolic means that can help him maintain his employability. From a more critical perspective, based on the analyses of impression management, one might also think that the institutionalisation of the process could allow the mentor to increase his social capital.

The results of the test of $H6$ concerning the composition of the dyad are more surprising. Only the link between the role modelling and improvement in performance is influenced by the composition of the dyad in terms of gender. In addition, this work shows that the link is only validated in the context of gender heterogeneity. Thus, the
hypothesis of psychological comfort which would normally be synonymous with homogeneity in the dyad, strongly advanced in the literature (Ragins, 1997; Feldman et al., 1999; Allen and Eby, 2003) is not confirmed here. Similarly Sosik and Godshalk (2000) found no difference in mentoring practices between heterogeneous and homogenous dyads. A number of explanations can be put forward for this. First of all, without questioning that homogeneity facilitates identification, one might think on the contrary that heterogeneity makes the relationship more contractual, more factual. In this case, the benefit derived by the mentor is above all professional. Second, this heterogeneity can also allow any competition mechanism, a perception of danger by the mentor with regard to the protégé, whose professional ambition he may feel to be a challenge to his position in the more or less long term, to be avoided. Beyond this, it should be recalled that if, in theory, homogeneity seems to be a major condition for the development of a rich relationship, results at the empirical level similar to Noe remain contradictory. This finding needs to be reconciled with research done on the samples of protégés where a number of studies have not validated the characteristics that facilitate homogeneity of the dyad (Dreher and Ash, 1990; Fagenson, 1989; Scandura and Ragins, 1993).

More generally, this study puts mentoring and mentoring activities back at the centre of a debate previously dominated by the advantages for the protégé. Based on social exchange theory, we show that certain activities do not appear to be associated with benefits for the mentor, despite the literature emphasising their importance. In this study, for example, of professional exposure did not result in gains for the mentor. In this case, social exchange theory indicates that it is likely that the mentor will not proceed with the activity. If we continue our analysis based on the derived benefits, the evidence suggests that the mentor could focus on role modelling which provides the same benefits as career advice and coaching combined. With the intention of increasing his personal benefits, the mentor could therefore widen his activity in these areas, but limit his efforts in the area of professional exposure.

However, it is important to qualify the above view of mentoring and suggest a more measured version of the support given to the protégé by the mentor. A more in-depth analysis of results shows that the activities in the psychosocial dimension are much more synonymous with benefits than those oriented towards career support. There is reason to think, as mentioned earlier, that this can be explained by the greater level of risk for the mentor involved in the exercise of instrumental activities. Finally, this study shows that the activities that make up mentoring lead to both psychosocial and instrumental benefits with the exception of internal recognition. This result indicates that mentoring appears to be an activity where the benefits derived are mainly personal.

5.1 Limitations

This research is not without limitations. The first is that it rests on a cross-sectional design. Any assumptions as to causality could turn out to be hazardous. Despite the presence of several control variables such as the sector of activity, the mentor’s function and the seniority of the mentor in the organisation, we have been unable to take into account in our analyses other important variables in the contextualisation of the mentoring relationship such as culture, the size of the enterprise and its geographical location. We did not question mentors regarding how long they had been performing their mentoring role, whereas Weinberg and Lankau (2011) demonstrate the importance of this temporal dimension. With regard to the issue of the analysis of the impact of formal vs informal mentoring, the size of our sample of formal mentors poses questions
about the robustness of the results found. The stability of the relationships found in this study also needs to be investigated further. Only a longitudinal study could allow the cause-effect relationships to be examined.

The second is that although rarely undertaken, this work only takes into account the perspective of the mentors and ignores the point of view of the protegés as regards mentoring activities. Numerous works (Armstrong et al., 2002; Raabe and Beehr, 2003) underline the differences in perception between mentors and protegés about mentoring. Wanberg et al. (2006) put forward the idea that the mentor, like the protegé, can perceive the informal changes that they establish in different ways. A piece of information on the operation of the enterprise, a description of a moment in his career can assume little importance for the mentor while compared to the protegé, and vice-versa. Moreover, the support work of the mentor does not necessarily take place in the presence of the protegé, which creates a discrepancy in the description of the mentoring between the two parties. Finally, this work has not taken into account the bias of social desirability. Research architectures therefore need to be developed that take into account the opinions of the protegés or at least of third parties, so allowing cross-validation with the mentors’ own reports. This orientation is in line with Chandler et al. (2011) who highlight the importance of viewing mentoring as more than the relationship between the mentor and the protegé. The understanding of mentoring requires different levels of analysis. Chandler et al. (2011) emphasise the importance of integrating macro-social elements such as technological developments or globalisation, which structure the mentoring relationship.

The third limitation is the possibility of a common method bias, which can inflate relationships among variables. We cannot rule out that advanced relationships do not result from the presence of bias. A number of precautions were taken to confront this problem. First, when compiling the questionnaire, where we made sure that the dependent and independent variables were not placed side by side. Next, the measures of the validity and reliability of our instruments, in particular the confirmatory factor analysis carried out on the activity measuring tools and mentoring benefits, like the results of the Harman one-factor statistical test, enable us to think that our results are not simply the consequence of methodological artefacts. Despite these limitations, the study suggests some interesting directions for future research.

5.2 Implications for human resource management and directions for future research
A number of managerial trends can be envisaged based on our results. First, becoming aware of heterogeneity both in the activities making up the role of mentor and the benefits derived from the latter. At this level, this study reveals that improvement margins are conceivable to make the functions associated with career support more attractive. Putting in place a training programme enabling potential mentors both to become aware of the value of their professional experience for a younger person and to acquire the relational skills to facilitate exposure of their protégé seems to be relevant. Taking into account time in the mentoring relationship would seem to be an interesting line of investigation. As Weinberg and Lankau’s study (2011) suggests, understanding how the mentor adjusts to his role over time could permit the optimisation of his actions towards his protégé, as well as the benefits he himself can gain from this role. To anchor this new management practice, it could be conceivable to inform the managerial personnel about the key role their mentor(s) played in their professional development. In addition, the image of mentoring must be changed to include the possible benefits for the mentor. Although the possibilities for action by the firm at a personal level
remain limited to expressions of gratitude by previous protégés, at the professional level, however, openings are possible if none of the activities selected are linked to internal recognition.

Part of creating a genuine mentoring culture thus perhaps includes enhanced career development for individuals agreeing to put some effort into the role of mentor. Setting up a club for mentors, allowing them to enlarge their social capital, perhaps even having regular access to managerial personnel, might constitute another enhancement method able to supplement pecuniary incentives. One could also conceive of putting in place technical training to accompany the mentor in his support work, synonymous for the latter with an increase in his employability. Although studies already exist on the motivation of mentors (Allen, 2003) suggesting the weight of personal variables such as attitude towards other people, they could be judiciously supplemented by research studies incorporating the influence of human resources management measures aimed at enhancing the mentor. Similar to studies underlining the positive effects of mentoring protégés on the career, the impact of the role of mentor could be isolated in terms of development of remuneration, scope of control or mastery of professional choices, particularly after the age of 40 in a French context. It would be interesting here to analyse the differences between mentors as a function of their gender or race. The relational approach constitutes a relevant base for understanding mentoring (Ragins and Verbos, 2007; Dobrow et al., 2012). Indeed, its serves to highlight that the mentor can form part of a support network that may be rewarding for him.

The characteristics of mentoring programmes constitute a promising avenue of research (Allen et al., 2006). The distinction emerging from the results regarding the advice activity between on the one hand a formal framework synonymous with professional benefits, and on the other an informal relationship favourable to personal benefits, should be examined in more depth. Focusing programmes on high-potential populations or distinct groups, such as women or ethnic minorities, could be thought to play a role in the benefits perceived by the mentor. The same applies to variables such as geographical or functional proximity put forward by several authors (Monge and Eisenberg, 1987; Allen et al., 2006; Murphy, 2011) Qualitative approaches could enable this dichotomy to be better understood. Finally, understanding the influence of the composition of the dyad in terms of gender could be better included by incorporating it in the analysis of variables such as the hierarchical difference. Allen et al. (2006) show that the latter facilitates the role-modelling activity in that it enables the mentor to see himself as the holder of expertise, a legitimate skill for the development of his protégé.

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**Further reading**


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