Exploring the Relationship Between Human Resource Development Functions and the Mentoring Process: A Qualitative Study

Ann F. Cole
School District of Lee County

Geri McArdle
Barry University

Kimberly D. Clements
School District of Lee County

> *Human resource development professionals are in a unique position to help organizations achieve maximum positive impact and avoid legal difficulties when implementing mentoring programs. This case study explored a formal mentoring program that was data-based and linked to HRD in order to advance the mentoring process as an effective individual and organizational tool. Study contributions and recommendations for human resource development are discussed, along with suggestions for future research.*

Keywords: Mentoring programs, employee training/orientation, program accountability

Organizations are continually searching for ways to recruit and retain high performing employees who are able to help meet such marketplace challenges as increased competition, globalization, and technological innovation. One response to successfully addressing these challenges which has shown great success is mentoring (Friday & Friday, 2002; Grene & Puetzer, 2002). Mentoring has a long history that dates back to 800 B.C. and Homer's tale of *The Odyssey* when Mentor, who served as an advisor to Telemachus, the son of King Odysseus, helped him meet leaders who could serve as role models and give him guidance (Fairchild, 1982; Schweibert, Deck, Bradshaw, Scott, & Harper, 1999; Wilson, 2001).

Over time, the mentoring process, in which younger, more inexperienced employees gain valuable experience from older, more experienced leaders, has been shown to be valuable to the mentor, the protégé, and the organization (Burke, McKeen, & McKenna, 1994). More recently, the definition of mentoring has broadened considerably to include group mentoring, e-mentoring, peer mentoring, and other types of mentoring programs (Fine & Pullins, 1998; Krouse, 2001; Ritchie & Genoni, 2002).

While these types of mentoring programs have become popular within organizations, Alleman and Clarke (2000) noted that mentoring programs may function unmanaged in most organizations and are often not understood, measured, or evaluated. For example, managers who have no expertise in the field of human resource development may often run or conduct specific mentoring programs for organizations and employees (Broadbridge, 1999).

Mentoring programs that are not well managed could not only lead to dysfunctional relationships between employees and their supervisors, but also employee frustration and disinterest regarding participation in mentoring programs (Feldman, 1999; Gibb 1994a; Myers & Humphreys, 1985; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Scandura, 1998). Therefore, in order to address these individual and organizational challenges related to mentoring programs, companies need to provide greater accountability and evaluation to measure if the program is working and what improvements could be made to make it better.

Problem Statement

A survey of the literature suggests that mentoring can be an effective tool to help organizations foster employee development (Hunt & Michael, 1983; Lewis & Fagenson, 1995). Burke, McKeen, and McKenna (1994) point out that mentoring has been linked to career advancement, increased wages, improved career satisfaction, and the advancement of women in organizations. However, there is also literature that identifies potential problems with ineffective mentoring programs that may cause adverse outcomes for the employee and the organization (Myers & Humphries, 1985; Regis & Cotton, 1999). Scandura depicts the

implications to employees and the organization from dysfunctional mentoring relationships, including poor employee evaluations and problems with career advancement. Feldman (1999) also noted that mentors, as well as protégés, can be injured by these dysfunctional relationships when one or both people engage in behaviors that sabotage the relationship or career of the other person.

Currently, there is little research available that successfully links mentoring programs with the field of human resource development, which is in a unique position to help such programs through providing the necessary training, data, and evaluation they clearly need. Due to the potential impact from mentoring programs, both positive and negative, on the organization and its employees, there exists a need for further exploration into mentoring programs and how they measure outcomes and provide accountability.

Specifically, research needs to address whether mentoring programs within an HR department are more effective due to the collection and synthesis of a needs assessment and other data, adherence to Civil Rights laws, and the structure that the HR department can provide. There is very little research available that indicates HRD has been successfully linked with mentoring (Hegstad, 1999) and very little that shows this link can promote more accountability and better results. Thus, there exists a need to explore the link between mentoring and HRD sponsored programs. This study explores the link between mentoring and HRD in order to gain more information about these programs and how they are successful to both the individual and the organization.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that was developed for this qualitative case study is based on an aspect of HRD that can be used by organizations in mentoring programs: the Instructional Systems Design—ADDIE model. Additionally, the conceptual framework included specific related theories that could be used to provide support, structure, and accountability for a mentoring program. The conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1 in this paper.

ADDIE Model

The ADDIE model of Instructional Systems Design (ISD) involves five main stages (Seels & Glasgow, 1998), including: analyze (performing a needs assessment), design (developing goals and objectives), develop (producing, assessing, and validating the materials to be used), implement (putting the program into practice), and evaluate (collecting and reviewing data to determine the effectiveness of the program and whether or not changes are necessary). Swanson and Holton III (2001) portray the ADDIE model process as a customary procedure for HRD, especially training and development. Gilley and Maycunich (2001) agreed that the ADDIE model is a very universal design for HRD professionals, and Biswalo (2001) noted that the purpose of ISD is to support the learning process in the employee. According to Hegstad (2002), ISD can provide structure and uniformity to mentoring programs when used effectively by HRD professionals to facilitate learning and performance improvements.

Seels and Glasgow (1998) noted that the five steps within the ADDIE model allows HRD professionals to use an adaptable guideline for valuable and cost-effective training and instruction. McArdle (1999) suggested that formative evaluation is absolutely vital to produce program enhancement and to demonstrate worth, such an evaluation may not only improve the program, but also assess the employee's learning and attitude toward it. Gilley and Maycunich (2001) similarly concurred that formative evaluation is both practical and progressive, and that it should be the basis for any changes or modifications to a program. Moreover, they emphasized that such evaluation offers accountability and the chance to substantiate the importance and value of a program. Thus, the ADDIE model drives the development of the program and provides HRD the opportunity to use these steps within formal mentoring programs to support the structure and accountability that has been lacking in some organizations. Therefore, this model may be used by organizations to provide accountability regarding the potential effectiveness of mentoring programs.

Related Theories

Human resource development is based on several theories. Swanson and Holton III (2001) depict a three-legged stool as the theoretical foundation for HRD encompassing economic, systems, and psychological theories with ethics as the carpet underneath the stool. They believe that HRD is the amalgamation of all three theories within an ethical structure, all of which may be used to emphasize the importance of learning and accountability to program effectiveness.

Psychological theories are traditional in nature and have been utilized for many years; they often provide the rationale for the process of learning and how it may be transferred and applied within the everyday world. The psychological theories that were examined within this study included andragogy and social learning theory. Andragogy (Knowles, 1984) has been used as a theoretical foundation for the development of interventions and strategies for adult learners. Social learning theory (Bandura, 1973), places emphasis on the observation of other people, interaction with the environment, and the replication of observed behaviors as critical components of the

learning process. The economic theory included human capital theory (Becker, 1993), in which learning is received from training, and education and training increases learning and leads to increased performance, productivity, wages, and corporate earnings. The systems theory included the use of general systems theory (Swanson & Holton III, 2001; VonBertalanffy, 1968), which enhances the development of HRD by merging with other branches of learning, providing more of an open systems approach and offering insight into the method and enhancement of theory building. The ADDIE model, together with each of these theories, emphasizes the importance of strengthening mentoring programs through the application of HRD functions. Specifically these theories impact mentoring in the following ways:

(1) The ADDIE model provides organizations with more data based and accountable programs that assess the effectiveness of such programs for both employees and the organization.

(2) Andragogy and social learning theory support mentoring programs by providing information about how adults learn.

(3) Human capital theory supports mentoring by explaining the benefits to organizations from investments in human capital.

(4) General systems theory supports mentoring by explaining influences on the performance of the entire system, not just the individual people within the system.
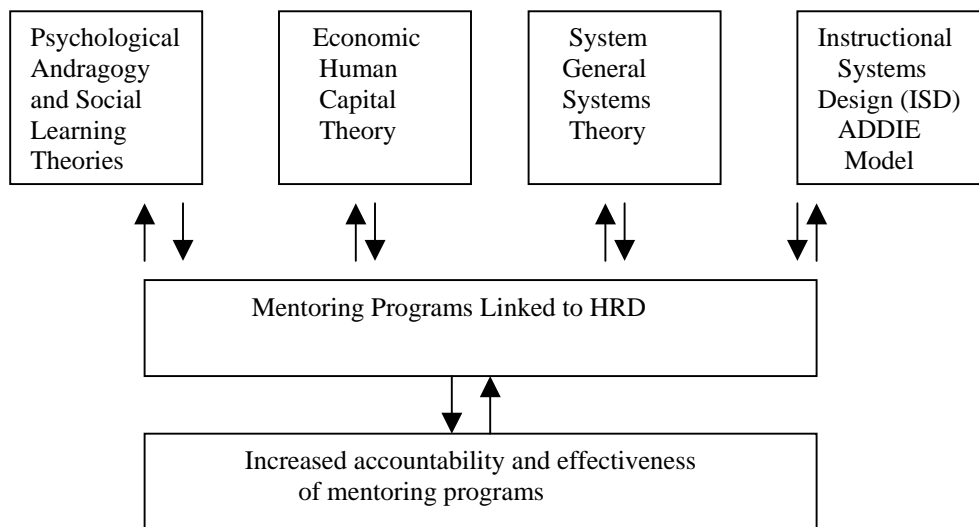

Figure 1. A Theoretical Framework for the Study

Research Questions

The fundamental research questions for this qualitative case study included the following: (a) how are formal mentoring programs in an organization cultivated and sustained? and (b) what are the mitigating factors of effectiveness in an organization's formal mentoring program?

Research Design

A qualitative case study was selected as the most appropriate methodology to investigate these research questions (Stake, 1995). This research was also based on studies conducted by Brown (1999) and by Hegstad (2002). Case study research has been advanced as a central method for examining specific questions and issues through exploring the perceptions and experiences of participants (Creswell, 1998). The case study was chosen due to the nature of the study, which involved the exploration of a bounded system, with in-depth data collection using multiple sources of data that were rich in context.

As advocated by Stake (1995), a small sample was used in order to provide a bounded system for exploring the organization's mentoring program which provided data that was then analyzed to identify categories and themes related to the research questions. The purposive sample that was used for this study was recruited through a gatekeeper HRD professional who contacted the corporate office of the company and asked for a volunteer site. A representative at the volunteer site then provided information about the study to potential participants; those who

indicated an interest in participating were then referred to the researcher. All participants must have been in the mentoring program for a minimum of three months, and all supervisors must have supervised that person for a minimum of three months.

Thirteen employees from the organization volunteered to participate in this study. The data collection process included the use of observations, audio-taped interviews, focus groups, and document review of the organization's mentoring program. Such methods specifically included the following: (a) semi-structured in-depth interviews were used with five protégés and an HRD professional, (b) a focus group with the mentors, (c) a separate focus group with the protégés, and (d) semi-structured interviews with five mentors and two protégé supervisors. Methodological triangulation was ensured through the use of thick, rich description, and member checking to enhance data accuracy (Creswell, 1998, Stake, 1995; Tellis, 1997).

Participating Organization and Participants

The organization that participated in this case study was originally established in 1883, with approximately 120 production facilities worldwide. Their headquarters is located in the Northeastern United States, and one Technical Center was specifically utilized for this study.

Contact information for those employees who were interested in participating in the study was provided to the researcher. The average length of participant employment at the organization was 12.75 years, with a range of 5 years to 28 years. Additionally, involvement in the mentoring program varied widely, with 31% involved for two years, 46% involved for three years, and 23% involved for four years.

Limitations

The limitations regarding this study relate largely to the fact that a limited sample size was used. Additionally, it may have proven useful to compare successful mentoring programs with those that were identified as unsuccessful, in order to better understand the relationship of such programs to HRD. Furthermore, it may have strengthened the research to use a mixed methods design, in which aspects of both qualitative and quantitative methodology could have been used to investigate the research question. Finally, study findings may have been different if the research had been conducted with an organization that was just beginning to develop a formal mentoring program, instead of focusing on a well-established program within an organization.

Results/Findings

The data collection methods that were used in this study helped to document the experiences and perceptions of participants, which were then analyzed for specific descriptions, categories, and themes. Such data was then organized to establish a pattern between HRD and mentoring. The results and findings obtained from data analysis and applied to the ADDIE model will be provided in this section according to each research question.

Research Question #1

The first research question, *"How are formal mentoring programs in an organization cultivated and sustained?"* was examined in terms of the ADDIE model. Under the first step, *Analyze,* it was found that the Research and Development Council initiated the mentoring program to make a difference for all employees and to address their developmental needs. The Council set out to eliminate some of the barriers to productivity and maximize employee potential through providing a structured program to positively impact opportunity and promotion. The mentoring program was developed through examining other programs and determining what areas the organization wanted to target for employee growth and development. In the participating organization, the Director of the Research and Development Council and the HR Director decided to implement the mentoring program by targeting both diversity issues and top talent within the organization.

Within the second step, *Design*, the Council reviewed other mentoring programs and created a sub-committee that put together a formal mentoring program with procedures, expected outcomes, guidelines, roles and responsibilities, measurement and evaluation, pitfalls, and expectation forms. This was then given to the HR Director who was responsible for implementing this as a pilot program. The Research and Development Council was responsible for the *Development* of the formal mentoring program which was provided to the HR Director for *Implementation.* The HR Director was responsible for the organization, matching, and monitoring of the overall program through periodic reviews and process evaluations. The HR Director was also responsible for handling problems and conflicts, implementing the evaluation process both during and after completion, and organizing and providing training for all participants. Part of the model was addressed by the organization through its creation of a structured, highly detailed, mentoring program that included training program guidelines and expected outcomes.

Research Question #2

The second research question, *"What are the mitigating factors of effectiveness in an organization's formal mentoring program?"* included the findings that there were impediments to the mentoring program's implementation and there were specific facilitators to the effective implementation of the organization's mentoring program. The impediments that were noted by subjects included the amount of time that was required to participate within the mentoring program. There was a clear division between those who felt that participation in the program required too much time and those who felt that the time commitment was a necessary part of serving as either a mentor or a protégé. Subjects also noted that there could be difficulties in cross-gender mentoring relationships, and that the program was not available to all employees. Another impediment to the mentoring program that was noted by subjects was the lack of communication regarding its relative effectiveness and impact upon the individual and the organization.

The facilitators of the mentoring program that were identified by subjects included the HR director's role in matching the mentor and the protégé, so that both individuals would be able to work effectively with one another. The actual structure of the mentoring program was also identified as a facilitator because it included the provision of specific guidelines and information about the program to participants so that everyone understood what was expected. Another facilitator that was noted by subjects as critical to the effective implementation of the mentoring program was the level of trust that was established between the mentor and the protégé. This was considered a critical piece to the mentoring relationship because it helped to encourage participants to take their roles seriously and work to find common ground through organizational projects and individual interests.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The data analysis that was used for this qualitative case study included the identification of categories that were then collapsed into themes and applied to each of the two research questions. Specifically, the organization did have a structured mentoring program that aligned with the ADDIE model. A needs assessment was conducted which was then used as the basis for the design and development of this program that was under the responsibility of the HR Director. Furthermore, the program aligned with specific strategic goals of the organization, which included fostering learning and development in order to remove productivity barriers. Similarly, it achieved the goals of improving individual growth and development through focussing on employee diversity and providing a structured opportunity for employees to learn from others. Through the implementation of the mentoring program, it appeared that the human resource department played a significant role in the organization's commitment to increased employee performance and learning.

Employees were able to identify specific impediments and facilitators to the mentoring program. The impediments included the amount of time required to participate in the program, cross-gender mentoring relationships, and the reality that the pilot program was not open to everyone in the organization. Additionally, participants explained that although the program was heavily evaluated, the results of whether or not the program was effective were not communicated within the organization. Facilitators that were identified within the program included: the process for matching mentors and protégés, the well-developed structure of the program, and the level of trust that was often achieved within the mentoring relationship.

A central finding of the study was that although the mentoring program was formalized and based largely upon the ADDIE model, which included continuous evaluation, the results of such evaluation were not clearly communicated to employees. Additionally, participants noted that this problem could potentially be addressed if the HR Director were given more time to devote to the program, specifically in terms of evaluation follow-up and communication of results.

Such evaluation results are critical to monitoring the effectiveness of the program and to making any necessary improvements in its design and structure. These results should be communicated to those administrators who may be in a unique position to provide additional assistance to the HR Director in the evaluation, communication, and improvement of the organization's mentoring program. The findings of this study confirm the ADDIE model as an effective tool to examine the use of mentoring programs within companies and organizations. Furthermore, the findings indicate the need to include an additional step within the ADDIE model, that of *Communication* to key stakeholders in the organization. This additional step is provided within the enhanced example of the ADDIE model that is provided in Figure 2b.

Contribution to HRD

Human resource development professionals have a critical role in the facilitation of mentoring programs within companies and organizations. However, they must have the time and resources available in order to effectively evaluate such programs and then communicate these findings to individuals within the company. Such accountability is crucial to the continued improvement of these programs so that they are able to match the organization's strategic goals and contribute to employee growth and development.

The findings of this study provide new information regarding the link between mentoring programs and HRD. Specifically, it illustrates the successful application of the ADDIE model and other related models in order to determine the effectiveness of a mentoring program within a large corporation. The findings indicate that mentoring programs can be developed in alignment with HRD goals and objectives; however, they also reveal that the important step of communicating mentoring program results may be missing from the evaluation of programs because of limited organizational resources. Additionally, study findings provide information about the mentor-protégé relationship and how important it is that both individuals work to develop the chemistry that is considered critical to the success of such a relationship.

These findings clearly advance the field of business and HRD; however, they also provide an impetus for the extension of such research through examining the mentoring programs of other companies and organizations to determine their relative alignment with HRD goals and objectives. It is necessary to look at the growing number of alternative types of mentoring programs and the role that HRD can play. Finally, it is crucial to continue exploring the role of HRD in providing accountability for mentoring programs.

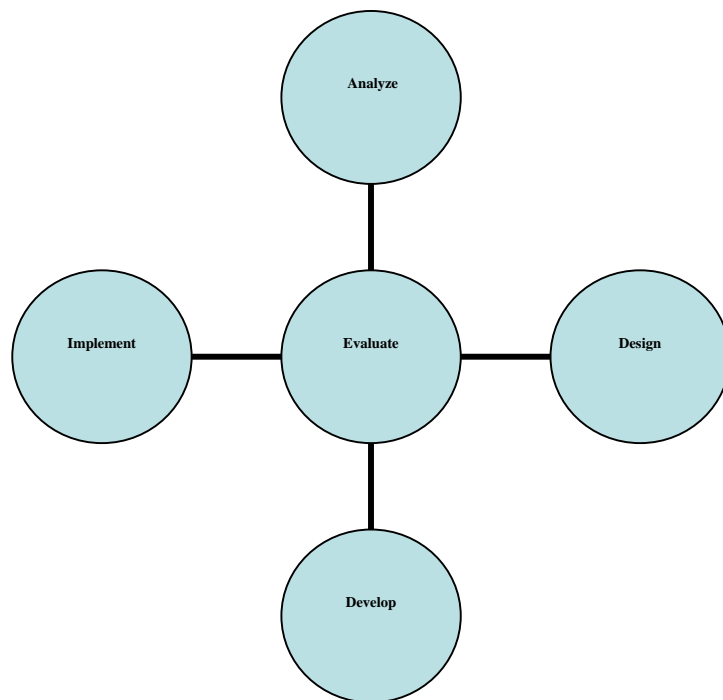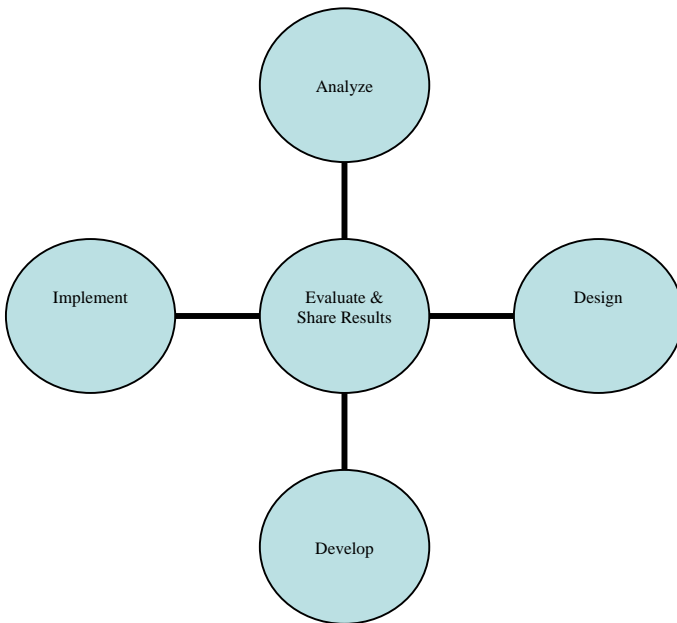**Figure 2a. Example of ADDIE Model adapted from McArdle (1999):**

Figure 2b. Enhanced example of ADDIE Model adapted from McArdle (1999):

References

Alleman, E., & Clarke, D.L. (2000). Accountability: Measuring mentoring and its bottom line impact. *Review of Business, 21,* 62-68.

Bandura, A. (1973). *Aggression: A social learning analysis.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Becker, G.S. (1993). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis with special reference to Education* (3rd ed). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Biswalo, P. (2001). The systems approach as a catalyst for creating an effective learning environment. *Convergence, 34,* 53-67.

Broadbridge, A. (1999). Mentoring in retailing: A tool for success? *Personnel Review, 4,* 336-356.

Brown, J.O. (1999). A case study of adults in college who developed an experiential learning portfolio. (Doctoral dissertation, Florida International University, 1999). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 60,* 1863.

Burke, R.J., McKeen, C.A. & McKenna, C. (1994). Benefits of mentoring in organizations. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 9,* 22-32.

Creswell, J.W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing, Inc.

Fairchild, R.W. (1982). Guaranteed not to shrink: Spiritual direction in pastoral care. *Pastoral Psychology, 31,* 79-95.

Feldman, D.C. (1999). Toxic mentors or toxic protégés? A critical re-examination of dysfunctional mentoring. *Human Resource Management Review, 9,* 247-279.

Fine, L.M., & Pullins, E.B. (1998). Peer mentoring in the industrial sales force: An exploratory investigation of men and women in developmental relationships. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, 18,* 89-104.

Friday, E. & Friday, S.S. (2002) Formal mentoring: Is there a strategic fit? *Management Decision, 40,* 152-157.

Gilley, J.W., & Maycunich, A. (2001). *Organizational learning, performance, and change: An introduction to strategic human resource development.* Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing.

Gibb S. (1994a). Evaluating mentoring. *Education & Training, 36,* 32-39.

Grene, M.T., & Puetzer, M. (2002). The value of mentoring: A strategic approach to retention and recruitment. *Journal of Nursing Care Quality, 17,* 67-74.

Hegstad, C.D. (1999). Formal mentoring as a strategy for human resource development: A review of research. *Human Resource development Quarterly, 10,* 383-390.

Hegstad, C.D. (2002). Development and maintenance of exemplary formal mentoring programs in fortune 500 companies. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2002). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 63,* 471.

Hunt, D.M., & Michael, C. (1983). Mentorship: A career training and development tool. *Academy of Management Review, 8,*475-485.

Knowles, M.S. (1984). *Andragogy in action.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Krouse, S.B. (2001). Virtual mentors: Mentoring on the internet. *Journal of Employment Counseling, 38,* 162-169.

Lewis, A.E., & Fagenson, E.A. (1995). Strategies for developing women managers: How well do they fulfill their objectives? *Journal of Management Development, 14,*39-54.

McArdle, G. (1999). *Training design and delivery.* Alexandria, VA: ASTD.

Myers, D.W., & Humphreys, N.J. (1985). The caveats of mentorship. *Business Horizons, 28,* 9-13.

Ragins, B.R., & Cotton, J.L. (1999). Mentor functions and outcomes: A comparison of men and women in formal and informal mentoring relationships. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 84,* 529-550.

Ritchie, A., & Genoni, P. (2002). Group mentoring and professionalism: A programme evaluation. *Library Management, 23,* 68-78.

Scandura, T.A. (1998). Dysfunctional mentoring relationships and outcomes. *Journal of Management, 24,*449-468.

Schweibert, V.L., Deck, M.D., Bradshaw, M.L., Scott, P., & Harper, M. (1999) Women as mentors. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education, & Development, 37,* 241-254.

Seels, B., & Glasgow, Z. (1998). *Making instructional design decisions* (2nd ed.) New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Swanson, R.A., & Holton, E.F., III. (2001). *Foundations of human resource development.* San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Tellis, W. (1997). Introduction to case study. *The Qualitative Report, 2,* 1-12.

Von Bertanlanffy, L. (1968). *General systems theory.* New York: George Braziller.

Wilson, P.F. (2001). Core virtues for the practice of mentoring. *Journal of Psychology & Theology, 29,* -131.