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MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS FOR THE NEW GRADUATE ASSISTANT: THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION AND INFORMATION SEEKING STRATEGIES

By

Sara M. Cyr

B.A. University of Maine, 1999

A THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

(in Communication)

The Graduate School

The University of Maine

August, 2003

Advisory Committee:

John C. Sherblom, Professor of Communication and Journalism, Advisor

Claire C. Sullivan, Associate Professor of Communication and Journalism

Nathan Stormer, Assistant Professor of Communication and Journalism

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By Sara M. Cyr

Thesis Advisor: John C. Sherblom

An Abstract of the Thesis Presented
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
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Graduate assistants are in unique positions within the university system as they may teach or conduct research as well as complete their own coursework. As a newcomer, graduate assistants learn about the university's culture and history, the norms and expectations of their peers, and their own job duties. To reduce the uncertainty that surrounds a new environment, a new graduate assistant may enact different information seeking strategies. For example, they may directly ask questions from a supervisor, quietly observe their co-workers, or ask indirect questions about a topic. These strategies can vary from person to person, depending on the type of information requested and the information source. Another aspect that may play a role in a graduate assistant's choice of information seeking strategy is communication apprehension. Individuals with higher levels of communication apprehension feel more uncomfortable or tense and embarassed communicating with others, therefore it seems likely they will also avoid more direct information seeking

strategies. Most individuals with communication apprehension avoid certain communication situations, and therefore avoid seeking the information necessary to reduce uncertainty. One way individuals can receive the information they need to reduce their anxiety and also develop support behaviors is to engage in a mentoring relationship. A mentor is willing to share his or her knowledge, as well as provide support, advice, or friendship.

This study examines mentoring relationships for new graduate assistants, as well as the role of communication apprehension and information seeking strategies. Questionnaires were distributed to graduate assistants at the University of Maine. The questionnaire contained three items, each relating to mentoring, information seeking, and communication apprehension.

The results indicate that engaging in a mentoring relationship is important to graduate assistants. 61 of the 69 respondents indicated they did have a mentor, and more specifically, 73% indicated their mentor was a faculty member or advisor. Overall, communication apprehension does appear to be moderately relatd to information seeking strategies, specifically in those involving one-on-one interactions. Since graduate assistants must learn an overwhelming amount of information in an a short amount of time, information seeking strategies, and more importantly, mentoring relationships, have proven to be effective strategies in reducing anxiety and providing the necessary tools to navigate their way through research projects, teaching, and the future.

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Chapter 1.

INTRODUCTION

The Graduate Assistant Experience

Each year, thousands of graduate students accept assistantships that place them in unique positions within the university system. Assistantships are designed to aid students financially while providing departments within colleges and universities a source of labor. For most students, assistantships allow them the opportunity to gain experience in their field, whether it's teaching or research. According to statistics from the National Center for Education Statistics, twenty percent of all graduate students received an assistantship in 1999-2000 (http://www.nces.ed.gov/pubs2003/quarterly/fall/4_3.asp#H3). Roughly twenty six percent of those assistantships were in the humanities and social or behavioral sciences, fifty four percent were in the life and physical sciences, while 28 percent were in engineering, computer science, and mathematics departments.

Preparing Graduate Assistants

Preparing graduate assistants for a role at the university or college level can be a difficult task. For example, teaching assistants fulfill important instructional needs in many departments but many times lack any training in education (Darling & Dewey, 1990). Socialization becomes significant for graduate students as it is through this process that they gain experience teaching at a university. It is a "process of trial and error learned largely through the shared knowledge and experimental base of experienced teachers, as well as through personal experience in the role" (p. 315). Usually socialization for graduate assistants occurs through different activities intended to provide

newcomers with a sense of the university's culture and their role within that culture. They may participate in university- or department-wide orientation programs, lunch or dinner with faculty or senior graduate assistants, or social activities designed to enhance interaction (Darling & Dewey, 1990).

Buerkel-Rothfuss & Gray (1990) examined the training graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) receive in various departments from several universities. The rationale for the study developed from a concern over the prevalence of GTAs, their impact at the university and an apparent lack of training provided. Because many GTAs are working on their own coursework, most towards a Master's degree, and have little actual experience teaching, GTA training has become an important issue. Most departments simply do not have the time or money needed to implement comprehensive training programs. The authors decided to take "a closer look at the state-of-the-art of the training provided for GTAs in this country between our field and others so that educators can begin to assess our progress in GTA training and can learn from innovations developed elsewhere" (p. 293).

Speech communication departments in particular, seem to rely mostly on GTAs for the instruction of introductory and 100 level courses. In fact, for this study, GTAs made up a large percentage of the student credit hours for participating universities. In addition, most of these courses are taught "autonomously" or managed solely by the GTA. For both speech communication departments and noncommunication departments, the "availability of guidance and evaluation during the actual teaching experience may help to compensate for the lack of training time prior to teaching" (p. 304). For this

study, each speech communication department that trained their GTAs also supervised them.

In his review of empirical research, Carroll (1980) examined studies conducted on typical training programs for teaching assistants (TAs). He found an increase of TA training programs but little research done on the effects of such training. For example, there is data to support the prevalence of various training programs but little evaluative data measuring their effectiveness or assessing student performance or satisfaction outcomes. Typical training programs included "pre-service orientation programs, in-service workshops, seminars, apprenticeship program, intern and extern programs," (p. 167). While there is a cost for materials and equipment, the difficulty in implementing these programs comes in the time invested by both TAs and the TA trainers. "TA trainers should expect to devote roughly seven or eight hours per week to administering such a program" (p. 178).

Graduate Assistant Concerns

In addition to their own coursework, new graduate assistants have additional responsibilities and duties that can be overwhelming. During the socialization process, new teaching assistants for example, must "attempt to develop a set of definitions and expectations," surrounding the teaching and learning processes (Darling and Dewey, 1990, p. 315). Through socialization, students learn more about the university's culture and history, as well as their own roles and job duties.

Equally important to newcomers is learning more about the people they will interact with on a day-to-day basis. Darling and Dewey (1990) examined some common

communication concerns of new graduate teaching assistants during the socialization process. They were able to identify three communication concerns new graduate teaching assistants experienced during their initial entry. Communication concerns were operationalized as "constructive frustrations or anticipations of future problem situations that involve participation in face-to-face interaction" (p. 316). They found that teaching assistants first have self-level concerns, move toward task level concerns, and after some teaching experience, feel impact level concerns.

Self concerns were described as those that "contained a tone of anxiety or fear about being able to survive and manage the credibility and authority of the role" (p. 319). Graduate student participants were apprehensive about 'surviving' as both a student and a teacher. The role conflict experienced by teaching assistants precipitates most of these concerns as they are still students themselves, yet desire credibility as teachers. The authors found that the majority of concerns expressed by the participants were self-level.

Beyond self-level concerns, participants in the study expressed task level concerns. Task level concerns involve learning and mastering the specific job duties of teaching. For example, participants are not just concerned about 'surviving' as a teacher and student, they are now concerned about being successful in the dual role. Setting priorities with duties such as grading, record keeping, and coursework become vital.

The smallest portion of concerns identified by the authors were impact level concerns. Impact level concerns were usually expressed only after participants had spent considerable time in front of the classroom. Participants' concerns progress from worry about their own abilities and credibility to the effects and influences teaching can have on their own students.

Stages of a Graduate Career

While graduate assistants can have various concerns about their new roles in the university, Baird (1995) identified three stages of a graduate career and provided a new framework for viewing those concerns. As graduate students progress through these stages, their roles, demands, and challenges can change. Baird offers, "perhaps the best way to understand these challenges and the advisor's role is to recast them as things students need to do to be successful" (p. 26).

In the beginning stage, usually consisting of the first year, graduate assistants are still trying to make sense of their new duties as well as the expectations placed upon them. There are many aspects students must become familiar with in the beginning stage, as they can be perceived as challenges. For example, graduate assistants must become familiar with the language of the field and the people in the program, become acquainted with their peers and an advisor, gain financial aid, and learn the specific requirements and daily tasks of both the department and the university.

After the first year of graduate school, students become more comfortable and confident in their studies and are familiar with peers and faculty members. In this middle period, students are able to concentrate more on their own studies and future course work. Graduate students in this stage have become acquainted with the language of the field and are now starting to master it. Along with mastering the language, students identify their professional interests and choose a committee of faculty members to support their work. Advisors play significant roles in this stage as they can offer feedback and guidance, as well as relate their own experiences in the field.

Graduate students in the dissertation (thesis) stage have developed their interests, chosen a committee, and a topic for their work. Again, advisors are extremely important in this stage as they provide valuable guidance for completing individual projects. Advisors help students rework and develop ideas and concepts relating to their thesis and explain the possible methods used to explore their idea. It is especially vital in this stage that students form supportive and encouraging relationships with their advisors. Completing a thesis can be a long and difficult process, one in which support and encouragement are both needed and appreciated.

The Graduate Experience

For most people, the graduate experience is a time of learning and development, as well as a time to form lasting and enriching relationships. However, it can also be a time of confusion, anxiety, and stress. Specifically, graduate assistants go through significant life changes that include "meeting deadlines for papers, conflict with balancing academic and social time, and struggling with decisions about a professional future" (Caple, 1995, p. 44). Mallinckrodt and Leong (1992) examined how graduate programs and family environments may provide social support that can affect students' stress levels. Specifically, the focus of the study were the differences between reported stress levels and sources of support for both women and men. Interestingly, the authors found that "women reported more life change stress and more anxiety and depression. Women experienced their academic departments as providing less flexible curriculum, as well as fewer tangible supports" (p. 720). Social support did not provide buffering effects for men, but did provide more general benefits. On the contrary, women sought

social support more often and received buffering effects. In other words, in times of stress, social support decreased the perceived feeling of stress for women.

Mentoring. Similar to research on social support, Ostroff and Kozlowski (1993) studied the role of mentoring on the learning process of newcomers. Mentors in this study, differed from supervisors, and were experienced members of an organization who help newcomers learn the historical, technical, and interpersonal aspects of academe. Results show that "mentored newcomers were more quickly sensitized to the importance of organizational culture, politics, history and other system-wide features than their nonmentored colleagues" (p. 180). Those newcomers that did not have mentors placed more focus on learning everyday tasks and routines and relied on their peers for more information. More significantly, the results point to the benefits of mentoring and its' immediate effects on the newcomer's entry.

The concept of mentoring is significant to the present study as it examines the supportive relationships graduate assistants engage in and their use of information seeking strategies. For this study, a mentor was operationalized as a teacher, someone well established in the organization who is available to provide advice, guidance, and support (Kalbfleisch & Keyton, 1995).

One of the most influential and beneficial elements of a graduate assistant's initial entry is the development of supportive relationships, however one of the easiest and quickest ways newcomers can learn about their environment is with the help of an established, knowledgeable individual that is open to providing valuable information (Cook, 1979). "For a new faculty member, who may be overwhelmed by the responsibilities of her/his new position, interpersonal bonding and social support can

serve as neutralizers that balance the anxiety or organizational entry and thereby allow for increased productivity" (Cawyer, Simonds, & Davis, 2002, p. 237). A mentor is someone who can guide the newcomer through this period of adjustment and redefinition. Such mentoring relationships have been shown to be advantageous not only for the organization but for both those who are involved in the relationship (Kalbfleisch & Keyton, 1995; Kogler Hill, Bahniuk, & Dobos, 1989).

Information Seeking. When newcomers, or more specifically graduate assistants, enter a new environment, they begin an important process of information seeking and sense making. Upon entering a new environment, most people are filled with anxiety about a number of issues they may encounter. Without knowing how to navigate in this new environment, people look for clues and seek out information on how to progress. Even a move within the same organization has potential to cause anxiety (Van Maanen, 1978). Therefore, information seeking has become a vital process for the individual as she or he may experience a period of uncertainty and ambiguity.

Communication Apprehension. As students can have communication concerns, communication apprehension can influence graduate assistants' information seeking behaviors and their engagement in a mentoring relationship. Communication apprehension is defined as "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person" (McCroskey, 1977, p. 55). It can refer to a "family of related terms like: (a) reticence, (b) shyness, (c) unwillingness to communicate, and (d) stage fright," (Allen & Bourhis, 1996, p. 215). Most people feel comfortable communicating with others but the individual who is considered to have a high level of communication apprehension does not see the benefits of communication

and even anticipates a negative experience. It is estimated that 10 to 20 percent of individuals experience an unusually high level of communication apprehension and an even higher number of people experience a moderate level of apprehension (McCroskey, 1976). More specifically, someone with a high level of communication apprehension experiences a fear that can overwhelm the individual's perceptions of the communication. Allen and Bourhis (1996) argue that communication apprehension affects communication behaviors so that those individuals with high levels of apprehension do not perform communication activities as well.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter two provides a review of previous literature on information-seeking strategies, communication apprehension, and mentoring. Past research on information-seeking includes information on the sense-making process and the need for information-seeking strategies, information-seeking outcomes, and the types of information sought by newcomers. Communication apprehension research demonstrates how pervasive and damaging high levels of communication apprehension can be, its role in student academic achievement and retention, and in teaching assistants. The mentoring literature provides various definitions of a mentoring relationship, the outcomes of engaging in a mentorship, and the benefits mentoring relationships can provide to both the participants and the organization. Chapter three presents the methods used in the present study. Included in this chapter are the demographics of the respondents, a description of the questionnaire, the procedures for distributing and collecting the questionnaire, and an explanation of the statistical analyses used. Chapter four reports the findings the present

study as well as the statistical analyses used. The data are explored through the use of regression analysis, chi-square analysis, and descriptive statistics. Tables are also provided in the text for each research question. Chapter five offers a discussion of the results and an interpretation of meanings as well as connections between the present study and previous research. Also included in this chapter is a discussion of the limitations of the present study and directions for future research.

Chapter 2.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Information Seeking

For most newcomers to an organization, there can be an overwhelming amount of uncertainty. To reduce this uncertainty, people make deliberate and strategic choices to gain that information (Miller & Jablin, 1991; Miller, 1996; Meyers, 1998). In general, entering a new organization or role is an experience "characterized by disorientation, foreignness, and a kind of sensory overload," (Reis Louis, 1980, p. 230). There can be too many unfamiliar situations and cues that the newcomer may not understand or know how to interpret. Researchers note that new jobs as well as job changes create a kind of uncertainty for newcomers (Feldman & Brett, 1983; Miller & Jablin,1991; Miller, 1996). Meeting new people, learning the specific tasks of their new role, and establishing a day-to-day routine can also become overwhelming to the newcomer.

Sense-Making Process

Reis Louis (1980) suggests that newcomers have a sense-making need in order to overcome these obstacles. "In particular, they need help in interpreting events in the new setting, including surprises, and help in appreciating situation-specific interpretation schemes or cultural assumptions" (p. 244). Unlike those established in the organization, newcomers are highly aware of the relationships they are beginning to form as well as the context surrounding them (Miller, 1996). However, in most cases, managers sometimes expect these newcomers to "hit the floor running," and ignore their need for information (Feldman & Brett, 1983).

Most newcomers go through a process of socialization where the organization aims to inform the newcomer of specific, but sometimes limited, pieces of information (Van Maanen, 1978). Although some research focuses on traditional orientations to socialization, other researchers have examined assimilation as the active process of "organizational attempts to form the newcomer (socialization) and the newcomer's efforts to influence the organization (individualization)" (Mignerey, Rubin, & Gorden, 1995, p. 54). The authors work under the assumption that each new employee brings with them a desire to learn new information. The techniques they use to acquire such information both influence and are affected by the amount of information given by the organization.

Newcomer Experience. Reis Louis (1980) developed a model of the newcomer experience to identify the key features involved in this experience. Change, contrast, and surprise were found to be the most influential features of this model. For the newcomer, change simply amounts to the differences in the new situation compared with the old. For example, "a new location, addresses, telephone numbers, title, salary, and job description," are changes the newcomers must adapt to and cope with (p. 235). With a role change especially, newcomers must adapt to a different professional identity.

Contrast is a feature that is person-specific. That is, there may be aspects of the job that only the newcomer finds disturbing. When someone enters a new environment, they compare their previous experiences with situations they are currently in as a way to evaluate their position. What emerges as contrasting is determined by the individual. It may be aspects such as a dress code or the absence of windows that the employee copes with.

Surprise is the third feature and is the difference "between an individual's anticipations or subsequent experiences in the new setting" (p. 237). What happens is that the newcomer brings with them assumptions or expectations from their previous organization or role and they are not met. Individuals can be surprised with their new job, the organization, or themselves. Employees may be surprised with the way they feel about their new role. For example, they may have expected to like working fewer hours or they may have thought they would like working for a start-up organization but find they are feeling the opposite.

Coping Strategies. With all the uncertainty surrounding a new job or role, Feldman and Brett (1983) found eight coping strategies newcomers engage in to reduce the anxiety they experience. Individuals may work longer hours, delegate responsibilities, get help from others, and even overindulge in alcohol, food, or cigarettes, but more significantly, newcomers seek out both information and social support. When these newcomers seek information, it is a "direct attempt to change the psychological condition of uncertainty" (p. 260). Receiving information about role expectations, daily tasks, and evaluations can help the individual learn about their new environment while decreasing anxiety. The social support newcomers seek out can provide them with an "outlet for blowing off steam, a set of people in whom to confide personal and work related problems, and a source of support for lagging self-confidence and self-esteem" (p. 261). Starting a relationship with an insider, or someone established in the organization, can ease the newcomer's transition. For example, insiders usually know what to expect and how to interpret certain situations newcomers may know little about.

They may even have their own network of insiders to compare new information to (Reis Louis, 1980).

Traditionally, socialization is viewed as a process that includes stages that individuals go through upon entering an organization. Although some research focuses on traditional orientations to socialization, other researchers have examined assimilation as the active process of "organizational attempts to form the newcomer (socialization) and the newcomer's efforts to influence the organization (individualization)" (Mignerey, Rubin, & Gorden, 1995, p. 54). The authors work under the assumption that each new employee brings with them a desire to learn new information. The techniques they use to acquire such information both influence and are affected by the amount of information provided by the organization.

Even with successful and efficient socialization or orientation programs, newcomers still need to be proactive information seekers. As an individual enters an organization, she/he may receive an overwhelming amount of information from established members of the organization. However, those established members may simply forget what it was like to be new and unintentionally leave out important information. What may also happen is that individuals that have been in the organization for some time, may be "reluctant to disclose role-related information until recruits have displayed certain qualities such as commitment or trustworthiness" (Miller & Jablin, 1991, p. 93). Reis Louis (1980) explains that organizations need to be aware of and understand what the newcomer experiences in order to implement successful orientation programs or provide necessary information. For example, "fostering links between newcomers and their insider peers or nonsupervisor superiors would be beneficial"

(p.247). Forming informal mentoring relationships or buddy systems may also prove to be beneficial for newcomers.

Contemporary orientations to socialization, or assimilation, focus on the mutuality aspect of the organization and individuals (Kramer & Miller, 1999). Some critics (Bullis, 1993), claim that traditional orientations to socialization do not take into account individual personalities and efforts for the "sake of the societal and corporate good, at times dominating (and excluding) the identities/voices of women and other minorities" (p. 361). This may explain why newcomers still need to take an active approach

Uncertainty Reduction. Information seeking allows individuals the opportunity to reduce the uncertainty that goes along with entering a new environment. "In addition to fostering satisfaction, uncertainty reduction also enables newcomers to perform their jobs more effectively. As uncertainty dissipates, newcomers know what they need to do and how to do it" (Morrison, 1993a, p. 564). Knowing the information necessary to complete a task successfully gives the individual a feeling of value and a sense of control. Similarly, Mignerey, Rubin, and Gorden (1995) found a connection between information seeking, role orientation and confidence. Information seeking points to important outcomes such as predictability and control, which have been shown to reduce uncertainty and lessen stress. Establishing routines can help newcomers regain the confidence they had in a previous position (Feldman & Brett, 1983).

Information Seeking Strategies

Knobloch and Solomon (2002) explain that "a diversity of information seeking strategies are available to people faced with relational uncertainty" (p. 249). These

strategies provide different types of information and may vary according to the individual seeking information. Miller and Jablin (1991) identified and developed seven information seeking strategies most used by individuals in a new environment - overt, indirect, third party, testing, disguising conversations, observing, and surveillance.

The first tactic, overt, involves direct contact with an information source. It is most likely used when newcomers feel comfortable asking this person for information. Indirect questions are more often used when newcomers do not feel comfortable seeking information from a source. This strategy allows individuals to ask questions without being embarrassed or putting anyone on the spot. The third party strategy uses someone other than the target as the information source. "This tactic is typically used when the primary source is unavailable and/or when newcomers feel uncomfortable in seeking information from a primary source" (p. 106). This strategy may also be used when primary sources usually do not provide adequate or accurate information. A fourth tactic, testing, involves monitoring an information source in order to learn more about the attitudes and feelings toward an issue or behavior. Newcomers may deliberately break rules to assess the consequences. A fifth tactic, disguising conversations, allows newcomers to appear nonchalant and seek information as part of a natural conversation. This strategy enables individuals to develop a relationship and find common ground. Observing, the sixth tactic, is used mostly when individuals "wish to unobtrusively obtain information concerning a target's attitude or information" (p. 110). Using this strategy, newcomers can compare their performance to more experienced individuals within the organization and possibly find someone to emulate. Surveillance, the seventh tactic, is

"based primarily on retrospective sense making" (p. 111). Newcomers think back to previous conversations or the past behaviors of others to guide future decision-making.

Miller (1996) further examined new hires' use of these information seeking strategies. He found that "new hires use overt and observe tactics to a considerable extent, third party and indirect tactics moderately and testing tactics infrequently" (p. 16). In situations where newcomers felt comfortable overtly asking for information, they were less likely to use other tactics. However, in situations where newcomers did not feel comfortable using an overt tactic, the perception of social costs increased and participants used other tactics.

Miller and Jablin (1991) posit factors that may affect information seeking behaviors during an individual's entry into the organization. Social costs, or an individual's perceived fear of social costs, may prevent him or her from seeking out necessary information. "In particular, newcomers are very concerned with negative relational consequences/costs associated with observable information seeking requests," (p. 97). Newcomers can sometimes be fearful this is information they should already know and therefore do not want to "bug" their information targets. As a result of these interactions, newcomers may also be afraid of being punished or reprimanded.

Information sources could also affect information seeking behaviors. Newcomers usually have a wealth of sources to gain information from such as organizational brochures, manuals, supervisors, co-workers, subordinates, and acquaintances. Supervisors are usually identified as the source individuals go to for information on job requirements and daily tasks, as well as approval. Co-workers have also been identified as beneficial sources of support as they are usually more available and social costs are

reduced significantly in these interactions. Individuals may choose information seeking tactics to reduce any anticipated high social costs. Essentially, newcomers will choose information seeking strategies in a particular situation according to "his or her uncertainty about the information, assessment of the target as an information source, and beliefs about potential social costs associated with [the] use of each tactic" (p. 114).

Myers and Knox (2001) explored the use of information-seeking strategies by undergraduate college students in the classroom and found that the overt strategy was used most, followed by observing, third party, indirect, and the testing strategy. Consequently, "student use of the overt information seeking strategy was positively correlated with perceived instructor clarity, verbal immediacy and verbal receptivity" (p. 349). When students perceived their instructor to be clear, approachable, and receptive, they felt more comfortable and were more likely to use the overt strategy.

Similarly, Myers, Mottet, & Martin (2002) examined the relationship between students' use of information seeking strategy and their communication motives. The authors argue that information seeking is important for a student, both academically and personally. Students may communicate with their instructor for many reasons such as, a desire to develop a relationship with the instructor, to learn more about the course and assignments, to receive approval, or to show their instructor they know the material. They found that students used different and specific information seeking strategies according to their motives for communicating. More specifically, students who seek information relating to course requirements and assignments, generally use the overt information seeking strategy, while students who want to develop a relationship or make an impression with their instructor, use indirect and observing strategies the most.

Types of Information

When entering a new environment, there are specific types of information individuals need to reduce uncertainty, accomplish certain tasks, and fit in with their new environment. Morrison (1993a) identified four types of information sought by newcomers to assimilate themselves to the organization. She also examined the frequency of seeking each type of information. The first, task mastery, consists of technical information and job skills that allow the employee to learn how to perform the job. The more frequently individuals sought this type of information, the more effectively they mastered the job. Role clarification, a second type of information, involves learning about the role behaviors others in the organization expect. Individuals seek this referent information to define their role in the organization. For participants in the study, Morrison found that frequency in seeking this type of information did lead to greater role clarity. The third type of information, acculturation, involves the behaviors and attitudes belonging to that particular organization's culture. For example, actions or behaviors considered appropriate in one organization may not be so for another. This area did not seem to be affected by the frequency of information seeking.

The fourth type of information, social integration or normative information, involves the individual and their sense of belonging. Employees develop relationships with each other and in their work groups and learn about the group's norms and expectations. An interesting aspect of Morrison's study was that "newcomers preferred peers for certain types of information and supervisors for others. The one unexpected result was that newcomers sought technical information from supervisors more frequently than from peers" (p. 582). Newcomers also most frequently sought technical information

the most, followed by referent and normative information. Naturally, over time newcomers sought less technical information as they began to master their job duties.

Some research has shown that information-seeking strategies are shaped by relational characteristics of the participants. Specifically, relationship intimacy, power dynamics and information expectancies shape the directness of strategies. People appear to use direct strategies "under conditions of heightened intimacy, which, in turn, increases the likelihood of positive outcomes and buffers the impact of negative insights" (Knobloch & Solomon, 2002, p. 251).

Communication Apprehension

Individuals with high levels of communication apprehension are more inclined to avoid communicating with others, either individuals or groups, and do not enjoy these interactions (Roach, 1998; McCroskey, 1976). They feel "uncomfortable, tense, and embarrassed, and will appear (at best) shy or reticent to others" (McCroskey, 1976, p. 1). As stated above, communication apprehension is experienced by a large number of people, however those that do not have this anxiety and communicate more can be perceived as being "more competent, attractive and sociable as well as exerting more leadership over others" (McCroskey & Richmond, 1979, p. 57).

Effects of Communication Apprehension

Communication apprehension (CA) can be defined as anxiety an individual experiences communicating with certain people or groups but not with others. This anxiety can be seen as a response to a given situation or context (Roach, 1998) and,

therefore, considered a state. However, most of the research involving communication apprehension has taken a trait approach. That is, most studies refer to communication apprehension as being trait-like or an aspect of one's personality. Trait-like communication apprehension occurs across a wide variety of communication situations and contexts (McCroskey, 1983).

Communication apprehension can have wide-ranging effects for those with high communication apprehension. Those who are highly apprehensive make decisions in their lives that allow them to avoid communicating with others. They may choose housing that is more remote, isolated seating in public areas, choose occupations with lower communication requirements, are less likely to seek promotions, exhibit more tension in groups, and can even be seen as less attractive by their peers (McCroskey, 1976). "The interpersonal effects of communication apprehension generally indicate high communication apprehension people experience emotional distress during or anticipating communication, prefer to avoid communication, and are perceived by others and themselves as less competent, skilled, and successful" (McCroskey, Booth-Butterfield & Payne, 1989, p. 101). As newcomers with high levels of communication apprehension may avoid certain communication situations, they may avoid seeking the information necessary to reduce uncertainty. Reducing this uncertainty would allow individuals to discover their role in the organization, to learn about their basic job duties, and about the organization as a whole (Mignerey, Rubin, & Gorden, 1995).

Allen and Bourhis' (1996) found interesting results from their meta-analysis of thirty-six studies relating communication behavior to communication apprehension levels. "A negative correlation indicates that a highly apprehensive person produces

either lower quantity or quality of communication behavior" (p. 219). Studies involving communication quantity measured the number of words spoken, the number of nonverbal movements, or both. Communication quality was examined using both in class assignments and perceptions of quality by trained observers. In general, the higher an individual's level of communication apprehension, we can expect a lower level of communication quantity and quality.

Communication Apprehension in Organizations

Communication apprehension does play a role in organizations as it affects an individual's level of satisfaction and even their chances of advancement (McCroskey & Richmond, 1979). Harville (1992) developed a person/job fit model that examines the role communication apprehension has on individuals' occupation preference and satisfaction. He found that employees who had high levels of communication apprehension, were significantly less satisfied in roles requiring a high level of communication. Jobs that required a lot of interaction with other people were more preferred by those low in communication apprehension, as they enjoy contact with other people. "The difficulty that high apprehensives may have in developing and maintaining friendships with fellow employees could partially explain their low job satisfaction" (p. 161). McCroskey and Richmond (1979) agree that for the individual with a high level of communication apprehension "prospects for employment, retention, and advancement are all significantly reduced" (p. 60). Harville also found that, "high apprehensives had less desire for advancement, were less likely to expect advancement, were more likely to see themselves in positions with low communication requirements, and were more likely

to prefer jobs with lower communication requirements than were low apprehensives" (p. 156).

Communication Apprehension in Academia

Student Academic Achievement. As communication apprehension plays a role in occupational and organizational settings, it can also play a role in the instructional system. Research has shown similarities between the college classroom and organizations (Myers & Knox, 2001). Martin, Valencic, and Heisel (2002) examined the connection between students' trait communication apprehension levels and their motives for communicating with their instructors. They found that students with high levels of communication apprehension tend to communicate less with their instructors. These findings support previous research stating that apprehensive students participate less in classroom activities (Martin, Myers & Mottet, 1999). McCroskey and Andersen (1976) explored the relationship between communication apprehension and academic achievement among college students and found that large class size may also play a role in student-teacher interactions. Classes containing several hundred students can be impersonal and often leaves little time for teachers to communicate with all students. However, smaller class size may not encourage student-teacher interaction. With more opportunities to communicate, "some students are functionally unable to communicate because of communication apprehension" (p. 73). These students refrain from asking questions and avoid participating in discussions. Because they avoid class discussions, these students may also receive lower evaluations and learn less. The authors were working under the assumption that "communication between student and teacher is a valuable component of many instructional systems, but that some students are much more

likely to seek this communication while others are more likely to avoid it" (p. 80). In the instructional systems studied by McCroskey and Anderson, those that permitted student-initiated interaction with the teacher, "significant differences in achievement were observed between high and low apprehensives, but in a communication-restricted system, no such differences were observed" (p. 80). Classrooms encouraging student-initiated interaction, place students with high levels of apprehension at a disadvantage because they may not be able to participate in discussions or ask the questions necessary to succeed.

In a similar study, McCroskey, Booth-Butterfield, and Payne (1989) examined the relationship between college students' retention and success and their level of communication apprehension. They found that "students with higher communication apprehension will earn lower grade point averages and are less likely to persist at the university," (p. 104). Academic success and interpersonal success are both important for retention; communication apprehension is thought to play a role in each. Results indicate that "students with higher CA will earn lower grade point averages and are less likely to persist at the university" (p. 104). Communication apprehension has a negative impact for students at the university level. The student that has a high level of communication apprehension, may avoid communicating with their peers, teachers, or advisors, as well as campus activities. Therefore, they do not receive the social support necessary to feel welcome and connected.

Dwyer and Fus (2002) investigated communication apprehension and self-perceived public speaking competence for students enrolled in a basic public speaking course. They found that communication "instruction in public speaking does contribute

to student perception of decreased communication apprehension and increased self-efficacy" (p. 34). The significance of their research points to the importance of public speaking courses since it contributes to students' perceptions of decreased communication apprehension as well as an increase in self-efficacy. Public speaking courses seem to increase students' beliefs they have to skills to be confident, competent communicators.

Communication Apprehension in Teaching Assistants. Communication apprehension doesn't only impact students but can affect teachers as well. "Communication traits and patterns of the instructor are important because they have the potential to affect the classroom environment, quality of instruction, performance of students, student communication, and the teacher-student relationship" (Roach, 1998, p. 132). More specifically, Roach investigated teaching assistant communication apprehension and their willingness to communicate in the classroom. Communication apprehension can be experienced by any teacher but teaching assistants "may experience heightened levels of anxiety" (p. 132). Understandably, a beginning teaching assistant is not experienced in front of students as an audience and may only be teaching to fulfill their assistantship duties. For some teaching assistants, they receive little training in not only the subject matter but in teaching as well, thus reducing their willingness to communicate.

Examining teaching assistant communication apprehension is important to study as these teachers may continue their careers and become faculty members. Roach explains, "Because communication apprehension is a trait-like predisposition and thus relatively enduring across contexts and time, one cannot assume that mere experience

will lessen communication apprehension for teaching assistants as they become faculty instructors" (p. 134). Studying communication apprehension in a classroom context is important because "student perceptions and learning are linked closely" (p. 132).

The results of Roach's research indicate that there is a negative correlation between teaching assistant communication apprehension and teaching experience, amount of training in subject matter, and amount of training in how to teach. Experience and training may reduce the level of communication apprehension or affect only the perception of the fear. Interestingly, he also found that "a TA with obvious state anxiety in the classroom is likely to produce empathetic nervousness in students. Even worse, high anxiety on the part of the TA could invite or foster malicious power-grabbing attempts from students" (p. 138).

Mentoring

As we enter new environments and develop supportive relationships with others, there are certain relationships that perform a unique function and possess a special meaning. Supportive relationships can be formed with anyone but mentoring relationships have distinctive qualities that set them apart from other relationships. Defining a mentor can prove to be challenging as they perform many functions and provide many benefits. Olian, Carroll, Giannantonio, and Feren (1988) offer a comprehensive explanation of a mentor. A mentor is, "a senior member of the profession or organization who shares values, provides emotional support, career counseling, information and advice, professional and organizational sponsorship, and facilitates access to key organizational and professional networks" (p. 16). For Zey (1988) an

effective mentor "establishes a safe, secure sub-environment in which novel ideas are developed, nurtured, experimented with and successfully introduced into the corporate mainstream" (p. 50). A mentee or protégé is most often the newcomer to an organization and someone who actively pursues clues and information on the culture of their new environment.

What is a Mentoring Relationship?

Defining a mentoring relationship in an organization is not always easy. It involves "organizational, occupational, positional, and interpersonal variables," that can affect each stage of the relationship (Hunt & Michael, 1983, p. 480). It is important to remember that mentoring relationships are unique and specific to the mentor and mentee. Clawson & Kram (1984) explain, "every relationship between a superior and a subordinate is 'developmental,' in that it is constantly teaching the subordinate something about how to be or not to be a manager" (p. 23).

Traditional Orientations. Traditional orientations to mentoring relationships have often focused on one individual as being 'stronger' and the other as being 'weaker.' "In most cases, the stronger party is also much older (and presumably wiser) than the weaker party, and the stronger party is charged by an institution to accomplish specific goals on behalf of the younger" (Philips, 1979, p. 340). More specifically, Philips focuses on the relationship between graduate students and faculty and places a great deal of importance on these relationships. He explains, "it is my feeling that the future of graduate study will hinge in no small way on how this student-advisor relationship is played out in graduate departments" (p. 339). However, Philips' definition of mentoring

ignores any notion of mutuality and places the student in a position to be molded and shaped by the professor.

Mutuality. Beyene, Anglin, Sanchez, & Ballou (2002) define a mentor as someone who, "provides emotional support, information, and advice; shares values; facilitates access to key networks; motivates; is a role model; protects; and provides the type of interactions that allow for transfer of knowledge and skills" (p. 90). They provide a new framework for mentoring; one that focuses on the relational mutuality and connection between two people. Unlike previous notions of mentoring (Phillips, 1979) that posit the student "at the mercy of the faculty" (p. 343), the notion of mutuality allows for an exchange of ideas and questions the superior-subordinate concept of mentoring. For Beyene et al., mentoring is transformed from a "single person instrumentally receiving help to 'make it' in the system to one in which relationships, grounded in relational mutuality, can change the world for the better" (p. 99).

Types of Mentors

Research now points to alternatives to traditional notions of mentoring relationships, placing peers and co-workers as valuable sources of support (Bell, Golombisky, Singh, & Hirschmann, 2000). For Rymer (2002), many of her close friendships, "amount to peers mentoring each other or, in a word, 'co-mentorships.' Simply put, a co-mentorship is a mutual mentorship of a pair of close, collegial friends committed to facilitating each other's development" (p. 343). The co-mentorship provides support and benefits both participants at different and specific points in their lives. These relationships can be formed over coffee, at conferences, during car pooling,

and around the office, essentially whenever there is opportunity to develop a friendship and to share inner feelings and ideas.

Peer relationships provide mutual benefits and can become vital elements of an individual's career (Kram, 1983). Because of this mutuality, participants find themselves both providing and receiving information and support. Kram and Isabella (1985) examined the benefits of peer relationships and explain that peers, "can coach and counsel; they can provide critical information; and they can provide support in handling personal problems and attaining professional growth" (p. 129). Compared to conventional mentoring relationships, peer relationships appear to offer a wider range of support for personal and professional development during every career stage.

The authors also identified three types of peer relationships that provide different forms of support. The information peer is one that individuals usually turn to exchange information about the job or the organization. Since the focus is on exchanging information about the job, emotional support is not the intent. The information peer also seems to be the most common type of peer relationship. The collegial peer is someone with whom individuals trust and disclose more information. They are seen more as a friend and engage in more intimate discussions than with the information peer. The special peer involves the "most intimate form of peer relationship" (p. 121). Participants usually form a strong connection and provide emotional support. Individuals in these types of relationships also report feeling a sense of bonding with the other person. Overall, peer relationships offer availability and mutuality, which in turn provides participants with a sense of equality as well as the necessary information and emotional support in every stage of one's career (Kram, 1983).

Successful Mentorships

While defining a mentoring relationship may prove to be difficult, some key characteristics of successful relationships have been identified. In their work on mentoring, Beyene, Anglin, Sanchez, & Ballou (2002) discovered that protégés value "communication, trust, knowledge, connection (care), nurturance, mutual interest, open-mindedness, respect, and patience" (p. 97). Similarly, Cawyer, Simonds, & Davis (2002) found specific characteristics of mentoring relationships that can impact socialization. Since socialization allows individuals to identify with the organization, these characteristics become vital, not only to the mentorincg relationship but to the individual's own feelings of success and accomplishment. Interpersonal bonding, social support, professional advice, history, and accessibility are aspects of mentoring that can affect socialization.

Types of Messages. Two types of messages were found to create an interpersonal bond between the mentor and the protégé. The first, messages of acknowledgement, helped the protégé feel welcome, wanted, and accepted. During socialization, messages of acknowledgement can reduce role conflict and provide positive reinforcement. The second type of message, small talk, provided the groundwork for a stronger interpersonal bond. Small talk allows participants the opportunity to disclose small amounts of information to the other, revealing common interests and building trust. It becomes a non-threatening way to form relationships.

Social support proved to be beneficial for protégés as it provides emotional and informational support as well as continuous interactions. Consistent interactions with a mentor let the protégé know that she or he is important and cared for. The mentor that

provides social support can lead the protégé into more group activities, initiating socialization, as well as demonstrate the social norms in that particular department.

Professional advice often comes in the form of "communication that not only assists in the day-to-day tasks of work, but also facilitates an understanding of acceptable behavior and departmental norms" (p. 234). This type of interaction helps the protégé become familiar with all of the necessary rules and policies that must be learned. As a mentor explains, "every department has a different feel, you can save people a lot of heartache if you explain things" (p. 234). Because the newcomer must learn so much information, professional advice will allow the protégé to see what is "really important" about her or his job and the department.

Learning about the history of an organization can allow the newcomer to better form an identity with that organization. Knowing why things happen the way they do can help the protégé understand "what is really going on versus what appears to be going on" (p. 235). Messages about history can involve learning about "interpersonal relationships between certain faculty members, obtaining biographical information about colleagues, and receiving information concerning departmental policies" (p. 235). Knowing this, the protégé can better form her or his own organizational identity and clarify their role.

Accessibility. Overall, accessibility plays a very important role in socialization and mentoring relationships. Protégés need someone that is available to "answer questions, offer advice, and make suggestions" (p. 235). If the mentor is not easily accessible, the relationship becomes inconvenient and pointless. For the mentor and protégé, spending time together can establish interpersonal bonding, or provide social

support, background information and professional advice. Without accessibility, socialization can be severely inhibited.

Characteristics of a Mentor

Research has also focused on the characteristics both protégés and mentors look for in each other. Hunt & Michael (1983) found that age differential, organization position, power, and self-confidence are characteristics usually found among mentors. For example, mentors are usually "highly placed, powerful, knowledgeable individuals who are willing to share their expertise but who are not threatened by the protégé's potential for equaling or surpassing them" (p. 481). Therefore, the mentor should be old enough to have gained the necessary experience and have a measure of power, as well as provide protection and advice (Hill, Bahniuk, Dobos, 1984). Mentors should also show concern for their protégé's development. The mentor must also be able to explain to the protégé the inner workings and history of the organization, as well as provide professional advice (Cawyer, Simonds, & Davis, 2002).

In their research, Olian, Carroll, Giannantonio, & Feren (1988) found that "younger respondents had stronger attraction to the mentor than older subjects. This result is intuitive since the younger the potential protégé, the greater the feelings of insecurity over organizational status, career direction, self-worth, and ability" (p. 28). They also found that interpersonal competence, as perceived by the protégé, was an important characteristic among mentors. That is, a higher level of interpersonal competence was preferred by protégés as it was assumed the mentor could then satisfy his or her needs for "emotional support, friendship, and intimacy in interactions" (p. 34).

Characteristics of a Protégé

Protégés can also share common characteristics, which may explain why some are chosen over others. Age, gender, and power needs of the protégé can all play a role in the mentoring relationship. Usually, those that are chosen as protégés are young, motivated, and aspiring individuals, open to receiving advice and information. Gender may also influence the relationship as females tend to engage in more emotional connections and can experience more overprotectiveness, compared to male protégés. As age and gender can affect the mentoring relationship, so can the personal needs of the protégé. Newcomers usually do not start with a high degree of power in the organization and therefore, establish mentoring relationships or alliances with those in higher level jobs that provide "reflected power." That is, protégés can benefit and utilize the power given their mentors (Hunt & Michael, 1983).

There are also common characteristics that can be found in mentoring relationships. Burke & McKeen (1997) studied the mentoring relationships for 280 female business graduates and found that they shared some commonalities. "Most mentors had direct supervisory responsibilities for their protégés. These relationships started early in the women's careers. Mentors were older and at higher organizational levels. Mentorships lasted for about 5 years...and were not actively encouraged or supported" (p. 54).

Benefits of Mentoring Relationships

Newcomer. In their work on mentoring relationships that facilitate socialization, Cawyer, Simonds, and Davis (2002) found that mentoring can provide some important

benefits to the newcomer in an organization. They examined the experiences of new faculty to a communication department at a large university. Their results suggest that "certain characteristics of mentoring relationships ease the anxiety of organizational entry" (p. 236). Bonding interpersonally with a mentor gave protégés the sense that they were valued members and helped them to feel more connected to the organization. "For a new faculty member, who may be overwhelmed by the responsibilities of her/his new position, interpersonal bonding and social support can serve as neutralizers that balance the anxiety of organizational entry and thereby allow for increased productivity" (p. 237). Hill, Bahniuk, & Dobos (1984) also studied new faculty members and found that with mentoring relationships, "faculty with all types of communication support and adequate information also perceived themselves as successful and satisfied" (p. 31).

Mentor. The outcomes of participating in a mentoring relationship can be powerful and influential. What makes this type of relationship so significant is that it can provide benefits not only to mentors and protégés, but to the organization as well (Hunt & Michael, 1983; Kram & Isabella, 1985). Mentoring relationships can help establish protégés or newcomers as knowledgeable and self-confident members of an organization or profession. A mentorship "provides an opportunity for greater utility of older managerial talent. Through these relationships, older professional can rejuvenate themselves by passing on the wisdom and experience they have learned through their professional careers" (Hunt & Michael, 1983, p. 478). For Zey (1988), mentoring provides mutual benefits. "Corporate coaches guide, counsel, protect and sometimes promote the development and career of the junior member, it's not a one-way street. The protégé also helps advance the mentor's career in a multitude of ways, serving as a

sounding board for ideas and helping the mentor finish a project" (p. 47). Mentoring programs demonstrate that the company cares about the professional and personal development of their employees, as well increases productivity and reduce turnover rates.

In addition to exchanging ideas, protégés can challenge her or his mentor, become friends, and learn from each other. Viewing mentorships through this relational or mutuality perspective, transforms conventional notions of hierarchical mentoring to a creation of one's identity through relating to others (Beyene, Anglin, Sanchez, & Ballou, 2002).

Often times, mentors receive validation as well as satisfaction from aiding newcomers and establishing a relationship with a prospective protege (Hunt & Michael, 1983). Through counseling and modeling, protection and visibility, the mentor is allowed to facilitate development of the protégé (Noe, 1988). "An experienced mentor...finds internal satisfaction in enabling a younger colleague to learn how to navigate in the organizational world, and gains respect from colleagues for successfully developing younger talent for the organization" (Kram & Isabella, 1985). On the downside, mentors who engage in these relationships to further their own work may be unable or unwilling to provide a full range of career benefits and knowledge to the protégé (Noe, 1988).

Protégé. Benefits experienced by the protégé are usually felt as a newcomer during organizational entry. In other words, mentoring relationships help ease the newcomer's anxiety and encourage role clarity. "The protégé generally feels more closely interwoven into the organization's cultural fabric" (Zey, 1988, p. 48). Zey also found that an open line of communication could also reduce the protégé's uncertainty.

Participating in a mentoring relationship not only provides the protégé with adequate information but also the confidence and competence to be successful in higher levels of the organization (Hunt & Michael, 1983). For those students in graduate school, the benefits can be especially significant as "financial aid, job placement, research project training, collaboration on publications, and personal and emotional support" (Cameron, 1978) as cited in (Hunt & Michael, 1983, p. 478) are provided to protégés.

Mentoring relationships involving females has often been compared to the model for female friendships, consequently there may be more benefits to a mentorship than traditional models would predict (Kalbfleisch & Keyton, 1995). Reich (1985) studied the effect mentoring has on female executives and found that with effective mentorships, women often "gained greater self-confidence...and an enhanced awareness of their strengths" (p. 52). Compared to men, more women felt the mentorship provided guidance and support and additionally, the "affective, or emotional, quality was more vital for women than for men" (p. 53). For women, the mentoring relationship became more important personally, rather than professionally as characteristics such as support, encouragement, nurturance, and friendship were highlighted.

Formal Mentoring Programs

Because mentoring can provide a wealth of benefits, many organizations such as Johnson & Johnson, AT&T, and Merrill Lynch have begun adopting formal mentoring programs (Zey, 1988). In a formal mentoring program, established members of the organization are paired with newcomers or those seeking advice or counseling. Research has focused on the affects of both informal and formal mentoring relationships as well as

their differences. However, Noe (1988) warns, "organizations should not expect protégés to obtain the same type of benefits from an assigned mentoring relationship as they would receive from an informally established, primary mentoring relationship" (p. 473). Chao, Walz, & Gardner (1992) examined both formal mentorship programs and informally developed mentorships. They explain that, "mentors often select protégés with whom they can identify and with whom they are willing to develop and devote attention. In contrast, formal mentors may not view the protégé as particularly worthy of special attention and support" (p. 621). Their results suggest that while formal mentors may provide an equal amount of emotional support, they provide less career-related support (Noe, 1988). While informal mentorships form as a result of mutual admiration and respect, formal mentorships may be surrounded by feelings of obligation and too much pressure. Time limitations, incompatible schedules, and an overall lack of interaction and accessibility can also contribute to an ineffective formal mentoring program (Noe, 1988).

Research has shown that while formal mentorships may differ than informal mentorships, they can still provide important benefits. For example, Klauss (1981) found that while formal mentorships are often less personal, they can still have an impact and can be successful and beneficial elements of an organization. Cawyer, Simonds, & Davis (2002) had similar findings. The assigned mentors in their research "did not fulfill the traditional mentoring role" (p. 238) but they did create opportunities for newcomers to seek information or advice. For these relationships to work, it becomes vital that mentors remain accessible and convenient to the protégé. Klauss goes one step further and adds

that "ultimately it is the advisee who must be prepared to initiate or take the lead in ensuring that the relationship works out successfully" (p. 496).

In most of the earlier work on mentoring, research was originally focused on finding common or key characteristics of successful executives. Researchers found that a mentoring relationship not only existed but was highly valued among top executives. However, mentoring relationships were usually only experienced by young men moving their way up the corporate ladder. Knowing how important mentoring is to a young person, Cook (1979) expanded the mentoring research by inquiring as to how available these relationships were to women and how these relationships affected their chances for advancement. "In the past, women set their sights lower because they didn't see other women at the top and they didn't feel they would be given opportunities for key jobs. Women...until recently have not been prepared scholastically, experientially, or emotionally to move into key executive positions" (p. 83).

Cross-Gender Mentoring

Kalbfleisch and Keyton (1995) expanded on mentorship research with their work on power and equality in mentoring relationships. They explain that, for women, there are two obstacles preventing them from engaging in successful mentorships. "Men are less likely to initiate mentoring relationships with women than with men," and "the traditional model of mentoring that appears to fit many male-male mentoring relationships does not appear to fit female-female mentoring relationships" (p. 208). Therefore, until women move higher up in organizations, they will have fewer higher-ranking mentors to form relationships with. Many women feel that the "'old boy'

networks often control promotions, which can result in the best qualified candidates being passed over for the choice assignments" (Reich, 1985, p. 51). To ensure that women and minorities have access to management and become socialized into the organization, assigning mentors may be an effective solution (Cook, 1979; Zey, 1988).

Some research involving cross-gender mentoring, or relationships involving members of the opposite sex, presents these relationships as difficult and complex. Clawson and Kram (1984) explain that mentoring relationships are developmental relationships, that is they serve the purpose of developing one's talents, knowledge, and skills. People learn more "if they feel that it is safe to approach those superiors...the superiors has their best interests at heart" (p. 24). With mutual trust and respect, individuals are more likely to learn from each other. However, there are characteristics of cross-gendering mentorships, identified by Clawson and Kram, that can create apprehension and concern for both participants. First, "men and women tend to assume stereotypical roles that reduce female managers' competence and autonomy and the overall effectiveness of work teams," as well as "concerns about increasing levels of intimacy create tension and anxiety for both men and women that can result in avoidance of frequent interaction or decreasing work effectiveness" (p. 23). Individuals may also avoid interacting behind closed doors due to concerns about the "public image" of their relationship. The problem doesn't necessarily lie in the level of intimacy between the mentor and protégé, but rather the perceived public image surrounding the relationship. These concerns add to the characteristics common of any developmental relationship.

Alternatives to Mentoring

Although most of the research on mentoring relationships highlights the benefits or examines common characteristics, there is some research devoted to those individuals who may not participate in mentorships and their possible alternatives. Kram (1983) found that a "young manager may feel undermined and held back by his or her mentor, or a senior mentor may feel threatened by his or her protégé's continued success and opportunity for advancement" (p. 622). Individuals may also feel apprehension about the level of intimacy involved in such relationships, as well as what others in the office may perceive. In examples such as this, the mentorship can become damaging or hurtful. Because the relationship can become so intimate and personal, a premature ending could result in a "loss of self-esteem, frustrations, blocked opportunity, and a sense of being betrayed" (Hunt & Michael, 1993, p. 479).

As some organizations may not encourage mentoring relationships or they may not be available to individuals during certain career stages (Kram, 1983) there is a need for alternative sources of information and support. As stated earlier, peers can provide adequate information as well as an overwhelming amount of support, encouragement, and advice (Bell, Golombisky, Singh, & Hirschmann, 2000; Rymer, 2002; Kram, 1983; Kram and Isabella, 1995). Dreher & Dougherty (1997) developed a Career Management and Asssessment System (CMAS) that would become an alternative to mentoring yet still provide support and advice as needed. The CMAS consists of programs and activities that identify individual's areas of need and implement courses of action. For example, managers may not interact with individuals directly but would gather and discuss each individual's strengths, weaknesses, and plan for their future in the organization. In

addition, managers may also observe and evaluate individuals during situational or job rotation exercises. That way, individuals can learn what each person does in and for the organization and managers get to know more about the individual's capabilities. CMASs differ from traditional mentorships in that a team of managers meet to discuss employees, evaluate their performance, and provide future direction within the organization, yet a one-on-one relationship does not exist.

Whether it's a formal or assigned mentoring program, a friendship, or discussions with an experienced member of the organization, engaging in a mentoring relationship can provide many benefits and greatly reduce the anxiety felt by the newcomer. Information seeking strategies can also be valuable approaches to easing the anxiety experienced by newcomers. However, individuals, such as graduate assistants, who have a high level of communication apprehension may find it difficult to seek necessary information or support from others creating a potential anxiety-producing situation. Further, the communication apprehension level of graduate assistants can affect their performance in the classroom and their interactions with students (Roach, 1998) as well as their performance as students (McCroskey & Andersen, 1976). An individuals' ability or desire to develop friendships (Harville, 1992; McCroskey & Richmond, 1979) and choice of information seeking strategy (Feldman & Brett, 1983; Knobloch & Solomon, 2002) can also be affected by communication apprehension. Understanding the various information seeking strategies newcomers use to make sense of a new environment as well as variables that can affect those strategies, can enable researchers to better understand the sense-making process. Managers and supervisors can develop more

efficient and valuable orientation programs based on the information seeking strategies used most by graduate teaching assistants.

Mentoring relationships can be very important to graduate assistants as they provide so many benefits. How do these relationships form and who engages in them? Is there a defined procedure for finding and developing a mentoring relationship? How does a mentoring relationship differ than any other? How important are mentoring relationships to graduate assistants? The importance of exploring different types of mentoring relationships and especially those available to graduate assistants can provide insights into who engages in mentorships, why, and what benefits they receive.

Research Questions

This review of the literature raises several questions in studying the development of graduate assistants' mentoring relationships, levels of communication apprehension, as well as information seeking strategies. Because mentoring relationships can reduce the anxiety felt by a newcomer and provide essential information, it is important to understand how these relationships form. Since information seeking strategies have also been shown to reduce anxiety (Feldman and Brett, 1983), it is important to understand the role communication apprehension may play in both the graduate assistants' ability to engage in such relationships as well as their use of information seeking strategies.

The following research questions will provide a better understanding of graduate assistants' mentoring relationships and the role of communication apprehension and information seeking behaviors:

1. Is a graduate assistant's level of communication apprehension (overall, dyadic, group, meeting, or public) related to their choice of information seeking strategy (that is, use of overt, indirect, third party, testing, disguising conversations, observing, or surveillance strategies)?

2. What type of information do graduate assistants go to their mentor for most often?

3. Is a student's level of communication apprehension related to having a mentor?

4. What types of mentoring relationships do graduate assistants most often engage in?

5. What are the unique qualities of mentoring relationships for graduate assistants?

6. How important is engaging in a mentoring relationship for graduate assistants?

7. Who initiates mentoring relationships, the mentor or the protégé?

Chapter 3.

METHODS

The purpose of the present study is to examine the relationship between graduate assistants' use of information seeking strategies, their engagement in mentoring relationships, and the affect communication apprehension may have on both. To answer the proposed research questions, a modified version of Miller's (1996) Information Seeking Tactics Scale, in addition to McCroskey's (1978) Personal Report of Communication Apprehension and a mentoring-related item, were included in a questionnaire.

First, the participants will be described. Second, the procedure for collecting data will be explained, as well as the procedure for identifying the sample. Third, each item on the questionnaire will be discussed, including validity and reliability information. Fourth, a description of the statistical analyses used will be included in this section.

Participants

Participants were graduate assistants employed by the University of Maine. Students with assistantships conduct research in various departments or assist in teaching designated classes. Graduate assistants were aware the questionnaire was designed for a thesis project. Participants were asked to read and fill out an instruction page, which asked for information that was not required but may be used for research purposes. The information on this page asked participants which type of assistantship they had, year with assistantship, department, gender, and whether or not English was their first

language. A total of 130 questionnaires were distributed, 71 were returned completed (54.6%), and 5 were returned incomplete or partially completed (3.8%). The incomplete items on those questionnaires were discarded and the remaining items used.

Of the 71 participants, 66 completed the instruction sheet. Thirty-seven were female (56.0%) and 29 were male (44.0%). Forty-three participants held teaching assistantships (65.1%), 14 held research assistantships (21.1%), 1 did not answer the question (1.5%), 6 currently held both positions (9.0%), and 2 held positions described as other (3.0%). Twenty-seven of the participants were in the first year of an assistantship (41.0%), 22 were in the second year (33.0%), and 10 were in the third (15.0%). Seven did not answer the question (11.0%). Sixty participants indicated English as their first language. Participants in the research were graduate assistants in the departments of Animal and Veterinary Sciences, Biological Sciences, Archaeology, Communication and Journalism, English, Physics, and Wildlife and Ecology.

Procedure

A list was obtained that included the names of course coordinators in those departments employing graduate assistants from the University of Maine Graduate School. The project was explained to course coordinators and they were asked for possible meeting times in their department or the names of students or faculty that may have more information. In some departments on campus, regular meetings may be held with graduate assistants and the course coordinator to discuss issues ranging from research projects to course assignments, as well as those concerning teaching, such as grading and lesson planning. For those departments that conduct regular meetings, the

course coordinator gave the researcher permission to distribute and collect the questionnaire at the meeting. At the coordinators' request, the researcher arrived early to the meetings to distribute the questionnaire. The researcher introduced herself and the project. She explained she was conducting research on graduate assistants for her thesis research and would appreciate input from any and all graduate assistants. Although an instruction sheet was included in the questionnaire, the researcher was available to answer questions the participants had concerning the questionnaire. Each participant was asked to first read the Informed Consent page and then, fill out the questionnaire. Most participants completed the questionnaire in ten minutes, five minutes under the suggested time given to the course coordinators. When the participants completed the questionnaire, instruction sheets and questionnaires were placed in designated envelopes. Participants either disposed of the Informed Consent page or handed them back to the researcher.

In those departments that do not hold regular meetings, graduate assistant contacts distributed the questionnaire to other graduate assistants in the department, collected the instruction sheet and questionnaire in separate envelopes, and sent them back to the researcher. Through some graduate assistant contacts, "appointments" were scheduled at times when a large number of graduate assistants held office hours or could simply be found. The questionnaire was distributed to those participants and completed in his or her office while the researcher waited and collected them.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was composed of three different parts to determine the information seeking strategies used, levels of communication apprehension, and descriptions of mentoring relationships. Placed on top of the questionnaire, was an Informed Consent sheet, as requested by the Use of Human Subjects Board, listing the name of the researcher, as well as an explanation of the risks and benefits of participating in the project, a confidentiality statement, and contact information for the researcher and her advisor. Participants were asked to read the Informed Consent before filling out the questionnaire.

The first page of the questionnaire was the instruction sheet. The instruction sheet asked participants to keep in mind their experiences as a graduate assistant and to answer each question as honestly as possible. Participants were then asked to place the questionnaire in the designated envelope. Also included on the instruction sheet was an offer from the researcher to provide a summary of the research results and/or suggestions for effective information seeking strategies to those participants choosing to provide an e-mail or mailing address in the space provided. To ensure confidentiality, the instruction sheet was separated from the rest of the questionnaire and placed in a separate envelope.

Information seeking was measured using a modified version of the Information Seeking Tactics Scale (Miller, 1996). This scale contains four items relating to each of the seven strategies identified by Miller and Jablin (1991). The original scale was designed to explore strategies used by newcomers in an organization. For the present study, the scale was modified to convey information seeking strategies that may be used

in an academic setting. Miller (1996) reports Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients ranging from .69 to .80 for these scales.

Overt, indirect, third party, testing, disguising conversation, observing, and surveillance strategies were investigated on the original scale using items such as, "I would ask specific, straight to the point questions to get the information I wanted," "I would indicate my curiosity about the topic without directly asking for the information," and "I would humorously remark about the topic with my advisor to see what kind of response I would get." Participants in the original study were asked to "Think about situations in which you were *very uncertain* about *how to perform your job* and wanted to find out how your *immediate supervisor* believed the job should be done" (p. 6).

Because the present study seeks to examine information seeking strategies used by graduate assistants, participants were asked to "Think about your experiences as a new graduate student and how you react to being in a new environment." Also, terms on the original scale were changed to reflect information seeking in an academic setting and with a mentor; the term 'supervisor' was replaced with 'mentor.' For example, an item in the original study states, "I would find another source other than my supervisor (coworker) who could tell me the same information." The scale used in the current study modified the item to state, "I find sources other than my mentor who can tell me the same information." Participants then rated the frequency in which they employed these strategies on a Likert-type scale containing 5-point scales ranging from 1=Never to 5=Always.

Communication apprehension was measured using the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24), developed by McCroskey (1982). This scale

assessed participants' levels of communication apprehension in public, small group, interpersonal, and group meeting communication contexts. The PRCA-24 is reported to be internally consistent with alpha reliability estimates ranging from .93 to .95 (Rublin, Palmgren, Sypher, 1994). Construct and criterion validity for the measure have also been asserted (Rubin, et al., 1994). Each context was measured as well as a total level of communication apprehension. Past researchers (e.g. Sherblom, 1986) have obtained a Cronbach alpha reliability score of .83 for the PRCA-24.

To examine the mentoring relationships graduate assistants engage in, the researcher developed an item of the questionnaire containing short answer questions, which allowed participants the chance to clarify and shed light on their mentoring relationships. The item was added to assess how many graduate assistant participants had mentors, characteristics of the relationship, and who initiated the mentorship. These questions include "Do you have a mentor?", "Who initiated the relationship?", "What type of support do you receive from your mentor(s)?", "What kind of information do you go to your mentor for?", "How important are mentoring relationships to you?" These questions were designed to gain information on the types of mentoring relationships graduate assistants engage in, their level of importance, and how the relationships were initially formed.

Data Treatment

Upon completion, the instruction sheets (containing demographic data) and questionnaires were kept in separate envelopes in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. To ensure confidentiality, the instruction sheets were kept apart from the

questionnaire and used only for descriptive analysis. Each questionnaire was then given a participant number in the upper right hand corner.

Once the surveys were given a participant number, the information was entered into an Excel spreadsheet. Headings in the spreadsheet contained the participant number, and each question from the survey thereafter. All of the statistical analyses were performed using Excel. Depending on the research question being analyzed, partially completed surveys could still be used. For example, research question one pertains to communication apprehension and information seeking strategies, and does not require information on mentoring. Therefore the number of participants for each question may change. The number of participants for each research question is provided in the results section in each corresponding table.

Research question five inquires into the unique qualities of mentoring relationships. This question produced many varied answers that fell into categories identified by the researcher. The researcher trained a coder who evaluated the responses and independently sorted them into those categories. The coder (a second year Master's candidate in the University of Maine's communication program) read all participant responses to the question and recorded the frequency of responses. The coder's evaluations were used in analyses.

Statistical Analysis

The communication apprehension scores collected from participants were evenly distributed across levels of communication apprehension from 24 to 112 with no clear segmentation points in the distribution of the scores. Converting communication

apprehension scores to high and low levels would have required discarding too many of the observations. Communication apprehension and information seeking scores are both interval level data and were analyzed in the present study using all observations in a multiple correlation (R) to test the significance of the relationship between a graduate assistant's level of communication apprehension and information seeking strategies. R^2 is calculated to show the strength of that relationship. Pearson product-moment correlations (r) between communication apprehension contexts and information seeking strategies are also reported.

Responses from participants with mentors were used to examine the type of information graduate assistants seek from their mentor. A chi-square analysis was used to determine the frequency of responses. Participants were asked to answer an open-ended question asking what type of information they most often go to their mentor for. While the responses were numerous and varied, four categories emerged that were used as the independent variable (advice, technical, personal, professional/advice on future career).

Responses from students with mentors were used to determine which of three types of mentoring relationships graduate assistants engage in most. Chi-square analysis was used to examine the frequency of each type (faculty member/advisor, senior graduate assistant, peer/friend).

To examine mentoring relationships in further detail, participants were asked to identify the unique characteristics of the relationship with the mentor they go to most frequently. Respondents offered many numerous qualities yet definitive categories did emerge. The frequency of responses were recorded for the following categories: trust,

friendliness, understanding, open dialogue, humor, honesty, mutual respect, support, accessibility, guidance, professional yet personal, helpful.

To examine how important mentoring relationships are to participants, a chi-square analysis was used. Respondents were asked to rate the perceived importance of the mentor they reported they go to most often (faculty/advisor, senior graduate assistant, peer). The independent variable was the four categories of importance (very important, somewhat important, not very important, not applicable).

A chi-square analysis was used to examine responses from participants indicating who initiated the mentoring relationship. Participants were asked how the relationship started and from those responses, three categories emerged (participant, mentor, mutual/both). The frequency of responses will be used to determine how mentorships form in academic settings for graduate assistants.

Chapter 5.

RESULTS

This chapter reports the findings of the present study as well as the statistical analyses used. The data are explored through the use of multiple correlation analysis, chi-square analysis, and descriptive statistics. Tables are provided in the text for each research question.

RQ 1: Is a graduate assistant's level of communication apprehension (overall, dyadic, group, meeting, and public) related to their choice of information seeking strategy (that is, use of overt, indirect, third party, testing, disguising conversations, observing, or surveillance strategies)?

Overall communication apprehension is moderately related to the information seeking strategies (overt, indirect, third party, testing, disguising conversation, observing, and surveillance) R=.38 (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000; Smith, 1998). These information seeking strategies account for 15% of the variance in the communication apprehension scores (R^2=.15). Dyadic communication apprehension shows the strongest relationship with information seeking strategies (R=.43) with information seeking strategies accounting for 18% of the variance in the dyadic context (R^2=.18). Meeting (R=.36; R^2=.13), group (R=.32; R^2=.10), and public (R=.31; R^2=.09) all show some relationship between communication apprehension and the information seeking strategies as well (see Table 1). However, as shown in Table 2, each of the information seeking strategies show a low correlation with each of the communication apprehension contexts indicating only small relationships between them. Only the information seeking strategy of seeking out a

third party showed a weak to moderate relationship to the communication apprehension contexts (group *r*=.24, meeting *r*=.29, dyadic *r*=.18, public *r*=.27, overall *r*=.31).

Table 1.
The Relationship Between Communication Apprehension and Information Seeking Strategies

Communication Apprehension Context	R	R^2
Overall	.38	.15
Dyadic	.43	.18
Meeting	.36	.13
Group	.32	.10
Public	.31	.09

Note: All analyses based on 66 observations

RQ 2: What type of information do graduate assistants go to their mentor for most often?

Respondents indicate that they go to their mentor most often for technical information (x^2=30.23, df=2, p<.005). Participants were asked this question in the form of a short-answer question. Three categories of information emerged as most common: technical, social, and professional. Morrison (1993a) identifies technical information as job skills that allow the employee to learn how to perform the job. For the participants in this study, this information includes administrative or clerical concerns, information about the department, teaching procedures, grading policies, and details regarding equipment for research use. Technical information was rated as the most frequent type of information sought by participants *n*=41 (66.13%). Examples of technical information reported in this study include: "Generally only instructions for lab or pointers to go more smoothly"; "Technical information"; "As far as teaching is concerned, I rely on my mentor for advice as to what types of lesson plans I should prepare for particular chapters, which she provides.

Table 2

Correlations Between Communication Apprehension Contexts and Information Seeking Strategies

		Group	Meeting	Dyadic	Public	Overall	Overt	Indirect	Testing	Disguise	Observing	Surveillance	Third Party
	Group	1.00											
Communication	Meeting	0.70	1.00										
Apprehension	Dyadic	0.48	0.56	1.00									
Contexts	Public	0.35	0.55	0.55	1.00								
	Overall	0.79	0.88	0.79	0.77	1.00							
	Overt	-0.02	0.07	0.17	0.09	0.09	1.00						
	Indirect	0.04	0.06	-0.06	0.13	0.05	-0.28	1.00					
Information	Testing	0.09	0.14	-0.02	0.20	0.13	-0.14	0.26	1.00				
Seeking	Disguise	0.15	-0.02	-0.03	0.08	0.06	-0.01	0.36	0.18	1.00			
Strategies	Observing	0.09	0.12	0.10	0.25	0.17	-0.09	0.31	0.20	0.43	1.00		
	Surveillance	-0.05	-0.09	-0.03	0.04	-0.04	-0.11	0.31	0.10	0.29	0.47	1.00	
	Third Party	0.24	0.29	0.18	0.27	0.31	0.06	0.06	0.00	0.22	-0.06	-0.09	1.00

n =66

Professional advice was rated the type of information most often sought from their mentor by 12 participants (19.35%). Professional advice for the participants in this study consisted of information on choosing a career path, designing a course of study or research project, and how to prepare for future studies. Examples of reported professional advice included: "What to do in a situation, where I should be going with my life, their perspectives but no specific directions as to what I have to do"; "Sometime ask for specific information related to the project and discussing some new information related to the thesis that is not clear to me"; "Future career, focus of study"; and "Information involved with the specific requirements of my job as well as suggestions for where I should go with my research."

The third category that emerged was social information. Participants reported social information as the type of information least sought from their mentors, *n*=9 (14.52%). Social information, for the participants in this study, includes support or friendship, how to interact with faculty and students, as well as how to act in specific situations. Examples of social information reported in this study included: "How to handle discipline problems and relationships with higher-ups"; "Just advice and a shoulder to lean on"; "How to deal with people problems. The social issues involved in making music with large groups of diverse people"; and "World related, political, feminist-related information." (see Table 3).

Table 3.
Frequency of Type of Information Graduate Assistants Seek Most Often

Type of Information	Frequency	Percentage
Technical	41	66.13%
Professional	12	19.35%
Social	9	14.52%

n=62, p<.005, df=2

RQ 3: Is a graduate assistant's level of communication apprehension related to having a mentor?

Whether a participant has a mentor or not accounts for only 1-3% of the variance in communication apprehension scores (overall communication apprehension R=.11, R^2=.01; group communication apprehension R=.16, R^2=.03; meeting R=.14, R^2=.02; dyadic communication apprehension R=.03, R^2=.001; public communication apprehension R=.09, R^2=.01). This result is largely an artifact of the number of participants who had mentors (61 of the 69 respondents indicated they had mentors). However, this result also suggests the prevalence and importance of mentors for the present graduate student respondents (see Table 4).

Table 4.
The Relationship of Communication Apprehension to Whether a Graduate Assistant has a Mentoring Relationship

Communication Apprehension Context	R	R^2
Overall	.11	.01
Group	.16	.03
Meeting	.14	.02
Dyadic	.03	.001
Public	.09	.01

Note: All analyses based on 66 observations

RQ 4: What types of mentoring relationships do graduate assistants most often engage in?

Respondents indicated the type of mentor they most frequently rely on is a faculty/advisor (x^2=44.67, df=2, p<.005). Of the 63 respondents, 46 chose faculty/advisors as mentors they go to most frequently, 9 chose graduate assistant mentors, and 8 chose peer mentors (Table 5).

Table 5.
Frequency of Type of Mentoring Relationship
Graduate Assistants Most Often Engage In

Type of Mentor	Frequency	Percentage
Faculty / Advisor	46	73.00%
Senior Graduate Assistant	9	14.30%
Peer	8	12.70%

n=63,p<.005, df=2

RQ 5: What are the unique qualities of mentoring relationships for graduate assistants?

From the frequency of responses, several categories emerged (see Table 6). The professional yet personal nature of the mentoring relationship was reported the most frequently with 15 responses (15%) of the total 100 responses. This dimension of a mentorship describes the wide-range of topics or issues the mentor and protégé discuss. The mentor may provide professional advice or suggestions for future research as well as engage in small talk to develop an interpersonal bond. Examples of professional yet personal characteristics of a mentoring relationship in the present study included: "We're friends who can get together for a beer, but also can discuss pedagogues, teaching theory,

and classroom experience"; "We interact on a semi-business level while at work, and also on a relaxed, friendship level while outside of work"; "We have a really great rapport that I feel extends to who we are as individuals and beyond our academic relationship"; "We speak about my work, and also occasionally about life outside of work. I feel she understands me pretty well"; and "Receive instruction regarding classes to take, how to perform thesis requirements, papers to read, also, is a good friend who is entertaining to hang out with."

The next category, in the order of frequency of occurrence, involved the mentor providing guidance or advice, which had 14 responses (14%). Guidance or advice in a mentoring relationship usually involves the mentor providing direction for the protégé, often times sharing their own knowledge and experiences. Examples of guidance or advice reported in the present study included: "She brings a real world perspective to the job because she was in management for 20 years before becoming a professor"; "He directs me in academic research"; "It's helpful, in that they've been through what I'm going through"; "She has been very supportive of me and provided me with advice about how to achieve my goals"; "Source of information, insight"; and "Allows me to express concern, offers suggestions."

The next two categories, were reported by 13 participants (13% each for a total of 26% of responses) to be unique qualities. Friendliness and mutual respect were rated by a total of 26 participants as unique qualities. Friendliness entails the personal side of the mentoring relationship and can involve the interpersonal bond between the mentor and protégé. Examples of friendliness in a mentoring relationship for this study included: "Friendly, welcoming"; "Good friend in both word and study"; "We have become good

friends"; "Friendly, laid-back, feel comfortable asking questions"; and "A peer relationship regardless of his doctoral status."

Mutual respect can involve the equality of the mentoring relationship. As mentors are most often older, more established individuals, he or she shows consideration and regard for the proteges' ideas, questions, and concerns. Examples of mutual respect in a mentoring relationship in this study included: "Openness, respect, willingness to listen to concerns and to direct attention to where important information can be found. Accessibility, on both sides, as well as mutual respect"; "Reciprocal - we participate in discussions as opposed to lectures"; "Strong desire to form a two way dialogue,"; "We have mutual respect for each other's intelligence, capability; respect, consideration, awareness of life outside of school"; and "I feel we are on equal footing. Share an equal burden; relaxed relationship and environment."

Helpfulness was next in frequency of occurrence, as it was indicated by 10 participants (10%) to be a unique quality. Helpfulness, in a mentoring relationship, usually involves the mentor aiding the protégé by providing information, guidance, support, or advice. Examples of helpfulness reported in this study included: "Very friendly, relaxing, and very helpful"; "He has done a Masters and can help me, telling me of his experiences and how he handled situations"; and "Offers insight into the structure of the department and help with my writing."

The next most frequent category, open dialogue or willingness to discuss most topics, was reported by 8 participants (8%). Examples of open dialogue reported in this study included: "Honest, open-minded conversation, willingness to search and see

different perspectives and careful consideration not to violate trust"; "Able to talk openly about issues"; "Ability to freely talk"; and "Can talk easily."

Honesty and support were next in frequency with 6 occurrences (6%) in each category. Honesty in a mentoring relationship usually involves the mentor's willingness to be fair, sincere, and open with the protégé. Examples of honesty included: "My relationship with my mentor is honest. They tell me what I need to hear not just what I want to hear"; "Honest communication about feelings, well being, attitude, schedules"; and "I can expect honest answers and critiques if I desire them. Also, that I can truly tell that they wish to help me, that there's no hidden agenda."

Support in a mentoring relationship consists of the mentor providing encouragement, help, strength, and acknowledgement to the protégé. Examples of support reported in this study included: "Sharing of personal situation with students, stress regarding difficult/challenging students, social activities outside the department"; "Openness, respect, willingness to listen to concerns and to direct attention to where important information can be found"; "He directs me in academic research,"; and "I feel like she's very invested in my academic work. I know that I can rely on her if I ever have any problems with my teaching or research. She is very supportive."

The next most frequent was accessibility, with 5 occurrences (5%). For participants in a mentoring relationship, accessibility involves spending time together or interpersonal bonding, even engaging in small talk. Both the protégé and mentor must be willing and able to engage in and maintain a mentoring relationship. Examples of accessibility reported in this study included: "Accessibility, on both sides, as well as mutual respect"; "Friendly, welcoming, available"; "I have her home phone number,

which I have used all hours of the day and night with questions about teaching"; and "Flexible time schedule."

Understanding was the next most frequently occurring category with 4 (4%) responses. Understanding in a mentoring relationship can be described as a mutual agreement, empathy, or acknowledgement of the other's thoughts, views, and concerns. For this study, examples of understanding included: "Understanding of graduate students' position and needs"; "Understanding of each other's background, both professionally and personally"; and "I feel like she understands me pretty well."

The last two categories, in order of frequency of occurrence, were humor and trust. 3 participants (3%) in each category, indicated these were unique qualities of mentoring relationships. Humor in a mentoring relationship is exhibited when participants can share an amusing story or anecdote as well as create a light and joyful atmosphere. Examples of humor reported in this study included: "Humor in and around the office"; "Enthusiasm, humor"; and "Ability for humor has allowed for honest communication."

Trust in a mentoring relationship occurs when the mentor or considers the other to be reliable, honest, and dependable. Examples of trust reported in this study included: "Honest, open-minded conversation, willingness to search and see different perspectives and careful consideration not to violate trust"; and "We have trust - I trust her to be honest, forthright (with no games/surprises)."

Table 6.
Frequency of Occurrence for Unique Qualities of a Mentoring Relationship

Unique Quality	**Frequency of Responses**	**Percentage**
Professional / Personal	15	15.0%
Guidance / Advice	14	14.0%
Mutual Respect	13	13.0%
Friendliness	13	13.0%
Helpful	10	10.0%
Open Dialogue	8	8.0%
Honesty	6	6.0%
Support	6	6.0%
Accessibility	5	5.0%
Understanding	4	4.0%
Humor	3	3.0%
Trust	3	3.0%
Total	**100**	**100%**

RQ 6: How important is engaging in a mentoring relationship for graduate assistants?

Respondents indicate that engaging in a mentoring relationship is important (x^2=36.96, df=6, p<.001). Participants were asked to rate the importance of the three types of mentors; faculty /advisor, senior graduate assistant, and peer. Mentors who are faculty advisors are rated as very important by 54 (77%) and somewhat important by 14 (20%) of the participants. Two participants indicate that the importance of a faculty advisor was not applicable to them. Graduate assistant mentors are considered very important by 18 (32%) and somewhat important by 18 (32%) of the participants. Two (3%) participants indicate a graduate assistant mentor is not very important and 19 (33%) participants reported that the importance of a graduate assistant mentor was not applicable to them. Peer mentors are rated very important by 26 (44%) and somewhat important by 20 (34%) of the participants. Three (5%) participants reported that a peer mentor was not very important and 10 (17%) participants rated them to be non-applicable (see Table 7).

Table 7.
Frequency of Importance of Mentoring Relationships

Type of Mentor	**Not Very Important**	**Somewhat Important**	**Very Important**	**Not Applicable**
Faculty / Advisor	0	14 (20%)	54 (77%)	2 (3%)
Senior Graduate Assistant	2 (3%)	18 (32%)	18 (32%)	19 (33%)
Peer	3 (5%)	20 (34%)	26 (44%)	10 (17%)

n=186, x^2=36.96, df=6, p<.001

RQ 7: Who initiates mentoring relationships, the mentor or the protégé?

A chi-square analysis indicating the frequency of responses did not reveal a significant difference (x^2=2.677, df=2, p=ns). The number of respondents who initiated the relationship, *n*=28 (50%), was not significantly greater than those indicating the mentor initiated the relationship, *n*=12 (21.4%), or those indicating it was mutually initiated, *n*=16 (28.6%) (see Table 8). Participants reported their experiences in the form of a short-answer question, allowing them to indicate not only who initiated the relationship but also the circumstances surrounding the initial meeting.

Table 8.
Frequency of Responses Indicating Who Initiated the Mentoring Relationship

Initiator	Frequency	Percentage
Participant	28	50.0%
Mutual	16	28.6%
Mentor	12	21.4%

n=56, x^2=2.677, df=2, p=ns

Examples of reports of participants who initiated the relationship in this study included: "I initiated while choosing a suitable advisor"; "I did in looking at grad. schools"; "I was looking for advice" and "Myself, most likely from a problem I had and went to this person because I knew they knew how to fix it."

Examples of reports of mentors who initiated the relationship included: "My advisor initiated the relationship before I came to UMO by asking if I was interested in working on her research"; "We have the same non-academic interests and we just started

to hang out after he asked me to his home"; and "Stuck with him, he's advising my research."

Examples of reports of the relationship being initiated mutually included: "Mutual, we share an office together"; "Mutual friendship developed out of common interests and research"; "We ended up in the same office by chance and became friends and colleagues"; and "Mutual as we do research together."

Chapter 5.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationships among communication apprehension, information seeking strategies, and mentoring for graduate assistants. Past research highlights the benefits of mentoring relationships, points to the importance of examining information seeking behaviors, and details the wide-ranging effects of communication apprehension. The present study corroborates as well as expands previous research in two respects. First, while previous research tends to focus on new employees to an organization, the present study examines graduate assistants in an academic setting. The role graduate assistants take on in the university and the university itself are distinctive areas in which to examine such constructs (information seeking behaviors, communication apprehension, and mentoring). Second, it illustrates specific characteristics of mentoring relationships that are beneficial to graduate assistants. The present study provides details on the types of information graduate assistants' mentors offer, as well as who initiated the relationship, under what circumstances, and the unique qualities of the relationship.

Communication Apprehension and Information Seeking Strategies

The first research question concerns the relationship between communication apprehension levels and a graduate assistant's choice of information seeking strategy. The present results suggest that information seeking strategies are moderately related to communication apprehension. In particular, information seeking strategies are associated

with levels of dyadic communication apprehension. Dyadic is a context of communication apprehension that involves the participant's level of fear or anxiety surrounding interpersonal communication in a one-on-one interaction. It makes sense that a graduate assistant who is more apprehensive in dyadic contexts will choose a different set of information seeking strategies than one who is less apprehensive.

Type of Information

Research question two asked participants what type of information they went to their mentor for most often. The most frequent type of information sought from a mentor may shed light on why faculty advisors are common mentors. Respondents indicated that they most often go to their mentor for technical information. Technical information in this study included grading policies, teaching procedures, classroom ethics, and details regarding equipment for research use, as well as information about the department itself.

In general, supervisors are the information source most individuals go to for technical information. Miller and Jablin (1991) posit that newcomers will use an information seeking strategy according to his or her "assessment of the target as an information source" (p. 114). Faculty members and advisors can also offer approval and provide feedback. Consequently, when an individual needs to know how to perform various aspects of his or her job, and want to be successful, the natural source would be someone who is established, has experience, and wants to share the information.

Professional Advice. In order of frequency, professional advice was rated the type of information most often sought from a mentor. Professional advice in this study, consisted of information on how to prepare for future studies, choosing a career path, and

designing a course of study. One respondent indicated that they go to their mentor for, "Experiential information mostly; he has been working in our field of study much longer than I have and has his experience to draw on when giving advice. Also scientific conceptual information, he is a good 'idea guy.'" Here, because of his experience, the faculty member or advisor is the source that this respondent feels would be most likely to have the necessary information.

Social Information. Social information, in order of frequency, was reported the type of information least sought from their mentors. This type of information includes support, advice on how to interact with faculty and students, as well as appropriate behavior in specific situations. Social information would appear to be information most sought from a senior graduate assistant or peer yet respondents still indicated that a faculty member or advisor was a preferred mentor to receive such information. One respondent wrote, "My advisor provides clarity in conflict situations with other faculty and relays similar experiences of his own."

These results point to the role conflict graduate assistants sometimes experience. For example, Darling and Dewey (1990) identified communication concerns, or anxiety about future face-to-face interactions, felt by new teaching assistants. These concerns range from apprehension towards facilitating effective discussions in the classroom to concerns about the impact their communication skills have on students. Essentially, graduate assistants are nervous and fearful about 'surviving' as both a student and a teacher.

Prevalence of Mentors

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the present research is that the apparent limitation to the study also provides one of the most interesting results. Originally, one objective of this study was to compare the information seeking behaviors and communication apprehension levels of those graduate assistants who had mentors with those that did not. Out of 69 respondents, only 6 did not have a mentor; that is 88% of the participants in the present study indicated that they had at least one mentor, making a comparison between the two groups unfeasible.

However, what this result does show is the prevalence of mentors in the lives of graduate assistants. The present study corroborates the work of Cawyer, Simonds, and Davis (2002) and Miller and Jablin (1991). Cawyer, et al. found mentoring relationships to be important facilitators of socialization for new faculty members in a university. Since each department and university is different, new faculty members need important professional advice, or information on everything from daily tasks and procedures, to acceptable behavior and the organization's culture. "Through professional advice, a newcomer learns the expectations of the organization and is able to adjust his/her personal expectations of work" (p. 234).

Similarly, Miller and Jablin's (1991) work on information seeking strategies suggests that when a newcomer directly asks for information, like professional advice, he or she is participating in the sense-making process and gaining information. Further, by directly asking for information and receiving help, the newcomer is most likely engaging in a mentoring relationship. Because graduate assistants have so much information to learn, directly asking questions, and forming a relationship with a co-worker or

supervisor, can be very beneficial. As indicated in the literature, professional advice comes from a mentor, or more established member of the organization, offering information that cannot be found in a handbook or brochure. An assigned mentor and participant in Cawyer, Simonds, and Davis' (2002) study relates, "every department has a different feel, you can save people a lot of heartache if you explain things" (p. 234).

Type of Mentor

Research question number four asked participants what type of mentor they go to most often. An overwhelming number of respondents, n=46 (73%) in the current study indicated the type of mentor they most often go to is a faculty member or advisor. In order of frequency, senior graduate assistants were reported next highest, n=9 (14.3%) and then peer mentors, n=8 (12.7%). One possible reason for this finding is that the traditional notion of what a mentor is and does, still exists.

For the most part, research on mentoring usually begins with a short story on the origin of the term mentor. Throughout history the definition has altered somewhat from Mentor, who was an advisor to Odysseus in mythology, to stories of famous mentors and protégés in the United States presidency (Kalbfleisch & Keyton, 1995). Some later notions of a mentor-ward relationship between a graduate student and a supervising faculty member began to emerge in academic literature. In the 1970s, the notion of what role a mentor played in the life of a graduate student differed drastically from what we know today. For example, Gerald Phillips (1979) in his conservative view on graduate study explains, "The peculiar aspect of this relationship is that in it one party is completely sovereign, the other completely subservient" (p. 340). Only recently has

research started to point to alternatives to traditional notions of mentoring. Many researchers have moved toward the concept of relational mutuality, mostly found in co-mentorships or close colleagues, and peers, that provide support and information (Beyene, Anglin, Sanchez, & Ballou, 2002; Rymer, 2002).

Perhaps graduate assistants today view mentoring relationships through more traditional notions. Participants may actually go to a peer for more information and support but when the word mentor is mentioned (as in this study), a peer, friend or fellow graduate assistant, does not come to mind. For this question, respondents were asked to choose from one of three choices: faculty/advisor, senior graduate assistant, and peer. Since a definition of mentoring was not provided, participants brought their own meaning and experiences to the term. Since mentorships can often be implied, it's possible they are not often discussed openly or often in an academic setting. Therefore, graduate assistants would not have much experience knowing that a peer can provide a valuable amount of information, support, and guidance. Another explanation may be that participants directly seek guidance or information from a faculty/advisor but indirectly and informally receive the same benefits from a peer or senior graduate assistant. Therefore, the participant's notion of mentoring and the type of information sought may play a role in who the graduate assistant will engage in a mentoring relationship with.

Unique Qualities of Mentoring Relationships

The present study also provides interesting information on what graduate assistants consider to be unique qualities of their mentoring relationships. Defining a mentoring relationship can be difficult because they can have many different

characteristics and can each carry special meanings for those involved. A mentor can provide "emotional support, career counseling, information and advice, professional and organizational sponsorship, and facilitates access to key organizational and professional networks" (Olian, Carroll, Giannantonio, and Feren , 1988, p. 16). With that in mind, research question five asked participants, in the form of a short answer question, the unique qualities of the mentoring relationships they are involved in.

Professional Yet Personal. These qualities also relate to characteristics important to graduate assistants in the mentoring relationships they engage in. Respondents provided a wide-variety of answers and from the categories that emerged, the professional yet personal nature of the relationship was reported the most frequently. This category embodies the distinctiveness that is a mentoring relationship. That is, the professional yet personal nature of a mentoring relationship refers to the wide-range of topics, issues or concerns the mentor and protégé discuss, unlike most other relationships.

This result connects to work done by Cawyer, Simonds, and Davis (2002) as they identified two types of messages that helped form an interpersonal bond between the mentor and protégé. They found that messages of acknowledgement and small talk allow for discussion of professional issues as well as personal interests. Messages of acknowledgement provide validation and can help reduce role conflict while small talk creates a stronger interpersonal bond, allowing the mentor to show interest and offer emotional and informational support.

The respondents in this study who reported that the professional yet personal nature of the mentorship was unique, included messages of acknowledgement and small talk in their answers. For example, one participant stated, "We speak about my work,

and also occasionally about life outside of work. I feel like she understands me pretty well." Another participant also explained, "Not just interested in work but also cares about my daily activities. He takes a true interest in his students not just another professor to get students through work." Another participant wrote, "I feel like she's invested in my academic work. We have a really great rapport that I feel extends to who we are as individuals and beyond our academic relationship. I know that I can rely on her if I ever have any problems with my teaching or research. She is very supportive." All of these responses suggest the presence of messages of acknowledgement and small talk. The participants feel accepted, that their work is valuable, and they are more than just students or assistants. Because these mentors make an effort to inquire into the student's academic work as well as life outside of school, these graduate assistants feel validated and understood.

Mutual Respect. Mutual respect was reported by 13% of the participants to be a unique quality of the mentoring relationship. This result highlights the need for graduate assistants' voices to be heard, to feel like successful members of the organization. One participant explained, "I feel we are on equal footing. Share an equal burden, relaxed relationship and environment." Another describes the relationship as involving, "Openness, respect, willingness to listen to concerns and to direct attention to where important information can be found. Accessibility, on both sides, as well as mutual respect." These answers indicate that the participants are more than willing to accept responsibility and the workload but also appreciate when their efforts are acknowledged. Hill, Bahniuk, & Dobos' (1984) work on mentoring and faculty success found that, "perceptions of a rich communication environment with adequate amounts of information

and all types of communication support help to shape the perceptual set of the faculty and to create feelings of success and satisfaction." Even more interesting, the most valuable communication support for performance indicators came from "working closely on projects, sharing research ideas, etc." (p. 31). While this result deals more with communication support from colleagues, the importance lies in feelings of validation, respect, and mutuality. More importantly, graduate assistants who experience a certain level of perceived support also view themselves to be successful and satisfied contributors to the department.

Open Dialogue. Another interesting category that emerged from participants' responses to the unique qualities of mentoring was the ability to engage in an open dialogue. Participants in this study expressed a great appreciation for mentors who were willing to discuss many different topics and ideas. This result is significant because it also shows support for other categories that emerged such as honesty, trust, and accessibility. For example, one respondent indicated that their mentor engaged in, "honest, open-minded conversation, willingness to search and see different perspectives and careful consideration not to violate trust." Another participant wrote that, "Can talk easily. Good listener. Very thorough - always taking notes, keeps me very busy. Open - feel free to ask questions if I need to."

Trust. Each of these participants trusts their mentor. They believe that they are being listened to, that they can speak honestly and express their ideas, and that their mentor makes a concerted effort to understand other viewpoints. Most mentoring relationships develop as a result of informal, everyday interactions. "In informal mentoring relationships, discussions between the mentor and protégé usually go beyond

career-related issues to more in-depth personal sharing of interests, needs, and values," (Noe, 1988, p. 458).

Importance of Mentoring Relationships

Research question six asked participants how important engaging in a mentoring relationship was. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of three types of mentors (faculty / advisor, senior graduate assistant, and peer) as not very important, somewhat important, very important, or not applicable. Mentors who are faculty / advisors are rated as very important by 77% and somewhat important by 20% of the participants.

Initiating the Relationship

Research question seven, which asked who initiates mentoring relationships among graduate assistants, provided interesting results as to how mentoring relationships even form. The results indicate that more graduate assistants 28, (50%) did report initiating the relationship, although the not a significant difference. 12 participants indicated the mentor initiated the relationship and 16 (28.6%) reported the relationship as mutually initiated.

The respondents that did report initiating the relationship, indicated varied reasons for initiating the relationship. Interestingly, a number of participants reveal the reason they began the relationship was their search for a mentor. They were actively seeking someone to guide them in their professional or personal lives. For example, one participant with a faculty/advisor mentor, reported that, "I was looking for a senior project advisor who worked in a field I was interested in." Another participant with a

faculty/advisor mentor reported, "I initiated while choosing a suitable advisor." These responses demonstrate that they were looking for, not only someone who could provide information or advice, but someone who would be an appropriate fit as well as someone they could admire or respect. One respondent in particular wrote, "I initiated the relationship because I felt he qualified as the leader I would like to emulate in both my studies and in my career." These participants are aware of the benefits mentoring relationships can have on a graduate assistants' career and actively sought that type of connection.

Other respondents who indicated they had initiated the relationship, suggest that the relationship was initiated out of necessity or requirement. For example, one respondent reported, "I did, as a potential employee/assistant," and another replied, "I did in looking at grad. schools." Another reported, "I did for acceptance into graduate school." These responses indicate a mentoring relationship that appears to be an obligation and suggest that some graduate assistants feel they need a mentor to be accepted, and succeed, in graduate school.

As respondents indicated they initiated the relationship because they were actively seeking someone to guide them or out of necessity, those indicating the mentor initiated the relationship, suggest the relationship began as an obligation or part of the job. For example, participants indicating the mentor initiated the relationship out of necessity report, "Advisor initiated on both parts - I was the only student in the laboratory and was new," and "Thesis advisor - I applied, he accepted." These responses indicate that the graduate assistant participants perceive their mentors as just doing their job. Personal qualities and characteristics of the relationship are not mentioned and therefore, one

could conclude the participant perceives the relationship to be obligatory. Unfortunately, responses did not provide more information as to why they perceive the relationship to be obligatory. Does the mentor conduct him- or herself in such a way as to suggest to the protégé that a mentoring relationship is part of the job? Does the protégé just assume all faculty/advisors must begin a mentoring relationship?

Some participants do perceive their mentor to be interested in the relationship because it was initially started through outside interests but reported the relationship to be initiated mutually. For example, those participants reported, "Mutual, through repeated classes together we recognized similar academic interests, which further led to thesis advising and general academic future counseling," and "Mutual friendship developed out of common interests and research." These relationships appear to begin as friendships and the sharing of common interests, then grow to be mentoring relationships. More information would be helpful to gather specific characteristics to assess why the protégé feels this relationship was initiated mutually.

Mentoring relationships appear to be important, beneficial, and valuable to graduate assistants. Not only do they reduce the anxiety felt by a graduate assistant newcomer, but provide the information necessary for them to make sense of their environment and understand their role in the university. This study provides more information on the types of mentors that graduate assistants engage in relationships with, their perceived importance, as well as the qualities that make that relationship unique. Communication apprehension does appear to affect information seeking strategies, specifically in those involving one-on-one interactions. Since graduate assistants must learn an overwhelming amount of information in a short amount of time, information

seeking strategies, and more importantly, mentoring relationships, have proven to be effective strategies in reducing anxiety and providing the necessary tools to navigate their way through research projects, teaching, and the future.

Limitations and Areas of Future Study

There are at least two limitations to the present study which should be considered. These limitations involve the participant sample size and the questionnaire. First, the sample of participants was relatively small. They attended one university and represented a relatively homogeneous population. Since the participants were such a homogeneous group, different cultures and perhaps age groups were not accounted for. Mentoring may be highly valued among traditional, college age students but nontraditional students may have their own notion of mentoring. Second, because all of the participants in this study attended the same university, there is a possibility they share some of the same perspectives in that university's culture. In other words, mentoring may be highly regarded and encouraged at this institution, yet go unacknowledged at another. Third, only 6 participants out of 69 indicated that they did not have a mentor. Therefore, a comparison between the two groups, those with mentors and those without, became impossible. It would have been useful to compare the two groups and their use of information seeking strategies, as well as communication apprehension levels.

The second limitation to the study is the questionnaire, the mentoring and information seeking items. First, the definition of a mentor or a mentoring relationship was provided but other aspects such as initiating the relationship and the types of information were not fully explained. There is a possibility some of the questions were

not answered to the fullest extent because participants were not clear on what possible role the mentor or relationship provided. The short-answer questions in the mentoring item had potential to provide a lot of information regarding mentoring relationships for graduate assistants, but because participants may not have been exactly sure of the issues surrounding a mentoring relationship, the fullest amount of information may not have been given. Still, very interesting and informative results came from the mentoring item and the short-answer questions.

Second, the information seeking section of the questionnaire was originally designed to assess new employees and their information seeking behaviors in a new environment. They were also asked to specifically keep in mind how their immediate supervisor may want them to perform their job. The adapted scale asked participants to think about their experiences as graduate assistants in a new environment. Participants were not directly asked to think of their experiences in a university setting. The wording of this section of the questionnaire may have led participants to answer the questions based on outside experiences.

It may be beneficial to examine those individual departments at a university that assign mentors or even encourage mentoring for their graduate assistants. Specifically, what actions are those departments taking? Do they hold regular meetings or informal gatherings or do they randomly assign a mentor with a protégé? Future research could benefit from examining the differences or similarities in those departments that have productive mentoring programs and those that do not. Perhaps the role of the course coordinator could be better developed to provide mentoring in those departments that do not hold regular meetings.

Future research could also benefit from examining those graduate assistants that indicated English was not their first language. If they have a mentor, how did this relationship form and did language play a role? Do these participants seek out mentors more than others or do they avoid engaging in such relationships? Language could also affect their choice of information seeking strategy as they may choose strategies that involve observation or surveillance and avoid those requiring direct interactions. This could also lead to examining the role language may play on communication apprehension levels.

Graduate assistants play important roles in the university but their contributions can often be overlooked. Understanding the behaviors and processes that allow them to make better sense of their environment, mentoring relationships and information seeking strategies, can enable them to concentrate on becoming more confident and capable teachers and researchers, as well as successful students. In turn, they can become valuable mentors themselves one day. Future research in this area should use a larger sample size and compare those graduate assistants who have mentors and those who do not. It may also be helpful to compare different departments within a university, perhaps evaluate mentoring in the social and physical sciences, as well as contrast the differences among graduate assistants at different universities.

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Appendix A

Instructions

Please answer each question as honestly as possible. Keep in mind your experiences as a graduate assistant, your initial entry into graduate school, and the relationships you engage in. Your answers will remain completely anonymous and will be kept in a secure location. When finished, please place your questionnaire in the designated envelope. If you wish to receive a summary of the research results and/or suggestions for effective information seeking strategies, provide your e-mail or mailing address in the space provided below. Thank you for participating.

The following information will be used for research purposes and is not required.

Type of assistantship (teaching, research, etc.) ______________________

Year with assistantship ________________

Department (optional) _________________

Your gender: F _____ M _____

E-mail: ________________ Mailing: address:__________________

____

Detach this page and place in a separate envelope.

Appendix B

Questionnaire

Instructions: Please think about the relationships you've formed at the University of Maine. Answer these questions as completely as you can, relating your experiences as a Graduate Assistant here at this University. More specifically, think about the mentoring relationships you engage in.

*A **mentor** can be described as someone established in the organization who is available to provide advice and guidance but also friendship and support.*

1. Is English your first language? Yes ______ No ______

2. Do you have a mentor? Yes _____ No _____ If yes, check only the mentor you go to most frequently?

Faculty/Advisor _____

Senior Graduate Assistant _____

Peer/Friend _____

3. How important is each type of mentoring relationship to you?
(Please circle the most appropriate response for each type of mentoring relationship)

Faculty/Advisor *not very important* *somewhat important* *very important* *n/a*

Senior Graduate Assistant *not very important* *somewhat important* *very important* *n/a*

Peer/Friend *not very important* *somewhat important* *very important* *n/a*

4. Who initiated the relationship and under what circumstances?

5. What are the unique characteristics of the relationship with your mentor? Please list specific qualities.

6. Do you rely on your mentor for specific types of information? If so, what type of information do they provide

Think about your experiences as a new graduate student and how you react to being in a new environment.

With people in general situations:	**Never**				**Always**
I ask specific, straight to the point questions to get the information I want	1	2	3	4	5
I identify what I don't know and ask for information about the matter	1	2	3	4	5
I go directly to someone and ask for information about the matter	1	2	3	4	5
I do not "beat around the bush" in asking for the information	1	2	3	4	5
I sometimes make vague references to the topic and wait for the other person to continue discussing it	1	2	3	4	5
I sometimes indicate my curiosity about the topic without directly asking for the information	1	2	3	4	5
I let someone know indirectly that I would like to know the information	1	2	3	4	5
I ask questions in such a way that they wouldn't seem like questions	1	2	3	4	5
I "mess up" on something related to the topic to see how another person would respond	1	2	3	4	5
I ignore a rule or guideline related to a topic to see how the other person would react	1	2	3	4	5
I try people's patience in the matter, "just a litte bit," to see how he or she would respond	1	2	3	4	5
I do one or two things to get on people's nerves in order to see how he or she would react	1	2	3	4	5
I humorously remark about a topic with other people to see what kind of response I get	1	2	3	4	5
I use "uh-huh" frequently to encourage other people to keep talking about the information I want	1	2	3	4	5
Through my non-verbal behavior, I hint to other people that I would like to know certain information	1	2	3	4	5
I encourage other people to talk about a topic without letting him/her know that I was seeking the information	1	2	3	4	5
Rather than ask for information, I deliberately model my behavior after others who seem to know what they were doing or whom I like	1	2	3	4	5
I look for the "answers" in the behaviors of others	1	2	3	4	5
I pay close attention to how other people act toward me and try to relate these actions to the topic	1	2	3	4	5
I consciously make mental notes about what others say about a topic	1	2	3	4	5
I do not ask for information in a traditional way-I just pick up on the unusual or especially "newsy" things that come my way	1	2	3	4	5
I walk around just to see "what's up" and think about what it might mean in relation to the topic when I had more time	1	2	3	4	5
I go about my tasks, but if any new information comes my way, I'm sure to pay attention to it	1	2	3	4	5

I find out particular information by keeping my eyes and ears open to what is going on around me	1	2	3	4	5

With my mentor:

I find sources other than my mentor who can tell me the same information	1	2	3	4	5
I find someone else besides my mentor to serve as a sounding board for a topic	1	2	3	4	5
I ask people who I know are acquainted with my mentor their feelings on the subject rather than ask my mentor	1	2	3	4	5
I check with someone else before checking with my mentor	1	2	3	4	5

Instructions: This instrument is composed of twenty-four statements concerning your feelings about communicating with other people. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you (1) strongly agree (2) agree (3) are undecided (4) disagree or (5) strongly disagree.
Please work quickly; record your first impression.

_______ 1. I dislike participating in group discussions.

_______ 2. Generally, I am comfortable while participating in group discussions.

_______ 3. I am tense and nervous while participating in group discussions.

_______ 4. I like to get involved in group discussions.

_______ 5. Engaging in a group discussion with new people makes me tense and nervous.

_______ 6. I am calm and relaxed while participating in group discussions.

_______ 7. Generally, I am nervous when I have to participate in a meeting.

_______ 8. Usually I am calm and relaxed while participating in meetings.

_______ 9. I am very calm and relaxed when I am called upon to express an opinion at a meeting.

_______10. I am afraid to express myself at meetings.

_______11. Communicating at meetings usually makes me uncomfortable.

_______12. I am very relaxed when answering questions at a meeting.

_______13. While participating in a conversation with a new acquaintance, I feel very nervous.

_______14. I have no fear of speaking up in conversation.

_______15. Ordinarily, I am very tense and nervous in conversations.

_______16. Ordinarily, I am very calm and relaxed in conversations.

_______17. While conversing with a new acquaintance, I feel very relaxed.

_______18. I'm afraid to speak up in conversations.

_______19. I have no fear of giving a presentation.

_______20. Certain parts of my body feel very tense and rigid while giving a presentation.

_______21. I feel relaxed while giving a presentation.

_______22. My thoughts become confused and jumbled when I am giving a presentation.

_______23. I face the prospect of giving a presentation with confidence.

_______24. While giving a presentation, I get so nervous I forget facts I really know.

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Sara M. Cyr was born in Presque Isle, Maine on August 8, 1976. She was raised in Fort Fairfield, Maine and graduated from Fort Fairfield High School in 1995. She entered The University of Maine, in the fall of 1995 and received her Bachelor of Arts in Communication with a Minor in Public Relations in December, 1999.

Sara returned to The University of Maine and entered the Communication graduate program in the fall of 2001. She served as a graduate teaching assistant for the Department of Communication and Journalism, where she was a primary course instructor for Fundamentals of Public Speaking. She was also an Editorial Assistant for Communication Research Reports. Sara is a candidate for the Master of Arts degree in Communication from The University of Maine in August, 2003.