



The roles of self-disclosure, modesty, and self-monitoring in the mentoring relationship

A longitudinal multi-source investigation

Gerhard Blickle and Paula B. Schneider

University of Bonn, Bonn, Germany, and

Pamela L. Perrewé, Fred R. Blass and Gerald R. Ferris

Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida, USA

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of protégé self-presentation by self-disclosure, modesty, and self-monitoring in mentoring.

Design/methodology/approach – This study used three data sources (i.e. employees, peers, and mentors) and a longitudinal design over a period of two years.

Findings – Employee self-disclosure and modesty at time 1 predicted an increase in mentoring received and mentoring given at time 2. Further, self-monitoring moderated the modesty-mentoring given relationship such that employees high in self-monitoring had the strongest positive relationship between modesty at time 1 and mentoring given two years later. Also, modesty interacted with self-monitoring at time 1 to influence the number of mentors involved with employees. That is, the modesty – number of mentors relationship was positive for those high in self-monitoring, and negative for those low in self-monitoring.

Research limitations/implications – Employees can exercise influence over the amount and type of mentoring experiences they receive based on the style on interaction they utilize with potential mentors, with specific reference to self-monitoring and the use of modesty.

Practical implications – It is modesty, and early career employees' ability to present it well, that will lead to positive affect (i.e. liking) and behavior (e.g. benevolence and generosity) by senior managers.

Originality/value – Investigates the role of protégé self-presentation by self-disclosure, modesty, and self-monitoring in mentoring.

Keywords Self assessment, Mentoring, Employee behaviour

Paper type Research paper

Mentoring refers to a one-on-one relationship between a less experienced (i.e. protégé) and a more experienced (i.e. mentor) person, which prototypically is intended to advance the personal and professional growth of the less experienced individual (Noe *et al.*, 2002; Wanberg *et al.*, 2003). Prospective studies over several decades have demonstrated that mentoring relationships in youth and young adulthood predict creative achievements and midlife mental health (Westermeyer, 1998; Yamada and



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Yu-Wen Tam, 1996). Additionally, as several meta-analyses have shown (Allen *et al.*, 2004; Ng *et al.*, 2005; Underhill, 2006), mentoring is important to an individual's success in organizations and to career success in general; specifically, mentoring is positively related to compensation, promotions, job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and career commitment.

Mentoring typically begins when new members in organizations, or existing members in new positions, desire to better understand their new environment, and in doing so, seek out more experienced members of the organization for answers (Miller and Jablin, 1991; Morrison, 1993a, b; Ostroff and Kozlowski, 1992; Perrewé *et al.*, 2002). According to Young and Perrewé (2000), whether or not the initial relationship crystallizes into a mentoring relationship is based on a number of elements, such as individual characteristics, career factors, environmental factors, and type of relationship. In other words, the development of a mentoring relationship is based on a complex blend of individual motives of both the protégé and the mentor.

Researchers interested in examining individual characteristics of protégés have examined learning goal orientation (Godsalk and Sosik, 2003), diversity (Ragins, 1997) and intimacy, (Wanberg *et al.*, 2003) as factors affecting the quality of mentoring. Others have engaged in initial examination of impression management or self-presentation tactics, and how they might influence levels of career success (Judge and Bretz, 1994). However, this area of protégé self-presentation has been largely overlooked as it relates to the mentoring relationship.

Although self-presentation tactics have been studied extensively across a range of social interactions (e.g. ingratiation, self-promotion), some of the more subtle forms of self-presentation, such as modesty and self-disclosure, have received much less attention in the literature. These more subtle forms of self presentation, called "attributive tactics" (Leary, 1996), attempt to convey that individuals possess certain characteristics assumed to be attractive to the mentor, thereby facilitating intimacy (Hinde, 1995). Finally, self-monitoring, as an interpersonal construct, is an important component of these subtle tactics because it leads to behavior that is tempered for the situation. High self-monitors take in social cues from others, and use those cues as feedback and guides for their own behavior (Snyder, 1974).

Therefore, the general purpose of the present study was to investigate the impact of three interpersonal constructs of protégés on the nature of the mentoring received. These three constructs are: self-disclosure, modesty, and self-monitoring. As previously mentioned, these constructs have been examined in many contexts (e.g. Collins and Miller, 1994; Day *et al.*, 2002; Gangestad and Snyder, 2000; Higgins *et al.*, 2003; Tardy and Dindia, 2006), but have not yet been sufficiently studied in mentoring research. We argue that these dispositional variables allow promising predictions about the successful initiation and intensification of mentoring relationships by early career employees and their senior managers.

Background and hypotheses

An established definition of a mentor (Ragins, 1989, p. 2) is:

A mentor generally is defined as a higher ranking influential individual in the work environment who has advanced experience and knowledge and is committed to providing upward mobility and career support.

Thus, mentors are individuals who take an active interest in helping to advance another's career. Mentoring relationships enhance both individuals' growth and advancement by offering the possibility that early career employees find the opportunity to talk openly about concerns that detract them from productive work. The mentor provides a sounding board for self-explorations, offers personal experience, and helps resolve problems through feedback and active listening. This is called the counseling function of mentoring (Kram, 1985).

Although this form of personal exchange is pivotal to mentoring, only recently has research examined how employees might initiate this form of interaction, and what consequences of this initiation may have in mentoring relationships (Ensher and Murphy, 2005; Wanberg *et al.*, 2007). Research has examined self-disclosure as one way to initiate these forms of personal exchange relationships. Self-disclosure is the act of revealing personal information about oneself to another, and is regarded as central to the development of close relationships (Collins and Miller, 1994).

Self-disclosure and mentoring

Self-disclosure refers to the process by which individuals verbally reveal information about themselves (including thoughts, feelings, and experiences) to others (Dindia, 2002). Self-disclosure is a primary means by which individuals become acquainted. In initial interactions, people begin self-disclosure by revealing biographic and demographic information about themselves (e.g. names, hometowns, etc.; Dindia and Timmerman, 2003).

In a meta-analytic review (Collins and Miller, 1994), research supported three basic effects:

- (1) People who engage in personal disclosures tend to be liked more than people who disclose at lower levels.
- (2) People disclose more to those whom they initially like.
- (3) People like others as a result of having disclosed to them.

In additional meta-analyses, Dindia (2002) confirmed that in social relationships personal disclosure is a reciprocal phenomenon. The results of her meta-analyses also provided support that self-disclosure processes are reciprocal both in the beginning stages of relationships between strangers, and in more advanced relational stages.

These findings can be generalized to the formation and maintenance of mentoring relationships between early career employees and senior managers. The employee's self-disclosure will have a positive impact on how much the senior manager likes the employee for several reasons; first, because the senior manager feels trusted and liked as a person, second, because he or she feels that his or her opinions are valued by the employee, and third, because the self-disclosure communicates interest in getting to know the senior manager more closely. Because of the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), the senior manager likely will self-disclose during these conversations. This will strengthen his or her liking for the early career employee. Because the employee feels liked by the senior manager's self-disclosure, the employee will engage in additional self-disclosure. These mutual self-disclosures proceed in a gradual and orderly fashion, from superficial to intimate levels of exchange.

However, contrary to expectations, Wanberg *et al.* (2007) did not find that levels of protégé and mentor self-disclosure were positively related, meaning a higher level of

disclosure on the part of protégé was not related to the level of disclosure on the part of the mentor. The authors argued that this may be specific to formal mentoring dyads, because the explicit goal of formal mentoring relationships is to help the protégé with various career issues; formal mentors may not consider self-disclosure to be important to this goal.

Based on theory and several meta-analyses, it is postulated that the more an early career employee engages in upward self-disclosures, the more senior managers will engage in mentoring this employee. Wanberg *et al.* (2007) found that the more a protégé in a formal mentoring program reported self-disclosures, the more the protégé reported mentoring received two months later. Building on the research of Wanberg *et al.* (2007), we hypothesize that self-disclosure of protégés will have a positive effect on the level of mentoring by senior managers:

- H1.* Self-disclosures by early career employees will have a positive impact on mentoring support over time.

Modesty and self-monitoring

One form of self-presentation that has received little research attention is humility or modesty (Jones, 1964). Unlike self-promotion, which highlights personal accomplishments (Ferris and Judge, 1991), and has been found to lower career success (Judge and Bretz, 1994), modesty reduces the positive self-evaluation of personal accomplishments, positive characteristics, or positive qualities (e.g. "I was just lucky," "it's nothing special," "everybody would have done so"). Jones and Pittman (1982) suggested that self-promotion is likely to be successful when claims of competence are difficult to verify.

On the other hand, when claims of competence can be easily refuted, the chances of achieving success are likely to be diminished. In a meta-analysis by Higgins *et al.* (2003), self-promotion aided in receiving favorable interview ratings, but it backfired in obtaining favorable performance assessments from supervisors. When one self-promotes in an interview, the likelihood of establishing a perception of competence is good because the interviewer has little ability to verify. Conversely, senior managers are likely to be in a position to judge the validity of self-promotions on the job.

The theoretical work of Jones and Pittman (1982) is useful to explain why modesty creates a favorable impression. Modesty is likely to be more successful when positive personal accomplishments, positive characteristics, or positive qualities are easily verifiable. Under these conditions, modesty should increase liking by mentors because employees do not play up their own value, but instead acknowledge the contribution of others. Because mentoring involves many on the job interactions, senior managers have the opportunity to observe, test, and verify the personal accomplishments, positive characteristics, or positive qualities of their employees.

In contrast to the use of self-disclosure, which leads to a reciprocal self-disclosure by the senior manager in informal mentoring relationships, modesty does not entail a reciprocal action of the senior manager. Thus, it is more difficult for the early career employee to assess the effects of modesty than when using self-disclosure. Thus, the positive impact of modesty on the mentoring relationship may take time, and may not be immediately recognized. Based on this theoretical reasoning and related empirical

findings, we hypothesize that employee modesty will have a positive effect on the level of mentoring provided by senior managers:

- H2.* Modesty by early career employees will have a positive impact on mentoring support over time.

As with most social influence and self-presentation tactics, the achievement of goals depends on the audience, the apt timing, the correct language-style, and the appropriate non-verbal execution (Treadway *et al.*, 2007). Individuals with good social skills are better able to choose appropriate facial expressions, hand gestures, body postures, voice textures, and other paralinguistic cues (Klein *et al.*, 2006). These expressive skills are closely related to self-monitoring, in which individuals are able to accurately assess their environment and regulate their behaviors to fit the situation (Gangestad and Snyder, 2000). Previous cross-sectional research (Aryee *et al.*, 1999; Turban and Dougherty, 1994) found that self-monitoring was positively related to the initiation of mentoring relationships by early career employees.

As a review of empirical research has shown (Gangestad and Snyder, 2000), high self-monitors behave in ways more congruent with others' expectations than do low self-monitors. High self-monitors have better nonverbal decoding skills, including the ability to recognize emotional displays in others, and are better able to feign emotional displays than low self-monitors, concealing their true intentions, and presenting an inauthentic self (Gangestad and Snyder, 2000). In the present research, we argue that employees high in self-monitoring, who use modesty, will have the most mentoring success, and have a greater number of mentors. Based on these empirical findings it is postulated that high self-monitors present themselves upwardly more effectively by modesty than low self-monitors. More specifically, we expect the positive relationship between employee modesty and later mentoring success and number of mentors will be stronger among high self-monitors than among low self-monitors:

- H3.* There will be an interaction between protégé modesty and self-monitoring on subsequent mentoring by senior managers. For protégés high in self-monitoring, increases in modesty will be associated with increases in mentoring. For protégés low in self-monitoring, increases in modesty will be associated with a decrease in the subsequent mentoring by senior managers.
- H4.* There will be an interaction between protégé modesty and self-monitoring on the number of mentors one experiences. For protégés high in self-monitoring, increases in modesty will be associated with increases in the number of mentors. For protégés low in self-monitoring, increases in modesty will be associated with decreases in the number of mentors.

Plan of the research

Early career employees were asked to rate themselves on a self-monitoring scale, to describe how they presented themselves to senior managers, if they had one or more mentors, and how much support they received from their mentor. They were also asked to pass along a questionnaire to their mentor. The mentors were asked to rate how the respective employee presents him- or herself to the senior manager, and how much mentoring support he or she gives to the employee. After about two years, the same employees received the questionnaires for a second time and were asked again to

pass one questionnaire along to their mentors. Further, peers of the employees were asked to assess the mentoring received by the early career employee.

This design used three data sources, namely employees, their peers, and their mentors. These different data sources were not expected to yield complete agreement, but were intended to complement, enrich, expand upon, and/or clarify the results (Stieglitz, 2003). To assess the validity of employees' self-disclosure and modesty self-ratings convergent validity coefficients (Funder and Colvin, 1997; Stieglitz, 2003) with the respective ratings of the mentors were calculated.

The majority of previous mentoring studies have relied on cross-sectional designs (Wanberg *et al.*, 2003). However, such designs do not allow empirically differentiating between predictors and consequences of mentoring. In contrast, a predictive design has a clear temporal order of the variables assessed and can contribute to causal analyses. Therefore, a predictive design covering a time interval of about two years was chosen in the present study.

A two-year time period was chosen because it was believed to be long enough to detect the effects of employee variables on mentoring outcomes. To assess the impact of self-disclosure, modesty, and self-monitoring at time 1 on mentoring support given at Time 2, we used hierarchical regression analyses (Cohen and Cohen, 1983; Cohen *et al.*, 2003).

Method

Sampling procedure and respondents

Sampling procedure. A predictive study with over two-year time span with early career employees was conducted to test these hypotheses. The goal of the present study was to investigate the impact of early career employees self-disclosure, modesty, and self-monitoring on mentoring relationships with senior managers. With the help of the alumni networks from different business schools in Germany, the authors contacted former Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) or Masters of Business Administration (MBA) students who had graduated at least three years earlier. The former students were sent questionnaires and prepaid return envelopes. The instructions made clear that having a mentor was not a necessary condition for participating in the study. This was done in order to have those employees with no mentoring support in the sample to avoid range restrictions.

The former students were sent questionnaires and prepaid return envelopes. The questionnaires were to be completed by the former students, a peer, and by a higher-up person who was currently their mentor. Some alumni who had received the questionnaires reported by phone or email that they had no such mentor or peer and therefore were unable to participate in the study. If this happened these employees were urged to participate in the study to avoid range restrictions. Due to moves and address changes, involuntary unemployment caused by the economic recession, and voluntary unemployment caused by the birth of children, it was impossible to calculate the return rate among employees.

Overall, 338 employees returned their questionnaire. In Germany, the average age of graduates entering the world of work is 27.9 years (Statistisches Bundesamt/German Federal Office of Statistics, 2004). From the employees, we selected 292 persons whose age was below 40 years. Although this may appear to be a relatively high age for employees entering the workforce, there were women returning from raising their

families to work who were early career employees although their age was beyond 35 years.

Respondents. Employee respondents consisted of 72 women and 220 men. Employees' age ranged between 24 and 39 years, with a mean age of 31.7 years. The mean income was €51,106 (SD = €20,753; €1 = US\$1.34). The mean hierarchical level of their current position in the organization (100 percent = top level, 00 percent = bottom level) was 53.9 percent (SD = 25.07). After about two years (M = 722 days, SD = 248 days) the employees were contacted again to participate in the second wave of the study. Respondents were offered and received €25 for participating in the second wave of the study. Employees in the second wave consisted of 43 women and 128 men. The mean income was €57,224 (SD = 22,048). The mean hierarchical level of their position in the organization (100 percent = top level, 00 percent = bottom level) was 57.39 percent (SD = 27.14).

Peer respondents consisted of 220 individuals. The response return rate for the first wave of data was 75.60 percent. In the second wave 89 peers participated, which represents a return rate of 40.45 percent. Mentor respondents consisted of 209 individuals. The response return rate for the first wave of data was 71.82 percent. In the second wave 78 mentors participated, which represents a return rate of 37.32 percent

Measures

Self-monitoring. A German adaptation of Snyder's (1974) self-monitoring scale by Nowack and Kammer (1987) was used in the first wave of the study. The 18-item scale was scored as true (1) or false (2). Nowack and Kammer report Cronbach's Alpha values between $0.64 \leq \alpha \leq 0.72$. In the present study, Cronbach's Alpha of the self-monitoring scale was $\alpha = 0.68$.

Self-disclosure. Four items were generated to measure upward self-disclosure, namely, "I talk about my self-doubts and uncertainties," "I talk about private matters," "I talk about personal matters," and "I am very open concerning myself." The instructions read: "how do you act toward senior managers who are sympathetic to you?" The Likert-type response format ranged from "never" (0) to "always" (8). In the first wave (see Table I), the Cronbach's Alpha value was $\alpha = 0.78$, in the second wave $\alpha = 0.80$. The scales from the first and second wave correlated at $r = 0.53$ ($p < 0.005$, $n = 167$).

In the mentor version, the instructions read: "how does this person behave towards you?" The response format was the same. Additionally, the mentors had the option choosing "can't say". This was coded as a missing value. In the first wave, the Cronbach's Alpha value among the career-supporters was $\alpha = 0.80$. The self-ratings of self-disclosure and the mentor ratings of employees' self-disclosure were correlated ($r = 0.26$, $p < 0.005$, $n = 209$), supporting the convergent validity of the scales.

Modesty. Four items were generated to measure self-presentation by modesty, namely "I act very modestly", "I blow my horn" (reverse scored), "I make no big fuss about my performance," and "I refrain from self-praise." The instructions read: "how do you act toward senior managers who are sympathetic to you?" The Likert-type response format ranged from "never" (0) to "always" (8). In the first wave, the Cronbach's Alpha value was $\alpha = 0.63$, in the second wave $\alpha = 0.64$. The scales from the first and second wave correlated at $r = 0.63$ ($p < 0.005$, $n = 167$).

	M	SD	n	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
1. Sex	1.25	0.43	292	(-)																
2. Age	31.72	3.24	292	-0.27**	(-)															
3. Self-monitoring	1.40	0.16	292	-0.07	-0.10	(0.68)														
4. E self-disclosure t1	3.42	1.43	292	-0.02	-0.05	0.12*	(0.78)													
5. E self-disclosure t2	3.57	1.39	167	-0.08	-0.06	0.18*	0.53**	(0.80)												
6. M self-disclosure t1	4.01	1.54	209	0.12	-0.05	0.06	0.26**	0.01	(0.81)											
7. E modesty t1	5.58	1.18	292	-0.02	0.05	-0.14*	-0.09	-0.02	-0.01	(0.63)										
8. E modesty t2	5.52	1.17	167	-0.03	0.00	-0.09	-0.12	-0.14	-0.08	0.63**	(0.64)									
9. M modesty t1	5.81	1.13	209	0.08	0.06	-0.05	-0.13*	-0.06	0.00	0.19**	0.14	(0.56)								
10. E mentoring t1	4.37	0.82	288	-0.05	-0.15*	0.04	0.24**	0.16*	0.19**	0.00	-0.07	0.04	(0.93)							
11. E mentoring t2	4.35	0.86	163	0.11	-0.21**	0.25**	0.28**	0.34**	0.12	-0.09	-0.13	-0.05	0.49**	(0.94)						
12. P mentoring t2	2.82	0.95	89	0.27*	-0.06	0.19	0.28**	0.16	0.28**	0.16	0.04	0.02	0.33**	0.32*	(0.93)					
13. M mentoring t1	4.99	0.76	210	-0.04	-0.01	0.09	0.07	-0.04	0.40*	-0.02	-0.10	0.09	0.32**	0.11	0.18	(0.91)				
14. M mentoring t2	4.84	0.91	78	0.08	0.18	-0.09	0.20	0.16	0.24*	0.24*	0.09	0.19	0.36**	0.36**	0.32*	0.43*	(0.95)			
15. number of mentors t1	2.43	1.08	291	-0.10	-0.16**	0.12*	0.15**	0.02	0.23**	0.00	-0.04	-0.12	0.43**	0.17**	0.05	0.24**	-0.10	(-)		
16. Number of mentors t2	2.39	0.94	170	-0.01	-0.17*	0.10	0.16*	0.15*	-0.04	0.06	0.06	-0.05	0.36**	0.44*	0.21	0.17	0.24*	0.26**	(-)	

Note: E = employee, M = Mentor, P = peer, t1 = wave one, t2 = wave two; sex: 1 = male, 2 = female; * $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed), ** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed)

Table I. Descriptive statistics, correlations and reliabilities for all variables

In the mentor version, the instructions read: "how does this person behave towards you?" The response format was the same. Additionally, the mentors had the option to choose "can't say". This was coded as a missing value. The self-ratings of self-disclosure and the mentor ratings of the employees' self-disclosure were correlated ($r = 0.19, p < 0.005, n = 209$), supporting the convergent validity of the scales.

Mentoring received and given. The 33-item mentor role instrument (Ragins and McFarlin, 1990) was used to measure mentoring received (employee and peer assessment) and mentoring given (mentor assessment). The instrument includes career roles (i.e. sponsoring, coaching, protection, challenging assignments, exposure) and psychosocial roles (i.e. friendship, socializing, parenting, role modeling, counseling, acceptance). A sample item from the original scale is "my mentor helps me attain desirable positions." We modified this scale slightly by adding "or that person who has so far supported me the most." Thus, a sample item is, "my mentor or that person who has so far supported me the most helps me attain desirable positions." The response format ranged from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 7 = "strongly agree." The mentor role instrument (i.e. mentoring received) was assessed by employees in the first and second wave of the study. Coefficient alphas were 0.93 (time 1) and 0.94 (time 2) for employees.

For the mentors, the mentor role instrument was slightly modified to reflect the mentors' perceptions of their mentoring given to their protégé. A sample item is "I help this person attain desirable positions." The modified mentor role instrument (i.e. mentoring given) was assessed by mentors in the first and second wave of the study. Coefficient alphas were 0.91 (time 1) and 0.95 (time 2) for mentors.

The scales from the first and second wave correlated at $r = 0.43$ ($p < 0.005, n = 78$). Self and mentor ratings of received and given mentoring correlated in the first wave at $r = 0.32$ ($p < 0.005, n = 210$) and in the second wave at $r = 0.36$ ($p < 0.01, n = 78$) supporting the convergent validity of the scales.

In the second wave, a peer of the employee from the same organization was asked to assess the mentoring received by the employee. Prior to the actual questions, the peer was asked: "how is the relationship between the person who gave this questionnaire to you and senior managers in your organization? Is there at least one senior manager who supports your peer? What is your assessment?" All items started with "there is at least one senior manager who . . ." Only the first 11 items of the Mentor role instrument covering all mentoring functions were used. Cronbach's Alpha was $\alpha = 0.93$. Employees' assessments of mentoring received at wave two and peers' assessments correlated at $r = 0.32$ ($p < 0.005, n = 89$) and assessments of mentoring given by mentors, it correlated at $r = 0.32$ ($p < 0.01, n = 78$). These results support the convergent validity of the scales.

Number of mentors. After having been presented with the definition of a mentor by Ragins (1989), the employees were asked to choose among the following four alternatives:

- (1) "I am not supported by a mentor."
- (2) "Until recently I was supported by a mentor."
- (3) "I am presently supported by a mentor."
- (4) "I am presently supported by several mentors."

Thus, the degree of mentoring was examined from several vantage points; mentoring received (employee and peer assessment), mentoring given, and reported number of mentors.

Results

Table I reports the means, standard deviations, intercorrelations, and coefficient alpha (α) internal consistency reliability estimates of the variables. The Cronbach's alphas of the scales ranged from excellent to marginally acceptable. The values of all variables of those who participated in the second wave and those who dropped out in the second wave were compared with respect to their values in the first wave of the study. There was only one variable that showed a systematic difference between these two groups: The mean of the received mentoring in the drop out group in wave two was slightly lower in wave one ($M = 4.23$) than in the group of those who participated in wave two ($M = 4.47, p < 0.05$).

Hypotheses testing

The hypotheses were tested using correlation and hierarchical regression analyses (Cohen and Cohen, 1983; Cohen *et al.*, 2003). *H1* stated that self-disclosures by early career employees will have a positive impact on mentoring support over time. The regression analyses revealed (see Table II) that employees' level of self-disclosure predicted, after a period of two years, increased mentoring received as assessed by the employees ($\beta = 0.12, p < 0.05$) and peers ($\beta = 0.23, p < 0.01$), and a positive change in the number of employees' mentors ($\beta = 0.13, p < 0.05$). These findings, over a time period of about two years, support *H1*. Employees' level of upward self-disclosure positively influences the degree of mentoring received and the number of mentors.

H2 stated that modesty by early career employees has a positive impact on mentoring support over time. As Table II shows, employees' self-assessed modesty

Predictor variables	Criteria in the second wave after two years			
	Mentoring received: employee assessments ($n = 162$)	Mentoring received: peer assessments ($n = 89$)	Mentoring given: mentor assessments ($n = 71$)	Number of mentors ($n = 170$)
<i>First step: control variables</i>				
Value of time 1 criterion	0.48***		0.39***	0.24***
Sex	0.07	0.28**	0.21*	-0.04
Age	-0.14**	0.02	0.16	-0.15*
<i>Second step: predictor variables</i>				
Self-disclosure	0.12*	0.23**	0.16	0.13*
Modesty	-0.03	0.21**	0.25**	0.08
Self-monitoring	0.18**	0.16	-0.19*	0.05
<i>Third step: interactions</i>				
Self-monitoring \times modesty	0.00	0.07	0.20*	0.15**

Notes: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ (one-tailed tests); All predictors in the second and third step were centered; sex: 1 = male, 2 = female

Table II. Hierarchical moderated regressions of mentoring and career success after two years

predicted positive mentoring provided ($\beta = 0.25, p < 0.01$) as assessed by mentors, and mentoring received ($\beta = 0.21, p < 0.01$) as assessed by employees' peers. Interestingly, modesty did not demonstrate an impact on mentoring received as assessed by the employee. As discussed earlier, in contrast to using self-disclosure, the employee using modesty cannot immediately see the positive effects on their mentoring relationship.

H3 stated that the positive relationship between modesty and later mentoring by senior managers is stronger among high self-monitors than among low self-monitors.

As Table II depicts, the interaction of modesty and self-monitoring had significant positive effects on given mentoring assessed by mentors as well as the number of mentors reported by the employees themselves. Among the high self-monitors (see Figure 1), the beta-weight for modesty on mentoring provided is $\beta = 0.46 (p < 0.005)$, among the low self-monitors the standardized beta-weight is $\beta = 0.09 (n.s.)$.

These results support *H3*. Further, the interaction between self-monitoring and modesty affects the number of mentors at T2, such that employees who are high self-monitors and are modest have the highest number of mentors after two years ($\beta = 0.15, p < 0.01$), thus supporting *H4*. The graph depicting this relationship is similar to the graph depicting the modesty and self-monitoring interaction on mentoring given (see Figure 2).

Discussion

In the present study, the effects of early career employees' self-disclosure, modesty, and of the interaction between employees' modesty and self-monitoring on subsequent changes in informal mentoring were investigated for the first time. The study used a

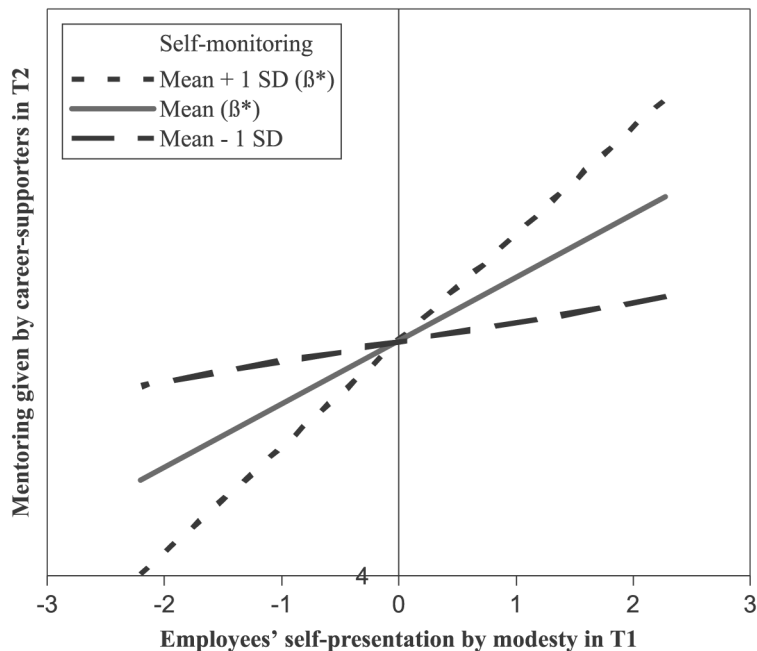


Figure 1.
Interaction of protégé
modesty ×
self-monitoring on
subsequent mentoring
behavior

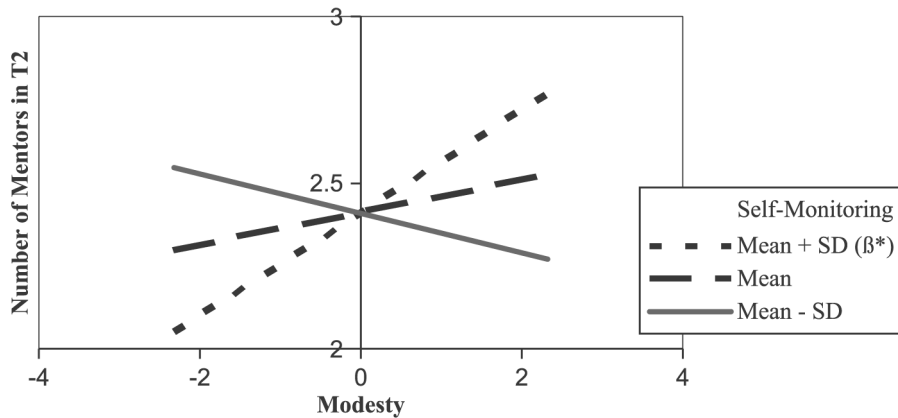


Figure 2.
Interaction of protégé
modesty \times
self-monitoring on
subsequent number of
mentors

longitudinal design over a period of two years. Three data sources were used, namely employees' assessments, employees' mentors' assessments, and assessments by employees' peers.

In line with the hypotheses, employees' self-disclosure was associated with mentoring after two years, as assessed by both the employee and the employee peer. Second, employees' modesty predicted mentoring received, as assessed by the employee, as well as mentoring given, as assessed by the employees' mentors. Third, the interaction between employees' modesty and self-monitoring predicted mentoring given, as assessed by the career-supporters, and the number of mentors, as assessed by the early career employees.

Implications of the study

Perhaps surprisingly, self-monitoring had different effects on received mentoring as assessed by employees and given mentoring as assessed by mentors (see Table II). Although self-monitoring predicts mentoring received as assessed by the employees ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < 0.01$), it negatively predicts mentoring provided, as assessed by the primary career-supports ($\beta = -0.19$, $p < 0.05$). These differences are completely consistent with the new concept of self-monitoring proposed by Gangestad and Snyder (2000). They argued that the self-monitoring scale relates to status oriented impression management, which is well illustrated in the relationship between self-monitoring and physical appearance of romantic partners (Gangestad and Snyder, 2000).

Specifically, high self-monitors prefer romantic partners with an attractive physical appearance to enhance their own status in the eyes of others. Their romantic relationships are characterized by less personal intimacy and they are more willing to engage in deception in romantic pursuits. In contrast, low self-monitors prefer romantic partners with similar identities and shared values. Their intimate relationships are relatively stable and are characterized by closeness and commitment.

This example is easily generalized to mentoring. High self-monitors prefer mentors with a reputation for power and influence to enhance their own status in the eyes of others. Their relationships with their mentors are characterized by low levels of personal bonding and low commitment. By contrast, low self-monitors particularly

prefer mentors with similar identities and shared values. Their relationships are relatively stable and are characterized by closeness and high commitment.

How does this fit with the present findings? A negative relationship between self-monitoring and mentoring given by the primary mentor ($\beta = -0.19, p < 0.05$) was identified. This negative relationship may reflect that high self-monitors do not seek strong personal bonds and high commitments with their mentors. Mentors are useful for them to enhance and reflect their own status in the eyes of others. As mentors become aware of this, they reduce their mentoring activities toward high self-monitors over time.

In contrast, high self-monitors have good social skills, and they are successful at initiating mentoring relationships (Aryee *et al.*, 1999; Turban and Dougherty, 1994). They are not as interested in close interpersonal relationships that imply high commitment, but rather in status-oriented impression management to bask in glory by association with a senior manager with a reputation of power and influence. Such protégés are likely satisfied just to demonstrate to others that they have an association with a powerful and influential mentor, rather than trying to intensify interpersonal bonds. Thus, this explains the positive relationship ($\beta = 0.18, p < 0.01$) between self-monitoring and received mentoring as assessed by the employees.

Interestingly, Gangestad and Snyder (2000) predicted that the relationships between high self-monitors and their senior managers are not stable. They argued that high self-monitors are more invested in negotiating status with higher-ups than in establishing and maintaining close personal bonds. This is an additional reason why, over time, mentors of high self-monitors reduce their mentoring support for them. In sum, although high self-monitors initiate successfully new mentoring relationships, they do not cultivate them over a longer period of time.

Allen *et al.* (2004) concluded from their meta-analytic review of the career benefits associated with mentoring for protégés that the findings were generally supportive of the career benefits, but effect sizes associated with objective outcomes were small. Our findings may contribute to an explanation of this. Employees interested in developing close and long-term mentoring relationships with senior managers, need be less concerned about self-monitoring and more focused on a personally rewarding social career context.

Limitations of the research

There may be a range restriction in the mentor sample concerning the level of modesty versus self-promotion of the employees. High levels of self-promotion among employees are probably related to low mentoring support. High self-promoters may not have a mentor after two years causing a variance restriction. So, the effect sizes are likely underestimated. Additionally, these effects relate to predictive effects over two years and cross-sources effects, relating self-assessments to other-assessments. Thus, although statistically these effects may be small, they are nonetheless substantively important.

In addition, the population examined and the research setting may limit the generalizability of this study. The respondents were highly educated, white-collar professionals in business organizations in Germany (i.e. in conventional and enterprising jobs). Thus, the present findings may not reflect the same situation for

employees in social, artistic, realistic (e.g. workmen, craftsmen, technicians, engineers), and scientific jobs (Holland, 1997) or for those less educated and in lower-paid groups.

Directions for future research

As the present research demonstrates, self-monitoring, self-disclosure, and modesty are important for increasing mentoring support. One set of questions for future research relates to political skill at work and mentoring (Blass *et al.*, 2007). Ferris *et al.* (2005) argued that political skill, which they have defined as: “the ability to effectively understand others at work, and use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one’s personal and/or organizational objectives” (p. 127) has four dimensions: Social Astuteness, Interpersonal Influence, Networking Ability, and Apparent Sincerity. Self-monitoring and social astuteness are similar constructs. Apparent sincerity, self-disclosure, and self-presentation by modesty are also related constructs. Thus, to study the impact of political skill at work regarding increasing mentoring support and achieving career success would greatly increase our understanding of mentoring and career processes.

Similarly, Noe *et al.* (2002) suggested that one of the outcomes of a positive mentoring experience is the visibility and exposure of the protégé to important constituents. They argued that this important outcome of mentoring occurs through access to important social and work networks, which increases networking ability of the protégé. Consistent with the call for research on the impact of political skill, research also should explore tacit “selection criteria” held by potential mentors. Do mentors pre-select based on demonstrated social skills or interpersonal characteristics, those protégés they feel they can best develop into politically skilled individuals?

Further, there may be significant differences across gender and race that affect the degree to which individuals are pre-disposed to use self-disclosure and modesty. As role expectations differ between women and minorities, so does situationally appropriate behavior. Additionally, there may be significant differences across gender and race that affect the degree to which mentors interpret self-disclosure and modesty. More research is needed regarding how protégé self-disclosure and modesty may be perceived as more or less situationally appropriate by mentors based on both mentor and protégé gender and race.

Practical implications

These findings have three direct implications for employees at the beginning of their careers and for career counselors. First, when early employees have positive personal accomplishments or positive characteristics, they should be advised to present themselves modestly in the organization. It is modesty, influenced by self-monitoring, that will lead to positive affect (i.e. liking) by senior managers, and will increase their benevolence and generosity toward the early employees.

Second, early career employees can safely be advised to talk openly about anxieties, fears, and ambivalence that distract them from productive work. The employee’s self-disclosure, again situationally adjusted through self-monitoring, will lead to the senior manager liking the employee, because the senior manager feels trusted and liked as a person. This is a gradual process. Employees begin slowly by revealing biographic and demographic information about themselves, and as senior managers reciprocate, more information is shared. These mutual self-disclosures proceed in a

gradual fashion from superficial to intimate levels of exchange, thereby establishing and cultivating a deeper mentoring relationship.

Finally, protégés should be aware that their behavior significantly influences the quality of mentoring relationship. Rather than being characterized as a downward only process, mentoring, more appropriately, should be construed as a constant social exchange potentially benefiting both the protégé and the mentor, and as such, it is of critical importance to the mentor, and thereby the protégé, to work towards a intimate interpersonal relationship.

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Corresponding author

Gerhard Blickle can be contacted at: gerhard.blickle@uni-bonn.de