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Mentoring Experiences Among Female Public Relations Entrepreneurs: A Qualitative Investigation

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Mentoring Experiences Among Female Public Relations Entrepreneurs:

A Qualitative Investigation

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

This phenomenological study expands from current mentoring literature within the mass communication field in understanding how mentoring can contribute to the successful careers of public relations entrepreneurial women. While many scholars indicate that mentoring is effective for women, the present study describes how mentoring has affected the women participants' public relations careers and personal lives. In-depth interviews focused on following five research questions: What have been the key contributing factors in the success of public relations women entrepreneurs? How has mentoring helped the women participants achieve their goals in a public relations career and in starting their own company? Which mentoring strategy (formal or informal) is perceived as being most effective? Do women benefit more from having a women mentor versus male? What motivating reasons attributed the public relations women participants to undertake their own business? The qualitative interview data generated six common themes which are: (1) networking, mentoring, building key relationships and a strong work ethic as being key to their success, (2) career mentoring from university faculty members and/or Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) as an integral part in the commencement of their public relations careers, (3) mentoring affirmed their self-worth, (4) informal mentoring being perceived as more beneficial due to the long lasting relationship that follows, (5) male mentors being as effective as female mentors relative to career issues, although women provide both career and psychological

mentoring, and (6) mentoring, lack of employment opportunities, and a better work-life balance being the three main key contributing factors in women professionals starting their own public relations company.

Chapter One: Introduction

An inspirational quote by American author Peggy Anderson may hold certain truth and wisdom:

Great women are not considered so because of personal achievements, but for the effect their efforts have had on the lives of countless others. From daring feats of bravery to the understated ways of a compassionate heart, great women possess a common strength of character. Through their passion and persistence, they have advanced womanhood and the world.

This quote is a reflection of the importance of mentoring and how women are perceived as achieving greatness from helping others succeed. This study explores the mentoring experiences of entrepreneurial public relations women to better understand the value of mentoring related to career advancement, entrepreneurialism, and work-life balance. As the latest numbers from the Bureau of Labor Statistics for the month of April 2010 show, women now account for 49.8% of jobs in the United States and as such, factors related to work-life balance for women become increasingly important. Feminist theory has emphasized creating equal opportunities for women in the workplace (Tong, 1998) and although women have continuously struggled for equality, according to a few researchers, the field is still far from equal. They are referring to the consistent salary gaps and the extra responsibilities women have with work, household chores, and childcare (Frazier, 2010; Wrigley, 2002). Most companies have not evolved with the

times in that both parents work so therefore family needs and issues need to be addressed by their employees, not a stay-at-home spouse.

Liberal feminists acknowledge that our societal structures favor men and disfavor women with regard to achieving power, money, and prominent status (Tong, 1998). Research also suggests that some women continue to face challenges in the workplace. Consequently, women are likely to achieve greater success in climbing the corporate ladder if they understand executive strategies (Ragins, 1998). Ragins describes the four strategies as: (1) exceeding performance expectations, (2) developing a style that male managers are comfortable with, (3) pursuing difficult and challenging projects, and (4) having influential mentors.

Mentoring has been proposed as a significant means for women to achieve career success (Schor, 1997). An extensive review of mentoring literature reveals that although a significant amount of research covers a general understanding of mentoring, no past research has focused on the phenomenological mentoring communication experiences shared by entrepreneurial women in public relations and how it has contributed to their self-employment initiatives.

Women have continued to pursue self-employment in all fields over the last few decades. As of 2007, 41% of women owned more than 10 million businesses (CWBR). Many resources are now available making it a little easier to pursue a start-up company. The U.S. federal government website is geared toward assisting socially and/or economically disadvantaged women with training designed to help them start and grow their business (SBA).

Because business owners have the responsibility to multitask and perform various duties, the need for entrepreneurs to obtain career development is an understandable imperative (Allen & Finkelstein, 2003; Lazear, 2005). Waters et al. (2002) shift the traditional mentoring theory by applying it to entrepreneurship.

Historically, economic conditions determined which jobs women could pursue years ago, and a shift from the manufacturing to the service industry provided a new spectrum of job possibilities to women beyond clerical positions. The service industry meant that clerical positions were no longer the only jobs to provide opportunity to women. Although women comprise a majority of service workers today, research shows they are overrepresented in traditionally feminized jobs (Blackwelder, 1997), given 70% to 80% of students in U.S. college public relations courses are women (Grunig, Toth, & Hon, 2000). Facing daily challenges such as career advancement, self-employment, and work-life balance may prominently factor in the daily lives and thinking of working women. A study involving members of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) revealed that future practitioners are concerned about gender and work-life balance issues (Sha & Toth, 2005).

Women have begun to embrace the role as public relations entrepreneurs by actively balancing the comprehensive responsibilities of running a business and maintaining a fully engaged personal life (whether with a family or single). As a result, there is a need to further extend the nascent research regarding entrepreneurial women, especially in the public relations field, their decisions as to why they are pursuing self-employment, and the role that mentoring may have played in their decision to set their own career enterprise course.

This study identifies common attributes of public relations women's perceptions regarding the significance of mentoring communication and entrepreneurial initiatives, particularly in the way they may have been shaped and cultivated through their professional training and personal mentorship experiences. Specifically, this study breaks new ground because it captures interviews of self-employed public relations women detailing their mentoring experiences in traditional (corporations) and entrepreneurial settings.

The focus and conceptual framework of the research target the glass ceiling and advancement paths for women in public relations as they relate to career decisions about settling on an entrepreneurial path, the dynamics of mentoring relationships particularly with regard to gender, the relationship between mentoring and the professional roles assumed in public relations, the uses of mentoring to supplement and enhance education and professional training, job satisfaction, work-life-balance, and the role mentoring plays in enhancing positive experiences. Some other topics are also explored such as personal credibility in the eyes of senior management, longevity of service, perceived quality and expertise, and ability to demonstrate public relations' contributions to the bottom line. Also, it is important to understand how public relations women entrepreneurs reconcile or compensate for potentially weak skills in such areas as finance and budgeting – topics often less emphasized in public relations curriculum.

This research study has three specific objectives: First, to chronicle in detail the perceptions of entrepreneurial women in public relations regarding their mentoring experiences. Second, to obtain first-person insights about how mentoring may have led

them to pursue self-employment. Third, to document how mentoring may have helped them achieve a work-life balance offered through self-employment.

Approach of the Study

This qualitative, phenomenological study focuses on seven self-employed women entrepreneurs working in the field of public relations. It is designed to examine the extent of mentoring influence on women's capabilities to achieve their self-employment goals, their rationale for becoming entrepreneurs, and how they achieve successful work-life balance. This phenomenological approach attempts to establish some baseline insights focusing on the essential experiences of public relations self-employed women and by plumbing the analysis further for identifying cultural, social, professional, economic, and business factors that influenced their decision to set forth as public relations entrepreneurs.

Collecting first-person experiences provides a sociological breadth of information in a phenomenological study (Creswell, 2007). In-depth interviews were conducted with seven public relations self-employed women who preliminarily indicated that mentoring was a key part of the process in realizing their goals of an entrepreneurial public relations start-up. An in-depth textual analysis of the interviews was used to distill common themes relating to the women's self-employment and mentoring experiences. Interview questions were designed to allow the participants to discuss their mentoring experiences while pursuing self-employment and achieving a work-life balance. The study's goal is to understand, from a qualitative viewpoint, the extent to which mentoring played a role in encouraging and assuring women to pursue self-employment in the public relations field along with their individual motivations to start their own businesses. Given the nature of

this phenomenological study, five primary open-ended questions were asked focusing on the lived experiences of public relations women and their mentoring experiences as it relates to starting their own public relations company and work-life balance.

- RQ1. What have been the key contributing factors in the success of public relations women entrepreneurs?
- RQ2. How has mentoring helped the women participants achieve their goals in a public relations career and in starting their own company?
- RQ3. Which mentoring strategy (formal or informal) is perceived as being most effective?
- RQ4. Do women benefit more from having a women mentor versus male?
- RQ5. What motivating reasons attributed the public relations women participants to undertake their own businesses?

The study incorporates elements of criterion sampling and purposeful sampling. Criterion sampling was used because the public relations entrepreneurial women in this study have all started their own company, which satisfies Creswell's (2007) description of experiencing a similar phenomenon. The small sample size is limited to one local geographical dimension so therefore results of the study can only be generalized within a limited extent to all other public relations women entrepreneurs.

The researcher is a white female in a director role in a corporation who has experienced mentoring and has mentored others. A researcher cannot eliminate all bias toward her research subjects so therefore the researcher will employ the technique of bracketing to assist in addressing this limitation. Bracketing is intended to make the researcher aware of preconceptions and theoretical impositions (Moustakas, 1994).

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Traditional research on mentoring communication suggests its effectiveness in helping women's advancement in corporations (Ragins & Cotton, 1993), although mentoring can also be employed in an entrepreneurial context. An entrepreneur is defined as someone who creates innovative activities and capitalizes on their skills to produce existing products or services in a competitive marketplace (Lazear, 2005). An entrepreneur is responsible for establishing strategies and implementations; therefore, characteristic traits such as perseverance, motivation, and strong desire to succeed are often seen (Bann, 2009).

In this chapter, the first section of the literature review will help provide the foundation for an exploration of the glass ceiling and advancement paths for women in public relations. The second topic will define mentoring, followed by the third topic of mentoring communication, which helps depict mentoring relationships. The fourth topic discusses organizational communication and its mentoring benefits, followed by the fifth topic discussing two types of mentoring: informal and formal. The sixth topic women and mentoring describes the various issues women face in mentoring. The seventh topic about women mentoring women explains the positives and negatives of women gender mentoring as indicated in the extent literature. Mentoring in a feminized field is the

eighth topic to be presented as it relates to public relations and, finally, a brief discussion about work-life balance wraps up the topics to be covered.

Glass ceiling and issues Public Relations women face

Although the majority of public relations practitioners are women, inequality is perceived by women given inadequate growth opportunities as well as salary gaps (PR Week, 2002). The glass ceiling has been defined by the U.S. Department of Labor (1998) as “artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward in their organization into management-level positions.” Feminist scholar Rakow (1989) has attributed the following three feminine characteristics – relationship building, two-way symmetrical communication, and collaboration – in creating organizational effectiveness. Women, therefore, may be better suited for leadership roles in public relations given the research findings (Aldoory & Toth, 2004). In Aldoory and Toth’s (2004) focus group research, participants viewed women as the better leaders in public relations due to their socialized traits such as empathy and collaborative efforts which constitute transformational leadership style, although they felt women do not have the same opportunities to obtain a leadership role as men due to socialization and structuralism in organizations and beliefs (Lewis & Fagenson-Eland, 1998).

Wrigley’s (2002) qualitative study contributed to identifying five factors as possible contributors to the glass ceiling problem women face in public relations and communications management. These factors are denial, gender role socialization, historical precedence, women turning against other women, and corporate culture. Research suggests that the culture and ethos of organizations largely conform to

masculine hegemonic forms, which value competition over cooperation (Morgan, 1996). Wrigley (2002) found that many women tended to believe they could advance to managerial positions through efforts such as mentoring, working harder, changing jobs, or even starting their own businesses.

Defining mentoring

As economic and sociocultural factors reshape business models and career paths, mentoring continues to be examined and redefined (Bozeman & Feeney, 2007). Mentoring provides support to the protégé through informal communication that is quite powerful in career or personal advancement (Bahniuk et al., 1998).

In a broad spectrum of research, mentoring has been described in various ways. Allen and Eby (2004) suggest, “Mentoring is an intense long-term relationship between a senior, more experienced individual (the mentor) and a more junior, less experienced individual (the protégé)” (p. 456). Zey (1984) describes a mentor as “a person who oversees the career and development of another person, usually junior, through teaching, counseling, providing psychological support, protecting, and at times promoting or sponsoring” (p. 7). Noe’s (1988) definition takes a similar path explaining, “the mentor is usually a senior, experienced employee who serves as a role model, provides support, direction, and feedback to the younger employee regarding career plans and interpersonal development, and increases the visibility of the protégé to decision-makers in the organization who may influence career opportunities” (p. 458).

These definitions indicate a relationship where a senior person is the mentor and a junior is the protégé. However, the existing literature overlooks the fact that upper management or senior professionals may need mentoring as well (Zachary & Fischler,

2009). Therefore, this thesis focuses on a comprehensive definition of mentoring as a “developmental, caring, sharing, helping relationship where one person invests time, know-how and effort in increasing and improving another person’s growth knowledge and skills” (Kram, 1985). This definition makes no assumptions in identifying particularly a senior or junior person in mentoring relationship roles.

Mentoring in communication studies

The communication studies field also has contributed substantially to the knowledge and growth of mentoring (Kalbfleisch & Davies, 1991). Solid communication skills are essential in obtaining a successful mentoring relationship (Farmer, 2005) especially as communication is described as a ritual model by Carey (1989), “linked to sharing, participation, association, fellowship... the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs” (p. 18).

The general themes from mentoring research include the benefits of potential career advancement and the challenges that women face in developing mentoring relationships (Hill, Bahniuk, Dobos, & Rouner, 1989). Other common mentoring communication research themes include interpersonal skills such as being able to work well with others, and the ability to form alliances (Kalbfleisch & Davies, 1993; Farmer, 2005), as well as personality and characteristic traits such as trust, honesty and willingness, all of which are essential and highly desirable in a mentoring relationship (Bell, Golombisky, Singh, & Hirschmann, 2000). Furthermore, theory and research implies that women place a higher value in interpersonal relationships than men do, and as such is key to a women’s professional career growth (Eagly & Wood, 1991). Mentors and protégés with highly developed interpersonal abilities also are described as having

organizational savviness, are well respected within their company and are capable of taking risks and accepting power given to them (Zey, 1984).

Communication competence is also described as a desirable quality in mentors and protégés. It is defined as the ability a person has to communicate behaviors in order to successfully obtain her goals while dealing with another person (Wiemann, 1977).

Self-esteem is another characteristic trait evident in a mentoring relationship (Kalbfleish & Davies, 1993). Kalbfleish and Davies (1993) describe strong feelings of self-worth as crucial for a person to believe they have the ability to help someone else.

Kram's (1985) research in mentoring relationships suggests that mentoring is a development process comprising phases: initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition. In the initiation phase, Kram (1985) describes a protégé as having respect and trust for the mentor, although Bouquillon et al. (2005) argue that trust in the relationship may naturally increase through the phases as the mentoring relationship matures over time. Emotional bonds, a deep spiritual connection, and wholeness (Bell, Golombisky, Singh, & Hirschmann, 2000) are also found to develop in mentor-protégé relationships over time. Buzzanell (2009) discusses spiritual mentoring as "transcend[ing] conventional mentoring forms and functions through inner and good work, embodiment of spiritual values, and enactment of everyday spiritual practices" (p. 22). This is accomplished by enhancing one's development by spontaneously creating opportunities and fostering continuous developmental growth (Buzzanell, 2009).

Sosik & Lee (2002) believe that socially perceptive mentors would most likely provide career development and role modeling for their protégés. A socially perceptive mentor is described as someone who has a high degree of self-awareness, self-monitoring

of behavior, and social self-confidence (Sosik & Lee, 2002). High levels of motivation are needed as well for a mentoring relationship to be successful (Noe, 1988).

Ragins & Scandura (1999) suggests that once protégés become mentors, their commitment to the relationship may be stronger due to the benefits both individuals received in the relationship, such as a desire to help (for the mentor), and building competence and self-worth (for the protégé). Those who have mentored others claim to feel more competent, increased confidence in their own abilities, and respect among peers due to mentoring participation, while those who have been mentored claim to receive more promotions and greater career satisfaction as well as higher compensation than those who were not mentored (Kram, 1985).

Organizational communication and mentoring benefits

According to Behniuk (1998), employees and managers in all types of organizations should understand the mentoring phenomenon and its relation to success in order to professionally develop their employees and achieve a successful work environment. Mentoring has been attributed to employee motivation, job performance and retention, development of leadership talent, and is linked to increasing the stability of organizational culture by providing a structured system (Kalbfleisch, 2000; Wilson & Elman, 1990). While these are important benefits to consider, Wilson and Elman (1990) discuss the long-term well-being of an organization as a social system and the role mentoring provides, such as a structured system that allows continuity of a strong corporate and organizational culture. Other benefits to mentoring include the adoption of organizational values given the mentees are in control of their career destiny, thus

fostering respect between mentor and mentee and creating a positive environment (Allen et al., 2004).

Organizations wanting to create mentoring as part of the organizational culture may need to recruit potential mentors who have never partaken in a mentoring relationship given the results from Scandura and Ragins (1999) research, which suggested that protégés were more likely to become mentors than those who were never mentored, or those who were poorly mentored. They also suggest including mentoring in performance appraisals and career development programs as a way of promoting mentoring throughout the organization (Scandura & Ragins, 1999).

Formal mentoring versus informal mentoring

Formal mentoring programs involve structured agreements. The frequency and duration of contact is agreed upon initially, with formal mentoring programs tending to last between six months to one year (Murray, 1991). The organization commits to making tools available to participants to facilitate the creation and maintenance of the relationship. In a formal mentoring relationship, there is discussion of expectations, goals, and the process to be used. This form of mentoring is tied to a strategic business objective of the organization and typically has a measurable outcome. Expert training is usually available, and anyone can participate. Nevertheless, the limitations in formal relationships are that pairing may be difficult, especially if the number of mentors is low, less flexible relationship and process, and risk of poor pairing.

Informal mentoring involves the self-selection of mentors and protégés without any assistance from the organization. Allowing informal mentoring within all hierarchy levels helps defuse claims of exclusivity, according to Kram (1986). Typically a protégé

approaches a mentor and explains her or his intentions. These mentoring relationships tend to last three to six years, and there is no definite process or format to the conversation (Murray, 1991). Protégés involved in informal mentoring relationships claim to have higher satisfaction rates than mentees in formal mentoring programs (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). While many of these informal mentoring relationships can be successful, there may be limitations, such as mentors being predominantly self-selected and unsupported in the mentoring process. Hence, they may be technically incompetent or bad role models, or may not understand how to mentor effectively.

Despite the limitations, research shows that formal mentoring programs are important for women (Nemanick, 1993). In comparison, Ragins and Cotton (1991) found that informal mentoring relationships exceeded the formal programs due to higher amounts of several types of career development functions, including coaching and increasing protégés' visibility. Their findings also indicate formal mentoring usually lasts less than one year, which may be too little time for any positive mentoring effects to take place because short-term career goals are a focus instead of long-term career ones (as experienced with informal mentoring relationships).

When a mentor and protégé develop a relationship there are certain emotional connections that develop such as familiarity, closeness, and trust (Bell, Golombisky, Singh, & Hirschmann, 2000; Ragins, Cotton & Miller, 2000). In formal mentoring situations where an organization creates the mentoring relationships, emotional connections may not occur between a mentor and a protégé. When the relationships are matched by a third party, mentors may find it much easier to offer career-related rather than psychosocial support to their protégés (Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

Regardless of whether the design of the mentoring program is formal or informal the effectiveness of the program will vary based on attitudes and the motivation and skills of the mentor (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). However, researchers have generally determined that formal mentoring produces a better outcome for protégés than with no mentoring relationships at all (Scandura & Williams, 2001).

Women and mentoring

Women leaders may face barriers such as lack of culture fit and being excluded from informal networks, which is consistent with tokenism theory in predicting that women leaders will experience negative feedback in their positions and exclusion from networks (Kanter, 1977). One reason women continue to face obstacles to advancement within organizations may be because some men feel uncomfortable relating to women as equals (Martin, 1990).

Research also suggests that beliefs and attitudes, such as women not being viewed as leaders, held by the organization as well as context, such as the structure of the organization, are culprits that hinder women's career advancement (Cooper Jackson, 2001). The literature additionally suggests mentoring is crucial to career success and that women may not be mentored as often or as well as men (Burke & McKeen, 1990). A reason men and women may be reluctant to establish mentoring relationships with each other is to avoid gossip and sexual innuendo (Burke & McKeen, 1990). There is also a shortage of women mentors, and those who are available are viewed as less powerful than male mentors (Bahniuk & Hill, 1998).

Kram (1983) describes mentors as providing two major functions: career related (i.e., by providing feedback and coaching) and psychosocial (i.e., offering support and

encouragement). Male mentors may provide more career mentoring to their protégés, relative to women mentors who may provide more psychosocial mentoring (Allen et al., 2004). Male mentees may be reluctant to accept psychosocial mentoring from women mentors out of fear of appearing weak.

Noe (1988) suggests that available mentors cannot keep up with the increasing numbers of women needing mentoring. Also, a mentor tends to choose a protégé based on similar interests and goals (Bahniuk & Hill, 1998), which may explain why men tend to mentor other men. Some contradictory research suggests women are not being mentored as often or as well, while other studies do not demonstrate differences in the amount of mentoring received by both women and men (Ragins & Scandura, 1993). Additionally, men may have an easier way to integrate into existing informal communication networks and, as a result, can then gain easier access to inspirational mentoring relationships (Bahniuk & Hill, 1998).

Some women may believe they cannot receive equal opportunities in the workforce without mentoring, given all the research associated with mentoring benefits (Noe, 1988). Therefore, climbing the corporate ladder continues to be a challenge if mentoring does not exist in their organization. Mentoring relationships may affect career advancement opportunities for public relations practitioners, which, in turn, may affect their professional growth (Tam, 1995). Tam's study suggested women managers in public relations offer more active and intense mentoring to their employees than do male supervisors. Ironically, superior mentoring by women managers still create fewer career advancement opportunities for their employee while men managers seem to provide more employee career advancement opportunities along with management advancement.

Women mentoring women

Some research reveals that only women should mentor other women (Kalbfleish & Keyton, 1995), while other studies indicate women mentoring women has its disadvantages (Burke & McKeen, 1995). A disadvantage is that managerial women with women mentors claimed to gain no additional benefits and were more likely to have intentions of leaving the organization (Burke & McKeen, 1996). In contrast, studies further shows professional women are just as comfortable with male mentors as they are with women (Burke & McKeen, 1995).

Research performed by Parker and Kram (1993) revealed that women found mentoring relationships with other women unsatisfying, which may be, in part, a result of women leaders feeling overburdened as mentors and junior women viewing senior women as competitive or intolerant. Other senior women may feel mentoring is too perilous in their careers, in that it would take a lot of time or that they would not be qualified enough to mentor (Ragins & Cotton, 1991).

Relationships where women mentor women resulted in the greatest amount of psychosocial mentoring (which offers support and encouragement), and may be due to the belief that women protégés need this form of mentoring because of gender discrimination in the workplace. Women mentors may empathize with the obstacles other women face with regard to organizational advancement and, therefore, provide a greater degree of counseling and friendship to their women mentees (Allen & Eby, 2004). Research suggests that women place a higher value on interpersonal support and intimacy in their relationships than do men (Feldman, 1999).

Mentoring in a feminized field

A feminist perspective of public relations has been developed by researchers and scholars in the public relations industry, which have founded feminist values such as justice, honesty and sensitivity (Grunig, Toth, & Hon, 2000). Despite women outnumbering males in the public relations field, men outnumber women in the higher-paying public relations management positions (PR Week Survey, 2002). A study by Ely (1995) revealed women's proportional representation in the upper hierarchy of organizations affects professional women's social constructions and gender identity at work. Ely noted that if there were many women in senior levels, women in junior levels could better identify themselves with the senior-level women and regard them as role models as well as regard their authority as more legitimate. Notably, the junior women would regard men and women more as equals, with fewer psychological and behavioral differences between them (Ely, 1995). Pompper and Adams (2006) indicate an important part of female leadership in public relations is the mentor-protégé relationship because it lends valuable information to the way women lead as mentors and how mentoring affects career advancements and opportunities for women. Using a survey of 40 public relations practitioners, Pompper and Adams found mentoring reflects and perpetuates gendered social roles. For example, females offered high levels of psychosocial support (i.e. friendship, counseling, acceptance and confirmation) to each other, while males offered their fellow males greater levels of career support (i.e. sponsorship, exposure, visibility, coaching and challenging assignments).

Parker and Kram (1993) suggest that a benefit of having a women mentoring relationship would be that women mentors have dealt with common identity issues, and may be able to help protégés achieve a happy work and life balance.

Work-life balance

Most literature on work and family balance reflects assumptions echoing the patriarchal western culture. Not many mentoring studies have focused on how mentoring may affect one's work-life balance. This may raise some interesting questions to examine especially since in 2004, Simpson and Stroh estimated more than three million women worked in occupations considered nontraditional. Difficult decisions such as career, marriage, and family should be considered for the many women who undertake non-traditional careers (Hakim, 2006). There is a growing awareness that some women have the need to achieve both career and maternal goals (Warner, Winter, & Breshears, 2005). In a public relations study conducted by Aldoory et al. (2006), both women and men defined the "work-family balance" as a women's issue, which is consistent with general societal expectations for women to continue facing balancing work and the majority of life issues (e.g., child care, elderly care, household chores, etc.). The study also revealed participants discussed enacting masculine career qualities in public relations, and evidence of gendered discourse was ubiquitous within the themes of societal pressure and norms, women blaming, guilt narratives, organizational lip service, and contested role of parenthood.

The feminist movement perpetuates the continued social change for women's rights in obtaining what they desire (Tong, 2007). Women continue to face work-life challenges which may help explain why an increase in the number of high-level women

are leaving the corporate world to pursue self-employment (Hewlett & Luce, 2005). The empowering prospect of self-employment in the public relations field may mean more than mere breadwinning and financial rewards for some women. There may be some concern that the increase of female self-employed public relations practitioners could lead to the emergence or the strengthening of 'new' gender stereotypes and, correspondingly, to the reformation of new glass ceilings (Frohlich & Peters, 2007). On the other hand, tangible benefits are more likely to be found in the framework of a more 'alternative' concept of professional success. The aspect of work-family balance would certainly have a significant impact in this context. But apart from this, it can also be reasonably argued that self-employment might be conducive for opening an alternative route for women who, in the traditional labor market, had not yet managed to find an occupation precisely matching their training and education. As suggested in Frohlich and Peters (2007), another reason for the women's trend toward self-employment could be their preference for a combination of managerial and technical job tasks (i.e., both strategy/leadership and creativity/production).

The majority of the literature review on mentoring describes qualitative and quantitative methods in general business settings. This phenomenological study is purposeful by adopting mentoring in public relations entrepreneurialism, a study not yet researched. This phenomenological approach may allow honing in on descriptive experiences shared by a collective group (Creswell, 2007). The primary research will focus of the lived mentoring experiences of seven public relations entrepreneurial women. The following related questions will elicit information from these women concerning their mentoring experiences:

- RQ1. What have been the key contributing factors in the success of public relations women entrepreneurs?
- RQ2. How has mentoring helped the women participants achieve their goals in a public relations career and in starting their own company?
- RQ3. Which mentoring strategy (formal or informal) is perceived as being most effective?
- RQ4. Do women benefit more from having a women mentor versus male?
- RQ5. What motivating reasons attributed the public relations women participants to undertake their own businesses?

Chapter Three:

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationships and mentoring experiences as well as the motivation for public relations women to undertake entrepreneurial activities. A qualitative method explores human experiences and offers an opportunity to obtain in-depth understandings of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994), therefore was used in this research paper. Likewise, the phenomenological approach focuses on descriptions of experiences and their meaning (Creswell, 2007), hence this study subscribes to the theory of phenomenology to help identify common themes as articulated by entrepreneurial women in the public relations profession. While conducting phenomenological research, one must be aware of the importance of reflexivity and how the researcher can impact the research process with biases in interviewing or framing of questions (Robson, 2002). Phenomenology allows an extensive study of a small number of participants to obtain a deeper understanding of their experiences. In the case of this study, assessing and evaluating mentoring and entrepreneurial experiences can potentially offer a strategy for increasing opportunities for public relations women practitioners with self-employment.

Sample Population

The question driving this research is how mentoring influenced, motivated, shaped, and directed women's entrepreneurial pursuit. The seven representative participants are a purposive sample selected through the local Tampa Bay network of public relations practitioners. Purposive sampling is defined as including "subjects or elements selected for specific characteristics or qualities" and eliminating "those who fail to meet these criteria" (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006, p. 91-92). Emails and phone calls were made to various women public relations entrepreneurs although some did not respond, while a few others did respond stating they either had not been mentored or had negative experiences and did not want to participate in this research. To locate participants for the study, a snowball sampling technique, an approach otherwise known as referrals, was used (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). Graduate faculty members and colleagues suggested two participants (Stefanie and Lucy), who in turn, referred others. The following is an introduction to the participants:

- Lea has been working full-time in public relations for seven years since college graduation. She started her business less than a year ago, in May 2010.
- Nadia has been working in public relations since her college graduation in 1997. She has owned her business for one year.
- Lucy started practicing public relations in 1986, and began her own business in 2001.
- Dalia has had her own agency for about four years, and has been working in public relations for 15 years.

- Marida has owned her company for a year and has been involved with public relations since 1998.
- Vicky has been in public relations for 16 years and started her business in mid-2007, for approximately three and a half years.
- Stefanie has a total of 17 years of experience in public relations, and has spent the last 10 years running her business.

The university's institutional review board approval (IRB) approved the project. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in November and December of 2010, which allowed the public relations entrepreneurial women to reflect and discuss their personal experiences in mentoring and starting their companies. This phenomenological study included practitioners with a range of experience between seven and 25 years. This parallel observation in a professional guidebook prepared in 2007 by PR Week, an industry publication, suggests a typical career in a public relations agency would involve working in an entry-level position for approximately three years, and then being promoted to an account executive position. Practitioners could expect to stay at this level for two to three years and then be promoted to an account manager position by the time they have at least five years to seven years of experience (PR Week, 2007). The corporate career path suggests an entry-level position would be, for example, a public relations specialist or public relations coordinator position. Corporate public relations practitioners should expect to advance to a public relations manager position by the time they have five years to 10 years of experience (PR Week, 2007).

Data Collection

The researcher personally invited the women via email and phone to participate, by explaining the purpose of the study and assuring them their anonymity would be protected by assigning pseudonyms to all participants and colleagues they referenced. IRB consent forms were emailed before the interview, and returned with signed approval from participants on the day of the interview. Note-taking and audio-recording were used to document the interviews. The semi-structured interviews ranged from 60 minutes to 90 minutes, and given the year-end timeframe after the interviews were conducted, holiday greeting/thank you cards were sent to the participants, as a token of appreciation for their time.

To aim for some consistency across interviews, the researcher asked the following main questions:

- RQ1. What have been the key contributing factors in the success of public relations women entrepreneurs?
- RQ2. How has mentoring helped the women participants achieve their goals in a public relations career and in starting their own company?
- RQ3. Which mentoring strategy (formal or informal) is perceived as being most effective?
- RQ4. Do women benefit more from having a women mentor versus male?
- RQ5. What motivating reasons attributed the public relations women participants to undertake their own businesses?

Data Analysis

After transcribing data, the researcher identified common themes and patterns upon which the responses would be appropriately sorted, coded, and summarized. All interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the data were then color coded to facilitate the retrieval of data segments categorized under the same codes. Qualitative interview methodologies require relating data to one particular topic that is not conveniently found packaged together in the same areas of each interview (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, the researcher spent numerous hours sifting and shuffling through extensive transcripts of interview data to identify preliminary codes relevant to the research questions. The next step entailed grouping answers from various participants together by common questions and by analyzing different perspectives regarding central research issues. The interview questions provided a descriptive analysis framework from which to work.

Wimmer and Dominick (2006) outline the advantages of in-depth interviews as providing detailed background about the reasons why respondents give specific answers, and in comparison with other qualitative methods, intensive interviews provide more accurate responses on sensitive issues. The rapport between interviewer and interviewee makes it easier to broach certain topics that might be inappropriate in other contexts. They allow for lengthy observation of respondents' nonverbal responses and are usually quite long with some interviews lasting several hours. The length allows for great depth but is also considered a disadvantage.

One other disadvantage of in-depth interviewing includes the possibility that people do not always say what they think. It is also difficult to generalize from interview data, and because interviews are non-standardized, each interviewee may answer slightly

or dramatically different to the questions. In-depth interviews may also present problems for data analysis, especially if the person coding the data is not the person who conducted the interview. For this study, the researcher interviewed participants and coded all the data.

It is important for a researcher to begin by organizing her data chronologically according to the sequence of events taking place during the research process. Then the data are organized into a preliminary category system. These categories might be informed by theory or prior research, or they might arise from the data themselves. Glaser and Strauss (1967) Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe one of the most common analytical induction techniques as the constant comparative technique.

Incidents are assigned to categories by comparing them to other units already assigned. If some units do not fit any preexisting category, new classifications need to be created. While refining categories, writing rules or propositions describing the underlying meaning that defines the category is essential. These rules help to refine the categorization and help explore the theoretical dimensions of the emerging categorization system. It is important to search for relationships and patterns across categories, and examine the propositional statements and look for connections. Finally, simplifying and integrating the data into a coherent theoretical structure will conclude the data analysis protocol (Wimmer & Dominick, 2003). In this phenomenological study all the individuals have experienced the same phenomenon of benefiting from mentoring throughout their public relations career and entrepreneurial pursuits. The characteristics of the individuals were somewhat similar, which helped find common experiences, themes, and the overall essence of the experiences the participants shared.

Chapter Four:

Results

Using a phenomenological method allowed a focused and in-depth exploration of participants' experiences. Qualitative interviews help direct the type of focused questions that would be asked of women entrepreneurs in the public relations field for further studies that address relevantly the concerns of a key demographic group in the career advancement aspects of the public relations field.

Relatively few existing studies illuminate this phenomenon from women's own perspectives and in their words (Josselson, 1987). In this research, the intent was to explore the successes and mentoring experiences of public relations entrepreneurial women. For the participants, mentoring was a process of growth characterized by mutual respect and trust identification with the mentor. Findings suggest that the participants are highly driven career-oriented women who have been both protégés and mentors throughout their careers. While many scholars indicate that mentoring is effective for women, the present study describes how mentoring has affected the women participants' public relations career and personal lives.

Mentoring is a broad concept that includes role modeling and coaching, and is used interchangeably. Each participant mentioned her experiences, ideas, behaviors, and phenomena, and six main themes emerged from the research questions:

RQ1. What have been the key contributing factors in the success of public relations women entrepreneurs? (1) Networking, mentoring, building key relationships and a strong work ethic as being key to their success, (2) career mentoring from university faculty members and/or Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) was an integral part in the commencement of their public relations careers.

RQ2. How has mentoring helped the women participants achieve their goals in a public relations career and in starting their own company? (3) Mentoring affirmed their self-worth.

RQ3. Which mentoring strategy (formal or informal) is perceived as being most effective? (4) Informal mentoring being perceived as more beneficial due to the long lasting relationship that follows.

RQ4. Do women benefit more from having a women mentor versus male? (5) Male mentors being as effective as female mentors relative to career issues, although women provide both career and psychological mentoring.

RQ5. What motivating reasons attributed the public relations women participants to undertake their own businesses? (6) Mentoring, lack of employment opportunities, and a better work-life balance being the three main key contributing factors in women professionals starting their own public relations company.

The following will provide in detail the common themes found while interviewing the participants as well as detailing in their own words their mentoring experiences and entrepreneurial career path.

Networking, mentoring, building key relationships and a strong work ethic as being key to their success

Participants were initially asked: What have been the key contributing factors in the success of public relations women entrepreneurs? From this question, four main common themes emerged. All the participants answered similarly about how networking and building relationships with other public relations professionals and clients were essential to their success. They also acknowledged mentoring as a contributing factor, along with a strong work ethic and the desire to succeed.

Vicky attributes the biggest reasons for her success to the connections she has made through networking and the organizations with which she is affiliated. She does not believe she would be in her career as a public relations business owner had it not been for the people that she worked with and who mentored her along with job advancements which have led to her successful career.

For Marida, relationships that she built along the way have been essentially important. She also states the value of being a hard worker and having a strong work ethic. Likewise, Stefanie's high work ethic allows the quality of her, work product and service to drive her business.

Lea expressed networking and being involved in the business community that allowed her to meet and be mentored by supportive colleagues, acquaintances and friends. She characterized these individuals as honest, open, and very helpful to speak with before she decided to start her own business. She also identified herself as being highly driven, determined and willing to take calculated risks to start a public relations company. Along with the others, Lucy states, "I was driven and I was committed... I learned the importance of networking early on and it afforded me my first job." She continues:

The networking component is so important in this industry and it's really basically helped me in my career a lot and still does today in my own business because it's really, really important in my own business now. It's who you know and who knows you in order to get the jobs and the clients, so it's extremely important.

Dalia as well considers herself to be “incredibly driven”, and from a mentoring and networking perspective, she adds:

I've also been really good about finding people that are like minded, that understand the profession and that I can learn from and I try and surround myself with them all the time.

Career mentoring from university faculty members and/or Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) was an integral part in the commencement of their public relations careers

Career mentoring for most of the women interviewed began during their college or university education. Vicky acknowledged that she had a few professors who were strong female mentors and helped guide her with career choices. She specifically pointed out a female professor who was “very strong and smart” and was part of the public relations faculty. She also was mentored by a female public relations professional from an internship she did in college, and attributes her subsequent jobs to her mentor and the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA).

Marida also had her first mentor when she was in college. She was the recipient of a Latino scholarship and took advantage of a mentoring scholarship program. While not everyone took advantage of the mentoring program she was fortunate enough to have been paired with a female professional who has turned out to be her most influential mentor in her career. The mentor taught her about community service, volunteerism, working with the community at large, and working with elected officials. The mentor was

extensively involved in the areas for which Marida is now involved. She describes her as having been an “amazing mentor” early on in her career, and they have now “become friends and still keep in touch.”

Stefanie had a similar experience with her female mentor while pursuing her master’s degree in public relations. In describing her mentor, Stefanie states “she was very influential in my graduate studies and she was very influential in two out of the four positions that I had in Tampa and recommended me.”

Long-term interactions prove critical to the mentoring success and impact, an observation expressed by most of the participants. Nadia describes her mentor while pursuing her career studies:

I became the closest with my professor who was the news director at the TV station. And, he was the news director at the TV station and the radio station. And, to this day we still keep in touch. He was easy to talk to and he was very supportive, you know he was like we’ve got to figure out, what you should do...do you want to go to the TV station and do TV; do you want to go up here because if you want to do that you’ve got to focus on that. So, he was actually a good one.

Likewise, Lea states:

In college I worked on a student PR campaign that was led by a professional liaison and she was a great mentor to me for a couple of years. She was only about three years older than I was, but she came a long way in three years right after college. So, she was very knowledgeable and we had a lot of similarities. She was a very driven, motivated person too and so I really learned a lot from her and she was definitely my college mentor. And, when I graduated with my first job, I joined the PRSA, the Public Relations Society of America, and they had a young professional’s special interest section, so I joined that and through that they were doing a mentoring matching program.

Lucy explains how she benefited from a college mentoring program:

I was a senior in college and the PRSA chapter did this program called

pair with a professional and it allowed seniors that are in the PR track to have a mentoring experience with a professional that was working in the business. So, I signed up for it and I got the best person I possibly could have that helped me in this position because, there were very few women in high positions within our business but I got one... she headed up a public affairs program. She worked in a building downtown, top floor office, I mean one of those women that you just... as a college senior you look and you go, wow... you know that's what I want to be one day when I grow up. I got to sit there and talk to her for a couple of hours and just ask her questions and she told me about where she came from and what she did and tips for success and it was the best two hours I think I ever spent because I walked away going, you know I think I can do that. I think I can be her someday.

Mentoring affirmed their self-worth

The second research question - how has mentoring helped women achieve their goals in a public relations career and in starting their own company – prompted common themes such as mentoring affirming individual self-worth, thus giving the confidence needed to succeed in careers. All the participants expressed fond memories of past mentors, and in some cases, current mentors while others discussed peer mentors, coaches, and role models interchangeably. The participants sought out their mentors informally whether it was a faculty member, manager, PRSA member, or an executive in a public relations firm or communications professional in a corporation. Employees and managers in all types of organizations need to understand the mentoring phenomenon and its connection to success so that they can professionally develop their employees and achieve greater success in the work environment (Behniuk, 1998).

One reason for the success of mentoring is the self-worth a protégé cultivates while learning new tasks and skills. For example, Vicky was at a crossroads with her career and reached out to her mentor to ask “what do I do now?” She recalls her mentor telling her “you can make it on your own; start your own business.” Through numerous

conversations, Vicky's mentor affirmed her self-worth and gave her the confidence she needed to begin her own company. Vicky indicated how she sought mentors that she could aspire to emulate, describing them as "very, very educated, very smart women. They were strong women and I guess to be successful in business you have to be a strong woman. Very personable, very open."

Marida's mentor helped her deal with "office politics and the ins and outs of working in a large business." Marida mentioned her mentors have positively impacted her career by spending many hours with her introducing her to many contacts through their network and taking her places where she would learn new things. She recounts having affirmed her self-worth and full confidence before starting her own company:

I wouldn't have gone as far in my career and I wouldn't have taken opportunities without their guidance or without their encouragement that I did. So, I think it made a huge difference. So again, I would have been involved in something in public relations but I probably would have never had my own business. I don't know if I would have thought I could do it because I wouldn't have had those experiences that led up to where I am now that were successful based on the encouragement and mentoring that I received from them. I now serve on six boards for free, I'm not getting paid but I know what I do is really helping a lot of other people.

Successful mentors practice what they recommend, being open, collegial, and nurturing. Marida explains:

They were not intimidating. I would say more of an open, nurturing quality and a quality of just wanting to share their knowledge and seeing someone grow without expecting anything in return because none of them did. They were always willing to be helpful anytime I needed anything or had a question, I knew I could pick up the phone and call them anytime.

Similarly, Nadia sought mentors whom she describes as "successful and easy to talk to, and willing to share stories." As with Marida and Vicky, their mentors were

career people they all aspired to be like. Lea gave a similar description of mentors whom were successful in their careers, and people she trusted who had a high level of integrity. Most of the participants indicated why honesty was also important as being a good communicator.

Dalia describes her dynamic mentor as being her “biggest cheerleader” whom she loves and aspires to be just like her. Dalia’s mentor has been a “big proponent” for her in guiding her to do more and be successful: “I mean personally and professionally, she’s just amazing.” Dalia sought her mentor, a female president of a public relations company, whom she describes being supportive from a “personal and professional level,” and who “has been there through the ups and the downs [of the profession].”

Lucy gravitated toward women who had positions of power and sought mentorship from several women who were senior account executives at the firms where she worked. She described herself back then as being “low on the totem pole and fresh out of college.” She had started as an intern and then was promoted to an assistant account executive position which allowed the opportunity to work with certain account executives, from which she learned a good deal of information that would eventually be helpful with her pursuit of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship-specific mentoring was mentioned several times in the various interviews. Stefanie recounts how a college professor helped set the foundation needed to build confidence in starting her business. Lea recalls being fortunate to have had discussions with those who encouraged and supported her in starting her company:

I had a really great mentor that worked in my department who was just very motivating and encouraging as far as things to help my career and stay on top of things and just become a better professional.

She was also very motivating when I decided to strike out on my own when I was talking about it and so I definitely picked her brain about her thoughts on things. They [mentors] gave me some great tips for things to watch out for and stuff like that which were really helpful but they were so positive that when everything else lined up in my head I was like all right this is good. It made me feel a lot better about my decision and I think it largely played into me actually taking the leap.

Informal mentoring being perceived as more beneficial due to the long lasting relationship that follows

The third research question – which mentoring strategy (formal or informal) do they perceive as being most effective? – generated responses in which all of the participants overwhelmingly chose an informal environment as being the most conducive to building the solid relationships that were developed over the years. For most of the participants, their mentor and protégé informal relationships have blossomed into peer mentoring and strong business friendships.

Although Vicky has never received formal mentoring, she quickly replied that her experiences had been “definitely informal.” Marida answered that she benefited from both informal and formal mentoring. She was paired with a professional from college through a formal mentoring program, but she viewed it more as informal as they are now friends, and have been for about 15 years. She explains:

I don't know if I can answer that well enough for you because it depends actually on the person and the relationship. I would say the formal one was good... if I hadn't have had the formal one -you know it was set up, I wouldn't have had that experience. I was very fortunate to have had that. But I think if you use the term formal, do you have to meet every Monday at 5:00 in the afternoon or do you just meet as friends, I like the casual feeling of the mentoring. It was more a casual feeling.

Marida no longer sees her mentors as frequently as she did in the past when she really needed them, although she still stays in touch. She adds, “there’s no formal mentoring but they’re friends now and I know that I can call them if I need advice. So, I would say that relationships still exist.”

Stefanie prefers informal mentoring as it is more of a natural part of the relationship, “you start with the relationship first, and the mentoring kind of is almost through osmosis.” She adds:

You can’t force it. There is a little bit of magic I think, you know, chemistry has to be good. If you don’t respect the person or you have seriously competing philosophies with them, it can be nice but it’s like yeah, whatever. In one ear and out the other, no real tangible meaning to that. I think conceptually it’s a good idea implementing it, it might be difficult. So, I guess I’d have to say informally is my preference.

Nadia’s formal mentoring experience was not what she intended it to be, and was disappointed. She, too, prefers informal mentoring:

I was part of this program that was kind of a new program in the company where they picked up the newcomers and lined them up with the presidents which is great. But, I didn’t get anything out of that. I mean, I got to know him a little bit better, but he wasn’t somebody that I wanted to go talk to. I didn’t seek him out; he was given to me and I wasn’t as comfortable with that. I don’t know if other people have said that, but I want to pick my own [mentors]. I didn’t pick him... I want to pick who my mentor is; I mean it’s kind of like a personal thing. Don’t just give me some guy who’s the president of the company. I liked him enough, but I didn’t feel a connection with him.

Dalia also expressed a preference to informal mentoring, because she feels it is “organic”, meaning a relationship that grows naturally, and can be based on common goals, personality traits and interests in and out of the profession. She does not like formality being tied to mentoring and believes it may be counterproductive to a creative

and extroverted person such as herself. She describes her mentoring relationship as a personal closeness that has developed between her and her mentor, and from a business perspective describes, “she’s very good at connecting me to people she thinks I should know and vice versa.”

Like most of her colleagues, Lea prefers informal mentoring because she prefers “the ones that happened organically versus the ones that are fixed.” However, she does believe formal mentoring is beneficial as someone may have an opportunity to meet a person they may not have had otherwise. And getting a different type of person with different niches and skill sets with different perspectives may be beneficial. Nevertheless, she adds, “in my experience and as far as what I’ve seen, I don’t really have any mentors who I wasn’t also personally friends with... personally invested in them and them in me.”

Lucy as well prefers informal mentoring with the ability to watch, observe, and learn from her mentors. She experienced formal mentoring and described it as “very nerve wracking.” Lucy also believes mentoring to be a part of business development because she considers the women she’s mentored to be able “to accomplish great things... It all comes around. It’s like pay it forward type of stuff and that’s happened. It’s happened with Donna (mentor). We’ve developed this symbiotic relationship now where she will bring me in on things she’s working on; I’ll bring her things that I’m working on and we’ve developed a trust.”

Vicky describes her first boss, in public relations, as her mentor although she now categorizes the relationship as more of a partnership, friendship, and peer mentor since they work together. She continues to build relationships with other professional women

and working mothers which has helped her extensively in issues and concerns surrounding her career and self-employment.

Male mentors being as effective as female mentors relative to career issues, although women provide both career and psychological mentoring

This question focuses on gender differences in mentoring: Do women benefit more from having a women mentor versus male? Most participants believed that male mentors were as effective as women mentors in helping them achieve their business goals, even though they had far more women mentors than men. A few women described some characteristic differences such as women mentors being more compassionate and understanding when dealing with family issues. In comparing mentoring experiences on gender differences, Vicky says, “there are certain things only mothers can say to other mothers, or women that have gone up through the ranks can say to other women.” Although she does believe that there are also many successful mentoring relationships between men and women that have occurred in the business world, she believes, regardless of gender, it all depends upon the strength of the relationship and whether or not the mentor is willing to put in the time and effort. She adds: “I think it’s probably easier to build a strong relationship between two women or two men, but I think it definitely can occur between different sexes.” She describes her male mentor as a “teacher who helped her with the legislative and government side of the business,” and they became friends as well. Nevertheless, she does not believe that their bond is as strong as the connection with a female mentor with whom she can talk to comfortably about anything.

Marida mentioned that she gravitated toward women mentors, because they were more open and willing to discuss different issues with her. “It was more of a friendship. We talked about work but that was a piece of it and the whole mentoring experience was a more well-rounded relationship and friendship built on a lot of things that we had in common.” She did benefit from her male mentor from a business sense and developed a friendship, but “it didn’t go as deep as the relationships or friendships that I had with the women. And, I think that’s because we stuck more with business issues and we didn’t get too much into the personal issues. We kept it more business on his side but he was still a very kind and nice man.”

Stefanie and Nadia agree that male versus female mentors have not made any difference, and that they are comfortable being mentored by men and women as well as mentoring both groups. Most of the participants also agree that public relations field professionals are predominantly women, therefore most of their mentoring experiences are likely to be with women.

Dalia believes a woman who mentors others will always be thinking of her protégés from a friendship and partnership basis. Dalia stated that she cares for her protégés and wants them to succeed and often passes leads and opportunities to her protégés. However, she believes a male mentor may not go the extra mile as with female mentors. From her perspective – as a mother, wife, and business owner – Dalia believes there are gender issues that exist in mentoring:

I don’t think that any man can completely understand my fears and hopes and dreams and being a mother, what it’s like... But, there’s also a unique perception or a unique place that I’m in as a mother and wife that can’t probably be filled by a man. I also have to be careful in that I work with very few men in the marketing industry

because there aren't a whole lot of men in PR. And, I would hesitate to share a lot of my thoughts and feelings with a man that wasn't my husband because I wouldn't want there to be any kind of emotional affair type of situation... I'm sure that my husband would have a problem with it.

Dalia also believes that "women are more willing to reach out to become mentors than men are...they're more willing to take on that role." She does not recall having been approached by male mentors as she has by women, and attributes it to a woman's "nurturing role; what we do naturally."

On the other hand, Lucy took advantage of both male and female mentors: "I think across the board I was looking for mentors who were really good at what they did, were doing specific things that I wanted to learn about... so, I would look for people who knew how to do that whether it was male or female."

Mentoring, lack of employment opportunities, and a better work-life balance being the three main key contributing factors in women professionals starting their own public relations company

The question dealing with entrepreneurial experience – what motivating reasons attributed public relations women to undertake their own business? – resulted in a set of three common answers. The participants were able to receive mentoring which, in turn, helped them understand public relations in depth, as well as receive other benefits such as self-worth and motivation to start their own company. Another deciding factor for some of the women was the poor economy and/or lack of more senior/executive job opportunities, along with the opportunity for a flexible work-life balance.

Vicky mentions the reason for leaving to start on her own was because she believed she "hit the glass ceiling." She had started at a company when she was young

and executives at her early jobs could not get past the image of her “being a kid.” She believed there were no promotions available, adding “honestly, at that point there were not many jobs out there. I did have my son, so hours were an issue. I thought that if I could work on my own it would be the best of both worlds. And, like I said I had somebody [mentor] telling me ‘you can do it, it’ll work’. So, I decided I would give it a shot and if it didn’t work then I would go and try to find something somewhere.” Her mentor, who helped guide her to start her company, had gone through a similar transition from single business professional to the ever-expanding roles of wife and mother. She was also able to talk about balancing life and work through her professional relationships and friends she has made through the years of networking and being a part of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA).

Lucy expresses:

What really drove me to my own business was my child. I was managing director of public relations; I had employees under me; I had a lot of responsibility; I was travelling constantly working 60-70 hour weeks... at first I went to my boss and I said, I know I’m in an executive management role here but I just have to ask, is there any way that we can do flexible hours so I can work part time from home, anything because I don’t want to leave but at the same time my bigger priority is my daughter. He understood that but I also understood his reason for no, because I did manage employees. So, I said well, I really loved working with you but I’m stepping off the cliff here. So, my husband and I we said we’ll just tighten our belts for a while; we’ll wait until she gets old enough to where we feel comfortable putting her in a daycare situation and then you can go back to work. I said well, in the meantime I think I’m just going to see if I can take on some projects.

In the end, Lucy began her own company, approximately 10 years ago, because of the flexibility she desired in her life when she had her daughter. She believes she had to create her own scenario of being “the boss” because, according to her, there were not a

lot of senior or executive positions for seasoned public relations professional women that would allow flexibility with hours. The expectations for a senior role or executive were to work an average of 60 hours per week, and she was no longer willing to work long hours.

Marida attributes a combination of “stars lighting up right” when becoming an entrepreneur. Her position ended due to a poor economy, and there were no interesting senior positions she wanted at the time. She was at a point in her career where she had gained knowledge and had experiences from her professional work and studies. The few positions available didn’t pay well, and the employers “wanted your soul,” she says. Because she was recently remarried and had a young son, she believed her best decision was to start her company so she could have more control of her schedule. In her words, “If I was going to kill myself working, I might as well do it for myself. Why not, I had nothing to lose.” Ultimately, she believed she would have more flexibility with running her own company and, thus, chose to focus on her personal life and family and devote her efforts to fit her family needs around her business. She believes, in the end, this will bring her more self-satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment knowing that she is still in a profession she enjoys but can still have time for her family.

Stefanie also agreed that a work-life balance is important, and by being self-employed, she finds ways to make herself, her health, and her family a priority. She attributes coaching as a way of bringing discipline and perspective to her life. Freedom was another big factor for her starting her own company: “I don’t want to have to call somebody and ask, can I have the morning off because I really have to take my child to the doctor. No, I can’t do that anymore. I just have had too much freedom so this is me from now until I’m done working.”

Nadia had a decision to make when her job was cut due to downsizing a couple of years ago. She went through a tough time and had to figure out what else she could do because the job market didn't have much to offer her as an experienced professional. While unemployed, she began to do some freelance work, and recently started her own company. She describes it as "a couple of things that kind of fell into place; I realized I actually did probably have a pretty good business, I just didn't see it and I just kind of woke up one day and said this is what I'm doing." She had support from her family members, who also were entrepreneurs. She also believes she has more balance in her life now that she has her own company. She's focusing more on her social life, and, therefore, does not work Friday nights, and works sparingly on the weekend: "I will not work as opposed to going out with my friends or spend time with my family. I'm pretty good about that. I get it, I don't need the money that badly. If I have a deadline, that's different, but that doesn't typically happen."

Lea looked for mentors to provide her guidance in running a business with aspects such as how to get clients and handle the financial side of business. Also, her motivation for leaving her last employer was due to the lack of flexibility in scheduling. She worked many hours because it was "expected" that employees would work more than the typical forty-hour week. A few other issues motivated her to start her own company and be "master" of her own destiny:

I was doing so much and I was working so hard for so long that finally a light went off, actually the fuse blew, and I was just saying I could be working this hard for myself and reaping all the benefits instead of working my butt off for someone else and I'm at a salary cap and I'm restricted on when I can take vacations and that type of thing and so that was a big factor. That was really what brought me to

making the move to really start thinking about it. I appreciate corporate environments but I just really wanted the flexibility and the freedom of really doing my own thing and I knew that. One good example is that my best friend just had a baby about a month ago and she wanted me to be there. We are like sisters; we grew up together and everything. But, I didn't know when she was going to have this baby and she lives in Jacksonville. If I were at my old job, I couldn't have planned to have been up there... so it was really nice for me to be able to get there.

The economic downturn was a common trigger for the respondents and Dalia had also been laid off. She states:

That was a big wake up call to me because I gave my heart and soul to that company and I was laid off. How in the world could they lay me off? I was quickly finding that corporate America and rightfully so, is out for the bottom line. So, I could spend my entire life working and doing work and even when I think back to the agency I was at – you had billable goals you had to meet. If you met those billable goals, you were still on the clock and you still had to stay there. Today, I can meet the goals of the client and take my children to Busch Gardens if I want...I think another part of it was I was so very unsure about being a mother and was so concerned that I wouldn't be able to live up to the expectations of myself in that corporate environment. This gave me a way to test the water, figure it out, do a little freelance work, figure out being a mom but then also I could always go back. It's amazing how your priorities change and I'm so very fortunate to be in a place where I can set my own priorities...flexibility, that's a number one for me.

Dalia also describes her mentor as “ very happy, vivacious, bubbly...who was just as dedicated to that organization in a volunteer capacity as she was in her own business that makes her money.” Her mentor has always shown flexibility and availability for her: “She's on the phone with me at 10 at night if I have a question; she was there when I was about to have a child and said ‘what can I do to help you? What can I do to help your business?’”

Given the examples above, mentoring, lack of employment opportunities, and a better work-life balance were largely the contributing factors that pushed all of the

participants to pursue their own public relations company.

The six main themes discussed above were prioritized in terms of the majority of participants' responses and how they explained and answered the research questions similarly. The following section will cover additional findings from the participants that are relevant to the research.

Additional Findings

All of the women participants expressed how women mentors helped them succeed, whether from operating at a corporate level or from starting their own company and by providing career and psychological support. This suggests the potential for further exploration in a different direction than suggested by one study (Burke et al.,1995) indicating that managerial women with women mentors claimed to gain no additional benefits and were more likely to have intentions of leaving the organizations. The probing question – In your opinion, would you be where you are today if you had not been mentored? yielded a response of “no” from all but one participant. For example, Vicky gives the following in reference to her female mentors: “I don't think I would be in the career I am in, had it not been for mentoring.”

Creating a niche network through mentoring

Mentoring created a niche network for the women participants and a sense of cohesiveness among each other. During the interviews, it was clear each participant had a narrowly defined specialty niche and some even had engaged with each other, either as mentors, protégés, or peer mentors. Successful self-employed people understand they possess certain qualities and expertise needed in identifying business opportunities

(Arthurs & Busenitz, 2006). Lucy explains in reference to her group of network peers (i.e., some of whom she has mentored):

They will send me something and say, hey, have you heard about this? This might help you for your client. So, I think it's definitely something that's not entirely just altruistic, it's something that I consider part of my business and so I make time for it because it [mentoring] could reap dividends for me later on and I enjoy doing it.

Vicky says her career lead her in a certain path, one that she never thought she would have. She believes there "is a little fate that played a part in it," but she also attributes the women mentors who helped her with a specialty niche. She describes her network of women as a "nice little society, community that we've built." Stefanie adds:

I know several people, independent practitioners same as I am, we never cross paths, we never butt heads. Everybody has their own little niche and specialty area and we never go head to head in bidding for jobs.

The importance of mentoring in schools

All participants felt demonstratively passionate about mentoring others, especially early on, starting in schools. They believe it sets the foundation for future networking and successful careers. They were all involved in mentoring either in a formal (e.g., through a college program) or informal setting. Stefanie reiterated:

I think that it's (mentoring) been a big part of my journey and I actually probably because of my experience, I'm very compelled to help other people. Even the students who contact me for jobs and I can't help them, I will point them to every resource that I know where they might find out about job opportunities or introduce them to people who can help them... it's just part of my nature honestly, but I enjoy being helpful.

Stefanie has also been involved with informal mentoring through internship programs at the University of South Florida (USF). She describes the mentoring she provided one student as being in the context of a business owner as opposed to a public

relations practitioner, because he appeared to be interested in pursuing self-employment options as well.

Dalia started the internship program at the agency where she worked. She recalls:

I really enjoyed that because I wanted these girls and boys that came in to learn from us that it's not just a work - loving them for who they are and helping them learn the business is one thing, but also building those personal relationships. I am still very close with a lot of those interns that interned with me. And, it's funny how things follow you. People reach out to me because they need help with things and that to me means more than anything in the world.

Vicky has also done some informal mentoring but adds, "I would love to participate in a more formal mentoring program but there's nothing really out there to do that." Marida has also mentored a few interns that worked for her. She also belongs to a professional women's association, and was assigned a college student whom she mentored. For Marida, she looks fondly at her mentoring experiences, adding:

I think it's a wonderful, wonderful thing to do to help our generation of professional women or men that are coming up, they need to have that mentoring experience because I understand for me what a big impact it made in my life and in my professional career. So, I would hope to do that for someone else too.

Most of the participants had a positive mentoring experience from their schools, and believed it was important to implement a formal mentoring program in colleges and universities. Vicky states:

I think there are a lot of professionals in this area that would be willing to be a part of a more formal mentoring program and if anybody would put one together, it just kind of - I know everyone's busy but there's a lot of students and a lot of young professionals out there that would benefit. I mean, I have benefitted tremendously.

Mentoring for the financial/business aspects

Having great business skills and a support system for the business owner is necessary to achieve a successful company (Headd, 2003). Mentoring and coaching helped the participants understand the financial side of the business because most of the participants felt they lacked these skills. Stefanie adds:

A lot of people fall into being a business owner because they have a specific skill set and they're good at what they do, but that might be the end of the line. Just because they're good at what they do, does not make you necessarily a strong business owner. Like a doctor who's a great physician but can't run his office. So, about a year and a half ago, I took on a partnership with a former client, and they had hired me when they first launched their business and I did a six month media blitz for them. We just kept in touch over time and about two years into their business they invited me into a strategic alliance. Basically, in exchange for PR services, I was receiving coaching services as a business owner and this was awesome... it's helped me a lot in goal setting. I finally wrote my own business plan. I actually wrote a mission statement, a vision statement, a meeting zone proposition. I really sat down and thought about that stuff.

Nadia leveraged her brother-in-law who is an attorney and regularly counsels small businesses. She had a great resource readily available for her. She also hired an accountant to help with her accounting books and file quarterly taxes, which she believed were "very intimidating" tasks and better accomplished by qualified professionals.

Vicky's mentor helped guide her in connecting with a lawyer and accountant to handle matters of incorporation and other legal advice, as well as giving her important information essential for a home-based business such as keeping track of mileage and business expenses.

Lucy had similar experiences although she adds: "Those were paid professionals; I don't consider them mentors; those are people that are paid to do that job."

Volunteering and agency work

Some of the benefits extended to intangible assets of good will and credibility.

Marida's mentor stressed the importance of community service and volunteerism, which has become an important aspect in Marida's life:

I always felt that no matter what job I had it felt like I needed to be doing something that was giving back to the community in one way or another, I think that came from her [mentor] example to me of giving back to the community. She did a lot of things that she didn't get paid to do but she could have, she didn't have to do that but she wanted to. And, people would call her morning, noon and night and she was always there for them and I saw that as an example and it clicked with me and I started volunteering for things. So, I think that sense of selflessness is a part of community service and volunteerism, I guess if you'd speak of a characteristic or a trait.

Vicky advises students she mentors to "work in an agency right out, that's great because you'll get in that mind set of always being accountable and always being on time." Along with a few other participants, she believes that an agency can train a public relations practitioner appropriately in the event they eventually would want to pursue self-employment opportunities.

Implementing mentoring programs in public relations companies

Although all the participants benefited from mentoring (i.e., mostly informal), some believed it would be beneficial to implement a formal mentoring program. However, Lucy believes mentoring is part of the job responsibilities for supervisors and "those that don't do it, I think it shows," she adds. Marida believes public relations companies should implement formal mentoring:

I would say yes. It can't hurt and especially I think anytime in your career it's good to have a mentor. I still look to people now but

especially when you're first getting started or when you're young and you're still learning, starting from college kids that are interning all the way up, you know maybe matching up an entry level person, like a PR specialist or a coordinator with a PR director or vice-president. I think that always helps and its imparting knowledge that they're going to be able to use and if they're in the same company, I think it will benefit the company. It may result in keeping employees on longer, better retention for the employees.

The glass ceiling

Hitting the glass ceiling was also a topic of conversation and some of the participants expressed a feeling of not having the same opportunities as men in the top executive positions in large public relations firms or corporate divisions, even though women are predominantly in the public relations workforce. Lucy states:

I happen to believe that we women have a long way to go still. We have such a long way to go and it just frustrates me when I see the number of women, public relations society meeting but the men who have the top positions, you know? When I see boards - my clients who have boards that have a token woman on them or a token African American or a token Hispanic...and, it's really frustrating for me. Because there's so many good women out there who deserve positions and don't get them because of the environment. I think we have a long way to go. So, for me, personally, I tend to seek out women that I can mentor because I want that to happen someday. It may not happen in my lifetime, I hopefully will be retired, but someday I hope to see a real transition take place where women are holding 50 percent of the executive positions and not just 20. Because we are half of this country. But, you don't see it in politics; you don't see it in the upper echelons of government; you just don't see it yet. But, maybe a little bit is coming forward but that's why I think it's important to look for women that you can push forward and push up there.

Research suggests that the lack of public relations women practitioners from management slows the professional development of the field; hence the importance of

breaking the glass ceiling (Dozier, 1988). Frustration due to the lack of opportunities in senior positions, for the participants, was a reason why they chose to start their own company. Some believed it was a way of advancing in their career, and they could control and dictate how to run the business without upper management telling them what to do.

Chapter 5:

Conclusion

Summary

The intent of the research was to understand the mentoring experiences of public relations from each woman's perspective and in her own words. This phenomenon can only be undertaken by revealing individual stories of public relations professional women in extensive detail, who have found success in their career and mentoring experiences. This study adds important increments to the existing knowledge about mentoring and how it facilitates a potentially deeper understanding of the phenomenon of being mentored as well as how mentoring contributes to the successful careers of public relations women entrepreneurs, an emerging topic of research.

There is a lack of mentoring research in applying mentoring relationships from nontraditional organizations and particularly among small business owners (Eby, 1997). From a research and methodological standpoint, this gap in literature should be addressed by conducting more research given the large majority of enterprises in any industry and fields are primarily small businesses.

The interviews in this study provided information about the aspects in which these women achieved public relations career success whether from a traditional organization or from their own company. Findings suggest participants are highly driven career-oriented women who have been both protégés and mentors throughout their careers. All

of the women expressed the importance in creating a network built on key relationships through mentoring and a strong work ethic. This study is consistent with Schor's (1997) in that women reported that mentors are significant in their careers. Mentoring sends out a clear message that the leaders are willing to make additional investments in their people. All the participants acknowledged mentoring as a key factor that attributed to their successful careers, although they expressed a preference with informal mentoring specifically tied to entrepreneurial ventures in public relations given the niche-focused activities that expand in the digital and social media platforms as opposed to the traditional media channels.

Owning their own businesses created new challenges, but were overcome due to the key relationships they built throughout their careers. Self-employed women often must pursue becoming familiar with complex business functions and skills through mentoring, training, and educational programs (Kram, 1985). Many of the self-employed women with little experience benefited from mentoring, although mentoring relationships benefit both mentor and protégé. The participants acknowledged and agreed that for the protégé, increased self-confidence occurred, and for the mentor, the satisfaction of helping others was present, along with creating a network for further working partnerships among women. In many cases, their mentoring relationships have now become, in effect, business partnerships. There appears to be a two-way symmetrical relationship which is mutually beneficial for the participants from the mentor and protégé viewpoints.

Most participants found comparable success by having men and women mentors in a corporate setting, which contradicts Okurame's (2002) study in that women should

have women mentors in order to have positive mentoring benefits. Most participants felt it was characteristic traits and networking connections, not gender, that they chose in a mentor. Even though a couple of participants believed a woman mentor may be more “understanding with personal issues,” that was not a requirement in the mentoring selection when starting out their public relations careers. A good mentor is a role model and someone to refer to when the protégé is unsure of how to approach an issue (Wilson & Elman, 1990). The mentor provides guidance while allowing the protégé to make her decision. All the participants referred to their mentors as having provided them with guidance while allowing them the freedom to do their own work in a corporate setting. They did express a preference toward women mentors from an entrepreneurial standpoint because there tends to be a strong long-lasting bond that generally did not occur with male mentors. In their self-employment pursuits, long-lasting business relationships are key to their success and as more women seek entrepreneurial options to break through the pervasive glass ceiling in the public relations profession once and for all, the network of women mentors and protégés will become a significant domain for extensive research focus. Further research may be beneficial in addressing the importance of the quality of mentor relationships for public relations women entrepreneurs and the universal qualities and traits regardless of gender. Such information may be useful in beginning to create a typology of effective mentoring for women entrepreneurs in public relations.

The participants all had positive experiences in choosing their mentor in an informal setting, which is consistent with current literature on the benefits of informal mentoring (Kram, 1986). The preference for informal mentoring was based on the longevity of the relationship that later turned to become a platform for peer mentoring

and friendship. Trust, closeness and emotional connections are made when informal mentoring develops between a mentor and protégé (Ragins, Cotton & Miller, 2000) as opposed to formal mentoring which focuses on career-related issues rather than psychosocial support for the protégés (Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

Mentoring, lack of employment opportunities, and a better work-life balance were the three main key contributing factors for women in starting their own public relations companies. Research suggests that women who undertake self-employment due to a work-life balance and a desire for personal growth tend to have a higher tendency to expect and achieve business growth (Morris et al., 2006). As for the participants, a strong sense reflecting self-worth, pride, and accomplishment was present during all seven interviews. As a side note, despite their busy schedules, each participant made a point to show flexibility in scheduling one to two hours of interview time. Research suggest that a public relations self-employed woman should be flexible and open because there are many uncertainties in running a business (Roodt, 2005), and all participants proved to embody such traits. Despite intensely demanding schedules, they did affirm they have a better work-life balance since they ventured into self-entrepreneurship. Self-employed women carrying familial support produce a better work-life balance that, in turn, reduces conflicts and stress otherwise caused by regular employment for a traditional company (Van Auken & Werbel, 2006). The work-life balance is important in today's workforce, and its importance continues to become more evident in the mentoring relationship dynamic for all women public relations practitioners. This study hopes to stimulate research avenues neglected in the past or limited to the traditional roles women have taken in the profession.

Limitations

This phenomenological study was limited to seven public relations entrepreneurial women in Tampa, Florida. Due to the small sample size, findings from this research study cannot be generalized for all public relations women practitioners. However, the research fine tunes and develops some specific, timely, and relevant questions that can be tested with a larger sample and which would incorporate quantitative methodology that rise the standards of validity and reliability.

Another common limitation in qualitative data analysis is the information and findings from the interview which can be interpreted in many ways depending on the researcher's views (Creswell, 2005).

Further Research

Further research about the mentoring process should be tracked and studied for further analysis. Also, it would help decide what type of structured protocol would be most particularly valuable in seeing the long-term aggregate effects of mentoring for public relations professionals, whether they use traditionally formal or informal avenues as well as entrepreneurial channels. And, with the mentoring experiences of women, how does this play into mentoring considerations for an increasingly diverse, multicultural profession.

While searching for participants to interview for this study, several declined stating that they either had negative mentoring experiences or none at all. One woman stated she wished she had been mentored and had someone to help her along the way, but unfortunately she had to learn on her own "the hard way." Further research could include public relations entrepreneurial women who lacked mentoring or had negative

experiences to understand what their motivation was and how they achieved their career success without the presence of mentoring.

This study suggests mentoring was significantly central for the seven participants from career entry to self-entrepreneurship. While all participants are now seasoned professionals, the mentoring experiences they shared as protégés prove to still work in their favor as most have now become mentors and are helping other public relations professionals whether in a traditional corporate setting or in motivating them to start their own company. Maintaining mentoring relationships has helped them create a network of various individuals with specialty niches and is used to leverage each other for projects to help fill the gap where they need. This type of peer mentoring and networking was mentioned frequently throughout all the interviews, potentially strong anecdotal evidence that can be used to develop further studies on the changing roles of women public relations practitioners in an industry being dramatically redefined by advancements in the communications media marketplace.

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Appendices

Appendix 1:
Questionnaire

Main Research Questions:

- RQ1. What have been the key contributing factors in the success of public relations women entrepreneurs?
- RQ2. How has mentoring helped the women participants achieve their goals in a public relations career and in starting their own company?
- RQ3. Which mentoring strategy (formal or informal) is perceived as being most effective?
- RQ4. Do women benefit more from having a women mentor versus male? Does gender matter?
- RQ5. What motivating reasons attributed the public relations women participants to undertake their own business?

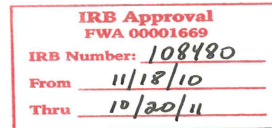
Probing questions:

- In your opinion, what are some of your characteristic traits that make you a successful entrepreneur?
- Did you seek out your mentors or did your past employers have formal mentoring programs?
- If you sought out mentors, what kind of qualities/characteristic traits were you looking for?

- How long have you had your own company?
- In your opinion, if you weren't mentored, do you think you'd be where you are today?
- Are you currently being mentored?
- Has mentoring helped you balance your unique work-life situation?
- Are you currently mentoring anyone? (whether your employees or others)
- What topics did/do you typically cover with your mentor/s?

Appendix 2:

IRB CONSENT FORM



Informed Consent to Participate in Research
Information to Consider Before Taking Part in this Research Study

IRB Study # 108480

Researchers at the University of South Florida (USF) study many topics. To do this, we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. This form tells you about this research study.

We are asking you to take part in a research study that is called:

The mentoring experiences of entrepreneurial public relations women practitioners

The person who is in charge of this research study is Sabina Gaggioli. This person is called the Principal Investigator. However, other research staff may be involved and can act on behalf of the person in charge.

Other research personnel who you may be involved with include: Dr. Ken Killebrew (Professor)

The research will be done in-person.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to:

- Gain an understanding of experiences shared by public relations entrepreneurial women who were mentored.

Study Procedures

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to

Provide:

- 1) detailed description and explanation of your mentoring experiences, and entrepreneurial endeavours.
- 2) participation for approximately 1-2 hours.
- 3) Audio-taping will be used. The tapes will be erased once the project is finished (end of January 2011).

Alternatives

You have the alternative to choose not to participate in this research study.

Benefits

A possible benefit: Sharing mentoring experiences will reinforce the notion that mentoring may benefit public relations entrepreneurial women.

Risks or Discomfort

No risks are associated with this study.

Confidentiality

- We must keep your study records as confidential as possible. A pseudo-name will be created in the research paper, thus maintaining confidentiality.

However, certain people may need to see your study records. By law, anyone who looks at your records must keep them completely confidential. The only people who will be allowed to see these records are:

- The research team, including the Principal Investigator, and Professor: Sabina Gaggioli and Dr. Ken Killebrew.
- Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study. For example, individuals who provide oversight on this study may need to look at your records. This is done to make sure that we are doing the study in the right way. They also need to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety.) These include:
 - The University of South Florida Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the staff that work for the IRB. Other individuals who work for USF that provide other kinds of oversight may also need to look at your records.

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not let anyone know your name. We will not publish anything else that would let people know who you are.

Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study, to please the investigator or the research staff. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study.

Questions, concerns, or complaints

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, call Sabina Gaggioli at 813.929.6423.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, general questions, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the

If you have questions about your rights as a person taking part in this research study you may contact the Florida Department of Health Institutional Review Board (DOH IRB) at (866) 433-2775 (toll free in Florida) or 850-245-4585.



Consent to Take Part in this Research Study

It is up to you to decide whether you want to take part in this study. If you want to take part, please sign the form, if the following statements are true.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

Signature of Person Taking Part in Study

Date

Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect.

I hereby certify that when this person signs this form, to the best of my knowledge, he or she understands:

- What the study is about.
- What procedures/interventions/investigational drugs or devices will be used.
- What the potential benefits might be.
- What the known risks might be.

Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Date

Sabina Gaggioli

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent



IRB Number: _____
IC Adult Minimal Risk Template – SocBeh Rev: 2008-10-14

IRB Consent Rev. Date: _____
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