Chapter 6

The Mentor Phenomenon and the Social Organization of Teaching

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Policymakers and educational leaders have thrust mentoring into the vocabulary of school reform as part of a mission to reward and retain capable teachers while obligating those teachers, implicitly or explicitly, to contribute to the improvement of schools and the quality of the teacher work force. For much of the past decade, the term mentor has been prominently associated with proposed shifts in teachers' professional relationships and with altered teacher roles in schools and school districts. Mentoring is a principal component of state-initiated teacher incentive programs (Hart, 1989; Neufeld, 1986; Wagner, 1985), university-based teacher preparation programs (Huling-Austin, 1988), and local programs of teacher induction and professional development (Stoddart, 1989).

Proponents of mentoring argue its merits on the basis of a “mutual benefits” model (Zey, 1984). By this argument, investing some teachers with the special titles, resources, and obligations of mentorship will more readily assure various individual and institutional benefits. The mentors themselves will receive public acknowledgement of their accumulated knowledge, skill, and judgment. Novice teachers will receive support that mediates the difficulties of the first years of teaching. Career opportunities in the occupation will be enriched. And schools, restructured to accommodate new teacher leadership roles, will expand their capacity to serve students and to adapt to societal demands.

Rhetoric and action have nonetheless outpaced both conceptual development and empirical warrant. Indeed, a certain “manic optimism” prevails (Elmore, 1989). Relative to the amount of pragmatic activity,
however, the volume of empirical inquiry is small. In a comprehensive review published in 1983, Merriam found scant material on mentoring in academic settings and made virtually no mention of mentoring for purposes of teacher induction, professional development, or career advancement among public school teachers (see also Galvez-Hjornevik, 1986). That is, as recently as 1983 there was no distinct line of research on mentoring in education—and certainly none on mentoring in K-12 teaching. Nonetheless, the scale of policy interest and practical experimentation since 1983 suggests a natural opportunity of considerable magnitude to examine the nature and consequences of these specialized teacher leadership roles. This review offers the beginnings of a rather substantial research agenda.

In this essay I examine mentorship as a structural and cultural feature of schools and the teaching occupation. The focus is the organizational and occupational significance of mentoring among practicing teachers, with emphasis on issues related to school organization, occupational socialization, and the structure of the teaching career. I begin with a conundrum: How to account for the rapidly escalating popularity of mentoring in an occupation that provides few precedents for formal and legitimate leadership by teachers on matters of professional practice.

Curiosity about the origins of mentoring among teachers stems in part from the cultural legacy of the mentor-protégé relationship. In the classical tale from which the term is derived, the departing Odysseus entrusts Mentor with the care and guidance of his son Telemachus. The relationship required of Mentor a full measure of wisdom, integrity, and personal investment. It required that Telemachus, as protégé, honor the differences in maturity and circumstance that separated them. The relationship between mentor and protégé was profoundly personal and mutually respectful, even though it was essentially asymmetrical. It exacted high demands and yielded substantial rewards.

The contemporary treatment of mentor-protégé relations is substantially more narrow. Clawson (1980) traces its transformation to the rise of apprenticeships, when a “more practical, less comprehensive concept of mentors” emerged, linking mentors primarily with career and less broadly with adult maturation (p. 146; but see Kram, 1983; Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1978). In the mentor programs that have swept education, the demands on the mentor’s competence, character, and commitment are often muted, reduced to formal eligibility criteria and specific job descriptions. Clawson argues, however, that comprehensiveness and mutuality remain the essence of the role. Like other theorists, Clawson confers mentor status only on those persons who fulfill several potential roles (see also Anderson & Shannon, 1988; Schein, 1978; Zey, 1984). Mentors worthy of the name serve as teacher, sponsor,
role model, confidant, and more. First-person accounts detail the way in which mentorships unfold, touching persons’ lives as well as their work and achieving their effects out of the reciprocal regard in which mentors and protégés hold one another (Parkay, 1988).

Even narrowed to occupational socialization, then, the concept of mentorship promises a great deal. To dignify teachers’ responsibilities with the title of “mentor” is to signify inescapably the mentor’s special capacities and to invoke a special relation between the mentor and other teachers. In Gehrke’s (1988b) analysis, the mentor-protégé relation is best interpreted from the perspective of a gift-exchange economy that is fundamentally incompatible with narrowly defined, utilitarian interactions (a market economy). By this view, mentorship is most appropriately understood “within a system of gift exchange where costs cannot be calculated; where labor is not measured by hours at a specified rate but by an interior clock; and where worth is judged by the individual in terms of its personal effect, and by the group in terms of its support of unity” (p. 193).

Some critics voice skepticism about legislative or bureaucratic actions bent on converting the fundamentally personal, informal, and intense relations of mentoring to formal arrangements (Clawson, 1980; Gehrke, 1988a, 1988b; Kram, 1986; Zey, 1984). The broader cultural legacy of mentoring presents a model of human relationship that does not lend itself well to policy intervention. Common to instances of “significant mentorship” (Hardcastle, 1988) are a breadth, mutuality, and informality difficult to achieve within the confines of bureaucratic arrangements (see Clawson, 1980; Schein, 1978). Heavily standardized and bureaucratic environments, according to Zey (1984), do not support mentoring well. Other critics, alert to the particular history and circumstances of teaching, argue that mentor roles are also largely incompatible with prevailing values, norms, and structures of the occupation (Smylie, 1989; see also Griffin, 1985). Formal initiatives to develop and support mentor roles are thus in some respects an odd enterprise. To resolve the riddle of how formal mentoring has come to pass in education requires in part that we understand what transpires when fundamentally personal relations become the object of formal organization. Also, it requires that we attend to the apparent disjuncture between the egalitarian and individualistic traditions of teaching and the special status implied by the title of mentor.

These puzzles occupy a large proportion of the research on mentoring. In the first and largest section of this paper, therefore, I rely on implementation studies that chronicle the emergence of the mentor role and the attempted reconciliation of present purposes with inherited traditions. In the remaining sections I employ the major implementation dilemmas to interpret the practice of mentoring from the perspective of its two most commonly stated purposes: teacher induction and career enhancement.
These sections are organized respectively by two aspects of the mentor phenomenon that are prominent in literature spanning education, business, and other professions: (a) conceptions oriented to helping, with emphasis on emotional support, skill development, and work performance, and (b) conceptions oriented to advancement, with emphasis on enhanced career opportunity and reward.

THE EMERGENCE OF FORMAL MENTOR ROLES

In principle, mentor roles satisfy three related policy problems. Mentoring responds first to problems in the occupational induction of teachers. Experienced teachers acknowledged for their own record of classroom accomplishment are invited to pass their knowledge on to novices. Second, “the mantle of mentorship” (Lemberger, 1989) purportedly creates an incentive for teacher retention and commitment by conferring public recognition and reward on the most accomplished teachers. Last, the concentration of discretionary resources on mentors signals a shifting strategy for local professional development and program innovation; districts employ mentors as staff development and curriculum specialists in pursuit of broad school or district priorities. In all of these policy rationales, the implicit logic is that the concentration of resources on a relatively small proportion of teachers will yield benefits for the larger teacher population and for the institutions that employ them.

Implementation studies have clustered around the major local and state initiatives that exemplify these three policy interests. The various initiatives are similar in their origins, tending to arise as policy-level responses to work force and workplace issues. They are alike, too, in devoting substantial institutional resources to an enterprise by which teachers themselves bolster the capacities and commitments of the teacher work force. The initiatives nonetheless vary in the focus and clarity of the purposes and strategies they pursue, in the degree to which the intended roles and functions depart from traditions of autonomy and equal status among teachers, and thus in the burden of change they present. The various implementation studies reflect these differences as well.

Three examples illustrate the initiatives on which research has focused and the directions researchers have pursued. In California’s Mentor Teacher Program, legislators placed reward and recognition for experienced teachers foremost. The emphasis on career incentives for individual teachers is reflected in the flow of dollars: Two thirds of the program’s resources go directly into the hands of the mentor teachers in the form of moderately large stipends ($4,000 per year). Although the legislators explicitly anticipated that mentors would in turn contribute to teacher induction, professional development, and leadership in curriculum and instructional improvement, districts were granted a wide range of latitude...
to shape a program responsive both to local interests and local constraints (Wagner, 1985). Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development undertook nine case studies and a statewide survey as part of a 2-year investigation of the first stages of program implementation. Case studies supplied the main insights (Bird, St. Clair, Shulman, & Little, 1984; Hanson, Shulman, & Bird, 1985; Shulman, Hanson, & King, 1985), which in turn were tested against a broader array of policies and practices in a survey sample of 291 districts (Bird, 1986; Bird & Alspaugh, 1986).

In Connecticut, mentor roles were introduced as an essential feature of the state’s new procedures for teacher certification and induction. These purposes were primary, career incentives were secondary (Allen & Pecheone, 1989). Mentors are expected to help prepare beginning teachers to satisfy the state’s criteria for certification in 15 competency areas. In this regard, the Connecticut program is similar to others in which mentors’ work is linked closely to local or state evaluation standards (Huffman & Leak, 1986; Stoddart, 1989). The Connecticut State Department of Education has supported program histories and program evaluations of the Connecticut Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST) program since its inception in 1985-86 (Allen, 1989; Allen & Pecheone, 1989; Martin, 1987; Neufeld, 1986). Conceptually, the state’s initiative is premised on a “screens and magnets” strategy (Sykes, 1983). Each of the studies, therefore, traces the development of the mentor role as part of a system in which more stringent assessment of teaching (better screening) is backed by more rigorous and frequent support of teachers (more compelling magnets). The various studies follow district-level pilot programs through a steady expansion in number from 5 to 25 and through the less steady, sometimes turbulent, search for shared goals and workable strategies. In the most recent phase, evaluations of pilot efforts in 25 of the state’s 166 districts concentrate on the short-term effects associated with certain instrumental aspects of program implementation, especially the effort to achieve a subject-grade level match between mentors and new teachers (Allen & Pecheone, 1989).

In still other sites, career incentive programs (Hart, 1989; Hart & Murphy, 1989b; Smylie & Denny, 1989) or school improvement consortia (Wasley, 1989) have promoted specialized leadership positions that bear a close resemblance to mentor roles, though their titles differ. Rarely do these evolving roles entail formal authority for personnel or program matters, although they do engage some teachers in the supervision, assistance, and instruction of others. These experiments most closely approximate the “school restructuring” applications of mentorship, linked not to specific provisions for teacher certification or induction but to broadly stated aspirations for teacher leadership and career enhancement. Local career ladder experiments in Utah, also spurred by the screens and magnets
logic, have been the site of investigations into school-level definitions of leadership roles, with special emphasis on the fit between teacher leadership and school goals (Hart & Murphy, 1989b) and on the “role politics” surrounding development of teacher leader and teacher specialist positions (Hart, 1989). A similar inquiry has followed a local career enhancement venture in which teacher leadership positions were introduced through a side letter agreement to a locally negotiated teacher contract (Smylie & Denny, 1989).

Enriched by advances in the study of innovations (McLaughlin, 1987) and by theories of work redesign (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Nicholson, 1984), implementation studies have charted the progress of mentor initiatives by closely attending to local contexts and organizational dynamics. All the implementation studies incorporate in-depth interviews; each adds, to varying degrees, other elements of a case study approach. Interviews with district administrators establish the place of the mentor phenomenon in relation to other district priorities, goals, and history. District-level coordinators, principals, and mentors themselves link the program to local school and district history, and particularly to similar leadership roles that had been well or poorly accepted by teachers in the past. Union representatives and district administrators fill in the details of local negotiation over the form and content of mentors’ work and the conditions of their selection. Mentors evaluate the arrangements made to prepare them for their new roles and to support them in their work. The mentors and the principals and teachers with whom they work describe and assess the actual work they have done in their capacity as mentor, and the time and other resources available to do it. Principals weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the arrangement from the perspective of the individual school and describe their own influence (or lack of it) in shaping the mentors’ general role or specific responsibilities.

These studies have in common that they construct the implementation problem not only as the pursuit of broad policy goals and the implementation of a discrete program, but also as the redefinition of institutional roles, professional relationships, and the work of teaching. In some respects, those who would implement mentor roles are confronted with a two-part challenge: to introduce classroom teachers to a role with which they are unfamiliar; and to introduce the role itself to an institution and occupation in which it has few precedents (Bird & Little, 1985; Little, 1988; Smylie & Denny, 1989). Consistent with this perspective, Hart (1989) cast her study of school-level teacher leader and teacher specialist positions in Utah as a case in role innovation and work redesign. The “substantial discretion” attached to new teacher leader positions led Smylie and Denny (1989) to frame their own study around questions of role definition and role evolution. Similar issues surrounding role defini-
tion guided the earliest inquiries into the Connecticut pilot programs (Neufeld, 1986), and persistent issues of role ambiguity and role conflict surface in more recent work (Allen, 1989). Far West Laboratory described its comprehensive study of the California Mentor Teacher Program this way:

The [mentor program] may be described as an effort to retain skillful teachers and to improve teaching by promoting direct, rigorous, and consequential activities and relationships between mentors and other teachers. The [studies] asked whether and how district efforts to implement the mentor program promoted those activities and relations. (Shulman et al., 1985, p. 2)

**Bowing to Conservative Precedent**

A single dominant theme emerges from the implementation studies: Mentor initiatives encounter consistent pressure to accommodate the individualistic and egalitarian traditions of teaching and to discount the status distinctions implied by the mentor title. At the school level, we find few cases in which the mentor role signals a reorganization of authority relations or an increase in the school’s collective influence on practices of teaching (for one example of such a case, see Hart, 1989).

Certain conditions of implementation constrain or enable local actors, moving them toward a more ambitious or a less ambitious conception of the mentor role. Among them are the pace at which implementation proceeds, the sheer opportunity for work that is described as “mentoring,” and the precedents that shape expectations for mentors’ performance. On the whole, these conditions have favored narrow definitions of the mentor role and conservative solutions to implementation problems.

**Pace of Implementation**

Mentor programs have proliferated rapidly over the past decade. The magnitude of change implied by the mentor title invites a pace that is slow enough to achieve properly “integrative agreements” (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1982), but brisk enough to sustain momentum. The persistence of problems related to role definition in the Connecticut sites suggests that a slow pace alone (3 years of “pilot” activity) does not ensure that proponents of the innovation will grapple successfully with established practice (Allen & Pecheone, 1989; Martin, 1987). A rapid pace, however, coupled with high public visibility, almost certainly guarantees that districts will settle on conservative solutions to the predictable problems that arise when a proposed innovation runs counter to established norms and structures.

California’s Mentor Teacher Program illustrates the problems associated with rapid starts and a fast pace in the early stages of a complex inno-
vation. Pressed to move quickly following passage of the state’s omnibus reform bill, teachers and administrators in many California districts achieved the fit between policy intent and local context that Berman and McLaughlin (1978) describe as “mutual adaptation” by compromising certain principal (but controversial) tenets of the legislative intent underlying mentorships. California launched a precipitous schedule of implementation in its first stages, urging districts to adopt the program in the closing months of the 1983-84 school year (Bird, 1986). Although participation in the California program was voluntary and although local districts retained substantial discretion in deciding a conception of the mentor role, the scale of the funding propelled districts to accept the program. By 1986-87, the budget supporting the mentor program constituted more than one half of the state’s categorical staff development funding (Little et al., 1987). Districts’ access to state-controlled funding for professional development resources was thus directly linked to participation in the mentor program. Meanwhile, a schedule of implementation linked to the state’s fiscal year pressed districts to decide quickly what form the local program would assume. The result was a pervasive effort to define the mentor role within the boundaries of familiar roles and functions. Based on nine case studies and a survey of 291 districts, Bird (1986) concludes that “a good deal was lost, and little or nothing gained, by haste in implementing the mentor program” (p. 7). California’s experience is mirrored elsewhere in the implementation studies. Hart and Murphy (1989b), too, attribute conservative program designs in Utah to the press of time in the early stages of implementation: “Because the time left by the state . . . between planning and implementation was limited, job descriptions often were modeled after preexisting special projects and unrecognizable from conventional practice” (p. 15). In Connecticut, where the state’s teacher certification law introduces a relatively standardized conception of the mentor role, a 3-year sequence of pilot efforts has not relieved the state of many of the same implementation problems faced in sites with less well-bounded purposes and fewer program specifications. Externally established goals, even when broadly accepted in principle, do not appear to overcome the hold exerted by long-standing and taken-for-granted ways of working. The slower pace in the Connecticut sites, however, may have helped to forestall the kinds of agreements that compromise key principles and thereby contribute to a pattern of “vanishing effects” (Malen & Hart, 1987).

Rapid starts place a premium on reducing the tangle of competing preferences and countervailing practices. Smooth starts achieved through large-scale compromise bode ill for long-term success. Integrative agreements, according to some theorists, require both tolerance for conflict and sufficient opportunity for conflict resolution (Pruitt & Carnevale,
1982). Case studies of innovation in 12 school districts led Huberman and Miles (1984) to conclude that smooth early use was a bad sign. Smoothly implementing sites seemed to get that way by reducing the initial scale of the project and by lowering the gradient of actual practice change. This “downsizing” got rid of most headaches during the initial implementation but also threw away most of the potential rewards; the project often turned into a modest, sometimes trivial, enterprise. (p. 273)

Broadly conceived policy initiatives, introduced rapidly in the spirit of reform, hold out mentor roles as one element in a new conception of teachers’ professional relations. But mentor initiatives constitute a direct and substantial challenge to some of the most powerfully established norms of teaching and to established authority relations in schools. On that basis alone, argue Malen and Hart (1987), such initiatives are especially susceptible to the problem of vanishing effects. The problem is exacerbated when the pace of implementation outstrips the human and material resources available to manage the change.

**Opportunity**

The fit between the rhetoric and the reality of mentoring is in large part a function of opportunity. The implementation studies cast the question of opportunity in two ways. They first confront the question, To whom do the opportunities or obligations of mentorship fall? The formal designation of “mentors” then gives rise to the second question: When and how do mentors conduct their work?

The formalization of mentor roles brings with it institutional control over selection, or the systematic structuring of teachers’ opportunity to assume professional leadership. Issues surrounding the criteria and process for selection have consumed a large share of the political and material resources devoted to implementation, and have occupied a central place in research. In one recent assessment of the prospects for teacher leadership, Little (1988) observed that

the most volatile issue in formal teacher leadership initiatives has been teacher selection. . . . The selection of leaders has been cast both as a technical problem (what are the acceptable criteria for performance?) and as a political problem (who will teachers accept as leaders, if anyone?). (pp. 100–101)

Little concludes that the selection problem is an artifact of isolated work in schools, a problem that achieves its present magnitude only because many teachers have no sensible grounds on which to grant or deny someone the right to lead them. Bird and Alspaugh (1986) observe, “On what basis do persons who work mostly in isolation accept a decision that some
of them are better prepared for leadership than others?” (pp. 53–54). Acceptable selection criteria and processes comprise a large share of teachers’ overall judgments about mentor programs, and a large portion of their complaints when things seem to go wrong. In interview data assembled from teachers in one career ladder site, “discontent and eroded commitment to the district emerged . . . when teachers questioned the quality of selection and discrimination associated with the new roles” (Hart & Murphy, 1989b, p. 23). Selection criteria, processes, and outcomes formed three of the eight criteria that Ruskus (1988) invited teachers and mentors to use in judging the overall effectiveness of California’s mentor initiative in five districts. Across districts, the perceived validity of selection “was the most important determinant of perceived program effectiveness” (p. 199). The district with the highest rating on selection (and also the highest program effectiveness rating) employed a two-stage selection process in which extensive paper screening and principals’ ratings were followed by interviews and observations of the highest ranking candidates. In that district, an objective rating form based on stated criteria resulted in the selection of one third of the applicants. By contrast, a district with consistently low ratings on selection (and the lowest rating on effectiveness) employed a more cursory review procedure, conducted interviews with all candidates but no observations, and was criticized by some teachers as relying on “subjective feelings” rather than “real evidence” (pp. 202–203).

To what extent do the formal selection processes—which may include formal applications, peer and supervisor recommendations, interviews, observations, simulations, or portfolios—capture the prospective mentor’s persona among colleagues, or reflect teachers’ expectations of a mentor’s efforts? Teachers’ complaints, recorded anecdotally through case study accounts, suggest that a selection process centered on a small sample of teacher’s present work may be inadequate to assure the breadth and depth of teacher experience and knowledge that may be an essential prerequisite to leadership on matters of professional practice. Available case studies provide few examples of selection processes in which multiple lines of evidence (Peterson, 1984) are assembled persuasively. In most of the sites described by the implementation studies, teachers’ eligibility for leadership positions was thought to be satisfied principally on the basis of short-term classroom observations or testimony by peers and administrators. Few assessed the particular combination of classroom-based expertise and collegial involvements that presage success in the mentor role. Teachers in one case study proposed that selection criteria balancing teachers’ classroom expertise and their ability to work with colleagues would be “more in keeping with the meaning of a ‘mentor’” (Shulman et al., 1985, p. 14).
Selection issues occupy a central place in the implementation panoply; the resolution of those issues affects opportunity by affecting individuals' access to the position and others' disposition toward them. Nonetheless, the obligations of mentorship are satisfied and its benefits assured only in the actual exercise of the role. Teachers judge mentors by the expertise that they demonstrate and by the effort they expend after being selected. Crucial to teachers' acceptance of the role of mentor, then, is their ability to confirm the worth of individual mentors in actual performance.

Despite the scrutiny given to the process by which teachers are selected to be mentors, a still greater burden of proof rests on the mentor who, once selected, must now actually mentor. Here the issue is the congruence among formal selection mechanisms, the actual demands of performance, and the informal regard of colleagues. Selection turns out to be less an event than a continuing process by which mentors earn their titles on the job. Through myriad daily encounters, and through subtle and not-so-subtle gestures, teachers affirm or reject the mentors' acclaimed status (Bird, 1986; Hart & Murphy, 1989b). On the basis of vignettes of teacher and mentor interactions (Allen, 1989; Shulman & Colbert, 1987), one can conclude that the closer the mentor comes to exerting influence on other teachers' work, the more stringent become the demands on the mentor's competence and character.

A teacher is selected as a mentor principally on the basis of accomplishments with children; the teacher is subsequently accepted as a mentor on the basis of accomplishments with fellow teachers and administrators. The demands on mentors' expertise are frequently far greater than a prospective mentor might anticipate on the basis of selection criteria alone. Admittedly, mentors appear more sanguine about the effectiveness of their work than are the teachers they purportedly serve. Teachers are less inclined to judge the mentors' efforts to be sufficiently influential. Teachers in five California districts consistently rated mentors' effectiveness in less glowing terms than did the participating mentors (Ruskus, 1988). In each of three areas of interaction (effectiveness with new teachers, with experienced teachers, and in facilitating communication) teachers' mean ratings of effectiveness were significantly below those of mentors themselves (p. 156). Teachers were also less willing to attribute impact on student progress or teacher retention to the efforts made by mentors; again, the mean ratings on the cross-district sample of teachers and mentors differed significantly. This finding parallels results of a case study of school-level instructional support teams in which team members rated their direct contacts with teachers as more frequent and more potent than did the teachers (Little & Long, 1985). One explanation accounts plausibly for these comparable patterns in the two studies. From the mentors' point of view, even a few direct consultations or classroom visits constitute a
high level of activity in an overcrowded schedule. From the perspective of teachers at large, most of whom have not been touched directly by the mentors’ activities, the work is less visible and less visibly consequential. Allowing for very real differences in effort and capacity among mentors, the fact remains that teachers’ perceptions of their effort and effectiveness are largely contingent on their opportunity to acquire direct evidence of their work. When asked, teachers discriminate finely between those in leadership positions who do much and those who do little, those whose work makes a solid contribution and those whose work is “trite” or “frivolous” (Hart & Murphy, 1989b). Ruskus collects, but does not report, data that would permit her to distinguish effectiveness ratings given by teachers who were directly involved with mentors from those ratings based on less immediate contact. Such measures of mentors’ effectiveness, sensitive to variations in direct involvement between mentors and teachers, will provide a more credible base than we have now for explaining teachers’ acceptance of the mentor role and for determining the nature and extent of mentors’ influence on teachers.

Concern for the performance aspect of the selection and subsequent acceptance of mentors has led states and districts to supply mentors with skill training or peer support groups (Bird & Little, 1985; Kent, 1985; King, 1988). By such training, mentors are sometimes helped to make explicit and accessible their own knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and classroom management. Often, however, they are asked to adopt concepts and terminology derived from classroom research (Kent, 1985) or from state and local teacher evaluation guidelines (Allen & Pecheone, 1989; Huffman & Leak, 1986). Communication skills, consultation strategies, and classroom observation techniques also form a large share of most training agendas (see, e.g., Brzoska, Jones, Mahaffy, Miller, & Mychals, 1987; Little & Nelson, 1989; State of Connecticut Department of Education, 1988). Indeed, even a cursory review of such guides leads one to conclude that the process of mentoring takes considerable precedence over its substance; training activities are heavily weighted toward ensuring smooth interpersonal relations between mentors and teachers or administrators.

Specialized training for mentors has become an increasingly common and prominent component of role development (e.g., Thies-Sprinthall, 1986). The earliest program ventures sparked widespread dispute about the need for organized training and support. Opponents of such training made the case that the very selection of teachers as mentors was intended to signal a high level of professional capacity, whereas advocates of training underscored the unfamiliar demands of mentoring for which the classroom provided little or no preparation (Bird & Little, 1985). In the first 2 years of California’s state-supported program, nearly 40% of par-
ticipating districts allocated no resources at all for postselection support of mentors; many others relied on occasional workshops sponsored by county offices of education or on other out-of-district opportunities (Bird & Alspaugh, 1986).

Structured training and support appears more likely where mentoring is linked to a single state or district policy goal, as in Connecticut’s use of mentors for teacher certification (Allen & Pecheone, 1989), Los Angeles Unified School District’s assignment of mentors to new teachers (Little & Nelson, 1989), and Toledo’s involvement of experienced teachers in the evaluation and tenure of new teachers (Stoddart, 1989). At the school level, organized training and support are more likely where administrators and teachers have forged a clear link between the mentor role and school-level goals. In these instances, clearly defined policy purposes surrounding the mentor role increase the availability of training, but also dictate its content. By contrast, teachers are more likely to assume new leadership roles without benefit of formal training and support where those roles remain personalized, entrepreneurial, and less clearly connected to institutional priorities (Hart, 1989; Smylie & Denny, 1989).

Training is typically a post hoc accommodation, following the award of mentor status. Only rarely does selection to mentor roles require that the teacher first acquire experience in other mentor-like capacities, such as serving as a supervisor of student teachers. Nor do selection processes typically assess prospective mentors’ disposition toward sharing ideas and materials, assisting others, or taking initiative with regard to professional practice (Allen, 1989; Smylie, 1989). These characteristic omissions from mentor selection routines may prove consequential, bearing in unanticipated ways on mentors’ own perceptions of their role and on the expectations that others hold out for it.

Despite the apparent range in availability and content of mentor training, there are virtually no studies that trace the contributions made by postselection training to the subsequent performance of the mentors, or to their success in relationships with teachers or administrators. No studies compare mentors who receive training with those who are left to their own resources. Nor have there been any attempts to assess the relative leverage to be gained by investing institutional resources in postselection training versus various forms of preselection preparation of individuals, groups, or organizations.

The performance imperatives of mentorship render the second aspect of opportunity crucial: when and how mentors do their work. This performance aspect of opportunity is fundamentally an issue of time, the most highly valued and closely protected of teachers’ resources. Those who control mentor programs, whether teachers or administrators, signal the importance they attribute to mentor roles by the amount of time they
allocate for mentors' work, by policies that govern when the work of mentoring can be done, and by the formal and informal expectations that define what work counts as mentoring. Thus, some districts reserve mentoring for time outside the school day, whereas others argue that the benefits of mentoring require teacher-to-teacher consultation embedded in the daily work of teaching. Some districts or schools insist that mentoring entails direct one-to-one work with individual teachers, in and out of the classroom; other sites are broadly permissive about the nature of the mentor's activities.

The time mentors spend tends to be treated as a proxy for their effort and effectiveness. Teachers judge the worth of mentors in part by the amount of time they visibly devote to the work of mentoring. Visibility is a crucial component of the time equation. When mentors do the work of mentoring directly with teachers (or in their immediate presence), they enable teachers to judge the quantity and quality of their contributions. According to Hart and Murphy (1989b), “visibility of the work played a key role in teacher assessments of the worth of the program” (p. 27). Visibility is diminished when mentors’ work is reserved to time outside the instructional day, to settings outside the mentors’ own school, or to tasks far removed from the classroom (Bird, 1986). For example, the most prominent object of mentors’ attention during the first 2 years of California’s Mentor Teacher Program was curriculum. Mentors in many districts worked on individual curriculum projects, largely out of sight of their colleagues. Judging by district coordinators’ estimates of mentors’ time (Bird & Alspaugh, 1986), mentors on average spent more than 60% of their time doing something other than working with fellow teachers. On the basis of mentors’ own accounts, this estimate may be conservative. Fewer than one in five of the districts surveyed required that mentors consult with or assist other teachers. The California experience is not unique. The 13 teacher leaders whose work was detailed by Smylie and Denny (1989) exemplify the discrepancy between aspirations and actual performance. "Although virtually all the leaders reported that they had interacted with and assisted other teachers, none of these activities was ranked among those consuming most of the leaders' time. The leaders have, therefore, spent most of their [time] engaged in activities that seem at variance with their primary conceptualizations of their roles. As one commented, ‘There is much involvement at the district level. However, I need to do more at the building level, more one-to-one conversations with teachers’ ” (p. 8).

A permissive stance toward the actual substance of mentors' work has enabled districts and schools to secure short-run agreements to implement a mentor program. Except in Connecticut, where mentoring is linked to certification (Allen & Pecheone, 1989), teachers have success-
fully sought assurances that teachers’ essential autonomy would not be jeopardized by mentors’ intrusions into their classrooms. Such a permissive stance, however, tends to produce a low rate of direct teacher-to-teacher involvement of the very sort needed to convince teachers that mentors are fulfilling their obligations (Bird, 1986; Huffman & Leak, 1986; Little, Galagaran, & O’Neal, 1984). Mentors respond by seeking ways to showcase their work to teachers. Sometimes they succeed in broadening their base of support; in other instances, their efforts to publicize their activities only intensify teachers’ opposition. Hart and Murphy (1989a) note that “praise was profuse” when teacher leaders tied their work clearly and productively to improvements in teaching and learning, but that complaints were equally profuse when leaders wasted teacher time in superficial activities inappropriately matched to teachers’ interests or sophistication, or devoted their energies to short-term projects of dubious value. Teachers with strong academic records and high performance ratings had the highest aspirations for what might be accomplished through teacher leadership positions, and were the most critical of shortcomings produced by program compromises. These teachers were most approving of long-range assignments that “gave teachers the power to function by marshalling the talents of other teachers to achieve learning by groups of students,” while they “ridiculed short term, limited assignments” (p. 20). One teacher was “scathing in her criticism of trite, unnecessary tasks disconnected from outcomes” (p. 21). Visibility alone, it appears, is not sufficient to win teachers’ endorsements.

Whatever the benefits that follow when mentors engage in “close-to-the-classroom” consultation or other involvements with teachers, the attendant compromises are not lost on the mentors or others with whom they work. In the name of school improvement or career enhancement, mentorship programs add to the burdens of the school-site faculty by removing capable teachers from the classroom. Time spent by a mentor in the classroom of a beginning teacher, for example, is time lost to the mentor’s own classroom. Teachers routinely devote less time to mentoring during the school day than they are allotted by program resources (Allen & Pecheone, 1989; see also the data on underuse of allocated release time as a component of school improvement programs in Berman & Gjelten, 1984). Release time budgets intended as a support for the program may turn out to be a burden for mentors. Release time that draws teachers away from primary classroom responsibilities underscores, perhaps ironically, the marginal status of mentoring activity by placing teachers’ work with fellow teachers in competition with the fundamental work of the classroom. To fulfill the obligations of mentoring, mentors risk compromising other valued institutional goals and increasing the strain on themselves as individuals. In one program evaluation,
the shortage of qualified substitutes, the additional planning time required to prepare for substitutes, and the loss in instructional time and quality all led teachers to assess release time as an “impractical” form of support for the program (Allen & Pecheone, 1989). By contrast, they would have welcomed regularly scheduled contact time during the salaried workday. In sum, the structure of time and task constrains or enables mentors’ work with teachers.

Precedents

Leadership by teachers is not entirely without precedent. Available models for leadership roles range from department- or grade-level head to committee chair to specialized staff development and curriculum development roles. On the whole, however, teachers have few models for an assertive conception of the mentor role, models that legitimate the kinds of relationships implied by the term. Despite certain long-standing precedents for formal leadership positions (Wasley, 1989), roles specifically dedicated to interpersonal guidance on matters of professional practice continue to represent a substantial departure from organizational and occupational tradition. Furthermore, districts or states rarely consider whether newly proposed roles are compatible with or in conflict with existing leadership opportunities (Hart & Murphy, 1989b).

Few of the available implementation studies explicitly confront local leadership precedents and their significance for newly introduced roles. In six of Far West Laboratory’s nine case study districts, respondents described other roles with mentor-like features. In one district, demonstration teachers and resource teachers were admired for their assistance to new teachers and their contributions to curriculum (Shulman et al., 1985). These models of teacher-to-teacher exchange disposed teachers favorably toward the idea of mentorship. In another district, a troublesome precedent was created in the form of remediation teachers who had been widely viewed by teachers as servants of administration; support for the mentor role was less readily secured (Hanson et al., 1985).

The various implementation studies all highlight the ways in which mentoring is a departure from business as usual. Mentor roles turn out to be an innovation of considerable complexity. Unlike new curricula or pedagogical methods, this innovation is not subject to individual adoption at the level of the classroom; rather, it is a social relation that requires joint action and joint acceptance. The “smallest unit” on which the fate of implementation rests (McLaughlin, 1987, p. 174) is thus not the individual teacher but the mentor-protégé pair. To stress the image of the mentor-protégé pair is not to overlook the fact that many designated mentors or leaders work alone (e.g., to develop curriculum) or work with groups of teachers in workshop-type settings. It is, rather, to underscore...
the fact that the term mentor inevitably implies the existence of a protégé whether that protégé is a specific individual (e.g., a 1st year teacher), or a diffuse body of teachers (e.g., potential users of the mentor’s curriculum ideas). The success of mentorship thus rests in part on the protégés’ willingness to be mentored, whether directly or indirectly. Individuals’ capacities, beliefs, and incentives do not account satisfactorily for local success. The skills and intentions of mentors are insufficient to sustain their interactions with teachers, which are approved or condemned within larger circles of peers. Mentoring is irretrievably a social and organizational phenomenon, and as such its utility as an organizational resource and a career incentive is shaped by social interaction.

Nicholson’s (1984) theory of work role transitions helps to highlight some of the disjunctures between the demands of mentoring and the likely perspectives and experiences of prospective mentors. The ordinary stress associated with role transitions is intensified when new roles present radically different requirements from persons’ experience, and thus exert new demands on personal knowledge, skill, judgment, confidence, and initiative. The particular adjustment that individuals make to their new roles can be traced, according to Nicholson, to their assessment of the differences or similarities in work demands, the dispositions they have acquired through past socialization, and the arrangements that now govern their work in a new position. However, Nicholson’s analysis stops short of anticipating certain fundamental conditions that bear on the specific case of mentoring among teachers. First is the degree of clarity and normative agreement that provide meaning to a role and direction for its performance. Although differentiating positions on the basis of the discretion they permit, Nicholson appears to assume that persons make a transition to an established role with reasonably well-defined (even if broad) normative boundaries. The more ambiguous the role, the fewer are the grounds to which the individual can turn to judge his or her own capacity to succeed in the role or by which he or she can interpret feedback on performance (Dubinsky & Yammarino, 1984). Mentor roles are markedly ambiguous. Throughout the implementation literature, observers record the uncertainties of mentors, administrators, and teachers regarding the central purposes of mentorship and the specific behavior in which mentors should or might engage. Hart (1989) tells of the teacher leader who punctuated an interview with a poignant question: “What should we be doing?” (p. 26). The 13 teacher leaders interviewed by Smylie and Denny (1989) voiced similar concerns; although the new leaders were relatively secure in their own knowledge and in their aspirations, “they were much less certain about whether their fellow teachers understood their leadership roles and what those teachers and their principals expected of them in those roles” (p.
8). In the early stages of Connecticut’s experimental programs, teachers designated as “assessors” received more support from teachers than those designated “mentors,” despite the apparently disadvantageous connotations attached to the former title. Neufeld (1986) attributes this unanticipated development to the clear purpose, predictable behavior, and structured relationships associated with the assessor role, and the comparatively high level of ambiguity surrounding the mentor role.

The uncertainties of purpose or practice that individual mentors experience often go unrelieved by organizational intervention or support. Ambiguity and conflict surrounding role definition have been greatest where mentor roles remain unlinked to any larger picture, where norms are unfavorable to professional growth or career mobility, and where teachers have been left to “invent their roles as they went along” (Hart, 1989, p. 24). Roles appear to develop most fully where teachers and administrators establish the teacher leader’s intended contribution to widely shared goals, then exploit resources eclectically and opportunistically in support of the leader’s activities. But in the local career enhancement project examined by Smylie and Denny (1989), “the district decided intentionally to leave open the specific roles and responsibilities associated with these positions. It was the responsibility of the teachers who would assume these positions to develop them” (p. 4). In the absence of organizational purpose and sanction, mentors’ individual and idiosyncratic efforts to fulfill their perceived obligations may only heighten their vulnerability. In the career ladder sites studied by Hart and Murphy (1989b), teachers successfully developed leadership positions only in those schools where the role was given institutional purpose and structure.

In the absence of organizational sanction, mentors must rely on personal resources to penetrate long-standing protections surrounding teacher autonomy. The actions that may be required to give meaning to the term mentor are precisely those proscribed by the dominant traditions of noninterference in teaching. Within the confines of the classroom, teachers recognize and defend a wide range of practice as falling legitimately within the bounds of teaching; the role of mentor has no such accepted heritage of wide, diverse, observable practice as its warrant. In most schools, teachers enjoy wide latitude to construct their relations with students and to make their curricular and instructional choices in accordance with personal preference; they enjoy correspondingly less latitude to comment on or attempt influence over other teachers’ classroom work. The teaching role is most problematic, most narrowly defined, and most constrained precisely in the area (collegial involvement and influence) where the mentor role places its greatest demands.

Mentoring is, on its face, at odds with the prevailing organizational and occupational traditions in teaching. Bird and Alspaugh (1986) describe
“the mentors’ dilemma” as the tension between the leadership expectations implicit in the title of mentor and the inherited traditions of autonomy and equality: “the scarcity of traditions, organizational arrangements, and norms of interaction that would allow or enable mentors to do enough, with enough other teachers, to earn their extra pay and resources” (pp. 3–4). Mentors or teacher leaders are at substantial risk of defining their positions in ways that spark the resentment of teachers. Ironically, teachers may move from classroom teacher, with substantial discretion over the manner of their work, to a mentorship that finds them exercising less discretion and accommodating more constraints. In this instance, then, role ambiguity promises something more than personal disappointments or organizational incoherence. It lays the ground for active conflict among teachers, or between teachers and other constituent groups. Such conflict, in turn, has its own consequences. Teachers who have served as mentors or teacher leaders decline to do so again; the intended career incentive is diluted both for them and for the colleagues who have witnessed their defeat (Hart, 1989). Faced with mounting dissent, the institution makes moves to render the role harmless—and thus useless (Bird, 1986). The prospect of increased organizational capacity is weakened. The standard of mutual benefit is compromised.

Finally, theories of role transition tend to assume that persons make a transition from one role to another—from teacher to principal, for example. Even theories that account for newly created and individually wrought “idosyncratic roles” assume that one enters fully into the new role (Miner, 1987). The rise of formal mentoring constitutes a radically different case, one in which the conditions for role conflict and role overload (Biddle, 1979) are likely consequences. In most instances, teachers retain the identities, obligations, perspectives, and affiliations of the classroom teacher while adding on, usually temporarily, the perspectives and perquisites of leadership. The ambiguities surrounding mentorship are compounded as teachers attempt to satisfy two sets of role demands that are not always compatible. Provisions for rotating the opportunities for leadership among a large pool of teachers place a premium on preserving one’s identity as a classroom teacher and one’s social standing with peers. For individual teachers, mentorships represent not permanent positions but short-term opportunities that one teacher likened to a short stepladder: “you step on and you step off” (Hart & Murphy, 1989b, p. 27). Smylie and Denny (1989) conclude that the teacher leaders are

in a precarious and ambiguous position with respect to violations of professional norms. They are well aware of this position but seem to want it both ways. That is, they seem to want the additional responsibility and recognition associated with their leadership positions but at the same time they wish to retain their status in the collegium. (p. 15)
In sum, conservative patterns of policy implementation underscore the conundrum that prefaces this review: How might we account for the emergence of a formal role that both sustains the essential character of the mentor-protégé relation and that successfully overcomes or displaces countervailing norms of privacy and equal status? In attempting to account fully for the prevailing configurations of mentoring, researchers have given special attention to two problems associated with specialized teacher leadership roles: the problem of expertise in teaching, and the problem of expert status among teachers.

The Problem of Expertise in Teaching

A recurrent paradox can be expressed this way: mentors’ claims to professional expertise are both demanded by the role and denied by history and circumstance. Implicit in the title of mentor, advisor, consulting teacher, or master teacher is the presumption of wisdom—accumulated knowledge that can serve as the basis of sensitive observation, astute commentary, sound advice, and constructive leadership. Demonstrated knowledge and skill are the essential ground on which the role and title of mentor are founded. In the district survey completed by Far West Laboratory (Bird & Alspaugh, 1986), district coordinators rated subject matter and pedagogical knowledge as the two most essential qualifications for mentoring. Implementation of mentor initiatives is confounded by two issues related to expertise in teaching: debate over the existence of an agreed-upon body of knowledge to guide practice; and the accessibility of teachers’ knowledge, in both technical and social-organizational senses.

What Mentors Know

What is the nature of knowledge to which a mentor might lay claim—knowledge that could serve as the basis of a relationship with teachers? Critics have argued that the low level of agreed-upon expertise in teaching simultaneously increases the stress on practitioners, constrains help giving, and leads teachers to discount criticism or advice (Edgar & Warren, 1969; Glidewell, Tucker, Todt, & Cox, 1983). In the past decade, however, two developments have altered the view of available expertise in ways that now inform the mentor initiatives. First, districts have incorporated into staff development and teacher evaluation a body of presumably codifiable knowledge arising from more than a decade of classroom research (Brophy & Good, 1986). This line of classroom research has supplied much of the expected language and content for mentors’ work. Second, teachers’ own practical knowledge has been granted more attention and greater deference (Buchmann, 1986; Elbaz, 1983; Pinnegar, 1987; Yinger, 1987). Studies of teacher thinking, planning, and situated decision making (Clark & Peterson, 1986) have helped to replace a “dim
view of teacher knowledge” (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986, p. 512) with a more respectful view. This line of research may go far to bolster public faith that some teachers, at least, command the sort of expert grasp of teaching that warrants mentor status.

The claims that underlie mentors’ legitimacy rest both on the availability of an externally validated knowledge base and on the credibility of a recognizably knowledgeable work force. In practice, externally derived research knowledge and teachers’ own experiential knowledge have often been accorded different weight. Where districts closely structure the mentor-protégé relation and where that relation is tightly coupled to personnel decisions, externally determined priorities and terminology are likely to override mentors’ individual preferences and practices. In formal job descriptions and in the content of training, research-based content appears to dominate experience-based wisdom. Grounded largely in classroom research on discrete instructional or classroom management practices, the practice of mentoring in such sites has come to reflect a skill orientation toward teaching and teachers that mirrors its present dominance in professional development and teacher evaluation more generally. By this view, the primary purpose of mentoring is to produce skilled performance. The task of the protégé is first to elicit or recognize the mentor’s skill and then to emulate it. This is an orientation reinforced where mentoring is joined with certification and evaluation (Allen & Pecheone, 1989).

The skill-oriented conceptions of teaching and mentoring are less clearly evident in cases where the mentor role is more loosely and permissively conceived. In open-ended and voluntary consultations among teachers or in the completion of special projects, mentors find more latitude to exploit their own knowledge and inclinations. Whatever other difficulties such a stance may engender (e.g., problems of role definition or problems of substantive merit in the work mentors elect to do), it appears to elicit more readily the form of teacher knowledge represented in studies of teacher thinking and teacher planning (Clark & Peterson, 1986) or in conceptions of teaching as structured improvisation (Yinger, 1987). In these broader conceptions of teachers’ knowledge, discrete skill is embedded in metacognitive patterns that enable teachers to make sense of their work. What teachers know is manifest in their situated judgments and in the interpretations they construct. In Kennedy’s (1987) analysis of professional expertise, persons require both technique and a grasp of its underlying rationale as the basis on which to innovate or to exercise judgment. The importance of being able to capture the intentionality of teachers’ performance, and not merely to label and reproduce observable behavior, argues for a particular kind of relation between mentor and protégé. Returning to Gehrke’s (1988b) critique: The
gift of the mentor is not narrowly conceived technique, but “a new and whole way of seeing things” (p. 192).

Access to Mentors’ Knowledge

Proponents of mentoring take for granted that properly selected mentors will be a source of expert knowledge to others. Access to mentors’ knowledge, however, is arguably problematic. Can mentors express what they know in a manner accessible to others; will they have sufficient opportunity to do so; and if they can, will they feel obligated to do so? Matters of opportunity have been treated elsewhere in this essay. At issue here are mentors’ ability to articulate their own expert knowledge and the incentives or disincentives that surround claims to expertise.

Access to mentors’ knowledge is in part a function of the technical capacity to make explicit certain underlying principles of practice (Kennedy, 1987). One consequence of the persistent privacy of the classroom is that teachers rarely have occasion to talk to fellow teachers in detail about their work. Even more rarely are they called on to talk about or display their work for purposes of helping others succeed in teaching. Teachers come to experience their work—and to describe it—as intuitive, done without much conscious framing or reflection (Buchmann, 1986). To use one’s own expert knowledge in the day-by-day, moment-by-moment enactments of teaching is a different matter, intellectually and interpersonally, from articulating that knowledge for the benefit of another’s understanding and practice (Yinger, 1987). Although we have some examples of how mentors imagine such talk, based on their spoken responses to simulated requests or problems posed to them by beginning teachers (Parker, 1989), it seems probable that simulated responses overestimate mentors’ willingness to propose straightforward diagnoses and to offer direct advice. Further, we have no way of knowing from these one-way simulations how beginning teachers would interpret the responses mentors give; can beginning teachers detect the knowledge that informs mentors’ comments? In studies of preservice teachers, McAlpine, Brown, McIntyre, and Haggar (1988) discover with what difficulty experienced teachers express what they know, and with what difficulty novice teachers learn to elicit and comprehend that knowledge. One study of video-taped interaction between teacher advisors and experienced teachers provides some evidence that genuine interest and good intentions do not stop participants from talking past one another (Little et al., 1984). Advisors, employing a language derived from classroom research (“objectives,” “transfer,” “wait time”), analyzed lessons. Teachers, employing a different language, analyzed the ebb and flow of a classroom. Like the teachers described by Pinnegar (1987), they examined when and why they knew students were “with me,” or what they did to “pull them in” if they were
not. Examples of naturally occurring exchanges between mentors and teachers, now absent from the published literature, might enable us to ground global assessments of perceived effectiveness in concrete instances of communication about teaching.

Accessibility is only partly a matter of one’s ability and opportunity to articulate one’s principles and practices. It is also shaped by the incentives or disincentives that prompt mentors to extend their expertise to others or to withhold it. In their study of professional support among teachers, Glidewell et al. (1983) found that the relation between stress (need for help) and actual help seeking was mediated by the degree of teachers’ commitment to established occupational norms of autonomy and equality. Based on Glidewell et al., we would expect that mentoring relations would be most likely to bear fruit where commitments to individual autonomy were weak and where countervailing norms of collegiality prevailed (see also Rosenholtz, 1989). Throughout the case literature, we find instances in which mentors express humility about their own expertise, fearing collegial censure (Little et al., 1984). The rewards are tenuous indeed. Neither in formal evaluation schemes nor in the informal reward structure of schools are teachers celebrated for contributing to the success of other teachers, nor penalized for failing to do so. In fact, the reward structure may operate to accentuate the norm of privacy and to promote hoarding of insights, methods, and materials. Revealing the “hidden cost of sharing expertise,” Allen (1989) describes a “mentor as miser” syndrome that prevails when mentors’ knowledge comprises a private store of ideas and materials that form the base of professional standing and sense of self.

The Problem of Expert Status Among Teachers

Publicly acknowledged and rewarded differences in expertise run counter to inherited traditions in teaching (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986; Smylie & Denny, 1989). Within the culture of teachers, informal acknowledgements are common, but formal expert status is suspect. Thus, mentors discount their special expertise as a basis of their professional relations with teachers. The problem of expertise is at the heart of the pervasive ambivalence about mentoring and the source of what Bird (1986) characterizes as the mentors’ dilemma: “The instrumental status differences that the Mentor Program calls for are virtually without precedent in teaching’s egalitarian and individualistic tradition” (Bird & Alspaugh, 1986, p. 3).

Mentor roles achieve special significance (and are rendered specially problematic) in an occupation that is constrained by norms of equal status and autonomy, is flat in its career profile, and in which an agreed-upon body of professional knowledge and practice is absent. Occupa-
tional traditions are mirrored in organizational realities; schools rarely structure the work of teaching to promote the kind of mutual interdependence favorable to mentoring (Little, 1988). Smylie (1989) hypothesizes that mentor or master teacher initiatives are less likely to win teachers' support than are other forms of collegial exchange (e.g., peer support groups) because the former are largely incongruent with the dominant social contexts of teaching and the psychological dispositions of teachers. Relying on theoretical advances in the study of cooperation and helping behavior, and particularly on the contributions of Deutsch (1982), Smylie posits that teaching favors collegial learning arrangements that are cooperative rather than competitive, that assume equality of power and influence among all members of the group, that stress socioemotional support over task orientation, and in which social interaction is governed not by bureaucratic rules but by tacitly held norms. Smylie concludes,

Master teacher programs induce formal status differentiation among teachers. They place teachers in superordinate and subordinate roles and suggest nonreciprocal relationships among teachers. The relationship between master teachers and other teachers may be governed by rules and expectations developed outside the relationship and may be geared more toward task performance and accomplishment than socioemotional support. In addition, they may contain a competitive element in that the extrinsic rewards associated with attaining master teacher status are likely to be dependent upon the perpetuation of status differences. (p. 11)

The history of implementation is in part the history of accommodating the tensions surrounding leadership in teaching by teachers. Presumably, there are two responses to the conflict between norms of equal status and the implications of the mentor role. In one response, districts could work to justify legitimate differences based on demonstrated differences in knowledge, skill, and commitment (Bird & Little, 1985). In one of the two case study sites described by Hart (1989), this appears to have been the strategy. The modal response, however, has been to diminish the status implications of the title and the other resources attached to the role. Despite some prominent exceptions in the case literature, the main trends show efforts to accommodate rather than alter the egalitarian and individualistic traditions that inhibit the development of mentor roles.

The main tendency in formalized mentor programs has been to diminish the status differences implied by the title of mentor rather than to justify those differences or to create the conditions consistent with their existence. Status-reduction strategies may enable schools and districts to secure short-term support and to neutralize resistance in the early stages of a program. The nine case studies assembled by Far West Laboratory (Bird et al., 1984) and the five career ladder districts examined by Hart and Murphy (1989b) show the diverse means employed by districts to re-
duce the status significance of formal teacher leadership positions. In negotiation with teachers' associations, districts broadened the range of mentors' tasks but reduced their demands on special expertise, making the tasks more like familiar sorts of "extra work for extra pay." They enlarged access to a wider pool of teachers by modifying selection criteria and providing for frequent rotation of opportunities to apply. In doing so, they obscured the place that special expertise occupies in leadership and established the presumption that the earned right to lead was widely, if not uniformly, distributed among the teaching force.

Tensions surrounding mentors' expert status are also alleviated by organizing the work of mentoring at a distance from the classroom. The norm of noninterference is honored in part by the generally permissive orientation toward mentors' direct involvement with teachers; mentors work with individual teachers "by request." In large measure, mentor programs have achieved constituent support not by pursuing the classic dimensions of close interpersonal exchange and consultation associated with mentoring, but by evolving a generalized service role in support of staff development and curriculum development (Little et al., 1987). Districts have absorbed the mentor role into a general pattern of specialist positions that provide out-of-classroom opportunities for individual teachers and expand the district's capacity to pursue district goals. Among the sources of influence on mentors' plans in California districts, district priorities ranked highest; although there are wide within-district and between-district variations, many mentors worked throughout the district with greater consistency than in their own schools, and worked with their own faculties as a group less often than with groups assembled for districtwide workshops (Bird & Alspaugh, 1986).

Finally, the implications of the mentor title are softened by focusing the work of mentors in domains where status differences are genuinely more acceptable, as in support for first year teachers, teachers new to a district, teachers confronted with new instructional assignments, or teachers engaged in innovation. Of these, mentoring for purposes of teacher induction is the dominant case.

THE DOMINANT CASE: MENTORING IN SUPPORT OF TEACHER INDUCTION

Intended improvements in teacher induction have supplied the dominant rationale for the proliferation of mentor roles and thus the main setting for empirical research. Fully two thirds of the published references to mentoring in the 1980s concentrate on mentoring as a principal component of induction programs (Gray & Gray, 1985; Huling-Austin, 1988; Stoddart, 1989). Implicitly, the main benefits of a mentor-protégé rela-
tionship are achieved within the first years of teaching, culminating in the certification decision in some states or in the tenure decision in local districts. In this sense, the dominant functions of mentoring in education parallel some of the recent formalized mentoring arrangements in business, industry, or government by concentrating on organizational entry (Zey, 1984).

The introduction of organizationally sponsored mentoring assumes particular significance against the backdrop of research on conditions of teachers' entry into teaching. Although some accounts of teacher careers distinguish between relatively easy and relatively painful beginnings (Huberman, 1986), observers spanning at least a century have highlighted the "reality shock" that commonly follows when novice teachers abruptly and without assistance assume full-scale and full-time responsibilities for teaching (Lacey, 1977; Lortie, 1975; Veenman, 1984; Zeichner & Gore, in press). Such conditions, say critics, drive capable people out of teaching. For those who remain, these same conditions place a premium on tricks of the trade that enable teachers to survive but that also retard their development of more principled understanding of teaching, their capacity for critical analysis or "expertise as deliberate action" (Kennedy, 1987, p. 148; see also Carter, 1988; Nemser, 1983). Once in command of a rudimentary set of knowledge and skill, teachers (like other beginning professionals) may engage in behavior that is self-validating and may discount criticism from others (Bucher & Stelling, 1977; Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1986). Worse, such conditions may both produce and perpetuate marginal performance in the classroom and tenuous commitment to teaching (Bridges, 1986).

Under the terms of reform initiatives in the early and mid-1980s, teacher induction has been the object of efforts to expand support for new teachers while also tightening scrutiny of their performance. Mentorship occupies center stage in the design of such efforts. Its proponents anticipate that by direct assistance and personal involvement with new teachers, mentors will relieve some of the stress associated with the intellectual, social, and emotional demands of first year teaching. The test of mentor roles lies in mentors' ability to alleviate the shock of entry into teaching, hasten the pace of learning to teach, model favorable professional relations among teachers, and reinforce teachers' loyalty to the profession.

To what extent do such formalized arrangements simply extend naturally occurring helping relationships between experienced and novice teachers? At issue here are relationships of a magnitude and intensity adequate to ensure not only the comfort and self-confidence of beginning teachers, but also their professional competence and commitment. Little (1987) proposes,
A distinction is in order between the social support that puts newcomers at ease and the professional support that advances one's knowledge and practice of teaching. . . Without diminishing the import of moral support and emotional solidarity, the central issue here is one of professional relations that go well beyond the usual "buddy" arrangement. (p. 498)

Despite the widely recognized maxim that teachers invite others to "ask if you need help," it appears that veteran teachers rarely engage in relations with beginning teachers that would warrant the designation of mentorship. To the extent that beginning teachers receive the kind of close attention that accords with the image of mentoring, it commonly derives from sources other than their peers. Even teachers who claim to have had a mentor typically found their support outside the teaching ranks; only 3 of 41 teachers interviewed by Gehrke and Kay (1984) identified other teachers among the significant mentors in their lives. These findings are consonant with other portrayals of informal induction (Lortie, 1975). As one might predict on the basis of generalized professional norms and the structural conditions of the work and workplace, informal mentoring of beginning teachers by experienced teachers is a low-incidence phenomenon. There are wide individual variations, though some schools more than others display norms supportive of intense and consequential support (Little, 1987; Meister, 1987).

Surveys centered specifically on mentoring relations may overestimate the importance of mentoring to teachers' careers as they are presently constituted. In the survey conducted by Gehrke and Kay (1984), many teachers claimed to have had a mentor, but relatively few of these relations approached the level of involvement that Clawson (1980) and other theorists would count as a genuine mentor-protégé relation. Despite the vivid portraits of the positive role models whom teachers later emulated or the negative ones whom they denigrated, rarely do we encounter tributes to a mentor in teachers' first-hand accounts of choosing to teach and developing one's teaching over time (Elbaz, 1983; Macrorie, 1984; Mead, 1989; Measor, 1985; Nias, 1989). Mentorship, it appears, is not firmly rooted in the informal conventions by which neophytes are brought into teaching. Policymakers, administrators, and academics have promoted formally assigned mentorships on the grounds that they both expand support and help to justify more stringent evaluation, thereby improving the prospects for a strong teacher workforce. Looking to the traditions of teaching and preferences of teachers, however, formal mentorship may constitute a case of "contrived collegiality" in pursuit of institutional purposes to which teachers may or may not subscribe (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1989). Nonetheless, formal mentoring is on the rise, justified principally as a remedy for inadequate induction support and organized primarily in terms of expanded reserves of help.
Mentoring as Help-Giving

Because formal induction practices are dominated by a conception of mentoring as help or assistance, they are usefully interpreted in light of advances in the study of helping behavior. Studies that highlight the help giving aspect of mentoring range from program evaluations that assess the perceived utility of mentor assistance (Huffman & Leak, 1986) to microinteractional studies that probe the interpersonal dynamics of mentor-protégé interactions (Allen, 1989; Shulman, 1987). Virtually none of these studies, however, has been informed explicitly by the kinds of theoretical constructs that have shaped social-psychological investigations of helping behavior during the past decade.

The antecedents, character, and consequences of help all are rendered problematic by recent research; neither the nature of help nor its virtue remains taken for granted. Gergen and Gergen (1983) underscore the social construction of helping, maintaining that instances of help assume meaning only in the context of an interpretive system. In examples that range from a bystander’s gesture of aid to a victim of trouble to large-scale interactions between Third World countries and aid-donating agencies, researchers find that both the definition of help and persons’ attitudes toward it are conditioned on a complex host of individual and social circumstances (Fisher, Nadler, & Whitcher-Alagna, 1983; Gergen & Gergen, 1983; Gross & McMullen, 1982). This literature begins to account for the occasions on which help is sought or not, offered or withheld, accepted or rejected.

The program implementation literature highlights the dilemmas of the teacher turned mentor, and the conditions surrounding emergence of a mentor role. The induction literature, by contrast, focuses more closely on the teacher as the potential beneficiary of mentorship. By turning attention to the recipient of help, recent research questions long-standing assumptions about receptivity to and gratitude for aid. The choices that persons make to solicit aid or to accept assistance when it is offered are determined in large part by their assessment of its psychological and social costs: the costs to their sense of competence and their status with important others, and the obligations they incur by accepting proffered resources (Gross & McMullen, 1982).

Fisher et al. (1983) employ four theoretical models to explain persons’ probable resistance to or acceptance of aid. Equity theories, together with related reciprocity and indebtedness models, start with the premise that persons seek parity in their interpersonal relations. To the degree that persons find themselves indebted in ways they cannot repay, or believe themselves to be implicitly derogated by their participation in a helping relationship, they can be expected to resist help (see also Greenberg &
Westcott, 1983). In business and industry, the success of informal mentorships rests largely on the mutual benefits they demonstrate. The assistance and sponsorship provided by the mentor is compensated as the protégé is delegated a larger share of the work, contributing to the mentor’s own productivity and career prospects (Zey, 1984). Reciprocity is achieved. By this argument, mentorships among teachers can be expected to thrive to the extent that the participants detect some measure of mutual gain in the exchange of ideas, materials, methods, and labor.

A second and complementary theoretical perspective suggests that persons are reluctant to seek help when they believe that doing so will unduly restrict their own freedom to act. Reactance theory applies most clearly where seeking help entails restrictions on physical movement (e.g., hospitalization) but a broader interpretation is possible. This generalized psychological disposition toward freedom of choice may be accentuated in the context of teaching and other professionalized occupations, where professional norms favor autonomy. Based on reactance theory, then, we can expect help to be welcomed to the extent that it expands a beginning teacher’s range of curricular or instructional options and sense of efficacy.  

To the extent that mentors are seen as agents of control who curtail curricular and instructional choice, however, help will be resisted. In one example, beginning teachers objected to teacher leaders’ implications that they were only “really teaching” when they employed narrowly defined “principles of effective instruction” or clearly observable “elements of an effective lesson plan” (Hart, 1988, pp. 10–11).

Attribution theories rely on persons’ own interpretations of the conditions and consequences of help to account for the incidence of help seeking. The complexities and subtleties of attribution theory cannot be represented adequately here, but certain main theoretical premises appear to have particular import for the success of mentoring in teacher induction. First, teachers are more likely to believe help is legitimate when they can attribute the need for help to the complexities of the task and the situation (external attribution) rather than to the limitations of their own competence (internal attribution). Formal teacher induction programs may induce receptivity to help by declaring publicly that the first years of teaching are especially demanding, regardless of individual skills and talents. Second, there is evidence that help is more often and more favorably accepted when it is offered than when it must be requested. The very act of requesting assistance may prompt internal attributions of failure (see also Gross, Wallston, & Piliavin, 1979). The prevailing norm of noninterference in teaching takes the form of an informal rule that one offers advice only when asked. Such an axiom may inadvertently depress help seeking.

In the fourth formulation developed by Fisher et al., the relationship
between the situational conditions that create a need for help and persons’ actual responses to aid are ultimately mediated by potential threats to self-esteem, social identity, and relations with others. To the degree that seeking or accepting help represents a threat to self-esteem, these theorists argue, persons will persist in attempts at self-help. To the extent that threats to self-esteem and social standing can be avoided (or advantage gained) persons will seek help from others. Combining this view with the other relevant theoretical frames, we can anticipate that threats to teachers’ self-esteem are alleviated when the helping relation with mentors stems from legitimately difficult circumstances rather than from personal inadequacy, when it permits or even requires a degree of reciprocity, when it adequately preserves the teacher’s freedom to act, and when it demonstrably contributes to the teacher’s success and satisfaction.

Teacher induction programs that are founded on the utility of help confront both the general cultural ambivalence about help seeking and specific occupational prohibitions surrounding interference in teaching. Independent of their individual capacities and dispositions, teachers’ attitudes toward mentoring are affected by general occupational images associated with professional autonomy and by local norms governing aid and assistance (Rosenholtz, 1989). Applying the broad social-psychological perspective associated with research on helping, Glidewell et al. (1983) examined the incidence of help among teachers. The central premise of their work is that stress-producing conditions can be expected to stimulate help seeking. In teaching and in other service professions, they argue, stress is exacerbated by lack of experience, lack of available expertise, ambiguity surrounding goal attainment, and departures from an optimal client load. These are factors that to varying degrees affect teachers in general, and that plausibly affect beginning teachers most. All other factors being equal, one might expect beginning teachers to be avid seekers of professional support or eager recipients of the support offered by others. But all other factors are not equal. In particular, Glidewell et al. demonstrate that the relationship between stress and help seeking is modified by teachers’ commitments to traditional norms of autonomy and equal status. The norm of autonomy not only establishes a right to independent practice, but also obligates practitioners to take care of their own problems; the norm of status equality constrains practitioners to reject implications of status difference. Where these traditional norms have been weakened or displaced by norms of collegial support, teachers openly request and offer help, and the predicted relationship between stress and help seeking is sustained. Under such circumstances, competence-based differences in status appear to be acceptable (see also Smith & Sandler, 1974). Responsibility for the successful induction of be-
beginning teachers or other newcomers is widely diffused. One of the five case study schools described in Meister’s (1987) review of school-based induction programs exemplifies this situation. Where the traditional norms hold sway, however, teachers find covert ways to relieve stress without exposing their difficulties. Overt requests for assistance are rare. Through “experience-swapping” they garner information, advice, and sympathy indirectly. Discussions of teaching acquire a piecemeal character, of doubtful depth and consequence.

The relations between social-psychological conditions and personal reactions are intensified where the tasks requiring help are crucial. The more central the focus of help to one’s professional identity (classroom instruction, in the case of teachers), the more salient become the conditions that support or threaten one’s sense of self. Where competence in teaching is judged by individual prowess in the classroom, help seeking may be suppressed as teachers attempt to hide errors and publicize successes (McLaughlin & Pfeifer, 1988). Teachers’ participation in mentoring may be affected directly by the external pressure to perform, and the consequences associated with failure. This is a prospect so far unexamined in the educational mentoring literature, although it has its parallels in business and industry (Zey, 1984): Genuine mentoring is more widespread under conditions of high interdependence, where each person bears the consequences of others’ success or failure.

In sum, recent advances in research on helping force us to examine more closely the taken-for-granted assumptions that undergird formal mentor programs. The character and consequences of mentors’ relationships with beginning teachers are productively placed in a broader social-psychological perspective, and formal mentor programs considered in the wider context of socialization into teaching.

Mentoring in the Context of Teacher Socialization

Studies of discrete induction activities form the largest single body of research explicitly centered on mentoring practices and relations. Precisely because of its association with specific initiatives, however, this research tends to display a narrowly programmatic conception of induction. It is virtually devoid of reference, for example, to the large and rich sociological and anthropological literature on induction into groups, societies, and occupations (Schlechty, 1985). Studies of teacher socialization help to locate mentoring roles and practices in the larger context of occupational and organizational induction. Although recent reviews of the teacher socialization literature give little or no explicit attention to the term mentoring, they do account for the role colleagues play in shaping teachers’ perspectives and practices (Zeichner & Gore, in press). Individual studies examine the power of fellow teachers as positive or negative
role models (Measor, 1985; Mead, 1989) and the norms governing advice giving among teachers that are central to mentoring (Glidewell et al., 1983; Little et al., 1984).

A socialization perspective makes central the web of professional relations and institutional purposes in which the mentor-teacher relationship resides. It permits us to trace the character and consequences of mentoring not only to the psychological dispositions and technical capacities of individuals, but also to the social context that enables or constrains such relationships (Smylie, 1989). It entertains a larger definition of the teacher’s role, encompassing the teacher in the classroom, as a member of a faculty, and as participant in a wider professional community (Little, 1987). To sort out the relative contributions made by mentors to beginning teachers’ success and satisfaction in teaching will require studies that encompass valued outcomes that range from a basic command of pedagogical technique to a capacity and inclination for well-informed innovation.

The broad socialization consequences of mentoring are masked by research designs that remain conceptually undeveloped and methodologically narrow. To date, we remain unable to assess the claims that have been made about the influence of mentoring on teachers’ classroom performance, their long-term development, or their career commitment. Most accounts are based on post hoc questionnaires (Huffman & Leak, 1986) or on interviews with mentors and teachers (Allen, 1989); there are no published accounts of observed mentoring in action, even though some study designs provide for observation of selected activities (Wasley, 1989). Most studies concentrate only on direct participants in induction programs. In the absence of a comparison group of unmentored teachers it is difficult to determine what, if anything, mentors contributed to the possible differences between painful and easy beginnings, as Huberman (1986) characterizes them. Analyses fail to distinguish various dimensions of involvement and impact, relying instead on global judgments of utility and anecdotal accounts of the content of interactions. Aggregate analyses of beginning teachers, mentors, or even mentor-teacher pairs obscure consequential aspects of the specific school context in which mentoring is attempted. Post hoc, global assessments of a mentor’s usefulness (Huffman & Leak, 1986) or official records of mentors’ activities (Odell, 1986) would be profitably supplemented by detailed histories of mentors’ interactions with beginning teachers. Such studies might productively combine elements of the structured field experiment, ethnography, and biography.

Program evaluations and case studies have only just begun to fill out a detailed picture of the actual work of mentors with beginning teachers. Despite theoretical and methodological limitations, certain themes
emerge. In the early stages of mentoring, consultation on curriculum and instruction takes second place to information or coaching about the system at large (Odell, 1986; Stoddart, 1989). Newcomers, whether new to teaching or new only to the local system, expect mentors to help them make sense of the institution’s formal and informal requirements and resources (Odell, 1986). Activities oriented toward emotional support constitute a small percentage of officially recorded support activities, but loom large in importance to beginning teachers (Allen & Pecheone, 1989; Huling-Austin, 1988). It seems likely that beginning teachers will judge even activities intended for other purposes in accordance with their effect on personal confidence and security.

The emphasis on comfort and harmonious relations between mentor and teacher may preclude productive confrontation with important but difficult matters of practice (Hollingsworth, 1989). In this, mentoring in support of beginning teachers differs from the informal mentoring that grooms selected individuals for leadership positions either in business (Zey, 1984) or in educational administration (Baltzell & Dentler, 1982). In these instances, the mentor’s and protégé’s career interests are closely linked. The prospects that they will rise or fall together help to drive an emphasis on competence. It is through close attention to practice that mentors become assured that their judgment (in recruiting the protégé) has been validated and that protégés acquire personal confidence in their professional competence. To uncover the complex connections between small practices and larger schema that advance understanding of teaching would seem to require both shared curiosity and joint scrutiny of practice. The relation between mentorship and “eased beginnings” ceases to seem self-evident. One might imagine, for example, that the presence of a mentor makes the first year of teaching more strenuous in the short run, even while promising substantial reward in the longer term. However, available accounts of mentoring suggest that mentors and beginning teachers spend too little time in one another’s company, and too little of that time on actual classroom work, to achieve such understanding.

Even linked to formal induction programs, mentoring remains a relatively low-incidence phenomenon; beginning teachers typically report sparing contact with their mentors (Allen & Pecheone, 1989). The dilemma is exacerbated when mentors and beginning teachers work at a distance, assigned to different schools, grade levels, or subjects, or committed to different beliefs about teaching and learning (Shulman & Colbert, 1987). This has been the impetus for districts to attempt subject and grade-level matches in pairing mentors with beginning teachers. Presumably, such matches permit the mentor to establish a persuasive set of credentials, both formal and experiential, and to supply a substantially rich base for advice, assistance, and consultation. When asked, teachers
claim to prefer a relationship with mentors whose present assignment or teaching history is close to their own (Huffman & Leak, 1986). However, interviews with teachers and mentors who have been matched on the basis of grade level and subject present a less clear picture (Allen & Pecheone, 1989). In districts where the mentor relation remains ambiguous, where norms of noninterference constrain mentors from posing tough questions about practice, and where mentoring takes place largely outside the classroom, there is little apparent return from an investment in subject and level matches. The attempt in teacher induction to achieve matchmaking through formal assignment appears to fail at least as often as it succeeds. It founders on its inability to produce genuine interdependence where it does not exist in the larger system, and by its inattention to local professional norms. It suffers, too, from uncertainty about how to reconcile the instrumental dimensions of the match (teaching assignment) with the inescapable social and emotional dimensions of personal interactions. In these respects, the experience in education parallels that of formal mentoring programs in business and government (Kram, 1986). Further, individual assignments have the effect of overemphasizing mentors' individual responsibilities for the success of beginning teachers, and masking the larger socialization context in which those teachers work. None of the available studies, however, has examined systematically the relationships among the amount of interaction, the character of the mentoring relationship, and the consequences for beginning teachers' performance and attitude. Such an analysis might address the policy problem posed by Huling-Austin (1988)—how much support is enough, or too much.

The litany of trouble surrounding the first years of teaching have been chronicled persuasively (Veenman, 1984). Coupled with the burgeoning research on the subtleties and complexities of expert classroom teaching (Berliner & Carter, 1986; Doyle, 1979; Jackson, 1968, 1986; Yinger, 1987), they suggest some of the reasons why mentoring might be judged personally and organizationally productive. Mentor roles have emerged as the favored strategic option in larger policy initiatives surrounding teacher induction at the local and state levels, taking precedence over other alternatives that might include reduced work load, peer group support, and formally structured staff development. The very prominence of mentor roles signals a characteristic policy stance. The disadvantages associated with an abrupt entry into teaching are to be relieved not by altering the student load that novice teachers confront, or by slowing the pace at which they assume the full tasks of teaching, but by increasing their access to pedagogical expertise, organizational savvy, and socioemotional support.

In principle, mentoring seems a sensible response to the present inade-
quacies of teacher induction. Problems of expert status are in some measure relieved by legitimate differences of perspective and experience that mentors bring to a relationship with beginning teachers. The recurrent problems of the first year teacher are reasonably well addressed by the cumulative research on effective classroom management and instruction. Formal induction projects present naturally occurring experiments, most of which use mentor roles as one of several elements in a larger configuration of support. Such roles have been credited with having greater effect on beginning teachers than other program elements (Huling-Austin, 1988), although we have only weak evidence on which to sustain claims for the special salience of mentoring. On the whole, program evaluations treat mentoring as a self-contained intervention (e.g., Huffman & Leak, 1986). To date, there is no published research designed to examine mentoring as one of several policy alternatives, or to test its relative power when other features of the setting are favorable or unfavorable. The occasional assistance typically available as part of a formal mentoring arrangement, for example, is unlikely to compensate for problems of teacher misassignment or other forms of work overload. Given the structural and cultural constraints on mentoring, its salience is likely to depend on the degree to which it is congruent with other forms of support in the lives of beginning teachers. Discrete program evaluations and narrowly conceived policy studies have done little to inform the larger picture, addressing fundamental questions about the place of mentoring in the improvement of teaching or the strengthening of the teacher work force. Mentoring in education has derived its main justification from inadequacies in the induction of teachers. The rationales remain to be tested, but the opportunities to do so are plentiful. Such tests will be most persuasive if they are informed by recent advances in the study of helping and by a broad perspective on socialization into teaching.

MENTORING OPPORTUNITIES AND TEACHERS’ CAREER ENHANCEMENT

A major impetus for the development of mentor roles and other teacher leadership opportunities rests with the public interest in a teacher work force that is competent, committed to teaching, and reasonably stable (Sykes, 1983). Mentorships are promoted on the grounds that such professional opportunities outside the classroom will help sustain the engagement and commitment of experienced teachers inside the classroom (Wagner, 1985). Less directly, the availability of mentorships and other specialized teacher leadership roles is expected to hold out an image of a more attractive career to those entering teaching.
Advancement Versus Retention

Case studies in business and in education provide an instructive contrast between conventional patterns of informal mentoring associated with career advancement and the emerging patterns of formal mentoring associated primarily with organizational entry or with institutional concerns for adequate levels of performance. In business and industry, informal mentoring has been the central element in a “system of professional patronage and sponsorship” (Shapiro, Haseltine, & Rowe, 1978, p. 55) devoted to long-term career development for a relatively small proportion of organizational newcomers (see also Kanter, 1977; Roche, 1979; Zey, 1984). In effect, mentors “oversee a career” for persons targeted for management positions (Zey, p. 7).

Mentorship survives, according to Zey (1984), on the basis of mutual benefits derived by the protégé, the mentor, and the organization at large. When the relationship is successful, the mentor boosts his or her own productivity through association with a capable protégé. The mentor’s work load is eased, or time is freed to take on more ambitious projects, as some share of the work is gradually assumed by the protégé. By intensive collaboration with the protégé, and by having to make his or her own knowledge clear, the mentor spawns new ideas and new methods at a higher rate. In the words of one corporate mentor: “Two cannot only work better than one; they can often work better than two” (p. 81). The mentor-protégé relation “expands areas of permissible inquiry” by making it acceptable to ask naive questions (p. 18). The mentor both develops and demonstrates the protégé’s knowledge and skill not by instruction or help but by orchestrating opportunity and by joint involvement in work. As the protégé wins the favorable attention of others in the organization, the mentor’s reputation as a “promoter of good people” grows, and the mentor’s own career prospects are enhanced. The protégé’s path through the promotional ranks is cleared. Opportunities to demonstrate competence and initiative are made more readily available, and are more shrewdly constructed by the mentor to highlight the protégé’s special talents. The organization, too, reaps certain benefits. Mentorship accelerates the pace at which newcomers acquire the technical, social, and political knowledge needed to succeed. Widespread mentoring helps to retain entrepreneurial individuals who might otherwise leave by assuring them adequate advancement opportunity and recognition, and by building personal as well as organizational loyalties within the corporation. A system of mentoring assures management succession and continuity. Together, these mutual benefits to mentor, protégé, and organization sustain the practice of mentoring; the supports for mentoring are weakened where the benefit to any of the
three is uncertain. Both for individuals and for the larger organization, however, these are benefits that take time to mature.

The purposes and practices of informal mentoring in business have no readily apparent counterpart in mentoring among teachers, although they do have clear parallels in the practices by which classroom teachers are informally groomed for positions as administrators or specialists (Baltzell & Dentler, 1982). Retention, not advancement, is the stated institutional aim of formal mentoring among teachers. This concern with retention shapes the conception of mutual benefit that underlies mentor programs. By granting experienced teachers the status and responsibilities of mentorship, districts expect those teachers to experience a renewal of their enthusiasm for teaching. Prospects for career advancement are not considered central, though some mentors do in fact move on to administrative positions (Ruskus, 1988). By asking mentors to devote their talents and energy to the support of beginning teachers, the district anticipates a lower turnover rate and more appropriate tenure decisions. For beginning teachers, the benefit is in relief of the stress of first year teaching and in enhanced prospects for job security (tenure). For the experienced teachers with whom mentors work, the benefit resides in an expanded pool of ideas, methods, and materials, or sometimes in relief from negative evaluations. For the mentor, the expected benefits begin with the status associated with the title, compensation, and other resources it brings. Mentors in education, as in business (Zey, 1984), celebrate the way in which their own performance and learning expands as they attempt to review and reveal what they know to others. In education, mentorship increases the mentors’ own access to still other professional development opportunities. Mentors in California districts, for example, were more likely than other experienced teachers to have observed in others’ classrooms, and to believe that their own teaching had improved as a result (Little et al., 1987). Ultimately, the benefits must extend to the psychic rewards that accompany a close and productive relationship with other adults, paralleling the intrinsic satisfactions of the classroom. For the organization, successful mentoring increases the return on investment in selecting and hiring, and permits public assurance regarding pretenure screening and the overall quality of the teacher workforce.

Mentoring in K-12 teaching thus neither promises nor is premised upon an advancement incentive, but rather on other dimensions of work that contribute to career satisfaction. In teachers’ conception of career, an emphasis on the quality of professional experience outweighs opportunities for promotion (Bennet, 1985; McLaughlin & Yee, 1988; Yee, 1986). Recent developments in the organizational theory literature offer an alternative orientation toward career, one that takes its point of departure from the work itself and the social identities of the persons who do it. By
this conception, teachers are considered members of an "occupational community" who weave their perspectives on work from the existing social, moral, physical, and intellectual character of the work itself. Individual assessments of work and career are cast in terms of one's getting better (or worse) at what one does, getting support (or interference) from others, exerting more (or less) influence over the nature of one's work, and so on. (Van Maanen & Barley, 1984, p. 289)

This perspective on career suggests a broadened treatment of retention, one which encompasses not merely teachers' decisions to leave teaching or remain in the classroom but rather a wider view of sustained (or diminished) engagement in teaching. Teachers may stay in teaching or leave it; they may leave temporarily and then return; they may reinforce their enthusiasms for the classroom or steadily withdraw their labor over time, effectively retiring on the job. Hart and Murphy (1989a), following Bluedorn's (1982) model of job turnover, propose a view of retention that encompasses not only decisions to leave teaching or remain, but a wider spectrum of attitudes, decisions, and choices regarding commitment. A similarly broad perspective underlies Ruskus's (1988) analysis of teachers' orientations toward their work. Ruskus distinguishes among teachers who have actually left education or who voice intent to leave ("attritors"), those who leave the classroom for other positions in education ("climb- ers"), those who are simply putting in time ("lifers"), and those whose enthusiasm and commitment remain high ("stars"). By applying a broadened conception of retention, researchers are able to explore the career consequences of teacher leadership in ways that are tapped inadequately by concrete decision points alone. In principle, the models that reflect such expanded perspectives retain greater sensitivity to the actual patterns of occupational participation that teachers exhibit. At present, however, there are no studies that compare retention of mentors or other program participants to system rates describing the retention or attrition of classroom teachers. These include rates for denial of tenure, involuntary layoff, voluntary attrition, promotion, dismissal, or retirement. Nor are there studies that locate mentorship in the ebb and flow of a teacher's subjective career (Huberman, 1989).

Although actual data on retention of mentors are meager, the evolving conceptual framework holds considerable promise. It entails a shift from a linear, sequential conception of career to one shaped around the experience of teachers in teaching. It holds out a view of retention that extends beyond decisions to leave or stay, encompassing the range of attitudes and actions that make up commitment to teaching. Finally, it places the individual in an institutional and social context in which other factors (lay-
offs, family obligations) may determine direct participation in the teacher work force.

**Power of the Career Incentive in Mentoring**

The development and support of formal mentor roles is a substantial policy investment. In California, for example, the budget devoted to the mentor program represents the largest single share of the state’s categorical staff development funding (Little et al., 1987). Its justification rests in large part on whether teachers find the role attractive. What do we know about the actual appeal of the mentor role, or about its power to secure or increase teachers’ enthusiasm for teaching?

The rhetorical literature is replete with proposals to policymakers and administrators for the timely development of teacher leadership roles, and with relatively sanguine assurances of their appeal to experienced teachers (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986). The research literature suggests a more lively interplay of support and opposition among teachers themselves. It has not escaped the notice of teachers’ organizations that the impetus behind teacher leadership positions and programs rests outside the teaching ranks (see, e.g., Cooper, 1988). Some critics argue that the expansion of teachers’ opportunities for collaborative work has been matched by a commensurate increase in external control over the substance of teachers’ work. Hargreaves (1989) asserts that “teachers are being urged and sometimes required to collaborate more, just at the point when there is less for them to collaborate about” (p. 29). But such commentaries fail to account for the fact that some teachers have in fact been actively involved in shaping such roles and have been eager to apply for them. So the question remains, for whom is the role an incentive?

Like most incentives, the opportunity to become a mentor is attractive to some and not others. Unlike other incentives, however, the success of mentoring (and thus the fulfilled promise of the incentive) depends on the direct participation or tacit acceptance of mentors by other teachers. The title of mentor, as Bird and Little (1985) have observed, “name[s] half of a relation” (p. 3). Thus, the nature and extent of its appeal to teachers is of special import. As part of their broader investigation of career ladder plans in Utah school districts, Hart and Murphy (1989a) assessed new teachers’ support for leadership positions held by more experienced teachers. The new teachers, all with 5 or fewer years of teaching experience, were ranked on the basis of grade point average (academic record) and principal ratings (current performance) to form three groups of varying promise in teaching. In all but 2 of the 20 cases selected for intensive interview, the ratings of academic preparation and current teaching performance coincided. The highest ranking teachers offered the greatest
support for differentiated roles, but also held out the most demanding standards for them: clear links between the tasks of leadership and the core functions of teaching and learning, stable and clearly differentiated opportunities (not short-term, marginal projects), and mechanisms for monitoring effort and impact. By contrast, low-ranking teachers were most likely to oppose or be indifferent toward the new roles, or to base their interest primarily on salary or on increases in teachers' power in governance and personnel matters. To construct the role in ways that catered to the concerns of the low-performing teachers might broaden the overall base of support in the short run, but almost certainly would result in losing the longer term participation and endorsement of precisely the target group of greatest interest to policymakers—the capable young teachers with high initial levels of enthusiasm and commitment. This evidence provides some grounds for advocating a more assertive definition of mentor roles. Missing from the equation so far, however, are the comparable orientations of high-performing and low-performing teachers at more advanced career stages.

Individuals' career histories and career aspirations may influence their decisions to pursue or avoid mentor positions. Research on teachers' careers has gradually abandoned its nearly exclusive attention to the first years of teaching and has begun to sketch the outlines of certain modal career cycles. The results have special significance for the study of formally devised career incentives, and particularly for incentives that carry with them certain professional obligations. The 160 Swiss secondary teachers in Huberman's (1989) 4-year study of teacher careers experience periods of engagement and disengagement, confidence and self-doubt, experimentation and retrenchment. These are patterns that change with time and circumstance. What teachers consider an incentive seems likely to vary with these fluctuations in experience and enthusiasm. Of particular interest here are those teachers in mid-career (7–18 years experience), whom Huberman characterizes as entering a period of experimentation and activism; such teachers may constitute the most receptive and appropriate pool of applicants for mentor positions. On the other hand, Huberman highlights that same period as one in which as many as 40% of teachers are specially prone to the kind of mid-career crisis that may prompt them to abandon the classroom. Would assuming a mentor role relieve such a crisis, or only exacerbate it? Ruskus (1988) distinguishes among mentors on the basis of their present orientation toward career. Among 12 mentors, only 4 professed to be firmly committed teachers. For 3, the mentor role served as one step along an intended path to administration. Of the remaining 5, 1 left teaching during the period of the study, and the remaining 4 expressed either intent to leave or a tenuous commitment to teaching. This profile of a small mentor population belies
the assumption that mentors are drawn exclusively from a pool of professionally ambitious and entrepreneurial teachers. Ruskus does not explicitly analyze the effect of mentorship on the enthusiasm, indifference, or alienation that mentors express toward teaching. Her implicit conclusion is that assuming a mentor role reinforces commitments where they exist, but does not moderate career disappointments or dissuade teachers from leaving. Other case examples lend credence to this interpretation.

When career histories are joined by other aspects of teachers' life history and local context, accounting for the differential appeal of the mentor role becomes yet more complex. Because much of the work of mentoring is added on to the school day, teachers' interest in becoming a mentor may be contingent on the number and intensity of other obligations, both in and out of school. Family obligations or community involvements compete with school demands. Even within the school, active participation in student activities, curriculum committees, or other out-of-classroom activity limits the availability of some of the most energetic teachers. For teachers who find themselves already stretched thin, preferred incentives are likely to be those that ease the burden. Embedded in the anecdotes collected in the implementation literature are alternative scenarios—preferences for increases in base compensation, more generous allotments of in-school preparation time, fewer course preparations. Asked if the mentor opportunity would hold him in teaching, one teacher responded, "I hope so. I can't guarantee it, though. It doesn't solve most of my personal concerns about being a teacher such as low public esteem, low salary. . . . It doesn't do anything to solve these problems" (Hanson et al., 1985, p. 28).

Just as teachers' present circumstances and future aspirations shape their response to the mentor role, so past disappointments may color their view. Teachers who have been thwarted in more conventional career pursuits may avoid any situations that require teachers to compete for career rewards on the basis of performance; it seems unlikely that "the embittered Mr. Pickwick," having failed to secure the administrative post he desired, would find mentorship an attractive prospect (Beynon, 1985).

Whatever the factors that enter into teachers' initial response to mentoring as a career incentive, the eventual power of the role lies in the experience it offers to the mentors themselves. Where mentors fail to reap personal and professional benefits from their work (Zey, 1984), or where the risks associated with mentoring outweigh the rewards (Yoder, Adams, Grove, & Priest, 1985), mentoring is inhibited. On the basis of present research, the benefits seem far from certain and the risks substantial. Some anecdotal accounts, to be sure, support proponents' claims. The vignettes constructed by Hanson et al. (1985) from interviews of mentor-teacher pairs are one example. In these vignettes, mentors detail the intrinsic re-
wards associated with their new role. Of 11 mentors, 8 stressed the satisfactions associated with helping others. Two of the 8 argued that the formal mentor role created a legitimate mechanism for sharing ideas and materials, and 2 others took pleasure in receiving compensation for work they had previously volunteered. Others derived intellectual stimulation from their new association with other mentors or teachers and from their expanded participation in conferences and workshops. Only 2 presented the mentor position as part of a clearly defined agenda for career advancement into the ranks of administration. One acknowledges,

I need the experience because I want to be an administrator. Basically I'm building a resume... The money is nice but it's not my real incentive. I am not just a teacher who is going to stay a teacher. I have aspirations. (p. 32)

But the benefits are by no means self-evident or uniformly accessible. Teachers who report having been mentored informally by peers found it hard to imagine what benefit the mentors derived from the experience (Gehrke & Kay, 1984). Although initially honored by their selection, mentors in formal programs subsequently experience considerable ambivalence, uncertain whether the mentor designation is a blessing or a burden (Allen, 1989; Hart, 1989; Shulman & Colbert, 1987). There is widespread evidence that teachers may experience an unwelcome transition from successful classroom teacher to failed mentor. Some of the basic conditions surrounding the role also undermine it. The time demands alone energize some, but exhaust many others (Hart, 1988). Problems of role stress—ambiguity, conflict, and overload—take their toll on teachers’ commitment and performance. Mentors may be subjected to the disdain and censure of colleagues, and find themselves for the first time having to account publicly for their performance (Bird, 1986; Hart, 1989). The relation between formal mentors and individual teachers tends to be a short-term affair, offering scant opportunity for the essential features of the relation to mature (Gray & Gray, 1985). And teachers’ own tenure in positions of mentorship itself is typically limited to a period ranging from a few months to 3 years. The shorter the period, the more deleterious the effects on mentors’ own classroom performance and the fewer the achievements in which they might take pride.

The power of the mentor role to serve as a career retention incentive is further enhanced or diluted by the immediate contexts in which mentors attempt their work. The power of context is glimpsed in small vignettes of mentors’ work (Allen 1989; Shulman & Colbert, 1987), but is analyzed more thoroughly in full-scale case studies informed by theoretical perspectives on work redesign and role innovation (Hart, 1989; Hart & Murphy, 1989b). The case studies generated in the wake of the Utah ca-
reer ladder experiment, although not focused specifically on mentor roles, examine a set of circumstances that closely parallel the implementation of mentor initiatives in other locales. Cross-site analyses illuminate some of the structural and cultural features that can be expected to distinguish a professionally rewarding mentor experience from one that produces only anxiety and frustration. Two schools studied in depth by Hart (1989) were in many respects comparable environments for classroom teaching, with similar student populations, faculty composition, and material resources. They were, however, radically different environments for the introduction of new teacher roles and altered professional relationships. In one school, where norms favored mutual support and problem solving, teacher leaders joined other teachers and the principal to fashion their new roles in the service of widely shared school goals. Leadership tasks were linked demonstrably to improvements in teaching and learning, and communication about both efforts and progress was frequent and public. A second school left its newly assigned teacher leaders to invent their own roles in relation to a faculty whose members jealously guarded their professional prerogatives. Teacher leaders in both schools suffered a certain degree of personal role conflict and overload, but only in the latter school was personal struggle to learn a new role compounded by stresses generated by faculty opposition, faculty pressure to account for their actions, and persistent ambiguity regarding the main purposes guiding their work. The Utah findings are echoed in other studies. Three teacher leaders who were interviewed and observed in their capacities as leaders (Wasley, 1989) “all mentioned that their greatest challenge was to break into the school culture” (p. 7). Although only one of the three leadership cases approximates in purpose and practice the role of a mentor, Wasley concludes, “These cases suggest that each teacher leadership position is firmly rooted in its own context and that context is critically important to the success of the role” (p. 27).

Finally, the incentive power of a new role is compromised to the extent that its present legitimacy and future stability are in doubt. Teachers experience the relative stability or instability of the incentive in two ways: continuity in an individual’s access to the role, and the continued existence of the formal role within the system at large (Hart, 1988). From an individual perspective, mentor roles constitute a small opportunity base—a scarce resource. California’s Mentor Teacher Program, for example, funds a maximum of 5% of a district’s teachers as mentors (Wagner, 1985). Only a relatively small percentage of teachers can occupy the roles at any one time, thus putting pressure on the system for short-term rotation of opportunities to expand the direct benefit to the largest possible pool of teachers. For the individual teacher, however, the power of the incentive is plausibly linked to one’s prospects for getting it, and one’s abil-
ity to remain in the position long enough to derive both its intrinsic and extrinsic rewards (and to offset the strains associated with learning a new role). Hart (1988) reports the shifting of views when one teacher who had argued previously for frequent rotation of opportunity began to see the merit of longer assignments: “all the training and the work the teacher leaders have been through would be lost if we turn it over so quickly. . . . We need more stability in the position” (p. 24). Another protests, “A career ladder’s not a ladder if you fall off it automatically every year” (p. 24). Most of the mentors interviewed by Hanson et al. (1985) asserted their intent to remain in teaching regardless of their future success in competing for mentorships, but there were exceptions. One teacher specifies clearly that he “will stay in the profession as long as he is mentor” (p. 46). In both studies, for at least some teachers, the association between leadership opportunities and long-term career commitments was tied closely to issues of individual access. Individual interests are thus in tension with system imperatives.

As a career incentive, then, mentor roles appear to have differential appeal among individuals, differential power to affect retention compared to other incentives, and differential significance under varying contextual conditions. Furthermore, the power of the incentive can be expected to wax and wane as individual circumstances evolve, as the configuration of other incentives and disincentives shifts, and as elements of context yield greater or lesser support for mentors’ work.

CONCLUSION

Mentoring among teachers in American schools has been spurred by public and professional debate over the quality of the work force, the vigor of the teaching occupation, and the conditions of improvement in schools. The proliferation of mentor programs results not from a groundswell of teacher interest, but is largely a product of policy interests and institutional concerns. Increased public attention to certification, tenure decisions, and teacher evaluation has driven the development of formal mentor roles. Much of the research, in turn, has taken the form of policy studies or program evaluations conducted in sites and settings shaped by formal intervention. In local schools, mentors fulfill three basic functions: They are guides to beginning teachers during a period of induction; they form a local cadre of staff developers or teacher consultants; and they lead or support program and curriculum development ventures. Of these, teacher induction programs provide the main setting in which the promise of mentoring has been tested. In all of them, however, the logic of help giving dominates. It is in this regard, primarily, that mentoring among teachers departs from traditions of informal mentoring in
business and industry, where career advancement is the driving force and the main source of rewards for both mentor and protégé.

On the whole, research has been slow to pursue some of the larger questions implicit in the choice of mentoring as a favored policy option for supplying career retention incentives to experienced teachers and for expanding professional support in schools. There are few comprehensive studies, well informed by theory and designed to examine in depth the context, content, and consequences of mentoring. But the themes that run through smaller studies prove remarkably consistent. From a range of discrete investigations, we can piece together a picture of the emergence of formal mentor roles through the implementation of local and state-sponsored programs. We can begin to test the instrumental power of mentoring to relieve the reality shock associated with teacher induction or to stimulate innovations in curriculum and instruction. We also can begin to assess the incentive power of the role by finding whom it attracts, and why, and what rewards they find in the role over time.

Attempts to introduce mentoring relations into the formal structures of schools and districts display a marked conservatism. Formal programs reflect persistent pressures to narrow the definitions of the mentor role, accommodating (and thus helping to preserve) traditional norms of privacy and equal status. In the face of uncertainty, districts and schools have sought bureaucratic solutions to problems of professional relationship, employing job descriptions, selection criteria, and the regulation of opportunity to diminish problematic implications of the mentors’ greater expertise, maturity, and status. From many of the case study scenarios, one is left with the sense that the problems surrounding the emergence of mentor roles are conceived as problems of a program to be marketed rather than as problems of a culture to be built.

The conservative tenor of implementation is reinforced where the purposes of mentoring remain ambiguous, where compromises are made with regard to selection, and where mentors’ opportunities to earn teachers’ respect are diminished by constraints on time and visibility. Mentors are inhibited further in their claims to special expertise and special status—claims that are inescapably implied by their title—by the relative scarcity of favorable precedents for leadership on matters of professional practice. In their efforts to fulfill their obligations, mentors encounter both general cultural ambivalence about help giving and specific occupational prohibitions regarding interference in others’ work. In effect, they must engage in a precarious form of improvisation, writing the script and performing the play at one and the same time for an audience whose sympathy is far from certain. There is a certain poignancy in the portraits of mentors’ work.

Formally structured mentoring among teachers, by comparison to the
images evoked in the tale of Mentor and Telemachus (or other famous mentors and protégés), tends to be a narrowly conceived affair with narrowly utilitarian purposes. The features of mutuality and comprehensiveness, distinguishing marks of genuine mentor relations, are hard to detect. Pieced together, mentors’ and teachers’ accounts add up to a picture of a formal role much diminished in substance and stature from the one reflected in our broad cultural images. The relations between mentors and teachers, on the whole, stress matters of comfort over issues of competence. They provide socioemotional support but appear to exert little influence on teachers’ thinking or performance. Teachers are more likely to credit mentors with providing moral support or enlarging a pool of material resources than with exerting direct influence on their curriculum priorities or instructional methods. In the end, these relations appear less mutually respectful than simply mutually reticent. The blatant disparity between the promise of the title and the patterns of practice led a teacher in one study to lament (even while crediting a mentor’s assistance), “Where is the real mentoring?!” (Hanson et al., 1985, p. 27).

Though there are some significant exceptions in the case literature, mentors more often are constrained than enabled by the organizational circumstances in which they work. Some of these circumstances lend themselves to policymaking and bureaucratic control; others do not, and are more properly the object of leadership than rule making. To the extent that ambitious, assertive conceptions of the mentor role have been legitimated and defended, however, mentors appear more likely to engage in the kinds of relations and activities that one might, by common sense, associate with mentoring. Where more limited conceptions prevail, the activities and relations approximate familiar constructions of extra work for extra pay.

The promise of the mentor role rests in its ability to attract those teachers whose professional record is highly regarded and who thus are able to secure the admiration and acceptance of other teachers. The power of the mentor role to serve as an incentive to career retention and enhanced commitment has received far less attention in the research literature than its more instrumental aspects, despite the prominent attention to career incentives in the policy rhetoric. The major gains have been conceptual rather than empirical. Theorists have recast retention to include not only concrete decision points or events (to leave or to stay), but a long-term set of attitudes and actions by which commitment is enhanced, sustained, or eroded. Students of teachers’ lives and careers show how the concern with retention might be located in a still broader conception of teachers’ careers. And theories of work redesign and role innovation place questions of career incentive in the context of the relation between individual and institution.
The empirical gains are fewer. Anecdotal evidence, threaded through the case studies, suggests some preliminary, highly tentative, conclusions. The attractiveness of the role and thus the incentive to compete for it in the first place appears to be a function of both individual career orientation and organizational context. The effect of the incentive is bolstered to the extent that teachers are able to match their images of the role with the opportunities they actually encounter and the responses they meet from teachers and administrators. It is diminished, predictably, when the stresses of the new role outweigh its rewards—a not uncommon development, it appears. Although cast as a career incentive for experienced teachers and a resource for schools, mentorships turn out to place individuals in a personally and organizationally precarious position. The mutual benefits standard is met only with considerable difficulty.

The research on mentoring reflects its pragmatic origins. Policy interests and programmatic considerations have dominated; simple restatements of policy rationales have generally substituted for more clearly articulated and robust theoretical perspectives. A more rigorous theoretical base is clearly available. Implementation studies have employed theories of work redesign and role innovation to account for the emergence of mentor roles and for the particular form they have assumed. Similarly, research on the contributions of mentoring to teacher induction will be enriched by advances in research on help giving or by theoretical perspectives on socialization into occupations, organizations, and groups. To grasp the significance of mentor roles as career incentives will require that we locate mentoring opportunities within a broader perspective on teachers' lives and careers.

Added theoretical rigor brings certain methodological demands. The characteristic limitations that Speizer (1981) associates with studies of mentoring in business and the professions apply equally in education. Among the characteristic limitations are small sample sizes, an overreliance on retrospective accounts, the absence of control or comparison groups, and the scarcity of longitudinal designs. Although many of the available studies of mentoring in education employ multiple sites, the number of sites generally remains small, and there is little evidence of systematic variation in those contextual features most likely to affect outcomes. Relatively few have been fully conceived and analyzed as comparative cases adequate to the underlying questions of theory, policy, and practice. There are virtually no structured studies that compare formal mentor arrangements with the conditions, contexts, dynamics, and consequences of naturally occurring mentor relations. Nor are there studies that compare mentoring to other policy alternatives in teacher induction or in the domain of career incentives. Most studies are cross-sectional, concentrated on the early stages of program implementation.
and role developments. Many of the crucial questions surrounding the emergence of the mentor role, its nature, and consequences, cannot be addressed without longitudinal designs that distinguish between short-term and long-term effects on individuals and institutions.

The characteristic limitations of small samples (an inevitability in the study of teacher leadership positions) might be compensated more persuasively by other aspects of research design. Sampling and selection strategies, for example, only rarely account for the web of social and professional relations in which mentors attempt their work. Designs that sample mentor-teacher pairs offer greater power, though sometimes they are weakened by a selection bias introduced when mentors control the selection of teachers to be interviewed. When this occurs, the sample is disproportionately composed of successful pairs. Other anecdotal and survey evidence suggests that the experience reported by such pairs is not typical. The problems of a small sample are compounded further by limitations on sources and types of data. Although the pool of case materials has grown steadily, permitting a more systematic examination of the actual circumstances and practices of mentoring, the available evidence often lacks credibility. Most studies rely heavily on in-depth interviews that reveal mentors' perceptions, but also are constrained by mentors' perspectives and experiences. The perspectives of teachers at large, teacher protégés in particular, or administrators are represented more sparingly. Observations of mentors' work are rare in study designs, and rarer still in published reports. Nonetheless, the sheer scale of practical experimentation with mentor roles suggests that methodological remedies, like theoretical sophistication, are well within reach.

This review has been constructed not only to assess and organize the available research, but also to shape an agenda for subsequent research and professional debate. Debates over the meaning of mentorship in education derive in part from a Western cultural legacy in which the name of Mentor signifies wisdom, maturity, and a personal investment in the capacities and fortunes of the protégé. And, on a more contemporary front, they derive from an implicit comparison to perceived parallels in business and industry, where mentorship is first and foremost a form of sponsorship, a mechanism by which promising candidates are groomed for the ranks of management. The specific meaning of mentoring among American elementary and secondary teachers has only begun to emerge from a handful of comprehensive implementation studies and from a larger array of small-scale program descriptions and program evaluations.

This review began with a conundrum: how to account for the rapidly escalating popularity of mentoring in an occupation that provides few precedents for formal and legitimate leadership by teachers on matters of professional practice. In many respects, the puzzle remains to be solved.
Woven throughout quite diverse inquiries is a persistent ambiguity about the meaning of the very term of mentor, and a certain skepticism that mentor relationships at their richest could be achieved by formal arrangement. Yet the twin aims of formal mentor programs—to reward and inspire experienced teachers, while tapping their accumulated wisdom in the service of teachers and schools—contain the elements necessary to satisfy the criterion of mutual benefit that sustain practices of mentoring elsewhere. That standard of mutual benefit seems a worthy point of departure for research and for practice.

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