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Finding a Mentor in the Practice of Law: An Empirical Inquiry

David L. Chambers

University of Michigan Law School, dcham@umich.edu

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Finding a Mentor in the Practice of Law: An Empirical Inquiry

David L. Chambers

Note added in 2019

In 1967, the University of Michigan Law School began an annual survey of selected classes of its alumni. The survey was administered by mail for forty consecutive years until 2006, when it was suspended upon the retirements of the survey's long-time co-directors, David L. Chambers and Terry K. Adams. In 2014, the survey was revived by Professor J. J. Prescott and was continued annually thereafter online.

What follows here is a reasonably polished but not fully complete draft of an article written by Chambers in 2001, based on the data collected up to that point. Chambers never completed some of the analyses he intended to include and the piece was never published as an article. Thus, the accuracy of the tables and other statistical figures in the draft have not been double-checked as they would have been if published. To verify the findings reported here and for access to additional data from years after the Project was revived, qualified researchers may apply for access to the full Project dataset. For guidance, go to https://repository.law.umich.edu/alumni_survey/alumni_survey_dataset.html.

For important background information on the Project, the reader is encouraged to read The University of Michigan Law School Alumni Survey Project: Description, Scope and Limits (2019), a seven-page memo available on this website. https://repository.law.umich.edu/alumni_survey_scholarship/

David L. Chambers
August 2019

DRAFT
Alumpaper-mentors
December 12, 2001, edits 2019

**Finding a Mentor in the Practice of Law:
An Empirical Inquiry**

by David L. Chambers*

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* Wade H. McCree, Jr., Collegiate Professor, University of Michigan Law School

Introduction

Here is some familiar folklore about the practice of law. The way to get ahead is to be taken under the wing of a mentor. A good mentor will teach you what you need to know, give you plum assignments, and advocate for you within the workplace. Mentors are especially important in law firms with many partners, because promotion to partnership will generally turn on having the support of a powerful promoter. Unfortunately, the lore continues, partners in law firms are attracted to mentor associates they see as like them and, since most partners in American law firms have white men, associates who are women and minorities face a harder time than white male associates in attracting a mentor and, in turn, a harder time becoming partners.

Every year, the University of Michigan Law School surveys its graduates who have been out of law school five, fifteen, twenty-five, thirty-five and forty-five years. For many years, the survey has asked the graduates five and fifteen years out of law school whether they have had one or more “especially helpful” mentors in their careers since law school. The question was asked not only of those who have worked in private law firms, but also of those who practices law in other settings, such as government agencies and corporate counsel offices. This article reports on the responses of nearly seven thousand alumni, with a particular focus on the responses of those five years out of law school surveyed over the over a sixteen year period between 1985 and 2000. As we will see, most Michigan graduates – over sixty percent – reported having had an “especially helpful mentor.”

In large part our study has confirmed the folklore about the importance of mentors in the practice of law, though only for those practicing law in law firms. Mentors seem to play much

less of a role for the success of those working in government legal offices, corporate counsel offices, and public interest or legal services settings. Far fewer respondents reported having had a mentor in these settings, and those who have had a mentor in these settings reported neither higher work satisfaction nor higher earnings than those who have not.

The story is otherwise for those in firms. Among those whose first jobs after law school were in a law firm, having had a mentor is strongly related to the probability that they were still working at the same firm five years after graduation. Among all those working in law firms five years after graduation, those who have had a firm mentor report significantly higher career satisfaction than those who've had no mentor. They also much more commonly report expecting to be working at the same firm in five more years. Among graduates who responded to surveys both at five years and at fifteen years after law school, those who reported having a mentor in a firm when five years out were much more likely to report when fifteen years out that are now a partner in the same firm. More broadly, among those working in firms fifteen years after graduation, those who've had mentors earn more money than those who did not.

It is when an explanation is sought for the differences between those who found mentors and those who didn't that some of our results may be. If we group all types of work settings together, firms, women report having had an "especially helpful" mentor since law school slightly more frequently, not less frequently, than men, and minority graduates report having mentors as frequently as whites report a mentor. On the other hand, looking at law firms only, while women report having had mentors there as frequently as men, minority graduates who have worked in private firms report having had a mentor somewhat less frequently than whites do. Within the data available to us the factors that seem most closely related to having a

mentor are not sex or race but positive attitude and zeal. The graduates who most frequently find mentors seem to be those who come to their first employer, and particularly to a first law firm, with the greatest drive to succeed in that setting.

Still, at least with regard to women, a paradox persists. Though women who begin their professional careers in a law firm are slightly more likely than men to report having had a mentor in a firm, they far less frequently than men to become partners in their original firm and far more frequently than men leave private practice altogether. This finding suggests either that women's mentors are not as helpful in promoting them as men's mentors are or that some other reason unrelated to mentoring propels them to leave the firms. Our data suggests that the latter is the more likely explanation.

For both women and men, of course, having had a mentor does not guarantee career success. Nor does not having had a mentor necessarily lead to failure or dissatisfaction. Many private practitioners who report having a mentor are comparatively dissatisfied with their careers and many others who've had no mentor are contented and prospering.

Mentors and Lawyers: The Sparse Literature

In the late 1970s, social scientists interested in corporations and the professions started writing about the importance of the mentoring relationship to success in these settings.¹ At first,

¹ For a helpful review of the mentoring literature, see Faye J. Crosby, "The Developing Literature on Developmental Relationships," in Audrey J. Murrell, Faye J. Crosby, and Robin J. Ely, eds., *Mentoring Dilemmas: Developmental Relationships within Multicultural Organizations*, at 3-20 (Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahwah, N.J. 1999).

the critical claim, captured well in the title of a Harvard Business Review article in 1978 was simply that “Everyone Who Makes It Has a Mentor.”²

In the intervening years, the issue of mentorship has been absorbed within a growing literature on “developmental relationships.” Observers have identified two quite different sorts of functions served by those they denominate as “mentors” -- direct, career-advancing functions (as teacher of skills and as promoter) and psychosocial functions (as counselor, cheerleader, and friend).³ Predictably, scales and instruments have been developed to assess the varying functions of a developmental relationship.⁴ Using these and similar measures, researchers have found that, within corporate settings, persons with mentors have greater chances for advancement, higher earnings, and higher job satisfaction.⁵ They have also found that, in many organizations, what is important is not securing a single mentor, but securing multiple mentors as well as sponsors, a term of art describing persons within an organization who promote a junior person but who do not have a close personal relationship with him or her.⁶

² F.J. Lunding, G.L. Clements, and D.S. Perkins, 56 Harv. Bus. Rev.89 (July-Aug. 1978).

³ See, e.g., Kathy E. Kram, *Mentoring at Work: Developmental Relationships in Organizational Life* (1988).

⁴ Belle Rose Ragins, and D.B. McFarlin, Perceptions of Mentor Roles in Cross-Gender Mentoring Relationships, 37 J. of Vocational Behavior 321 (1990).

⁵ See E. Faganson, The Mentor Advantage: Perceived Career/Job Experiences of Proteges versus Non-Proteges, 10 J. of Organizational Behavior 309 (1989); W. Whitely, T. Dougherty, and G. Dreher, Correlates of Career-Oriented Mentoring for Early Career Managers and Professionals, 13 J. of Organizational Behavior 141 (1992).

⁶ See Linda Hill and Nancy Kamrath, *Beyond the Myth of the Perfect Mentor: Building a*

From the outset, much of the writing about developmental relationships has focused on the special issues facing junior women within organizations run largely by men.⁷ Early articles anticipated that women would have difficulty obtaining mentors, but, recently, reviewing dozens of articles and studies primarily in the corporate context, Regina O'Neill et al have concluded that "In the simplest terms, the gender of a junior person does not influence the person's probability of becoming a protégé."⁸ When interviewed, women and men in nearly all settings report having had a mentor at approximately the same rates. Similarly, senior women in organizations report having protégés as frequently as senior men. Some researchers have speculated that, despite the similar frequency of mentoring, women and men look for different qualities in mentors, men caring more about advancement and women about psychological support, but it appears that in fact women and men in corporate settings receive, overall, about the same levels of instrumental and psychosocial help.⁹

Much less has been written about the experience of minorities seeking mentors in white-run organizations.¹⁰ One study of recent MBA's does report that minorities secure mentors less

Network of Developmental Relationships, Harvard Business School (June 1998)

⁷ See Rosabeth Kanter, Men and Women of the Corporation (1977).

⁸ Regina M. O'Neill, Sylvia Harden, and Faye J. Crosby, "Gender Issues in Developmental Relationships," in Murrell, Crosby and Ely, *supra*, at 63-82.

⁹ *Id* at 70-72.

¹⁰ See Gail M. McGuire, Do Race and Sex Affect Employee's Access to and Help from Mentors? Insights from the Study of a Large Corporation, in Murrell, Crosby and Ely, *supra*, at

frequently than whites.¹¹ Another large study, of the employees of a very large financial services corporation found no differences by race, but did find that people of color report more frequently than whites receiving “socioemotional” sorts of help from their mentors, while whites report more frequently than people of color receiving instrumental sorts of help.¹²

Research on mentors in the legal profession is much more scarce. Only a few empirical studies of the legal profession as a whole have asked about mentors. The largest was undertaken by the American Bar Association in the early 1980s. As part of the National Survey of Career Satisfaction, respondents were asked “Do you have a mentor in your place of work who furthers your career and gives you advice?” The question was asked in the present tense and thus seemed to exclude persons who had once been but were no longer serving as mentors. Nonetheless, despite the fact that the study included persons in practice for a great many years, 38 percent of those in private practice reported that they “have a mentor.” Reanalyzing the dataset some years later, David Laband and Bernard Lentz sought to explain who did and did not report having had such a mentor.¹³ Using logistic regression models, they found that women and minorities were no less likely than men or whites to report having a mentor. Nor were grades in

105, 106.

¹¹ T. Cox and S. Nkomo, *A Race and Gender-Group Analysis of the Early Career Experiences of MBAs*, 18 *Work and Occupations* 431 (1991)

¹² See McGuire, two footnotes above, at 111-114.

¹³ *Workplace Mentoring in the Legal Profession*, 61 *Southern Econ. J.* 783 (January 1995).

law school, marital status or having children related to the incidence of having a mentor. Of the data available to them, years of experience in practice was positively related to having a mentor and (not surprisingly) being in solo practice was strongly negatively related. They also found that, after taking other factors into account, such as sex and firm size, being a protégé of a mentor was positively related to income.

Most of the other writing about mentoring in the legal profession concentrates on the position of women and minorities, particularly in the context of large private firms, where in general women and minorities become partners at a lower rate than men. In this literature, there is some tension between studies with a statistical foundation and others that are more observational and rhetorical. The latter are likely to assert or assume that women and minorities have comparative difficulty in finding mentors;¹⁴ the empirical studies sometimes but less commonly report any significant differences.¹⁵

¹⁴ See, e.g., Elizabeth K. Ziewacz, *Can the Glass Ceiling Be Shattered? The Decline of Women Partners in Large Law Firms*, 57 Ohio St. L. J. 971, 982 (1996). (“In large firms, women generally lack these [mentoring] relationships with powerful senior attorneys who could assist in their development as lawyers.”); Grace M. Giesel, *The Business Client is a Woman: The Effect of Women as In-House Counsel on Women in Law Firms and the Legal Profession*, 72 Neb. L. Rev. 760, 777-78 (“Women [in firms] generally lack mentoring relationships with powerful senior attorneys who can assist them in obtaining choice assignments. . . . Senior male attorneys shy away from mentoring female associates for a plethora of reasons, most of which probably relate to a desire to avoid the slightest appearance of sexual impropriety, the desire to associate with the familiar as opposed to the unfamiliar, and opinions about the competence and commitment of female attorneys

¹⁵ See, e.g., Mobley, , and ,(1995) (reporting on a study of Georgia attorneys and finding no statistically significant differences between the rates at which women and men reported having a mentor).

Within the last decade or so, numerous commissions have been created by state bar associations to examine the position of women attorneys within their states and many of these reports have included interviews and surveys that include questions about mentors. For example, in the early 1990s, Cynthia Fuchs Epstein and a group of others conducted an extensive study on behalf of the Bar Association of the City of New York. They interviewed 174 attorneys in eight large New York law firms¹⁶ where the proportion of women among associates had been steadily growing but the proportion of women among new partners had been growing at a considerably slower pace.¹⁷ The report includes extensive discussion of mentoring.¹⁸ Both women and men attorneys agreed that “connecting with senior attorneys who take a special interest in one’s career progress is critical to moving up the ladder in the firms,”¹⁹ but even though the study as a whole was focused on obstacles to success for women, Epstein and her co-authors found no differences between women and men in the extent to which they reported having found mentors. They also found that women and men were equally assertive about seeking out such relationships.²⁰ The one gender-based difference Epstein reported was not

¹⁶ Cynthia Fuchs Epstein, Robert Saute, Bonnie Oglensky, and Martha Gever, *Glass Ceilings and Open Doors: Women’s Advancement in the Legal Profession*, 64 *Fordham L. Rev.* 291.

¹⁷ *Id.* at 302, 317.

¹⁸ *Id.* at 342-56.

¹⁹ *Id.* at 345.

²⁰ *Id.* at 349.

about the sex of the mentee, but about the sex of the mentor. Some women and men were hesitant to rely on women as mentors in large part it seems because women tend to be “less powerful than men in the firms.”²¹ Epstein also reported a “pervasive sense of guilt among female partners” for failing to take the initiative to mentor female associates.

In 1998, Cathlin Donnell, Joyce Sterling, and Nancy Reichman conducted a similar study based on extended interviews with 100 experienced attorneys in law firms in the Denver metropolitan area, approximately half of whom were women.²² Nearly all the lawyers interviewed identified one or more persons who had been a “mentor” to them, though the content of the notion of what it meant to be a mentor differed widely among them. Unlike Epstein, Donnell does report that women found greater difficulty in securing mentors. They found that in general lawyers are “more comfortable mentoring younger attorneys of the same sex.”²³ Their interviews also suggested that senior women were failing to mentor other women in significant numbers. If a woman had a mentor at all, it was disproportionately a man who performed the role for her.²⁴

Regarding race, David Wilkins and others, writing in the context of corporate firms have

²¹ Id. at 353.

²² Gender Penalties: The Results of the Career and Compensation Study (Colorado Women’s Bar Assn. 1998)

²³ Id. at 54.

²⁴ Id. at 55-57.

tried to explain why there are so few lawyers of color, and particularly partners of color, at large corporate firms.²⁵ Wilkins has sought to explain the structural reasons why fewer minorities are hired by the largest firms and why those who are hired nearly always leave before becoming partners.²⁶ He believes that one of the serious barriers facing those who find work in such a firm is that “they are less likely than whites to find mentors who will give them challenging work and provide them with advice and counseling about how to succeed at the firm.”²⁷ In his survey of black Harvard graduates in large firms, he found that fewer than 40 percent reported having a partner who took an interest in their careers and that most who had left said that the absence of a mentor had been a significant reason.²⁸ He did not have a comparison sample of white graduates, but believed that his conclusion that blacks face comparative difficulties was supported by the observations of others.

The University of Michigan Alumni Survey

Each year since 1973, the University of Michigan Law School has administered a survey by mail to the class that graduated five years before. As of the year 2000, 28 consecutive classes

²⁵ See David B. Wilkins and G. Mitu Gulati, *Why Are There So Few Black Lawyers in Corporate Law Firms? An Institutional Analysis*, 84 *Calif. L. Rev.* 493 (1996); Linda Davila, *The Underrepresentation of Hispanic Attorneys in Corporate Law Firms*, 39 *Stan. L. Rev.* 1403 (1987). An interesting account of one person's experiences is Paul M. Barrett, *The Good Black: A True Story of Race in America* (Dutton 1999).

²⁶

²⁷ *Id.* at 568.

²⁸ *Id.*

have been surveyed five years after graduation. The law school also surveys its graduates 15, 25, 35 and 45 years after graduation.²⁹ The University of Michigan is the only law school in the country that conducts surveys of its alumni on a regular basis.

The survey has seven pages of questions. Its initial two pages ask about parents, about marital status and children and about the respondents' law school experiences. The rest of the survey concentrates on the respondents' career since law school, asking, among other things, about first jobs, about numbers of jobs and years in various settings, and about many aspects of the current job, including substantive areas of practice, numbers of co-workers, income and many aspects of satisfaction. Each year, the information gathered from the mail survey is merged with other information from the law school's records, including LSAT scores and undergraduate and law school grades. In 1985, a few questions about mentors were added to the survey instrument for both the five-year and fifteen-year survey instruments. In each of the 16 years of surveys since then, the following question has been asked:

In your career since law school, has there been one person (or two) who served as an especially helpful mentor to you?

yes no

For the same 16 classes five years after law school, two additional questions were asked of those who answered the first question "yes." We asked "in what setting(s) did you have such a mentor?" and provided boxes for judicial clerkships, law firms, government agencies and three

²⁹ The classes 15 years out of law school have been surveyed every year since 1967. The surveying of the classes 25, 35 and 45 years out began much more recently, in 1997.

other possible settings. We also asked whether the mentors had been “a woman or women,” “a man or men,” or “both men and women.”

This article focuses on the (exactly) 4000 responses to the surveys of the classes of 1980 through 1995 conducted five years after graduation, including 1081 members of the classes of 1980 through 1985 who have responded to both a five-year and fifteen-year survey. For these survey years, response rates to the survey have varied across time, gradually drifting downward. Among the classes five years out, the mean overall response rate was 65.8 percent with a high of 74.7 percent for the class of 1982 surveyed in 1987 and a low of 59.1 percent for the class of 1993 surveyed in 1998.³⁰

Since the survey includes only three questions about mentors, it can illuminate only a few central aspects of the mentoring phenomenon -- the incidence of mentoring by setting and by sex of mentor. From this limited data, we can learn whether or not a person has ever had a mentor in a law firm or in government, but we cannot tell in exactly what year the mentoring relationship was formed or, if the respondent has worked in more than one private firm, whether the mentor relation was within the current firm for which the respondent works as opposed to some prior firm. On the other hand, the broad focus of the survey permits us to link the responses to the mentoring questions with a wide array of other information in order to explore what sorts of persons secure a mentor and a mentor’s possible effects on career. The

³⁰ Among the 5 year respondents, the response rate of women and men is nearly identical (65.6 percent of women, 65.9 percent of men). As with the 15 year graduates, however, there is a substantial difference between the response rate of minorities (49.5 percent) and whites (68.5 percent). MN1.

broad focus also helps ameliorate the problem of self-selection: no one filling out this quite general questionnaire would believe that it has a primary focus on mentors and thus no one would make a decision about whether to respond to the survey based on strong feelings one way or another about their mentoring experiences.

Before reporting results, we want to offer two warnings. First, ours is a study of a single school's graduates. Michigan's graduates might be different from the graduates of other law schools in many ways that bear on their mentoring experience. It is possible, for example, that fewer Michigan graduates have mentors than the graduates of schools where nearly all the alumni work nearby and take a paternal and protective attitude toward the graduates of their alma mater. Conversely, since Michigan attracts more employers to interview its students than most schools do, Michigan's graduates may more generally be in a position to pick an employment setting where they sense a good fit for themselves and a likelihood of finding a person to take them under their wing. The short of our warning is that the findings we have reached with regard to Michigan's alumni may not mirror the experience of the alumni of other schools.

Our second warning is that, because we have such a large sample, differences that we report as having "statistical significance" are often differences of no practical significance in the lives of the lawyers we surveyed. Thus, when we report that among the graduates five years out of law school 66.0 percent of the women and 62.6 percent of the men report having had an "especially helpful" mentor at some point in their career since law school and that the difference is statistically significant, the reader should remember that from the point of view of anyone,

male or female, looking at our data for purposes of calculating their odds of finding a mentor, there is no meaningful distinction between the two figures.

What Functions Have Mentors Served?

The Michigan survey question that asks whether the respondent has had “an especially helpful mentor” in their career since law school neither defines the term “mentor” nor explains what it means by the phrase “especially helpful.” In order to learn what our respondents’ considered the attributes of an “especially helpful mentor,” we added an open-ended questions in one annual round of our surveys asking simply, “What did your mentor(s) do that was especially helpful?” and left 2 lines for an answer.³¹ We found, as have others, that mentors were helpful in multiple ways -- as teachers, as models, as confidants, as boosters, and as friends.³²

Respondents’ most frequent response related to their mentor as teacher. Many answers were highly general, such as “helped train me,” “provided feedback on work,” and “taught me practical aspects of practicing law.” Many others mentioned training in specific fields or specific lawyering skills: “trained me in commercial transactions,” “taught me how to prepare pleadings, litigation strategy,” and “how to handle a large case load.” One woman respondent described the

³¹ The survey conducted in 1994 of the classes of 1979 and 1989.

³² For discussions of the functions of mentors in firms, see Cynthia Fuchs Epstein, Robert Saute, Bonnie Oglensky, and Martha Gever, *Glass Ceilings and Open Doors: Women's Advancement in the Legal Profession*, 65 *Fordham L. Rev.* 291, 343-56 (1995); Cathlin Donnell, Joyce Sterling, and Nancy Reichman, *Gender Penalties: The Results of the Career and Compensation Study* 49-57 (1998).

training given her at somewhat greater length: “I had a mentor [in a firm] who was particularly helpful in training my litigation skills. After a deposition, hearing or trial, he would take time to go over with me what had occurred. He would sit in on my depositions, hearings or trials and review my performance in detail in ways that were constructive and supportive.” Several respondents spoke of being taught to be a better lawyer by example. “He allowed me to watch and imitate,” as one person put it.

Many commented that their mentors provided them with opportunities and responsibility: “he assigned me to matters that were interesting,” “supplied me a steady flow of interesting work,” “released me early on to work directly with clients,” or “gave me a lot of responsibility and independence.” Some mentors also took their protégés on “trips, explaining strategies,” included them “in negotiations and client meetings.” Some of those in private practice also praised their mentor for teaching them how to succeed within a firm environment. As one woman said of her male mentor, “he explained the unwritten rules about law firm survival.” Another spoke of being taught “how to survive within the law firm setting,” and another of “inside info on firm politics.”

Respondents often described mentors as providing more than one form of assistance. Many referred to both training and support: “helped me develop my skills and self-confidence,” “training, support, listening,” “teacher and friend.” Others mentioned their mentors’ availability: “always accessible,” “always willing to answer questions,” others their mentor’s “patience” and “understanding”: He didn’t “get upset when mistakes made,”; she “did not expect me to know

everything.” Several mentioned their mentor’s belief in them and their advocacy for them within the firm: the mentor “supported me without question,” “regularly expressed confidence in my abilities,” “expressed trust and support,” “talked me up in the firm,” “took me under her wing.” Mentors also provided advice on all manner of subjects. They were in the words used by several different respondents an available “sounding board.”

We asked our respondents only for a few-line description of what their mentors had done that was “especially helpful.” We assume that they told us what was immediately salient to them at the time they filled out our survey. Thus, when we report that over 60 percent of our respondents had an “especially important” mentor, we are speaking about many different sorts of supportive relationships. This diversity has important implications for our findings. Since we asked about the particular functions of mentors in only one year, we are unable to analyze for our respondents as a whole whether men and women thought the same things were “especially helpful” to them or whether persons who had mentors of a certain sort (say, those who were good “sounding boards”) contribute more to overall career satisfaction or to earnings than do mentors of other sorts.

Who has had a mentor?

Most of our graduates who have practiced law at any point (and about 98 percent of the survey respondents had practiced law at some point) report having had an “especially helpful mentor” in the years since they finished law school. (Hereafter, when we report that respondents had a “mentor,” we will mean they indicated that they had had “an especially helpful mentor.”) As Table 1 reports, 63.8 percent of the alumni report having had such a mentor

Across the graduating years, there are modest differences in the proportions of the alumni who had ever had a mentor in practice when we surveyed them five years after graduation or fifteen years after graduation. The differences are less notable than the consistency. Year after year when we surveyed the classes with the same question about an “especially helpful mentor” strikingly similar percentages of the respondents have answered, “yes.”

Table 1
University of Michigan Graduates
Five years after graduation

Among those ever practicing law in any setting,
who has had an “especially helpful mentor”
in their career since law school

CLASSES SURVEYED 5 YEARS AFTER GRADUATION*		
Classes of 1980-1981	476	68.7%
Classes of 1982-1983	501	62.7%
Classes of 1984-1985	466	65.0%
Classes of 1986-1987	508	60.6%
Classes of 1988-1989	493	59.6%
Classes of 1990-1991	484	62.2%
Classes of 1992-1993	463	68.0%
Classes of 1994-1995	478	64.4%
ALL 5 YEAR CLASSES	3869	63.8%

MN2 * P<.05

Sex and Race: An initial look

As Table 2 reveals, among the graduates surveyed five years after law school, women were as likely as, indeed slightly but statistically significantly more likely, than men to report having had a mentor and African-Americans and Hispanics as likely to report having had a mentor as whites. In the next section, we concentrate on mentors in private practice, the setting in which mentors might be thought most important, and in a concluding section we will comment more on the position of women. For now, the important point is that during their careers since law school women and minorities were at least as successful as men and as whites in securing mentors whom they themselves regard as having been “especially helpful.” See Table 2, next page.

Table 2
University of Michigan Graduates
Five years after graduation

Among those ever practicing law in any setting,
who has had an “especially helpful mentor” in their career since law school?

	N=	Percent ever having an “especially helpful” mentor
SEX		
Women	1332	66.1%*
Men	2537	62.7%*
RACE/ETHNICITY		
African-American	183	61.2%
Asian-American	71	57.7%
Latino/Hispanic	127	66.9%
Native-American	29	65.5%
Non-Hispanic White	3446	64.1%
TOTAL	3868	63.9%

MN2

* Column differences significant. $p < .05$

Mentors by Work Setting

If, in bivariate comparisons, sex is of only slight importance in accounting for who finds a mentor and if race also seems to bear little relationship to finding a mentor, what factors do explain whether a person finds a mentor?

One major factor is the settings in which the respondent have worked, for in some settings many more people have found mentors than in others. Table 3 reveals the incidence of mentoring by the principal settings in which the graduates five years out of law school have worked. Since many have worked in more than one setting (virtually all the judicial clerks, for example), many respondents are reported here in more than one row. As the table reveals, more of those who have worked in firms report having had a mentor in that setting than those who have worked in government, in corporate counsel's offices, legal services or public interest.

Table 3
 University of Michigan Graduates,
 Classes of 1980-1995
 Surveyed Five Years After Law School

Among those ever working in various settings
 Who has had an “especially helpful mentor”
 in that setting?

WORK SETTING	N=	Percent ever having a mentor in this setting#
Judicial Clerkship	696	51.6%
Private Firm	3524	54.7%
Government	599	31.9%
Legal Services, Public Defender	158	44.3%
Public Interest Org.	131	29.0%
Corporate Counsel	389	33.2%

Among those ever working in this setting

MN3

We cannot fully explain why those who have worked in firms more frequently report a mentor in a firm than those who have worked in other settings report a mentor in those settings.³³

One possible reason is a matter of perception: it may be that having a mentor is a well-defined role within firms and that junior attorneys in other settings have similar relationships at similar rates but do not define them in terms of mentoring. After all, in all settings, senior attorneys

³³ Among other reasons, many of our respondents have worked in more than one of these settings and had a mentor in one setting but not the other.

share with junior attorneys the desire that junior attorneys learn quickly how to perform the tasks of the job, and in all settings senior and junior lawyers can derive psychic benefits from forming close working relationships. Still, there are reasons why mentors may be especially important to both sides of the working relationship within the private law firm and why mentoring may be especially prevalent there. Partners in law firms have a personal financial stake in the investment made in young associates in their early years. They want a return on their investment as soon as possible. They also have a financial stake in satisfied clients. They want to avoid having young attorneys who shirk on their work.³⁴ Individual partners also have an incentive to train a cadre of junior lawyers who will remain loyal to them personally.³⁵ The associate also, of course, has a stake. Like every starting lawyer, he wants to learn the trade, but, to a greater extent in private practice than in other settings, he may also believe that only by having an enthusiastic mentor is he likely to advance within the organization within the organization or be retained as an employee. By the same token, firms, particularly large firms, typically have the resources to permit partners to devote not-fully-compensated time to the training of younger lawyers.

By contrast, in government and legal services settings, though the junior attorney may well be as eager to learn, the more experienced staff is typically overworked, and young attorneys may be given much responsibility with little guidance at an early point in their career. The more experienced attorneys commonly have little or no personal financial stake in the productivity of the junior lawyers.

³⁴ Cite LaBand

³⁵ Cite LaBand

A different explanation seems needed to account for the lower rate of mentors among attorneys working in corporate counsel's offices. Here timing of working in the setting seems particularly important. Among Michigan graduates, comparatively few entered corporate counsel offices immediately after law school. At 5 years after graduation, most of the Michigan graduates working in this setting offices have only recently begun there. As Table 2 displays, corporate counsel's office is the only setting where more 15-year graduates than 5-year graduates report having had a mentor. As we will later see, those few who *begin* their careers in a corporate counsel's office are as likely to report having had a mentor as those who begin work in a firm.

Private Practice

We will concentrate our analysis of who secures a mentor on the respondents who have ever been in private practice. We do so, first, because private practice is the setting where the substantial majority of Michigan alumni are working at the point at which we survey them (and where an even greater number have worked at some point in their careers) and thus the large numbers permit us to perform close-grained analysis. And second, and more significantly, we do so because private practice is the setting in which the existing literature and our own findings suggest that having a mentor is most critical to success.³⁶ At the end of this section, we briefly compare mentoring in private practice with mentoring the other settings in which Michigan graduates have worked.

³⁶ See literature review, *supra*.

Of our respondents who have ever worked in a private firm, 57 percent report having had an “especially helpful” mentor in a firm by the time that they are five years out of law school. What distinguishes those who report having had an “especially helpful” mentor from those who did not? In particular, are race and gender, which did not appear to matter in the full sample, important for understanding mentoring in private practice? As Table 4 reports, women report having had a mentor in private practice as often as men, both among those whose first job after law school was in a firm and among those who have ever worked in private practice in their first five years after law school. On the other hand the proportion of African Americans who have had a mentor in private practice is lower than it is for other racial and ethnic groups and significantly lower than it is for whites both among those whose first job was in private practice and among those who were working in private practice at the time of our survey.³⁷ Among those ever working in private practice, Whites are nearly 25 percent more likely to report having had a mentor than are African Americans.

³⁷ For 5 year graduates who started their careers in firms, 47.1 percent of African Americans, 56.7 percent of Latinos and 56.6 percent of whites report having had a mentor in private practice. Difference between whites and African Americans significant. $P < .05$. MN4.

Table 4
 University of Michigan Graduates
 Five years after graduation, Classes of 1980-1995

Among those with private practice experience,
 who has had an “especially helpful mentor” in private practice?

	Those whose <i>first</i> job after law school was in private practice		Those <i>ever</i> working in private practice during first five years	
	N=	Percent having an “especially helpful” private practice mentor	N=	Percent having an “especially helpful” private practice mentor
SEX				
Women	1087	57.2%	1176	55.9%
Men	2201	55.4%	2348	54.0%
RACE/ETHNICITY				
African-American	119	47.1%#	145	44.1%#
Asian-American	60	56.7%	64	53.1%
Latino/Hispanic	99	50.5%	111	52.3%
Native American	23	65.2%	26	57.7%
Non-Hispanic White	2976	56.6%	3167	55.4%
TOTAL	3287	56.0%	524	55.0%

MN4n

MN4

In pairwise comparisons in each of the two percentage columns, the differences between African-Americans and whites are significant. $P < .05$. Other pairwise differences are not.

Do the differences between African Americans and whites persist after controlling for other factors that relate to having a mentor? Does sex become a significant factor after accounting for other factors? What factors are in fact most strongly related to having a mentor in

private practice? To explore these questions, we began by examining the bivariate relationship between having a mentor and the variables in our dataset that we thought might be plausibly related to having a mentor and then used logistic regression models to try to isolate those most strongly related in fact. Logistic regression is the most widely accepted approach in the social sciences for modeling dichotomous outcomes (such as having a mentor versus not having a mentor).³⁸

Our findings are set forth in Appendix Tables A. Lists 1 below summarizes the results of the two logistic regression models reported in that Table. The first model includes characteristics that were acquired or events that occurred prior to the respondent's acquisition of a mentor and thus might plausibly contribute to rather than be an effect of securing a mentor. These included the age at which the respondent decided to attend law school, whether the respondent planned to go into private practice at the time of her or his law school graduation, whether the respondent's second year summer job or first post-law school job was in private practice, and the respondent's race, sex, year of graduation from law school, and percentile rank in law school grades. We removed from this model before what is reported here other variables that might have been expected to show some relationship to securing a mentor but showed no such relationship before or after controls. These include the respondents' father's occupation and father's occupation as an attorney (as rough proxies for class background and connections), the respondent's age on finishing law school, the respondent's marital status on finishing law school and size of the law

³⁸ See Hosmer & Lemeshow, (1989); Neter, Kutner, Nachtsheim, & Wasserman, (1996).

firm where the respondent first worked.³⁹ None of these proved, before or after controls, to have a significant place in explaining who does and does not find a mentor.

In the second model, we added information provided by questions on the survey about the respondents views of their own skills and personalities. Since 1987, the survey has included questions asking the respondents to compare themselves on a 7-point scale with other attorneys their own age. Among the ten characteristics asked about are five that showed some relationship, before controls, with having a mentor in private practice: aggressiveness, concern about the value of their work to society, compulsiveness about work, skill at deal making, and self-confidence.⁴⁰

List 1 displays the factors that were significantly related to having a private-practice mentor for the graduates five years out of law school who had ever worked in private practice.

³⁹ See mnt-04a8. There are no statistically significant differences in the proportion of respondents with first jobs in firms of 1-10, 11-50, 51-150, 151-300, and 300 or more who report having had a firm mentor

⁴⁰ The others, which did not correlate with having a mentor, are effectiveness as a writer, skepticism of the motives of others, honesty, concern about making a lot of money, and compassion.

List 1

Regression. Factors significantly associated with having had a mentor in law firm among those ever having worked in law firm.

Graduates of 1980-1993, surveyed **Five** Years after Law School

For details, see Appendix Table A

FACTORS SIGNIFICANTLY ASSOCIATED WITH HAVING A MENTOR

Decided to attend law school prior to age 18 -- higher rate of having been mentored than among those who decided later (both models).

Had no long-term career plan at end of law school -- lower rate of having been mentored than among those whose plan at end of law school was to work in a firm (both models).

Long-term career plan at end of law school was a setting other than private practice -- lower rate of having been mentored than for those whose long-term plan at end of law school was to work in a firm (first model).

Worked in a law firm during summer between second and third year of law school -- higher rate of having been mentored than for those who worked in other settings (both models).

Worked in a law firm as first job after law school (not counting judicial clerkship) -- higher rate of having been mentored than for those whose first job was in government, legal services or other setting (both models).

Perceives self as more compulsive about work than most other lawyers their age -- higher rate of having been mentored than for those who see themselves as average or below average in compulsiveness (second model).

Perceives self as less concerned than most other lawyers their age about the social impact of their work -- higher rate of having been mentored than for those who see themselves as average or below average in concern about social impact (second model).

Perceives self as more self-confident than most other lawyers their age -- higher rate of having been mentored than for those who see themselves as average or below average in self-confidence (second model).

White women -- higher rate of having been mentored than white men (and then minority men) (second model only).

TWO FACTORS NOT ASSOCIATED WITH HAVING A MENTOR

Rank in Class

Size of Law Firm in Which Currently Working

A common thread runs through most of the factors that are significantly related to having a mentor. With a few exceptions, they suggest that securing a mentor is related to having a drive to be a lawyer and a drive to succeed in a law firm in particular, as well as to personality characteristics and skills that support such a drive. That is, those who decide in high school or earlier to become lawyers,⁴¹ those who form a long-term career plan while still in law school, those who work for a firm in their second-year summer and those who work in a firm in their first job after law school are all more likely than those who do not have those characteristics to find a mentor in private practice. Even among those who began their careers in private practice, those who had a long-term career plan of private practice at the end of law school were substantially more likely to have found a private practice mentor.⁴² The bivariate relationship between some of these factors and having a mentor is set forth in Appendix Table B.

⁴¹ The Appendix table displays the age of deciding when to become a lawyer as a dichotomy, over and under 18. In fact, the question was asked as an open question and recorded the actual recollected age. About half of the sample for both 5 and 15 year alumni decided on law school late in high school or during college (ages 18-22). Of this group, 53.4 percent of the 5 year graduates and 45.2 percent of the 15 year group had a mentor. Among the next older group, those who were 23-27 when they decided on law school, the percentage with mentors was almost identical (54.0 percent of the 5 years, 43.8 percent of the 15 years). For both the 5 and 15 year group, a small number (about 5 percent) first decided on law school when they were 28 or over. This group had a mentor substantially less often than those who were younger. 40.6 percent of the 5 year graduates, 29.7 percent of the 15 year graduates. For this latter group, a different explanation than absence of a fire in the belly probably accounts for their lower incidence of having a mentor: perhaps that they were more independent, or seemed less in need of a mentor, or that partners found it awkward to be a mentor for someone their own age or older.

⁴² Among those with first jobs after law school in a firm, 53.6 percent of those with a long-term private practice plan and 36.0 percent of those without such a plan report having a private-practice mentor. $P < .001$. MN4f.

Finding a mentor seems also related to the self-reported personality traits. As the list reveals, those who see themselves as comparatively compulsive about work and self-confident report a higher rate of finding a mentor. Those who see themselves as more concerned than others about the social value of their work have a lower rate of finding a mentor. As stated above, we cannot be certain that having these traits is a cause of having a mentor rather than a direct or indirect result of it. If as seems plausible, a large proportion of those who found mentors arrived at their firms with these traits, then those most likely to find a mentor seem to have a fire in their belly to succeed and let it show. They also seem to be the sorts of persons whom a law firm partner might want to take under her wing: hardworking and self-assured with long term aspirations in private practice. In Appendix Table C are displayed some of the significant bivariate relationships between these characteristics and having a mentor.

After controls for these other factors, the place of sex and race in the securing of a mentor remains complex. Among the graduates five years after law school, there were no significant differences in the first model among white women, white men, minority women and minority men in the proportion having mentors, but after adding the personal characteristics and traits in the second model, white women are significantly more likely and minority women somewhat more likely than white and minority men to have had a private practice mentor. It is possible that this anomalous finding that women have mentors more often than men reveals a problem in our question about mentors: that is, perhaps men and women have similar relationships with senior workers but women are more likely than men to characterize the senior person as a “mentor” or to see a mentor as “especially helpful.” On the other hand, it is also possible, all other factors

about career plans and personality being equal (particularly self-confidence and concern about the social value of their work), that women seek out mentoring relationships more ardently than men. If they do, it might be because they thrive on such personal relationships or it might be because even more than men that regard having a mentor as indispensable to success.⁴³

Two factors that might have been expected to explain differences in the rate of mentoring but that do not appear to do so merit brief discussion. The first is the respondents' performance in law school. As Appendix Table A reveals there is no relationship between students' grades in law school and their likelihood of finding a mentor in private practice. (We obtained our graduates' grades not by asking about their grades on the survey but by coding grades directly from law school records.) Grouping the entire class into quintiles by the percentile rank of their final law school gradepoint average, those in the top fifth of the class or the next fifth of the class were no more likely than those in other fifths of the class to report having a mentor. To those who hypothesize that grades are an indicator of ambition, the absence of a relationship between grades and mentoring is likely to be somewhat puzzling, given the other factors that correspond with having a mentor. It seems likely, however, that there is little relationship between ambition to succeed in law school and the ambition to succeed in private practice. Moreover, it is also quite possible that, at any particular firm, most new associates have fairly similar gradepoint averages and thus that grades, whatever they might signify at the point of hiring, do not provide much basis for differentiation among associates.

⁴³ For evidence from studies in the corporate context that women seek out mentors at least as assiduously as men, see Regina M. O'Neill, Sylvia Horton, and Faye J. Crosby, "Gender Issues in Developmental Relationships," in Murrell, Crosby and Ely, *supra*, at 63,

The other variable that might have been thought likely to predict having a mentor but did not was the size of the firms in which the graduates have worked. Conversely, some might expect the greater intimacy of small firms to breed mentoring relations. Some might expect large firms to structure the work setting to foster mentoring relationships more reliably. Whatever the hypothesis, our data provides no suggestion that size of firm makes much difference.

Unfortunately, while our questionnaire asks the respondent whether she had a mentor in a firm and the size of the firm in which she first worked and in which she currently works, it does not ask about the size of the firm in which the person had a mentor. Thus, for persons who by the time of our survey had worked for two or more firms we cannot tell in which of them they had a mentor. Still, for the five year graduates, we nonetheless believe that if firm size made a difference in the rate of mentoring, it would show up in the firm sizes of those whose first job after law school was in a firm. The size of the first firm bore no relationship to the likelihood of having a mentor. Breaking firms into ranges of size from 1-10 lawyers, 11-50 lawyers, 51-150 lawyers and 151 or more lawyers, between 53.2 and 57.5 percent of those who started in each range reported a private-practice mentor.⁴⁴ Nor was there any difference in the rate of mentoring by the size of the firm that the graduate was working in at the time of the five-year interview.⁴⁵ Size of firm does not become significantly related after controlling for other

⁴⁴ For those beginning in a firm of 1-10 other lawyers, 57.5 percent report a private-practice mentor since law school; for those beginning in a firm of 11-50, 55.5 percent; for those beginning in a firm of 51-150, 53.2 percent; and for those beginning in a firm of 151 or more, 56.1 percent. Not significant. MN4e.

⁴⁵ For those currently working in a firm of 1-10 other lawyers, 60.8 percent report a private-practice mentor since law school; for those beginning in a firm of 11-50, 59.0 percent;

variables.

Mentors in Other Career Settings

Many of our respondents have practiced law in government and in corporate counsels offices. Some, but fewer, have worked in legal services for the poor, in public defenders offices and in public interest organizations. As table 3 above reported, our graduates working in these other settings less commonly reported having had a mentor than do those who have worked in firms -- about 55 percent of those who have worked in firms but only 44 percent of those who have worked in legal services or public defenders offices and only about 30 percent of those who have worked in government, in corporate counsel's offices or in public interest organizations.

When we attempt to identify who, among those who have worked in these other settings, have found mentors in those settings, the factors that emerge are similar in many ways to those we found for private practice. Neither race nor gender nor grades in law school are significantly related to having a mentor. Again, aspirations and interest seems more strongly related. Many of our graduates finished law school with long term plans to work in government, legal services or public interest work, and in each of those contexts having such a longterm plan was significantly related to having a mentor in that setting.⁴⁶ Similarly, apart from such a longterm

for those beginning in a firm of 51-150, 64.9 percent; and for those beginning in a firm of 151 or more, 60.0 percent. Not significant. MN4e. Unsurprisingly, fewer of those working in solo practice at the five-year survey (28.6 percent) report having had a private practice mentor.

⁴⁶ For example, among the 590 five year graduates who ever worked in government, 44.4

plan, taking a first job in one of these settings correlated with having a mentor in that setting.⁴⁷

On the other hand, the personality traits and skills that seemed to characterize those more likely to have mentors in private practice do not help in explaining who finds a mentor among those who've worked in government, legal services or public interest work.

Many fewer of our graduates finished law school with a longterm plan to work in a corporate counsels office and that factor provides little help in explaining who finds a mentor in business, but, apart from longterm aspiration, those who started their careers after law school in a corporate counsels' office report having mentors much more frequently than those who came to a corporate counsel's offices later.⁴⁸ One of the personality traits also correlates strongly with having a mentor in a corporate counsel's office: those who see themselves as more aggressive than other attorneys report having mentors more often than those who see themselves as average or below in aggressiveness.⁴⁹

percent of those who had a long-term plan to work in government or politics when they began law school have had a government mentor, while only 28.0 percent of those without such a long-term plan found a government mentor. P<.001. MN3c1.

⁴⁷ Among the 597 five year graduates who ever worked in government, 46.4 percent of those whose first post-law school job was in government but only 25.7 percent of those who began in some other setting reported having had a government mentor. P<.001. MN3c. Similarly, among the 754 fifteen-year graduates who ever worked in government, 28.1 percent of those whose first post-law-school job was in government but only 18.1 percent of those who began in some other setting, reported having a government mentor. P<.05. MN3c.

⁴⁸ 55.3 percent of the 77 whose first post law-school job in a corporate counsel's office report a mentor in that setting; 27.6 percent of the 312 whose first job was in some other setting. [double-check]

⁴⁹ Of 176 five year graduates who saw themselves as average or below in aggressiveness, 27.6 percent had had a corporate-counsel mentor; of 101 who saw themselves as above average

As stated earlier, most of those five years out of law school who have worked in a corporate counsel's office started their careers in a private firm. One interesting question about mentoring that the Michigan data can illuminate is whether most of those who move to a corporation from a firm had been unable to find a mentor in the firm. The answer is no. Among the surveyed graduates five years out of law school, 111 had moved to a corporate counsel's office from a firm within the preceding 2 years. Of these, 58.6 percent report having had a mentor in a firm.⁵⁰ Although that figure is not quite as high as the percentage of those still working in their first firm job who have had a firm mentor (65.6 percent),⁵¹ the figure is high enough to make clear that those who transferred from a firm to a corporate counsel's office were not in general persons who never found a mentor.⁵² On the contrary, the number is high enough to suggest that those who move from a firm to a corporation very often had mentors at their firm who were helpful in placing the mentee with a client corporation.

in aggressiveness, 42.6 percent had had a corporate-counsel mentor. $P < .01$. MN3b.

⁵⁰ MN3b1.

⁵¹ MN3b1

⁵² Those who began in a firm and now are working in settings other than a corporate counsel's office (government, legal services or non-practice settings) are much less likely than those now working in a corporate counsel's office to say that they have had a mentor in the firm. (see tab 23).

The Apparent Consequences of Having a Mentor

Are persons with mentors more successful or contented than persons who do not have mentors? The survey permits us to explore this question in several ways. It asks questions about satisfaction with career, about earned income, and about expectations of being with the same employer in five years. We also learned whether a respondent is still with his or her first employer after law school and, among those in firms, whether he or she has become a partner.

Private Practice

Put simply, having had an “especially helpful” mentor strongly correlates with the professional attainment and satisfaction of Michigan law school graduates in private practice. Table 5 reports on the five-year graduates who have ever worked in private practice. It reveals that among those who have ever worked in private practice, those who have had a private-practice mentor are significantly more likely than those who have not had a mentor still to be working in private practice and still to be working in the first firm they joined after law school. Moreover, among those who were working in private practice at the time of our survey, while those who have had mentors earn no more than those who have had no mentor, they are significantly more satisfied with their careers overall and significantly more likely to expect to be working in the same firm in five years. For each of these measures of satisfaction and accomplishment, having had a mentor remains significantly related after taking other factors into account.

Table 5
University of Michigan Graduates

Classes of 1980-1995, those ever working in private practice,
five years after graduation

	THOSE WHO HAVE EVER BEEN IN PRIVATE PRACTICE	
	and had a mentor in private practice	but had <i>no</i> mentor in private practice
Percent still in private practice at 5 years***	82.3%	66.9%
Percent still working in their first firm***	52.8%	36.6%
Percent who began work at a firm as first job after law school and are still there.***	50.2%	33.5%
	THOSE CURRENTLY WORKING IN PRIVATE PRACTICE	
	and had a mentor in private practice	but had no mentor in private practice
Percent who expect to be working in same firm in five years***	62.5%	46.6%
Mean overall career satisfaction (on 7-point scale)***	5.21	4.67
Percent who say they are quite satisfied with their careers overall (6 or 7 on 7-point scale)***	45.6%	28.5%
Earned income in 4th year (in 2000 dollars)	\$94,000	\$92,200

*** row percentages significant, $p < .001$

MN6

Regression tables on overall career satisfaction of those working in firms and on the likelihood of remaining in the same firm are set forth in Appendix Tables D and E. With regard to career satisfaction, among all the information available to us about persons currently in private practice, including, among others, sex, race, marital status, year of graduation, size of firm,

partnership status, political liberalism, income, stress -- the factors most strongly related to overall satisfaction are, in order, experiencing a comparatively low level of stress at work, having a perception of oneself as comparatively self-confident, having a perception of oneself as comparative compulsive about work, having had a mentor within private practice, believing that the lawyers with whom one deals (outside one's own firm) are highly ethical, and not working in a large (51-150 attorney) or very large (150+ attorney) firm. See Appendix Table D.

Regarding expectations of continuing to work in the same work setting, the questionnaire asks "Look ahead five years. Do you expect to be working five years from now in the same setting (same government agency, same firm etc) in which you are currently working?" We offer four choices of response: no, probably not, probably yes, and yes. Unsurprisingly, the expectation to be in the same firm in five years correlates positively with overall career satisfaction, and the factors that explain who expects to be working for the same firm are similar, though not identical, to those that correlate with satisfaction. In the regression, which is reported in Appendix Table E, those most likely to expect to be in the same firm in 5 years are those who have a perception of themselves as comparatively compulsive about work, those who had a longterm career plan at the end of law school to work in private practice, those who experience a comparatively low level of stress at work, those who had a longterm career plan at the beginning of law school to work in private practice, those not working in firms of more than 150 lawyers, those already partners in their firms, those who are married, those who believe that most other lawyers they work with are highly ethical, and those who had a mentor in a firm.

The critical question that is impossible for us to answer with any certainty is whether or not the persons who have had mentors are more satisfied with their careers and have greater expectations of remaining at their firms *because* they've had a mentor. Given the lore about the importance of having a mentor, it is plausible that a causal relationship does exist. Moreover, the very way the survey phrased the question about the mentor, "Have you . . . had an especially helpful mentor" probably suggested to some respondents that we were seeking to know of mentors whom the respondent credited with at least part of their achievements.

Still, it remains possible that persons who attract mentors tend to be upbeat persons who get along well with other people and who would have positive views about their jobs and

optimistic views about their futures at a firm even if they had never had a mentor. To test for this possibility obliquely, we ran a regression on career satisfaction that included the same independent variables used in Appendix Table D and one additional independent variable: the response to a question about the respondent's satisfaction with the social aspects of law school. We hypothesized that contentment (even as remembered five years later) with the social aspects of law school was likely to indicate a person who got along well with other people and had generally positive attitudes toward life. In the regression, satisfaction with the social aspects of law school was indeed significantly related to overall career satisfaction.⁵³ On the other hand, including satisfaction with the social aspects of law school in the model did not reduce the strength of the relationship between career satisfaction and having a mentor.⁵⁴ Of course, whether satisfaction with law school is an adequate surrogate for the sort of personality traits that might both attract a mentor and produce contentment with work is quite uncertain.

Fifteen years after law school, having had an “especially helpful” mentor in private practice still seems to exert positive effects. Six of the classes that we surveyed five years after law schools asking about mentors have also been surveyed fifteen years after graduation: 876 members of the classes of 1980 through 1986 who had worked in private practice within the first five years after graduation have responded to both a five and fifteen year survey. Table 6 reports on the position 15 years after law school of those who did and did not report having had a

⁵³ In the model without personality traits and skills, it had a standardized beta of .103, $p < .001$; in the model with the traits and skills, it had a standardized beta of .092, $p < .001$. MN6b2a

⁵⁴ In the model without personality traits and skills, adding in satisfaction with the social aspects of law school reduces the standardized beta of having a mentor inconsequentially (.172 before, .171 after). The same is true in the larger model that includes the personality traits and skills (.128 before, .127 after). In each case, having a mentor remains highly significantly related to overall career satisfaction. $p < .001$. MN6b2a.

private practice mentor five years after law schools. Of those who began their careers in a firm, almost twice as many of those who report having had a mentor are partners in the same firm today as are those who say that they had no mentor in private practice.⁵⁵ Those with mentors who are currently in a firm also earn significantly more than those who are in a firm but had no private-practice mentor -- an average in 2000 dollars of \$224,500 as opposed to \$191,400. The income advantage of having had a mentor ceases to be statistically significant, however, after controlling for the size of the firm in which the lawyer currently practices, the number of years in private practice, the number of years worked in the current firm, and gender.⁵⁶ When a larger group of 15 year classes is examined -- the twelve classes that were asked about having a mentor in private practice on the fifteen year survey -- and the same additional factors are controlled for, having a mentor remains highly significant and having a mentor, even after controls, is worth an extra \$20,800 per year in 2000 dollars.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ MN6. Similarly, for the six classes for which we have both 5- and 15- year survey data, the classes of 1980-1985, among those who were working in private practice at the time of the five year survey, 30.6 percent of those who said on that survey that they'd had a mentor in private practice were still at the same firm at the time of the 15 year survey, in comparison to only 18.9 percent of those who said on the five-year survey that they'd had no mentor in private practice. $P < .001$. MNMG1f1.

⁵⁶ $P < .01$. In the regression, size of firm is by far the strongest factor in explaining earnings. The total adjusted explained variance, including the variables listed in the text, is 24.6 percent. MN6e.

⁵⁷ Having a mentor. $P < .01$. MN6e.

Table 6
 University of Michigan Graduates,
 Graduates of the classes of 1980-1986 who had Worked in Law Firm
 During the First Five Years After Law School,
 Position and Achievements 15 years after Law School

	THOSE WHO HAD BEEN IN LAW FIRM IN FIRST FIVE YEARS AFTER LAW SCHOOL	
	and had a mentor in law firm	but had no mentor in law firm
Percent still in law firm at 15 years***	69.8%	51.6%
Percent who began work at a firm as first job after law school and are partners in that firm now.***	37.3%	21.4%
	THOSE CURRENTLY WORKING IN LAW FIRM	
	and had a mentor in law firm	but had no mentor in law firm
Percent who expect to be working in same firm five years after the survey*	85.5%	80.8%
Mean overall career satisfaction (on 7-point scale)	5.52	5.43
Percent who say they are quite satisfied with their careers overall (6 or 7 on 7-point scale)	49.4%	55.4%
Earned income in 14th year (in 2000 dollars)*	\$224,500	\$191,400

*** row percentages significant, $p < .001$ * row percentages significant, $p < .05$

mnmg05b

Other Settings

Too few of our graduates were working in legal services or in public interest settings at the time they were surveyed to examine the relationship for them between having a mentor and their satisfaction or achievements. About those in corporate counsel's offices and in government, a few points can be made.

For the graduates working in corporate counsel's offices at five years after graduation, having had a corporate counsel mentor is strongly related to current overall career satisfaction. In regressions on overall career satisfaction, using the same sorts of variables included in examining satisfaction in private practice as well as a few others (particularly, does respondent work for a Fortune 500 company), only three proved significantly related to overall satisfaction: having had a corporate counsel mentor, considering oneself comparatively self-confident; and (marginally significant) being white.⁵⁸ Simply having had a mentor in any setting was not related to satisfaction. Only having a corporate-counsel mentor related to satisfaction. On the other hand, those with corporate counsel mentors among the five year graduates earned no more than those who had had no mentor. Nor were they more likely to say that they expected to be working for the same employer in five years. MN6g

For those working in government five years after law school, having had a mentor in government was unrelated to *any* of our measures of achievement or satisfaction, but having had

⁵⁸ Standardized betas: mentor in business, .212; self-confidence, .207; being white, .115. Total explained variance, .092. P<.001. MN6h

a mentor in some setting since law school (such as a judicial clerkship or a law firm) was related mildly and positively both to overall career satisfaction⁵⁹ and to current income.⁶⁰ After controls for other variables, having had a mentor in some setting remains marginally relevant to satisfaction⁶¹ and strongly related to income.⁶²

Succeeding Anyway: Partners without Mentors

The lore inspiring this article was that in private practice having a mentor was indispensable to success. As we have seen, having had a mentor in private practice is in fact strongly related to satisfaction and to expectations of remaining in the same firm for those working in private practice five years after law school. For those fifteen years after law school it

⁵⁹ Among the five year graduates in government, the 184 with mentors in some setting had a mean overall satisfaction of 5.67; the 130 with no mentor ever had a mean satisfaction of 5.38. $P < .05$. MN6g. Among the 15 year graduates, the 105 who had had a mentor in some setting had a mean satisfaction overall of 5.51; the 100 without a mentor a mean satisfaction of 5.2. $p < .05$.

⁶⁰ The 184 with mentors earned a mean of \$64,500, those without mentors a mean of \$58,500. $P < .01$ MN6g.

⁶¹ In regressions on overall career satisfaction with much the same measures used as controls in the regressions on satisfaction in private practice (see Appendix Table E) as well as a few distinctly related to government practice (government work long-term goal at end of law school, works as prosecutor now, works for federal government now), the factors most related to satisfaction, as measured by the standardized betas, were: works as prosecutor now (beta .171), other lawyers with whom one works highly ethical (beta .166), log income in year 2000 dollars (beta .147), and having had a mentor in some setting (beta .107). Total adjusted explained variance .086). MN6i.

⁶² In regression on log of income in year 2000 dollars, the strongest factors were: works for federal government (.349), years in private practice (.275), having had a mentor in some setting (.190); and being male (.124). Total adjusted explained variance (.243) MN6i2

is also strongly related to being a partner in their original firm and, for those still in private practice, mildly related to income. Nonetheless, many private practitioners in our sample achieve success without a mentor. This brief section reports on one such group.

Of the Michigan graduates in the classes of 1970-1981 fifteen years out of law school, 2673 began their professional careers in a private firm (after completing any judicial clerkship).⁶³ At the time they were surveyed, 723 of this group (about 27 percent) had become partners in the same firm and had worked there the entire 14 or 15 years they had been in practice.⁶⁴ One might expect, given the lore of practice, that nearly all of the 723 would report having had a mentor. In fact, 237 of this group, about 32 percent of those now partners at their original firm, report that they had no “especially helpful” mentor. These mentorless partners earn as much, on average, as the partners who had mentors (a mean of \$250,800 v. a mean of \$248,100 in year 2000 dollars).⁶⁵ And the firms in which they work are of about the same sizes as the firms of those who had mentors -- two-thirds of both groups are in firms of 50 or more lawyers. By two traditional measures of success in the legal profession, these mentorless partners have achieved success.

What explains the achievement in private practice of this group who had no mentors? We looked to see whether any features distinguish this group of partners without mentors -- features that distinguish them either from those who, like them, are partners in their original firms, but

⁶³ MN6j.

⁶⁴ MN6k.

⁶⁵ MN6k.

who did have mentors or from those who, like them, never had mentors but who left the original firm? We can say only a little to explain their success.

Among those still at their original firms, the mentorless and mentored partners are very much alike. They work long hours, mostly in large firms, and report roughly equal and high levels of aggressiveness, compulsiveness about work, and self-confidence. The only major difference between the partners with and without mentors are that those who became partners without a mentor are even more likely to be men than those who became partners with a mentor,⁶⁶ less likely to have finished law school with a longterm plan to work in private practice, and had marginally higher grades in law school.⁶⁷

The group who have become partners in their original firms despite the lack of a mentor differ somewhat more, however, from the mentorless persons who left their original firms. The mentorless who stayed and became partners had significantly higher grades in law school than those who left (even though those who left also had, on average, grades higher than the median of their graduating class as a whole),⁶⁸ more frequently had a plan for a career in private practice

⁶⁶ Of the partners without mentors, 6.3 percent were women; of the partners with mentors, 12.1 percent were women. $P < .05$.

⁶⁷ The partners without mentors were, on average, in the 64th percentile in their classes; the partners with mentors were, on average, in the 59th percentile. $< .10$.

⁶⁸ Those who stayed and became partners were on average in the 64th percentile; those who left were on average in the 53d percentile. $P < .001$. MN6k.

at the end of law school,⁶⁹ work longer hours today,⁷⁰ and consider themselves more compulsive about work⁷¹ and more concerned about making a lot of money.⁷²

The high numbers of persons who are partners in their original firms but say that they never had a mentor may raise some doubts about the reliability of their recollections. Did some or many of them actually have helpful mentors but rewrite their histories to become self-made? That a higher proportion of the men than women who are partners say that they had no mentors is consistent with the possibility that men have a greater need to see themselves as making it on their own than women do. On the other hand, of course, it is also consistent with the possibility that women need mentors more than men in order to become partners. Whatever the explanation, it appears that a significant number of our graduates fifteen years after law school have succeeded very well by conventional measures even though, at least as they recall it, they were never taken under the wing of a mentor.

⁶⁹ 89.6 percent of those who stated and became partners remember ending law school with a long-term career plan to work in private practice as opposed to 82.1 percent of those who left. P<.01.

⁷⁰ An average of 51.6 hours v. an average of 48.2 hours. P<.001. MN6k

⁷¹ A mean of 4.62 v. a mean of 4.07 on a scale of 7. P<.001. MN6k.

⁷² A mean of 3.86 v. a mean of 3.58 on a scale of 7. P<.01. MN6k. The mentorless partners also earn a lot more money than those who left the firm without a mentor: the mentorless partners average \$252,000; the mentorless graduates who left earn an average of \$179,900, in year 2000 dollars.)

More on the Mentoring Experiences of Women

In Table 2 earlier in this article we report that, among Michigan graduates surveyed five years after graduation, women slightly but significantly more often than men reported having had a mentor in at least one setting in the years since law school. These women and men graduated in the 1980s and early 1990s. In our surveying of women and men from the classes of the 1970s surveyed fifteen years after law school, we also find equal rates of mentoring in at least one setting. Pairing class years of graduation, we find no statistically significant difference in the incidence of women and men finding mentors in at least one setting across the 26 years of graduates for whom we have information.⁷³

Table 7 reports on the five-year graduates by work settings. It reveals that the pattern of roughly equal rates of mentoring for women and men holds true for all of the work settings we examined but one. The exception is judicial clerkships, where, for reasons we cannot explain, men who have clerked report having had a mentor somewhat more frequently than women.⁷⁴

⁷³ Mnt-06d3.

⁷⁴ For example, except in the earliest years (1970-74) when the number of women who clerked for a judge was tiny, men who clerked have across time consistently reported having judges as mentors more frequently than woman who clerked report having had them. See MN7z.

Table 7
 University of Michigan Graduates
 Classes of 1980-1995, Five years after graduation

Among those Ever Working in Various Settings,
 Which ones have had an “especially helpful mentor” in that setting?

	WOMEN		MEN	
	N=	%	N	%
Judicial Clerkship*	288	46.5%*	408	55.1%*
Private Firm	176	55.9%	2348	54.0%
Corporate Counsel	159	32.7%	230	33.5%
Government	243	30.5%	356	32.9%
Legal Services, Public Defender	66	47.0%	88	44.3%
Public Interest Group	69	27.5%	62	30.6%
Total ever having a mentor in any setting*	1361	65.9%*	2612	62.0%*

MN3a

* row percentage, p<.05

There is a possibility nonetheless that the equal rates of mentoring that we report for women and men are illusory. As we suggested above, the phenomenon could be due to systematically different sex-linked views about what a mentor is or does or about what makes a mentor “helpful.” Men might, for example, have a greater need than women to believe that their success rests entirely on their own talents and achievements and undervalue the assistance given them by a more senior person in their workplace. In a study conducted in the 1970s of 1250 senior corporate executives nearly all of whom were men, two thirds reported having had one or more “mentors,” but most did not believe that their mentors had been an important ingredient in

their success.⁷⁵ It is possible that if these men had completed a survey like ours, many would have said they had no “especially helpful” mentor, but that most women with the same experience would say that they had. In addition, men might also consider mentors “especially helpful” only if they were helpful in some particularly tangible way. We have no way of being certain if women and men, in general, define what it means to be a mentor in similar ways, though the research conducted in corporate settings and other research on the legal profession suggests that women and men do have mentors at similar rates and that the mentors perform similar functions.⁷⁶

Women in Private Practice

The earliest graduates whom we have asked about mentors were the graduates of 1979 through 1979 surveyed fifteen years after law school. In these ten classes, somewhat fewer women than men reported having had a mentor in private practice. For example, of the graduates of the classes of 1970 and 1971, only about half as many women as men who ever worked in private practice have ever had a private practice mentor.⁷⁷ By the graduates of the early 1980s,

⁷⁵ G. Roche, “Probing Opinions,” 57 *Harvard Business Rev.* 14-28 (1979), issue 1. Cited in Jeanne Speizer, *Role Models, Mentors, and Sponsors: The Elusive Concepts*, 6 *Signs: Journal of Woman in Culture and Society* 692 (1981). See mentor notes.

⁷⁶ See *supra*, text at

⁷⁷ For women in the 1970s, small firms seem to have been the least hospitable place to start a career and find a mentor 33.3 percent of the women and 47.2 percent of the men 15 years out who started in firms of ten or fewer lawyers report having had a private practice mentor. $P < .05$. Women who began in larger firms were more likely than women who started in smaller firms to have a mentor in private practice. MN7a.

however, women who started their careers in private practice (or who ever worked in private practice) began to report having a private-practice mentor as often as men.⁷⁸ In fact, from the graduates of the mid-1980s on, in every graduating class from 1984 through 1995, a somewhat higher proportion of women than men report having a mentor in a firm.⁷⁹ The pattern of women who have worked in private practice reporting mentors at least as frequently as men holds true without regard to firm size. Women and men who start their legal careers in small or midsize firms report having had mentors in private practice with equal frequency. Among those beginning their careers in large or very large firms, significantly more women than men report having had a private practice mentor.⁸⁰

Here nonetheless is a conundrum. Among our graduates five years out of law school, most of the men and women begin their professional careers (after any judicial clerkship) in a law firm. And, of those who do, roughly equal and very high proportions remember that when they finished law school their longterm career plan was to practice in a firm.⁸¹ Yet -- and here is the conundrum -- of the men and women who graduated from law school with such longterm

⁷⁸ MN7h, MN7h1

⁷⁹ MN7b

⁸⁰ 59.3 percent of the women and 52.6 percent of the men who began their careers in a firm of 50 or more lawyers report having had a private-practice mentor. $P < .001$. MN7a

⁸¹ Of the graduates five years out of law school who took a first job in private practice, 74.0 percent of women and 74.4 percent of men recall having a long-term career plan to work in private practice. Not significant (of course). Of the graduates 15 years out of law school who took a first job in private practice, 82.9 percent of women and 86.4 percent of men recall having a long-term career plan to work in private practice. Again, not significant. MN9b1a

plans and who in fact began their careers in a firm, many more of the women than the men have left law-firm practice by the time we surveyed them.⁸² Similarly, among the men and women who have remained in private practice after five years, women were far more likely than men to expect to leave their firm within the next five years -- that is, we inferred, expecting in larger numbers to leave without becoming partners.⁸³ This is so in each case despite the fact that roughly equal proportions of these women and men who started in private practice reported having had a mentor in private practice.

Why is this so? If women with private practice ambitions are as successful as men in attracting mentors, why is it that they leave private practice at so much higher a rate than men and, if still in private practice, expect to leave their current job at some much higher a rate? Why is it that, 15 years after graduation from law school, so many fewer of them are partners in firms?

We cannot fully answer these questions but, despite the fact that it is an inviting inference, the answer does not appear to be that women's higher rate of leaving and of expecting to leave is due to their getting less help or support from their mentors than are the men with mentors. If that were the case, one would expect to find that women with mentors were leaving private practice or expecting to leave their current firms at close to the same rate as the women without mentors, while men with mentors were staying at a much higher rate than men without mentors. But that is not the case. Women with mentors have remained at their original firms or remained in private

⁸² Among the graduates only five years out, 14.3 percent of the men and 23.8 percent of the women with long-term private-practice ambitions had left private practice $P < .001$. MN9b1a.

⁸³ Of those in private practice with a private practice mentor, 26.8 percent of men and 44.3 percent of women expect to have left the firm within the next five years.

practice at much higher rates than women without mentors. It is simply that women with mentors are leaving and expecting to leave at higher rates than men with mentors *and* that women without mentors are leaving and expecting to leave at higher rates than men without mentors. In short, it appears that mentors are helpful to both women and men and that something other than having or not having a helpful mentor explains why, even among those who have planned a career in private practice, women are exiting at higher rates. What those other factors are, we cannot be certain. One factor that disproportionately affects women are issues relating to families and children. As a follow-up to our question about whether the respondent expects to be in the same job in five years, we ask those who answer “no” or “probably not” what their most probable reason would be for leaving. Many women, but few men, indicate that it will be because of caring for children or other family related reasons.⁸⁴ -- but it is unlikely that family-related reasons tell the whole story.

Mentoring By Women

The survey asks those who report having had a mentor or mentors about the sex of their mentors. Unfortunately, for respondents who have worked in more than one setting and who

⁸⁴ Of those who began in private practice with long-term private practice plans and were still in private practice when surveyed five years after law school, 18.8 percent of the 552 women but only 3.4 percent of the 1352 men who say they expect to leave offered child- or family-related reasons as their answer. MN9b3. Another way of conveying the special place of childrearing in the lives of women is this: among the 15 year graduates who began at firms with long-term career plans in private practice, 5.4 percent of women and 0.5 percent of men were unemployed at the time of the 15 year survey. Nearly all the women were caring for children. Among the 5 year graduates, the figures were 3.7 percent of women and 0.4 percent of men. MN9b.

report having had both men and women as mentors, we cannot identify which setting or settings provided a woman as mentor. Still, we can report on the change over time in the proportion of women and men who report ever having had a woman as a mentor in at least some setting.

In the early classes of women in our study -- the women who graduated in the early 1970s when the profession included few women -- some women nonetheless found other women to serve as their mentor. 16.7 percent of the women graduates of 1970 and 1971 reported a woman as mentor.⁸⁵ [CHART WILL BE MADE SHOWING THE UPWARD TRAJECTORY.] The proportion of women with women as mentors remained approximately the same throughout the classes of the 1970s and then started to climb rapidly in the classes of the 1980s. In every pair of graduating classes since 1984, at least 25 percent of the women have had a woman as mentor. In the classes of the 1990s, at least 35 percent of the women in each pair of classes have had a woman as mentor.

Some men, too, of course, have had women as mentors, but not nearly as many. Only about 3 percent of the male graduates of the 1970s reported having had a woman as mentor, but the numbers rose among the classes of the late 1980s and in the last four classes surveyed, the classes of 1992 through 1995, the proportion with women as mentors approaches 20 percent. Still, across all decades, a much higher proportion of women than men report having had a woman as mentor. Surely, this no coincidence. It suggests, though does not prove, that junior women are intentionally seeking out more experienced women to guide them and vice versa. It is also the case, however, that most junior women who have had a woman as a mentor have also

⁸⁵ MN9h

had at least one man as a mentor. Among the women graduates surveyed five years after law school, 64 percent of those who report a woman as mentor report also having had a male as mentor. In fact, the slightly higher proportion of women than men in our study who report ever having a mentor in their professional lives can be explained, from one perspective, by the fact that only slightly fewer women than men report having had a male as a mentor, but many more women than men report also having a woman as mentor.

Does the gender of the mentor have an effect on the success of the mentee? Since the majority of both women and men who report having had a woman as mentor also report having had a man as mentor, we do not have large number of women in our sample with only women as mentors and it is perilous to compare them to women who had only men as mentors leaving out the women who had both. Nonetheless, among the five year women in private practice who had men only or women only as their private practice mentors, women with women mentors were somewhat less satisfied with their careers overall than women with men as their mentors,⁸⁶ though they earned no less and were no less likely to expect to be working for the same firm in five years.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ In a regression on overall career satisfaction (7-point scale) for the 367 women in private practice with male only or female only mentors, after controlling for size of firm and year of graduation, having only male mentors had a standardized beta of .102. $P < .05$ MN9c1.

⁸⁷ Regression models were run on log of income in year 2000 dollars and on expectation of being in same firm, using the same controls listed in last preceding footnote.

More on the Mentoring Experiences of Minorities

Our conclusions are more tentative about race than about gender. Four different minority groups were separately identified as a part of our project -- African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanics. For some of the groups -- all groups but African Americans in the 15 year classes, and Native Americans in both the 5 and 15 year classes -- our numbers are too small to draw reliable conclusions. Making analysis even more problematic is that, over the years, we have consistently had a higher nonresponse rate among minority graduates than whites.⁸⁸ Here nonetheless is what we learned.

Table 8
University of Michigan Graduates
Classes of 1980-1995, Five years after graduation

Among those Ever Working in Various Settings,
Which ones have had an "especially helpful mentor" in that setting,
by race/ethnicity

	African American		Hispanic		Asian American		All Nonwhite		White	
	N=	%	N=	%	N=	%	N=	%	N=	%
Judicial Clerkship	33	72.7%	#	#	#	#	43	53.8%	634	52.1%
Private Firm	145	44.1% *	111	52.3%	64	53.1%	346	49.4%*	2707	56.0%*
Corporate Counsel	34	29.4%	#	#	#	#	54	33.3%	233	33.0%
Government	63	38.1%	34	41.2%	#	#	113	36.2%	485	30.5%
Total ever having a mentor anywhere	194	60.8%	130	65.4%	72	58.3%	425	62.1%	3535	63.6%

number in cell fewer than 20.

MN3a

* In pairwise comparisons, difference between African-Americans and Whites and between All Nonwhite and whites was significant. $P < .05$

Table 2 earlier in this article reveals that close to the same percentage of minorities as whites have found “especially helpful” mentors in at least one setting since law school. On the other hand, Table 4 reports that African Americans are somewhat less likely than whites to have found a mentor in private practice. After controls, it appears that white women and not whites in general who more frequently had private-practice mentors. Table 8 on the preceding page reports by race on the five year graduates across all the major settings of practice. Minorities in general and African-Americans in particular, report having mentors as frequently as whites in judicial clerkships, in government, and in corporate counsels offices.

Given our comparatively small numbers, we are cautious in drawing conclusions calling for fine-grained analysis. We did look to see whether minority women faced especial difficulties in attracting mentors that were not reported by minority men. After all, minority women differ not in one way but two from the white men who dominate the profession. Moreover, white men might be especially reluctant to be seen working with minority women because of the stereotypes of minority women as sexually available.⁸⁹ Despite this, we found no such differences in rates of mentoring among the graduates five years out of law school. Minority women report having mentors as frequently as both minority men and white men -- in firms, in corporate counsel's

⁸⁹ See, e.g., Stacy Blake, *At the Crossroads of Race and Gender: Lessons from the Mentoring Experiences of Professional Black Women*, in Murrell, Crosby, and Ely, *supra*, at 83-104.

office and in government.

Even though African-American and Hispanic graduates obtain mentors whom they consider “especially helpful” at much the same rate as whites, are their mentors as helpful to their advancement as they are for whites? Much has been written about the special difficulties that minority lawyers have faced within large corporate firms.⁹⁰ Unfortunately, we have too few minority lawyers who have been surveyed fifteen years after law school and who began their careers in corporate firms to determine whether whites and minorities differed in their rates of being mentored. Conversely, although we have, among the five-year respondents many more minority respondents who began their careers in large corporate firms, five years out is too soon to learn what their success will be in obtaining partnership.

What we can say is illustrated in Table 9.

Table 9
University of Michigan Graduates
Classes of 1980-1995, Five years after graduation

Minority and White Graduates Who Began
Their Careers in a Firm of 50 or More Attorneys

	Minority Attorneys		White Attorneys	
	N=	% of Line A	N=	% of Line A
A. Began in large firm (50+ lawyers) as first job after law school	200		1969	
B. And had a mentor there and are still there after 5 years	37	18.5%*	538	27.3%*
C. And expect to be there in another 5 years	29	14.3%	298	15.1%

⁹⁰ X-Ref to Wilkins article, Davila article, supra. * p<.05

The Table shows that among white and minority attorneys in the classes five years out of law school, significantly fewer minority than white lawyers who started their careers at a large firm and who had a private-practice mentor were still at that firm after 5 years. (Unfortunately, because we did not ask persons who have worked in more than one firm, which firm they had a mentor in, we cannot separately calculate who had a mentor in their first firm and then determine how many of that group are still at that firm.) On the other hand, even though a smaller proportion of minorities with mentors continue to work at their original firms, those who are still there are, on the whole, *more* optimistic than the white lawyers about being there in another five years. They are also marginally more satisfied with their careers and with their relationships with their coworkers at their place of work. If they are correct in their forecast about staying at the firm, then, as Table 9 suggests in the last line, approximately as many of the minorities as whites will end up ten years out of law school at the same large firm where they began their professional careers. This finding runs counter to the findings reported by others that, of lawyers who start in very large firms, far fewer minorities than whites survive to become partners.⁹¹ Perhaps the Michigan minority lawyers who forecast that they will remain at their firm are overly optimistic. Or perhaps they will swim successfully against the tide. The real message of table 9 is that, among Michigan graduates five years out of law school who started at large firms, the overwhelming majority of both African American and white attorney have

⁹¹ See Wilkins. See also "Law Firms are Slow in Promoting Minority Lawyers to Partner Role," New York Times, August 7, 2001, p. A1 (reporting that at the 12 largest grossing law firms in the United States, about 8 percent of new associates in the early 1980s were minorities, but that, at 7 firms that would supply information, only about 5 percent of recently named partners were minorities.)

already left or expect to leave soon.

Conclusion

Teacher. Advisor. Promoter. Sounding Board. Role model. Friend. These are the ways that Michigan graduates characterize the persons who have served as their “especially helpful mentors.” Five years after law school, the considerable majority of Michigan graduates report having had a mentor at some point in their professional lives since law school. Women report having such mentors slightly more frequently than men. Minorities report having such mentors as frequently as whites. Persons with low grades in law school report mentors as frequently as people with higher grades. Within the data available to us, the factors that distinguish those who have found a mentor from those who have not are that one seem primarily to suggest a drive to succeed, to having a fire in the belly: those with mentors decided earlier than others that they wanted to become lawyers; at the end of law school they more frequently had a longterm career plan to work in the sort of setting where they in fact found a mentor; and they more frequently took a job in that area of practice as their first job after law school. Zeal rather than race or sex seems to be the most significant observable determinant.

Having a mentor seems to have little relationship to satisfaction or professional achievement for those working in government or legal services or public interest law, but does correlates with satisfaction and success for those working in private practice. For private practitioners five years out of law school, those with mentors are more likely to be at their original firm, more likely to expect to be in the same firm in five years, and more satisfied with their careers. For private practitioners fifteen years after law school having had a mentor is

strongly related to being still at their first firm and more mildly related to earned income. We cannot be completely certain of the causal relationship between having a mentor and these outcomes. It is possible that those who attract mentors tend to be the sorts of persons who would be happy and wealthy even if they'd had no mentors. Still, given the lore among private practitioners, the causal link seems plausible to draw. After all, in their written comments, so many of the graduates credit their mentors with a role in their achievements.

APPENDIX TABLES

Appendix Table A

Five year classes, 1982-1995, logistic models, for Persons ever in Private Practice, predicting ever having an “especially helpful mentor” in private practice

	Model 1 N=3207	Model 2 N=3203
	Adjusted Odds Ratio	Adjusted Odds Ratio
Year of Graduation ⁹²		
1982 and 1983	1.24	1.18
1984 and 1985	1.29	1.23
1986 and 1987	0.96	0.92
1988 and 1989	1.09	1.11
1990 and 1991	1.22	1.20
1992 and 1993	1.65**	1.56**
Race and Sex ⁹³		
White Women	1.17	1.27**
Minority Women	1.04	1.15
Minority Men	.85	0.85
Decided to become lawyer prior to age 18	1.45***	1.29**
Rank in Class (percentile) ⁹⁴		
Lowest 20 percent	0.99	1.01

⁹² Reference group=Classes of 1994-1995

⁹³ Reference group= white men

⁹⁴ Reference group= highest 20 percent

2d to lowest 20 percent	0.92	0.96
Middle 20 percent	0.99	1.07
2d to highest 20 percent	0.94	0.95
Longterm career plans end of law school ⁹⁵		
Had No plan	0.54***	0.62**
Planned on setting other than private practice	0.82*	0.91
Worked in private practice during summer after second year of law school	1.88***	1.75***
Worked in private practice as first post- law school job (excluding judicial clerkships)	6.66***	6.54***
Skills and Traits		
Regards self as above average in deal making skills		1.17
Regards self as above average in aggressiveness		1.18
Regards self as above average in compulsiveness about work		1.35***
Regards self as above average in concern about social value of his/her work		0.73***
Regards self as above average in self-confidence		1.24*

*** p<.001 ** p<.01 * p<.05

MN4g3a

⁹⁵ Reference group= those whose long-term career plan was in private practice

Appendix Table B
 University of Michigan Law School
 Classes of 1980-1995, Five years after graduation

Among those ever working in private practice,
 who has had an “especially helpful mentor”
 in private practice?

	N=	Percent ever having an “especially helpful” mentor
AGE FIRST DECIDED TO BECOME A LAWYER (OR ATTEND LAW SCHOOL)		
17 or under	1498	58.1%***
18 or older	1980	52.2%
LONGTERM CAREER PLAN AT END OF LAW SCHOOL		
No career plan	260	41.9%***
Private Practice	2470	59.5%
Other than Private Practice	729	43.9 %
LAW FIRM WAS FIRST JOB AFTER ANY JUDICIAL CLERKSHIP		
Yes	3288	56.0%***
No	223	35.0%
TOTAL	3074	54.7%

Tab A-10

NOTE: Significance tests apply to the categories within each variable taken as a group.

Appendix Table C
 University of Michigan Law School
 Classes of 1980-1995, Five years after graduation

Among those ever working in private practice,
 who has had an “especially helpful mentor” in private practice,
 by self-assessment of personal characteristics?

	N=	Percent ever having an “especially helpful” mentor
COMPULSIVENESS ABOUT WORK IN COMPARISON TO OTHER LAWYERS		
About the same or less	1772	50.7%***
More compulsive	1251	59.5%
SELF-CONFIDENCE IN COMPARISON TO OTHER LAWYERS		
About the same or less	1186	48.7%***
More self-confident	1848	57.7%
TOTAL	3034	54.2%

MN4h

*** p<.001 ** p<.01

APPENDIX TABLE D

Graduates of University of Michigan Law School,
Classes of 1982-1995, surveyed 5 years after Law School,
Who Were Working in Private Practice at Time of Survey

Standardized Betas for Least Squares Regression
of Overall Career Satisfaction (7-point variable.)

Model 1 Model 2

<i>Class years</i>		
1982-1983	.058	.039
1984-1985	.026	.019
1986-1987	-.053	-.054
1988-1989	-.060*	-.052
1990-1991	-.033	-.029
1992-1993	.022	.024
<i>Demographic Characteristics</i>		
Is a woman	-.035	-.051*
Is nonwhite	.053*	.032
Is married	.106***	.100***
Has children	.037	.036
Liberal-Conservative (7 point scale)	.052*	.027
<i>Career Plans</i>		
At beginning of law school, planned longterm career in private practice	.104***	.077***
At end of law school, planned longterm career in		

private practice	.081***	.057**
<i>Aspects of Work</i>		
Number of years in private practice	-.051*	-.033
Number of years in current job	.036	.039
Works part-time	-.034	-.042
Is partner in firm	.085***	.061**
<i>Size of firm where currently working:</i> ⁹⁶		
11-50 lawyers in firm	-.044	-.047
51-150 lawyers in firm	-.107**	-.120***
151 or more lawyers in firm	-.096*	-.119**
HAD MENTOR IN FIRM	.172***	.128***
Percent time spent on litigation related activities	.073***	.023
Specialty today was specialty planned when in law school	.047*	.036
Stress experienced in your work today (7 point scale)	-.207***	-.225***
Most lawyers I work with other than in my own firm are highly ethical (7 point scale, disagree-agree)	.129***	.131***
Log of earned income in CPI-adjusted 2000 dollars	.085***	.035
<i>Self-Described Personal Characteristics in Comparison to Other Lawyers of Same Age (7-point scale)</i>		
Comparatively aggressive		.099***
Comparatively compulsive about work		.150***
Comparatively more concerned about social value of the work they do		-.083***
Comparatively more concerned about making money.		-.048*

⁹⁶ Reference group=solo practice or firm of up to 10 other lawyers.

Comparatively Self-Confident		.157***
Number in sample	1866	1846
Total explained variance (adjusted)	.189	.260

MN6b2 ***p<.001 **p<.01 *p<.05

APPENDIX TABLE E

Graduates of University of Michigan Law School,
 Classes of 1982-1995, surveyed 5 years after Law School,
 Who Were Working in Private Practice at Time of Survey

Standardized Betas for Least Squares Regression on Response to Question:
 "Do you expect to be working five years from now in the
 same . . . firm in which you are working today?
 (4 point response -- no; probably not; probably yes; yes)

Model 1 Model 2

<i>Class years</i>		
1982-1983	.044	.032
1984-1985	.050	.045
1986-1987	-.051	-.052
1988-1989	-.065*	-.063*
1990-1991	-.082**	.078**
1992-1993	-.016	.017
<i>Demographic Characteristics</i>		
Is a woman	-.068**	-.057**
Is nonwhite	.022	.043*
Is married	.122***	.116***
Has children	.062**	.067**
Liberal-Conservative (7 point scale)	.068**	.048*
<i>Career Plans</i>		
At beginning of law school, planned longterm career in private practice	.137***	.120***
At end of law school, planned longterm career in private practice	.173***	.153***

<i>Aspects of Work</i>		
Number of years in private practice	-.014	.004
Number of years in current job	.012	.013
Works part-time	-.079***	-.081***
Is partner in firm	.134***	.119***
<i>Size of firm where currently working:</i> ⁹⁷		
11-50 lawyers in firm	-.001	-.024
51-150 lawyers in firm	-.051	-.056
151 or more lawyers in firm	-.109**	.122**
HAD MENTOR IN FIRM	.127***	.095***
Percent time spent on litigation-related activities	.084***	.062**
Specialty today is specialty planned in law school	.032	.028
Stress experienced in your work today (7 point scale)	-.092***	-.127***
Most lawyers I work with other than in my own firm are highly ethical (7 point scale, agree-disagree)	.100***	.105***
Log of earned income in CPI-adjusted 2000 dollars	-.019	-.054*
<i>Self-Described Personal Characteristics in Comparison to Other Lawyers of Same Age (7 point scale)</i>		
Comparatively aggressive		.057*
Comparatively compulsive about work		.161***
Comparatively more concerned about social value of the work they do		-.048*
Comparatively more concerned about making a lot of money.		.008
Comparatively Self-Confident		.053*

⁹⁷ Reference group= solo practice and firms of up to 10 other lawyers.

Number in sample	1850	1847
Total explained variance (adjusted)	.242	.279

MN6c