

# The Impact Of Mentoring On Career Plateau And Turnover Intentions Of Management Accountants

Benjamin P. Foster, (E-mail: ben.foster@louisville.edu), University of Louisville  
Trimbak Shastri, University of Louisville  
Sirinimal Withane, University of Windsor, Canada

## **Abstract**

*The presence of frustrated employees in an organization is likely to have a significant adverse effect on the organization's operations. Employees faced with a career plateau are likely to exhibit feelings of frustration. Such employees may have a higher tendency to leave the company, increasing employee turnover. Using Canadian Certified Management Accountants (CMAs), as subjects, this study examined the effect of mentoring on employee career plateau tendencies and turnover intentions.*

*Survey questionnaires were mailed and responses obtained from 235 CMAs. Subjects' responses were factor analyzed to develop composite scales about CMAs' perceptions for mentoring (MENTOR), career plateau (PLAT), turnover intentions (EXIT), positive job attributes (PJA), and job satisfaction rate (JSR). For hypotheses testing, the means of the scaled values were used in statistical tests of relationships between the measures.*

*Tests indicated that mentoring reduces plateau tendency significantly and significantly lowers turnover intentions even after controlling for career plateau, job satisfaction, and positive job attributes. The results imply that fostering a mentoring environment can reduce career plateau attainment and turnover intentions. Reducing career plateau in turn is likely to have positive impact on organization's operations. For example, CMAs are often involved in, among other matters, the operational information and financial reporting process. Therefore, reducing CMAs' career plateau tendencies and turnover intentions could improve the quality of an organization's financial reporting process.*

## **I. Introduction**

The term *career plateau* refers to the feeling of frustration and psychological feebleness that employees tend to experience following a temporary or permanent halt in the advancement of their careers (Lemire, Saba and Gagnon 1999; Rotondo and Perrew 2000; Rotondo 1999). At this stage of an employee's career, the likelihood of additional hierarchical promotion is very low (Duffy 2000). Career plateaus lead to some previously effective employees becoming ineffective performers within the organization (Appelbaum 1994), and may lead some effective employees to leave the company (Rotondo and Perrew 2000). Consequently, employee career plateaus are likely to be detrimental to the operating activities of an enterprise, and reversing employee career plateau tendencies is likely to be an important issue for companies.

Certified management accountants' (CMAs') are often involved in developing information for operational decision-making and the financial reporting process. Reducing CMAs' career plateau tendencies and turnover intentions could improve the quality of an organization's information reporting process. Therefore, we studied the impact of mentoring on Canadian CMAs' career plateau tendencies and turnover intentions. In this regard, we

surveyed certified management accountants (CMAs) working in Ontario, Canada and obtained personal, organizational, and job specific information.

CMAs' feelings about their position in the organization with respect to job attributes and job satisfaction are likely to affect their perceptions regarding career plateaus and their turnover intentions. Consequently, we included measures for these variables in models used to assess the impact of mentoring on career plateau tendencies and turnover intentions. The results of our analyses, which are discussed in detail below, indicate that job satisfaction and positive job attributes are inversely related to career plateau tendencies and turnover intentions, and that perceptions of more mentoring activities within their organizations resulted in lower career plateau tendencies and turnover intentions among CMAs. More mentoring activities significantly lowered turnover intentions even after controlling for career plateau tendencies, job satisfaction, and positive job attributes.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Previous literature is discussed and hypotheses are developed in Section II. Research methods are described in Section III. Section IV discusses data analysis and results while Section V contains conclusions and implications from the study.

## **II. Previous Literature And Hypotheses Development**

### *Career Plateaus*

Sources of career plateaus may be organizational (e.g., lack of promotional opportunities in the entity) and personal, such as, lack of skills due to a technologically changing environment. Career plateau literature describes four career states for employees, these are: i) learners or comers (employees performing below acceptable standards, but have the potential for future advancement), ii) stars (outstanding employees with a high potential for advancement), iii) solid citizens, and iv) deadwood (Duffy 2000; Ference et al., 1977). The solid citizens do satisfactory work, but have low opportunity for advancement. Deadwood personnel are not satisfactory performers and have very little potential for advancement.

Solid citizens receive relatively less management attention than the stars, learners, and deadwood employees. Both solid citizens and deadwood are plateaued, the former are effective whereas the latter ineffective (Appelbaum 1994). An objective of management should be to prevent solid-citizens facing plateaus from becoming deadwood (Ference et al., 1977; Duffy 2000), and also to maintain employee productivity and positive attitude when a promotion for good performance is no longer available.

Employees may use three different types of strategies to cope with career plateaus: *defense*, *reevaluation* and *transition*. The first strategy (defense) does not attack the actual cause of the stress, but attempts to reduce the intensity of stress. Defense strategy focuses on eliminating or adjusting the level of stress (attempting to minimize the discomfort) through employees' internal responses and rationalization. Mostly, employees concentrate on denial (e.g., blaming the work environment) or excessive optimism in defending their course of action (Elsass and Ralston 1989). However, these defense approaches do not address the root cause of career plateaus. From a practical standpoint, defense attempts are believed to cause a negative impact on an employee's performance. An employee addressing a plateau with defense easily becomes deadwood.

The second strategy, reevaluation, may involve ignoring the presence of a plateau or adapting to the situation. Reevaluation focuses on reducing disappointment through cognitive responses such as a change of needs and values (e.g. Latack 1984; Hall and Richter 1990; Hall 1985). This strategy is aimed at cognitive manipulation of the meaning of the career plateau. The stressed employee is expected to selectively ignore the evidence or events related to the career plateau to moderate the disappointment and/or feeling of helplessness. Reevaluation also includes giving more prominence to personal life factors. Career plateau literature suggests that managers should take an active role to encourage an employee facing a plateau to engage in reevaluation strategies. According to Rotondo and Perrew (2000), effectively managing plateaued employees includes changing the employees' environment using positive work opportunities.

The third strategy, transition, focuses on alteration of career roles to eliminate/overcome plateaus. Compared to reevaluation, this strategy aims at behavioral coping that requires some action, such as a transition into a new role within the company, or exiting and moving into a new career or job. Rotondo and Perrewé (2000) argue that both reevaluation and transition strategies involve activities that can have positive or negative effects on individual's job performance and the organization. For example, reevaluation may lead employees to become more productive by better adapting to, or changing, their environment. If not effectively managed, employees may remain in the same position and become less productive. Likewise, when following the transition strategy, employees may move into new, more effective, roles within the company. However, if many employees use the transition strategy of leaving the company, the company may lose valuable human capital.

As stated earlier, the scope of this study is confined to career plateau and employees' transition strategy of exiting (leaving) the company. Career plateau is likely to increase in the workplace due to the economy, technology and other factors (Duffy 2000). In light of technological changes, downsizing, outsourcing and related factors the levels of career plateau stress in Canada and the United States is likely to remain at a high level. Thus, strains on employer-employee interactions will likely increase. In the next section, we discuss how mentoring may also provide useful resources to help employees avoid plateaus or deal with plateaus within the company rather than exiting the company.

#### *Mentoring And Career Guidance*

Mentoring improves the pool of talent for management and technical jobs and helps to shape future leaders (Shea 1998). Through mentoring, the people who have the most experience can also effectively pass along knowledge throughout the organization. For example, mentors may use many practices such as assisting their protégés with individual career problem solving, and redefinition of career success to significantly facilitate their protégés' career adaptation process (Lamire, Saba and Gagnon 1999). Also, mentoring involves interpersonal relationship in which an experienced person counsels/helps a junior or inexperienced person (Gibb 1999).

Mentoring may be classified into two types: primary and secondary (Whitely, et al., 1991). Primary or classical mentoring is an intense developmental relationship of relatively long duration in which employees receive a range of career and psychological help exclusively from senior managers (Kram 1985). Secondary mentoring offers a specialized developmental function (Zey 1984). Kram (1985) argues that secondary mentoring tends to focus on external, career progress-oriented functions, such as sponsorship, visibility and exposure rather than on inner psychological developmental functions.

As coaches or teachers, mentors provide socioeconomic support and seek to bolster the self-confidence and self-esteem of protégés (Whitely, et al., 1991). As sponsors, mentors actively intervene, contriving to get their protégés' exposure and visibility through assignments that involve working with other managers and endorsing their protégés' for promotions and special projects. To sum up, mentoring is a powerful intervention that assists employees in the establishment, advancement and maintenance stages of their careers (Geiger-Dumond and Boyle 1995).

The operational definition of mentoring has varied somewhat, e.g., primary or secondary mentoring, or whether the mentor is one's immediate supervisor or someone else (Higgins and Kram 2001). However, for this study we consider mentoring as managers providing professional career counseling and advice about career prospects within the company, and the employee's own perceptions of their company's mentoring services.

Viator and Scandura, (1991) found that mentoring was associated with lower turnover intentions in large public accounting firms. However, Viator (2001) found little evidence that formal mentoring reduced overall turnover intentions of professionals in public accounting firms. Unlike Viator's (2001) study which pertained to CPAs in public accounting firms, we examined responses from accounting professionals working in organizations other than public accounting to focus on the impact of mentoring on career plateaus and turnover intentions of Certified Management Accountants (CMAs).

Also, rather than focusing on the presence of a mentor for the employee specifically, our survey questions obtained the employees' perceptions and opinions about mentoring, counseling and management advice received by them. We hypothesize that employees involved with mentoring activities will more likely be able to employ adequate strategies to avoid career plateaus or cope with career plateau stress and stay within their current companies. By contrast, employees not involved with career mentoring are more likely to face feelings of reaching a career plateau and are more likely to leave (exit) the organization.

### *Hypotheses*

*H<sub>1</sub>: Mentoring (MENTOR) will reduce employees' career plateau (PLAT) tendencies.*

*H<sub>2</sub>: Mentoring (MENTOR) will lower employees' desire to leave (EXIT) the organization.*

In addition to MENTOR, other environmental and personal factors could impact PLAT and EXIT. We discuss and evaluate some of these other factors as controlling/confounding variables in the next section.

### **III. Research Methodology**

We developed a survey questionnaire that included twenty-eight (28) questions to elicit responses from Certified Management Accountants (CMAs) about their perceptions/opinions related to career mentoring and job environment/attributes, and job satisfaction. These questions were developed based on review of literature. We tested the survey instrument with colleagues and graduate students before administering.

Subjects (CMAs) responded to questions on a seven-point Likert scale anchored on one end with *strongly disagree* (1) and the other end with *strongly agree* (7). Also, the survey instrument included questions seeking biographical background information.<sup>1</sup> The questionnaires were mailed to CMAs working in Ontario, Canada. A cover letter was prepared and mailed to 600 CMAs. We obtained a response rate of 39 per cent; 235 CMAs responded.<sup>2</sup> (Of the 235 respondents, only 227 provided their age.)

#### *Controlling For Confounding Variables*

Besides mentoring, career plateau stress is likely to be affected by several individual and organizational factors. As Kahn et al. (1964) suggest, these factors can significantly impact employees' cognitive and behavioral coping mechanisms (such as exiting the company). Addressing all variables that affect stress coping activities is beyond the focus of this paper. However, examining the impact of mentoring on career plateaus and turnover intentions would be incomplete if we do not consider the effect of some other relevant variables.

Consequently, we identified some personal and organizational variables that could also impact career plateaus and turnover intentions. We treat these variables independently in our predictive models. These variables include the employees' perceptions of job satisfaction and positive job attributes. We not only expect that mentoring will reduce career plateaus and turnover intentions, but also expect higher ratings of job satisfaction and positive job attributes to reduce employees' career plateau ranking and intentions to exit the company. In addition, an employee's age-level could also affect their plateau status and turnover intentions. The variables are labeled as follows:

---

<sup>1</sup> A copy of the questionnaire is available upon request.

<sup>2</sup> Because we were discouraged from keeping record of the initial mailing for a follow-up, and received a good response rate, we did not send a second request.

Variable	Label	Type
Plan for exiting the company -- Turnover intentions	EXIT	Dependent
Career Plateau Status	PLAT	Dependent/Independent
Career Mentoring in the Organization	MENTOR	Independent of Interest
Employee Age	AGE123	Control
Positive Job Attributes	PJA	Control
Job Satisfaction Rate	JSR	Control

### *Career Stage (Age)*

Several models of career development exist, many of which depicted stages of life or career by utilizing specific age ranges (Erickson 1963; Hall and Nougaim 1968; Levinson 1978; Schein 1978; Veiga 1983). Most researchers have found that such stages can be roughly correlated with age (Schein 1978). However, Rotondo (1999) argued that age and tenure are not directly correlated with career plateaus. Evans and Gilbert (1984) indicated that motivational differences between plateaued and non-plateaued managers grow less distinct with age.

Age may impact turnover intentions. As employees age, they become more risk averse and more concerned with security that may be found by staying with the same company. Therefore, we expect age to have an inverse relationship with turnover intentions, but an indeterminate impact on plateau tendency. Consequently, we constructed a variable based on the respondents' age. AGE123 is a categorical variable, where: AGE123 =1 is for respondents under 40 years old; AGE123 = 2 is for all respondents in their 40s; and AGE123 = 3 is for respondents over 49 years old<sup>3</sup>.

### *Job Attributes and Job Satisfaction*

The perceived level of positive job attributes and employees' job satisfaction rate are likely to influence career plateaus and turnover intentions. For example, employees evaluate how their abilities, skills, needs and values, match the attributes of their current positions, and opportunities for advancement within the organization (Schein 1978). This match affects employees' plateau status, perceived stress, and coping strategies. High levels of positive job environment-related attributes (PJA) are likely to reduce an employee's plateau tendency (Feldman and Weitz 1988). Also, as employees' ratings of job satisfaction (JSR) increases, their plateau tendency decreases. Employees with low job satisfaction and low positive job attributes in their current positions will feel more stress and may have more incentive to reduce stress by moving to another organization than employees in positions with relatively higher job satisfaction and higher positive job attributes.

We expect that positive job attributes (PJA) and job satisfaction ratings (JSR) are inversely related to career plateaus (PLAT) and turnover intentions (EXIT). Also, some studies provide evidence that mentoring is associated with higher job satisfaction (Chao et al., 1992; Whitely and Coetsier 1993). Consequently, we include job satisfaction (JSR) and positive job attributes (PJA) as control variables in this study.

### *Composite Scales For Variables And Hypotheses Testing*

We used subjects' responses to twenty-eight questions to develop (perceptual/cognitive) composite scales by applying factor analysis to identify questions loading together. We reversed the scale for three questions (7,14, and 18) before performing factor analysis.

<sup>3</sup>Only 227 respondents indicated their age: five in their 20s, 86 in their 30s, 93 in their 40s, 42 in their 50s, and one respondent was over 60 years old. Thus, our AGE123 categorical variable included 91 respondents, 93 respondents, and 43 respondents coded as 1, 2, and 3, respectively.

We used orthogonal (Varimax) rotation to determine which questions loaded on which factors/dimensions.<sup>4</sup> Based on the questions included in each factor and their meaning, we assigned logical names/labels to each factor. (For example, questions #12, 14, 19 loaded on a factor, and a review of these questions relate to mentoring. Accordingly, this factor was labeled as MENTOR). The results of the rotation indicated that the responses to questions were loaded on five factors/dimensions as follows:

- Positive job attributes (PJA): Questions 1,3,7,8,10,15,17
- Job satisfaction rate (JSR): Questions 20,23,24,25
- Career plateau (PLAT): Questions 2,4,6,11,13,16,21
- Plan for (exiting) leaving the company (EXIT): Questions 18,22,28
- Career mentoring in the organization (MENTOR): Questions 12,14,19

After factor analysis, we dropped questions 5 (*The skills I possess are adequate for me to move ahead in the company*) and 27 (*I am due to retire within a few years*) for further analysis because these questions did not load on any factor. Also our review of these questions indicated that dropping them would not in substance change our results and conclusions. Question 26, related to job satisfaction but low monetary reward (REWARD), did not load with any other questions (items). Because a scale with one item may not provide a reliable measure, we did not consider REWARD for further data analysis or present any hypothesis related to REWARD.

After identifying the major factors, to measure the scale reliability we computed Cronbach's coefficient Alpha. (Table 1 provides a listing of questions retained after the initial analysis while Table 2 reports the Cronbach's coefficient Alpha for the factors.) The computed alpha for PJA, JSR, PLAT and EXIT scales exceeded the recommended 0.7 for scale reliability (Nunnally, 1978). The alpha for MENTOR was 0.624. Although a scale reliability of 0.7 is recommended, an alpha lower than 0.7 has been used to construct composite scales in prior research studies. (For example, Siegel, et. al (2001) used a composite scale with 0.66 alpha, and Kisielius and Sternthal (1984) used a composite scale with 0.6 alpha.)

We used average responses for the questions loaded on a factor to compose cognitive/perceptual scales for *PJA*, *JSR*, *PLAT*, *EXIT* and *MENTOR*. (Table 2 also reports descriptive statistics for the scales.) We performed correlation analysis and regression analysis on the scales to test our hypotheses and draw conclusions about our variables. The results of our analyses are discussed in the next section.

#### IV. Data Analysis And Results

As indicated earlier, the focus of this study is to examine the impact of mentoring (MENTOR) on employees' career plateau status (PLAT) and turnover (EXIT) tendencies. In connection with measuring PLAT, EXIT and other variables (as described in the preceding section) subjects' responses were composed into perceptual and cognitive scales using factor analysis and scale reliability tested using Cronbach's alpha. As discussed, in addition to MENTOR, other factors including age and perceptual dimensions, such as job attributes and job satisfaction rate will also influence employees' career plateau status and turnover tendencies. Table 3 presents correlations among factors and age-levels.

---

<sup>4</sup> Factor loadings are available upon request.

**Table 1<sup>5</sup>**  
**Factors Identified Through Analysis and Related Questions**

Factor	Questions
PJA	1. I have made managerial decisions on a regular basis 3. Presently, I hold a coaching 7. The company has <b>not</b> so far allowed me to supervise or review others work [ <i>Reversed</i> ] 8. The company has allowed me to freely undertake creative work 10. The company's management is supportive of my career development 15. I am freely allowed to participate in the decision making process 17. My recommendations are often acted on by the company's management
JSR	20. I enjoy working in this company 23. My job responsibilities enable me to develop new skills 24. I am satisfied with my compensation package 25. I am satisfied with the progress I have made in the company
PLAT	2. When I joined the company, I thought that I would <i>move up the corporate ladder</i> faster, but I was not allowed to 4. I am beginning to think that my background is <b>not</b> a good match to the needs of the company 6. Compared to my involvement in the current position, my participation in decision making was relatively greater in my previous position 11. In this organization, the opportunities for my career development are limited 13. My company does <b>not</b> encourage employees to learn tasks outside their divisions 16. The nature of the work assigned me is repetitive and routine 21. I <b>don't</b> foresee any opportunities to grow in this company
EXIT	18. I have <b>no</b> plans to leave this organization [ <i>Reversed</i> ] 22. I am ready for a change and I need to seek another job 28. I am planning to leave this company as soon as possible
MENTOR	12. The company is committed to providing professional career counseling 14. I <b>seldom</b> receive advice from management about my career prospects in the company [ <i>Reversed</i> ] 19. The company provides me good mentoring services
REWARD	26. I like my present job requirements <b>although</b> the job is <b>not</b> monetarily rewarding

**Table 2**  
**Composite Scales: Means, Standard Deviations, and Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha**

Questions Loaded On Factor	Factor [Suggested Name]	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Alpha
1, 3,7 (reversed), 8, 10, 15, 17	<b>PJA:</b> Positive Job Attributes	235	5.7195	0.959	0.819
20, 23, 24, 25	<b>JSR:</b> Job Satisfaction Rate	235	5.1096	1.128	0.744
2, 4, 6, 11, 13, 16, 21	<b>PLAT:</b> Plateauing	235	3.0448	1.133	0.790
18 (reversed),22, 28	<b>EXIT:</b> Exit plans	235	3.1348	1.757	0.876
12, 14 (reversed),19	<b>MENTOR:</b> Career counseling & mentoring	235	3.3262	1.602	0.624

Correlations reported in Table 3 indicate that the factor for MENTOR was directly correlated with both positive job attributes (PJA) and job satisfaction rate (JSR) (at  $p < .0001$ ). Table 3 data also reveal that PJA and JSR are inversely correlated with PLAT (at  $p < .0001$ ) and EXIT (at  $p < .0001$ ). Consequently, we included PJA and JSR as control variables in models used to test the impact of MENTOR on career plateau status. We also included PJA, JSR, and AGE123 as control variables in models used to test the impact of MENTOR on turnover intentions.

<sup>5</sup> After factor analysis, we dropped questions 5 (*The skills I possess are adequate for me to move ahead in the company*) and 27 (*I am due to retire within a few years*) for further analysis because these questions did not load on any factor.

Table 3 Correlations Of Factors And Age

	PJA	JSR	PLAT	EXIT	MENTOR	AGE123
PJA	1.00000	0.60790	-0.58237	-0.52880	0.44930	0.10044
		<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	0.1314
JSR	0.60790	1.00000	-0.68472	-0.76554	0.59361	0.12802
		<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	0.0541
PLAT	-0.58237	-0.68472	1.00000	0.66987	-0.62886	0.03264
		<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	0.6247
EXIT	-0.5288	0-0.76554	0.66987	1.00000	-0.60031	-0.15253
		<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	0.0215
MENTOR0.	44930	0.59361	-0.62886	-0.60031	1.00000	0.02598
		<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	<.0001	0.6970
AGE123	0.10044	0.12802	.03264	-0.15253	0.02598	1.00000
		0.1314	0.0541	0.6247	0.0215	0.6970

Pearson Correlation Coefficients

Prob > |r| under H0: Rho=0

PJA = Positive job attributes, composite scale of questions 1,3,7,8,10,15,17.

JSR = Job satisfaction rate, composite scale of questions 20,23,24,25.

PLAT = Career plateau level, composite scale of questions 2,4,6,11,13,16,21.

EXIT = Plan for (exiting) leaving the company, composite scale of questions 18,22,28.

MENTOR = Career mentoring in the organization, composite scale of questions 12,14,19.

AGE123 = Respondent’s age, = 1 if under 40 years old; =2 if in their 40s; and =3 if over 49 years old.

Control Variables

As explained earlier, the subjects were blocked into three age groups (only 227 out of 235 respondents indicated their age). As explained earlier, we expected that age would influence turnover intentions, but not career plateau tendencies. Our expectations were supported by correlations among variables as reported in Table 3. While AGE 123 is significantly correlated with EXIT (p<.02), its correlation with PLAT is not significant (p<.62).

To further explore whether age-level (independently) had any effect on EXIT and PLAT, we performed ANOVA using EXIT and PLAT as dependent variables and age-level as the independent variable. The means and standard deviations for PLAT and EXIT for each age group, and ANOVA results are reported in Table 4. The ANOVA indicates that, overall, age impacted EXIT significantly (p<0.07). However, only the youngest and oldest groups exhibited significant differences (p<0.02) in pairwise comparisons of the groups. (Not reported elsewhere.) Employees over age 50 were less likely to have positive turnover intentions than employees under age 40. Further, as expected, ANOVA revealed that "age" had no effect on PLAT (p<0.80).

Table 4 MEAN, Standard Deviation, And ANOVA Results: Exit And Plat By Age Group

Age group	N	EXIT Mean	EXIT Std. Dev	PLAT Mean	PLAT Std. Dev
under 40	91	3.35	1.71	2.99	1.06
40-49	93	3.06	1.86	2.98	1.12
50 & over	43	2.60	1.59	3.11	1.27

ANOVA results:

For EXIT = AGE123: [F (df. 2, 224) = 2.74, MSE = 3.056, Prob.>F < 0.0669]

For PLAT = AGE123: [F (df. 2, 224) = 0.23, MSE = 1.270, Prob.>F < 0.7970]

Variables defined in Table 3.

*Effect of Career Mentoring on Career Plateau Status*

Correlation analysis (reported in Table 3) indicates that as hypothesized ( $H_1$ ), MENTOR is inversely related to career plateau status (PLAT) at a significant level ( $p < .0001$ ). To further determine the impact of MENTOR on PLAT, we performed a regression analysis using PLAT as the dependent variable and MENTOR as an independent variable. PJA and JSR were included in the model to assess the independent effect of MENTOR on PLAT. Panel A of Table 5 reports these results.

**Table 5 Regression Results**Panel A:  $H_1$  Dependent Variable = PLAT

Independent variable	Parameter estimate	Standard error	t-value	Prob.>  t
Intercept	7.273	0.300	24.25	<0.0001
JSR	-0.364	0.060	-6.03	<0.0001
PJA	-0.258	0.064	-4.02	<0.0001
MENTOR	-0.268	0.046	-5.82	<0.0001

[F (df. 3, 231) = 104.19, MSE = 0.548, Prob.>F < 0.0001]  $R^2 = 0.575$ Panel B:  $H_2$  Dependent Variable = EXIT

Independent variable	Parameter estimate	Standard error	t-value	Prob.>  t
Intercept	7.216	0.842	8.57	<0.0001
AGE123	-0.215	0.099	-2.18	0.0304
JSR	-0.785	0.096	-8.14	<0.0001
PJA	-0.016	0.101	-0.16	0.8752
PLAT	0.348	0.099	3.52	0.0005
MENTOR	-0.198	0.072	-2.74	0.0066

[F (df. 5, 226) = 78.43, MSE = 1.144, Prob.>F < 0.0001]  $R^2 = 0.640$ Panel C:  $H_2$  Dependent Variable = EXIT

Independent variable	Parameter estimate	Standard error	t-value	Prob.>  t
Intercept	7.140	0.688	10.38	<0.0001
AGE123	-0.216	0.098	-2.20	0.0285
JSR	-0.790	0.092	-8.63	<0.0001
PLAT	0.352	0.095	3.71	0.0003
MENTOR	-0.198	0.0721	-2.76	0.0062

[F (df. 4, 226) = 98.47, MSE = 1.139, Prob.>F < 0.0001]  $R^2 = 0.640$ 

Variables defined in Table 3.

The model produced an R-square of 0.58 ( $F < .0001$ ). Each of these three factors was inversely related to PLAT at a significant level ( $p < 0.0001$ ). Therefore, as expected MENTOR (after controlling JSR and PJA), reduces career plateau tendency (PLAT) supporting Hypothesis 1.

*Effect of Career Mentoring on Turnover Intentions*

Correlation analysis (reported in Table 3) also indicates that as hypothesized ( $H_2$ ), MENTOR is inversely related to turnover intentions (EXIT) at a significant level ( $p < .0001$ ). To determine if MENTOR affected EXIT beyond the other variables that could influence turnover intentions, we used another multiple regression model. EXIT served as the dependent variable while AGE123, JSR, PJA, PLAT, and MENTOR were included as independent variables. Panel B of Table 5 reports these results. The model produced an R-square of 0.64 ( $F < .0001$ ). All variables had the expected sign (AGE123, JSR, PJA, and MENTOR with inverse relationships, and PLAT with a direct relationship to EXIT). However, PJA was insignificant ( $p = 0.8752$ ) in this model.

Because PJA was insignificant, we performed another regression analysis excluding PJA from the analysis. Panel C of Table 5 reports these results. This model also produced an R-square of 0.64 ( $F < .0001$ ), with all variables exhibiting the expected sign at a significant level (AGE123  $p = 0.0285$ , JSR  $p < 0.0001$ , PLAT  $p = 0.0003$ , and MENTOR  $p = 0.0062$ ). Therefore, as expected MENTOR (after controlling AGE123, JSR, PJA, and PLAT) reduces employees' turnover intentions (EXIT), supporting Hypothesis 2.

## **V. Conclusions And Implications**

This paper described career plateau status, and coping strategies that include exiting the organization. We obtained data from CMAs working in non-public accounting organizations in Ontario, Canada. Perceptual data collected related to individual and organizational variables, such as, positive job attributes, job satisfaction rate, career mentoring, career plateau indicators, and turnover intentions. (We also obtained the age of the subjects.) After controlling for the individual and organizational variables of positive job attributes, job satisfaction rate, and age, analysis indicates that career mentoring helps to reduce a CMA's career plateau status and turnover intentions.

Previous research provided conflicting evidence regarding mentoring and turnover intentions in large public accounting firms. Viator and Scandura (1991) found some evidence that mentoring was associated with lower turnover intentions while Viator (2001) found little evidence that informal or formal mentoring reduced overall turnover intentions. Our study focused on CMAs working in organizations other than public accounting firms. The organizational structure of public accounting firms may differ from the types of organizations in which our subjects worked. Our sample should be more representative of employees within typical corporate environments.

Also, previous research focused on employees who indicated that they currently or recently had a mentor. Our survey questions obtained the employees' perception about the level of career advice provided within the organization and mentoring they received. Analysis indicates that organizational actions to foster and encourage mentoring can lower the negative effects of career plateauing stress. Our results correspond to Lemire, Saba and Gagnon (1999) conclusions for public sector managers and professionals in Québec: "...absences or inadequacy of practices linked to career planning, development, and support, as well as a lack of opportunities to play new roles and participate in workgroups, accentuates the perception of career plateauing."

Results show that mentoring activities could be used to enrich the work experience of managers and professionals and reduce employee turnover intentions. These outcomes will likely enhance employee performance. Improved employee performance will likely positively influence an organization's operations, including the quality of the organization's financial reporting process.

Because our sample consisted only of Certified Management Accountants (CMAs) from Ontario, Canada, our results may not be generalizable to all CMAs. Future research could address the impact of mentoring on career plateau status and turnover intentions of CMAs from other geographical locations. Also, we initially planned to examine the effects of monetary rewards on career plateau status and turnover intentions. Only one question (question #26) related to monetary rewards. Upon later reflection, we decided that one question alone, particularly with the wording of our question, would not allow us to directly examine the impact of monetary compensation on career plateau and turnover intentions. In this regard, future studies could undertake to directly examine the effect of monetary compensation and perhaps other factors on employee career plateau, coping, and turnover intentions.

## **References**

1. Appelbaum, Steven H. 1994. "Revisiting Career Plateauing", *Journal of Management Psychology*, Vol 9, Issue 5
2. Chao, G. T., P. M. Walz, and P. D. Gardner. 1992. "Formal and informal mentorships: a comparison on mentoring functions and contrast with nonmentored counterparts," *Personnel Psychology*, 45:619-636.
3. Duffy, Jean Ann. 2000. "The Application of Chaos Theory to the Career-Plateaued Worker", *Journal of Employment Counseling*, December, vol 37, Issue 4.

4. Elsass, P.M., and D.A. Ralston, 1989. "Individual responses to the stress of career plateauing" *Journal of Management* 15:35-47.
5. Erickson, B. H. 1963. *Childhood and Society*, 2nd Edition, New York; Hott Rinehart and Winston.
6. Evans, M.G. and Gilbert, E. 1984. "Plateaued managers: Their need gratifications and their effort-performance expectations," *Journal of Management Studies*, 21:99-108.
7. Feldman, D. C., and B.A. Weitz, 1988. "Career plateaus reconsidered" *Journal of Management*, 14:69-80.
8. Ference, T. P., Stoner, J. A. F. and Warren, E. K. 1977. "Managing the Career Plateau." *Academy of Management Review*, 2:606-612.
9. Gibb, Stephen. 1999. The Usefulness of Theory: A Case Study in Evaluating Formal Mentoring Schemes, *Human Relations*, Vol 52, #8.
10. Geiger-Dumond, A. and Boyle, S. 1995, "Mentoring: A Practitioner Guide" Training and Development March, 51-54
11. Hall, D.T. 1985. "Project work as an antidote to career plateauing in a declining engineering organization", *Human Resources Management*, 24:271-292
12. Hall, D.T. and Nougaim, K. 1968. "An examination of Maslow's need hierarchy in an organizational setting," *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 3:12-35.
13. Hall, D.T., and J. Richter. 1990. "Career Gridlock: Baby Boomers hit the wall" *Academy of Management Executive*, 4:7-22
14. Higgins, M. C., and K. E. Kram. 2001. "Reconceptualizing mentoring at work: A developmental network perspective", *Academy of Management Review*, Mississippi State, April, Volume 26, Issue 2, pp 264-288
15. Kahn, R.L., Wolfe, D.H., Quinn, R.P., Snock, J.D., and Rosenthal, R.A. 1964. *Organizational Stress*. (New York:Wiley).
16. Kisielius, J., and B. Sternthal. 1984. "Detecting and explaining vividness effects in attitudinal judgment" *Journal of Marketing Research* (February): 54-64.
17. Kram, K.E. 1985. "Mentoring at work: Developmental relationship in organizational life". Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman.
18. Latack, J.C. 1984. "Career transitions within organizations: An exploratory study of work, non-work, and coping strategies," *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 34:296-322.
19. Lemire, L., T. Saba, and Y. Gagnon. 1999. "Managing Career Plateauing in the Quebec Public Sector" *Public Personnel Management*, 28:375-391.
20. Levinson, D.J. 1978. "*The seasons of a man's life*." (New York: Ballantine Books).
21. Nunnally, J.C. 1978. "*Psychometric Theory*." New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company Of Management, 15:35-47
22. Rotondo, D. 1999. "Individual-Difference Variables and Career-Related Coping," *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 139: 458-471.
23. Rotondo, D. M., and P.L. Perrewe, 2000. "Coping with a career Plateau: An Empirical Examination of What Works and What Doesn't" *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 30:2622-2646
24. Schein, E.H. 1978. *Career Dynamics*. (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley).
25. Shea, G. 1998. "*Mentoring: How to develop successful mentor Behaviours*" (Menlo Park, California, Cript Publication.)
26. Siegel, P.H., Reinstein, A. and Miller, C.L. 2001, "Mentoring and Organizational Justice among Audit Professionals," *Journal of Accounting, Auditing & Finance*, 16: 1-25.
27. Veiga, J.P. 1983. "Mobility influences during managerial career stages," *Academy of Management Journal*, 26:64-85.
28. Viator, R, E. 2001. "The association of formal and informal public accounting mentoring with role stress and related job outcomes", *Accounting Organization and Society*, 26:73-93.
29. Viator, R, E. and T. A. Scandura. 1991. "A study of mentor-protégé relationships in large public accounting firms," *Accounting Horizons*, 3, 5:20-30.
30. Whitely, W. T. and P. Coetsier. 1993. "The relationship of career mentoring to early career outcomes," *Organization Studies*, 14:419-441.
31. Whitely, W., T.W. Dougherty, and G.F. Dreher. 1991. "Relationship of career mentoring and socioeconomic origin to manager's and professional's early career progress," *Academy of Management Journal*, 34:331-351.
32. Zey, M. 1984. *The mentor connection*. (Homewood, Il: Dow Jones-Irwin).

**Notes**