Mentoring refers to a relationship between a mentor and a protégé within a certain period of time. By transmitting knowledge, experience and support from the mentor to the protégé, mentoring can directly fulfill the needs of the protégé. By doing so, mentoring plays an important role in promoting public service and in optimizing human and social capital in the public sector. However, in public management, only a handful of studies examine the role of mentoring. Studies for outcomes of mentoring are even fewer. Given that mentoring is an interactive process between a mentor and a protégé, it can be reasonable to assume that mentorship is inevitably relevant to rules and regulations in the public sector where is relatively formalized and hierarchical. When these rules and regulations become red tape, they will generate pressures to the public managers, and make them perceive depression and constraints. This situation poses a question, which is also mentioned by Bozeman and Feeney: what is the role of mentoring in determining organizational red tape?

In response to the question above, this study aims to examine the influences of mentoring on organizational red tape. To achieve this, this study first conceptualizes mentoring using four components of mentorship – gender matching between a mentor and a protégé, mentor’s gender, mentoring duration and formality of mentoring. Second, this study tests the relationships of each component with red tape with a group of controls. By linking mentoring theory with red tape theory, the study hypothesizes that both gender matching (same gender) between a mentor and a protégé and female mentor will negatively relate to the protégé’s perception of red tape, whereas formal mentoring will have a positive relationship with red tape, compared to informal mentoring. Most importantly, mentoring duration is expected to show an inverted U-shape relationship with red tape.

With Phase III of the National Administrative Studies Project (NASP-III), OLS regression and a group of controls, the robust regression model presents that both gender matching between a mentor and a protégé and mentoring duration show statistically significant relationships with red tape, as hypothesized. However, the relationships of mentor’s gender and of formality of mentoring with red tape are both nonsignificant. The results also present that mentoring duration variable is significantly positive while the squared variable is significantly negative in the mentoring duration – red tape relationship. This relationship indicates that the level of the protégé’s perception of red tape will increase within a certain range of mentoring duration, but will fall if the duration is too long. Theoretically, this study extends our understanding of mentoring by linking four mentorship characteristics with organizational red tape. In practice, this study supplies a sense of the logic and the interactive model between mentoring and red tape in the public sector.