



An examination of formal mentoring relationships in librarianship

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Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to provide a description on formal mentoring relationships in the Library Leadership and Management Association (LLAMA) mentoring program. The LLAMA mentoring program is designed to assist mentees in exchanging knowledge and technical skills and to retain novice librarians, provide networking opportunities, and reinforce diversity. There is limited empirical research that addresses formal mentoring relationships in librarianship research (Boers, 1997; Kuyper-Rushing, 2001; Wojewodzki, Stein, & Richardson, 1998; Zhang, Deyoe, & Matveyeva, 2007). The significance of this study was twofold: (a) to explore relationships of LLAMA's former mentoring participants and (b) to investigate the careers of mentees after participating in a formal mentoring program. The results discuss the dynamics of the reported mentor-mentee relationships, contribute to formal mentoring literature, and specifically highlight formal mentorship relationships in librarianship.

Formal mentoring programs in workplaces or professional organizations may provide training, career development, emotional support, and diversity; however, available research in librarianship mentoring focuses heavily on informal mentorship. (Allen, 2007; Allen, Finkelstein, & Poteet, 2009). Consequently, empirical research addressing formal mentorship is examined in nursing, health care, business, and psychology literature more frequently than librarianship literature (Birch, Asiri, & de Gara, 2007; Finley, Ivanitskaya, & Kennedy, 2007; Harvey, McIntyre, Heames, & Moeller, 2009; Haynes & Ghosh, 2008; Hinkle & Kopp, 2006; Matuszek, Denni, & Schraeder, 2008; Sawatzky & Enns, 2009). Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, and Dubois (2008) stated, "The study of mentoring has generally been conducted within disciplinary silos with a specific type of mentoring relationship as a focus" (p. 254).

Eby et al. (2008) examined interpersonal relationships, motivation, and career mentoring outcomes. The authors formed six hypotheses in their examination of approximately 15,000 articles and reports addressing youth, academic, and workplace mentoring. The outcomes in mentoring from the six categories of mentoring were as follows: (a) behavioral, (b) attitudinal, (c) health related, (d) relational, (e) motivational, and (f) career. Furthermore, Eby et al. conducted interdisciplinary database searches in psychology, business, education, health, and medicine, and they concluded that mentoring does influence "workplace mentoring and career attitudes, work attitudes, and

some career outcomes" (p. 263). Their research does not clearly state which industry found a correlation between mentoring influencing career and work attitudes, and career outcomes. The present study sought to examine mentor-mentee relationships in a professional organization's formal mentoring program from 2010 to 2015.

Research problem

Librarians are retiring at a rapid rate. This investigation examined how to prepare entry-level and mid-career librarians for leadership positions in libraries and professional organizations. This study examined the formal mentoring program of mentor-mentee relationships of the LLAMA from 2010 to 2015. The rapid changes in librarianship personnel are the result of baby boomers retiring in large numbers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). The result is an increased need for leaders to fill vacant administrative positions. The U.S. Department for Professional Employees (2010) reported, "The current population of librarians is aging; 58% of librarians in the U.S. are projected to reach the retirement age of 65 between 2005 and 2019, while 40% of library directors plan to retire between 2007 and 2016" (p. 6). The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012) projected a 7% growth in numbers of librarians from 2012 to 2022 with an increased demand for librarians' skillset to include accessing electronic information. There is an increasing concern regarding retention of mid-career librarians. Subsequently, recruiting new librarians is critical to professional sustainability and growth.

Green (2008) stressed that, as baby boomers leave the workforce, a more diverse group of leaders will replace them in the 21st century. As long-term librarians leave, institutional memory and professional skills disappear. Savickas (2007) forecasted that organizations will continue to downsize, outsource, and retain a flat organizational structure; therefore, workers will need to be flexible and mobile in the 21st century to develop their careers. The purpose of the current study was to evaluate the relationships of mentees with their mentors and explore factors that contribute to mentees' career outcomes. The traditional model of mentoring originates from Greek mythology. A classic example is Homer's *Odyssey* (Barr, 1998; Eby, Rhodes, & Allen, 2007; Kram, 1985), in which an experienced individual guides a younger less experienced person. Mentoring examples vary historically from Homer's *Odyssey* to current librarians, pop icons, athletes, politicians, musicians, corporate executives, and educators (Eby et al., 2007). There are

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numerous traditional mentoring programs in library professional organizations to mentor graduate students and novice librarians. The LLAMA mentoring program serves as an example of one formal librarian mentoring program.

The LLAMA strategic plan for 2012 to 2015 includes fostering continuous development of a robust formal mentoring program that enhances the membership experience for aspiring library leaders in public, academic, and specialty libraries. The LLAMA mentoring program includes a division committee with the purpose to encourage and nurture current and future leaders, as well as to develop and promote outstanding leadership and management practices for libraries through a mutually beneficial shared interaction between the mentor and mentee (Library Leadership and Management Association, 2014). Mentoring serves mentees in developing foundational skills and identifying tools in librarianship to build their career (Okuhara, 2012). Formal mentoring serves to aid workers in navigating their careers. Moreover, “for centuries, mentoring has been used as a vehicle for handing down knowledge, maintaining culture, supporting talent, and securing future leadership” (Savickas, 2007, p. xx). According to Ross (2013), to avoid a gap in prepared library leaders it is essential to value mentoring programs in institutions and professional organization initiatives.

There are few recent empirical studies that address formal mentoring in librarianship (Boon, 2006; Bosch, Ramachandran, Luvano, & Wakiji, 2010; Johnson, 2007; Ross, 2013), although there are a number of articles focusing on informal mentorship relationships experienced by librarians (Moore, Miller, Pitchford, & Jeng, 2008). Boon (2006) conducted a qualitative study by interviewing 14 female library directors employed at rural community colleges in Texas. They examined professional development and identified mentoring as one tool in continual education. Mentoring plays an instrumental role in professional development from instruction and understanding their function as directors to providing the confidence to perform their jobs (Boon, 2006). Although Boon (2006) and Bosch et al. (2010) conducted quantitative studies, Johnson (2007) provided a program review of the Minnesota Institute for Early Career Librarians. The Minnesota Institute for Early Career Librarians accepted 88 librarians of color as mentees from 1998 to 2004 in their 2-year program. Providing the participants with a mentor at their home institutions was a key component of the 10-week study. Johnson (2007) examined the role of mentoring in retaining underrepresented groups in librarianship. Johnson's study concluded that building a community from study participants built a psychosocial and career-related support system that assisted in retaining librarians of color persons in librarianship.

Similarly, Lee (2011) focused on developing mentorship programs in librarianship. Davidson and Middleton (2006) examined the roles of professional associations in mentoring. They examined the correlation of the role of mentoring and retention in a library professional organization for science and engineering. Their study included 265 science librarians; 96% of these librarians participated in library-related professional associations. Their research extends the literature on the role of formal mentoring in a professional organization, highlighting the increased need for science and technology mentoring. This study used a quantitative methodology to address the gap in empirical research scrutinizing the mentor and mentee relationship in a formal library-mentoring program.

Literature review

In this literature review, the researcher discusses the theoretical framework and empirical research trends in formal mentoring, mentoring in librarianship, mentoring theory, and relationships in mentor-mentee interactions. The American Library Association and its divisions and affiliate organizations have approximately 15 formal yearlong mentoring programs. The primary focus of these programs is assisting mentees with leadership, career development, and conference

participation. Historically, formal mentoring programs were used to transition new librarians into librarianship, provide apprenticeship, and to prepare academic librarians for the tenure and promotion process (Boers, 1997).

It is increasingly difficult to ignore mentoring as a topic in prominent library newsletters or magazines. Published literature addressing mentoring in librarianship provides a narrative of informal mentoring experiences, benefits, and best practices in nonempirical literature (Chiorazzi, 2014; Kenefick & DeVito, 2015; Moore et al., 2008; Reid-Smith, 2012; Sears, 2014). Additional studies (Doolittle et al., 2009; Freedman, 2009) synthesize secondary sources to persuade administrators, institutions, and organizations to implement a mentoring program. Most studies in librarianship and mentoring have used nonempirical research methods, such as program reviews (Farmer, Stockham, & Trussell, 2009; Ghouse & Church-Duran, 2008). Numerous publications have described mentoring studies employing a nonempirical approach that have stimulated interest and conversations about mentoring (Montgomery, Dodson, & Johnson, 2014). Additionally, articles provide practical advice for mentoring in librarianship. There was a growing need for empirical research that explored formal mentoring in librarianship and in higher education.

Theoretical framework

In the formulation of a theoretical perspective to observe and measure mentoring relationships in librarianship, this study examined psychological contract theory in Rousseau (1989). Haggard and Turban (2012) argued, “Psychological contract theory suggests that we shift the focus from what one expects to gain from the relationship to what one feels he or she is obligated to provide in the relationship” (p. 1905). A psychological contract can be written or unwritten. The agreement is, by nature, reciprocal and dynamic and is renegotiated as the relationship develops (Rousseau, 1989). Haggard (2012) stated, “Mentoring [psychological contract] breach was significantly related to formality, indicating that formal protégés experienced more mentoring breach than informal protégés” (p. 170). Psychosocial functions intertwine with the mentoring pair relationships and heavily influence mentees' evaluation of their mentoring experiences. Rousseau's (1989) seminal research in workplace relationships and behaviors explored the distinction of psychological and implied contracts between employees and organizations. The primary focus of this study involved the exploration of psychosocial functions as influences on the psychological contract in mentoring relationships. Rousseau provided a theoretical examination of employee relations, whereas Haggard (2012) conducted a quantitative study on psychological contract theory. Haggard (2012) examined social exchange theory as an aspect of psychological contract theory to examine mentoring relationships. The author summarized, “Psychological contract theory is based on social exchange theory and assumes that individuals are rational, self-interested beings who form, maintain, and terminate relationships based on the perceived benefits of such actions outweighing the perceived costs” (Haggard, 2012, p. 162). Haggard's study compared psychological and implied contracts in mentoring relationships and assessed the impact of psychological contract breach in a survey of 144 mentees. The study's participants were postgraduate business students of a large midwestern university. The study examined the consequences of negative psychological contract breach and its correlation to mentees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Mentoring theory

Mentoring-relationship research scholars, such as Kram (1983, 1985), Allen (2007), Allen, Day, and Lentz (2005), Allen et al. (2009), Eby and Lockwood (2005), Eby et al. (2007), and Eby et al. (2008), provided the foundation of current and future studies addressing workplace mentoring relationships. Kram's (1983) sexng theory. Kram

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