

Revealing Moments of Mentorship: Social Exchanges Between a Graduate Research Assistant and a Professor

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This is a longitudinal self-study of a mentoring relationship that emerged and evolved between a graduate research assistant and a professor over seven academic years. We use social exchange theory to explore the evolution of this relationship. Specifically, our focus is a series of nine revealing moments that demonstrate evident learning, a relationship change, or shifts in the currencies of exchange over time. These revealing moments arose from intentional opportunities for scholarly development, personal and relational interactions, and unanticipated occurrences. This study exemplifies the dynamics of a mentoring relationship over an extended time period, thereby responding to the dearth of longitudinal studies of mentoring internationally.

Ce projet de recherche est une étude longitudinale de soi portant sur une relation de mentorat qui a évolué entre un assistant de recherche de cycle supérieur et un professeur au cours de sept années académiques. Nous nous appuyons sur la théorie de l'échange sociale pour explorer cette relation. Plus précisément, nous nous penchons sur neuf moments révélateurs qui démontrent soit un apprentissage évident, un changement dans la relation ou l'évolution des échanges. Ces moments révélateurs ont découlé d'occasions délibérées visant le développement de la recherche; des interactions personnelles et relationnelles; et des événements inattendus. Cette étude illustre la dynamique d'une relation de mentorat au fil du temps, apportant ainsi une réponse au manque, à l'échelle internationale, d'études longitudinales portant sur le mentorat.

Mentoring relationships in graduate education are often cited as significant to the growth of future scholars (Barnett, 2008; Jeong, Irby, Pugliese, Boswell & Kappler-Hewitt, 2018; Johnston & McCormack, 1997) and influential to their perceptions about the quality of their graduate experience (Rose, 2005). As posited by Paré, Starke-Meyerring, and McAlpine (2009) “Our [supervised] graduate students are highly visible products of our own knowledge work, and we have a vested interest in their successful passage to disciplinary membership” (p. 183).

According to Kelly and Schweitzer (1999), “mentoring is considered to be the heart of graduate education” (p. 130). In graduate education, mentorship is typically considered in the context of graduate supervision where professors may assume roles as mentors alongside their roles as thesis supervisors (Barnett, 2008; Pearson & Brew, 2002). However, graduate supervision is not the only space for professor-student interactions in graduate education and not the only space with mentoring potential (Baker, Hums, Mamo & Andrew, 2019; Hoffmann, Loughead & Caron, 2019). Coursework, participation on university committees, and research assistantships may all

provide opportunities for mentorship (McGinn & Niemczyk, 2013; Niemczyk, 2016; Rossouw & Niemczyk, 2013).

Considering the potential of research assistantships, Grundy (2004), in her master's thesis, showed that graduate research assistants working with experienced researchers had the potential to develop valuable research capacities and increase their self-confidence. Grundy's work illustrated several positive mentoring relationships that developed in research assistantships. However, negative relationships were also reported in her work and other scholarly literature (Grundy, 2004; Hinchey & Kimmel, 2000). Limeri et al (2019) conducted a qualitative study in an effort to characterize negative mentoring relationships in learning to conduct academic research and described seven significant ways participants experienced negative mentoring: "1) absenteeism, 2) abuse of power, 3) interpersonal mismatch, 4) lack of career and technical support, 5) lack of psychosocial support, 6) misaligned expectations, and 7) unequal treatment" (p. 4).

The mentoring relationship that provides the focus for this self-study emerged from a research assistantship where a graduate student was hired to assist a professor with a research project in the autumn of 2003. From this initial connection, the relationship continued to evolve throughout and beyond the research assistantship. The purpose of this self-study is to uncover and describe the revealing moments that occurred during the evolution of this mentoring relationship over seven years, thereby responding to the dearth of longitudinal studies of mentoring. We believe that uncovering and describing these moments has the potential to raise consciousness for professors and graduate students about the vitality of events and actions throughout their relationships.

Despite evidence that mentoring relationships between professors and graduate students are important for the development of future scholars (Barnett, 2008; Johnston & McCormack, 1997, Rossouw & Niemczyk, 2013, Naufel & Beike, 2013), the research literature provides limited evidence about the specifics of how these mentoring relationships evolve over time, and what circumstances contribute to the formation of mentoring relationships. Through this self-study, we chronicle the mentoring relationship that evolved between a graduate research assistant (protégé) and a professor (mentor). Drawing upon social exchange theory (van Emmerik, 2008), this self-study contributes qualitative and longitudinal evidence regarding revealing moments that occurred between the mentor and protégé during an initial eight-month research assistant contract and the subsequent six academic years. The primary research question guiding this study is: *How did a mentoring relationship form and evolve between the mentor and the protégé over seven academic years?* This question led us to identify revealing moments that demonstrate evident learning; relationship change for the mentor, the protégé, or both; or shifts in the currencies of exchange over time. The revealing moments also describe the reciprocity, dynamics, and continual changes in the mentoring relationship.

Mentorship in Graduate Education

Mentoring entails a special relationship that transcends professional boundaries to incorporate personal connections between a mentor and a protégé (Fowler & O'Gorman, 2005). Traditionally, mentors were viewed as professionals with specialized knowledge and experience who provided wisdom and support to protégés through their mentoring relationships (Allen, 2003; Bozeman & Feeney, 2007; D'Abate & Eddy, 2008; Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000; Scandura & Williams, 2001; Sosik & Godshalk, 2005). There is an extensive literature base regarding the characteristics

of mentoring and the value of mentoring relationships (Barnett, 2008; D'Abate & Eddy, 2008; Johnston & McCormack, 1997; Ransdell, Nguyen, Hums, Clark, & Williams, 2018). However, several authors have lamented the lack of literature that documents the specific elements that contribute to successful mentoring programs and relationships (D'Abate & Eddy, 2008; Douglas & McCauley, 1999; McDonald, Erickson, Johnson, & Elder, 2007; Schlee, 2000). Additionally, a noticeable gap in the literature is research that explores the dynamics occurring over time within mentoring relationships. As Allen, Eby, O'Brien, and Lentz (2008) argue, "longitudinal research strategies are essential to fully appreciate the dynamic nature of mentoring" (p. 344) through analysis of "multiple time points from initiation through termination/redefinition" (p. 350).

Social exchange theory provides a generative means to consider the dynamic nature of mentoring relationships across extended time periods (Ensher, Thomas, & Murphy, 2001; Scandura, 1992; van Emmerik, 2008). According to social exchange theory, individuals seek, develop, sustain, or end relationships based on their perceptions of the potential benefits and costs (known together as the "currencies") of those relationships (Emerson, 1981; Ensher et al., 2001). Foa and Foa (1974) delineated six categories of social exchange that are particularly relevant to mentoring relationships: emotional support, status, information or skills, money, goods, and services. These are the currencies that are exchanged between mentors and protégés as they engage together and illustrated in revealing moments in this study.

Scandura (1992) mapped these six categories of social exchange to the three main types of mentoring support—psychosocial support, support through role modelling, and vocational support—that are emphasized in many descriptions of mentoring (Ensher, Grant-Vallone & Marelich, 2002; Schockett & Haring-Hidore, 1985). Traditional unidirectional interpretations of mentoring emphasize these three types of mentoring support as the kinds of contributions that mentors bring to a relationship and the benefits that protégés receive. For example, Bouquillon, Sosik, and Lee (2005) identified acceptance, friendship, and confirmation of protégé behaviour as specific forms of psychosocial support that a mentor can provide for protégés. They also specified that role modelling by a mentor draws attention to "attitudes, values and behaviours [that] guide the protégé" (p. 241). Vocational support is "operationalized as status, information, and services" (Ensher et al., 2001, p. 442) provided by the mentor to the protégé, often in the form of providing information, teaching necessary skills, recommending career strategies, or facilitating relevant introductions. The resulting benefits for protégés are well documented in the form of increased retention rates, higher grade point averages, clarity of career goals, knowledge of academic life, and other positive short- and long-term consequences of mentorship (Bell & Treleaven, 2011; Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Gardiner, Tiggemann, Kearns, & Marshall, 2007; Laursen, Seymour, Hunter, Thiry, & Melton, 2010).

A focus on social exchange provides a means to move beyond these unidirectional interpretations of mentoring to consider the "reciprocal benefits" (Shore, Toyokawa, & Anderson, 2008, p. 493) for both parties in the relationship. Contemporary conceptualizations represent mentoring as a "shared adventure" (Baird, 1993, p. 54), involving continual "negotiation and development" (Fletcher, 2000, p. 49) where both mentoring partners contribute their knowledge and experience, and receive positive benefits in return (MacCallum, 2007; Young & Perrewé, 2000). Dobie, Smith, and Robins (2010) argue that ideal mentoring relationships are reciprocal, mutually rewarding, and responsive to changes over time that reflects the needs of the parties within the relationship.

Mentoring relationships lead to strong emotional bonds as trust and commitment build between the mentor and the protégé. Mentoring partners "engage in the relationship to create a

partnership” (Hodges, 2009, p. 34), and all partners benefit from the good feelings that stem from the resulting personal connections. Mentoring relationships can evolve into personal friendships (Rong & Preissle, 2006).

Based upon a meta-analytic review of published studies of mentoring in higher education, Ehrich, Hansford, and Tennent (2004) concluded that mentoring relationships provide positive results for mentors and protégés. There is an imbalance in the literature, however, with much more evidence about the benefits and motivations for protégés than for mentors (Eagan, Sharkness, Hurtado, Mosqueda, & Chang, 2011). Available evidence shows that mentors may benefit personally and professionally through career rejuvenation and the sense of satisfaction from contributing to the development of new scholars (Griffin, 2008; Hansford, Ehrich, & Tennent, 2003).

Social exchanges within mentoring relationships provide opportunities for skill development, career advancement, and emotional connections for protégés as well as mentors. It is important to note that social exchange theory does not postulate that relationships must offer parity in terms of the reciprocity involved (Emerson, 1981). Mentors and protégés may make quite different contributions to their relationships and may experience quite different consequences from their interactions. There may also be changes over time in what is contributed or received in a mentoring relationship.

Specific to the context of research assistantships, Eagan et al. (2011) found that professors gave their time and knowledge, and students contributed beneficial labour to the professors’ research projects. Strike et al. (2002) claim that it is an ethical obligation of supervisors to provide research assistants with educational opportunities and support their progress as developing scholars. The authors also stated that research supervisors should attend to the welfare of individual research assistants. Social exchange theory suggests that professors may have to weigh the potentially high involvement necessary to build and sustain a mentoring relationship against the benefits they could accrue by involving students in their research projects (Eagan et al., 2011). Professors are unlikely to engage in mentoring if they have little time to invest in students, anticipate little benefit from the students’ contributions to their research, or have no formal commitment to mentoring. In contrast, if professors are driven by personal commitments or institutional support for mentoring students, then they may perceive the necessary investment as a “fair ‘exchange”” (p. 155). In some cases, a mentor may contribute to a protégé as a means to “pay forward the debt” (Clutterbuck, 2005, p. 7) owed to a prior mentor, thereby moving the social exchange beyond the original two partners to include other individuals or other time periods. Furthermore, mentoring may involve a one-on-one relationship between a mentor and a protégé, or it may involve multiple mentors each contributing different elements to the development of the protégé (Barnett, 2008).

Allen et al. (2008) argued that mentoring relationships are complex since mentors and protégés engage in different roles and perform different responsibilities at different times in their relationships. The present research addresses an apparent gap in the literature by capturing the revealing moments that contributed to a mentoring relationship over seven academic years. This study provides insight into the social exchanges from the perspective of the mentor, the protégé, and a critical friend. We highlight the negotiated discourses, reciprocations, and responsibilities involved over time in this relationship, thereby providing a contribution to the knowledge base regarding mentoring.

Research Approach

This is a qualitative self-study (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011) of the mentoring relationship between a graduate student and a professor. The two individuals independently agreed to participate in this study, and each participated in all aspects of the research except for the writing of this paper. The research was undertaken in collaboration with another graduate student who was not involved in the initial research assistantship. The graduate student served as a critical friend to ask probing questions and introduce an outsider perspective during the analysis phase of the research (Costa & Kallick, 1993), which began in 2011, two years after the last revealing moment that formed part of this study.

Consistent with the recommendations of Allen et al. (2008), this longitudinal study draws from multiple data sources to investigate several time points over seven academic years in the relationship from the perspectives of the mentor and the protégé, as well as the critical friend. The analysis of the data began after year seven of this study. Data analysis provided time to settle the ongoing reflections of the mentor and the protégé that were captured on an ongoing basis over the seven years via (a) audio-recorded meetings and (b) the journal maintained by the protégé during and beyond the research assistantship. Together, the three researchers analyzed data sources, including: (a) audio-recorded and transcribed meetings over the duration of the research assistantship (October through May in year one); (b) various documents associated with the qualitative research project that provided the context for the research assistantship (e.g., ethics review application materials, a conference proposal, a conference paper, grant applications, email correspondence); (c) the journal maintained by the protégé during and beyond the research assistantship; and (d) informal conversations and communications subsequent to the research assistantship. Following the precepts of interaction analysis (Jordan & Henderson, 1995), we reviewed the entire corpus of data to identify examples and evidence of the nature of the relationship and its evolution over time.

We independently analyzed transcripts of all meetings between the mentor and the protégé to identify significant moments in the relationship and sought confirming or disconfirming evidence across other data sources. Through repeating viewings of data sources and in analysis meetings, we each created a list of events that appeared to be significant to the evolution of the mentoring relationship between the mentor and the protégé. We then presented to each other our individual lists of events and the reasons we felt they were significant. We discussed the significance and merits of each identified moment, and eventually settled upon a series of nine revealing moments that we all agreed exemplified and contributed to the evolution of the mentoring relationship between the mentor and the protégé. Although this was not planned, none of the revealing moments occurred during the data analysis stage of the study.

We define revealing moments as specific moments of interaction between the mentor, the protégé, and other parties that stood out in the data as evidence of the formation and evolution of a mentoring relationship. These revealing moments demonstrate evident learning or a relationship change for the mentor or the protégé (or both). The final set of nine revealing moments includes those moments that our research team judged to best characterize the changing relationship over time. These revealing moments are our response to the guiding research question: How did a mentoring relationship form and evolve between the mentor and the protégé over seven academic years?

The Mentor and the Protégé

The professor and graduate research assistant are both women who were in their mid-30s at the beginning of the relationship. For the purposes of clarity, we use the labels “mentor” and “protégé” to refer to these individuals throughout our discussion, even though we would not have used these labels at the beginning of the relationship. The relationship began when the protégé was a new Master of Education student and appointed for one academic year (eight months) as a research assistant for the mentor, who was a recently tenured Associate Professor of Educational Research. During the research assistantship, the mentor and the protégé collaborated on a qualitative research project from initial inception to presentation at a national conference. The relationship evolved during the research assistantship and in the subsequent years as the protégé completed her degree and moved to another country where she taught at a university while pursuing doctoral studies at a distance. This paper captures a seven-year time span in this relationship. This particular seven-year time span was chosen as the most significant revealing moments occurred during these years. In subsequent years, the mentor’s and protégé’s careers and research interests took them in different directions and their mentoring relationship shifted toward a friendly and collegial relationship.

Revealing Moments in the Evolution of the Mentoring Relationship

We use social exchange theory to describe nine revealing moments over the course of the relationship that uncover and describe evident learning or relationship change. Some of these moments occurred through intentional actions or lessons that provided opportunities for reciprocal benefits through social exchange. For example, some of the revealing moments occurred when the mentor assigned a specific task associated with the research assistantship. In these moments, the mentor provided instruction, advice, or opportunities for the protégé to learn through the task. The mentor received completed work that advanced the research project, and the protégé increased her independence and self-confidence as a researcher. Other moments occurred through unanticipated events or unfolding situations where emotional support, status, information, and skills were exchanged between the mentor and protégé. The relationship began during the initial research assistant contract but continued well beyond this time period as the mentor and the protégé became research collaborators, and eventually as the protégé shifted to a mentoring role with other academic newcomers where she emulated the behaviour of the mentor. This is a longitudinal investigation of the social exchanges associated with the evolving relationship between the mentor and the protégé.

First Research Meeting (Year One)

The first research meeting demonstrated a difference between the protégé’s and the mentor’s visions of the social exchanges in the relationship. The protégé perceived the relationship as employment, but rather than interest in the salary, she was focused on this “job” as a means to learn about research, for which she had little experience. The mentor perceived the potential for an educative and relationship-building opportunity. The protégé sought direction from the mentor about her job responsibilities, asking “Is there anything specific that you want me to talk about [in the journal] or just a normal report on the process?” (Transcript, October 1, 2003). The mentor responded that the protégé should record activities and events that were truthful and

important according to her own judgment. Afterward, the protégé questioned in her journal, “I wonder if there is some form of review of progress system for being [a research assistant]?” (Journal Entry). At this moment, the protégé concentrated on how she contributed as an employee and how she would be evaluated. She gave no thought to the development of a mentoring relationship. In contrast, the mentor was focused on inviting input from the protégé as a means of fostering a rich, educational opportunity that could potentially lead to a mutually rewarding relationship. This moment was revealing because it indicated the employer-employee relationship that was focal at this stage for the protégé, which stood in sharp contrast with other moments that follow.

Application for Research Ethics Review (Year One)

A few weeks into the project, the mentor and the protégé were in a meeting discussing the completion of required tasks for the research study. This presented a revealing moment of negotiation in the social exchange between the mentor and the protégé as they prepared an application for research ethics review. The mentor presented the protégé with two options to complete the task: (a) they could meet together to co-write the application or (b) one of them could write a first draft and then meet to edit the draft collectively. The protégé offered to write the first draft, with the request for support from the mentor in the form of feedback. The protégé undertook this extra independent task in exchange for the opportunity to learn from the mentor’s promised feedback. The mentor judged this work style as adequate to the research project needs and to the protégé’s educational needs. The moment is significant because it is the first clear indication that the protégé was willing to take a risk (attempting to write a first draft of the application for research ethics review) and was confident that the mentor would provide the necessary support.

First Qualitative Interviews (Year One)

In the fourth month, the mentor and the protégé conducted interviews for their qualitative research project, which illustrated a revealing moment of social exchange through role modelling. The protégé observed the first few interviews conducted by the mentor as a role model, which offered the protégé a safe space to learn. During debriefing conversations, the mentor provided specific details regarding how to conduct structured and semi-structured interviews and other relevant research design aspects. After observing several interviews, the protégé offered to interview a graduate student in an attempt to model interview strategies while the mentor observed, which indicates the protégé accepting the challenge of a new research task by choosing the moment and environment to engage. “I feel confident with conducting the next [graduate student] interview myself as long as [my mentor] is there to provide input if I miss something” (Journal Entry). This revealing moment demonstrated the opportunity for the protégé to learn and grow as a researcher. The mentor offered role modelling, instruction, feedback, and input as needed. The protégé accepted this offer of instruction and support, and completed the task with confidence.

Plagiarism in Class (Year One)

Throughout the first year, the protégé was also enrolled in master’s courses, which led to the first

revealing moment that was not part of the research assistantship. In one course, a graduate classmate of the protégé gave a presentation plagiarized from a course paper the protégé had written previously. The protégé left the class “distraught and angry” (Journal Entry) and immediately phoned the mentor—not a friend, not the course instructor, not her thesis supervisor, nor any other person. In the social exchange, the protégé sought professional and emotional support regarding this challenging situation and felt confident the mentor was the best person to provide this support. The mentor was struck by the significance that the protégé sought her advice about the ethical challenge before speaking to her course instructor or thesis supervisor and was also conscious of the need to respect the instructor’s responsibility for the course. This moment also draws attention to the fact that other individuals can affect or be implicated in a mentoring relationship.

A Restaurant Break (Year One)

A revealing moment occurred near the end of the first year involving an informal social exchange between the mentor, the protégé, and another professor. After an extended research meeting focused on preparing for an upcoming conference, the mentor and the protégé joined the other professor for dinner and participated in casual conversation unrelated to the upcoming conference. The protégé characterized this as “the first personal/relational moment with any member of the academic world” (Journal Entry). The conversations throughout the evening focused on favourite authors and recent research. This revealing moment captures a shift in the relationship to a personal connection or friendship not just an employer-employee or professor-student relationship. The protégé and critical friend both included this moment on their initial lists of significant moments, whereas the mentor could barely remember the evening. This revealing moment provided evidence of differential value in the social exchange for the mentor and the protégé. A seemingly insignificant event for the mentor was truly significant for the protégé; the currencies of exchange were not necessarily equivalent. Establishing a personal relationship with a professor may be an uncommon experience for many graduate students, so this shift in the relationship was initially more obvious to the student researchers (protégé and critical friend) than the professor (mentor).

Conference Presentation (Year One)

At the end of the first year, the mentor and the protégé worked in tandem to prepare the conference paper arising from the research assistantship for presentation at a national conference. This was the protégé’s first academic conference, and an important milestone for learning the forms of communication expected from academics. This revealing moment involved an exchange between the mentor and an audience member, which was witnessed by the protégé. During the conference presentation, the audience member challenged the trustworthiness of qualitative research. The protégé initially felt devastated: “I worked so hard and the person just dismissed everything because it wasn’t what she considered evidence” (Journal Entry). The mentor answered the challenge using literature and supporting arguments affirming the veracity of qualitative research as a form of evidence. Through this social exchange, the mentor role modelled how to engage in a scholarly debate regarding quality and credibility of qualitative research. The protégé received the emotional support necessary to overcome her sense of devastation and observed how to address scholarly debate.

Rebuttal to a Research Critique (Year Five)

The next revealing moment occurred over three years after the protégé witnessed the mentor's rebuttal to the critique at the conference. The protégé reflected back on the mentor's role modelling and consciously emulated the rebuttal approach without consultation or discussion with the mentor. At this point, the protégé was engaged in doctoral studies and living outside the country. In an online course, the instructor recommended that the protégé change her research topic because, "I don't believe that anything significant can be learned" (Journal Entry). The protégé asked the course instructor to explain the rationale behind her dismissal of the topic, and then the protégé addressed each concern using published sources and empirical evidence. The social exchange represented in this moment involved a method for legitimizing research ideas and approaches in a scholarly fashion. This moment indicates the lasting effect of role modelling behaviour. In addition, this moment indicates the social exchange extended over several years. The mentor's model was taken up years later, and the mentor learned of this incident only during the analysis of the data.

Preparation for the Doctoral Comprehensive Examination (Year Six)

Another revealing moment occurred prior to the protégé's doctoral comprehensive examination. On a visit to campus, the protégé expressed nervousness about the oral hearing, looking for support and advice from the mentor. The mentor immediately offered to attend a practice presentation as a way to alleviate the protégé's tension, and provide constructive feedback. The mentor was concerned about the appropriate level of support considering that she was not the protégé's Ph.D. supervisor. This moment of social exchange indicated the tensions that can result from multiple mentors as a graduate student progresses through a degree program. The protégé had not considered potential tensions for the mentor until the analysis of the data. Ultimately, the mentor explained a public practice presentation would provide an opportunity for the protégé to become familiar with the process of an oral defense and learn the types of questions that could be asked by academics. Although their work together had ended, the mentor remained a person to whom the protégé turned for support, indicated the sustaining power of social exchanges in the mentoring relationship over geographical distance and diverse scholarly paths, and despite the existence and involvement of other potential mentors, including the protégé's dissertation supervisor.

The Protégé Begins to Mentor Others (Year Six)

The final revealing moment occurred long after the mentoring relationship began and occurred outside the initial mentoring relationship. In fact, the mentor learned about this moment through analyzing the data for this paper. The protégé was employed as an educator in an international context, at an institution that had recently increased its research focus. The protégé was one of few educators with research experience; hence the Dean at her academic institution requested that she take a guiding role in supporting her colleagues' research. The protégé provided guidance, information, ideas, support, and advice to her colleagues regarding research paradigms, methods, literature reviews, proposals, funding, conference presentations, and publishing. A specific example that stood out as a revealing moment occurred well into the sixth year of the mentoring relationship when the protégé was assisting a colleague with an action research study that was

intended to form the basis for the colleague's master's thesis. The colleague referred to the protégé as her "mentor." During a meeting, the protégé and colleague sat together preparing an application for research ethics review. The protégé started inserting information in the various sections and then stopped and invited the colleague to engage first, with the explicit intention to replicate the earlier revealing moment between the mentor and the protégé. The moment between the protégé and her colleague was revealing because it represented a social exchange that occurred within the dynamic of a new mentoring relationship as the protégé transitioned into a new role, as a mentor to her colleague. The protégé had acquired a model for her actions from the earlier interaction with her mentor; in exchange, the mentor saw the long-term consequences of her earlier actions captured in this subsequent mentoring exchange.

Discussion

These nine revealing moments capture the social exchanges embedded in the mentoring relationship between a professor and a graduate research assistant, and their interactions with others over seven academic years. The revealing moments portray evident learning and relationship changes that characterize the mentoring relationship as indicated through analysis of the accumulated data, especially the meeting transcripts and the protégé's research and personal journals. The salience of these documentary records was profound. It was only through this self-study involving analysis of these data sources that we realized that Foa and Foa's (1974) six categories of social exchanges were not only present in the mentoring relationship, but they often appeared interconnected with each other. In addition, Scandura's (1992) mapping of the categories of social exchanges to mentoring support, psychosocial support, support through role modelling, and vocational support, was also represented throughout the revealing moments as interconnected, rather than distinct. In effect, throughout the revealing moments, the protégé learned and then modelled the mentor's actions and had evolved into being a mentor herself. Ultimately, through this self-study, the protégé realized that she became that which she experienced. Self-study provided an opportunity for the mentor and the protégé to better understand themselves and their actions, which is a common outcome from self-study, as noted by Bullough and Pinnegar (2004).

The research assistantship included numerous social exchanges involving task completion by the protégé and instruction or feedback from the mentor that align with Foa and Foa's (1974) categories of social exchanges: exchanges of information or skills, money, and services. These exchanges also represent the vocational support type of mentoring support (Scandura, 1992). These moments provided several early intentional opportunities for the protégé's scholarly development: (a) co-designing interviews, (b) drafting an application for research ethics review, (c) observing then conducting interviews, (d) collaboratively analyzing data, (e) co-authoring a conference proposal, and (f) co-presenting a conference paper. Most of these social exchanges occurred within the first year of the study, specifically: the first research meeting, application for research ethics review, first qualitative interviews, plagiarism in class, a restaurant break, conference presentation. However, the description of the revealing moments demonstrate that not only vocational support was represented, but also psychosocial support (Scandura, 1992), which contributed to feelings of confidence and trust indicative of Foa and Foa's (1974) category of social exchanges of emotional support.

The mentor and the protégé worked in a fully collaborative fashion on the initial research project, such that the protégé became a research collaborator, not just an assistant. As the protégé

continued to build knowledge, skills, confidence, and trust, she began to assume more responsibilities as a research collaborator indicative of all six of Foa and Foa's social exchange categories, but particularly the status category and representing psychosocial support, vocational support, and support through role modelling. To accomplish the various scholarly tasks, the mentor and the protégé met frequently (once per week for eight months), providing opportunities for several "side conversations" related to the protégé's scholarly development (Paré, Starke-Meyerring, & McAlpine, 2009). These side conversations were focused upon applying to Ph.D. programs, writing academic papers, attending academic conferences, and locating relevant scholarly resources. Although not integral components of the shared research project, these side conversations were intentional educative aspects of the research assistantship (Strike et al., 2002) and contributed to the protégé's development of skills and confidence necessary to be a research collaborator. Ultimately, as a result of the research assistantship opportunity, the protégé applied for and was accepted into doctoral studies.

These moments also reveal relationship changes. Over time, the social exchanges between the mentor and the protégé began to indicate a burgeoning personal relationship that extended beyond the initial research study. The resulting level of trust led the protégé to seek out the support of the mentor for other scholarly tasks including in later years during her doctoral research. These instances include a plagiarism situation involving a graduate classmate, preparation for the doctoral comprehensive examination, the restaurant break, and the selection of academic conferences to attend. The emotional bond that grew over time was informed by and contributed to non-scholarly interactions such as sharing a restaurant meal or a hotel suite, activities whose salience was unknown to the mentor until the writing of this paper.

In the later years of the relationship, the protégé shifted into a supportive role with other academic newcomers and became a mentor herself, often mirroring the categories of social exchanges (Foa & Foa, 1974) she experienced and providing the types of mentoring support (Scandura, 1992) she received. These later interactions reveal a new dynamic of social exchange, involving other people, in a different country, and unknown at the time to the mentor. These social exchanges represent a pay-it-forward form of interaction (Clutterbuck, 2005), rather than just a backward reciprocity. The mentor provided support to the protégé at one point in time and, in exchange, the protégé provided similar support to another individual several years later. The protégé's place of employment articulated a new interest in educational research. The protégé was one of the few educators with a background in educational research to match this new institutional emphasis. Although the protégé did not initially envision herself as a mentor, she emulated what her mentor did and other colleagues came to recognize her as a mentor. In this way, the protégé became a mentor to others, which reflects the kind of transformation that Clutterbuck identifies as "one of the core measurements of the success of a mentoring relationship" (p. 8). Thus, it appears the categories of social exchanges (Foa & Foa, 1974) and types of mentoring relationships (Scandura, 1992) are fluid, interconnected and have long term impact. These revealing moments indicate the potential for social exchanges to extend over a long period of time, involve other parties, and continue forward to others, thereby demonstrating the long-term and extended impact of revealing moments and the mentoring relationship.

Just as the mentor was unaware of some revealing moments until the development of this paper, the protégé had not realized the mentor experienced some tensions regarding professional boundaries. The revealing moments regarding the plagiarism incident and the Ph.D. comprehensive examination involved other professors who were the mentor's colleagues. Care must be taken so that graduate students' mentoring relationships do not interfere with or

undermine formal roles within their graduate programs. Reflection on these revealing moments raised awareness for the protégé, the mentor, and the critical friend (also a graduate student). We encourage other mentoring partners and their colleagues to engage in self-study to develop similarly heightened levels of awareness, which could contribute to positive educational practices.

Conclusions

This qualitative study represents a longitudinal analysis of a mentoring relationship between a graduate research assistant and a professor. Our study captures the social exchanges and evolution of a mentoring relationship from inception through seven academic years. It identifies how the social exchanges evolved from an employment relationship to a bond exemplifying trust, loyalty, and commitment from the mentor and the protégé. Through the revealing moments, we noted evidence that the protégé experienced a conceptual shift. This relationship emerged, shaped, and reshaped itself over seven years. It included a specific research assistantship period, a continuing period of graduate study, and time at an international distance. Clearly, the protégé, even as she assumed a role as mentor herself, continued to rely on her mentor as a role model, a guide, a colleague, and a friend. The mentor continued to offer support and encouragement, and to monitor how her input was received. We found that this mentorship was a multifaceted relationship with revealing moments, social exchanges, interwoven connections, dynamic growth, and personal bonding.

The relationship formed on the basis of an employment contract; the protégé initially saw herself as an employee. Through engagement in the research tasks, this conception shifted and the protégé began to see herself as a research collaborator. As the relationship continued after the completion of the research assistantship contract, the protégé turned to her mentor for ongoing guidance but also demonstrated increasing autonomy. Eventually, the mentoring relationship transformed into a friendship that crossed geographical boundaries.

The revealing moments that contributed to the development of this mentoring relationship included intentional opportunities for scholarly development, personal and relational interactions, and unanticipated occurrences. These are forms of social exchange (Ensher et al., 2001; van Emmerik, 2008) that had reciprocal positive effects for the mentoring partners. The protégé learned research skills, obtained knowledge about life in academia, and increased her status by acquiring the sought-after role as a research assistant and presenting at a scholarly conference. The mentor benefited from the resulting contributions to her research project from this newly competent and confident research collaborator and from a sense of personal fulfillment as she observed the protégé's growth and especially the ways the protégé was able to pay-it-forward by mentoring others (Clutterbuck, 2005). The protégé modelled the "mentor's attitudes, values and behaviours" (Bouquillon et al., 2005, p. 241) as she moved into her role as mentor to others. The mentor experienced a sense of satisfaction and enhanced confidence in her role as supervisor by seeing the positive influence she had on the protégé and on the protégé's contributions to mentoring others. Consistent with social exchange theory, these were direct forms of professional, personal, and vocational support for both mentoring partners (Scandura, 1992).

This self-study provides four important contributions to the literature. First, we have learned that revealing moments can influence the evolution of a mentoring relationship. These moments may or may not initially seem significant, but carry a lasting effect. These moments may arise from intentional actions or through unanticipated occurrences. Profound moments of bonding in

mentoring relationships can occur even if the mentor or protégé is not aware of their occurrence or significance. Until we engaged in this self-study, the mentor was unaware of the significance of the restaurant break to the protégé. Further, this analysis highlighted the ways the protégé clearly and automatically followed the role modelling of the mentor when she rebutted a research critique and when she supported the research activities of other colleagues. These moments occurred years after the research assistantship ended when the protégé was living in a different country and without consultation or communication with the mentor. Furthermore, we discovered that mentoring partners could identify different moments as revealing or different reasons that a particular moment is revealing. Therefore, it is important to consider mentor and protégé perspectives, and to include insider and outsider perspectives in analyses of incidents that could lead toward mentorship (Allen et al., 2008).

Second, this study reinforces our claim that mentorship is a dynamic relationship of ongoing “negotiation and development” (Fletcher, 2000, p. 49) through interactions. Mentorship plays out in unpredictable ways that are informed by the situation encountered. As Allen et al. (2008) argued, better understandings of the dynamics of mentoring are essential to theoretical advance in the field. Social exchange theory provides a helpful theoretical model to understand the dynamics of a mentoring relationship. It is important to recognize that the social exchanges in the relationship do not have to be equal between the mentor and the protégé. The key to sustainable social exchanges is that both parties perceive that they receive sufficient value for what they contribute (Young & Perrewé, 2000).

Third, social exchanges in a mentoring relationship can extend beyond the initial mentoring parties to others outside the initial relationship. In this study, multiple mentors were implicated or affected by the mentoring relationship. For example, the mentor experienced a degree of professional tension in the revealing moments when the protégé requested advice in handling a plagiarism incident in her course and later in preparing for her doctoral comprehensive examination. In another example, we documented a revealing moment between the protégé and her colleague, which echoed an earlier social exchange between the mentor and the protégé when they were completing an application for research ethics review. In the later revealing moment, the protégé emulated the actions and behaviours that she witnessed from her mentor in her new mentoring relationship. The social exchanges of this mentoring relationship extended to include other individuals and other time periods.

Fourth, our analysis shows that a research assistantship has the potential to be educative and transformational in ways beyond the initial work. Mentorship may or may not be the goal of a research assistantship, but the possibility exists that such a relationship could form. Social interaction between the mentor and the protégé within and beyond the contracted work can provide a foundation for establishing mentorship bonds. A mentoring relationship builds on a foundation of continued interaction, advice, support, and consolation within and beyond any formal contracted period of work. Professors who employ research assistants should take note that a mentoring relationship can evolve from the employment relationship. At the start of their relationship, the mentor was aware of this potential, but the protégé was not. The mentor demonstrated a commitment to ensuring that the research assistantship was educative (Strike et al., 2002) and hence devoted resources to providing necessary supports for the protégé’s scholarly development related to the research project and other unrelated academic topics; the protégé came to recognize this support as mentorship. Comparable commitments by other professors or research assistant supervisors might provide the grounding for mentoring relationships.

Our findings are based upon a single mentoring relationship that evolved between two

individuals. We do not intend to suggest that all professor-student relationships unfold in a similar fashion. We are certainly aware that not all research assistantships are positive experiences for graduate students (Grundy, 2004; Hinchey & Kimmel, 2000, Rossouw & Niemczyk, 2013). We do hope, however, that our discussion of this particular relationship will lead to further research about revealing moments in mentorship and will promote reflection for professors and students alike.

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