Building Effective Mentorship Dyads with the Use of Attachment Theory

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Scope of Abstract
New nurse educators often characterize their transition into the professional faculty role as being fraught with anxiety, uncertainty, and a general lack of confidence (Ferguson, 2011). One evidence-based solution to combat this emotionally tumultuous challenge is through the use of formalized mentoring programs (Ferguson, 2011). Unfortunately, despite the many benefits of formalized mentorship programs, they are not common in nursing education and culture.

Objectives and Significance

Objectives
- Learners will be able to identify personality differences as the number one reason given for the failure of formalized mentor relationships and possible consequences for the mentor and protégé if the relationship fails.
- Learners will be able to defend application of Attachment Theory concepts to mentorship and how these will contribute to strategies that enhance mentor relationships and healthy work environments.

Significance
Formalized mentor relationships between professional nurses have become more popular and have proven to have many benefits for the mentors and protégé, but there is no preparation for these roles in postsecondary educational institutions (Schoening, 2013).

Benefits of Mentorship
- Early and more successful socialization.
- Increased job performance and satisfaction.
- Increased career advancement and scholarship.
- Improved retention and commitment to organization.

Conversely, failure of the mentoring relationship has been shown to negatively affect both mentors and protégé (Straus, Johnson, Marquez, & Feldman, 2014). The number one reason given for failure of the mentor relationship is difficulty in personality differences (Straus et al., 2014).

Literature Review
The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), Big Five Instrument, and the Adult Attachment Scale (AAS) were the tools chosen based on frequency of use reported by the searched literature and examined using reliability, validity, and social desirability.

Myers Briggs Type Indicator
- Most frequently found tool on review of literature.
- Grant (2016) described the MBTI as “the sad that won’t die” (p.1).
- Pittinger (2010) and Diekmann et al. (2012) list numerous issues with reliability and validity with the MBTI.
- Lack of data found on social desirability for the MBTI.

The Big Five Personality Inventory
- Second most frequently used test by organizations (Diekmann et al., 2012).
- Reliability and validity scores fair to good (Hee, 2014).
- Lee et al. (2009) recommends utilization of the Big Five for use in mentorship programs although the publication is several years out of date.
- Social desirability is a concern for this tool

Adult Attachment Scale
- Well supported by literature and backed by the Attachment Theory (Wei, Russell, Mallinckrodt, & Vogel, 2011; Miles, 2011).
- Multiple studies have successfully demonstrated the expansion of Attachment Theory to assist in the understanding of adult relationships, (Germain, 2011; Miles, 2011).
- The AAS tool boasts fair to good reliability rates.
- Social desirability attachment studies have not been found to be contaminated with bias (Frias, Shaver, Mikulincer, 2014).
- Literature review does yield current data on recommendation for use in mentoring (Miles, 2011; Paetzold, 2015).

Reliability and Validity

Application of Attachment Theory
Attachment theory has been expanded from original development pertaining to the parental pair bond, to examination of adult relationships in times of need or stress (Miles, 2011). With comparison of the four stages of transition in mentorship (anticipation/expectation, disorientation, information-seeking, and identity formation) to the last two stages of attachment (active proximity seeking and goal corrected partnership), an outcome of security for the protégé while career exploration and personal growth take place under the guidance and support of a mentor can be created (Crain, 2015; Miles, 2011; Schoening, 2013).

Adult Attachment Scale
There are nine possible pairings when using Adult Attachment Scale (Germain, 2011). With training, preparation, and awareness of potential difficulties, no pairing need be avoided, which is the strength of utilizing a personality based pairing tool for predictive assessment.

Possible Relationship Pairings

Conclusion
Introduction of a seminar or specified coursework in nursing programs on what it takes to be a mentor and a protégé in a mentoring relationship, with the application of attachment theory and personality testing would assist in the success of these relationships and an increased likelihood of career success.

Suggested Content
- Mentorship roles and expectations
- Attachment Theory and AAS Results
- Construction of Smart Goals
- Drafting No-Fault & Confidentiality Contracts
- Conflict resolution and conversation skills

Evaluation
- Pre-course Survey
- Post-course Survey
- Post-graduation Survey
  - Participation in a formal/informal mentor relationship
  - Application of course knowledge/skills

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