

**TRANSITIONING FROM DOCTORAL STUDENT TO ACADEMIC
PROFESSIONAL: A CRITICAL REFLECTION ON THE VALUE OF
MENTORSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Keisha Samlal*

The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus

Abstract: *Mentorship in higher education is valuable in the transition process from doctoral studies to an academic career. A doctoral degree is insufficient to properly qualify doctoral candidates for entry into the professional academic space. This paper utilizes a reflective approach to discuss the role and importance of supervisory mentorship in the transitional process from doctoral student to academic professional. From the perspective of a PhD student mentee, the paper firstly articulates an in-depth narrative of the personal challenges, fears and anxieties experienced in negotiating the convergence of academic and professional development. Secondly, the paper critically discusses the role of a supervisory mentoring relationship in navigating these difficulties experienced by the mentee and the importance of supporting the doctoral candidate throughout the process. Finally, the paper interrogates the importance of dyadic, hierarchical faculty mentoring arrangements to the transition process from doctoral candidate to academic professional.*

Keywords: *doctoral supervision; supervisory mentoring; mentoring; PhD; higher education*

* Corresponding Author (Kc_samlal@yahoo.com)

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INTRODUCTION

A doctoral degree, as the highest educational achievement, is necessary but not sufficient to fully qualify an individual for an academic career (Boncori & Smith, 2020). Rather, a good start would be professional training that accompanies the doctoral process, equipping the PhD candidate with the necessary skills and tools to transition into the professional space and identity. The process of becoming a professional in any field is predicated not only on the acquisition of specialized educational qualifications, but also the development of the sense of responsibility, attitude and commitment needed to engage and accomplish the tasks and duties required at that level (Watts, 2009). Therefore, students engaging in doctoral education are required to fulfil multiple roles and identities as part of the process of becoming an academic professional (Boncori & Smith, 2020). Navigating these multiple roles, identities and requirements can be challenging for PhD students, however, and require the assistance and guidance of an academic advisor or supervisor (Phillips & Pugh, 2005; Murphy & Wibberley, 2017). Numerous studies focus on doctoral supervision, providing insight into the perspectives and experiences of students (Winchester-Seeto et al., 2013; Dolori et al., 2012), supervisory experiences and pedagogies (Richards & Fletcher, 2018; Maor et al., 2016), as well as the overall challenges faced by both parties during the academic pairing (Denis et al., 2019; Baptista, 2011). Despite these observations, it is also clear that very little exists by way of research that speaks specifically to the doctoral experiences relating to the transition from student to academic professional during PhD candidature. Instead, the literature is centred on the supervision of doctoral candidates, from both academic and mentoring perspectives, as discussed in the following sections.

The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to explore the role and value of supervisory mentorship to a doctoral candidate in the process of transitioning from student to academic professional. Through the reflections of a PhD candidate, the paper discusses a faculty/student supervisory mentoring relationship over a three-year period, with specific focus on the personal challenges of the doctoral student and the contributions of the mentoring component of the supervisor-student relationship in overcoming these challenges. While the paper does not make a specific argument for mandatory formal mentoring programmes for doctoral students, it does support consideration of a reconceptualization of doctoral supervision as mentoring.

PhD Advising and Supervision

The nature of a doctoral degree is different from that of other higher education degrees, given its focus on research and the stringent requirements for completion. One of the main influencing factors for success at this academic level has been noted to be good and/or effective supervision (Phillips & Pugh, 2005; Halse & Malfroy, 2010; Masek & Alias, 2020). However, numerous debates exist on what classifies as good supervision. Some authors have centred their discussion on traditional conceptualizations of doctoral supervision, that is, focused on the research component of the doctoral degree (Ndayambaje, 2018; Denis et al., 2019; Masek & Alias, 2020). For these authors, good supervision is predicated on the completion of a quality dissertation and demonstration by the PhD candidate of competence in conducting research, knowledge of their area of interest and contribution to wider scholarship (Ndayambaje, 2018; Masek & Alias, 2020). Within this conceptualization, the supervisor-student relationship is one that is of a professional nature, with little or no overlap into the other more personal areas of life.

Other studies, however, have expanded that discussion to include additional areas covered by the academic adviser in supporting and moulding the doctoral candidate into an effective researcher and professional. These include career guidance and psychosocial support (Phillips & Pugh, 2015; Bastalich, 2015; Halse & Malfroy, 2010). These conceptualizations have also reimagined the relationship between supervisor and doctoral student as one that is still characterized by professional respect, but allows for less formality and for more personal bonds to form (Richards & Fletcher, 2018; Al Makamreh & Stockley, 2019). While the differential power dynamic is still present in these types of pairings, they tend to be subtle and serve the intended purpose of directing PhD candidates and ensuring that they maintain the required standards and achievements throughout their journey (Richards & Fletcher, 2018). These changes in defining “good supervision” reflect a recognition of the challenges doctoral students often face in the fast-changing world of higher education and doctoral studies, and an acknowledgement that different types of support are needed by students, and not only professional support around the research dissertation (Denis et al., 2018; Halsey & Malfroy, 2010; Bastalich, 2015).

Mentoring in Higher Education

An important area of additional support that complements traditional conceptualizations of doctoral supervision that has also been recognized by other scholarship is that of mentoring (Al Makhamreh & Stockley, 2019; Pearson & Brew, 2002). The practice of mentoring has been found to be of value across numerous fields and industries and is today a focal point of

academic research. The scholarly literature around mentoring has demonstrated its presence and the utility of this practice in the general areas of sports and coaching (Sawiuk et al., 2018; Choi et al., 2015; Picariello & Waller, 2016; Bloom et al., 1998); business organizations and professional development (Kahle-Piasecki, 2011; Kahle-Piasecki & Doles, 2015; Freedman, 2009; Waters et al., 2002); the practice of medicine (Chua et al., 2020; Ramnanan et al., 2002; Ratnapalan, 2010); youth work and development (Britner et al., 2006; DuBois and Rhodes, 2006); disability studies (Hayes & Balcazar, 2008; Fairhurst et al., 2017) and academia (Chandler, 1996; Blau et al., 2010; Miller & Deggs, 2012; Schunk & Mullen, 2013; Gregoric & Wilson, 2015; Harvey et al., 2017). Within these general areas, there exists the exploration of intersecting niches relating to mentoring, such as mentoring and women in higher education (Chandler, 1996; Blau et al., 2010); women in sport (Picariello & Waller, 2016); ethnicity, culture and mentoring (Lechuga, 2011); and mentoring, race and leadership (Chang et al., 2014).

With this diverse application of mentoring, the definitions and conceptualizations of the practice are equally numerous. Earlier definitions have been centred around the idea of a mutually beneficial developmental relationship, particularly between an older adult at a more advanced stage of their career, and a younger inexperienced adult, with the intention of transferring knowledge and organizational information from the mentor to the mentee and expanding the organizational roles and contributions of the mentor (Kram, 1983; Kram & Isabella, 1985). Subsequent scholarly interrogations of mentoring have debated the value of the dyadic, hierarchical structure of traditional mentoring relationships and proposed more power-neutral, group-oriented, non-hierarchical mentoring relationships, such as co-mentoring and peer mentoring as beneficial, due to their collaborative and cooperative nature (Chandler, 1996; Gregoric & Wilson, 2015; Mullen, 2000; Christie, 2014). Other threads of research have taken the position that it is not a question of which type of mentoring is better, but, rather, understanding the function, value and contributions of the different types of mentoring to individuals (Webb et al., 2009; Colvin & Ashman, 2010).

These numerous debates around the different types of mentoring do not discount nor diminish the presence in, and value of mentoring to, higher education. Within higher education, mentoring has been utilized to improve the professional and social identity, the function, competence, and productivity of faculty members (Lumpkin, 2011; Darwin & Palmer, 2009); early career researchers (Gregoric & Wilson, 2015; Merga & Mason, 2021); and graduate students (Tenenbaum et al., 2001; Melrose, 2006). Amongst graduate students, mentoring has been found to be of significant value to doctoral candidates in informing them and equipping them for academia (Rosser, 2004; Webb et al., 2009). Mentoring has been considered an avenue for improvement for doctoral students, both in terms of their

academic achievements and professional efforts, and assisting them greatly as they navigate between both academic and professional identities (Hall & Burns, 2009). Of particular interest in the research on mentoring of doctoral candidates is the role and contributions of faculty members as mentors to PhD student protégés (Paglis et al., 2006; Webb et al., 2009; Hall & Burns, 2009). Some investigations into mentoring arrangements that have specifically focused on faculty/student combinations for doctoral candidates have noted the importance of faculty mentorship for the guidance, advice, skills and training for professional development (Paglis et al., 2006; Webb et al., 2009).

Supervisory/Advisor Mentoring in PhD Education

Though different approaches to mentoring have been discussed extensively in the mentoring scholarship, of particular interest in this paper is the approach of supervisory mentoring and its impact specifically on the process of transition from doctoral student to academic professional. Supervisory mentoring refers to mentoring that occurs within, and as part of, formally arranged relationships (Green & Bauer, 1995). Not limited to any field of study, supervisory mentoring focuses on dyadic mentoring relationships between a higher ranking professional and a junior protégé who have been formally paired together for work or professional purposes and in which positive affective and professional changes have been observed in protégés over time. (Green & Bauer, 1995; Scandura & Williams, 2004).

Studies have acknowledged the incorporation of mentoring as part of student advising at the doctoral level (Paglis et al., 2006). While not classifying these types of relationships as specifically advisory or supervisory mentoring, scholarly investigations have indicated that there is a role for, and value in, mentorship as part of the advising process for doctoral students (Phillips & Pugh, 2005; Halse & Malfroy, 2010). The research also suggests a general debate around thinking about mentoring as part of doctoral advising. Firstly, numerous scholars have approached mentoring at the doctoral level as a component of the academic advising and supervision relationship between faculty advisor and doctoral student (Al Makhamreh & Stockley, 2019). Within this approach, mentoring is understood to be part of the professional requirements of PhD supervisors and necessary for the overall wellbeing and success of students engaged in the PhD process (Al Makhamreh & Stockley, 2019).

In contention with this, however, is the body of thought that views academic advising of doctoral students and mentorship as separate functions and roles; and while a doctoral supervisor must provide academic advising on the research and dissertation requirements of the doctoral degree, this advisory role does not automatically assume mentorship (Sangganjanavanich & Magnuson, 2009; Linden et al., 2013). A clear distinction is made

between PhD academic supervision and mentoring. Studies have argued that advising and supervision are centred around the educational requirements of the doctoral degree, that is, the research and production of a quality dissertation, whereas mentoring requires the enactment of separate roles and duties that may complement supervising, but are not mandatory for supervision. Such roles can actually be fulfilled by a separate mentoring arrangement outside of the formal supervision relationship (Paglis et al., 2006; Sangganjanavanich & Magnuson, 2009; Linden et al., 2013).

Interestingly, in both approaches to mentoring as part of the doctoral supervision arrangement, mentoring is conceptualized as a separate but complementary host of roles and actions to be fulfilled in addition to the research and educational requirements. Numerous studies have expounded on the characteristics and contributions of quality mentorship to doctoral students. Al Makhamreh & Stockley (2019) found that supervisors should demonstrate presence and engagement, sincere interest, confidence and mindfulness, space for growth and positivity in their capacity as mentors to PhD candidates. Linden et al. (2013), in their comparison of student learning during doctoral supervision and mentoring, noted that supervision provided more targeted learning around issues such as research, students' areas of interest, planning, organization and structure. Mentoring, however, was more nuanced and exploratory, and included learning about professional interactions and boundary setting, career and identity, insight into social networking and generally facilitated learning in a power neutral interaction as compared to the supervisor-student arrangement (Linden et al., 2013). This suggests a clear distinction in the nature and tone of the interactions, dependent on the role being enacted by the academic supervisor, that of a doctoral advisor or a mentor. The dynamics of these interactions and the impact on doctoral students therefore represent important points of interrogation which this paper will address.

Mentor Role Theory

The mentor role theory (Kram, 1983) proposes two major roles played by mentors in relation to their protégés: career development and psychosocial roles, with each of the broader role categories including various functions that are aimed at affecting both the personal and professional growth of the protégé. To better understand these roles as described, however, the context and nature of the mentoring arrangement as interrogated by Kram (1983) are important. The theorizing presented by mentor role theory is centered on dyadic, hierarchically structured mentoring relationships, that is, mentoring arrangements that consist of a senior experienced person and a junior inexperienced person, to whom the knowledge, experiences and skills can be transferred (Kram, 1983; Kram &

Isabella, 1985). While all mentoring relationships are uniquely different and specific to the context and participants involved (Ragins & Kram, 2007), the mentor roles as outlined by this theoretical work are rooted in the seniority and experience of the mentor in a dyadic, hierarchical mentoring arrangement.

According to Kram (1983), mentors perform several key functions that contribute to the overall career development of their protégés, including sponsorship, coaching, protection, improving the mentee's visibility and exposure, and the provision of challenging assignments (Ragins, & Cotton, 1999; Scandura & Pelligrini, 2010; Schunk & Mullen, 2013). These functions can be manifested in different ways, to varying degrees and at different phases of the mentoring relationship (Ragins & Kram, 2007). However, they each play a role in the professional development of the mentee. The role of psychosocial support includes functions such as counselling, validation and confirmation, but is predicated on the more interpersonal characteristics of the mentoring relationship between mentor and mentee (Schunk & Mullen, 2013). Aspects such as relatability, similarity and communication style and practice are also relevant (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Baker & Pifer, 2011; Arora & Rangnekar, 2015).

Within higher education, mentoring is consistently connected to the professional and psychosocial development of mentees. Mentors, through their experiential knowledge, are able to guide mentees towards opportunities, as well as offer training and advice that foster improvement in their academic and professional skills and practice (Chandler, 1996; Webb et al., 2009; Lechuga, 2011). Researchers also suggest that mentors provide counsel, role-modelling and social, emotional and psychological support that contribute to the overall confidence, sense of identity of the mentee and their adjustment to the professional space (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Arora & Rangnekar, 2015). Thus, within the context of this paper which discusses the role and value of supervisory mentorship in higher education, the mentor role theory (Kram, 1983) has utility as it provides a framework through which the dyadic and hierarchical supervisory mentoring arrangement can be evaluated.

METHOD

The reflective approach facilitates critical learning and understanding that are centred on the thoughts, feelings and experiences embedded in the personal accounts of events (Dunn, et al., 2014). Reflective writing and research facilitate a nuanced understanding of experiences, events, and practice through a connection to real-life contexts, settings and

histories (Mortari, 2015). Therefore, through the reflective approach, one can gain insight into how meaning of past events and experiences is created and interpreted (Mortari, 2015); and these can further inform future theory and practice.

The paper utilizes a reflective approach to record and analyse the first-hand experiences of a PhD candidate at a Caribbean regional university. An in-depth journal was used over a two-month period, January–February 2021, to record the recalled mentoring experiences, events, memories and emotions for the first three years of the PhD. programme. As a method of collecting data, journaling aided in the recording of very descriptive and detailed information in a narrative form, especially for the purpose of making connections among multiple events and situations. The journaling process was not linear, but more inward; as memories and events were recorded, further entries and notes were made to connect these to deeper self-reflections around fears, challenges, benefits and outcomes. The entries were then treated as a narrative that was further re-organized to resemble a chronological unfolding of events and experiences that could be analysed. The data was analysed thematically, and the emerging themes were interpreted within the contexts provided through the self-reflections, such as the personal context, personal history, and institutional setting as well as the theory.

Reflection

This paper focuses on a three-year reflection period, from the beginning of 2018 to the end of 2020, marking the first three years I spent as a doctoral student in Sociology at the university. Initially, I was assigned a Chief Advisor who was responsible for guiding my doctoral research and this evolved into a supervisory mentoring relationship. With prior interaction through a previous MSc supervision relationship, we both stepped into the doctoral level arrangement with some familiarity and knowledge of each other. During this period, the supervisory mentoring relationship has fostered and supported me not only in my doctoral work, but also in transitioning into a more professional individual and identity.

My enrolment into the doctoral programme in 2018 was done with the intent of not only earning a degree, but also with a future goal of an academic career. I immediately, however, found myself facing challenges, which can be generally categorized into personal and institutional.

From a personal perspective, I had high levels of anxiety caused by numerous issues. Firstly, as a first-generation university student, it was particularly challenging for me without a personal network, through which I could gain advice about an academic career. Nor did I have someone who had experienced university at the graduate level to provide much needed insight. Therefore, my enrolment into the PhD programme was one accompanied by a great deal of uneasiness and ignorance regarding the specific steps to be taken to progress and gain entry into the academic profession.

Secondly, life at the doctoral level can be a very lonely experience. As a PhD student, you are expected to practise independent work and study, with minimal student and group interactions as part of your daily life. Unlike the undergraduate level and even the MSc level, there is not that classroom setting as a learning space on a long-term basis, and this kind of isolation has taken a toll on me. Without that consistent peer engagement and interaction, it led to high levels of self-doubt, as there was not much peer feedback and reassurance.

From an institutional perspective, my worries and anxieties were the result of a lack of institutional information and, by extension, support. While the university provides information about the requirements for entry into the course of study, methods of assessment and length of study, very little information is provided about other aspects of the programme, such as expectations during the course, necessary skills, and the expected output of a doctoral candidate. Furthermore, almost no documented information exists officially from the university regarding academic careers, the requirements and what doctoral students should be doing to prepare and equip themselves for a future academic career.

The Supervisory Mentoring Relationship

The mentoring interaction which developed between my mentor and me can be classified as a supervisory mentoring relationship. As a faculty member, she was officially assigned as the chief supervisor responsible for monitoring and guiding my doctoral research; however, our interactions superseded that of student and supervisor. In assigning a supervisor to a doctoral student, the university does not provide any official guidelines or documentation about the role of the supervisor beyond advising and supervision directly related to the doctoral research and academic supervisors are not mandated to act in a capacity beyond supervision of the doctoral research. In my case, however, the relationship with the academic supervisor expanded beyond direct student supervision to include career guidance and

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professional opportunities, as well as encouragement, support and friendship. The decision to engage in a mentoring-focused relationship rather than one based only on academic supervision was voluntary and mutually decided during initial conversations after supervision was assigned. During this discussion, the mentor proposed the idea of a more interactive and goal-oriented relationship beyond just supervision, to which I agreed.

Career guidance and opportunities for professional development

Within the university as an institution, there are no set guidelines or documented sources of information that guide the process of transitioning into an academic career. Instead, the onus is on the doctoral student to choose the right opportunities that will facilitate career training and development alongside the doctoral degree. The supervisory mentoring relationship allowed for open discussions between myself and my mentor about what I should be working towards accomplishing, opportunities I should be looking out for and the personal skills that I should exert time and effort into developing. To support this, in 2019 I was greatly encouraged by my mentor to attend a grant-writing workshop hosted by the university. She viewed this as an excellent opportunity for exposure to a necessary skill set in academia, the importance of which I did not fully grasp prior to my mentor's intervention. In this situation, my mentor was able to alert me to a great opportunity I would not have chosen for myself because of my lack of knowledge.

Beyond skills and training, my mentor has also emphasized the value of connecting and networking with like minded individuals within the academic space. To support this, she encouraged my participation in a networking and mentoring workshop in February 2019 that exposed me to the real-life experiences of women in academia from multiple disciplines, universities and countries who were able to transcend the barriers to collaboration, mentorship, and publication. This type of insight was encouraging as I noted in my journal in January 2021 "...it was a bit awe-inspiring to see how these very different women could come together to produce papers for publication and host the workshop. It makes the prospect of a possible career in this field even more exciting." The knowledge and guidance have been integral to my future goal setting, as I receive direction from a qualified professional who has first-hand knowledge of what skills, training and opportunities are necessary to transition into the professional academic space.

The mentoring arrangement also allowed for opportunities to collaborate, providing a type of academic "work experience". I noted to myself in January 2021 "...looking back at the past three years, I can say that I have not only been a student. Without even realizing, I have been taking part in professional activities. I have been, in a way, stepping into more professional

roles.” Within the three-year period, I have had the chance to work with my mentor and other colleagues on different research projects, presentations, and publications. I have had opportunities to learn and practise organizational skills, public-speaking, and academic writing. Attempting to participate in academic opportunities independently can be intimidating. However, my mentor has made the effort to partner with me for numerous opportunities that allow me to gain the exposure and experience, while still having a more experienced advisor present, leading, and providing guidance. We have partnered for numerous conference presentations, as well as publications, all centred around topics outside of my doctoral research area. While I am spending time and effort on projects unrelated to my doctoral thesis, I am gaining the experience of presenting, researching, writing and the process of publishing, all of which are extremely valuable to a future academic career.

Psychosocial support

As a doctoral candidate, one of the biggest challenges I have faced thus far is impostor syndrome, constantly questioning my right to be in an academic environment as a student with ambitions of an academic career. As a first-generation university student and pursuing a field I had no undergraduate experience in, I have questioned my deservedness and qualification to be in the institutional and disciplinary spaces. As a student embarking on professional development in a highly competitive field, I have found myself unsure of the quality of my work and my ability to meet the professional standards of academia, be it teaching, research, or presenting and writing. The mentoring relationship has provided much support in these areas, not only the safety to express these undermining thoughts and fears, but also opportunities to address and confirm my belonging to the academy. In thinking about this, I wrote in February 2021:

Doc’s guidance and encouragement have helped me to continuously apply myself in a way that I can confidently say that I have improved. And the thing is, it’s not a case of her saying what to do, and I do it. We have conversations; I offer my input and we negotiate around what must be done. When I started the PhD, after submitting the literature review draft, I met with her and told her I thought I needed to contextualize this study with a chapter around the socio-historical conceptualizations of women in the Caribbean before I went any further. She listened to what I had to say and why I thought I needed it and fully supported me. She even suggested some readings and books to get me started. So, a part of my interaction with her is working on my capacity to make decisions around my own work, understanding what I need to have

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and what I need to omit, but also being able to justify the decisions I make with my work. This helps me to recognize the quality and value of my work.

The mentoring relationship is one that allows me to safely express my challenges and anxieties regarding my work without the fear of negative feedback or criticism. My mentor has encouraged this type of discourse and has worked with me to address the issues of self-doubt in direct and indirect ways. While she consistently points out the areas in my work and performance that may need improvement, these are accompanied by a discussion around what needs to be addressed and why, and the discussions are balanced with positive feedback and guidance. In February 2021, I noted:

She would make suggestions and comments throughout my submissions, and by putting what she suggested into practice, I learned along the way about writing, the research process and how it's all supposed to fit together. Her feedback was also very encouraging and helped to change how I viewed my own writing progress, from a hypercritical position, to one that recognized the improvements I was making.

Therefore, I am always left with an understanding of where I should be investing time and energy to improve, and I am also reassured that I am doing well and am making strides towards my future goals. This reassurance and counselling from someone who has previously been in my position have greatly encouraged and motivated me to continue working and improving, both as a student and future professional.

An indirect benefit of the informal mentoring relationship that has supported me greatly has been the role modelling provided by the mentor. The supervisory mentoring relationship has given me the opportunity to connect with an accomplished and qualified faculty member to whom I can look as a role model. In the capacity of a role model, my mentor allows me a realistic visualization of the goals I should accomplish, the skills and qualifications I should be developing and gaining in order to be successful in the academic arena. Beyond the interactions of student and research supervisor, the mentoring arrangement facilitated a closer, more informative relationship that gave me insight into the realities of an academic career.

Another aspect of the supervisory mentoring relationship that has emerged indirectly was the genuine friendship forged between myself and my mentor. Throughout the three-year period, the occurrence and quality of interactions we have shared through the supervisory mentoring arrangement has fostered a deeper, nuanced relationship beyond just student and faculty advisor. Instead, we have been able to share experiences and stories, have frank

discussions about worries and stress, and been able to offer advice and support to each other. We easily talk about more personal aspects of our lives and check in with each other. This connection is valuable to me as a doctoral student, as the doctoral journey is one that requires mostly independent work and has made me feel isolated and alone at times. The knowledge of this type of voluntary support and friendship has helped me psychologically and emotionally, as it eliminates that sense of complete isolation. Furthermore, this friendship is one that still exists with a sense of professionalism but has humanized my mentor to me beyond a faculty member, a research supervisor and an academic, and allows me to perceive her in a more relatable manner. I was able to observe and connect with her as a person, a working woman and mother, and gain insight into the complexities of the life of a woman in academia.

Socialization into the academic career

One of the most impactful outcomes of the supervisory mentoring relationship for me was socialization into the institution. As a doctoral student, I had no first-hand experience or knowledge of the university outside of being a student consumer of the services provided in that capacity. Therefore, I was unaware of the culture and the rules, written and unwritten, of the university as a professional workspace. As a faculty member, my mentor, however, stands in a more experienced position, more aware of the culture and working environment of the university, with insight into the formal and informal rules, norms, and values of the institution. Therefore, my interactions with her in the capacity of a mentee led to a transfer of that accumulated knowledge. This guidance and knowledge allowed me to navigate the professional space of the university more smoothly.

The mentoring relationship provided an informal learning opportunity around the flow of relations of the university as an institution. While university handbooks and websites do exist providing information about the structure of the departments and faculty within which I was employed, these did not provide information about the dynamics of the culture and decision-making processes within the departments and faculty. In 2018, during my first year as a Teaching Assistant, I was employed specifically in the Sociology Unit within the Department of Behavioural Sciences, under the Faculty of Social Sciences. I quickly learned that there were multiple levels of administration around my employment and having a mentor was very valuable to my adjustment process. As a faculty member herself, my mentor knew the inner workings of the department and faculty. She imparted important information about my work expectations beyond what was explicitly stated within my contract, indicated points of contact within the department for assistance and information, as well as possible resources to aid me in my work tasks. The information that she passed on allowed me to feel

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more informed and secure in my position and ability to do my job, increasing my sense of self-competence and providing a better understanding of the environment within which I worked.

Another important aspect of this socialization aspect of the supervisory mentoring relationship was learning more about the academic career, specifically within the local setting of the university. I was able to have a clearer understanding of the full scope of an academic career, including aspects such as the various commitments and demands of the job, requirements for promotion and mobility within the field, and the nature of the job outside of teaching and research, such as student supervision and administrative duties. A memorable part of this for me was learning the importance of publications to an academic career. While I understood that writing and publishing were part of the job requirements for academics, I did not fully grasp how important it was, especially for promotion and upward mobility in the academic field. The close interaction with my mentor also allowed me to observe the demands of the job and the challenges around balancing an academic career and personal life demands. I was able to garner real life information about an academic career beyond what can be described on a job description or contract.

DISCUSSION

My experiences from the supervisory mentoring relationship align with the mentor role theory. Firstly, mentoring relationships can have a positive impact on the career and professional development of graduate student protégés. Experienced faculty members hold a wealth of knowledge from their own doctoral journey and transitional process into academic careers. This experiential and transitional knowledge is a useful resource to doctoral students, as it can assist and shape their path towards an academic career. This is connected to a key function that supervisory mentors are fulfilling towards PhD protégés: they are providing an informal education about the career and the required training and capacities. Doctoral students can learn about the additional areas of expertise that should be developed in preparation for an academic career alongside the completion of their doctoral degree. Students can become better equipped through mentorship to make decisions about professional activities such as conference presentations and workshops that aid in building their professional portfolio. In addition to this, collaborative efforts between the faculty mentor and student protégés facilitate a type of “on the job” work experience, whereby doctoral students can participate and be active in professional spaces and activities, while still having the guidance and security of an experienced faculty mentor. Specific to graduate student and faculty mentoring relationships, Lechuga (2011) noted that from the perspective of faculty members, mentors fulfil several roles, such as advisor, employer and

instructor, which all contribute to mentee's professional competence and development. Through these varying roles, advice and guidance are given to student mentees in multiple areas of importance. From the perspective of students, Webb et al. (2009) noted that mentors were important for the development of appropriate skills for the academic and disciplinary environment. Students viewed mentors as sources of guidance who could direct them towards the skills and opportunities that would best contribute to their professional development (Webb et al., 2009). From both faculty and student perspectives, the experiential knowledge of faculty mentees undergirds the guidance and direction given to student mentees. Overall, however, the literature consistently cites professional and career development as a main benefit emerging from mentoring in higher education (Harvey et al., 2017; Lechuga, 2011; Webb et al., 2009).

The psychosocial support provided through mentoring is multifaceted and has functions that can directly and indirectly connect to the experience of supervisory mentors. Functions such as role modelling and coaching build directly on the mentors' prior experiences and achievements. Other functions, however, such as friendship and moral support are built on aspects such as relatability, similarity, communication, and the type of relationship that exists between the mentor and protégés, and are therefore more context-specific. Some psychosocial functions may be more dependent on the type and quality of interactions that are maintained between the mentor and mentee. Others, though, can stem from mentors' past experiences and an understanding of the fears and challenges faced by mentees. These can influence their decision on the type of approach they may take with their mentees in terms of fostering friendly relations and creating safe environments that aid in the overall development of the mentee. Scholarship pertaining to mentoring has referred to psychosocial support. Lechuga (2011) has noted that mentorship provides a sense of allyship and personal support that assist mentees emotionally as they adjust to their roles, tasks, and environments. This type of emotional support and connection through mentoring lends itself well to the psychological development of the mentee over time. This is particularly important for doctoral students, who require connections and "bridges" that not only support them professionally, but also aid in validating their belonging to academia (Baker & Pifer, 2011). Psychosocial support through mentoring is also evident in more specialized areas of scholarly interrogations. Research has noted that mentoring provides strong psychosocial support among women (Chandler, 1996; Chang et al., 2014). Mentoring of women by women within academia fosters a level of similarity and relatability that supports and assists women mentees in adjusting and navigating the challenges they experience in higher education.

To accompany career and professional development, supervisory mentors can also provide informal education for doctoral students through the socialization process around the

institution, the discipline and an academic career. As with career and professional development, this socialization role is predicated on the experiential knowledge of the faculty members. What must be considered in addition to this experiential knowledge, however, is the insider position held by faculty mentors. Faculty mentors are already a part of the institution, discipline, and career, socialized into the norms, values and cultures of these three areas. Therefore, they can fulfil two key functions as part of their role in socializing their doctoral protégés: provision of entry into these important spaces, and transfer of knowledge about the norms, values and cultures of these areas that makes entry and participation smoother. Interestingly, mentor role theory does not directly include the socialization role played by mentors in mentoring relationships. It specifically addresses only the roles of professional development and psychosocial support (Kram, 1983). While these roles include numerous functions that can be connected to aspects of socialization, such as sponsorship and coaching, the theory does not specifically address the importance or impact of socialization as part of the mentoring process. The scholarship on mentoring speaks to the importance of socialization, however, and the value of mentoring relationships to the socialization process of protégés in higher education settings (Webb et al., 2009; Lechuga, 2011; Christie, 2014). Research suggests that mentors, as holders of “expert positions”, possess a wealth of knowledge gained through their experiences and are well placed to transfer their knowledge to their protégés through the mentoring relationship (Christie, 2014). Mentors, especially supervisory mentors teamed with graduate students, can act as agents of socialization who, through their own knowledge and networks, can direct their protégés to useful opportunities to build their academic career, acclimatize to the culture, norms, and values of the discipline, and build their own professional networks (Webb et al., 2009; Lechuga, 2011). These informal learning opportunities engage protégés in more experiential learning, directly contributing to their skill development and professionalism (Lechuga, 2011).

Thus, despite the growing scholarship in support of non-dyadic, power-neutral mentoring arrangements within higher education (Gregoric & Wilson, 2015; Christie, 2014; Mullen, 2000), this paper provides support for the relevance of mentor role theory (Kram, 1983) and supports the value of hierarchical dyadic mentoring relationships for graduate students. While there is merit in the non-traditional approaches to mentoring for students, within the context of the professional development of graduate student protégés, the transfer of knowledge from faculty mentor to student protégé is integrally important as a source of informal knowledge that equips and encourages the student. Therefore, the mentor role theory is still applicable as a theoretical lens to understand the persistence of traditional mentoring arrangements in higher education. Recognizing this, however, does not detract

from the value of alternative mentoring arrangements, nor does it suggest that other mentoring arrangements cannot also contribute to the professional development of graduate students. Instead, research that explores the complementary value of multiple mentoring arrangements rather than interrogating them as oppositional methods would be useful. Investigation into the benefits and challenges experienced by students engaging in multiple mentoring arrangements can provide insight into the overlapping and intersecting roles and functions of mentoring arrangements, rather than viewing them as separate methods of mentoring.

CONCLUSION

Though the central discussion of the paper is emerging from a personal student reflection of supervisory mentorship, there is still value in these experiences for consideration. Supervisory mentorship for doctoral candidates can fulfil three distinct roles: professional and career development, psychosocial support, and socialization into the institution, discipline, and professional academic space. Specific to PhD. students' preparation for academic careers, supervisory mentors and the experiences of their own academic journeys are resources that can contribute to candidates' competency, self-efficacy, and professional performance. Therefore, there is value in reconceptualizing doctoral supervision arrangements as supervisory mentoring arrangements, broadening the scope of supervision in doctoral studies. This position corresponds with the mentor role theory (Kram, 1983) which highlights the transfer of knowledge, wisdom and expertise between a senior mentor and junior protégé within an institution.

Whether it is the roles of professional development, psychosocial support or socialization, there is value in supervisory mentoring arrangements, especially in the transitional process from doctoral student to academic professional. These different roles build on the experiences of academic supervisors and transform these into valid sources of knowledge that can guide and ease the process of transition for doctoral candidates with academic career ambitions. Supervisory mentoring facilitates entry, participation, and acceptance into professional spaces alongside the achievement of requisite academic qualifications. Therefore, PhD candidates can leave doctoral programmes with a more well-rounded education, professional experience and better positioned for an academic career.

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