Mentor-protégé fit
Identifying and developing effective mentorship across identities in doctoral education

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Abstract

Purpose – The aim of this conceptual paper is to explore Mentor-protégé fit as important to the selection and development of successful doctoral student–faculty mentoring relationships. We suggest that the student–faculty relationship in doctoral education is an additional and previously untested type of Mentor-protégé fit.

Design/methodology/approach – Generated from an existing framework of identity in the academy, we explore how three types of identity (professional, relational, personal) may influence students' fit assessments as they seek to initiate and develop relationships.

Findings – We offer propositions for research to further explore the potential application of the proposed framework to knowledge generation about the doctoral student experience.

Originality/value – While the research about doctoral education has considered all three aspects of students' identities individually, it has not explicated the ways in which these intersecting identities relate to students' needs and expectations related to mentoring, their choices related to mentor selection, or the effectiveness and outcomes of mentoring relationships in fostering success and satisfaction.

Keywords Mentoring, Mentor-protégé fit, Doctoral education, Student–faculty mentoring relationships, Academic identity

Paper type Conceptual paper

While often framed as a silver bullet to improve career satisfaction, mobility, and personal development, mentoring continues to be a ubiquitous concept that lacks clarity in terms of research, practice, and policy (Crisp and Cruz, 2009; Jacobi, 1991). Operational challenges coupled with inconsistent attempts to define and assess mentorship have made it even more difficult to answer the question of how one should identify suitable mentors and engage in the establishment and maintenance of effective mentoring relationships over time. In this conceptual paper, we focus specifically on Mentor-protégé relationships between faculty members and doctoral students,

suggesting a nuanced approach to identifying mentor characteristics can foster more effective mentor relationships.

There has been some study of successful faculty-student mentoring relationships (e.g. O'Meara *et al.*, 2013); however, scholars have not fully considered how multiple dimensions of identity may influence developmental relationships. Additionally, research about the student's process of mentor identification has been narrowly focused on perceived similarity according to area of study or personal traits (Griffin, 2013; Lark and Croteau, 1998; Maher *et al.*, 2004; Patton, 2009). While important, these considerations are not the only factor(s) in predicting the effectiveness of relationships in preparing students for their professional roles and supporting them throughout doctoral training.

We recommend that mentoring research and practice re-center on the notion of fit, as opposed to similarity, to uncover the characteristics and conditions that lead to successful mentorships in doctoral education. Fit is achieved through the presence of shared values, complementarity, and mutuality. More than surface-level assumptions of similarity, fit requires deeper thought about the variety of both the mentor and the protégé's values, attitudes, opinions, and characteristics that contribute to the identification, establishment, and maintenance of successful mentoring relationships (Van Vianen, 2000). Organizational and management scholars have long been interested in the concept of fit to better understand personal and organizational outcomes (Backhaus, 2003; Chatman, 1989, 1991; Schneider, 1987). This line of research explores the connection between individual and situational aspects of the work setting, which include relationships with work peers, groups and supervisors. Several types of fit have received scholarly attention. Person-Supervisor (P-S) Fit has been particularly useful in exploring the role of dyadic relationships in work settings, given the connections between dyads and job satisfaction (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005), organization commitment (Westerman and Cyr, 2004), and employee attitudes and retention. While similar to supervisors, mentors play a distinct role in the lives of graduate students, suggesting the need for a different understanding of fit between mentors and protégés.

The purpose of this conceptual paper is to consider how students might conduct complex needs assessments to initiate and foster mentoring relationships with strong Mentor-protégé fit (M-P Fit). We focus on doctoral education because it is "seen as playing a crucial role in the production of knowledge" and "doctorate holders are viewed as a primary source of innovation, research, and development capacity" (Nerad and Heggelund, 2008, p. 5). Despite structural differences in doctoral education globally as highlighted by Nerad and Heggelund (2008), the master–apprentice model permeates doctoral education, highlighting the importance of the faculty–student relationship in doctoral student development. Our emphasis is on the dyadic relationship, specifically from the student perspective, and not on the process by which mentorships evolve over time. Students conceptualize their identities in complex ways that can be influenced by various aspects of the organization and the learning context. However, we offer our conceptual framework to serve as a guide which helps students to better define their needs, through an identity lens, when identifying a potential mentor.

We begin with a review of the literature. We then provide an overview of a newly developed conceptual framework and discuss its application to the consideration of Mentor-protégé relationships in doctoral education. The framework explicates the role

of identity in lived experiences in the academy, and we suggest fit assessments should be based on three components:

(1) *professional identity* (perceptions of self related to the major tasks and roles of the academic career);

(2) *relational identity* (self-concept as it relates to family roles and responsibilities and interpersonal relationships outside of the professional context); and

(3) *personal identity* (general sense of self, including the perceived salience of personal characteristics within specific contexts).

We extend this framework by suggesting its application to supporting students as they seek to identify and cultivate effective mentorships in their doctoral experience. Our description of the framework is followed by suggestions for future research and practice. Specifically, we assert a set of propositions that may serve as a foundation for future studies about the ways in which doctoral students assess fit when establishing and enacting mentoring relationships.

Review of the literature

Several areas of research are pertinent to understanding relationships between doctoral students and faculty, fostering our ability to anticipate the success of these relationships based on fit rather than surface-level similarities. First, we clarify what mentoring relationships are, distinguishing them from other relationships in doctoral education. Next, we review literature on Mentor-protégé relationships in higher education, as well as research about the importance and nature of assessing M-P Fit. Finally, we address how experiences in doctoral education may vary based on student identity, thus influencing the formation and maintenance of Mentor-protégé relationships and assessments of fit.

Student–faculty relationships in doctoral education

Academia is built on an apprenticeship model, with doctoral students studying closely with faculty members in their academic departments and disciplines as they engage in supervised research and other scholarly activities. The close, enduring and, in many cases, in-depth relationship between faculty members and students are distinctive from the relationships students form with faculty during their undergraduate years (Johnson, 2007). These relationships are the primary form of teaching and knowledge transmission during graduate training (Barnes and Austin, 2009; Jairam and Kahl, 2012; Kelly and Schweitzer, 1999; Nakamura *et al.*, 2009). Relationships play an important role in the doctoral student experience (Austin, 2002; Barnes and Austin, 2009; Kelly and Schweitzer, 1999; Nakamura *et al.*, 2009), particularly related to identity development (Baker *et al.*, 2013), persistence (Felder, 2010; Gardner, 2009b; Lovitts, 2001; Nettles and Millett, 2006) and productivity (Paglis *et al.*, 2006; Tenenbaum *et al.*, 2001).

Within the process of graduate education, faculty members fulfill multiple roles. Three roles that are central in the student experience, and which provide varying levels of support, are those of supervisor, academic advisor and mentor (Baker and Griffin, 2010; Griffin, 2012; Lindén *et al.*, 2013). A lack of prior knowledge of the nuances between these roles or their purposes coupled with minimal institutional differentiation often leads doctoral students to confound them, resulting in miscommunications and unrealistic expectations of faculty members in each role (Lindén *et al.*, 2013; Johnson,

2007), ultimately decreasing the likelihood of M-P Fit and successful mentor selection. The supervisory relationship is particularly important in doctoral education, where faculty members serve as skilled experts overseeing the professional knowledge- and skill-development of emerging scholars. Supervisors oversee task completion of the student's original research or on research teams. Supervisory relationships may be established through mutual interest in collaboration or through the student's fulfillment of research assistantship responsibilities. Supervision is also often used in Australia, Scandinavia and the UK to capture the multiple dimensions of relationships between student and advisor (Lindén *et al.*, 2013).

In the USA, this role is most commonly referred to as an advisor. The faculty advisor, as defined by Schlosser and Gelso (2001, p. 158), "has the greatest responsibility for helping guide the advisee through the graduate program" . Advising includes the roles of academic guide, major professor and in some instances dissertation chair. Advisors are expected to provide clear and consistent information to help students complete academic tasks in a timely manner and facilitate their progress through the academic program (Baker and Griffin, 2010; Johnson, 2007; Schlosser and Gelso, 2001). Advising relationships may be determined by a mutual interest in research areas, or may be assigned more generically upon a student's admission into a doctoral program.

Some, but not all, advising relationships will become mentoring relationships, which are marked by a deeper level of commitment to a student's psychosocial development (Johnson, 2007). Mentoring relationships can be informal (developed based on mutual interest, outside of the context of an assigned or formalized relationship) or formal (developed based on assignment with specific guidelines and objectives). Generally, mentors provide a deeper level of support than advisors or supervisors, engaging in more reciprocal and enduring relationships with their protégés than those that exist through advising and supervisory roles (Griffin, 2012; Healy and Welchert, 1990; Johnson, 2007). While they may coincide with other relationships, mentoring relationships are distinguished by an emotional commitment connected to the mentor's care for a student's growth, both professionally and personally (Baker and Griffin, 2010). Mentoring relationships often incorporate a combination of role modeling, social support and professional counsel that is unique to each Mentor-protégé pair (Johnson, 2007; Kram, 1985).

Because of the differences in the purpose and nature of the roles that faculty members can play in doctoral students' educational journeys, additional research is needed to establish more complete understanding of the ways in which doctoral students seek out and establish mentoring relationships, the characteristics on which they base such decisions, and the degree of fit present within their relationships. This work considers the utility of a framework for focusing on fit in mentoring relationships that students seek and perceive as important. Rather than addressing the process of fit, we focus on the characteristics of mentors and protégés that will promote the highest degree of fit, providing a foundation for higher quality interactions.

As we begin this work, we must briefly acknowledge the limitations of several assumptions embedded in this discussion. Much of the research and discourse around mentoring assumes that having a mentor is positive, and that mentoring is a critical component to fostering positive outcomes in graduate education. However, we acknowledge that there are often challenges inherent in bringing about these positive outcomes. There are many skills associated with doing this work well (Johnson, 2007;

O'Meara *et al.*, 2013), and faculty members can engage in behaviors that create strife and result in negative outcomes for students (Baker *et al.*, 2013). Further, mentoring is not free from the dynamics of power and politics, and Manathunga (2007) highlights the paternalistic nature and inclination for self-reproduction inherent in these relationships. It is also important to acknowledge that not all students will want a mentor or perceive that these relationships are important to their development (Johnson, 2007). Some may view mentoring as contrary to the spirit of individual meritocracy, which suggests that students can make their own success without guidance from others. Others may view traditional notions of mentoring as placing students in one-sided relationships in which they have nothing to offer. It is also important to acknowledge that mentoring takes on different meanings depending on context, as does terminology. In the USA, for example, the term advisor is synonymous with supervisor; in other national contexts, students and faculty alike may have different expectations of these relationships. It lies within the realm of future studies to apply the framework to investigations of doctoral education that consider essential factors such as context, culture and structure.

Mentor-protégé relationships in doctoral education
Research has established the centrality of student–faculty mentoring relationships in effective doctoral education (Baker *et al.*, 2013). Graduate students who have access to mentors report higher levels of critical thinking, academic skill development and interest in becoming professors than those who do not benefit from such relationships (Adams, 1992; Belcher, 1994; Kelly and Schweitzer, 1999). These outcomes can be enduring, translating to long-term job placement, self-efficacy and productivity after graduation (Dixon-Reeves, 2003; Johnson *et al.*, 2007; Paglis *et al.*, 2006). The psychosocial outcomes associated with mentoring are also important. Scholars have suggested that the socio-emotional support that mentors offer to graduate students may be more important to students than career support (Waldeck *et al.*, 1997). This type of support is related to students' satisfaction with their mentoring relationships and experiences in graduate school overall (Patton and Harper, 2003; Tenenbaum *et al.*, 2001). Conversely, while effective mentoring can serve to guide and advance doctoral students through training, degree completion and placement, ineffective relationships can disrupt students' progress, resulting in negative outcomes such as resentment and reduced efficacy for students and faculty alike.

The literature provides a foundation for understanding the importance of mentoring in the development of graduate students and related outcomes; however, there are several limitations to current knowledge that necessitate new frameworks for understanding these relationships. Previous research has offered little attention to the distinctions between types of relationships or qualities that will foster the process of relationship formation. The characteristics associated with an ideal mentor can vary significantly (Rose, 2005) and there is no clear understanding of how students determine which characteristics are meaningful in identifying potential mentors. In fact, the importance of various characteristics may change as students' needs evolve throughout the stages of the doctoral student experience, thus influencing the relationships students have with their mentors (Baker and Pifer, 2014).

Doctoral education and identity
While academic interests have the potential to lead to M-P Fit, various components of identity can also play a vital role in how students assess the salience of characteristics sought in a potential mentor. Research about doctoral education has disparately addressed the salience of individual characteristics and differences in shaping students' experiences and outcomes within mentoring relationships. Some of this scholarship has favored professional characteristics, such as McAlpine and Amundsen's (2009) research about academic identity development among doctoral students. Scholars have also begun to address the combined salience of personal and professional characteristics in doctoral students' experiences (e.g. McAlpine and Lucas, 2011; Baker and Pifer, 2011); however, work in this area is still emerging. Gardner (2009a) developed a model of doctoral student identity development that emphasized cognitive and psychosocial development, but did not address students' personal identities in great detail. Gardner noted that more research is needed to understand the role of students' social identities in their feelings of belonging within their programs. Similarly, Nettles and Millett (2006) included the effect of student background characteristics on outcomes related to financial resources, socialization, research productivity, satisfaction and degree completion in their conceptual model of doctoral student experiences. They concluded that understanding how individual characteristics affect students' experiences was an important area for future research in anticipation of the "challenges that doctoral programs will be compelled to address as students demand more equity" (Nettles and Millett, 2006, p. 222).

Other scholars have addressed the salience of personal characteristics in doctoral education, with the greatest attention to race and gender. Examples include Erickson's (2012) study of women in engineering and Truong and Museus' (2012) exploration of doctoral students' responses to experiences of racism. Monforti and Michelson (2008) identified both a lack of mentoring and feelings of isolation as hindering the success of Latina and Latino graduate students in political science. These studies point to a common concern among those who are not able to identify mentors who share and understand their identities in meaningful ways. Within this body of scholarship, there is a theme of otherness, inequity, isolation and self-doubt related to a lack of perceived fit or effective relationships based on personal and professional characteristics (De Welde and Laursen, 2008; Espino, 2012; Sallee, 2010). For example, in Nettles and Millett's (2006) study, women were more likely to choose same-sex mentors, as was the case for African American respondents, and Asian American students were less likely than white students to have mentors.

While this research provides helpful ways to consider the importance of various forms of identity in mentoring relationships, we were unable to locate work which considers fit or difference across multiple dimensions of identity, and how this may influence protégé outcomes and perceptions of fit. Colbeck's (2008) work offers some insights, and considered how social networks and relationships affect the salience of identity across the multiple contexts of doctoral students' lives. She concluded that the ability to manage and integrate personal and professional identities is an important component of success for doctoral students. It is likely that students' and faculty members' multiple identities also have an influence on mentoring relationships, and there must be a deeper understanding of how identity is understood in mentor choice and relationship development.

Conceptual framework

Throughout our research about doctoral education (Baker *et al.*, 2013; Griffin, 2012, 2013), mentoring repeatedly surfaced as students and faculty discussed their developmental relationships and provided their assessments of what aspects of those relationships were effective or ineffective. In these studies, doctoral students did not always communicate realistic expectations about what support faculty members should provide to them or how various faculty roles differed. Thus, we turned to M-P Fit as a possible construct for better understanding students' selection and perception of faculty mentors.

To advance our understanding of the role of M-P Fit in doctoral students' mentoring relationships and how students may conceptualize fit within those relationships, we propose a new application of a previously developed conceptual framework of identity in academic careers across three categories: professional identity, relational identity and personal identity (Pifer and Baker, 2010). Below, we describe each dimension in detail as it relates to the doctoral student experience, grounded in relevant research.

Professional identity

Defined in the conceptual framework as the perceptions of self related to the major tasks and roles associated with the academic career, professional identity is an important component of fit for doctoral students. Students are likely to select programs based on perceived learning and professional development opportunities, including the availability of potential mentoring relationships. They are also likely to explore opportunities for professional similarities or connections with faculty in the program as an initial metric, as well as other program, departmental and disciplinary factors. Once enrolled, students learn more about faculty members' professional interests, research agendas and engagement in professional organizations. These factors are the foundation for exploring M-P Fit based on professional identity. Strong M-P Fit according to doctoral students' professional identities may include research agendas, methodological skills and approaches, career goals or work styles. Students' professional identities provide one potential source of influence for initial mentor selection criteria and the development of effective mentoring relationships.

Research has revealed a connection between mentoring and professional identity. In study of early career MBA students, the authors found that as developmental network density (access to resources) increased, students' sense of clarity about professional identity decreased, which has important consequences for early career individuals. Eby *et al.* (2004) conducted a meta-analysis to explore whether having a mentor is connected to career outcomes. Their findings suggest that in addition to higher compensation and promotions, commitment to one's career was higher for people who were mentored than for their non-mentored peers. Perhaps most decisively, Russell and Adams (1997, p. 3) concluded that "the benefits [of mentoring] to the protégé can be so valuable that identification with a mentor should be considered a major developmental task of the early career". Given the doctoral student experience is the first stage of the academic career (Austin, 2002), the support of a mentor is likely to contribute to one's professional identity, efficacy and thus persistence.

Relational identity
Relational identity represents self-concept drawn from family roles and responsibilities and interpersonal relationships outside of the professional context. In our prior application of this framework to the study of doctoral education (Pifer and Baker, 2011), we found that doctoral students' relational identities were sometimes linked to isolation and a sense of difference from fellow students and faculty members within their academic programs. Other research has provided additional evidence that doctoral students' relational identities are cause for negative distinction, isolation, self-doubt and stress. In their qualitative study of seven graduate students' experiences, Winkle-Wagner *et al.* (2010) reported that students who were the first in their families to enroll in graduate school struggled with their inability to garner knowledge and advice from family members about the process. Participants did, however, indicate that their families, friendships and relationships with people in their churches and communities provided critical support and a sense of purpose. The Latina doctoral students in González' (2006) study pointed to physical distance from their families of origin and care-giving responsibilities for children and other relatives as among the challenges of doctoral studies. Additional studies beyond these examples have pointed to the sacrifices and barriers to completion, as well as sources of meaning and motivation, that doctoral students' relational identities contribute to their experiences (Gardner and Holley, 2011; Martinez *et al.*, 2013; Vekkaila *et al.*, 2013).

Given the salience of doctoral students' relational identities, the degree to which their mentors can identify with or support students' affiliated responsibilities may be invaluable in establishing and maintaining successful mentoring relationships. Eby and Allen (2002) explored mismatches in mentor and protégé values, such as social values, definitions of success, and approaches to work, and found that negative outcomes result from a lack of commonality in these dimensions. Changing contexts of academic work related to scarcity of tenure-line positions, decreased resources and higher demands for assessment and accountability are embedded within broader shifts in social norms and ideals related to family structure, work–life balance, partnership and parenting choices and community engagement. The ways in which students conceptualize their and their mentors' identities and choices in terms of their personal roles and relationships may be a factor in assessing M-P Fit and maintaining positive mentorships.

Personal identity
Finally, the Pifer and Baker, 2010 framework considers personal identity in academic careers. Personal identity includes a person's demographic characteristics, social identities and a general sense of self. Much of the mentoring literature in doctoral education has focused on how students' experiences have been shaped by social identities, or groups within larger systems of advantage and disadvantage or privilege and oppression. Social identities include, but are not limited to, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual identity, physical ability, class and socioeconomic background and religion (Kirk and Okazawa-Rey, 2010; Tatum, 2010).

Some scholars have suggested that social identities influence students' access to mentors and the quality of mentoring they receive. Both mentors and mentees report high interest in individuals who share their demographic characteristics (Bowman *et al.*, 1999; Heinrich, 1995; Patton, 2009; Patton and Harper, 2003; Turban *et al.*, 2002). For example, women and people of color participating in study expressed more interest in

identity matching with their mentors than their male and white peers. Further, having a mentor who shares one's social identity may serve as evidence that success is possible and a source of motivation for both the student and the mentor (Blake-Beard *et al.*, 2011; Fries-Britt and Turner Kelly, 2005), encouraging the interaction and increasing expectations of fit.

It is important to note that while there are some benefits for students with mentors who match their own social identities, there are also studies that suggest similarity in personal identity does not necessarily translate to better outcomes (Dreher and Cox, 1996; Turban and Dougherty, 1994; Urgin *et al.*, 2008). For example, even when they identified similarity as important for mentor assignments, participants in Blake-Beard *et al.* (2011) study with same-race or same-gender mentors demonstrated no difference in academic outcomes than those who had divergent identities from their mentors. What may be more important than matching identities is understanding or recognition of identities. Scholars have highlighted the importance of mentors recognizing students' cultural backgrounds and advocating for their needs, particularly when they are from underrepresented groups in the academy (Blake-Beard *et al.*, 2011; Brown *et al.*, 1999; Davidson and Foster-Johnson, 2001). Hall and Burns (2009, p. 59) noted that students' efforts to maintain their sense of self when it may not align with the norms of the academy must be recognized by faculty, and cautioned that questioning and resistance from students "however legitimate, may lead mentors to perceive students as disinterested, hostile, uncommitted, or unable to do the work necessary for success".

The likelihood that a faculty member will advocate for a student and understand her or his needs may be related to their shared marginalized identity (Hall and Burns, 2009), but this may not always be the case. Rather than assuming fit, expecting mentoring, or anticipating mentor effectiveness based on race, gender or sexual identity, such factors may serve as one possible component of mentor selection and the development of strong M-P Fit. Similarity in personal identity between mentor and protégé may be less important than the combination of identities, worldviews, values, skills and networks that allow for positive outcomes in mentoring relationships through understanding, support and advocacy.

While the research about doctoral education has considered all three aspects of students' identities individually, it has not explicated the ways in which these intersecting identities relate to students' needs and expectations related to mentoring, their choices related to mentor selection, or the effectiveness and outcomes of mentoring relationships in fostering success and satisfaction. Further research is needed to identify how doctoral students engage in the mentor selection process and whether mentor selection based on fit across components of faculty and students identities, rather than narrowly defined similarity, leads to more effective mentoring relationships.

Next steps: propositions for research
The literature about mentoring in doctoral education demonstrates a tendency to conceptualize similarity according to one or more aspects of students' identities as essential for understanding and predicting mentoring relationships. This synthesis of literature emphasizes that while all aspects of students' identities are embedded in their doctoral experiences, it may be most important to recognize and integrate these identities when helping students to conceptualize mentor identification and selection than to allow students to default to desired similarity according to any one

characteristic. We offer several propositions based on our review of the literature that would allow for the application and refinement of this framework towards increased knowledge of M-P Fit in doctoral education. Future research that generates empirical results about these propositions would be useful for refining the framework and its potential for improving our understanding of this critical aspect of doctoral training and the doctoral student experience.

P1. As new entrants, doctoral students make decisions about mentors based on perceived similarity according to personal characteristics or professional interests instead of a complex understanding of the factors that best facilitate strong M-P Fit.

We recommend a shift in research, implementing the framework of identity in academic careers to better understand the decisions students make as they form mentoring relationships in doctoral education. This framework sheds light on important questions about which components of identity promote student outcomes such as persistence in graduate school or commitment to the disciplinary field. It also suggests the possibility of deeper knowledge regarding whether and why students from certain social identity groups are more likely to prioritize some identities over others. Future studies should explore the relative and potentially intersecting salience of professional, relational and personal identity in mentoring relationships overall, as well as across student populations, disciplines, program stages, career goals and institution types. For example, do students in the hard sciences rely on the same categories of identity when seeking mentors as students in the humanities? Are identities more or less salient at different stages of the doctoral training process, thus necessitating different fit assessments and subsequent identification of mentors that correspond with those different stages? Research about these questions would provide important insight into the process and outcomes of doctoral education.

P2. As new entrants, doctoral students do not distinguish between the key faculty roles of instructor, advisor, supervisor, chair and mentor.

Extant research suggests that the term "mentor" is often used in an all-encompassing way, including multiple relationships that have very distinctive expectations, roles and outcomes (Pifer and Baker, 2010; Jacobi, 1991; Johnson, 2007). Johnson (2007), for example, suggested that students often express disappointment that their advisors are not exhibiting behaviors consistent with mentorship, suggesting students' do not know or understand the distinctions. Clearer understanding of the variety of roles faculty members can and do engage in, as well as relationships between students and faculty can temper students' expectations and help them establish the most appropriate relationships given their needs. Future research should identify and differentiate between the outcomes associated with advising, mentoring and supervision, and the contexts and conditions under which each relationship type is most beneficial for student success. Such work should examine whether there are particular identity dimensions that matter more when students identify mentors, compared to advisors and supervisors. Further, it would be helpful to determine whether certain relationships and behaviors are more critical at specific stages of the doctoral training process and whether disciplinary differences and career goals affect the structure and purpose of

such relationships. Further, clarifying the differences between these relationships can help faculty structure their relationships more intentionally, providing clear communication with students and helping them to develop informed and appropriate expectations for the various roles faculty members play in doctoral education.

> *P3.* Application of the three-part framework of identity in academic careers will inform knowledge of, as well as practice about, the mentor selection process among doctoral students.

Knowledge generated from the application of this framework may assist both doctoral students and faculty members in understanding and developing effective mentoring relationships. Students at all stages, including those considering or beginning doctoral education, those engaged in the process, and those preparing for faculty roles or alternative careers, may be aided by this framework. The framework has the potential to affirm the importance of complex, layered and intersecting identities in doctoral student success and satisfaction and specifically, mentoring relationships. Are there instances when a student and faculty mentor experience strong professional identity fit, but have conflicting personal or relational values? Is the professional fit strong enough to "trump" the lack of personal or relational fit?

Application of the framework to practice may also enable faculty members to understand the complex ways in which students are making sense of their doctoral journeys. The framework may serve as a discussion guide or point of entry into the student–faculty member dialogue about expectations for mentoring relationships. Also, the framework may be useful in beginning to identify where the problems lie within ineffective mentoring relationships and how they might be addressed.

> *P4.* Application of M-P Fit framework will inform knowledge of, as well as practice about, the mentor selection process among doctoral students.

The majority of management, organizational studies and higher education research that has explored Person–Person Fit has done so with a focus on the Person–Supervisor (P-S) relationship. P-S Fit influences employees' withdrawal attitudes and work behaviors, as well as turnover intentions. In higher education, argued for the need to be more systematic when making student–supervisor assignments at the undergraduate level, given the growing importance of the supervisor to key outcomes. The same sentiments are shared given the importance of the student–faculty mentoring relationship. Strong M-P Fit in mentoring relationships results in reduced time-to-degree (Maher *et al.*, 2004) and access to social or human capital that supports career progression (Ballout, 2007). Additionally, strong M-P Fit is likely to aid students' transitions towards full participation in academic and disciplinary communities, positively influencing professional identity development and persistence (Spaulding and Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012).

Conclusion
Although mentoring is central in doctoral education, there is an inconsistent level of satisfaction with these relationships that may be related to poor M-P Fit, such as what may occur as a result of misalignment between student and faculty expectations. In the

doctoral student mentoring literature, there is often an assumption that similarity according to:

- professional identity such as area of study;
- relational identity such as parenting roles; or
- personal identity such as race or gender alone ensures a successful mentorship or allows for a complete understanding of the complex dynamics embedded in mentor selection and student–faculty mentoring relationships.

Given the growing literature about dysfunctional mentoring (Eby *et al.*, 2008; Johnson and Huwe, 2002), it is timely to advance research that explores the nature and outcomes of effective mentoring through fit rather than similarity. M-P Fit goes beyond similarity by focusing on the alignment of core values between doctoral students and faculty members. Furthermore, a focus on M-P Fit allows for the integrated and overlapping enactment of professional, relational and personal identities that influence the doctoral student experience and preparation for the profession, as well as the Mentor-protégé relationship and the important outcomes associated with mentoring in doctoral education.

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