

Undergraduate Students' Perceptions of Mentorship in Relation to Future Leadership
Opportunities at an Evangelical Christian University

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Abstract

Mentoring relationships have been shown to be a catalyst for leadership development. They serve an important role in the lives of students in preparing them for academic success, career advancement, and future leadership opportunities. However, at Christian institutions of higher learning, there is a tendency for male faculty to vastly outnumber female faculty and administrators. For the purposes of understanding how students view mentoring relationships, student perceptions of mentorship and future leadership emergence were measured at a large Evangelical Christian university. A survey was distributed to student Residential Assistants and results were analyzed in order to determine if there was a significant difference between male and female participant responses. A significant relationship was found between a female student's perceived likelihood of finding a mentor of the same gender within the organization and her perceived likelihood of obtaining an executive position.

Keywords: leadership emergence, mentorship, gender, student, Christian University

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Leadership is perhaps one of the most broadly studied concepts in organizational psychology and management. While much research is focused on leadership types, styles, and effective practices, the conceptual framework of leadership identity is still being developed. Leadership styles are not singular behaviors but are rather the product of a range of behaviors that serve a particular function (Eagly, 2007). For many decades, research has connected certain character dimensions to the concept of a transformational leader, the most sought-after leadership style in organizational leadership. Transformational leaders are the visionary and influential leaders in stories. This leadership style has been the center of much research and has four dimensions: charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985). Transformational leadership leads to higher job satisfaction (Jaskyte, 2004) and has a higher association to work unit effectiveness, or the overall effectiveness of a workplace (Lowe et al., 1996) than other types. Due to its nature of inspiring, stimulating, and engaging followers on an interpersonal level, this type of leadership is not only shown to be effective, but demonstrates, in some capacity, that followers have the ability to influence the credibility of a leader. The dynamic process between leader and individuals in their environment shape the idea of leadership identity development, or leadership being an important aspect of one's identity.

It has been debated whether women truly have a different style of leadership than men. Since men have historically occupied positions of leadership and power, most associate good leadership qualities with a masculine style of leadership, which tends to be more task-oriented and assertive. Women, on the other hand, being more communal, relational, and gentle, must

challenge this perception as they strive for leadership positions. These factors result in men appearing more natural in positions of leadership, as their qualities fit what most might consider good leadership (Eagly, 2007). Aside from the male-normed perception of leadership common in many organizations, women also face the challenge of finding a female role model due to the scarcity of women in executive leadership and the complexities of cross-gender relationships in the workplace (Dahlvig & Longman, 2016; Leck & Orser, 2013; Lee & Bush, 2003; Stockton, 2019). However, evidence supports that women's leadership style could be beneficial to an organization (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Interestingly, other studies have recognized that women tend to have more qualities of a transformational leader (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Eagly et al., 2003).

Within the context of higher education, leadership development programs equip and train students with leadership skills as they enter the workforce (Dugan, 2006). In seeking to produce the highest quality of education for students, universities implement formal leadership development programs, which have been shown to significantly positively influence a student's capacity for leadership (Dugan & Komives, 2007). Additionally, other factors that promote a student's capacity for leadership are socio-cultural conversations among peers, faculty mentoring, and participation in community service (Dugan & Komives, 2007). Mentoring relationships are vital for the development of a young adults understanding of leadership (Parks, 2000), and are powerful predictors of leadership gains for students (Campbell et al., 2012).

While mentorship is extremely beneficial for students, its impact may vary depending on the student protégé's gender. It has been suggested that females face more barriers than males when seeking an effective mentoring relationship (Ragins & Cotton, 1993). These barriers include an imbalance of female executives and faculty compared to the population of students

(Dahlvig & Longman, 2016, Jacobi, 1991; Lee & Bush, 2003), stereotypes associated with cross-gender pairings (Lee & Bush, 2003; Ragins & Cotton, 1993; Stockton, 2019), and specifically within Evangelical Christian universities, cultural beliefs about gender-roles that may hinder women's leadership development within the organization (Bryant, 2006; Colaner & Warner, 2005; Dahlvig & Longman, 2016). Since mentorship acts as a catalyst for leadership development among students (Campbell et al., 2012), it is vital that mentoring is available to all students in order to better prepare them for entering the workforce as competent and professional leaders.

Specifically, within the context of Evangelical Christian universities, the barriers to finding a mentor of the same gender and overcoming cultural stereotypes and beliefs are even greater than non-evangelical Christian schools in the nation (Dahlvig & Longman, 2014; Dahlvig & Longman, 2016; Stockton, 2019). Christian institutions of higher education are uniquely different in that they integrate their faith in Christ with the education they provide students. Women's leadership development in this sector is also uniquely different from that of the secular world. A study collected data over two decades and found a drastic difference in the number of women holding senior-level leadership positions in a Christian environment compared to secular non-profits and institutions of higher learning (Longman & Anderson, 2016). They found the number to be roughly half of what was represented in secular universities. A primary issue in institutions of Christian higher education is the number of women in executive leadership positions.

In order to better understand the factors that contribute to women stepping into leadership positions at Christian institutions of higher learning, Dahlvig and Longman (2014) conducted a study that observed 16 women in executive leadership positions at their Christian institutions.

They found that the women attributed their motivation for stepping into leadership to (a) relational responsibility, or the sense of dedication to the people and mission of their institution, (b) sense of calling and giftedness for leadership and (c) a mentor or role model. Since there is a lack of female executive leaders in Christian institutions, the occurrence of a female mentor or role model might be difficult for emerging female leaders to find. Therefore, cross-gender and other important developmental relationships must be considered for the development and advancement of female leaders within this context.

Within the evangelical Christian subculture, there are two dominant perspectives held by Christians as it relates to gender roles: complementarian and egalitarian perspectives. These perspectives are taught by various institutions such as churches, private schools and colleges, and Christian organizations. The complementarian perspective, being more conservative, was established by The Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW, 2021) and advocates for distinct roles between men and women, where men have the ultimate headship, authority, and leadership within a marriage. They believe that the distinct role of man and woman has existed since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. Within this perspective, women are not able to lead as the head pastor or hold leadership positions, such as deacon or elder. Some extreme complementarians even believe that within religious organizations, women should also be withheld from primary leadership roles. This perspective comes from verses such as 1 Timothy 2:12 when Paul writes, “But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet” (New American Standard Bible, 1971/1995). Moderate complementarians are less strict in their interpretations of where gender role attitudes should prevail—with many believing that women should only be withheld from primary leadership within the context of a church and the home.

The egalitarian perspective, however, is promoted by the non-profit organization Christians for Biblical Equity (CBE, 2021). They promote gender equality among Christian men and women, citing Galatians 3:28, "...there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ" (New American Standard Bible, 1971/1995). This perspective "involves mutuality in all aspects of life including home, church, and career" (Colaner & Warner, 2005, p. 225). This idea of "mutual submission" is demonstrated by Christ in Philippians 2:5-8: "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!" (English Standard Version Bible, 2001). Taken to an extreme, however, the egalitarian perspective views males and females as the same, discounting the unique traits apparent in each gender. Both perspectives acknowledge that men and women are equal, but each interpret their God-given roles differently.

The effects of complementarianism and egalitarianism have been studied specifically as they relate to students' perspectives of leadership. In order to analyze perceptions of leadership among students in an evangelical student subculture, Bryant (2006) found that students held unique perspectives regarding women in leadership. After observing and conducting interviews with 22 students, she found that students believed that women's leadership was limited to certain contexts and situations, with one male student stating, "In men is a strong desire to lead...In women is a strong desire to be led" (p. 622). She noted that, "although women were part of the student leadership team, there was some hesitation regarding women teaching mixed-gender groups" (p. 623). Her study provides an example of the dissonance some young Christians experience as they navigate gender roles, career, and a Biblical worldview of both. Colaner and

Warner (2005) studied how gender role attitudes influenced future career aspirations in undergraduate female Christian college students. The study found a significant positive relationship between gender role attitudes and career goals. Students who endorsed complementarian gender role attitudes tended not to indicate a desire in pursuing an advanced graduate or doctoral degree. However, students who endorsed egalitarian gender role attitudes indicated a desire to pursue careers that require higher education, training, and commitment, indicating that they were more willing to adapt their lifestyle around their career aspirations. This study, although dated and not representative of complementarian and egalitarian women as a whole, demonstrated interesting trends in student perceptions and future aspirations. Gender role attitudes, especially when taught or endorsed by an institution, might influence the level of leadership to which female students aspire post-graduation.

The purpose of this study is to understand how these specific barriers impact a student's perception of mentorship and how this perception might also influence their perceived likelihood of attaining an executive leadership role in the future.

Leadership

Leadership Development and Identity

Karp and Helgo (2009) proposed that leadership, rather than being categorized based on individual traits, is a dynamic process between individuals. DeRue and Ashford (2010) also proposed that leadership identity results from a process of claiming and granting, where individuals take action to assert themselves as leaders, while others can grant, or endorse them as leaders, further establishing their position within the organization. These actions establish leadership identity as a social and mutual influence process, requiring the individuals in question

to see themselves as capable of influencing others and to be seen by others as capable of doing the same (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Stockton, 2019).

Gender Differences in Leadership

Leadership identity development differs among demographics. Sometimes cultural, geographical, and gender differences can influence how a person sees herself as a leader and is seen by others as a leader. Women's leadership development differs from men's leadership development in that there are certain barriers and obstacles women must overcome in order to achieve the same position and status as their male counterparts. The term "glass ceiling" is often used to describe the barrier that prevents women from achieving executive advancement in an organization (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Some barriers are more obvious, like the absence of female executives within an organization, leading to a scarcity of female mentors (Ragins & Cotton, 1993). More covert barriers include the challenge of overcoming male-normed leadership standards and organizational practices (O'Neil et al., 2008; Yoder, 2001). A study done by O'Neil et al. (2008) evaluated the literature surrounding women's careers around the turn of the 21st century and concluded that "male-defined constructions of work and career success continue to dominate organizational research and practice" (p.727). In her review of literature, Yoder (2001) found that the concept of leadership is gendered and, depending on the context, serves to benefit those that align with the specific norm embodied in the culture of the environment. They spoke specifically of a continuum with "male-dominated, hierarchical, performance-oriented, power-expressive and thus masculinized" at one end to "transformational contexts that stress the empowerment of followers" (p. 815) at the other extreme. For those who ascribe to the organizational and cultural norms of the workplace, this may be beneficial. But for those with different leadership and interpersonal communication styles than the norm, this might inhibit

advancement into positions of influence. Since many workplaces and organizations have male-dominated executive leadership, it may be hard for women to advance if they do not abide by the standard of leadership their organization promotes.

Role of Developmental Relationships in Leadership Identity Development

Many studies have highlighted the benefits and importance of developmental relationships such as mentors, role models, and sponsors in leadership emergence for women (DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Hewlett, 2014; Murphy & Kram, 2014). These relationships lead to career advancement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment within businesses (Jacobi, 1991; Scandura & Williams, 2004), growing transformational leadership skills (Scandura & Williams, 2004), promotions and compensation (O'Brien et al., 2010), and many more career and leadership-related outcomes. Within the context of higher education, developmental relationships like mentorship have outcomes like student retention, academic success, leadership development, career development, and enhanced relationships between students and professors (Campbell et al., 2012; Moreton & Newsom, 2004; Parks, 2000).

Other types of developmental relationships include coaching, sponsorship, and role modeling. Coaching is unique in that its purpose is to develop specific competencies in a short or moderate amount of time. Sponsorship occurs when higher-ranking advisors use their position of influence to advocate for their protégé. It is used to enhance the career path of the protégé (Stockton, 2019). A few characteristics of sponsorship include a belief in the protégé's potential, willingness to put one's own reputation at risk, and a level of influence that allows the sponsor to push for the protégé's advancement (Hewlett, 2014). In this way, sponsors provide developmental career support that may be missing in a mentoring relationship (Stockton, 2019). Role models are influential to the development of a protégé in that they model certain behaviors,

skills, and competencies that the protégé lacks, which allows the protégé to develop these skills through observing their role model (Speizer, 1981). Examples of role models include senior employees, professors, and even peers.

Mentoring

Sosik and Godshalk (2000) defined mentorship in a way that offers the most clarity for both the organizational and educational context: “Mentoring is defined as a deliberate pairing of a more skilled or experienced person with a lesser skilled or experienced one, with the agreed-upon goal of having the lesser skilled person grow and develop specific competencies” (p. 109). The origin of mentorship in literature dates back to the 18th and 19th centuries. The term was used in the titles of books that helped young adults learn specific skills or trades (Woodd, 1997). The term “mentor” became even more popular in the 1970s within the business world. It originated from Homer’s character, Mentor, who served as the trusted advisor and teacher to Odysseus’ son Telemachus in his work, *The Odyssey* (Dutton, 2003). Modern mentor literature commonly describes a mentor as an older or more experienced individual and a protégé as a younger or less experienced individual (Haggard et al., 2011). A mentor’s power within an organization influences the effectiveness of the relationship’s functions (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Mentoring relationships are dynamic, and, with time, they grow in intensity as the mentor and protégé establish trust and various other psychosocial functions like friendship, closeness, and acceptance (Kram, 1985; Stockton, 2019). The first phase of initiation within a mentoring relationship is largely influenced by the formality of the relationship.

The formality of mentorship may influence how effective the relationship is, according to Ragins and Cotton (1999) who conducted a study evaluating men and women in both formal and informal mentoring relationships. Whether a mentoring relationship is formal or informal

depends on the manner in which the relationship is initiated, its structure, and the processes within the relationship (Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

Informal mentorship occurs when the protégé and mentor come together naturally. Both the mentor and protégé recognize their mutual desire for such relationship; mentors usually are older, more experienced professionals seeking to contribute to the younger while protégés seek a role model or more experienced person that can provide a number of functions that contribute to their personal and career development. The structure of informal mentorship is a relationship that lasts multiple years, the protégé and mentor meet when desired, and the goals of the relationship evolve over time as the protégé and mentor meet goals and adapt (Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

Formal mentorship, however, is initiated when a protégé is assigned to a mentor. This is usually the product of organizational programs implemented to enhance growth and leadership within an organization. Some organizations provide these programs for underrepresented groups such as women and ethnic minorities to allow for a way to overcome barriers to finding a mentor. Since the pair is chosen through a formal application process, it is common for the mentor and protégé to not even meet until after they are paired, which might mean functions such as friendship and counseling are less prevalent in the relationship. The relationships are shorter than that of informal relationships and the frequency and goals are agreed upon by both the protégé and mentor. Unfortunately, in formal mentoring relationships, there are several processes that may impede the effectiveness of the partnership. Since formal mentors are matched with their protégé, they may be less motivated to be in the relationship than informal mentors and more cautious to engage in career development behaviors that might imply favoritism or partiality, as their role is more visible within the organization due to the program (Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

Many studies and literature propose that informal mentoring is much more effective and successful than formal mentoring (Ghosh, 2014; Murphy & Kram, 2014; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). Protégés with informal mentors reported that they were provided with more career development and psychosocial functions, such as counseling and friendship, than protégés within a formal mentoring relationship. Protégés with informal mentors reported greater overall satisfaction with their mentors than those with formal mentors (Ragins & Cotton, 1999).

Leadership Development Outcomes

Due to its developmental nature, mentorship provides a variety of outcomes for both the protégé and the mentor, including leadership development. Within the context of higher education, studies have demonstrated a significant, positive relationship between faculty mentoring and leadership development (Campbell et al., 2012; Dugan and Komives, 2007) and found that faculty mentoring was a more powerful predictor of leadership gains, while peer mentoring and mentoring by student affairs administrators also had a positive effect on leadership outcomes. Campbell et al. (2012) found that students with mentors from their student affairs department demonstrated a greater leadership capacity than those who were mentored by faculty. The results of their study indicated that psychosocial mentoring actually had a greater capacity to equip students with leadership skills than did career mentoring.

Psychosocial and Career Development Functions

According to Kram (1985), there are two categories of mentorship functions: career development and psychosocial mentorship. Career mentorship is primarily used to enhance advancement in leadership and career goals. Its functions are coaching, sponsorship, and providing career challenges for the protégé. The primary outcomes of career mentorship are career development, advancement, leadership skills, promotions, and compensation (O'Brien et

al., 2010). Campbell et al. (2012) noted that career mentoring tends to focus on socialization to the work-world, networking, and job-oriented skills. Psychosocial mentorship, on the other hand, focuses on “enhancing an individual’s sense of efficacy, identity, or competence” (Stockton, 2019, p. 64). Its functions include role modeling behaviors, counseling, and friendship. Its outcomes are increased satisfaction with relationship and enhanced efficacy (O’Brien et al., 2010). Campbell et al. (2012) found that students who received psychosocial mentoring were more likely to develop socially responsible leadership, or a type of leadership that focuses on change and the common good. Additionally, psychosocial mentorship was related to outcomes such as reflective abilities, challenging oneself, coping skills, and openness to new experiences.

Gender Dynamics in Developmental Relationships

Campbell et al. (2012) noted that the composition of a mentoring dyad was important in order to evaluate its leadership development effectiveness. Sosik and Godshalk (2000) focused on how the composition of the mentoring relationship influences the mentor functions provided, which in turn influences the outcomes for the protégé. Therefore, gender influences must be taken into account when considering mentorship as a whole.

In the educational context, early findings demonstrated that women had more difficulty establishing relationships with mentors (Jacobi, 1991). A study at Hong Kong Baptist University measured student protégé and mentor perceptions of mentorship among first year students and faculty members (Lee & Bush, 2003). They found that gender dynamics within the mentor pairings had both benefits and drawbacks. When participants in the study were given the choice, the majority chose mentors or protégés of the same sex, indicating a preference for same-sex mentoring over cross-sex mentoring. Unfortunately, at Hong Kong Baptist University, women

faculty were underrepresented, reducing the number of available mentors for female students that prefer same-sex mentoring.

As demonstrated in the study at Hong Kong Baptist University, within the context of higher education, female leaders are scarce despite female students composing approximately 55.5% of college students in America (Bustamante, 2021). Historically within Christian higher education, the number of female faculty have been even lower. The low number of female faculty and administrators within Christian higher education leads to a lack of available female mentors for women in the school's community (Longman & Anderson, 2016).

However, research has shown that it may be most effective when women protégés are mentored by women mentors. For example, Leck and Orser (2013) suggested that same-sex mentorships have greater levels of established trust than do cross-sex pairings. This may be the result of shared interests, similar communication styles, and lack of tension or perceived tension that may occur within cross-sex pairings. Additionally, women with female mentors report more interpersonal comfort (Allen et al., 2005), psychosocial support, and role modeling than with male mentors (Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). O'Brien et al (2010) found that female protégés reported receiving more psychosocial support than did male protégés, especially when paired with a female mentor.

Although same-sex pairings are held as the most effective pairing for female protégés, cross-sex pairings are inevitable as many organizations lack female mentors and executive leaders. Sosik and Godshalk (2000) found that male mentors with female protégés were associated with more career development behaviors and functions than any other pairing. Ragins and Cotton (1999) found that a history of male mentors was significantly related to higher compensation for female protégés. Additionally, O'Brien et al. (2010) found that male mentors

reported providing more career functions than did female mentors. For female protégés desiring career advancement functions in their mentoring relationship, it seems male mentors might be more beneficial than female mentors. However, within Christian institutions, cultural barriers such as distrust, gossip and innuendoes, and strong gender role beliefs arise as male and female individuals interact and form relationships. In their study, Lee and Bush (2003) recorded that one male faculty member said he preferred “to have a mentee (protégé) of the same sex is to avoid destructive gossip and discrediting innuendos” (p. 268). Considering the cultural implications of a Christian school in regard to complementarian views on gender roles and negative views associated with cross-sex pairings (Lee & Bush, 2003; Stockton, 2019), the first hypothesis addresses the perceived salience of same-sex mentors for student protégés at an evangelical Christian school:

Hypothesis 1A: Perceived likelihood of same-sex mentorship is lower for female student leaders than male student leaders

Because mentoring relationships are integral in career and leadership advancement (Dahlvig & Longman, 2014; Jacobi, 1991; Scandura & Williams, 2004; Stockton, 2019), perceived lack of mentorship salience might influence the leadership aspirations of female students who struggle to find a mentor:

Hypothesis 1B: Perception of same-sex mentorship availability is linked to perceived desire to obtain an executive leadership position for female student leaders in the future

Additionally, considering that female protégés received reporting more psychosocial support from their mentor within an organizational setting (O’Brien et al., 2010), female students might place a higher value on psychosocial support functions within an educational institution:

Hypothesis 2: Perceived value of psychosocial mentorship is higher for female student leaders than male student leaders

Due to the cultural implications of cross-sex mentoring pairings within evangelical institutions, female students might also place a lower value in career mentorship as they have less access to male mentors who provide this specific function:

Hypothesis 3A: Perceived value of career mentorship is lower for female student leaders than for male student leaders

Since career development mentoring strongly influences career outcomes like promotions, compensation, and leadership skills (O'Brien et al., 2010) and helps build competence and confidence within a protégé, the lack of this mentoring function might influence the likelihood of a protégé's leadership emergence in the future:

Hypothesis 3B: Perceived value of career mentorship influences perceived likelihood of executive leadership emergence for female student leaders but not male student leaders

Lastly, because female protégés at an evangelical institution of higher learning might be disadvantaged in finding a mentor of their preferred gender that could provide the specific mentor functions they value, their concept of mentor efficacy might also be influenced:

Hypothesis 4: Perceived mentor effectiveness is lower for female students than male students

Method

Participants

At the university used for this research project, the ratio of male and female faculty members slightly differed from the ratio of male and female students: male professors comprised

60% of the overall population, while female professors comprised 40%; the population of students were 47% male and 53% female (Liberty University, 2021b). Specifically, the breakdown of gender and academic rank for professors were 80% male and 20% female, assistant professors were 54% male, and 46% female, and associate professors were 62% male and 38% female (Data USA, 2021). Participants in the study were chosen based on their leadership position on campus. Residential assistants (RAs), according to the school's website, are "highly motivated individuals with a strong work ethic who can help maintain the integrity of housing facilities while building community" (Liberty University, 2021a, paragraph 2). Additionally, listed under the benefits of the position, RAs "receive mentoring and discipleship by a Resident Director (RD)" (Liberty University, 2021a). The group of participants was chosen due to its members' leadership positions, ability to exercise leadership skills, and potential for mentorship. RAs represent the campus gender demographics by having male and female students assigned to a hall of the same gender. RAs are also assigned to lead groups, or smaller groups comprised of several RAs and an RD. These groups provide an outlet for discipleship and mentorship for the students, as RDs are the direct supervisors for RAs.

In total, there were 258 RA students who were contacted and asked to participate in this project. Out of 258, 93 responses were recorded. After analyzing data, only 80 participant responses were usable, representing 86% of total responses. Out of 80 participants, 48 were female (60%) and 32 were male (40%). This number slightly differs from the overall student body demographic: 53% female and 47% male (Liberty University, 2021b). Other demographic data are included in the table below.

Table 1
Demographic Data

Variable	<i>N</i>	%
Gender		
Female	48	60
Male	32	40
Ethnicity		
White	63	78.8%
African American	5	6.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	4	5.0%
Hispanic or Latino	4	5.0%
Mixed or Multiple Races	2	2.5%
Other	1	1.3%
Prefer not to say	1	1.3%
Age		
0-18 years old	1	1.3%
18-25 years old	78	97.5%
25-30 years old	1	1.3%
Relationship Status		
Single	80	100%
Academic School of Study		
Humanities	22	27.5%
Social Sciences	19	23.8%
Health Sciences	16	20.0%
Applied Sciences	18	22.5%
Other	5	6.3%

Additionally, demographic data regarding the RA's mentor was taken as well.

Information is included in the table below:

Table 2
Mentor Demographic Data

Variable	<i>N</i>	%
Do you have a mentor?		
Yes	63	78.8%
No	17	21.3%
Is your mentor the same gender as you?		
Yes	54	67.5%
No	8	10.0%
Do not have a mentor	18	22.5%
What organization do they work for?		
Liberty	55	68.8%
Other	7	8.7%
Do not have a mentor	18	22.5%
What is their position?		
Direct Manager	26	32.5%
Professor	3	3.8%
Administrator	4	5.0%
Faculty	11	13.7%
Other	18	22.5%
Do not have a mentor	18	22.5%
How often do you meet?		
Weekly	38	47.4%
Monthly	3	3.8%
Semesterly	3	3.8%
Other	18	22.5%
Do not have a mentor	18	22.5%
Were you assigned this mentor by your organization or did you select this mentor yourself?		
Assigned mentor	40	50.0%
Personal Decision	22	27.5%
Do not have a mentor	18	22.5%

After conducting a descriptive statistics analysis, an interesting finding showed that from within the sample of students who had a mentor, an overwhelming majority (87%) had one of the same gender. This is congruent with findings in literature that indicate students at Christian institutions prefer mentors of the same gender (Lee & Bush, 2003).

Materials

A survey was designed and distributed to qualified participants in order to measure their perceptions and analyze whether there was a significant difference in response based on gender. After receiving IRB approval, the survey was distributed to 258 RA students through their university email addresses. A link to the survey was attached in the email, and a follow-up email was sent one week after the initial distribution. The questionnaire was comprised of 23 questions. The study was anonymous and no personal identifying information was collected. Once participants indicated their consent, they were taken to the next part of the survey. Participants answered demographic questions relating to their background and the background of their mentoring relationship. The age, gender, race, marital status, and academic school were measured along with questions about the participant's experience as a protégé. The following definition of mentorship was given for clarity:

A mentoring relationship can be defined as a deliberate pairing of a more skilled or experienced person (mentor) with a lesser skilled or experienced one (protégé), with the agreed-upon goal of having the lesser skilled person grow and develop specific competencies. Your mentor may or may not be your manager.

Then, questions were asked to determine whether the participant had a mentor, if the participants were the same gender as the mentor, if their mentor worked within the organization, what position their mentor held (faculty, manager, administrator), and the frequency of the meetings with their mentor. Finally, the participants indicated whether their mentor relationship was formal (assigned to them) or informal (chosen by them).

After demographic questions were answered, participants were asked 5 Likert-scale questions that measured their perception of mentorship and leadership. The first question was related to Hypotheses 1A, asking:

What is the likelihood of finding a mentor of the same gender within your organization (e.g., male mentor/male protégé and female mentor/female protégé)?

Participants answered based on a scale of 1-7, 1 being “Extremely Unlikely” and 7 being “Extremely Likely”. The second question was asked to measure the students’ perception of psychosocial mentorship (Hypothesis 2):

I value psychosocial development as the primary function of a mentor relationship.

This question was followed with a definition of psychosocial mentorship:

Psychosocial mentoring occurs when the mentor serves as counselor, friend, and advocate, providing guidance, role modeling, and acceptance for the mentee.

Participants answered based on a scale of 1-7, 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”. Similarly, the third question aimed to measure the students’ perceptions of career development mentor functions:

I value career development as the primary function of a mentor relationship.

Participants were then given the following definition of career development mentoring:

Career development mentoring occurs when the mentor provides vocational (career) coaching, sponsoring, visibility, and networking.

Again, participants answered based on a scale of 1-7, 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”. The third question was asked to measure perceived mentor effectiveness:

I believe mentor relationships are effective in helping me meet my personal goals.

On a scale from 1-7, 1 being “Strongly Disagree” and 7 being “Strongly Agree”, participants answered the question. The final question was meant to measure leadership potential in the future:

What is the likelihood of obtaining a future high-level leadership position within your organization? (high-level positions may include president, director, vice president, and any other title that signifies complete responsibility over a large group of workers)

On a scale from 1-7, 1 being “Extremely Unlikely” and 7 being “Extremely Likely”, participants answered based on their perception of executive leader emergence in the future.

Procedure

After receiving approval from the IRB, an email was sent to the student RAs at the school. Responses were collected for one week until the survey was closed. Data was analyzed using Independent Sample T-Tests and Pearson’s Correlations. The results of the study are included in the next section.

Results

Independent T-tests and Correlational tests were used on the data. The variable considered was protégé gender. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to measure whether there was a significant difference in response between male and female participants. Answers for questions relating to hypotheses 1A, 2, 3A, and 3B were all analyzed using independent samples t-test. A table of the results is attached below.

Table 3. Independent Samples T-Test.

Variable	Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means			
	F	Sig.	t	df	p	MD
Likelihood of Same-Sex Mentor	.344	.559	.190	78	.850	.052
Value of Psychosocial Mentoring	.368	.546	-.696	78	.488	-.167
Value of Career Mentoring	2.824	.097	-.856	78	.395	-.302
Effectiveness of Mentor Relationships	.011	.916	.261	78	.795	.063

The first independent samples t-test was conducted to determine the difference in male and female responses about their perceived likelihood of finding a mentor of the same gender within their organization. The results found no significant difference between male ($M=6.28$, $SD= 1.35$), and female responses ($M=6.23$, $SD= 1.096$), $t(78) = .190$, $p= .850$. Thus, no support for Hypothesis 1A was found.

The second independent samples t-test was conducted to determine the difference in male and female responses about their perceived value of psychosocial development within a mentoring relationship. The results found no significant difference between male ($M= 6.19$, $SD= 1.148$) and female responses ($M= 6.35$, $SD= .978$), $t(78) = -.696$, $p=.488$. Thus, no support for Hypothesis 2 was found.

The third independent samples t-test was conducted to determine the difference in male and female responses about their perceived value of career development within a mentoring relationship. The results found no significant difference between male ($M=4.97$, $SD= 1.787$) and female responses ($M= 5.27$, $SD= 1.364$), $t(78) = -.856$, $p= .395$. Thus, no support for Hypothesis 3A was found.

The fourth independent samples t-test was conducted to determine the difference in male and female responses about their perceived effectiveness of mentoring relationships. The results found no significant difference between male ($M= 6.19$, $SD= 1.030$) and female responses ($M= 6.13$, $SD= 1.064$), $t(78) = .261$, $p= .795$. Thus, no support for Hypothesis 4 was found.

A Pearson correlation coefficient was computed for both Hypotheses 1B and 3B. A table of results is attached below for both male and female participants:

Table 4. Pearson's r, Means, and Standard Deviations for All Students.

	1	2	3	4	5
Likelihood of Leadership Emergence	1				
Likelihood of Same Sex Mentor	.164	1			
Value of Psychosocial Development	-.207	.296**	1		
Value of Career Development	.150	.089	.024	1	
Mentor Effectiveness	.018	.324**	.424**	.269*	1
Mean	5.15	6.25	6.29	5.15	6.15
SD	1.485	1.196	1.046	1.543	1.045

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The positive relationship between perceived likelihood of finding a mentor of the same gender and perceived value of psychosocial development functions was significant $r(78)=.296$, $p=.008$. Additionally, the positive relationship between mentor effectiveness and perceived likelihood of same sex mentor $r(78)=.324$, $p=.003$, mentor effectiveness and perceived value of psychosocial development functions $r(78)=.424$, $p=.000$, and mentor effectiveness and perceived value of career development functions $r(78)=.269$, $p=.016$ were all significant. Each positive significant relationship indicated that high scores in one variable were linked to high scores in another variable.

Table 5 demonstrates the correlation between the variables of leadership emergence, same sex mentor salience, and value of career development for female students:

Table 5. Pearson's *r*, Means, and Standard Deviations for Female Students.

	1	2	3
Likelihood of Leadership Emergence	1		
Likelihood of Same Sex Mentor	.428**	1	
Value of Career Development	.116	.015	1
Mean	5.06	6.23	5.27
SD	1.375	1.096	1.364

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In order to analyze Hypotheses 1B and 3B, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed. For Hypothesis 1B, the relationship between the perceived likelihood in finding a mentor of the same gender and perceived likelihood in obtaining a future executive leadership role within male and female students was examined. Among female students, the results indicate a significant positive relationship between perception of mentor availability and perception of future leadership emergence $r(46) = .428, p = .002$. Higher scores of perception of same-sex mentor availability are related to higher scores of perception of future leadership emergence. Thus, the findings support Hypothesis 1B: perception of same-sex mentor availability is linked to perceived desire to obtain an executive leadership position in the future for female students.

The relationship between future leadership emergence and perceived value of career development within a mentoring relationship among female students was not significant. The

results indicate a non-significant positive relationship between the two variables $t(46) = .116, p = .434$. Therefore, no support was found for Hypothesis 3B.

The correlations for male participants are included in Table 6:

Table 6. Pearson's r , Means, and Standard Deviations for Male Participants.

	1	2	3
Likelihood of Leadership Emergence	1		
Likelihood of Same Sex Mentor	-.109	1	
Value of Career Development	.200	.164	1
Mean	5.28	6.28	4.97
SD	1.651	1.350	1.787

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Among male students, the results indicate a non-significant negative relationship between the perception of future leadership emergence and perception of same-sex mentor availability $r(30) = -.109, p = .552$. This finding further supports Hypothesis 1B, demonstrating the significant relationship between future leadership emergence and likelihood of finding a mentor of the same gender among female students and not male students.

The relationship between perceived likelihood of future leadership emergence and perceived value of career development was not significant for male participants $t(30) = .200, p = .273$. Higher scores on perceived likelihood of future leadership emergence are related to higher scores on perceived value of career development within mentoring relationships for male participants, but not significantly. This further indicates no support for Hypothesis 3B.

Discussion

After conducting a descriptive statistics analysis, an interesting finding showed that from within the sample of students who had a mentor, an overwhelming majority (87%) had one of the same gender. This is congruent with findings in literature that indicate students at Christian institutions prefer mentors of the same gender (Lee & Bush, 2003).

As it relates to Hypothesis 1A, there was no significant difference between male and female participants' perceived likelihood of finding a mentor of the same gender. This is consistent with the findings of O'Brien et al. (2010), which found that male and female employees were equally as likely to report having protégé experience. The data for Hypotheses 1B, however, demonstrated that among the female participants, perception of female mentor availability was strongly related to the perception of emerging as an executive leader in the future. Since mentorship is a catalyst for leadership development, this finding was important and consistent with previous studies that found mentorship to be highly beneficial for women striving towards leadership positions (Campbell et al., 2012; Parks, 2000; Stockton, 2019).

The results for Hypothesis 2 found that there was no significant difference in male and female perceived value of psychosocial development within a mentoring relationship. O'Brien et al. (2010) found that female protégés were more likely to receive psychosocial support than male protégés within a mentoring relationship. However, this study measured for perceived value of psychosocial support and did not measure for reported psychosocial support received by female protégés.

While research demonstrates that males tend to receive more career support from mentoring relationships (O'Brien et al., 2010), the results for Hypothesis 3A found that there was no difference in perceived value of career development within a mentoring relationship for males

or females. Hypothesis 3B, which proposed that there would be a relationship in perceived value of career mentorship and future leadership emergence, was not supported by the data. However, literature surrounding the value of career development as a mentoring function supports the concept of increased career development functions leading to a stronger likelihood of leadership emergence and career advancement (O'Brien et al., 2010). Hypothesis 4 found no difference in perceived effectiveness of mentor relationships for male and female participants.

In both male and female participants, the results demonstrated that there were significant positive relationships between mentor effectiveness and perception of same sex mentor availability, perceived value of psychosocial functions, and perceived value of career functions. Mentor effectiveness is linked to a student's perception of mentor availability and higher placed value in both career and psychosocial functions of a mentoring relationship. The more effective students perceive a mentoring relationship, the more likely they are to seek out mentoring relationships and value the primary career and psychosocial functions of a mentoring relationship as well.

Limitations

There were a number of limitations involved in the study. First, the sample of participants may not have been representative of the broader student body at the school. RAs are assigned to Resident Directors (RDs), or mentors within their program. This may have influenced the outcome of Hypothesis 1A as it relates to the students' perception of same-sex mentor salience within their environment. Interestingly, there were many respondents who did not report having a mentoring relationship. This could have arisen due to an unclear understanding of the definition given or not viewing their RD as a mentor figure. Additionally, Hypothesis 1A was aimed at measuring an average student's ability to find a mentor of the same gender. The sample

of participants may not have been representative of an average student at the school. Future research should include a more general sample of the student population and include a more diverse and expansive set of students.

Secondly, this study is specific to the culture of the university at which it was conducted. Student perceptions are shaped by cultural norms within the university, and the results of this study may not be generalizable to college campuses that do not hold an evangelical Christian worldview. Future recommendations of study include replicating this study at a public university and comparing results. The influence of an evangelical worldview may or may not influence student perceptions of same-sex mentor salience, mentor efficacy, and leadership potential. Another recommendation for future study is to measure specific mentor functions provided in mentoring relationships at an evangelical Christian school in order to observe whether findings are similar to preexisting literature.

Conclusion

The broad aim in this research was to understand how students view mentorship at an Evangelical Christian university. This study demonstrated the importance of mentorship in academic settings. The findings highlighted how developmental relationships play an extremely important role in shaping a student's leadership identity. Since a significant relationship between perceived mentor availability and future leadership emergence was found for female students, the data from this study support the idea that developmental relationships are important for leadership growth. Additionally, the links found between mentor effectiveness and mentor availability, value in career development, and value in psychosocial development are important to consider for future research. Other studies may consider how perception of mentor availability

and perception of mentor functions influence a mentoring relationship's effectiveness. This would especially be interesting to study within a different university setting.

The results demonstrated the effectiveness of the mentor programming already available within the Office of Residence Life and the equitable access RAs have to effective mentoring relationships. This study contributes to the dialogue surrounding how universities might better equip their students to embrace leadership opportunities. Additionally, it sheds light into how students' perceptions of mentorship might influence how effective they believe developmental relationships are in helping them attain their goals.

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