

Appreciating Episodic Mentoring: Reconsiderations of and Interventions for a Comprehensive Mentoring Process for Engineering Faculty

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Purdue ADVANCE Gender & STEM Symposium 2013

Buzzanell et al.: Appreciating Episodic Mentoring: Reconsiderations of and Interventions

Appreciating Episodic Mentoring: Reconsiderations of and Interventions for a Comprehensive Mentoring Process for Engineering Faculty.

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Overview

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- Background
- Episodic Mentoring
- Research Questions
- Methods
- Results
 - Initiating Episodic Mentoring
 - Mentoring for Inclusion and Growth

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Background

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- Whereas research has delved into faculty-student mentoring and its consequences, there are few investigations about faculty mentoring in STEM.
- This paper is part of a larger project with goals to understand faculty's mentoring experience and assessing the revised formal mentoring programs designed and offered by the College of Engineering at a large Midwestern (U.S.) university

Episodic Mentoring

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- Mentoring episodes: short-term developmental interactions that occur at specific points in time

Form	happening in everyday processes (Buzzanell, 2009).
Time	short-term interactions (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007).
Goal	focus on the relational aspects of the mentoring experiences (Kalbfleisch, 2007)
Direction	multiple inputs (Parse, 2002).
Role of Mentor	offer a diligent, loving presence, a link with a community of scholars, and celebratory recognition (Parse, 2002).

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Episodic Mentoring

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- These mentoring moments or episodes probably occur more often than people realize, in large part because **they may not be labeled as mentoring** by the relationship participants and **may occur spontaneously**.
- Mentoring moments or episodes also may **be vital to mentees' feelings of inclusion** into professions and work-related contexts because they offer insight into **behind-the-scenes** reasoning and activities, as well as opportunities to ask questions in **less threatening venues** given their seemingly impromptu nature.

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Research Questions

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- *How do faculty members describe and evaluate their episodic mentoring?*
- *What role does episodic mentoring play in faculty members' lives?*

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Methods and Analysis

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Participants

- Thirteen tenure-track faculty from the College of Engineering at one Midwestern university agreed to participate in our study .
 - 6 men and 7 women
 - 11 participants (85%) were tenured
 - 4 interviewees were self identified as under-represented minorities

Data collection

- In-depth Interview :50 minutes each on average (range=25-80 minutes).
- Recorded and transcribed for analysis: 325 pages of double-spaced transcription.

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Methods and Analysis

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Data analysis

- Inductive-deductive process through which we looked for overarching themes and subthemes that depicted patterns of mentoring interactions indicating when, why, how, and with what perceived consequences episodic mentoring occurred.
- Refined our category development and tested our ideas against our data and findings from other empirical studies (Charmaz, 2006).
- Coded for instances of episodic mentoring.
- Case study of one participant.

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Results

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The three primary ways in which mentees either initiated or perceived opportunities for mentoring were:

- (a) direct advice or information seeking
- (b) observation focused on learning
- (c) engagement in serendipitous interactions.

Direct Advice or Information Seeking

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- The perception that one party wanted to obtain some advice from another party and thus created an occasion for mentoring.
- Stems from a perplexing issue, a felt need or problem, or a question that had emerged during work.
 - E.g., a classroom concern

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Observation focused on learning

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- Occurred when two parties (mentor and mentee) were engaged in activities together.
 - e.g., working on the same research projects, serving on the same committee, co-teaching a course.
- This form of episodic mentoring could be characterized as learning through observation or example, or mentoring through role modeling.

Engagement in Serendipitous Interactions

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- Refers to the unexpected instances of mentoring.
 - E.g., hallways, airports, and in bars
- Factors that could lead to or be used to cultivate spontaneous mentoring: proximity, collegiality, workplace culture, people who are willing to share and help others.

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Mentoring for Inclusion and Growth

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- A mentoring story from Brian.
 - “Navigating one’s way as other”
 - “An advance scout, or an explorer”
 - Traditional mentoring was rare, so people looked for other means of advice.
 - However, Brian noted that individuals fail to recognize the networks of mentoring and engagement in which they participate.
 - Trust, understanding, and a relational culture as prerequisites for episodic mentoring.

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Discussion

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- episodic mentoring is proposed not only as a means of career development but also as faculty engagement and empowerment
- the role of the episodic mentoring has been underestimated in its positive impact on faculty advancement.
- without recognizing the value of episodic mentoring, one cannot assess the full extent of a comprehensive mentoring process.

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Questions?

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