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The Psychology of Workplace Mentoring Relationships

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Abstract

Workplace mentoring relationships have been advanced as critical to employee development. However, mentoring research has tended to find small to moderate effects of mentoring on protégé and mentor outcomes and considerable heterogeneity in effect sizes. These findings underscore the need to better understand the psychology of mentoring relationships in order to maximize the benefits of mentoring for mentors, protégés, and organizations. In this article, after briefly reviewing established research on workplace mentoring relationships, we introduce five relationship science theories from outside organizational psychology and organizational behavior that provide new insight into the psychology of workplace mentoring: attachment theory, interdependence theory, self-expansion theory, Rhodes' model of formal youth mentoring, and the working alliance. We then discuss several unique features of workplace mentoring that should be considered when applying these relationship science theories and introduce provocative ideas for future research. We conclude by discussing practical implications for mentors, protégés, and organizations.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The potential benefits of workplace mentoring have received considerable attention in both the scholarly (e.g., Ragins & Kram 2007) and practitioner (e.g., Tyler 2018) literature. Beliefs regarding the importance of mentoring are based on the premise that a close one-on-one developmental relationship between a senior or more experienced individual (mentor) and a junior or less experienced individual (protégé) is an important career development experience (Kram 1985).

Workplace mentoring includes relationships that are arranged as part of an organizationally sanctioned program and those that develop spontaneously based on mutual attraction, admiration by a potential protégé, and perceived "coachability" by a potential mentor (Kram 1985). In terms of position and authority, mentors can be inside or outside a protégé's chain of command (or even organization; see Eby 1997). Moreover, although some leaders can also be mentors, mentoring support behaviors are distinct from those provided by leaders (Ragins & Kram 2007). Mentors provide support that facilitates protégé career advancement (career-related support) as well as personal and professional growth (psychosocial support; Kram 1985). These behaviors are distinct from those provided by leaders (e.g., delegating work, monitoring performance, providing job-related feedback; Judge et al. 2004, Sosik & Godshalk 2000b). There is also empirical evidence that mentoring is distinct from supervisor support (e.g., Ragins et al. 2017) and leader-member exchange relationships (e.g., Thomas & Lankau 2009).

To provide a roadmap for this article, we open with a synopsis of established research findings on organizational mentoring. We then introduce five relationship science theories from outside organizational psychology and organizational behavior that provide new insight into the psychology of workplace mentoring. We then discuss several unique features of workplace mentoring that should be considered when applying these relationship science theories. This discussion then segues into provocative ideas for future research that use the relationship science theories included in this article as foundational elements. In the final section, we discuss practical implications for mentors, protégés, and organizations.

2. WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT MENTORING AT WORK

There are currently two distinct streams of research on workplace mentoring. The first approach focuses on the comparison of individuals with experience as a protégé (or mentor) to those without such experience. The second approach examines only those with experience in a mentoring relationship and focuses on variation in the quality of mentoring relationships.

2.1. Experience in a Mentoring Relationship

In terms of comparisons between those with and without mentoring experience, individuals are more likely to be protégés if they possess personality traits associated with positive views of the self, sociability, and achievement orientation (e.g., Aryee et al. 1999, Fagenson 1992, Fagenson-Eland & Baugh 2001, Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge 2008, Turban & Dougherty 1994, Underhill 2006). Interestingly, despite considerable discussion about differential access to mentoring for women and underrepresented minorities, there is little evidence that gender or race are associated with the experience of being a protégé (Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge 2008, O'Brien et al. 2010). By contrast, men are more likely to serve as mentors than women, although this effect is small in magnitude (O'Brien et al. 2010).

Several meta-analyses have compared outcomes between those with and without experience in a mentoring relationship. Although the effect sizes tend to be small to moderate, being a protégé

is associated with more favorable work attitudes (Allen et al. 2004, Eby et al. 2008, Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge 2008), higher subjective career success (e.g., career satisfaction; Allen et al. 2004, Eby et al. 2008, Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge 2008), greater objective career success (e.g., promotions; Allen et al. 2004), higher performance (Eby et al. 2008, Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge 2008), lower turnover (Eby et al. 2008), and more positive interpersonal relationships outside the mentorship (Eby et al. 2008). There are also small documented associations with stress and strain ($\rho = -.07$; Eby et al. 2008).

In terms of the positive effects of being a mentor, the literature is more limited. Ghosh & Reio (2013) documented small positive meta-analytic effects for job satisfaction and organizational commitment but no association with turnover intent. Some primary studies report that serving as a mentor is associated with higher salary (Allen et al. 2006b), greater job performance (Gentry et al. 2008), subjective perceptions of career success (Collins 1994), and less career plateauing (Lentz & Allen 2009). In terms of promotion rate, research has found both positive (Allen et al. 2006b) and null (Burke et al. 1990) effects associated with mentoring others. More proximal outcomes of serving as a mentor to others include a heightened sense of generativity, personal satisfaction, and recognition by others within the organization (Allen et al. 1997, Eby et al. 2006, Kram 1985, Ragins & Scandura 1999).

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2.2. Mentoring Relationship Quality

Mentoring relationship quality is conceptualized in terms of the amount of career-related (sponsorship, challenging assignments, exposure and visibility, coaching, protection) and psychosocial (acceptance and confirmation, role modeling, counseling, friendship) support received (as reported by the protégé) or provided (as reported by the mentor). Other indicators of relationship quality include satisfaction with the mentor or satisfaction with the relationship, which are distinct from the receipt of career-related and psychosocial support (Eby et al. 2013).

Meta-analytic research finds that the strongest and most consistent predictor of protégé reports of career-related support, psychosocial support, and relationship quality is perceived deep-level similarity [i.e., perceived similarity in attitudes, beliefs, values, or personality (Eby et al. 2013; also see Ghosh 2014 for results aggregated across mentor and protégé similarity perceptions)]. Mentors' perceptions of similarity to protégés are likewise predictive of the amount of support they report providing (e.g., Burke et al. 1990, Wanberg et al. 2006). Protégé perceptions of relationship quality are also related to more frequent interaction with the mentor, greater protégé motivation (e.g., more hours worked per week, greater job involvement), more positive core-self evaluations, and higher levels of protégé social capital (Eby et al. 2013, Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge 2008). In addition, more mentoring support is reported in supervisory than nonsupervisory mentoring relationships (e.g., Payne & Huffman 2005, Ragins & McFarlin 1990) and in relationships that develop informally compared to those that are part of a formal program, although the difference between formal and informal mentorships is small in magnitude (Eby et al. 2013). Other factors, such as relationship length, protégé performance, mentor human capital, and similarity in experiences (e.g., functional area, rank, organizational setting), demonstrate stronger associations with some aspects of relationship quality than others (Eby et al. 2013).

In terms of gender, there is little evidence that either protégé gender or mentor gender are associated with mentoring received or relationship satisfaction (Eby et al. 2013, Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge 2008, O'Brien et al. 2010). By contrast, protégés report slightly higher levels of career-related (Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge 2008, Eby et al. 2013) and psychosocial support (Eby et al. 2013) from nonminority mentors. Research on cross-race and cross-gender mentoring is more limited. Early studies documented less psychosocial support in racially dissimilar (e.g., Thomas

1990) and gender dissimilar (e.g., Ragins & Scandura 1999, Ragins & McFarlin 1990) dyads, although subsequent meta-analytic research finds few differences in protégé reports of relationship quality as a function of mentor-protégé similarity in surface characteristics such as race or gender (Eby et al. 2013).

Both protégés and mentors reap benefits from greater mentoring support and higher quality relationships. Outcomes for protégés include more favorable work and career attitudes, greater learning, increased objective and subjective career success, higher performance, and fewer strain-related reactions (Allen et al. 2004, Eby et al. 2013, Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge 2008). For mentors, the provision of more mentoring support to protégés is related to higher performance ratings by mentors' supervisors (Gentry et al. 2008), more positive work attitudes (Eby et al. 2006), and both objective and subjective perceptions of career success (Bozionelos 2004).

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2.3. What We Currently Know About Workplace Mentoring

An important conclusion from existing research is that the effects of mentoring on protégés and mentors are positive but are generally small to moderate in magnitude. Importantly, close examination of research on the outcomes of mentoring reveals considerable heterogeneity in the meta-analytic estimates (Allen et al. 2004; Eby et al. 2008, 2013; Ghosh & Reio 2013; Kammeyer-Mueller & Judge 2008; Underhill 2006). This means that mere involvement in a mentoring relationship or the provision of mentoring support is not a guarantee of positive outcomes. In addition, there is evidence that characteristics of the protégé, such as personality characteristics indicative of strong interpersonal skills (Kalbfleisch & Davies 1993), achievement orientation (Hirschfeld et al. 2006), and positive self-regard (e.g., Noe 1988), as well as characteristics of the mentor, such as mentor proactivity (Wanberg et al. 2006), openness to experience (Bozionelos 2004), and various aspects of a more transformational leadership style (Sosik & Godshalk 2000a, 2004), are associated with more positive mentoring outcomes. Rather, as with all relationships, mentorships vary considerably in their relational dynamics, and these features are likely to have marked implications for both mentor and protégé outcomes. In fact, there is evidence that both protégés (e.g., Eby et al. 2000, 2004) and mentors (e.g., Eby & McManus 2004, Eby et al. 2008) sometimes report negative or dysfunctional mentoring experiences. Protégés can experience mismatches with their mentor in terms of attitudes, values and work styles, as well as perceived misfit in terms of the skills and experience that mentors bring to bear on the relationship. Lower base rate problems can include mentor manipulation, deception, and other relational dysfunctions. Mentors may also experience negative relational experiences with protégés, including perceived misfit in attitudes, values, and work styles, as well as the perception that the protégé is unwilling to learn, not performing up to expectations, and in rarer cases, that the protégé is engaging in more subtle relational transgressions (e.g., deceit, undermining). Given this literature, understanding mentoring from a relational perspective is critical for extending the science of workplace mentoring scholarship and providing actionable guidance on how to maximize the benefits of mentoring for mentors, protégés, and organizations.

3. AN INTERDISCIPLINARY RELATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON WORKPLACE MENTORING

In order to provide fresh insight into the psychology of mentoring relationships, we introduce five established theories of close relationships outside of organizational psychology and organizational behavior. These theories were selected based on their primacy in relationship science literature, strong relational focus, and potential relevance to workplace mentoring.

3.1. Attachment Theory

Attachment theory is a longstanding and robust theory of close relationships. Although the theory originally emerged to explain infants' attachment to their mothers (Bowlby 1982, Ainsworth et al. 1978), it was later extended to understanding close relationships in adulthood (Ainsworth 1989; Hazan & Shaver 1987, 1994). Over the past 30 years, thousands of studies have examined adult attachment, primarily in romantic relationships, but also in friendships (e.g., Fraley & Davis 1997) and adult parent-child relationships (e.g., Cicirelli 1983). Broadly, research has addressed two primary features of attachment theory: normative processes and individual differences (Collins & Feeney 2000, Hazan & Shaver 1994).

Research on normative processes focuses on why and under what conditions the attachment and caregiving systems are activated across individuals. Attachment theory proposes that the attachment system is triggered when an individual is faced with threatening surroundings and functions to encourage the individual to seek protection and comfort from an attachment figure; this is referred to as the safe haven function of attachment (Collins & Feeney 2000). The caregiving system is activated in the attachment figure in response to the care-seeker's support-seeking behavior or signals of distress. Once activated, the caregiver provides responsive support to the care-seeker's needs. The availability and proximity of the attachment figure during times of threat are theorized to contribute to the care-seeker's sense of felt security that enables him or her to engage in confident exploration of the environment in the absence of threat (Bowlby 1982); this is known as the secure base function of attachment (Hazan & Shaver 1987). Importantly, secure attachment processes involve the dyadic coordination of behavioral systems; for example, effective support provision is contingent on the appropriate coordination of both the attachment system (in the care-seeker) and the caregiving system (in the attachment figure). Appropriate coordination of the attachment and caregiving behavioral systems is proposed to positively affect a variety of outcomes, including relational outcomes (e.g., relationship satisfaction, closeness, longevity) and individual outcomes (e.g., well-being, self-efficacy, autonomous functioning; Feeney 2007, Feeney & Collins 2015, Hazan & Shaver 1994).

The central tenets of attachment theory have received considerable empirical support (see Mikulincer & Shaver 2003 for an in-depth review). There is reliable evidence that threat activates the attachment system; for example, prior research has found that felt distress is associated with attempts to seek support from close others (Collins & Feeney 2000) and that exposure to threatening stimuli activates mental representation of attachment figures (Mikulincer et al. 2000). There is also evidence that the attachment and caregiving systems are behaviorally coordinated, such that activation of the attachment system in one partner predicts caregiving behaviors in the other (Collins & Feeney 2000). In addition, research has found that caregiver responsiveness enables the care-seeker to engage in autonomous exploratory behavior (Feeney 2007, Feeney & Thrush 2010), supporting the proposition that responsive caregivers serve as a secure base from which to explore the world. Finally, consistent with the proposition that caregiver responsiveness enables the well-being of care recipients and the caregiver-recipient relationship, there is evidence that responsiveness is associated with a broad variety of positive outcomes for individuals and relationships (Feeney & Collins 2015, Reis & Gable 2015).

Although attachment theory was originally proposed as a normative theory, most attachment research has focused on understanding how individual differences in attachment orientation affect enactment of the attachment and caregiving systems. Attachment orientations are theorized to develop through repeated experiences with attachment figures; these early experiences contribute to the development of chronically accessible internal working models of the self and others that affect how individuals view and behave in relationships (Bowlby 1982, Mikulincer & Shaver 2003). Attachment orientations vary on two dimensions: anxiety and avoidance. Attachment

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anxiety reflects the extent to which people have negative internal working models of themselves, whereas attachment avoidance reflects the extent to which people have negative internal working models of others (Bartholomew & Horowitz 1991). Theoretically, both dimensions of insecure attachment emerge through repeated experiences with unavailable and/or unresponsive attachment figures (Mikulincer & Shaver 2003). Attachment anxiety is an adaptation to this situation that occurs when individuals chronically hyperactivate the attachment system (e.g., escalation of proximity- and support-seeking behavior, protest over failure to receive caregiving, preoccupation with relationships). In contrast, attachment avoidance emerges through chronic deactivation of the attachment system (e.g., compulsive self-reliance, withdrawal from and avoidance of close relationships). When caregivers are responsive and available, secure attachment—characterized by positive internal working models of the self (i.e., low anxiety) and others (i.e., low avoidance)—is proposed to develop, with appropriate activation of the attachment system in response to threat. In support of attachment theory, research has found that secure attachment (i.e., low levels of anxiety and avoidance) is associated with effective care-seeking and caregiving behavior (e.g., Collins & Feeney 2000, Mikulincer et al. 2005), exploratory behavior (e.g., Feeney 2004), positive views of the self and others (e.g., Bartholomew & Horowitz 1991), and more satisfying relationships (Bartholomew & Horowitz 1991, Kane et al. 2007).

Several scholars have noted the applicability of attachment theory to workplace mentoring relationships and work in this area has focused exclusively on individual differences in attachment orientations. Conceptual research has proposed main effects of attachment orientation as well as dyadic configuration effects on mentoring relationships, including at relationship entry and as a predictor of relationship functioning (Germain 2011, Gormley 2008, Scandura & Pellegrini 2004). Consistent with theory, empirical research has found that insecure attachment orientations are associated with poorer outcomes for mentors (e.g., lower willingness to mentor in the future) and protégés (e.g., less feedback seeking and feedback acceptance, less mentoring support received; Allen et al. 2010, Poteat et al. 2015, Wang et al. 2009). In the only study to examine dyadic configuration effects in workplace mentoring relationships, Mitchell et al. (2015) found that protégé perceptions of similarity to mentors—one of the strongest predictors of mentoring relationship quality (Eby et al. 2013)—were higher when mentors and protégés were both similarly higher or similarly lower in attachment security.

3.2. Interdependence Theory

Interdependence theory explains social behavior as a function of both person and situation factors in interpersonal interactions. Since Thibaut & Kelley's (1959) original formulation of the theory, interdependence theory has undergone major extensions (Kelley & Thibaut 1978, Kelley et al. 2003) to account for behavior across a broad range of interpersonal situations and has been an influential theory of close relationships (for excellent reviews, see Rusbult & Van Lange 1996, 2003; Van Lange & Rusbult 2011). The concept of outcome interdependence—the extent to which one person's outcomes are affected by the other person's actions—is at the core of interdependence theory. Relevant outcomes can be both concrete (i.e., immediate tangible consequences in terms of pleasure or displeasure) and symbolic (i.e., broader consequences for the person and relationship). For example, helping a partner complete an undesirable task may have negative concrete outcomes (e.g., displeasure over having to complete the task) but positive symbolic outcomes (e.g., positive affect resulting from demonstrating care and concern for the partner).

Interdependence theory outlines several dimensions along which the structure of interpersonal situations can vary, including level of dependence (i.e., the extent to which each person's outcomes

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are affected by the other's actions), mutuality of dependence (i.e., the extent to which two people are equally dependent on each other), basis of dependence (i.e., how partners influence each other's outcomes), covariation of interests (i.e., the extent to which partners' positive outcomes covary or conflict), temporal structure (i.e., the extent to which outcomes, situations, and behaviors are constrained by prior interactions), and information availability (i.e., the extent to which each partner possesses certain or uncertain information about the situation; Kelley et al. 2003, Van Lange & Rusbult 2011). These dimensions of interpersonal situations constrain an actor's available behavioral options in a given situation. For example, exploitative behavior is constrained in situations involving high covariation of partners' interests (i.e., actions that promote positive outcomes for the actor also promote positive outcomes for the partner) and when the situation involves low levels of dependence (i.e., each partner's behavior has little to no effect on the other's outcomes). In contrast, if a situation involves high levels of asymmetrical dependence (i.e., the partner's outcomes are strongly affected by the actor's behavior, but the actor is unaffected by the partner's behavior), exploitative behavior is one potential behavioral option for the more powerful (i.e., less dependent) partner.

In addition to outlining the dimensions of interpersonal situations, interdependence theory accounts for how person factors affect interpersonal interactions. The concept of affordance describes how interpersonal situations make possible or activate person factors—specific needs, thoughts, motives, and behaviors in each partner (Kelley et al. 2003). Interpersonal situations that allow for multiple behavioral options afford individuals the opportunity to express various person factors. In these diagnostic situations, an individual's behavioral choices provide valuable information about relevant person factors to both the partner (e.g., my partner is kind because s/he put my interests first) and the self (e.g., putting my partner's interests first makes me realize how much I value him or her). As another example, situations involving asymmetrical dependence may afford the opportunity for the more powerful partner to act exploitatively or benevolently. If the partner behaves benevolently when he or she could have behaved exploitatively, both partners will gain insight into the powerful partner's relevant person factors (e.g., how concerned he or she is about the less powerful partner's well-being, his or her general tendency to act prosocially). When situations are so constrained that they provide few behavioral options (e.g., strong norms and expectations are in place to guide behavior), diagnosticity is reduced (i.e., an individual's behavior provides less insight into his or her relevant person factors).

Even though interdependence theory proposes that people act in ways that maximize their own outcomes, it also accounts for behavior that appears to undermine immediate self-interest. The concept of transformation is used to describe the process through which individuals shift given (self-interested) preferences to effective (broader) preferences (Rusbult & Van Lange 1996). Interdependence theory proposes that people behave on the basis of these broader effective preferences. In other words, person factors act to transform given situations—situations based on immediate, self-interested outcome preferences—into effective situations—situations based on broader outcome preferences—that in turn guide behavior (Kelley & Thibaut 1978, Rusbult & Van Lange 2003). For example, choosing to go to a partner's favorite restaurant instead of insisting on one's own favorite restaurant may undermine immediate self-interest (given preferences), but may be the preferred behavioral option if there is a long-term motivation to maximize the partner's outcomes (effective preferences). Over time, as people repeatedly encounter the same types of interdependence situations, they develop habitual patterns of responding; this is referred to as the process of adaptation (Rusbult & Van Lange 2003).

One influential application of interdependence theory to close relationships is Rusbult's investment model of commitment (Rusbult 1980, Rusbult et al. 2006). This model proposes

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that commitment and persistence in relationships are driven by dependence. Dependence on a relationship is determined by three factors: (*a*) the extent to which a relationship provides more benefits than costs relative to the individual's expectations of his or her relationships in general (relationship satisfaction), (*b*) the degree to which attractive alternatives to the relationship exist (comparison level of alternatives), and (*c*) how much the individual has invested resources in the relationship (investment size). Commitment to a relationship is enhanced to the extent that individuals have higher levels of relationship satisfaction, fewer attractive alternatives to the relationship, and higher levels of investment in the relationship. In support of the investment model, meta-analytic research has found that relationship satisfaction, the availability of attractive alternatives, and investment are strong predictors of commitment in romantic relationships and that each accounts for unique variance in prediction (Le & Agnew 2003).

Although there are few applications of interdependence theory to workplace mentoring (for a conceptual exception, see Eby 2007), this theory is highly relevant to workplace mentoring. Mentoring situations at work likely vary on several structural dimensions. For example, some mentoring situations may be more symmetrically dependent than others; for instance, if a mentor is evaluated on mentoring performance, dependence may be more symmetrical (i.e., the mentor's outcomes depend at least partially on the protégé's actions). Mentoring situations may also vary in terms of the extent to which the mentor and protégé have conflicting versus corresponding interests (e.g., a mentor may prefer for the protégé to follow his or her career path, whereas the protégé may prefer to pursue an alternative path). It is also possible that in some mentoring situations there are additional bases of dependence. For example, if the mentor is also the protégé's supervisor, multiple bases for asymmetrical dependence exist (i.e., dependence due to the mentoring relationship and the supervisory relationship). Describing mentoring relationships using situational dimensions can inform predictions about mentor and protégé behavior in different contexts and can provide insight into the structural conditions that maximize effective mentoring. The concept of transformation can also be useful for explaining how mentor and protégé preentry characteristics affect their behavior in mentoring situations, and the conditions under which certain characteristics may be most important for maximizing positive mentoring outcomes. For example, mentors who are high in prosocial motivation may transform given situations involving conflicting interests into effective situations characterized by corresponding interests, and thereby act to benefit the protégé. As Eby (2007) demonstrated, the investment model of commitment may also be highly applicable to understanding satisfaction, commitment, and stability in mentoring relationships.

3.3. Self-Expansion Theory

Self-expansion theory proposes that people are inherently motivated to self-expand—to enhance their potential efficacy by increasing resources, perspectives, and identities that facilitate personal goal achievement (Aron & Aron 1986, 1996; Aron et al. 2004a,b, 2013). The motivational framework of self-expansion theory proposes that people regulate their self-expansion to an optimal level (Aron et al. 2004a). When there are insufficient opportunities for self-expansion, individuals will experience underexpansion and will be motivated to seek out ways to fulfill their needs for expansion. In contrast, when life circumstances promote an uncomfortable level of expansion (i.e., more change, novelty, or challenge than desired), people will experience overexpansion and will be motivated to reduce their involvement in potentially expanding experiences. Although the theory considers self-expansion to be a universal human need, there is also evidence of individual differences in the need for self-expansion, such that some individuals are more prone to underexpansion (or overexpansion) than others (Gordon & Luo 2011).

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One way that people are able to self-expand is through developing relationships with others. Close relationships give people access to others' resources, perspectives, and identities that can in turn facilitate goal accomplishment. For example, in developing a close relationship with someone from a different social group, a person may come to include the other's group identity in his or her self-concept (Aron et al. 2004b, Davies et al. 2011). The experience of self-expansion through relationships is theorized to foster positive affective states, which in turn are attributed to the relational partner and contribute to relationship satisfaction (Aron & Aron 1996, Aron et al. 2013). In support of this proposition, experimental work has shown that engaging in novel, challenging, and exciting activities with a partner is associated with increases in relationship satisfaction (see Aron et al. 2013 for a summary of this research). There is also evidence that lack of expansion in close relationships is a strong predictor of decreased relationship satisfaction over the long term (Tsapelas et al. 2009).

Self-expansion theory proposes that inclusion of the other in self (IOS) is the primary mechanism through which close relationships develop—indeed, self-expansion theory proposes that closeness is defined by IOS (Aron et al. 2004b). IOS is a cognitive process through which another person's resources, perspectives, and identities become included in the self-concept. Resources include the other person's material goods (e.g., financial assets), knowledge, and social resources (e.g., professional networks). Perspectives refer to the other person's points of view about the world. Identities refer to characteristics of the other person—including traits, group memberships, and memories—that distinguish the close other from other people. Through IOS, people come to experience the close other's outcomes as their own. For example, a close other's accomplishments tend to be partially experienced as one's own accomplishments. Research has found that IOS is facilitated through mutual self-disclosure (Aron et al. 1997), perspective taking (Davis et al. 1996), and believing that one is likely to become close to another person (Slotter & Gardner 2009). Consistent with the idea that IOS is associated with perceiving the other's outcomes as one's own, prior research has found that IOS is associated with lessened self-other distinction, greater empathy, and engagement in other-oriented versus self-focused behavior (see Aron et al. 2004a for a review).

Self-expansion theory has been used to explain several central questions regarding close relationships, including why people enter relationships, how people respond to relationship dissolution, and how people come to include groups into the self-concept. Consistent with the proposition that people are motivated to self-expand through relationships with others, research has found that people are attracted to dissimilar others when they are confident that the relationship is likely to develop, when they are motivated to self-expand, and when there are few expansion opportunities in their current relationships (Aron et al. 2013). Also consistent with the proposition that close relationships provide opportunities to expand the self, research has found that dissolution of a self-expanding relationship is associated with losses in the complexity of the self-concept (Lewandowski et al. 2006). In contrast, ending a relationship that provides little opportunity for expansion is associated with enhanced self-expansion opportunities (Lewandowski & Bizzoco 2007). Research on cross-group friendships has supported the proposition that IOS is associated with the inclusion of the other's identities in the self. This work has found that cross-group relationships promote IOS, which in turn is associated with the inclusion of the other's group membership in the self-concept and reductions in prejudice (Davies et al. 2011).

Although self-expansion theory has not been directly applied to workplace mentoring, this theory is highly relevant to explaining why mentors and protégés may initiate informal mentoring relationships, as well as the quality and effectiveness of both formal and informal mentorships. Self-expansion theory further predicts that individual differences in self-expansion motivation underlie the decision to be involved in expanding activities. Self-expansion motivation may likewise

motivate both mentors' and protégés' involvement in mentoring. Furthermore, self-expansion theory suggests that self-expansion motivation may interact with available expansion opportunities to predict relational involvement. This suggests that when protégés (or mentors) are high in self-expansion motivation and experience limited expansion opportunities apart from mentoring, they may be particularly motivated to be involved in mentoring relationships. However, when expansion opportunities are abundant, individuals may be less likely to be involved in mentoring and may even experience uncomfortable feelings of overexpansion in current mentoring relationships. Once a mentoring relationship has been initiated, self-expansion theory predicts that the extent to which both mentors and protégés continue to receive expansion opportunities from the mentorship is associated with greater relationship satisfaction. The concept of IOS is also relevant to understanding how protégés may come to experience positive mentoring outcomes and identify with the mentor; through incorporating their mentors' characteristics (e.g., skills, perspectives, resources, and identities) into their selves, protégés may come to increase their own efficacy and goal achievement. Similarly, mentors may benefit by including their protégés' characteristics into their selves (e.g., feelings of pride at the protégé's accomplishments, gaining skills and perspectives held by the protégé).

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3.4. Rhodes' Model of Formal Youth Mentoring

Formal youth mentoring refers to a supportive relationship between a nonparental adult and young person, providing another vantage point by which to understand the relational processes underlying workplace mentoring. Formal youth mentoring targets adolescents who are living in environments characterized by crime, poverty, and/or inconsistent parenting, all of which can place them at risk for poor academic, health, relational, and psychological outcomes (DuBois et al. 2002). One of the most influential models of youth mentoring was developed by Rhodes (2002, 2005). The theory provides a unique relational perspective on the social-emotional, cognitive, and identity development processes that are purported to explain the positive effect of mentoring on a wide range of attitudinal, behavioral, and health outcomes for youth (DuBois et al. 2002). The model also attempts to reconcile conventional wisdom that support from a caring nonfamilial adult is an important experience for youth (for example, see Caplan 1964) with the arguably small to modest effect sizes associated with youth mentoring (DuBois et al. 2002). Rhodes argues that this discrepancy can be explained by taking a relational, process-oriented perspective where the beneficial effects of youth mentoring are dependent on the degree to which the mentor and protégé develop a strong connection marked by interpersonal closeness.

As Rhodes (2002) describes, mentoring is particularly impactful in adolescence. She explains that adolescence is a developmental stage where individuals are particularly vulnerable due to changes in parental and peer relationships, which bring to the surface questions about one's own identity and emotional intimacy. For at-risk youth in particular, adolescence is a developmental period that is uniquely suited for revising and reconceptualizing one's working model of relationships through a safe and secure mentoring relationship with an adult. Rhodes conceptualizes interpersonal closeness as the gateway to effective mentoring and identifies three key features: trust, empathy, and mutuality. Closeness develops through a willingness to share thoughts, feelings, and self-perceptions (Csikszenthmihalyi & Rathunde 1998). Through such "genuine conversations" (Nakkula & Harris 2005, p. 103), meaningful reciprocal sharing occurs, and trust is built. Over time and with repeated interactions, the mentor becomes more attuned to his or her protégé and opportunities to demonstrate empathy increase. With repeated disclosure, increasing trust, and empathetic exchanges, a relational environment is created that is marked by mutuality, where both members of the dyad are actively engaged and participating (Miller & Stiver 1997). As

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Rhodes describes, if (and only if) these three relational processes develop in the given mentoring relationship, youth experience positive social-emotional, cognitive, and identity development.

Improvements in protégé social-emotional development are theorized to result from a mentor's provision of caring and support. Mentor support challenges the youth's often negative self-views and alters his or her mental representations of caregivers, serving as a corrective experience for those who have had unsatisfactory parenting relationships (Olds et al. 1997). Research supports this proposition by finding that higher quality relationships with mentors can improve youth perceptions of parental intimacy, trust, and communication (Karcher et al. 2002, Rhodes et al. 2000). In terms of cognitive development, Rhodes' model predicts that experience with a caring mentor provides youth with positive social interactions, which are known to facilitate learning, problem-solving, and intellectual growth (Vygotsky 1978). A close relationship also creates a milieu where the advice and perspectives that a mentor provides are more likely to build problem-solving skills in the protégé (Rhodes 2005). Finally, Rhodes suggests that interpersonal closeness can facilitate positive youth identity development. This is presumed to occur through both role modeling (Kohut 1984) and reflected appraisal (Meade 1934). Role modeling occurs through the process of identification with the mentor and leads to the internalization of the mentor's values, behaviors, and attitudes. In reflected appraisal, the mentor's positive view of the protégé may become incorporated into the protégé's own sense of self and in so doing foster positive identity development.

Various aspects of Rhodes' model of youth mentoring bear resemblance to workplace mentoring. Both types of mentoring place protégé learning and development at center stage. In addition, there is a common focus on the provision of both instrumental (or career-related) and emotional (or psychosocial) support to protégés. The workplace mentoring literature has also relied on excellent program development research in formal youth mentoring contexts to inform design features of formal workplace mentoring (e.g., Allen et al. 2006a). The prominence of mentors as role models also underpins both Rhodes' (2002, 2005) model of youth mentoring and Kram's (1985) seminal research on workplace mentoring. Similarly, both emphasize the importance of identification and identify development processes as central to the mentoring experience for protégés.

3.5. The Working Alliance

Another prominent relationally oriented theory that provides potential insight into the psychology of mentoring relationships is the working alliance (Bordin 1979). The working alliance originated in clinical psychology and was introduced in response to the inability to find consistent differences in therapeutic effectiveness across different treatment approaches. As Bordin (1979) noted, the common factor across all therapies is the relationship that develops between the client and therapist. Bordin coined this client-therapist relationship the working alliance and argued that it is the active relational ingredient in all change-inducing relationships.

According to Bordin (1979), there are three components of the alliance that develop between client and therapist: the task, the goal, and the bond. The task refers to the in-therapy interactions that comprise the substance of the therapeutic process. The assertion that both client and therapist agree that tasks are relevant and that both individuals demonstrate effort in working on these tasks is particularly important. An additional consideration for the task is ensuring that it is developmentally appropriate and can be executed without undue anxiety by the client (Pinsof 1994). The goal is the therapist's and client's mutual acceptance, agreement, and valuing of the outcomes that are targeted in therapy. The goal operates as a motivational construct that affects both individuals' commitment to the process of change. Finally, the bond represents the relationship that develops between therapist and client. It is characterized by acceptance, trust, and confidence. The bond is also associated with the display of therapist empathy (Horvath & Greenberg 1989) and is related

to the therapist's own comfort level with close relationships (Dunkle & Friedlander 1996). These three elements (task, goal, and bond) create a bridge between the technical and the relational aspects of therapy, providing a common framework by which to understand the important role that the client-therapist relationship plays in the collaborative goal of reducing client distress. Attesting to the importance of the working alliance as a collaborative experience, client ratings, therapist ratings, and observer ratings of a stronger working alliance are all related to more positive client outcomes (Horvath & Symonds 1991).

A wide range of outcomes have been examined in relation to the alliance. Meta-analytic research finds that a stronger alliance is associated with more positive patient outcomes such as fewer counselor rated psychiatric symptoms, less drug use, lower depression, reduced anxiety, and improved psychological functioning (Horvath & Bedi 2002, Horvath & Symonds 1991, Martin et al. 2000). Consistent with Bordin's (1979) original claim that the therapeutic alliance is the active ingredient in affecting client change, meta-analytic research finds that the strength of the association between the alliance and client outcomes does not vary by type of outcome, source of alliance rating, alliance measure used, or type of treatment provided (Martin et al. 2000). In addition, both therapist and client ratings of the working alliance predict client satisfaction and perceived change in therapy (Horvath & Greenberg 1989).

As a relational construct, the working alliance purportedly changes over time and with repeated interactions. Luborsky (1976) proposed and found support for two types of alliances. Type 1 develops earlier in the relationship and is grounded in the client's belief that the therapist is supportive and helpful. This level of alliance provides a secure holding relationship that serves as a foundation for the work of therapy to begin. Type 2 develops later in the relationship and is characterized by the perception that the client and therapist are collaborating to solve the client's problem and that there is a shared responsibility for working on the goals of treatment. There is also research examining the time course of the working alliance, in an effort to understand if there are inflection points where a stronger alliance is particularly important. Although the results are somewhat equivocal, there is some indication a strong working alliance early in the therapeutic relationship (even as early as the first session; Kokotovic & Tracey 1990) may be particularly important in predicting positive patient outcomes (Horvath & Bedi 2002, Horvath & Symonds 1991). Importantly, the working alliance does not appear to be a mere proxy for therapeutic gain; the level of therapeutic change in a given session is only weakly associated with client reports of the alliance (Horvath 1994).

The alliance in client-therapist relationships has been directly extended to the workplace in order to provide a framework for understanding the learning and development process of counselors in-training. The supervisory working alliance (Bordin 1983) explicates the way in which the development of a task-oriented, collaborative, and close interpersonal relationship between a clinical supervisor and counselor facilitates the counselor's personal and professional development. A strong supervisory working alliance is described as one where more experienced supervisors deliberately influence less experienced counselors though a didactic learning process (Efstation et al. 1990). Undergirding the supervisory working alliance is a focus on relational learning, in terms of both learning relationship-oriented skills from the supervisory process to enhance one's own relationship building with clients (Patton & Kivlighan 1997) and developing an interpersonal connection with one's clinical supervisor (Efstation et al. 1990).

The construct of the supervisory working alliance provides a natural bridge to workplace mentoring. As with workplace mentoring, the clinical supervisory relationship is the primary means by which counselors become socialized into the organization and profession, as well as the primary vehicle for on-the-job training and professional development (Borders & Leddick 1988, Powell & Brodsky 2004). The workplace mentoring literature also finds strong associations between

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mentoring and employee learning (Eby et al. 2014). In addition, role modeling is an important aspect of both clinical supervision (Powell & Brodsky 2004) and workplace mentoring (Kram 1985).

4. APPLYING RELATIONSHIP SCIENCE THEORIES TO WORKPLACE MENTORING: IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES

There are several unique features of workplace mentoring that warrant careful consideration when applying theory and research from other areas of relationship science. However, these unique features also serve as catalysts for thought-provoking questions regarding the psychology of workplace mentoring.

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4.1. Workplace Context

One of the distinctive features of organizational mentoring is that it is situated within a workplace setting in which both mentors and protégés are being paid for fulfilling job-related obligations and where serving as a mentor or a protégé is rarely part of an employee's job description. On the basis of this unique situation, both mentor and protégé are pursuing multiple, independent, and sometimes conflicting goals. In addition, because mentoring is confined to the workplace context, the time available for mentor-protégé interaction is limited and the range of settings in which these interactions take place is less varied than in many other types of close relationships. Finally, the workplace setting also has strong normative prescriptions regarding professional behavior and in particular, acceptable levels of relational closeness (Kram 1985).

4.1.1. Important considerations. Because mentors and protégés have more limited interaction than in other relational contexts, attachment and caregiving systems may be less frequently cued than as described by attachment theory. In addition, norms regarding professional behavior raise questions as to how and to what extent protégés and mentors engage in attachment and caregiving behaviors, respectively. The more limited interaction in mentoring relationships suggests that whether or not a mentor is viewed as an attachment figure may depend on factors beyond mentor availability and proximity as proposed by attachment theory. For example, the extent to which the mentor is perceived as a role model—which does not necessarily require direct interaction or even the mentor's awareness that he or she is considered a mentor (Kram 1985)—may be important to the development of attachment to a mentor.

Strong norms regarding professionalism within the workplace have implications for the purportedly critical role of personal self-disclosure in building high quality relationships as described in Rhodes' model of formal youth mentoring, self-expansion theory, and the working alliance. The common premise in these theories is that in order for relationships to be effective, close, and facilitate positive change, individuals need to be motivated and willing to share personal information. Considerable research finds that reciprocal self-disclosure does result in increased closeness (e.g., Aron et al. 1997, Page-Gould et al. 2008). However, the type and amount of personal information disclosed may be more limited in a professional context. There may also be potential downsides of the otherwise relationship-enhancing behavior of disclosure, such as exacerbating existing power differences between mentors and protégés (e.g., by giving mentors access to personal information about protégés that may be reputationally damaging if shared).

4.1.2. New opportunities. From an interdependence theoretical perspective, the more limited interaction between mentor and protégé may result in situations that provide less information about relevant person factors of both members of the dyad. As a result of lower diagnosticity,

mentors and protégés may have fewer opportunities to form impressions about each other's needs, thoughts, and motives or less opportunity to use mentoring situations to increase their own self-knowledge. Interdependence theory also emphasizes the importance of repeated interactions between members of a dyad for adaptation to occur. Adaptation may occur relatively quickly in workplace mentoring because the same types of settings tend to create highly similar types of interpersonal situations. However, adaptation may fail to emerge to the same extent as in other types of relationships because workplace mentoring situations may be too brief or insufficiently deep to provide enough information about the relevant situational dimensions to allow for adaptation to occur.

Covariation of interests as described by interdependence theory may also be useful to understand how the multiple, and perhaps competing, goals being pursued by mentors and protégés outside their mentoring relationship may affect relational dynamics. Given that both mentor and protégé roles in the relationship exist in the context of other job-prescribed roles and work-related goals, mentoring relationships may be prone to conflicting interests. For example, spending time mentoring a protégé may benefit the protégé, but may interfere with other goals of the mentor such as engaging in activities to advance his or her own career (e.g., participating in developmental opportunities, taking on additional responsibilities). Even if mentor and protégé goals are aligned, self-expansion theory suggests that navigating multiple goals simultaneously may create feelings of overexpansion for one or both partners. For example, initiating a mentorship immediately upon entry to a new organization may be uncomfortably expanding for the protégé in the context of other novel and challenging experiences (e.g., becoming familiar with new work tasks and being socialized to a new work environment).

4.2. Occupational and Organizational Context

Occupational context is important to consider because individuals in the same occupation tend to be similar in personality (Holland 1997). Such a "built-in" basis of similarity is potentially important because perceived similarity in deep-level characteristics such as work styles and personality is the strongest and most consistent predictor of the amount of mentoring support received, as well as protégé reports of relationship quality (Eby et al. 2013). Within-occupation similarity also means that there are differences across occupations in the structure of work environments and the types of individuals employed therein (Holland 1997). These occupational differences may also affect mentoring relationships.

The organizational context provides another potential layer of influence on workplace mentoring. Research demonstrates that organizational climate influences employee perceptions and behavior, both individually and collectively (Schneider et al. 2017). In a rare examination of organizational climate in relation to workplace mentoring, Spell et al. (2014) found that shared perceptions of developmental support from coworkers and mentors in a work unit (i.e., developmental climate) exerted an influence on employee outcomes, over and above the amount of support received individually by either source. Similarly, Kram (1985) discusses various features of the organization that are likely to facilitate developmental relationships, including a climate that encourages open communication across hierarchical levels, values collaboration, and encourages subordinate development.

4.2.1. Important considerations. Most of the relationship science theories discussed in this article do not explicitly consider these broader contextual features as key theoretical elements. As a consequence, their application to workplace mentoring may require theoretical elaboration. For example, the concept of responsiveness to a partner's needs is core to several theories (e.g.,

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attachment theory, Rhodes' model of youth mentoring, working alliance). However, mentor responsiveness may be either constrained or facilitated depending on the occupational context and climate of the specific organization. As an illustration, individuals in investigative occupations (e.g., physicists, engineers) tend to be more quiet, independent, exact, and cautious, whereas those in social occupations (e.g., therapists, teachers) tend to be helpful, understanding, and generous (Holland 1997). These differences in occupational personality suggest that mentors may vary considerably in both their skill level and comfort providing responsive support. The climate of an organization may also affect the range of behaviors that constitute responsive support. In highly competitive organizational climates, responsive behavior may be narrower in scope and focused primarily on protégé goal achievement. By contrast, in more cooperative and developmentally oriented organizational climates, responsive behavior may include a wider range of support behaviors.

4.2.2. New opportunities. In terms of occupational context, a major premise in workplace mentoring scholarship is that perceived similarity predicts both relationship initiation (particularly in informal) and relationship quality (in both formal and informal mentoring relationships; Eby et al. 2013). This process should be naturally facilitated in workplace mentoring due to the similarity that characterizes individuals working in a common occupational context. However, self-expansion theory predicts that when the likelihood of establishing a relationship is high, individuals desire dissimilar others as relational partners because these types of relationships provide greater opportunities for self-expansion. This central tenet of self-expansion theory opens up interesting questions regarding the role that dissimilarity may play in mentoring relationships, particularly in situations where one or both individuals are highly motivated to self-expand.

With respect to organizational context, attachment theory describes perceptions of threat as the mechanism that activates the attachment system. This implies that protégés working in organizational environments that are highly uncertain and competitive (high threat) may benefit the most from safe haven mentoring support behaviors such as protection and counseling. However, based on the attraction-selection-attrition effect (Schneider 1987), mentors who are adept at providing this type of mentoring support may be less frequently found in highly competitive organizational environments. Another example drawn from Rhodes' (2002, 2005) model of youth mentoring is that it may be more difficult for the mentor and protégé to develop the disclosure, trust, and mutual empathy that is purported to be necessary for high quality mentoring in organizational climates marked by strong deference to authority and more closed communication channels.

4.3. Asymmetrical Purpose and Power

Even though both mentor and protégé can benefit, mentoring relationships are initiated and executed with the expressed purpose of meeting the protégé's needs for career development and growth (Kram 1985). This asymmetrical purpose means that mentoring relationships are characterized by a considerable power differential between mentor and protégé. Owing to their greater professional experience, more extensive work history, and higher organizational status, mentors have greater referent, expert, and legitimate power than protégés (French & Raven 1959). In situations when a mentor is also the protégé's supervisor, the power dynamic is further complicated (Eby 1997) because the mentor also has reward, coercive, and informational bases of power (French & Raven 1959).

4.3.1. Important considerations. Several theories predict that relationship satisfaction is driven by the extent to which the relationship fulfills important needs (e.g., self-expansion, felt

security). However, given that mentoring relationships focus primarily on protégés' needs, it is unclear whether need fulfillment is a necessary condition for mentors to feel satisfied with their mentoring relationships. Moreover, numerous theories predict that relationships that provide similar levels of need fulfillment for both partners are likely to be the most satisfying and enduring (e.g., self-expansion theory, interdependence theory). However, we know that mentors can experience highly satisfying relationships with protégés despite the asymmetrical focus on the protégés' needs (Allen & Eby 2003), and that in some cases mentors may be more satisfied with the relationship than protégés. Furthermore, mentors may derive satisfaction from mentoring relationships through other mechanisms beyond need fulfillment (e.g., experiencing protégés' positive outcomes as their own through transformation as predicted by interdependence theory or IOS as predicted by self-expansion theory).

4.3.2. New opportunities. According to interdependence theory, situations involving asymmetrical dependence and conflicting interests afford the more powerful partner the opportunity to act prosocially or selfishly. In mentoring relationships, mentors' decisions in these situations should provide powerful insight to protégés about mentors' characteristics (Kelley et al. 2003). The concept of transformation, where self-interested preferences shift into broader preferences that benefit the relationship as a whole, can also be useful for understanding why and under what conditions mentors may act to benefit protégés despite conflicting interests.

Asymmetrically dependent situations also create differences in relational attention, cognition, emotion, and behavior (Kelley et al. 2003). For example, because the protégé's outcomes rely on the mentor's actions, the protégé should be more highly attuned to the mentor's behavior, intentions, and characteristics than vice versa. Interdependence theory further predicts that asymmetrical dependence can be uncomfortable, particularly for the more dependent partner (the protégé). One strategy to manage this inherent asymmetrical dependence may involve the protégé engaging in actions that benefit the mentor (e.g., providing technical or task assistance), or attempting to gain additional skills, knowledge, and perspectives beyond what the mentor can provide. In addition, given the developmental purpose of mentoring, the mentor may actively attempt to reduce the level of asymmetry as the protégé grows in competence over time (e.g., by creating opportunities for the protégé to make autonomous choices).

The inherent power difference between mentor and protégé also raises questions about whether there is asymmetry in the process of IOS as described by self-expansion theory. On the basis of the identification process that underpins mentoring (Kram 1985; Rhodes 2002, 2005) and the mentor's greater status and expertise, a protégé may be more likely to incorporate the mentor's resources, perspective, and identities into the self than vice versa. Interestingly, the very aspects of mentoring that create asymmetrical dependence (i.e., the mentor's greater expertise, knowledge, and skill) are those that create the most opportunity for the protégé's self-expansion. However, these situations may be least expanding for mentors, because highly dependent protégés may have far less to offer the mentor in terms of unique knowledge and skills. An exception may be mentoring relationships that are formally created to match dissimilar partners (e.g., matching underrepresented minority protégés with majority-group mentors, matching across functions or disciplines) because this arrangement offers greater opportunities for reciprocal IOS, particularly if both the mentor and the protégé are motivated to self-expand.

4.4. Scope of Relational Influence

Workplace mentoring relationships are rather narrowly oriented toward helping protégés advance in their career as well as develop a sense of professional identity and competence (Kram 1985).

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As such, the scope of influence associated with workplace mentoring is primarily in the protégé's occupational and professional domain. In fact, the most commonly examined protégé outcomes include learning, socialization, attitudes toward one's work and career, job performance, objective career success (e.g., promotions, salary), and subjective career success (e.g., career satisfaction, perceived advancement opportunities) (Allen et al. 2004, Eby et al. 2013).

4.4.1. Important considerations. Although the working alliance also focuses on a limited scope of outcomes, the foci are very different (reduced psychological distress in the alliance versus career development in mentoring). Moreover, research on the alliance argues that all three features of the working alliance (task, goal, bond) are necessary for therapeutic gain (Horvath & Greenberg 1989), an assumption that does not necessarily hold for workplace mentoring. In fact, Kram (1985) notes that psychosocial support—which is most similar to the bond aspect of the working alliance—not only develops much later in workplace mentorships, but also may not emerge in all mentorships. In addition, several theories predict that experiences in close relationships can have profound effects on individual functioning (e.g., Rhodes' model of youth mentoring, attachment theory, self-expansion theory). Some theories even suggest that close relationships can compensate for prior negative relational experiences and may elicit change in how individuals view themselves in relation to others (e.g., Rhodes' model of youth mentoring, attachment theory). However, it is unclear whether workplace mentoring relationships should be expected to have the same types of broad effects.

4.4.2. New opportunities. One expansion opportunity is the possibility that workplace mentoring may actually have more far-reaching effects on the self and perhaps even relationships outside the mentorship under certain conditions. Both attachment theory and Rhodes' model of youth mentoring imply that certain types of protégés (e.g., those facing high levels of threat, those with negative views of the self and others) may be especially likely to benefit broadly from a positive relationship with a mentor. For example, Rhodes' discussion of how mentors can help adolescents challenge negative self-views, develop greater confidence, and change their beliefs about how they are viewed by others may be particularly applicable to the workplace mentoring of underrepresented minorities. Research on the experiences of underrepresented minorities in STEM occupations documents personal barriers such as lower self-efficacy as well as concerns that others do not believe that they have what it takes to be successful in their chosen fields (Epstein & Fischer 2017, Hurtado et al. 2009). Given these challenges, acceptance and confirmation, counseling, and friendship from a workplace mentor may be particularly valuable for underrepresented protégés. Unfortunately, protégés who may benefit most from mentoring may also be least likely to enter mentoring relationships due to various barriers to access. In the workplace, such barriers include fear of initiating a mentoring relationship, the belief that potential mentors may be unwilling to develop a mentoring relationship, and lack of access to potential mentors (Ragins & Cotton 1991).

The concept of corrective relational experiences from attachment theory (Bowlby 1982) and Rhodes' (2002, 2005) model of youth mentoring further suggest that the relational effects of mentoring may extend beyond the protégé and relationship. For example, the youth mentoring literature discusses how positive relationships with mentors can teach adolescents to trust parents, encourage openness and deeper communication with parents, and increase their awareness of the tremendous potential that exists in close relationships (Rhodes 2005). Research is needed to determine whether and under what conditions mentoring can have these broader relational effects, both within the workplace (e.g., improving relationships with coworkers) and outside of the workplace (e.g., improving relationships with family members). It may be that such changes are more

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likely to occur in particular developmental or transitional periods (e.g., career entry, marital dissolution), with certain kinds of mentoring relationships (e.g., those characterized by high levels of trust and closeness), and among protégés with negative relational experiences (e.g., who have experienced abusive supervision).

4.5. Relational Time Course and Weak Expectations of Exclusivity

Workplace mentoring relationships are time-limited, with informal mentoring relationships lasting between two and five years (Kram 1985) and formal mentorships being much shorter (Ragins & Cotton 1999). Protégés enter mentoring relationships to develop the experiences, skills, connections, and confidence necessary to advance within their career. Once the protégé has reached the point where he or she no longer needs guidance from the mentor and is ready to work more autonomously, the separation process begins (Kram 1985). The separation process occurs both psychologically and structurally, and it is often marked by feelings of turmoil, apprehension, and loss. However, the process of separation can also be exciting. The mentor may take considerable pride in seeing the protégé move on to new challenges and levels of responsibility. Similarly, the protégé may be proud of his or her own accomplishments and eager to move on without the mentor's guidance. In addition, there are typically weaker expectations of exclusivity in a mentoring relationship compared to other close relationships, such as romantic relationships. Instead, in most mentorships both mentors and protégés are likely to recognize the utility of multiple mentoring relationships for the protégé's growth and development.

4.5.1. Important considerations. The naturally limited timeframe and nonexclusivity of workplace mentoring relationships pose considerations for the application of theories that focus on relationships that may persist indefinitely and often have expectations of exclusivity (e.g., long-term romantic relationships, parent-child relationships). For example, Rusbult's (1980) investment model of commitment draws on interdependence theory to predict that commitment in romantic relationships will be enhanced to the extent that an individual perceives having fewer attractive alternative partners and has invested more resources into the relationship. However, because mentoring relationships are relatively short and there is no expectation that a protégé must pursue mentorship from only a single mentor, availability of alternatives and level of investment may be less important in predicting relationship commitment in mentorships. Instead, other features suggested by Rusbult, such as relationship satisfaction, may be more foundational elements of commitment in workplace mentorships.

The relatively short relational lifespan of mentoring may also affect the emotional connection that develops between mentor and protégé. This is important to consider because several theories discussed in this article (e.g., self-expansion theory, Rhodes' model of youth mentoring, attachment theory) identify closeness as the primary mechanism through which relationships achieve positive outcomes. It is possible that mentors and protégés will be less motivated to engage in behaviors leading to closeness if they know that the relationship will eventually end and/or that each person has attractive alternatives apart from the mentoring relationship. If workplace mentoring is indeed characterized by lower levels of closeness, then we might expect mentorships to have weaker effects on outcomes than other types of close relationships. Alternatively, it may be that closeness is not as important in predicting protégé outcomes as it is in other types of close relationships, or that closeness in mentoring relationships is developed in different ways than in other relationships (e.g., through jointly achieving valued protégé goals versus engaging in mutual self-disclosure).

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4.5.2. New opportunities. In addition to understanding relationship commitment, Rusbult's (1980) investment model positions reduced relational dependence as a predictor of relationship dissolution. This provides a different theoretical lens by which to understand the separation process in workplace mentoring, which has been the subject of very little empirical attention (for an exception see Ragins & Scandura 1997). The investment model also suggests that the availability of alternative mentoring partners or others who could provide compensatory support may predict a protégé's intention or actual decision to leave a mentorship.

Bordin's (1979) conceptualization of the working alliance may also prove useful in enhancing our understanding of the complex interplay between dependence and autonomy in the time course of mentoring. The working alliance is merely the vehicle for the successful delivery of counseling, which ultimately fosters independence from the therapeutic relationship (Bordin 1979). In this way, the therapeutic process is highly similar to mentoring. A mentorship is initiated to offer a protégé guidance and support, yet over time the protégé becomes increasingly autonomous and eventually no longer needs the mentor's support (Kram 1985). Given these corollaries, theory and research on the working alliance may provide insight into behavioral milestones that indicate a protégé is ready to take greater personal responsibility for career development as well as effective methods for initiating the separation process when mentors believe the protégés are ready to operate autonomously.

Although there are weaker expectations for exclusivity in workplace mentoring than in some other types of close relationships, in some cases one or both partners may become overinvested in the relationship. The mentor may overidentify with the protégé and expect his or her protégé to be a clone (Ragins & Scandura 1997), or a protégé may become resentful of the mentor's investment in other employees. Self-expansion theory provides interesting insight into the possible consequences of these situations. For example, although some mentors might derive some satisfaction from attempts to recreate protégés in their own image, self-expansion theory predicts lower relationship satisfaction for mentors in these situations. As a variation on interdependence theory, Rusbult's (1980) investment model predicts escalating relationship commitment in mentorships marked by stronger expectations for exclusivity, particularly if there are fewer alternative relational partners and greater investments in the relationship. Moreover, although the investment model views commitment as a positive feature of close relationships, dissolution is part of the natural course of workplace mentoring relationships. In workplace relationships characterized by stronger exclusivity expectations, the separation process may be prolonged beyond its healthy ending and be more likely to involve hostility and turmoil.

5. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Several theories predict that mutual acceptance of the goals of the relationship should produce the most effective relational outcomes (e.g., working alliance, interdependence theory). Thus, a primary practical task should be clarifying what the goals of the mentorship are and how the mentor and protégé plan to jointly achieve these goals. We believe this should be done at the beginning of the relationship and modified as the goals of the mentorship or the ability of the relationship to achieve those goals may change over time. Importantly, the theories discussed suggest that the ability of mentoring relationships to achieve protégé developmental goals is primarily dependent on the responsiveness of the mentor and the closeness of the relationship. This suggests that identifying and responding to the needs of the protégé and engaging in closeness-building behaviors are among the most critical tasks for mentors.

The theoretical perspectives discussed also have implications for organizations. The finding that self-expansion motivation and available expansion opportunities jointly predict relational

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outcomes suggests the importance of assessing both among prospective mentors and protégés. Such knowledge can provide guidance regarding who to target for mentoring initiatives (i.e., those with high levels of self-expansion motivation) and when mentoring initiatives might be particularly successful (i.e., when there are fewer available opportunities for self-expansion). From an interdependence perspective, organizational mentoring programs may also consider including factors that affect transformation of motivation in the selection of mentors. For example, mentors who are high in trait prosocial orientation may be more likely to act in their protégés' best interests, even when doing so may be costly for the mentor.

Some of the theories outlined imply somewhat counterintuitive effects of matching based on similarity. On the one hand, similarity can provide a signal that the relationship is likely to develop, increasing interpersonal attraction (Aron et al. 2013). On the other hand, too much similarity between mentors and protégés may undermine the self-expanding potential of the mentorship. Organizations should consider the unique skills, perspectives, and identities of mentors and protégés when arranging matches to ensure that more reciprocal self-expansion can occur. Depending on the goals of the program, this may include matching mentors and protégés from different areas of expertise, organizational units, or cultural or ethnic backgrounds.

Importantly, the relationship science theories examined suggest that the behaviors that occur once the mentoring relationship has been established are just as important, and are likely more predictive of outcomes, than pre-entry characteristics, program features, and matching. Thus, organizational mentoring programs should consider how programs can be structured to facilitate critical relational behaviors such as responsiveness, self-disclosure, and empathy. This may include mentor training on these behaviors or structured activities that encourage these behaviors, such as mentor-protégé social events or mentor-protégé collaboration on the development of protégé individual development plans.

6. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The aim of this article was to summarize current scientific knowledge regarding workplace mentoring, introduce new relationship science perspectives to the existing literature, and offer novel applications of these theories in an effort to enhance our understanding of the psychology of workplace mentoring. By juxtaposing the unique features of workplace mentoring with the foundational tenets of the relationship science theories reviewed here, we also provide the reader with considerable fodder for future research in our integration section (for a list of additional research recommendations, see the Future Issues, below). Finally, we offer theoretically informed practical guidance for enhancing workplace mentoring relationships. We hope that our article reinvigorates research on the psychology of workplace mentoring and enhances our theoretical and practical understanding of the complex relational dynamics underpinning this unique type of workplace experience.

FUTURE ISSUES

1. Investigate the extent to which mentors are considered attachment figures, how attachment and caregiving systems are activated and behaviorally coordinated, and how such behaviors manifest in the workplace.
2. Consider occupational and organizational differences in the provision of responsive support, as well as the type and amount of self-disclosure.

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3. Identify how closeness can be developed in workplace mentoring relationships given the constraints imposed by the workplace context and asymmetrical power dynamics.
4. Examine the role of self-expansion, including its motivating potential, the specific types of resources, perspectives, and identities that are part of this process, and how individual differences in self-expansion motivation may affect inclusion of other in self in mentorships.
5. Attend to issues of time in the mentoring relationship, including changes in power, dependence, and self-expansion potential.
6. Explore the tasks, goals, and bonds that develop in mentorships, including their key features, order of establishment, and potential for change over time.
7. Understand the dimensions of mentoring situations and how these affect mentor and protégé behavior and outcomes.
8. Consider whether and under what circumstances mentoring may contribute to individual and relational outcomes outside the professional realm, as well as improvements in relationships inside and outside of work.

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DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

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