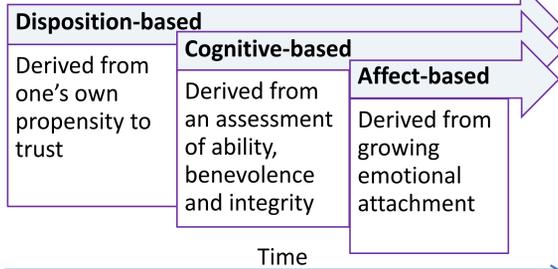


Introduction

Human resources managers are now recognizing e-mentoring programs as an important organizational strategy to help develop future talent. Research shows that mutual trust is crucial for effective mentoring. In traditional face-to-face efforts, a pair can engage in-person through formal and informal activities—facilitating trust formation in the process. This is not the case in e-mentoring, however, as mentees and mentors start off knowing little about each other, and communication is often missing body and vocal language. In fact, not much is known about how trust is fostered online. This research aims to examine the factors influencing initial perceptions of trust towards e-mentors by looking at Mayer, Davis & Shoorman's (1995) three dimensions of trust model. Complementing the work of a previous master's thesis, this study contributes to knowledge by informing e-mentoring program managers on how to design mentor profiles that will maximize perceived trustworthiness.

Mayer et al.'s three dimensions of trust (1995)



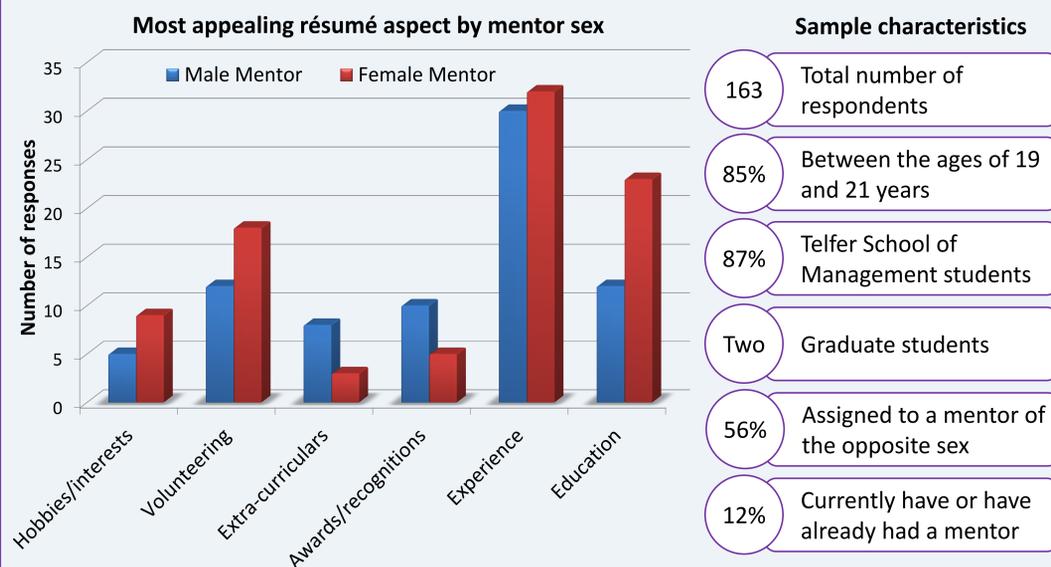
Hypotheses

- H_0 : Mentor sex, propensity to trust, or perceived ability, benevolence integrity do not affect how protégés trust or prefer a mentor.
- H_1, H_2, H_3 : The greater they perceive a mentor's (1) ability, (2) benevolence and (3) integrity, the more likely protégés are to trust him or her.
- H_4, H_5, H_6 : The greater they perceive a mentor's (4) ability, (5) benevolence and (6) integrity, the more likely protégés are to prefer him or her.
- H_7, H_8 : The greater their propensity to trust, the more likely protégés are to (7) trust or (8) prefer a mentor.
- H_9, H_{10} : Protégés are more likely to (9) trust or (10) prefer a mentor of the same sex.

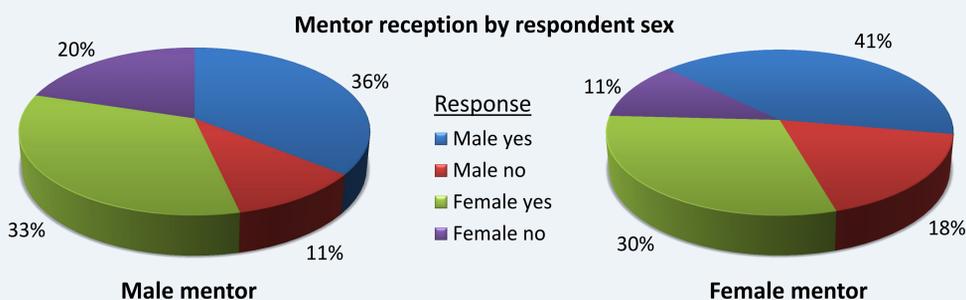
Methodology

- Created two fictional e-mentor résumés, which highlighted education, extracurricular activities, professional experience, volunteer work, hobbies and interests;
- Used research to design a survey measuring disposition- and cognitive-based trust;
- Presented one of the two résumés to University of Ottawa students and instructed them to read it before completing the online questionnaire.

Preliminary data & observations



- Respondents citing professional experience and education as the best aspects of the male's résumé were more responsive to his business experience than to his engineering background.
- Respondents citing professional experience and education as the worst aspects of the male's résumé disliked his engineering background rather than his business experience.
- Respondents expressing an interest in the male professional's education were also more likely to express an interest in at least one of either his extra-curricular involvement or awards and recognitions.
- While the female's education yielded more reception than the male's, there were weaker links between so and her extra-curricular activities or awards and recognitions.
- Just over a third of respondents who admired the female mentor's professional experience also indicated interest in her benevolent actions (i.e. using humour to improve morale, cultivating strong work relationships, resolving conflicts).
- The male professional's hobbies and interests yielded more disinterest than interest, while the female professional's only yielded interest.



- Respondents showed more likelihood to prefer the mentor of the opposite sex.
- Respondents perceived the female mentor as a better match than the male.
- Male respondents had a higher tendency to match themselves to a mentor than did female respondents.
- Respondents perceived the female mentor as more benevolent than the male.
- Respondents perceived the female mentor as having more integrity than the male.
- Male respondents had a higher tendency to perceive either mentor as benevolent than did female respondents.

T-Test	Male mentor (n = 85)	Female mentor (n = 79)	Significance
Perceived ability	$\mu = 4.02$ $\sigma = 0.41$	$\mu = 3.97$ $\sigma = 0.42$	None
Perceived benevolence	$\mu = 3.24$ $\sigma = 0.42$	$\mu = 3.58$ $\sigma = 0.46$	$P > 0.001$
Perceived integrity	$\mu = 3.39$ $\sigma = 0.47$	$\mu = 3.68$ $\sigma = 0.56$	$P > 0.001$

Overall propensity to trust by respondent

T-Test	Male respondents (n = 85)	Female respondents (n = 78)	Significance
Propensity to trust	$\mu = 3.37$ $\sigma = 0.46$	$\mu = 3.33$ $\sigma = 0.34$	None

Discussion

A few possible sources of error were detected over the course of the study. For instance, a section in the survey which addressed trust propensity confused some students as the survey asked respondents to read their assigned résumé prior to answering the questions, which were not directly related to the mentor. Furthermore, 13% of students missed a question on the survey which asked to make a physical indication on their résumé copy, and only 150 copies were received in comparison to the 163 completed survey responses. Additionally, an error was made in the use of the definition of "trust propensity", which resulted in the survey not providing the information needed to fully assess the hypotheses.

Conclusion

Due to the nature of the data, not all hypotheses can be addressed at this time. The current information obtained in this study does, however, give indication that protégés are not more likely to prefer a mentor of the same sex, leading to a rejection in hypothesis 10. It also hints that hypotheses 5 and 6 are true. More data collection will be done in the future in order to further analyze the relationships between mentor sex, propensity to trust and perceived ability, benevolence and integrity. Regardless of the results, the UROP allows for students to gain new skills—not typically available to Commerce students throughout regular courses. It gives undergraduates valuable, practical research experience that highly leverages their pursuit of a post-graduate degree.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Joanne Leck for accepting the opportunity to undertake this project with me, as well as for offering her guidance and help from beginning to end. I would also like to direct my appreciation towards the personnel and coordinators of the UROP for making this venture possible, as well as to mentor Chloé Drouin for her advice and counsel.

References

Bierema, L., & Merriam, S. (2002), Buche, M. (2008), Caffery, L. (2007), Clutterbuck, D. (2006), Colquitt, J., Wesson, M., Lepine, J. & Gellatly, I. (2013), Gannon, J. M., & Maher, A. (2012), Kram, K. (1983), Lynn, A. B. (1998), Management Mentors (2014), Simmonds, D., & Zammit Lupi, A. M. (2010), Tahmincioglu, E. (2004), University of Pittsburgh Institute for Clinical Research Education (2014), Walabe, E. (2013).