

Academic Paper

Mimetic effect in mentoring: the contribution of shared transcendence values

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Abstract

Modelling in mentoring has been widely identified but the underlying mimetic process of how mentor qualities are reproduced in mentees is rarely explained. This article describes how a critical realist mixed methods case-study of Baptist ministers led to the development of a Resonance Model of Mimetic Effect in Mentoring depicting core conditions and drivers in the mimetic process. Mentor-mentee prioritising of God and transcendence values were found to particularly contribute to the generative mechanism in mimetic effect. Awareness of this powerful mimetic process is described as significant for equipping mentors to work in beneficial developmental ways with mentees.

Keywords

Mimetic, modelling, imitation, ministerial formation, exemplarity, resonance model,

Article history

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Introduction

This article reports on how six generative conditions and two motivational drivers in the mentoring process combine in leading a mentee to uniquely adopt and express one or more of their mentor's qualities. By means of analytic generalisation, findings concerning the mimetic process are integrated into a new Resonance Model of Mimetic Effect. It is suggested that it is useful to go beyond reporting modelling presence in mentoring to focus on understanding the process that culminates in mimetic effect: a mentee reproducing, but not consciously copying or imitating, a mentor's attitudes, values or behaviours.

In this study, the focus was on the process of mimetic effect in mentoring Baptist ministers. The development of Baptist ministers shares with other organisations a basic assumption that mentoring leads to personal and professional development (Eby, 2007). Those on the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB, 2017) Register of Nationally Accredited Ministers must develop contextually adaptable attitudes and approaches to ministry (Green, 2012) and evidence of ministerial competency and calling, expressed in tasks like community leadership, worship enabling and pastoral care and in living a life of discipleship and witness consistent with Christian faith and

belief (Goodliff, 2012). Some of these attitudes and approaches will be formed in ministers through a mimetic process within mentoring where qualities observed and experienced in mentors are reproduced in their mentees.

My interest in 'mimetic effect in mentoring Baptist ministers' originates in a long-standing engagement with helping individuals develop as people and as leaders through pastoral care, mentoring, counselling, and spiritual direction with a current responsibility for overseeing the provision of mentoring and the equipping of mentors. The aim of the study was to undertake primary research to identify and understand the dynamics of mimetic effect with Baptist ministers in mentoring relationships. This was achieved by critically reviewing the literature relating to ministerial formation and mimetic effect in mentoring, psychological learning theories and practical theology. Emerging themes were analysed and explored with mentoring practitioners and trainers in the field of Christian ministerial formation to gain additional perspectives on the process of mimetic effect. Further thematic analysis identified key conditions and drivers for mimetic effect to occur. These conditions and drivers were developed through analytic generalisation into a new resonance model of mimetic effect with relevance to mentoring theory and practice beyond Baptist ministry settings.

In the next section I will briefly outline the existing literature relevant to understanding the mimetic process in mentoring. I will then summarise the methodology used for the research study, before turning to a discussion of the relevant findings and their integration into a resonance model. Finally, I will make conclusions concerning application of the model, noting limitations and possibilities for future research.

Literature

A literature search found a scarcity of studies directly relating to the mimetic process, still less within mentoring, and not at all within the context of mentoring Baptist ministers. Exceptionally, McCullough (2013) explores the correlates of motivational and imitative role modelling by professionals and makes connections between the sort of role-modelling that happens in a mentoring relationship and imitative desire.

A response to this research gap into explanatory processes for modelling outcomes in mentoring was made by reviewing studies and literature in other related disciplines. Literature was reviewed relating to mimetic effect in mentoring Baptist ministers, at the intersection of mentoring, mimetic learning (the psychological dynamics of imitation and modelling), and a practical theology of Baptist ministerial formation.

In the mentoring literature, studies of modelling confirm that it is regarded as a distinct, established mentoring function (Murphy and Kram, 2010). Modelling contributes positive outcomes for mentees in career development, satisfaction and salary (Dickson et al, 2014; Speizer, 1981; Gibson, 2004, McCullough, 2013), as one dimension of the psychosocial function of mentoring (Kram, 1988) or as a distinct third mentoring function (Scandura and Williams, 2001; Castro and Scandura, 2004) or one of four domains of mentoring (Crisp and Cruz, 2009). There are some relational explanations of how modelling works in mentoring. Kram's early research mentions several factors in the way modelling may work including transference parent feelings, emotional attachment, and varying degrees of identification (Kram, 1988). Drawing on Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, Bailey-McHale and Hart (2013) suggest that active, reflective, intentional role-modelling moves learning beyond simple observation-based emulation to include connections between practice, theory, values and attitudes (Bailey-McHale and Hart, 2013). There is a gap, however, in studies focusing on the mechanism behind a positive impact from modelling. Explanations of how modelling works are confined to a limited number of studies that refer to the contributions of similarity (Lankau et al,

2005; Allen et al 2006; Ghosh, 2014), identification (Mitchell et al, 2015), exemplarity (Avolio et al, 2004; Steinbock, 2001) and processes of transference (Gayle, 2010).

Studies and articles beyond the mentoring literature and in the area of mimetic learning indicate that imitative outcomes are influenced by group norms within a social context (Potolsky, 2006) as well as by the goals and intentions of an individual model (Oghourlian, 2011; Garrels, 2011). Mimetic learning includes desiring according to the desires of another (Girard, 1976) and is grounded in mirroring neural mechanisms (Gallese 2011; Jacoboni, 2009). Mimetic effect is the outcome of an identifiable set of factors and processes which are fundamental to human development (Billett, 2014; Hoppit and Laland, 2013; Meltzoff, 2011). This involves reflective, self-critical orientation towards an identified-with, exemplary, mediating model (Oppong, 2014; Fridland and Moore, 2014). This model exhibits an attractive and apparently attainable approach to life and leadership (Moberg, 2000; Brace-Govan, 2013) which is both admirable and most imitable (Zagzebski, 2013; Kristjánsson, 2017). Mimetic learning includes the power of a new perception leading to imitation though not exact replication and sameness (Wulf, 2008).

In the framework of ministerial formation, there is growing interest in theological accounts of the interdisciplinary concept of mimesis (Kirwan, 2009; Alison, 2003) but the actual process of mimetic formation (for example, the attractiveness and identification with a model exemplar and their goals and attitudes) remains under-developed. Spiritual dynamics are often assumed to be at work in mentoring (Lewis, 2009; Holmes, 2012; Ellis, 2008; Fiddes, 2006). Mentoring as a means to ministerial formation in its context of practical theology is rooted for Christians in the biblical witness to accounts of discipleship: 'following Jesus' (Holy Bible, 1995, Mark 1.17) and 'imitating Paul' (Holy Bible, 1995, 1 Corinthians 11.1). Aspects of the concept of imitating God are found elsewhere in both the New and Old Testaments, for example: 'Be imitators of God, as beloved children and live in love' (Holy Bible, 1995, Ephesians 5.1-2) and encouragement to imitate God's own character and 'practice' (Holy Bible, 1995, Exodus 20.8-11), and in Leviticus 19.2 (Holy Bible, 1995,) 'be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy' (Barton, 2014).

Exemplarity and intentional modelling are understood to be important in developing a minister's character, both within and beyond formal mentoring (Tidball, 2008; Copan, 2010). In an important comment from the discipline of practical theology, Herdt (2012, p.225) asserts her view of:

"a Christian ethic of mimetic virtue, virtue acquired by being conformed to Christ and imitating virtuous human exemplars. This takes place in a process in which both divine and human agency are fully at work, as we are attracted by the beauty of exemplars in a way which energises our agency and ultimately are drawn into a process of being re-formed in the image of God."

The positioning of mimetic effect in mentoring in this study concentrates on the directly relevant interdisciplinary material of practical theological research and the literature of ministerial formation and social learning theory. Imitative modelling straddles social learning, ministerial theology, mentoring research and literature. Exemplarity, modelling, imitation and 'mimetic' are overlapping concepts and keywords that occur in the ministerial formation accounts of practical theology but without research into or explanation of the dynamics.

The study analyses and explores themes arising from participating ministers' own experiences and explanations of mimetic effect in mentoring to identify and understand the dynamics. Evaluating the results and convergence has generated fresh explanation concerning the dynamics and potential of mimetic effect in mentoring. This applies to the formation of Baptist ministers and also has theoretical and practical transferability for others in the field of mentoring and mimetic learning.

Methodology

The design of the study drew on or adapted existing interdisciplinary theoretical concepts referred to in the literature review (Murphy and Kram, 2010; Billett, 2014; Kristjánsson, 2017, Herdt, 2012). A mixed-methods case study methodology in three phases of data collection has allowed the collection of evidence of mimetic effect and the possibility of making inferences about this phenomenon (Maxwell, 2012). A case study approach has allowed a close view and exploration of the phenomenon of mimetic effect (Flyvbjerg, 2006 p.235). As a new model of mimetic effect has been developed during research, case study methodology has allowed the possibility of full and intensive research using mixed methods and multiple confirmatory sources, each interpreted via several theoretical strands to build explanation (Easton, 2010). This methodology was designed to identify and build 'best fit' explanations of mimetic effect in the mentoring of Baptist ministers in accordance with the assumptions of critical realism (CR). My position is as a Christian and Baptist minister. As a member of the community of ministers who participated in this study, I conducted the research as an insider-researcher. A CR approach underlies my commitment to avoid privileging faith or spiritual accounts of mimesis and gives as full as possible an interdisciplinary account on the mechanism of mimetic effect.

The choice to use a mixed-methods case-study approach - the collection of relevant quantitative data followed by the collection of qualitative data (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009) - has maximised the possibility of gaining understanding and insights into the mechanism of mimetic effect (Sayer, 2000 p.19). The flexibility of this case study has meant that multiple sources of data have been obtained using both quantitative and qualitative methods. This has enabled the building of multiple perspectives of mimetic effect from a relatively small number of instances, studied in depth via interviews with Baptist minister mentees and their mentors.

This case study has involved a range of sources of data. A survey was sent to all 246 Baptist ministers in two neighbouring regional Baptist Associations with a 32% response rate. This provided valuable data, identifying indications of mimetic effect for later analysis. Purposive selection of participants for in-depth interviews (Maxwell, 2012) was made according to theoretical expectations emerging from the literature review. The survey asked participants to respond on three aspects of their experience of mentoring and its effects by answering closed-ended questions about how strongly they agreed or disagreed with statements using a 6-point Likert interval scale. The first of these aspects asked about their sense of connection - with the mentor as a person, their facilitation of the mentoring meeting, and their approach to ministry. The second aspect focused on role-model effect – how strongly they agreed that they aspired to be like their mentor in the way that they approached ministry and saw their mentor at that time as a positive role model. The third aspect built on this area with four statements about positive mentor-to-mentee effect on relating to other people, engaging in ministry tasks, sensing God's presence and participating in God's purposes.

A second source of data came from in-depth semi-structured interviews with five mentees. Participants could expand on answers to the survey questions, producing rich information concerning the presence and dynamic of mimetic effect in their dyads. As part of this phase of the study, subsequent in-depth interviews with the mentors from each of the mentee dyads generated a third source of information about the dynamic of mimetic effect. Three experienced mentor-practitioners involved in ministerial formation were interviewed as a fourth source of information about their experience of and insights into mimetic effect. In particular, perspectives were sought regarding surface themes reported in interviews of mentees and their mentors including 'a wide basis for trust' (lots in common), 'mentee openness' (arising from struggle and need), 'the mentee's desire for or expectation of growth', 'the level of exposure to the mentor's values and struggles', 'the relating-style of the mentor including going beyond professional requirements', and finally, 'shared perspectives on God and ministry.' These multiple forms of data have provided opportunities for methodological triangulation, adding to the quality of the case-study (Roulston,

2012, p.84). Thematic Analysis (TA) was used to analyse the qualitative interview data as being a flexible and theoretically-free method particularly useful for identifying descriptive and explanatory strands within and across multiple sources of information and the facilitation and reflection of and unpicking of 'reality' (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Some analysis proceeded iteratively to serve each stage of data collection, for example, identifying the presence of mimetic effect and variables in the experience of survey participants to facilitate selection of interview participants. Observed patterns in the data from interviewing mentees informed subsequent mentor interviews, and similarly themes from both were drawn on in mentor-practitioner interviews. Further descriptive analysis of the survey took place using a computerised software package (SPSS) to organise contextual data and explanatory factors. After transcribing interviews, and using pseudonyms to anonymise participants, a systematic constant comparative thematic analysis was used to organise, categorise and interpret the interview data (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2017) into themes and patterns as part of contributions to conclusions about explanatory factors in mimetic effect.

Findings and discussion

The presence of mimetic effect in both the survey and the interview data

Descriptive analysis of the data collected from the quantitative survey identified the possible presence of mimetic effect. It also enabled purposive selection of candidates according to strength of agreement across the following theoretically expected mimetic variables (shown in italics): a sense of connection, aspiration and modelling, and a positive impact on attitudes, values or behaviour in relating, engaging in ministry tasks, sensing God's presence, and participating in God's purposes. The survey data was found to show an association between the sets of variables of sense of connection with aspiration and modelling, and sense of connection with positive impact on attitudes, values or behaviour. Causal relationships were not demonstrated.

Subsequent interviews in the qualitative part of this case-study focused on exploring the contribution of these variables in greater depth. These variables did not determine the themes found in the interview data, although inevitably, there was awareness of them throughout the process of thematic analysis. Associations between these variables were corroborated in findings from the rich qualitative data where connection between mentees and mentors took place across six generative conditions which are explained in the next section.

Qualitative thematic analysis based upon the interviews with Baptist minister mentees, their mentors, and with experienced practitioners in the field of mentoring concentrated on themes and findings regarding the presence of mimetic effect and the particular contribution from mentees to this dynamic. It also focused on the contribution a mentor makes to an outcome of mimetic effect.

Thematic analysis (TA) of the interview data confirmed the presence of mimetic effect. One mentee (Carl) internalised and expressed a primary value and attitude, 'grace by the bucketful', from his mentor, Ed. One mentor, Lynn, modelled 'very tenacious and creative' confidence and style leading her mentee, Wanda, to be more confident in her calling, leading, preaching and ability to be herself as a female minister in a male-dominated ministerial and church culture.

Table 1: Survey responses regarding mimetic effect indicators for mentees selected for interview (by pseudonym)

Statements evaluating experience of mentor	Disagree strongly	Disagree moderately	Disagree slightly	Agree slightly	Agree moderately	Agree strongly
I connect with him/her as a person						Carl Brian Wanda Larry Kevin
I connect with his/her approach to ministry					Wanda	Carl Brian Larry Kevin
I connect with the way that (s)he facilitates our mentoring meetings					Kevin	Carl Brian Wanda Larry
I aspire to be like him/her in the way that they approach ministry					Kevin	Carl Brian Wanda Larry
I see him/her as a positive role model						Carl Brian Wanda Larry Kevin
(S)he has positively affected the way I relate to other people					Kevin	Carl Brian Wanda Larry
(S)he has positively affected the way I engage in ministry tasks					Kevin	Carl Brian Wanda Larry
(S)he has positively affected my sense of God's presence					Larry Kevin	Carl Brian Wanda
(S)he has positively affected my sense of participating in God's purposes					Larry Kevin	Carl Brian Wanda
(S)he has negatively affected my values, attitudes or behaviour	Carl Brian Wanda Larry Kevin					
Mentee helped in development as minister by mentor as role model					Larry	Carl Brian Wanda Kevin

Table 2: Interview participants (each mentoring dyad shown in separate column)

Participants	Interviewee Pseudonym				
Mentees	Brian	Carl	Kevin	Larry	Wanda
Mentors	Rick	Ed	Harry	Dave	Lynn
Mentoring 'Field experts'	Sam	Tina		Vic	

Six core conditions for mimetic effect

TA led to the findings that there were six core conditions and two motivational drivers which contributed to mimetic effect. The six core conditions relate to both mentor priorities and mentee amenability within the mentoring relationship. The first of these was *openness to growth and change* by the mentee. Disorientation and openness were reported to be rooted in a struggle or deficit of resource, experience or wisdom. One mentee, Larry, was isolated before beginning mentoring, lacking feedback about his leadership, and anxious about managing his church and family situation. He intentionally looked for a mentor 'who would be real and would help me walk the journey that God's set out for us.'

A second condition was *creative, relevant and attainable difference between a mentee and their mentor*. Areas of difference in the mentee from the mentor (either in whole or in degree of emphasis) modelled something creatively desirable as a condition for mimetic effect. This difference was evident for Brian, a mentee who developed a more patient, flexible, open, grounded, persevering and resilient approach to pastoral relationships derived from his mentor, Rick, in whom the ability to 'go with the flow and not be too phased that things have to be done this way' were modelled. This serendipity of creative fit (Cox 2005, Mitchell et al, 2015) arises from disorientation and a desire to find a way through a life or ministry crisis, rooted in the reassurance of depth of connection.

A friendship-like love and care where *a mentor exceeding expected care about and belief in their mentee* was found to be a third core condition. Demonstrating care and availability beyond the mentoring sessions included phone or text contact and, for Carl, his mentor, Ed, 'praying that I'll be able to put into practice stuff.' Other care was experienced through a mentor, Lynn, wanting to communicate to her mentee, Wanda, 'I've got her back and I'm on her side', experienced by Wanda as this mentor 'is for me, this person believes in me and loves me, even.' For mentees these experiences of their mentor stood out even though, as Tina, one mentoring field practitioner put it: 'that is what professional mentoring should do. That's all part of the package.' Mentee reports may have represented low expectations regarding the nature of professionally enabled mentoring (Storrs et al, 2008) and a hierarchical rather than developmental relationship (Keller, 2010). Perceptions of receiving beyond expected care and being believed in functioned as exemplary behaviour which deepened connection and engendered trust and openness to qualities in mentors.

A fourth core condition was *a mentor's real humanity and self-disclosure* including the importance of vulnerability. Mentees spoke appreciatively about and seemed to be drawn more fully into relationship with their mentors through disclosure of struggles and ordinary humanity. For Larry's mentor this meant sharing 'a bit about what's going on in his life in terms of his ministry.' *Real humanity* naturally and carefully disclosed by the mentor meant that any pronounced qualities and associated enthusiasms were experienced as relevant to and attainable by the mentee, illustrating motivational inspiration and admiration elicited when a model exceeds standards (Thrash and Elliott, 2004). A mentor's humanity and transparency affected a mentee's perception of the relevance, attainability and desirability of their mentor's striking qualities. Going beyond expected boundaries both in care and disclosure worked for mentees in deepening the relationship and opening up a view of and route to attainable and relevant qualities. These two conditions for mimetic effect of exemplary care-love and disclosure of real humanity confirm the importance in mentoring of 'ideal mentor dimensions' (Rose, 2003). A mentor's embodiment of a greater than expected depth of commitment to, care for and belief in the mentee, a friendship-like love, itself a pronounced quality, had a positive modelling effect, deepening connection in a dyad.

The fifth condition was *deep-level similarity between a mentee and their mentor*. For one mentee, Carl, and his mentor, Ed, this included a similar understanding of the style or focus of ministry and a shared theological stance, particularly 'getting his concerns as a youth pastor.' In this study, *deep-level similarity* was rooted in the mentor-facilitated mutual priority of prayerfully attending and attuning to *God as the third person* within and beyond the mentoring relationship. A shared

understanding of God's purposes influenced mentee-mentor conclusions about desirable qualities. These desirable qualities were jointly named, prayed for, and trusted as being brought about through the working of God's Spirit. Other similarities of personality, experience and social background seemed less important to the participants than the deep-level similarity of mutual prioritising by mentor and mentee on God, 'the third person' in the room, and on prayer.

This *deep-level similarity* of shared experience and assumptions about life and ministry - deeply rooted in Christian faith and calling - has implications for the whole process of mimetic effect in mentoring Baptist ministers. Prayer has been a means of articulating, rehearsing, reinforcing, and seeking strength and help for achieving desired growth in specific qualities. This generative condition of deep-level similarity is founded in a faith framework and transcendent vision where a mentee is inspired by an illuminating trigger object in the mentor role model and inspired to a higher goal for self (Thrash and Elliott, 2004). Inspiration is made up of transcendence (better and higher possibilities); evocation (spontaneous feelings of energy and pleasure) and motivation (to act out the higher possibility that has been newly glimpsed) (Thrash and Elliott, 2004). The shared focus on listening and responding to a person outside of the mentoring relationship – however described (God, Jesus, the Spirit) - is an example of awe and reverence towards a vastly higher and greater model and the ideals that are represented (Schindler et al 2015). The effect of this shared referencing has been to increase and deepen affiliative connectedness and mutual identification (Schindler, 2013) binding mentor and mentee in a greatly valued area (Eby, 2013; Mitchell et al, 2015).

A sixth core condition was the mutual *prioritising of the third person in the room (God and prayer)*. God is regarded as the highest authority and third person in the mentoring relationship, prayed with and trusted to guide into and enable appropriate responses. Personal spiritual responsiveness is a major focus for mentees which is shared by and with mentors. Brian's view of mentoring as including spiritual direction is summed up by his mentor, Rick, as the priority of 'hearing from God' accompanied by a modelling to Brian of 'some really good and helpful behaviours that he models in his personal spirituality.' God is an explicitly assumed third person, an accompanier and guide in the process. When interviewed, Larry articulated a question regularly asked in mentoring sessions with his mentor: 'So what's God saying to you in the situation?'

Two motivational drivers in mimetic effect

This sixth condition for mimetic effect identifies a fundamental motivational driver in a mentee being attracted to and adopting a quality in their mentor, namely *resonance with a transcendent value, vision, or outcome*. Certain qualities and behaviour in the mentor are considered to be desirable, attainable and worth adopting not simply to overcome a sense of personal deficit or to improve life and ministry, but because they are associated with shared faith values and vision for Christian leadership and God's wider purposes for the world. God's calling and enabling of humanity to receive afresh their vocation to be fully human as imaged in Christ and to bless the world, is rooted in the core message in the Scriptures. Although variously interpreted, referencing this biblical story – whether directly or indirectly – gives a fundamental shared inspiration and shape to which qualities are considered desirable. As Brian's mentor Rick suggests 'if I've been reading scripture, if I think this has got a resonance with what we're talking [about]...he loves it.'

The act of mentee and mentor praying and referring to the biblical story together expresses trust in and a request for God's help and strength for growth and wisdom in life and ministry. It also has a wider impact because it vocalises afresh and reinforces desirable outcomes arising from the mentoring session, including qualities modelled in the mentor. Ed speaks directly about this, 'Sometimes those prayers, they mirror what's happened in our meeting earlier...[they] pick up on what we've just been discussing.' One field practitioner, Tina, speaks in terms of a person becoming and fulfilling their God-given potential and contribution where mentoring as 'a dynamic intentional relationship of trust between two people, one of whom is enabling the other, to maximise

the grace of God and their service in God's kingdom purposes.' The focus is on being part of a wider vision which is not limited to individual needs or the priorities of an organisation. This is echoed in one mentee's (Wanda) own grasp of the meaning of God for her own freedom and development describing him as 'for me, growing me and it's ok for me to respond to God on the way that I feel God is calling me, telling me, guiding me.'

A second motivational driver arises from a sense of resonance *with an attractive quality in their mentor as model and exemplar* which is *perceived to be relevant (to their prior needs), attainable and desirable*. Terms like 'resonance' (Brian) and associated concepts like 'chiming' (Kevin) occurred in participant reports. Wanda, 'found her own voice', Carl and Ed experienced fresh motivation towards desired qualities in part because 'their hearts were singing.' Some of the motivational energy for adopting a desirable quality comes from initial resonance as a mentee's first response to a quality which chimes in his or her mentor. A mentee derives motivational meaning because a quality in their mentor is perceived as relevant and attainable and also by a sense of how enacting this attitude, value or behaviour fits with their call to human becoming and participation in God's purposes. Motivational energy comes from taking steps towards a valued outcome (Egan 1990) and the coinciding of core inner and outer drivers for change (Rogers, 2016).

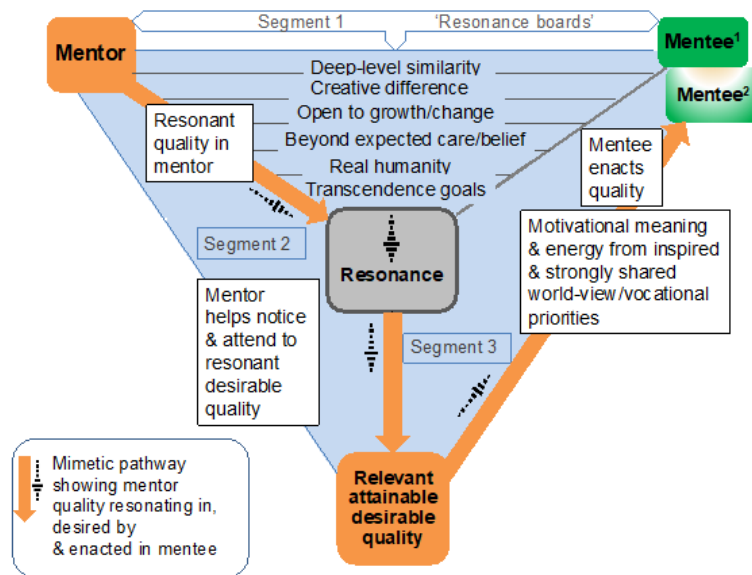
Integrating the conditions and drivers: The Resonance Model of Mimetic Effect

The Resonance Model of Mimetic Effect (Transcendence) presented in this article (Figure 1) is a further development of the author's original heuristic representation of mimetic effect in the context of Christian faith (Norris, 2018). The term 'transcendence', understood as a deep commitment to higher beliefs and goals, suggested a possible way of representing the mechanism of mimetic effect to include but also be applied beyond Christian contexts. Transcendence has been described as a component part of the inspirational process of modelling through an illuminating trigger object like a role model and inspiration to a higher goal for self (Thrash and Elliott, 2004). By including the concept of transcendence, this revised resonance model allows for greater analytic generalisation in the contexts of a shared commitment to wider goals or beliefs regarding human becoming and contributing beyond immediate personal or organisational functional and utilitarian needs (Garvey, 2017).

The model uses the concept of resonance to integrate the six generative conditions and two motivational drivers outlined above. In developing this transcendence model, one of the generative conditions previously discussed as a finding from participant data is changed from 'God and prayer priority' to the generic term 'transcendence goals'. Similarly, the second motivational driver discussed previously is changed from its Christian-mentoring originated 'inspired and shared human/divine call' to a generic 'strongly shared world-view and vocational priorities'. These transcendence motivational drivers have power to support and propel towards what the mentee desires (Smith, 2016). We emulate what we actually love whether that be the exemplary Christ, (Herdt, 2012) or some other higher reference person or belief (Smith, 2016).

The model shows the generative mechanism of mimetic effect as comprising three distinct areas or segments of movement. The mimetic pathway representing the way in which a mentor quality resonates in, is desired by and enacted in a mentee is shown by connecting arrows. The six synergistic generative conditions for mimetic effect can be understood as being like the multiple strips of wood in the resonance (sound) board of a stringed instrument like a piano.

Figure 1: Resonance Model of Mimetic Effect in Mentoring (Transcendence)



The generative process in the model is as follows. Special conditions in the mentoring process act like resonance boards which amplify a resonant mentor quality. Resonance conditions (boards) between mentee and mentor make possible the transmission of this sounded quality (object) from mentor to mentee. Mimetic resonance occurs in a mentee when a pronounced quality in their mentor as model and exemplar is perceived to be relevant, attainable and desirable. In addition, mimetic resonance takes place when this quality is perceived to represent an inspirational call towards ‘strongly shared world-view and vocational priorities’. In the initial part of this process, resonance leads a mentee to notice a quality which has chimed within them. An attentive mentor can work with a mentee to reflect on the value, attitude or behaviour which has resonated to determine the shape of his or her distinctive response. Time given to jointly reflecting on critical resonance leading to developmental steps (Muir, 2014) may be compared to pressing the sustain pedal on a piano.

Two motivational drivers contribute to this generative mimetic mechanism. Resonance with a mentor quality is one of these drivers, hence the importance of ‘sustain effect’ - staying with the resonating ‘note’ (quality). A second motivational driver is the impetus for a mentee to move towards expressing this quality for themselves through sensing it as a call to make their own distinctive and meaningful contribution to a bigger vision which transcends their immediate pragmatic concerns. Motivational meaning and drive derive from this freshly inspired and shared call to enact a quality perceived in a mentor as relevant for a mentee in seeking to fulfil vocational priorities (Schindler et al, 2015). The process of mimetic effect occurs as movement and growth in the mentee takes place (from Mentee1 to Mentee2) and results in the adoption and enacting of a new or expanded quality originally ‘sounded’ in or by a mentor.

Conclusions

The aim of the study was to undertake primary research to identify and understand the dynamics of mimetic effect in mentoring relationships by undertaking a mixed methods case-study of Baptist ministers. Thematic analysis of the data has led to identification of key conditions and drivers contributing to mimetic effect in mentoring. These conditions and drivers have been developed through analytic generalisation into a new resonance model of mimetic effect with relevance to mentoring theory and practice beyond Baptist ministry settings. This resonance model is a new representation which makes a valuable contribution to understanding and working with mimetic effect as a powerful dynamic in the practice of mentoring. There has not previously been a model in

mentoring theory for how a quality in a mentor becomes noticed, desired and adopted by their mentee. This explanatory, integrated, new model can enable theorists and practitioners in the areas of both mentoring and ministerial formation to understand the possibility and power of mimetic effect and to consciously work with and participate in this process.

Implications for practice: Positive and negative aspects of the mimetic process

Findings regarding this powerful mimetic process in mentoring have implications for mentors and their trainers. The Resonance Model implies a need for mentors to notice, stay with, and work with, motivational drivers that lead mentees to adopt desired qualities. In the second segment of the Resonance Model, a mentor has the task of noticing and reflectively staying with the meaning and signposting of resonance in a mentee towards an attainable, relevant and desired quality. The process includes mentor and mentee working out what the particular resonance effect might signify given that there are other sorts of 'moments' or experiences of 'presence' in mentoring and helping relationships (Senge et al, 2005; Noon, 2018). A mentor who understands the second movement in the Resonance Model will attend to and help a mentee explore resonance and his or her sense of being inspired by new, better and higher possibilities, effectively accompanied by raised feelings of energy, goodness and pleasure and motivation to act out the higher possibility that has been newly glimpsed (Thrash and Elliott, 2004).

Self-awareness and intentionality are required by a mentor in working with a mimetic dynamic. Since resonance arises from a quality in mentors themselves it is necessary for them to be sufficiently self-aware to distinguish their own values, attitudes and behaviour from those which are genuinely desired by their mentees (Sosik and Godshalk, 2004). Spontaneous contagion (Bailey-McHale and Hart, 2013) or absorption (Smith, 2016) of mentor qualities can take place. It is suggested, however, that a mentor can help a mentee critically reflect upon, explore and interpret the meaning of a resonating quality to discern whether and how it can be relevant, attainable and desirable.

The mimetic process is powerful and can have negative as well as positive effects. In the Christian context, the prioritising of God, partially expressed within the mentoring relationship through prayer, is a significant motivating factor in mentees moving towards a desirable quality but needs to be carefully engaged with by mentors. The manner and style of the mimetic process will be influenced by what sort of God and divine process is assumed to be present and prioritised by mentee and mentor. A narrow theological or transcendent world view could dampen or rule out certain sorts of possibility or growth in mentees. Mentors have the potential to influence mentees through not only what they deliberately share in the sessions but via inner convictions and enthusiasms which may not seem to be disclosed; this is for good or ill (Gortner and Dreibelbis 2007). As one of the participants in this study indicated, integrity, genuineness, respect and care are needed in the way that prayer and the Christian story feature in the mentoring relationship. In this way mentoring remains congruent with the mentee's needs and desires and resistant to any hint of empty pep-talking, shallow cheer-leading or, as Washington (2013) warns, toxic manipulation. For those involved in ministerial and leadership formation, knowledge of the power of mimetic effect indicates the need for self-care, continuous growth and supervision for mentors (Brockbank and McGill, 2012). Self-responsibility and integrity are necessary for mentors in the influential role of mimetic modelling to mentees (Sosik et al, 2013) indicating a need to attend to self-reflection, supervision, and personal growth.

Study limitations and future research paths

There are some limitations to this study, some of which indicate potentially fruitful research paths. The Resonance Model of Mimetic Effect (Transcendence) has deliberately involved analytic generalisation from rich, in-depth data for potential application in a wider context (Yin, 2014) and

arises from within the boundaries of this case. This limitation has been managed by ensuring that theoretical contributions and practical recommendations have remained close to the unique Christian leadership and ministry context (Easton, 2010). The unique nature of Baptist ministry and mentoring means that findings may not be as transferable. Replacing God, prayer and the Trinitarian context with generic concepts may substantively change important generative factors in the mechanism and model as originally found and developed from participant case study data. The critical realist best-fit model that has been constructed of the generative mechanism in mimetic effect in mentoring represents one account in developing a fuller understanding of mimetic effect making further research necessary. In particular it would be useful to test and refine the Resonance Model within Christian faith and other transcendence contexts.

The Resonance Model contributes to understanding attractions to transpersonal ideals and related emotions of appreciation directed towards higher truths and entities like God (Algoe and Haidt, 2009). As Zagzebski (2017) suggests, however, further research is needed regarding transpersonal ideals. It is suggested that this transcendence version of a resonance model is tested through further contextually relevant research. Reference has been made to a tentative suggestion that admiration and adoration feed one another in an upward spiral of affiliation and emulation but these theories regarding reverence and awe (Schindler et al, 2015) have been employed interpretively to understand and analyse meaning (Maxwell, 2012) rather than being tested within the study. With Zagzebski (2017), who takes admiration as the focal point for exemplarism, I acknowledge the need for further studies into attractions to transpersonal ideals and related emotions of appreciation directed towards higher truths and entities like God.

There are advantages and disadvantages about being an insider-researcher (Unluer, 2012). It has been helpful to be able to understand the context of Baptist culture, the experience and assumptions of Christian faith, and the calling to be a minister. The dynamic of being well-known and in a senior role in relation to participants was managed during the analysis stage by staying close to the data rather than my 'other' knowledge of each mentee or mentor's pronounced qualities and their story. Having Christian faith and calling to ministry in common with the participants has enabled some aspects of trust and rapport but has also affected my decision to carefully interpret prayer and attentiveness to God as aspects of critical reality rather than constructs.

The Resonance Model depicts core conditions and drivers which contribute to mimetic effect - not causal links. There is no intention to imply that mimetic effect in mentoring follows a tidy, linear, predictable pattern, or that it be manipulated within a mentoring relationship for organisational or other goals or that it happens automatically when certain conditions and cues are in place. Neither is it suggested in this study that mentee development through mentoring only happens through mimetic effect. Other contributions are made by relational, interpersonal and facilitative abilities (Ragins, 2016; Rogers et al, 2016), experience, non-judgmental support, care, knowledge, and wisdom for the development of a mentee who desires to grow in some way(s) of their own determining (Western, 2012). Mimetic effect is also not limited to situations of mentoring but there are specific dynamics within the mentoring relationship. Two-way mimetic effect in a mentoring relationship has not been the focus of this study but could also be usefully researched.

Summary

The underlying mimetic process of how mentor qualities are reproduced in mentees has rarely been explained. This article has reported on significant themes which underlie mimetic effect and identified a dynamic between a mentor and their mentee comprising six generative conditions and two motivating drivers. Identifying and understanding the way in which these conditions and drivers combine to produce mimetic enactment has led to the development of a Resonance Model which can be applied to contexts of shared transcendence values and goals. Awareness of this powerful

mimetic process has been explained as important in equipping mentors to work in beneficial developmental ways with mentees.

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