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MENTORING AND WOMEN MANAGERS: ANOTHER LOOK AT THE FIELD

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Abstract

PURPOSE: To provide a discussion of some salient research relating to mentoring for women managers.

METHODOLOGY / APPROACH: The paper draws mainly upon writing and research from the United Kingdom, United States, Canada and Australasia to explore some of the issues that continue to be pertinent for the mentoring of women managers.

FINDINGS: The paper explores some of the early arguments promoting mentoring for women in the light of more recent research. From the literature, three key issues that have important implications for women in mentoring relationships are considered. These are identifying the nature and focus of mentoring relationships; managing cross-gender mentoring; and negotiating the power dimension that underpins the mentoring relationship.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS: The paper provides a discussion of the practical implications of three key issues that are significant for women managers.

ORIGINALITY / VALUE OF PAPER: The paper draws together work in the field and distils a number of issues and their implications that require further attention and discussion.

KEY WORDS: women managers, mentoring, power, cross-gender

CLASSIFICATION: literature review

MENTORING AND WOMEN MANAGERS: ANOTHER LOOK AT THE FIELD

Introduction

Mentoring has been the subject of much writing and research since the 1970s when the first formalised programs were introduced in the United States, United Kingdom and then Australia. Mentoring has been identified as a valuable human resource development strategy (Catalyst, 1993), a collaborative learning relationship between two persons (Zachary, 2005), an activity for socially excluded young people (Piper and Piper, 2000) and an affirmative action strategy used to support women and members of minority groups (Byrne, 1991; Garrett Taylor, 1998). It has been advocated in a variety of settings ranging from large corporations to schools to community settings to hospitals. In more recent times, due to the rise of computer technology, e-mentoring that uses electronic communication as a main mode through which mentors and protégés or mentees connect and communicate has emerged (Fagenson-Eland and Yan Lu, 2004; Whiting and de Janasz, 2004).

The focus of this paper lies with mentoring for women managers. Its major contribution is that it draws upon research and writing from several countries, including the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, and Australasia region, to provide a snapshot of the field. It does this by considering some of the early arguments that were put forward to promote mentoring as an activity necessary for women managers and then reviews these arguments in the light of more recent international research findings. From this review is a distillation of three key issues and their implications for women managers who find themselves in mentoring

relationships. The paper begins by providing a background discussion of the meaning of mentoring and two main types of mentoring approaches available.

Definition

Mentoring has been described as an elusive term (Piper and Piper, 2000) and, not surprisingly, there is little consensus over its meaning. Jacobi (1991) goes as far as saying there is "definitional vagueness" surrounding it due in part to the lack of a strong theoretical base. Yet, there is a considerable body of theories that has been put forward to explain mentoring. Based on a review of over 300 research based papers on mentoring, Ehrich, Hansford and Tennent (2001) identified several categories of theories used by researchers to explain mentoring and these include developmental theories, theories relating to power, leadership and management theories, organisational structure and network theories, interpersonal relationship theories, sponsorship theories, human capital theories and learning theories. Three of these theories are now considered more closely. Firstly, Kram's (1985) seminal work maintains that mentoring consists of two key constructs: career development functions and psycho-social functions. Mentors are said to perform both roles where career functions include sponsorship, coaching, protection, exposure, visibility and challenging work assignments; and psycho-social functions include encouragement, friendship, advice and feedback, as well helping individuals develop a sense of competence, confidence and effectiveness. Viewed this way, mentoring provides career development and psycho-social support to mentees.

Secondly, mentoring has been viewed as a type of business transaction with costs and benefits. For example, social exchange theory refers to the social cost and reciprocity

of mentoring where mentors and mentees evaluate costs and benefits to determine if the relationship is viable (Lee and Nolan, 1998). Thirdly, social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) has been used in mentoring studies to explain that learning lies at the heart of mentoring. The mentee learns through observation, socialisation and the mentor acts as a role model. All of these theories promote a different view of mentoring with mentors playing different roles and therefore different outcomes would be expected to emerge from the mentoring relationship.

Informal and formal mentoring

Another way of understanding mentoring is to view it in terms of two main categories: informal and formal. Informal or traditional mentoring has been around for centuries and is said to occur when a mentor chooses to develop a protégé or mentee because he or she shows potential or talent in a particular field. In history, mentors have been identified as "significant others" who have used their knowledge, power and status to help the careers and development of others (Byrne, 1991). Informal mentoring arrangements can evolve also where two people working in a similar or related field, find they have mutual interests and decide to "establish a developmental alliance" (Clutterbuck, 2004a, p. 4).

In contrast, formal mentoring programs are a more recent phenomenon. Today they are commonplace and used to support graduates and new staff, new and aspiring leaders, and members of target groups, including women. Formal mentoring programs are said to differ from informal mentoring arrangements in a number of key ways. Two key ways are described here. Firstly, formal mentoring, as an organisational interventionist strategy, is initiated by the organisation and in many cases the

organisational coordinator determines the matching between mentor and protégé/ mentee (Ragins and Cotton, 1999). This differs from informal mentoring as mentors and mentees make a decision to work together. Secondly, formal mentoring programs tend to be more structured with set goals to meet within a specified time frame (Ragins and Cotton, 1999). This lies in contrast to informal mentoring arrangements that are fluid with the goals and focus of the relationship evolving over time. An important advantage of formal programs is that they are more accessible than informal mentoring relationships while a downside is that they do not always provide choice to the parties regarding their participation or choice about the partner with whom the individual might like to work. Thus, formal mentoring relationships can take more time to develop (Clutterbuck, 2004a). Noteworthy is Clutterbuck's (2004b) comment that it is not always possible to draw a line between formal and informal mentoring arrangements. For instance, he refers to "grey areas" where there is some choice for mentors and mentees regarding the person with whom they will work. Clutterbuck (2004b) refers to these situations as "semi-formal".

Formal mentoring programs have been used as an affirmative action strategy to support women's career progression and address, in part, their under-representation in senior management (Byrne 1989, 1991) for some years. These programs appear to be more widespread today than they were 30 years ago. Evidence of their use can be found on government based websites throughout many countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United Kingdom. As an example, the Northern Territory public service provides a leadership program for front-line managers called, "Discovery – women as leaders". Its aim is to "help women develop greater confidence (including confidence in valuing their own backgrounds and cultures),

learn leadership skills and build valuable support and business networks"
(http://www.ocpe.nt.gov.au/workforce_development/workforce_capacity/leadership_
development. Similar programs are offered by private and public corporations around
Australia and internationally. The widespread use and application of mentoring
programs in government, corporate and community settings would suggest that such
programs are meeting a need to support the career development and learning
opportunities for the participants involved.

Mentoring for women

This section of the paper considers some of the early research and writing put forward
to support an argument for both informal and formal mentoring arrangements for
women managers. Three key arguments are identified and discussed in the light of
more recent research in the field.

Women's limited access to mentors

Over the last couple of decades, mentoring has been advocated as an important career
development tool for women (Burke and McKeen, 1990; Missirian, 1982; Ragins,
1999). For example, Missirian's (1982) study of 100 senior women in corporate
positions in the United States of America confirmed that mentorship is absolutely
vital for women's career development. Similarly, both Collins' (1983) in-depth of
study of women managers and Dodgson's (1986) study of Canadian women
educational administrators found that mentoring is a crucial career tool with positive
implications for women.   Yet, much of this early research demonstrated that women
had been socially excluded from informal mentoring relationships and had greater
difficulty acquiring informal mentors to the same extent as their male colleagues (see

Byrne, 1989; Hill, Bahniuk and Dobos, 1989; Kanter, 1977; Marshall, 1985). For example, Kanter's early ethnographic study of men and women in one large corporation in the United States found that male managers were those who sponsored or mentored other males (and not females). She used the term "homosocial reproduction" to refer to the situation of men choosing other men, in their own image, thus reinforcing the masculine strategy of patronage. In other words, men who occupy powerful positions preserve the status quo by sponsoring other men thus reinforcing a gendered reproductive practice (Colley, 2002). Thus the implication of women's limited access to informal mentors was viewed as problematic because they were denied access to this type of relationship and consequently missed out on the considerable benefits male protégés enjoyed including improved career outcomes.

In more recent times, research findings have been inconsistent regarding the issue of women's limited access to informal mentors. Studies by Ragins and Cotton (1991) and Fox and Schumann (2001) found that women are as likely as men to have access to mentors. For example, Fox and Schumann (2001) who investigated the mentoring experiences of female and male city managers in the United States found that they had similar numbers of mentors, although female managers reported they had more female mentors than male mentors. In a large study of mentoring in the New Zealand public sector, Bhatta and Washington (2003) found that women were more likely than their male counterparts to have a mentor. They found that 28% of women managers compared with 16% of male managers had a mentor. The authors offer two plausible explanations for this discrepancy. Firstly, women may have more mentors because they may need them and secondly women may have made more deliberate attempts to access mentors. For these reasons, writers in the field (Bhatta and Washington, 2003;

Feeney, 2006; Tharanou, 2005) continue to argue that mentoring is a valuable career development activity for women.

The glass ceiling

Early writing in mentoring identified that women faced a variety of barriers that impeded their career development and prevented them from reaching senior management positions. Morrison, White and Van Velsor (1987) coined the term, "the glass ceiling" to explain those barriers of which mentoring was viewed to be one. Other barriers included gender discrimination, family responsibilities and a lack of informal networks. Today, women throughout the world continue to be under-represented in positions of senior management not only in government but also in the corporate world (Bhatta and Washington, 2003; Hertz, 2006; Hymowitz, 2006). By way of example, women constituted only 30% of the senior executive service (including the position of CEO) in the Queensland (Australian) public service in 2006 (in 2000, this statistic was 22%) (Office of the Public Service Commissioner, 2006, 2000). Women are also under-represented in the New Zealand public sector, with them holding just over 20% of chief executive positions and women representing one-third of senior managers (Bhatta and Washington, 2003).

In the corporate world, this situation is more severe. In 2006, the EOWA Australian Census of Women in leadership found that within the top 200 companies on the Australia Stock exchange:

- Women hold only 12% of executive manager positions (compared with 11.4% in 2004)

- Women hold 8.7% of board directorships (compared with 8.2% in 2004)

- 13.5% of companies have two or more women Board Directors (compared to 10.2% in 2004) (Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA), 2006)

While these statistics give some indication that the situation of women's under-representation in senior management has improved slightly in recent years, it is difficult to discern the reasons for this. Noteworthy is the fact that some writers continue to use the "glass ceiling" to explain the difficulties women face (Hertz, 2006; O'Brien, 2006) while others have argued that not only are glass ceilings "cracking" (Bowling, Kelleher, Jones and Wright, 2006) but the concept itself has weaknesses (Connell, 2006). The extent to which mentoring can be attributed to any improvement in women's under-representation in senior management positions is not known. Feeney (2006), for one, claims that the relationship between mentoring and promotional opportunities for public sector workers is complex to discern because there are so many other variables at play in the equation.

Mentoring: does it create better career outcomes for women?

There is a body of research that suggests that mentoring does contribute to women's career success. For example, 91% of the women CEOs who were interviewed by Ragins, Townsend and Mattis (1998) claimed they had a mentor during their career and 81% stated that mentors were critical or important people. Yet, the findings tend to be mixed in regard to whether mentoring provides more positive outcomes for women than men. For instance, a study by Burt (1998 cited in Tharanou, 2005) found that women more so than their male counterparts advanced to executive levels when they had a 'strategic sponsor'. A survey of 3220 Australians from lower to

middle levels within the public sector and finance and business service found that mentor career support increased women protégés' advancement in terms of promotion to a greater extent than their male counterparts (Tharanou, 2005). In contrast mentoring as viewed as psycho-social support only, was found not to help women's advancement more than it does for males. Career advancement and psycho-social support overall were not related to men's advancement in the study. Tharanou (2005) explained this by saying that men are likely to advance regardless of support given by a mentor. An important implication of her finding is that mentor career support should be viewed as one of many developmental activities to assist women to advance in their careers. Furthermore, her findings provide support for the argument made earlier in this paper that the particular type of the mentoring that is undertaken (i.e. career or psycho-social support) will shape the type of outcomes that are achieved from the mentoring relationship.

A study of public servants in the United States by Feeney (2006) found that access to a mentor increased the career outcomes for public managers of both genders. There was no support for the argument that mentoring produces more positive outcomes for women than men. In contrast, a study by Lortie-Lussier and Rinfret (2005) of women and men managers in the Quebec public service found that although the support of a mentor was viewed as making a contribution to both sexes in terms of career advancement, it was seen as contributing more to men's career advancement. Noteworthy, too, was the finding that 'human capital' comprising educational qualifications and experience was the most important predictor of 'objective' success (construed as salary and status) for male and female managers in the sample (Lortie-Lussier and Rinfret, 2005). As Tharanou (2005) and other researchers have argued,

more research, indeed longitudinal research, is required to determine the extent to which mentoring might be identified as a key factor in improving women's status in senior management since there are mixed findings in the research studies to date.

Issues and implications of mentoring for women managers

The final part of this paper distils three key issues that have implications for women managers who may find themselves in mentoring relationships. These include the differential outcomes that can be produced from particular types of mentoring relationships; the challenges posed by cross gender mentoring; and power as a dimension of the mentoring relationship.

Nature and focus of the mentoring relationship

There is no doubt that mentoring relationships can be experienced differently and there can be much diversity within informal and formal arrangements. At one end of the spectrum, mentoring can be experienced as an intense and profound interpersonal relationship (Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson and McPhee, 1978) and at the other it can be a perfunctory relationship where basic work-related information is shared from one party to the other. It becomes important, then, for women to recognise the type of mentoring relationship in which they are engaging and to be aware that the focus of mentoring can vary enormously and so can the outcomes. Formal programs tend to be more structured and focused with set goals. Even so, as a number of writers have suggested (see Blake-Beard, 2001; Tovey, 1998) these relationships need to be negotiated and expectations identified within the parameters of the overall program. A commonly cited difficulty in many formal mentoring programs is a lack of clarity surrounding the expectations and roles each party is to play (Hansford, Tennent and

Ehrich, 2003). Early discussions may help to allay later disappointments that may follow (Blake-Beard, 2001).   In the case of informal mentoring arrangements which simply evolve, it is likely that both parties would engage in some discussion about the activities on which they are going to work.

Another type of mentoring arrangement that has emerged over the last decade is e-mentoring and formal e-mentoring programs. E-mentoring is seen to share the same purpose of conventional mentoring (i.e. developing the skills and knowledge of a mentee / protégé) but uses electronic communication (such as e-mail and other electronic communications) to facilitate the process (Single and Single, 2005). According to a review of research based studies published from the mid 1990s, Single and Single (2005) found that e-mentoring provides many of the benefits associated with face-to-face mentoring such as psycho-social support and sharing of information. Not surprisingly, an additional benefit they found was flexibility in scheduling since geographical distances are no longer obstacles to connecting mentors and mentees.

There have been many examples of programs that have used e-mentoring programs for students in school, colleges and universities (Guy, 2002). Of interest to this paper are e-mentoring programs that have been designed to develop women's career and management potential. Headlam-Wells (2004) and Headlam-Wells, Gosland and Craig (2005) report on two such programs. Preliminary findings of the second program which involved 122 female volunteers matched in pairs indicated that the majority of participants found the website to be excellent, good or satisfactory at facilitating communication (Headlam-Wells *et al*., 2005). Furthermore, the majority of participants indicated that electronic communication was effective when used in

combination with other means such as telephone and face to face interactions. This led the researchers to conclude that a blended approach is a key way of building positive and successful mentoring relationships. A negative outcome of the evaluation was the comment by a number of participants who found the site difficult to navigate and who indicated they needed more hands on training regarding the use of on-line technologies (Headlam-Wells *et al.*, 2005). One of the basic assumptions upon which effective use of e-mentoring rests is being able to access a computer and then use the technology competently. Without this ability, it is likely that e-mentoring will create barriers for those who do not have the know-how.

A key implication of the aforementioned discussion is that women need to be aware of the nature, type and focus of the mentoring relationship in which they are engaging, whether it is face to face or e-mentoring and therefore have realistic expectations about the range of outcomes that may or may not emerge. The notion that 'everyone who makes it has a mentor' needs to be treated with some caution.

Cross gender mentoring relationships

In recent years, the workplace has been identified as a sexualised environment (Hearn, Sheppard, Tancred-Sherriff and Burrell, 1989). Not surprisingly, the issue of sexuality and sexual dynamics has arisen within the context of mentoring relationships (Morgan and Davidson, 2008). According to a critical review of the literature by Morgan and Davidson (2008), this issue remains an under-researched area, particularly in relation to female mentor – male protégé dyads and gay / lesbian / bisexual mentoring relationships. Of the limited research and writing that is available,

it pertains to cross-gender relationships involving heterosexual unions of male mentor – female protégé / mentee.

Writers in the field of cross-gender dyads have drawn attention to the difficulties that can emerge from these relationships (Hansman, 1998; Kram, 1985; Schramm, 2000). For example, Schramm (2000) and Clawson and Kram (1984) refer to cross-gender relationships that foster stereotypical behaviours in men and women, where men as mentors are reinforced as all knowing and powerful and women are obedient and compliant others. Clawson and Kram (1984) have written about the difficulties relating to sexual risks and negative comments / reactions of others as well as jealousy of spouses and co-workers who are resentful (Bowen, 1985).

Clawson and Kram's (1984) research highlighted three potential risks that can emerge within cross-gender informal mentoring relationships. Firstly, when the relationship becomes sexual, there are serious risks that may jeopardise the professional and personal lives of both parties. Clawson and Kram (1984) summarise these risks as guilt, loss of self confidence, loss of respect of others in the organisation, divorce or damage to personal relationships. Powell and Foley (1999) refer to the disruption that can be caused to family relationships because of workplace romantic relationships.

Secondly, Clawson and Kram (1984) pointed to others in the organisation who suspect that the mentor and mentee are having a sexual relationship. This is problematic whether or not this is actually the case since the consequences are still going to be significant for both parties. According to Hansman (1998), it is likely that male mentors may avoid mentoring female mentees for this very reason or if they do mentor women, they may decide not to allow themselves to become too close or intimate for fear of public scrutiny and gossip (Hansman, 1998).

Thirdly, Clawson and Kram (1984) refer to stereotypical roles and behaviours that both parties play out as a way of diffusing the fears they feel might be harmful. The "father daughter" relationship is an example of this (Kram in Spruell, 1985). In this situation, the protégé or mentee plays a dependent role with her mentor and thus does not demonstrate her skills and talents while the mentor maintains a paternalistic stance and therefore does not expect anything from the mentee. All of these stereotypical roles are unlikely to allow the mentoring relationship to develop on an egalitarian footing.

Noteworthy is an argument posed by Guy (2002) that problems emerging from cross-gender mentor dyads are not only peculiar to face to face mentoring but also reproduced in online environments. Drawing upon the work of Halbert (1999), Guy (2002) stated that, "online communication is a reflection of real-life communication and that instead of diminishing or eliminating the importance of socialised identities, online communication codifies them" (p.35). In contrast to this position, Fagenson-Eland and Yan Lu (2004) maintain that virtual relationships through internet communications, "make gender … relatively invisible" (p.155). It is evident that further research in this area is necessary to determine the extent to which on-line mentoring poses any difficulties, such as sexual risks, for cross-gender dyads.

A key implication emerging from the issue of cross-gender dyads is that although there are potential risks within the male-female mentoring dyad, such risks can and should be minimised (Bowen, 1985; Clutterbuck, 2004a; Clawson and Kram, 1984; Morgan and Davidson, 2008). For example, both Clawson and Kram (1984) and Morgan and Davidson (2008) argue that both parties need to define the boundaries between appropriate levels of intimacy and romance and maintain professional

behaviour at all times. Clutterbuck (2004a) refers to the need for openness and transparency so that spouses of the mentor and mentee do not feel threatened or concerned about the mentoring relationship. In commenting on programs where there are cross-gender dyads on-line, Guy (2002) maintains that considerable care and attention is required on the part of the mentor and organisation to minimise any potential ill-effect on the protégé. It seems that this care is required not only at the matching phase but also throughout the duration of the mentoring relationship. Following this line of reasoning, Hansman (2002) argues it is vital that issues surrounding cross-gender and cross-race mentoring pairs be identified and discussed at formal mentor training and orientation sessions to raise the awareness of mentors to these issues.

Another implication is the argument that female mentors may be best placed to work with female protégés (Schwiebert, Deck, Bradshaw, Scott and Harper, 1999) to eliminate potential cross-gender difficulties. An assumption underpinning this argument is that sexuality or sexual risk is not likely to be an issue within same gender dyads. Yet, it is possible that sexual risks could emerge when either or both party is lesbian or bisexual. As Morgan and Davidson (2008) maintain, the area of gay / lesbian and bisexual mentoring relationships is one that requires further research to determine the extent to which such relationships mirror cross-gender relationships.

Research (Burke, McKeen and McKenna, 1990; Clawson and Kram, 1984; Feeney, 2006; Tharanou, 2005) to date appears mixed regarding the question of whether same gender dyads have advantages over cross-gender dyads. While Feeney's (2006) study found that same gender mentorships compared to cross gender mentorships did not provide career advantages to women in public organisations, Tharanou's (2005) study

found that the support of women mentors translated into promotion for women they mentored to a greater extent than if they had been mentored by a male. Even if same gender relationships provide greater advantages to women than cross gender dyads, the reality is there is a limited number of women in senior positions who can play this role (Feeney, 2006; Fox and Schumann, 2001; Morgan and Davidson, 2008).

Power

Mentoring has been described as "a relationship that is both power dependent and helping" (Elmes and Smith, 2006, p.484). For this reason, power has been described as an important issue when understanding the dynamics of mentoring relationships. Clutterbuck (2004a) poses a set of important questions regarding the power base that constitutes mentoring arrangements. He asks: who controls the power in a mentoring relationship? Who should control the power? Who should set the goals and lead the conversations? Who is the active subject? All of these questions are pertinent. Clutterbuck's (2004a) view of mentoring, favouring a more developmental approach, is that it is a two-way learning process where mentors as well as mentees can benefit if they are open to the relationship. He maintains that in both formal and informal mentoring situations, there is scope to negotiate issues of power. His preference is for a type of mentoring where the mentee has choice about the setting the agenda and where he or she directs and manages the relationship (i.e. the mentee is in control) rather than a mentor who comes to the relationship with a pre-determined agenda, determines the processes of the relationship and provides only one-way information (i.e. the mentor is in control).

Yet, negotiating issues of power may be easier said than done due to the complexity of power dynamics. Elmes and Smith (2006) give some examples of "double bind

dynamics" that can exist in the mentor relationship. These include the mentor who

sees the protégé as a future competitor and therefore feels ambivalent about building

the relationship; a protégé's confidence and expertise can sometimes threaten a

mentor who may then be unprepared to provide support or assistance; and problems

can arise when a mentor sends contradictory messages to a protégé about wanting to

help but not being prepared to help at all. Sometimes these situations can result in the

protégé or mentor withdrawing from the relationship. These examples of dynamics

can be subtle yet can cause difficulties in communication between the parties.

The approach promoted by both Clutterbuck (2004a) and Elmes and Smith (2006) is

one where effective mentors should allow the protégé to define the parameters of the

relationship and mentors will need to exercise self awareness and humility. These

thoughts also resonate with the work of feminist authors (DeMarco, 1993; Schramm,

2000) who argue for mentoring relationships to be less hierarchical and directive and

more empowering for those who are mentored. For example, DeMarco (1993)

maintains that mentoring relationships should be based on three key characteristics

and these are "reciprocity, empowerment and solidarity" (p.1243). Yet as Elmes and

Smith (2006) caution, this type of mentoring may not be possible for mentors who are

easily threatened or unable to take risks. Indeed, institutions that are characterised by

competition, individualism and short-term goals are unlikely to foster a culture that

supports individuals to develop open, transparent and egalitarian mentoring

relationships.

Three key implications are raised here. Firstly, following the work of Clutterbuck

(2004a) there is a need for mentors to be conscious of the extent to which they are

directing or non-directing the mentoring relationship. Secondly, the more didactive the mentor is, the less empowering it will be for the mentee and the less likely the mentee will become independent and autonomous (Clutterbuck, 2004a). However, it is likely there will be occasions when both positions will be required. Auster (in Elmes and Smith, 2006) claims that in the beginning of a mentoring relationship, power is likely to be exercised by the mentor, while Emerson (in Elmes and Smith, 2006) maintains that this power imbalance may shift in time as the protégé gains more experience and knowledge. Effective mentors will need to be open and aware of the way they communicate with their protégés and seek to encourage protégés to take responsibility to make decisions and define the parameters of the relationship. Open honest dialogue on the part of both parties is necessary to build a relationship that is based on trust and respect.

A third implication that is raised relates to the type of power that is used within the mentoring relationship. Clutterbuck (2004a), Elmes and Smith (2006) and Schramm (2000) argue for an orientation to mentoring that is developmental, has learning as its focus and is based on power sharing or power with rather than hierarchy or power over. Thus, developmental mentoring has much to offer everyone including women managers, since mentoring is conceptualised as an egalitarian relationship where learning becomes a key outcome of mentoring. This position lies in contrast to a different type of mentoring known as "sponsorship" mentoring (Clutterbuck, 2004a) which focuses on the power and position of the mentor to bring about positive career gains for those who are mentored. Sponsorship mentoring resonates with a number of the roles mentors play according to Kram's (1985) explanation of career development. These roles are sponsorship, protection, visibility and exposure. Sponsorship

mentoring is said to opens doors for protégés and provides valuable information and access to scarce resources due to the mentor's position and power. A downside is it is elitist and idiosyncratic and not usually accessible to women (Byrne, 1989). As identified in the discussion previously, sponsorship mentoring tends to be a masculine strategy of patronage; an informal strategy used by powerful men to support and promote the careers of other men. When sponsorship mentoring is extended to females, it perpetuates the organisation "as a patriarchal system, that both the mentor and the mentee collude in unwitting ways to reproduce the ideology of the profession and the hierarchy of gender" (Olson and Ashton-Jones, 1992, p.122). In other words, while the relationship may provide special favours and privileges to the chosen mentee, this practice reinforces the organisation as gendered, masculine and hierarchical. Olson and Ashton-Jones (1992) go on to state that while such relationships can be viewed as problematic and paradoxical, they do offer an avenue for women to enter into more powerful positions and are more likely to enhance their career development. A key implication is that for women protégés in these types of relationships, not to become clones of their mentor nor to accept uncritically the practices and institutional norms they observe (Hansman, 2002). This discussion has reinforced the point that power relations underpin mentoring relationships regardless of whether such relationships are developmental or sponsorship in nature.

CONCLUSION

This paper has endeavoured to explore some of the literature and research that has argued for the role and place of mentoring to support women managers in their career development and growth. It was established that mentoring can yield both career developmental outcomes such as salary increases and promotion as well as psycho-

social supportive functions such as counselling and friendship. Mentoring can also provide valuable opportunities for learning and growth. For these reasons, it is argued that mentoring in all of its guises should be encouraged and supported.

A key contribution of this paper was the point that mentoring can be experienced differently depending on the type of mentoring relationship that is developed and even within informal and formal arrangements, there can be much diversity. The issue of power was discussed and it was argued that mentoring relationships should be open, visible and professional (particularly in relation to cross-gender mentoring relationships) and based on openness, trust and negotiation so that the protégé is empowered and can become independent. It was also argued that sponsorship mentoring raises a dilemma for women. On the one hand, it means that certain selected women are granted access to power and resources by their powerful mentors but, on the other, such a practice perpetuates a hierarchical and elitist view of mentoring that reinforces masculine strategies of power.

Given that the outcomes of mentoring relationships can and do vary, the advice of writers in the field (see de Janasz and Sullivan, 2002; Kram, 1985 Kram and Isabella, 1985; Long, 1997; Riegle, 2006) is very valuable. These writers argue that what is required is mentoring support that comes from many people and many directions since it is unlikely that one mentoring relationship is going to fulfil both psychosocial and career needs. For example, De Janasz and Sullivan (2002) make this claim in relation to women in the academy. They argue that multiple mentors are warranted to cater for the needs of women (e.g. teaching, research, publication, etc) at different times during their careers. Kram and Isabella (1985) identify peer mentoring as a

very useful strategy to help women develop psycho-social skills and build networks with likeminded others. While peer mentoring may not lead to career advancement (Kram and Isabella, 1985) it is likely to provide friendship and camaraderie for women. This type of mentoring is more in keeping with feminist values because it is not competitive or hierarchical (Schramm, 2000). Another version of mentoring is 'group mentoring' where a mentor works with a group of mentees. (Long, 1997). Finally, some of the early research findings in the field of e-mentoring has shown that it holds much promise for professional women who wish to improve their knowledge, ICT skills, overcome feelings of isolation and access networks and resources (see Headlam-Wells, 2004; Headlam-Wells *et al*., 2005). Different mentoring relationships that women managers can cultivate with peers, supervisors, significant powerful others and subordinates should be encouraged for the impact they can have on their personal, social, and career development.

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