Leadership and Mentorship

by

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B.Sc., St. Xavier's College, Calcutta University (1993)

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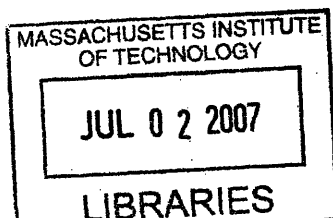
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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to learn more about mentoring relationships in organizations. Through detailed one on one interviews with mentors and mentees from a variety of different backgrounds, different age groups, genders, races, ethnicities and experiences, I develop a perspective on how mentoring relationships are structured and what met individuals expectations and what failed.

The thesis then applies principles of system dynamics to understand the complexities of organizations. Applying the assumption that the demographics in the system are represented by demographics in Fortune 500 companies today, we analyze reinforcing and balancing loops within the system to understand why there is resistance to mentorship policy and why despite good intentions, many formal mentorship policies fail.

I explore the case for mentorship through the value proposition of a mentorship relationship from the perspective of the mentor, mentee and the organization through responses collected from the interviews with mentors and mentee about why they enter into mentoring relationships and what motivates them to seek them out.

The thesis uses system dynamics principles to understand mentoring policies and the barriers posed by the system. I examine examples of mentorship policy that have worked and aim to understand their success through the framework of the model. Using learnings from the model and interviews, I try to build a list of useful elements to consider when designing effective mentorship policy. Mentorship policy like all other policies feels the tension between equity and efficiency. On one extreme, too much regulation leads to bureaucratic policy and mentoring relationships that exist long after they stop working but a lack of any regulation can leave a whole group of employees that provide diverse voices and experiences without a supportive environment to realize their potential.

Thesis Supervisor: Professor Neal A. Hartman
Title: Senior Lecturer, MIT Sloan School of Management
Thesis Advisor: Professor Peter Senge

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There are many others I would like to thank-

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- My parents for their constant encouragement and support through the entire program. Vikas, Jag, and Maria who helped me through this.

- All the people I regard as mentors and as I wrote this I realized I have been privileged to have so many – Robert Lavelle, Martha Fowlkes, Heather Grady, David Gergen, Don Bulens and Mary Robinson. I have been lucky to have the opportunity to learn from you.

- Everyone that honestly shared their thoughts and insights with me for this paper.

Leadership and Mentorship

"The crucible is an essential element in the process of becoming a leader....Some magic takes place in the crucible of leadership, whether the transformational experience is an ordeal like Mandela's years in prison or a relatively painless experience such as being mentored. The individual brings certain attributes into the crucible and emerges with new, improved leadership skills."[1] Warren Bennis, *On Becoming a Leader*

Background of the study:

While most people agree that mentorship is important and every writer on Leadership from Warren Bennis to James MacGregor emphasizes its crucial role in shaping the individual, there is not much change in the way things are moving forward. When most people agree that mentorship is a good thing, why is there no change? Why do a lot of the formal mentorship policies fail to achieve success?

How do policies move from plain lip service or good intentions to implementation? Why is there so much policy resistance? For this, we need to address obstacles that prevent people from being mentors or mentees. This paper attempts to understand the complexity of the needs of mentors and mentees and time limitations which are a significant barrier but not necessarily the crucial one. Currently mentorship is initiated by mentees and mentors that are motivated above all to find a way to incorporate mentorship into their

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[1] Warren Bennis, On Becoming a Leader, pg xx of introduction

lives. However, there are a large number of employees that are left without mentors and any support from the system. Unless there is a substantial pull from mentors or a substantial push from enlightened learning organizations, it is hard for there to be significant change. The sole push from mentees is unable to create a tipping point where mentorship is incorporated into the culture of organizations.

Statement of the problem:

James MacGregor Burns when he defines leadership talks about 'followership' as well. In his book *Leadership*, he says "Leadership over human beings is exercised when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize…institutional, political, psychological and other resources so as to arouse, engage, and satisfy the motives of the followers." Today's leaders have forgotten the follower's motives and interpret their role in a narrow way especially in business. The leader's task is defined as maximizing returns for shareholders. This definition does not even mention other stakeholders such as employees. Leading a company by Burn's definition would mean helping employees express their entire potential and achieve their goals; making the company a successful enterprise which would return value to shareholders that invest in it. The shareholders benefit as an outcome but it is not the goal for the leader.

The mentor - mentee relationship or Leader-Follower relationship is essential in any organization but mentorship and apprenticeship currently is not practiced in any meaningful way at an organizational level. For mentorship to become an integral component of leadership of any organization, Leaders whether male or female need to

have a well defined sense of the value proposition that mentorship offers before it can compete against the multiple demands on their time and energy.

For example, established women leaders that would serve as potential mentors are already struggling to balance their own careers and family life. With such few women at top leadership positions, they have many demands on their time they have succeeded. They are offered positions on boards of Fortune 500 companies and non-profits and approached constantly to speak at women's forums. With so many demands on their time, realistically there is no time for them to mentor younger women in any meaningful way along with meeting demands of a powerful job and family. So when is it time to stop struggling and start giving? This thought occurred to me when I attended a major women leader's initiative that espoused intergenerational exchange of ideas but the younger women were asked to be silent observers. When it came to networking the younger women were separated to a different room and often when they approached the established women leaders they did not receive a welcoming response. There is a big gap between our words and actions on mentorship. This thesis hopes to understand that gap and understand what we can do to bring change in the system.

Hypothesis

Every organization is a complex system. Any change in a system will be faced with some policy resistance.[2] Mentorship has long been a value to be aspired but is rarely implemented in an equitable and efficient way that allows all even the most vulnerable employees live to their potential. Companies go through a long and careful recruiting

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[2] System Dynamics, John Sterman Class notes

process to identify their new hires. After this why are they not willing to commit to the developing the full potential of each hire rather than leave it to chance? This paper hopes to take the discussion of mentorship beyond explaining definitions and understanding it which several articles and papers have already done. Lots of other studies have noted the importance of mentorship with respect to race and gender. I hope to revisit these again with a hope to tackle the value proposition of mentorship and challenges and barriers in implementation of mentorship policy in a complex system. My hypothesis is that effective change in a mentorship policy threatens to change the very culture of some organizations, the dominant power structure and the imbedded opinions and beliefs of many of their employees. Mentorship cannot help address social issues of diversity, race, age and gender. Any time one attempts to change the status quo the pushback from the system is tremendous. Mentorship policy requires such a fundamental change that it threatens even the smartest and brightest who believes in it. Hence we settle for a much smaller more controlled less equitable effort at a more superficial level and satisfy ourselves with it, declaring "availability of time" not "resistance to change" as our barrier.

Methodology:

The research style was intentionally kept non- quantitative as I wanted to try to capture the complexity of the mentorship relationship rather than isolate the correlation of a mentorship with any particular variable such as level of commitment, length of employee retention, income levels or financial returns of companies. However, as books such as *Built to Last* and *Good to Great* are proving that companies that invest in their people and

culture with a long term perspective actually do reap the rewards in ways that can be measured and quantified. The research methodology was inspired by Daniel Levinson's approach in Seasons of a Woman's Life to get textured stories and subjective interviews, often multiple interviews with the same people to build layers on their initial responses. One of the mentor interviews was very useful as she pointed out **"Just because mentorship is it isn't quantifiable doesn't mean it isn't measurable."** [3] Heather Grady had done some leading research on Women's empowerment where she had to tackle difficult issues of things that were unquantifiable but she was able to put them in terms that were certainly measurable. She designed break through qualitative measurement tools through participatory rural appraisals which aimed to assess trends over time.

Interviews were conducted with mentors and mentees with an eye for diversity of race, ethnicity, gender, class, industry experience, life experiences and overall perspectives to further our understanding what motivated them to be part of mentoring relationships. One thing I borrowed from the methodology of *Success Built to Last* was to keep an open mind even if that meant my hypothesis was proved wrong or lead me to a completely different direction. Their words "And we definitely did not want to confirm our own set of beliefs about some theory we were trying to prove. We wanted to learn!"[4] This was my key motivation through my thesis. Hence I disregarded the survey, closed question method which gives multiple choices and helps greatly with quantifying data, and seeing trends. Its disadvantages are it misses all the rich texture and ignores the complexities of each individuals experience and learning in order to tabulate responses.

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[3] Mentor Interview, Heather Grady, Realizing Rights, past Oxfam Regional Director
[4] Success Built to Last, Porras, Jerry, Emery, Stewart, Thompson, Mark, Wharton School Publishing, Pg 11

Further, as I was trying to hear people's personal stories about when they needed mentorship in their personal and professional life which they had to overcome to be successful. Hence, it was essential to do the interviews live, wherever possible in person otherwise by phone to establish trust. Each of our lives is filled with personal and professional challenges, such as tackling work while being a single parent, personal health issues, dealing with being gay or lesbian in a dominantly straight work culture, needing leaves of absence to care for elderly parents with declining heath, and questioning our ability to belong and fit in an organization.

In my rich texture stories I looked for trends as well- from people that were in a position to mentor but did not, what the barriers were and if they felt they would be interested in different circumstances to do more. Interviews with mentees aimed at finding patterns to see if they looked for mentors that had some commonality to them, if they were able to find mentors as desired and if they were satisfied with their development at the companies or organizations they worked at. A lot of the interviewing required gently pushing back, questioning assumptions of the lack of time, questioning if mentoring had been considered as doing their job well and was part of the compensation they received would they still disregard it?

The mentors and mentees selected for this study were chosen with a view to collect experiences from as diverse a group as possible. Factors considered were age, class, years of experience, race, ethnicity, industry, level of education, economic class and difference in perspectives.

Distribution by Race and Ethnicity:

Race	Male	Female	Total
American (white)	3	5	8
Latin American	1	1	2
South Asian (Including Indian and Chinese)	3	4	7
Russian/Romanian/Polish	1	1	2
African	1		1
Caribbean	2		2
Japanese		1	1
American (African American)	1	1	2
Total	**12**	**13**	**25**

Distribution by Career and Industry:

Career	Male	Female	Total
Consulting	2	1	3
Medicine/pharmaceutical	1	2	3
Media	1	2	3
Retail/ Technology/Manufacturing	3	1	4
Finance/Insurance	2	1	3
Law		1	1
Non-profit/ Government	2	4	6
Education/Academia	1	1	2
Total	12	13	25

Viewing a Person as a whole and mentoring the whole person.

We love to isolate variables in a person and we choose to view their identity only in one category. Mentoring has long fallen prey to either ignoring all categorizations or picking only one or a select view of people to mentor. People have complex lives and complex circumstances.

➢ Woman

➢ Race Issues

➢ Children issues, single parent

➢ Work/life balance

➢ Handicap and disability

- ➢ Financial stress

- ➢ Mental and physical illness

- ➢ Stability of home

- ➢ Difficult childhood

The more issues like the ones above a candidate has, the more pressure he/she is at the job as there is constant spillover from the personal life to the professional life. Thus the more vulnerable the person, one could assume the higher the need for a safety net or support system. Mentee, Melindah Sharma was lucky to have mentors in her life as she dealt with issues of her father's health and raising a child as a single mother. "I was lucky to have great mentors, Radha Jalan, CEO of Electro Chem., a fuel cell company helped me start a non-profit and was one the primary and most significant mentors for me. She was a formal mentor assigned by the PEACE advisory board in my role as Executive Director and was very helpful advising me personally and professionally. Being a daughter, my parental health responsibilities were important to me. My dad had a stroke when I was working and finishing school simultaneously. I went to India to be with him. This had great impact financially, emotionally, academically and professionally. One of my business partners Gaurav, who has also been a mentor, took a large amount of responsibility and took over my projects seamlessly so my clients were not impacted at all."[5]

Depending upon the industry, the voices of a particular group might be critical in the decision making process and all organizations should encourage diversity for the value

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[5] Mentee Interview, Melindah Sharma, Pharmaceutical Industry

and difference of perspectives it brings the organization. In *Good to Great,* Jim Collins

says that one of the characteristics of the companies that help them become great was

getting the right people. From my interviews, I gathered that the bulk of companies and

organizations never make it to "GREAT". They do a great job of identifying the right

people but then are unable to retain them because of the culture and environment of the

organization does not let diverse voices be heard and survive.

"It is really important to make an investment in the whole person. It is satisfying –people

give to you and you give back. For any organization it is key to see an employee as a

whole person to get to know them as a whole person, feels good to know you have

something to offer…There was a person in our office who was very talented at his job

and in those situations it is tempting to leave them there but if we had thought of the

person as a whole and we would have realized he needed to grow, change and learn and

made the changes so he was growing and advancing maybe he might have stayed with

the job and we might have kept him at MIT."[6]

Mentee Anupama Jati's mentor played a crucial role in her success. "When I had surgery

and was pregnant, my supervisor came to know and gave a very light schedule and

partnered me with another person so that they would cover my patients for me and I

could rest."[7]

The sample set for this thesis not statistically significant and anecdotal rather than data

driven so one cannot draw any conclusive evidence on causality of organization's success

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[6] Mentor interview, Sarah Wolozin, Department of Media Studies, MIT
[7] Mentor interview, Anupama Jati, Doctor

or failure with hiring policies. While this is not a focus of this paper, it is worthwhile to note that companies that do a lot to get the right people in but then are unable to retain that talent. Many companies throw up their hands in frustration. "It is not that we don't hire women or African- Americans, we do, we want them to bring diversity to our workforce, they just don't stay, and the turnover numbers are atrocious", said one business person from a company in the finance industry over a dinner on "Leadership and Women's Mentoring". In my interviews, however I learnt the reasons people left their organizations- lack of support or understanding from a consulting company for a single mother; a formal mentor that competed, constantly criticized and was too overbearing with a medical resident who rather than valuing the mentorship ended up feeling more isolated at the organization because of it, employees that felt they were not empowered to make any decisions. For organizations to take mentorship seriously each stakeholder has to be aware of the value proposition to them and the value of mentorship needs to not be something amorphous but compelling enough for them to warrant the difficulties that change and its implementation bring.

Value Proposition of Mentorship

In today's world, mentorship has become an even more important way for companies to differentiate themselves from each other. Especially as more and more businesses claim that their employees are their core asset as business moves from manufacturing to services. "It is whether you view the short term or the long term, over the long term the core asset of the company is people- if you think of mentorship and apprenticeship are preserving the core asset of the company – people, then mentorship makes financial sense

as well."[8] Further as Peter Drucker the management guru says we are in the knowledge economy. The knowledge worker tends to be more like a freelancer with their time span of employment at companies reducing. In their paper, Pittinsky and Shih call the knowledge worker, knowledge nomads because of their characteristic mobility. They show through empirical analysis that it is even more important today for managers to be leaders and engage the knowledge nomads so they may form commitments to the organization. Mentorship is one such way of harnessing commitment and engaging "the knowledge nomad as they move from job to job"[9].

"Managers often have a common mindset about turnover and commitment that limits their ability to lead…. As a result, they fail to unleash the commitment of their employees, especially the commitment of a young, growing, mobile and significant segment of the workforce – knowledge nomads….engagement is also associated with desirable outcomes for the workers themselves. There is compelling evidence that individuals want to feel committed."[10]

Mentorship is becoming more relevant and more important in our world but CEO's and leaders of many organizations still largely leave it to chance. The employees that are motivated and skilled enough to be able to seek and recruit mentors benefit from mentorship while the others are left without it. It is mostly the responsibility of the

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[8] Mentor Interview, Vikas Taneja, Vice President, The Boston Consulting Group
[9] Pittinsky, Todd, Shih, Margaret, *Knowledge Nomads*, Center for Public Leadership, Working Papers, Spring 2006
[10] Pittinsky, Todd, Shih, Margaret, *Knowledge Nomads*, Center for Public Leadership, Working Papers, Spring 2006

employees themselves. That said, several companies have formal mentorship policies, some effective and others largely ineffective.

Additional research being done by Todd Pittinsky and Brian Welle has also found that the traditional view of scarce resources- limited time that needs to be dedicated to work and family life and hence other interpersonal relations (including mentorship) would have a negative correlation to time spent on professional leadership is not necessarily true.[11] While the focus of their work was on aspiring leaders intentions and focused on professional and interpersonal (non-professional) relationship correlation, the findings could probably extend to mentorship relations.

It would be worthwhile to do future research to see if what our mothers told us "the busiest people do the most work not the ones who have more time" is true. If in fact the most successful leaders do not feel that mentorship has a negative correlation with the amount of time they spend with family or other professional endeavors. If we can show that like the rising tide that lifts all boats mentorship is helping all the stakeholders, mentors, mentees and the organization, there may be more motivation to lift the barriers on implementation of mentorship.

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[11] Pittinsky, Todd, Welle, Brian. *Not so Lonely at the Top,* Working Paper, Center for Public Leadership- Spring 2006, pg 146-149

Mentorship within a complex organization
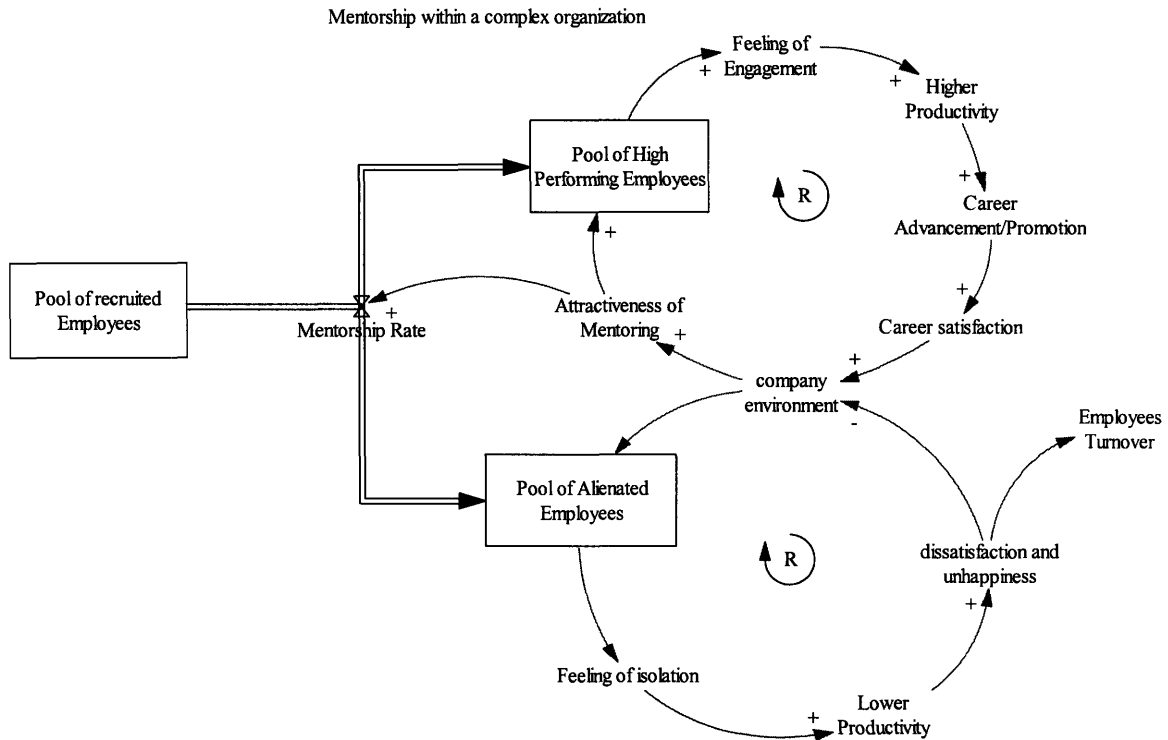
Mentorship within a Complex Organization:

The system dynamic model attached is a very basic attempt to track the impact of mentorship in an organization. If one can make the simple assumption that mentorship helps employees or members of an organization feel connected as a result of relationship with the mentor and the mentor's networks. This would lead to the individual employee feeling engaged and empowered helping them achieve a high level of productivity; which in turn leads to promotion and career advancement within the organization. On the other hand, individuals that are unable to find mentors feel a sense of isolation and function at lower than optimal levels of productivity, taking longer to advance their careers,

dissatisfied and eventually leaving the organization. The first loop of the dominant culture of the organization is a virtuous reinforcing loop while the second loop of diversity or change is also a reinforcing loop but a vicious one. Hence if the system is left at status quo, the dominant culture of the organization will be reinforced and people that fit those existing values will succeed (may or may not be most talented people), and the diverse voices that do not fit the culture will be removed through the balancing loop and leave the system through employee turnover. This model leads us to reward success to the successful.[12]

Thus any organization that is hoping to change itself needs a direct intervention in the process. As organizations become more aware of the value of diverse perspectives, be they people of different religions, age groups, viewpoints, gender, or race and ethnicities they will need to understand that the survival of these groups needs intervention in the system so they are not isolated and underpowered in the dominant culture.

Modeling Diversity through the Model:

If now we introduce a layer of complexity by adding a few assumptions. First, that in most of Corporate America, the senior management is mostly middle aged or older white male (as is a high percentage) and secondly, like minded people tend to gravitate to each other and mentees and mentor seek to form relationships with someone usually when they share a common element, be that race, gender, or financial background, then the reinforcing loops show us that the mentees will mirror the senior management. "…Only

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[12] Archetype "success to the successful", Fifth Discipline Field Book, Peter Senge

about 16 percent of corporate officers at Fortune 500 companies are women, according to Catalyst, an organization that studies women in the workplace. The numbers are even sparer at the top of the pyramid: women fill only nine, or less than 2 percent, of the chief executive jobs at Fortune 500 companies."[13] Hence given the original demographics, the demographic distribution of the organization will not change or change very slowly over time. The system will continue to perpetuate itself even if the hiring and recruitment processes change to try to hire for gender, race and ethnicity diversity. The loop for diverse people that do not fit the system unfortunately is a vicious reinforcing loop rather than a virtuous one. Anybody that does not reflect the values and demographics of the senior management will have a harder time getting them to be mentors and gaining their support. If they are unable to recruit mentors, they will feel more isolated and less empowered to navigate within the system. Mentors within organizations are especially helpful with acquainting new recruits with the informal dos and don't of the organization. Less empowered recruits especially those that anyway represent different and diverse voices might withhold their actual views and not express their dissatisfaction. Over time they become marginalized and leave. So one could model an outcome where there are very few women in an organization and maybe none in senior management and the organization makes a huge commitment to recruit more women without providing mentorship or an environment to make them comfortable causing them to become dissatisfied and leave over time.

The organization does not understand why its effort failed and assumes that women cannot succeed in that industry. "There have been women in the pipeline for 20 to 25

[13] Crebwell, Julie, **How Suite It Isn't: A Dearth of Female Bosses** - New York Times, 12/17/2006,

years; progress has been slower than anybody thought it ever would be, " laments Julie H. Daum, the North American board practice leader for Spencer Stuart, the executive search firm. She says she does not expect the situation to change anytime soon. "It's not as if we're in the beginning of something that's going to explode and that there are going to be lots of women in the c- suite," she said. "I think we're still way far removed from where we should be and from where women would like to be."[14]

This corresponds with the information mentioned by several mentors and mentees. Mentor Jag Duggal who worked in consulting for over 10 years and mentored several men and women through his years said, "Women struggled more at finding their niche as there was a large skew to males amongst senior partners. The one female partner that was most successful and still doing line consulting was in demand and had about 20-25 women in fact almost all women in the Boston office looking up to her and seeking her out. It was probably overwhelming for her. In my opinion, foreigners struggled the most and they had the hardest time finding their mentors. In most consulting companies people make snap judgments about on people based on demeanor and behavior. Assumptions are made without factoring cultural references as people only want to invest in the people they think will make it to the top. It is such a high turnover model; it is not worth it to put effort into others."[15]

Many banks and financial institutions complain today "we hire African- Americans and women; they just do not have what it takes to survive in the system and leave. They don't

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[14] Crebwell, Julie, **How Suite It Isn't: A Dearth of Female Bosses** - New York Times, 12/17/2006
[15] Mentor interview, Jag Duggal, Consulting/ Techonology

want these jobs"[16] With the above model, we can see how such a statement can be a clear distortion of the true causality of the problem of retention. While mentorship is just one of the variables in the mix, it could have a strong impact in providing a safety net and backing to diverse voices if there is support from someone within the system especially at a senior level.

Using the Model to Understand the Solution:

To negate the level of the balancing loop and actually change demographics, the organization needs to change the way mentorship occurs not just through self selection even though self-selection is very efficient and maybe effective for a small group, it is important to ensure mentorship is equitable and that vulnerable recruits and diverse voices get supported as well. Thus a conscious deliberate effort on the part of the organization and the mentors are required to reach out to that group to make sure they all do not fall into the isolated and marginalized pool that leaves but add them to the pool of engaged employees. Once this loop (reinforcing loop) starts including diversity it will reinforce itself and help to build upon the initial base once there is a sustainable base formed. The organization and senior management needs to be really committed to change they need to build the environment and dedicate the time and resources to help the new group survive and thrive in the organization. Only then can they see a change in demographics in the long term.

Here are some of the responses gathered from the interviews with mentors and mentees about the value of their mentorship experience for them.

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[16] Comment made by a senior manager of a large American bank whose name is deliberately withheld

Value Proposition of Mentorship for the Mentor:

One of the most striking findings in the interviews was that most people who mentored had had successful mentoring relationships when they were mentees. Almost every one of the mentors stressed the need to give back to the system (not necessarily limited to the same organization) which points to valuable positive virtuous loop that occurs with every successful mentoring relationship. This was a key motivator for many mentors and mentees (that have mentor roles in other relationships) that were interviewed. When is it time to stop grasping and start giving? It seems the time is now. There seems to be no perfect time level of achievement at which point one starts mentoring. "There is always room for mentorship. There is always someone else 2 steps behind and it is a matter of taking time and seeing importance of it."[17]

Some of the key benefits of mentorship that mentors mentioned in their interviews were

-Takes them out of their isolation at the top

-Mentoring younger talent keeps them up to date with what is happening through out their organization

-Enriches their own learning.[18]

-Succession planning for organization. There was a sense of people seeing the cause as bigger than themselves and wanting to pass the torch on to younger capable individuals who they thought had high potential. Mentor Maria Levis sees this as a key reason that

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[17] Mentee Interview, Ama Marston, Non-Profit Sector
[18] This came up as an important point both from mentors and mentees as a key factor for success and sustainability of the relationship.

she was able to engage mentors at United Way, UNICEF, and the UN when she had first started to build her non-profit in Puerto Rico.

- Fairness (seeing the right people succeed; seeing people live up to their potential)

- Emotional satisfaction and pleasure of seeing someone they mentor do well

- The relationships and friendships built

- Preserving a good culture in their company or departments; setting an example for other senior executives

- Reputation within the company

- Mentorship and meaning to one's life: What seems to be the most discerning factor for deciding if mentors spend time to mentor others is not the availability of time but is clearly motivation and commitment to mentorship.

Value Proposition of Mentorship for the Mentee:

Mentee Interviewee, Yiting Shen joined a mentorship program offered by Columbia University that was such a great experience that despite her shy personality changed her so she actively sought out mentors thereafter well beyond her years at Columbia University. "It was such a treasure to have a mentorship with Chester Lee. Without that experience my time at Columbia would have been a different experience. It was amazing for me to see his consistent and persistent passion for the school even though he had graduated 35 years ago."[19] The experience helped Yiting an otherwise shy person, change her pattern and seek out mentors both at work and further education from thereon. Yiting also emulated her mentor and in turn gave back to Columbia University by helping the Asian American Alumni Association that had been started by Chester to mentor Asian

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[19] Mentee Interview, Yiting Shen, Student, MIT Sloan School/Harvard Kennedy School

students coming to Columbia. Yiting went on to both seek mentors herself and mentor others and was an ambassador both at MIT Sloan and the Kennedy School hosting and helping new students settle down. Some of the benefits that mentees mentioned in their interviews were

- The ability to gain from learnings of successful leaders

- Realizing their potential which they may not have on their own

- Encouragement and self confidence

- Career and personal advice

- Role model to emulate

- Increased visibility within the organization

- A network of people and job opportunities

- Faster career growth

- Ability to get additional responsibility, the first break, and high visibility projects

- Build friendship and relationships

- Learning to navigate the organization and informal dos and don't of organizations

Value Proposition of Mentorship for the Organization:

The mentors and mentees mentioned the following beneficial outcomes for organizations that encouraged mentorship

- Keep institutional learning in the organization

-Build learning organizations[20]

- Create loyalty of contractors, employees and temporary/ part-time/ freelancers.[21]

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[20] Senge, Peter, **The Fifth Discipline,** Doubleday Books. copyright 1990
[21] Drucker, Peter, **Landmarks of Tomorrow**, 1959, Harper Collins

- Help employees of diverse cultures flourish and settle in new environments

- Stem employee turnover

- Ensure a meritocracy

- Prevent senior management from isolation of ideas at the top

- Keep senior management informed of changes that may be happening. Change is usually embraced by younger generations whose patterns shift with the environment. Older managers may be out of touch with trends. Mentorship could help them connect with this younger generation to open new understanding of business opportunities. E.g. many business opportunities today in Corporate America have been missed by the larger more established companies as trends are catching on in a younger age group and they are able to see opportunities such as the growing popularity of companies in the web 2.0 space such as FaceBook, Second Life, and Online Gaming etc. "It is just not possible any longer to figure it out from the top, and have everyone follow the orders of the "grand strategist". The organizations that will truly excel in the future will be organizations that discover how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn at *all* levels in an organization."[22]

-Create a community within the organization

- A safety net and support system within the organization

- Successful CEO's have been known to be characterized by the ability to build peer and mentorship relationships along the way.

- Development of internal talent for senior management – for example GE's Leadership Rotational program has become legendary and many companies have tried to emulate it.

- Engage the highly mobile knowledge worker

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[22] Senge, Peter, Currency Doubleday Publishing, 1990, The Fifth Discipline, pg 4

- Values based management

- Building social capital fabric within the organization and hence all the benefits of social capital

- Helping women succeed and stay at workplaces

If in spite of these various benefits, mentorship is still not being implemented it is worthwhile to examine our system and see what **barriers and resistance** is inbuilt in the structure of the system that makes it hard to implement something in general stakeholders believe is good.

Policy Resistance in the Model:

Till there is an intervention in our model for mentorship, significant push from organizations, pull from mentors reaching out to not just the usual individuals that know how to make the status quo work for them, or vulnerable mentees are empowered and enabled to reach out for help, nothing will change. Informal mentoring divides groups into those that have the skills to recruit and reach out to mentors and those that don't. If there is no intervention in the system then the group that is vulnerable gets left out as the model rewards "success to the successful". If there is intervention and mentors are assigned then there is a whole new level of threat from the system to change and unfamiliar territory.

System Dynamics principles can be applied to organizations to help us understand why when mentorship policies are implemented, they meet significant policy resistance.
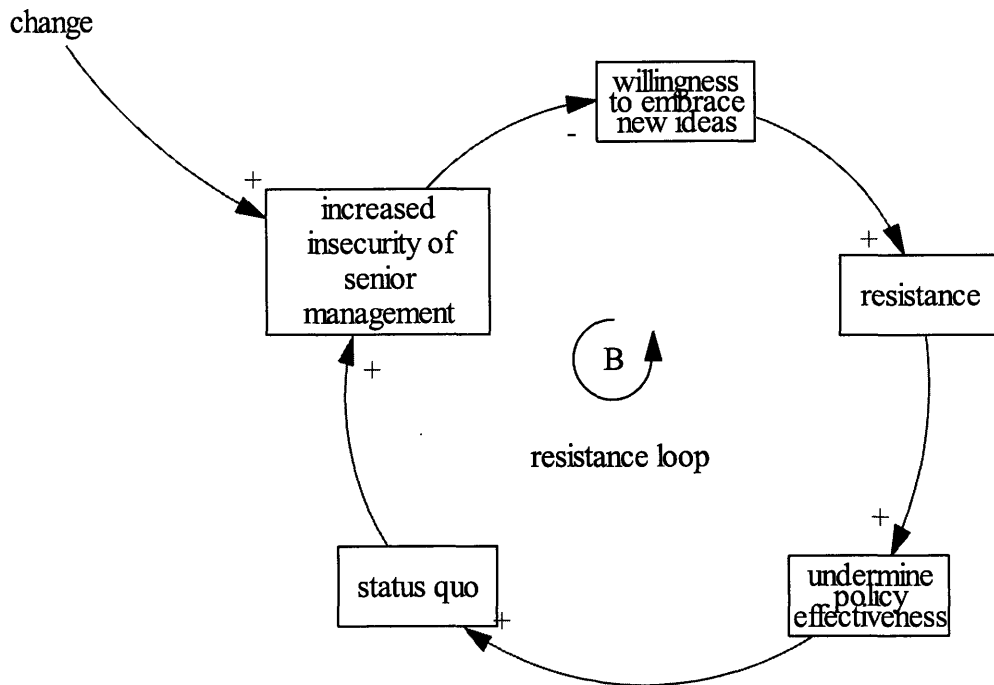
In every model, there are individuals that are benefiting from the existing system. These individuals are inclined to keep their benefits and power. If the new system threatens their power or reduces their benefits they will oppose it to whatever extent they can whether visibly or invisibly. All things being equal if competency is the only metric used for evaluation would the people in power still have their job? Does the policy oppose their belief system?

"The conventional explanation for wage gap – job segregation- is incorrect because it ignores men's incentive to preserve their advantages and their ability to do so by establishing the rules that distribute the rewards….neither sex-integrating jobs nor implementing comparable worth will markedly improve women's employment status because men can subvert these mechanisms or even change the rules by which rewards are allocated."[23] Thus there is a very real reason for tremendous policy resistance from the majority within the system with power. Also "as newcomers, women (or any diverse perspectives) may reflect contemporary trends in management (Fondas, 1997), including an emphasis on transformational leadership, that may threaten older, more established mangers."[24] Till they are not convinced that the change is in their long term best interest, they will continue a stronger resistance to change.

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[23] Reskin, Barbara, *Bringing the Men Back In*, Cheryl Miller Lecture 1987, Sage Social Science Collections
[24] Eagley, Alice H., Johannesen-Schmidt, Mary, *The Leadership Styles of Women and Men*, Northwestern University, 2001, The Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, Journal of Social Issues, Vol. 57

change


```
                          willingness
                          to embrace
                           new ideas
                                       -
              +
          increased                              +
          insecurity of                      resistance
          senior
          management
                        +        B
                                                       +
                          resistance loop
                                              undermine
          status quo                           policy
                          +                  effectiveness
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Prisoners of the System or Prisoners of Our Own Thinking?[25]

"We do not have mental models. We "are" our mental models. They are the medium

through which we and the world interact….Learning that changes our mental models is

immensely challenging. It is disorienting. It can be frightening as we confront cherished

beliefs and assumptions. It cannot be done alone. It can only occur within a community

of learners."[26] Mentorship policies based on equity challenge age, race, ethnicity and

gender assumptions and key beliefs that are held by the majority in the system. Given that

they topple the dominant group that wants to hold on to its power, why are we surprised

that success is actually incredibly hard to achieve and is achieved over a long period of

time with small incremental shifts of mindset. If senior management is able to see that in

the long term, the very survival of their organization and hence their jobs are dependent

on hiring the most capable minds and empowering all employees they recruit to perform

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[25] Senge, Peter, The Fifth Discipline, Title taken from Chapter 3 of the book.

[26] Senge, Peter, The Fifth Discipline, pg xv, Doubleday Books. copyright 1990

at the optimal level, they may be able to see that in the long term mentorship helps their objectives rather than threatens them. However as Peter Senge describes in the Fifth Discipline the traps and barriers we fall into are similar to those we experienced first hand at the beer game we played at MIT-

- "(People) become their position. People do not see how their actions affect other positions.

- Consequently, when problems arise, they quickly blame each other – 'the enemy" becomes the players at the other positions.

- When people get proactive….they make matters worse. (because they set a whole new chain of events into motion with every intervention)

- ….they don't realize the direness of the situation till it is too late.

- By and large, they don't learn form their experience because most important consequences of their actions occur elsewhere in the system, eventually coming back to create the problems they blame on others."[27]

Pygmalion in the Classroom

In 1968, Robert Rosenthal and Leonore Jacobson published 'Pygmalion in the classroom: Teacher expectation and pupils' intellectual development. "Put simply, the main argument of the book is that the expectations that teachers have about their students' behavior can unwittingly influence such behavior. This influence, or self-fulfilling prophecy, could have a positive or negative impact. In other words, when teachers expect students to do well, they tend to do well; when teachers expect students to fail, they tend

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[27] Senge Peter, The Fifth Discipline, findings from the beer game- pg 51

to fail. The concept of self-fulfilling prophecy had been introduced to the sociological debate by Robert Merton in a seminal essay published in the *Antioch Review* in 1948. In that article, Merton described a self-fulfilling prophecy as a three-stage process beginning with a person's belief (false at the time it is held) that a certain event will happen in the future. In the second stage this expectation, or prophecy, leads to a new behavior that the person would have not undertake in the absence of such expectation. In the last stage the expected events actually take place, and the prophecy is fulfilled." [28]

"If this phenomenon is true in the classroom, then could have important implications for mentoring relationships." explains Professor Senge. If mentors believe that particular employees have more potential then do those employees internalize the expectation and perform at a higher level and when there are no mentors or supervisors do not have favorable impressions of certain employees do they also try to fulfill the unfavorable impression and get discourage and try less. If individuals within organizations are feeling defeated and isolated then we know mentorship is certainly not working for everyone.

"Often, these negative expectations are based on appearances and other factors that have little to do with actual intellectual ability: Rosenthal and Jacobson's study and subsequent research confirmed that teachers' expectations matter, that student labeling is often done on arbitrary and biased grounds, and suggested that through the hidden curriculum teachers can, consciously or unconsciously, reinforce existing class, ethnic and gender inequalities. This is done by creating a classroom atmosphere in which some students are

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[28] http://www.wier.ca/~%20daniel_schugurensky/assignment1/1968rosenjacob.html
Website: History of education

systematically encouraged to succeed whereas others are systematically discouraged, reproducing in the classroom the social cycle of advantages and disadvantages."28

Hence senior management may arbitrarily form positive or negative impressions of employees which then feed into the employee's chance of being mentored and succeeding within the firm. This sets of a chain of reinforcing events impacting the performance and satisfaction of the employees, leading them to "bloom" if they were amongst the chosen few or "fail" and fulfill the unfavorable expectations of their superiors if they were arbitrarily rejected as their talents were unrecognized.

Barriers for Mentorship:

Incentives for Leaders:

The system currently rewards the go-it-alone, larger than life, Fortune cover CEO rather than the quiet collaborators and nurturers. Warren Bennis explains, "Americans have always tended to see their institutions as the lengthened shadows of great men – a tendency that drove a genuinely collaborative leader like John Adams to near madness- and we have tended to reward such charismatic leaders out of proportion to their contribution."[29] In America individualism is rewarded and the swaggering John Wayne is respected and idolized. The larger than life charismatic CEO gets the limelight and accolades over the more genuine, mentoring long lasting CEO which is now getting acknowledged in books such as *Built to Last* as we do our own soul searching with the corporate scandals and disappointments. One has to be seen as "tough" and "ruthless" to be successful in corporate America, nurturing and collaboration are seen as a weakness

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[29] Warren Bennis, On Becoming a Leader, pg. xiii

and fluffy stuff. Till we can show that mentorship counts to key objectives of stakeholders and ultimately shareholders and CEO's start thinking beyond shareholders and Wall Street analysts that impact their stock price in the short term, it is doubtful we will see a change in the system.

Time:

Mentees usually want to approach successful people in their field. By nature there are more mentees that all clamor for the attention of the 3-4 successful partners of the firm or the senior executives in the organization. Throw into this mix that the senior executives shoulder a significant level of responsibility at work and have a difficult time balancing their work life and family demands on their time. Many successful people are also giving their time to be on boards of other companies, non-profits and charitable organizations they care about. Additionally they are busy with speaking engagements at trade conferences, management conferences and other personal endeavors. Mentorship comes fairly low in relative priority to all these other needs. Time was an issue that was mentioned by virtually every mentor and mentee. However, we prioritize our time. If mentorship was a key objective of doing our job well and was compensated as such, how many of us would feel comfortable reporting we do a bad job at work because we do not have enough time to do a good job.

Tendency to Choose Mentors like Oneself:

If there is a tendency of mentees to approach people of similar gender say women tend to approach only women or mostly women then given there are fewer women leaders, their

time is at a higher premium than their male counterparts. This would imply fewer

opportunities for women to be mentored than men even if all other variables are the same.

"…Only about 16 percent of corporate officers at Fortune 500 companies are women,

according to Catalyst, an organization that studies women in the workplace. The numbers

are even sparer at the top of the pyramid: women fill only nine, or less than 2 percent, of

the chief executive jobs at Fortune 500 companies."13

The flip side of this problem is that the senior management is mostly made up of men that

feel more comfortable with each other and are more at ease advocating for another man.

"Analysts and executive women say that one of the biggest roadblocks between women

and the c-suite is the thick layer of men who dominate boardrooms and corner offices

across the country. "The men in the boardroom and the men at the top are choosing and

tend to choose who they are comfortable with: other men," Ms. Bartz (CEO of

AutoDesk) says."[30]

"Challenges of Cross-Race & Cross-Gender Mentoring Relationships[31]

Stacy Blake –Beard regards trust, tokenism, identification, developmental dilemma and

protective hesitation" to be crucial barriers to cross gender and cross race mentorship.

Cross- race and cross-gender mentorship offers a unique opportunity and threat. The

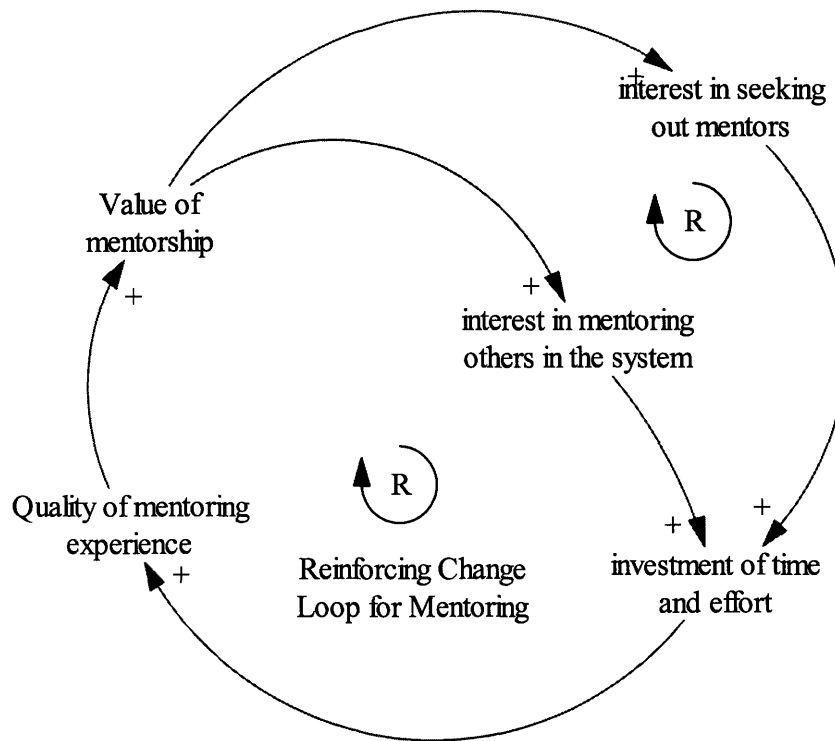unique opportunity is offers is a chance for both the mentor and mentee to learn from

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[30] Crebwell, Julie, **How Suite It Isn't: A Dearth of Female Bosses** - New York Times, 12/17/2006

[31] Taken from power point presentation by leading mentorship research done by Stacy BlakeBeard, Phd, Simmons School of Management, Center for Gender in Organization
http://www.mentornet.net/Documents/Files/SACNAS.Stacy.Blake.Beard.pdf

each other which seems like it is a vital element in sustainability of a mentoring relationship. This however takes significant effort, and respect that both individuals must have for each other or it can reduce to a token effort blocking the way for a more productive mentoring relationship. Further the mentor may be intimidated to push the mentee further and censor themselves or lower their expectations. Cross-race and cross-gender mentoring relationships also need a high level of comfort and communication to be established to build trust in the relationship. It requires significant effort but the payoff can be huge when it occurs as it encourages genuine systemic change in the organization. We return to this topic to study the benefits of cross gender and cross race mentoring relationship vs. same race and same gender relationship later in the thesis.

Reinforcing Loops of Mentorship

Reinforcing Loops for Mentorship

interest in seeking
out mentors

Value of
mentorship

R

+

interest in mentoring
others in the system

Quality of mentoring
experience

R

+

Reinforcing Change
Loop for Mentoring

investment of time
and effort

+   +

+

The loop is neutral, not virtuous or vicious in and of itself. Movement in any one

direction creates more movement towards the same direction. The implication of this is

that the first few steps in the system are crucially important as they set off reinforcing

loops either in a positive or negative direction. For individuals that are able to find

successful mentoring relationships they have a positive experience and go on to seek out

mentors in the future and are more receptive to being mentors. Simultaneously

individuals having negative mentoring experiences result in the exact opposite result. A

mentor is less willing in the future to invest as much time and grows cynical and mentees do not seek out mentors as aggressively within the system and have a reduced sense of belonging or empowerment to the organization. When mentees do not have the sense of belonging in the system, they are less likely to volunteer their time to give back to the system.

Positive Path for the Reinforcing Loop

Another Reinforcing Loop for Mentorship
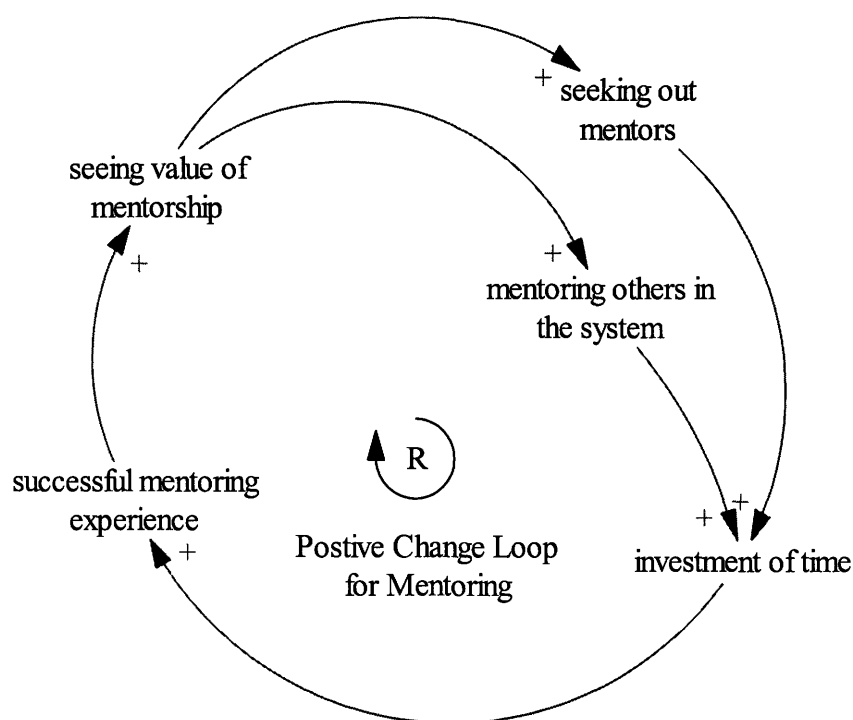
A key characteristic I observed was that mentors and mentees often had both mentoring and mentee relationships simultaneously. Often individuals that had participated in a successful mentoring relationship sought out more of them both as mentees forming additional mentors inside and outside their organization and mentees feeling of wanting

to give back to the system and mentor others. This positive change functions like a viral word of mouth loop where one good experience helps you seek out more experiences not just for more mentors but also a higher willingness to mentor someone else. The value of this loop is undervalued in development of mentorship policy and it may hold a key to reducing the barriers to mentorship over time. As people see tangible results and are happy with the investment of time and resources in past relationships they are most willing to invest more time and effort to what they think is a valuable endeavor and prioritize it higher.

This virtuous circle of positive change does not stay just within one organization but as employees leave and change jobs, they encourage and are willing to take a chance to mentor and seek mentors within those systems as well. Mentee, Bonnie Rosenbaum had several positive mentorship experiences at organizations where she worked. Convinced of the value that mentorship had in her life, she decided to mentor at the Posse Foundation as a writing mentor to underprivileged students starting her own virtuous loop into motion. Further upon moving to new organizations, she invested the time upfront and took the effort to seek out mentors, and recruit them as she had seen the value they had been able to add to her prior experiences. Sarah Wolozin, Program Manager at MIT's Department of Media Studies mentioned, "At MIT, people naturally mentor you; there is a strong culture of encouraging job growth and people helping each other and mentoring. It is intrinsic in the culture of the place. I believe the culture is set at the top and trickles down. There is a viral transfer of good feelings. Now I'm helping someone who came in

as a graduate administrator as when I came in there initially there were a lot of people

willing to bend over backwards to help me and I'd like to return that good will."[32]

The Laws of the Fifth Discipline Applied to Mentorship

The following framework from management theory from Senge's Fifth Discipline can be

used to study and understand mentorship in organizations.

1. "Today's problems come from yesterday's solutions.

2. The harder you push, the harder the system pushes back- compensating feedback.

3. The easy way out usually leads back in

4. The cure can be worse than the disease

5. Faster is slower

6. Cause and effect are not closely related in time and space

7. Small changes can produce big results- but the areas of highest leverage are often

    the least obvious".[33]

Current Best Practices at Companies and Organizations

The Boston Consulting Group:

The company makes sure the incentive for partners at the firm is real. They offer the

North Star Award that rewards the senior executives that are in the top quartile of

revenues brought to the company **AND** the top quartile of mentorship and apprenticeship.

This award is not just great for reputation but is associated with financial compensation

of the senior executives which conveys the message that the firm takes mentorship and

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[32] Mentor Interview, Sarah Wolozin, Program Manager, MIT Media Studies
[33] Selective pieces of the Framework are taken from The Laws of the Fifth Discipline, Senge, Peter, For entire framework consult Pg 57-67

apprenticeship very seriously as seriously as they take company revenue and expanding the business.

Oxfam International:

Oxfam International has had a formal mentorship program that has proved successful over a long time. Mentor, Heather Grady had two women mentors while she was employed at Oxfam. Oxfam is an international organization and has had a thoughtful and reflective approach to mentorship. Heather applied to be a regional director, a position in the senior management of the organization. As a requirement the person in the position had to be willing to be mentored for 2 years with a team of two formal mentors, one an organizational change consultant and the other, a person who has worked within Oxfam for a long time and had deep knowledge of the organization. The formal mentorship started with diagnostic testing and an understanding and analysis of personality and thereafter the mentorship process built on existing strengths and weaknesses. Heather felt that the reason it worked was that is was formal and structured. It included formalized bi-weekly talks. One key component to its success was two way feedback. Heather felt the key piece that was internal to the organization included 360 degree feedback which let you know your peer's and junior's assessment. Heather mentioned "Mentoring is changing individual behavior and in some ways women are more receptive. Of the eight regional directors, the men did not do as well; they felt more awkward being as self-reflective". 34

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[34] Mentor Interview, Heather Grady, Realizing Rights, past Oxfam Regional Director

Red Cross

Mentor Patricia Deyton helped to create a formal mentorship program at the American Red Cross. They put a lot of thought into good matching, good timetables, deliverables, and signed contracts for mentoring relationships. The huge effort was initiated as a way for the Red Cross to develop new leaders. "The organization needed to develop leadership for the future. It is harder to have a successful mentoring program unless its key objectives are tied to the success of organization. The expectations need to be very clear as sustainability of attention and resources is expensive and needs real commitment. Many companies are worried about diversity and people leaving. A formal program can call attention to the people that are not being looked after and the formal program holds you accountable. Do not want to deny them that opportunity. Have to believe in intrinsic value of every single person."[35] The aspects of the Red Cross formal program that helped make it successful were- incentives for good leadership; very high recognition for those that mentored; a well designed program so one could see positive impact of the mentoring relationship in tangible results.

The Posse Foundation

The Posse Foundation is one example where mentoring is done with a great understanding of the system dynamics models, understanding that the culture of an organization might not be welcoming to diversity and might initially provide resistance instead of support. The Posse foundation helps inner city students survive in some mostly white colleges by sending them out in groups called "Posses". These groups act as a

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[35] Mentor Patricia Deyton, Center for Gender in Organizations

support structure for each individual within the posse and provide peer to peer mentorship in case they have difficulty in finding the mentorship outside of the group. "The Posse Foundation identifies, recruits and trains student leaders from public high schools to form multicultural teams called "Posses." These teams are then prepared, through an intensive eight-month Pre-Collegiate Training Program, for enrollment at top-tier universities nationwide to pursue their academics and to help promote cross-cultural communication on campus. The Posse Program has exhibited great success over the past 17 years placing 1,521 students into colleges and universities. These students …are graduating at 90 percent—a rate higher than the national averages at institutions of higher education."[36] "But what makes the Posse program unique is what happens after its students have been accepted to college. Each institution is required to accept 10 students who will attend the school together as a posse, a slang term for a group of friends. The idea is to provide these students, many of them first-generation college goers who have never ventured far from home, with constant support. The posses receive training before matriculation, including team-building exercises, lectures on time management, and academic tutoring. They continue meeting throughout college, helping one another deal with everything from roommate conflicts to challenging coursework.

The setup seems to work: Ninety percent of Posse scholars graduate within six years, far above both the national average of 54 percent and the even lower graduation rates for minority students. North Bronx native Xiomara Gonzalez, who graduates this month from Brandeis University, says her posse helped her endure freshman year when she gained weight and felt homesick during the snowy New England winter. "It was an

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[36] http://www.possefoundation.org/main/learn/index.cfm

artificially imposed relationship at the beginning, but we came to rely on each other because we felt like we had a collective stake in our success," says Gonzalez, who plans to return to New York and teach in the public schools."[37] If one could think of applying the similar concept to organizations to not hire one or two people from the race, ethnicity, gender or age group but to get a group of them, this would increase their chances of survival and ability to support and mentor each other till they can reach out and form relationships in the broader organization.

Mentorship and Gender:

When we think of mentorship and gender it is worthwhile to consider what kinds of trends there are and how power plays into the equation. Do men and women seek someone of similar gender, similar ethnicity or do they simply seek someone in power. If at the average company, most of the senior executives or all are men, is it harder for high potential women to approach them as mentees rather than men that are equally successful in the same class. If there is no formal mentorship process in the company and the young men play golf with the senior executives, do the men have a higher chance to display their potential and gain mentors though there is no bias. If women seek other women in the organization then it is important to see if the women mentors have the same power, networks and carry the same weight within the company.

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[37] US News.com Article on The Posse Foundation, Strength in Numbers, **Alex Kingsbury** , **5/23/05** http://www.usnews.com/usnews/culture/articles/050523/23posse.htm

Women of color especially seem to state the ability to recruit a mentor as one of their top barriers in career advancement. "As with other women of color, the lack of a mentor is the number one barrier to success for Latinas. In addition to lacking access to mentors, role models, and sponsors, some Latinas also report the lack of access to networks as a difficulty, resulting in significant disadvantages such as being passed over for key assignments."[38] Mentee Jyoti Singhvi mentioned that finding mentors was a hard process. "Maybe10-20% of the people I approached actually ended up mentoring as there is a symbiotic relationship required for mentoring."[39]

The initial findings through the interviews did not show such a correlation amongst the women where even the mentors they self selected were men. After digging deeper and in some cases going back for second interviews I found

- Many times there were no women in positions of authority in certain fields

- Mentees had approached women but women were looking forward to plan their own careers than glancing back which may be attributed to the fact they feel they need to accomplish more to reach the same level as a man40

- More women said they were busy and seemed less encouraging

- Women within the organization did not have any power.

One particular mentee interview shone light on this when she said "Ironically, I felt men more willing and able to mentor me. It was disappointing in that women feel

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[38] Catalyst Report, *Advancing Latinas in the Workplace: What Managers Need to Know*, Copyright 2003 Catalyst

[39] Mentee Jyoti Singhvi, Retail Industry

[40] Mentee Interview, Ama Martson, Non-Profit sector

marginalized that they have to work harder to achieve the same career so they are more looking forward than looking back at who's watching them or trying to follow in their footsteps. Some of this also had to do with the issues I was working on and who was available- generally in environment more established men in hierarchy and university positions at the time. However, I always sought out more women figures and if they had been more accessible, I would have reached out to them; in fact I accessed the women's mentorship through reading as many biographies of women as I possibly could."[41]

This made me realize that what I was seeing in the interviews was co-relation and was certainly not causality. Just because a large number of women did not approach women but approached men as mentors was not simply because they preferred men but there were a multitude of variables- availability of women in positions of authority, willingness of women to mentor; social regard of women mentors; perceived power of women mentors; attempt to fit in with the mainstream; not stereotype themselves.

Another different observation, I noticed was most of the men, only listed male mentors, when pushed further about roles that women might have played in mentorship they acknowledged mentorship roles that women had played in their lives but instinctively when asked most of them resorted to naming men only. This is one of the many reasons why I felt it was important to do live interviews rather than mailed surveys where it would be impossible to delve further and gather the subtle complexities and one may take the results at face value giving a distorted impression.

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[41] Mentee Interview, Ama Marston, Non-profit Sector

When Irene Padavic and Barbara Reskin talk about women at work (*Women and Men at Work*, 2002) they differentiate between the words "sex" and "gender". Hence applied to mentorship the questions "is sex an issue for mentorship" and "is gender an issue for mentorship" have very different meanings and implications. They use sex as a classification based on human biology but gender as a classification that social actors construct that typically exaggerates the differences between male and female.[42] Thus the sexual difference that results in a person's ability to be a mentor may clearly be a factor there is a much exaggerated gender differentiation that occurs within organization and companies especially in fields and senior management levels where women are a minority. If there is a general tendency of any person to try and fit in with the mainstream, if there is only one amongst 12 partners of a law firm that is a women, younger ambitious women lawyers might try to seek male mentors and deemphasize their portrayal as women lawyers if they feel it would be an additional barrier to cross. While through this project, given the methodology was one on one interviews and in many cases second and third interviews with the same person hence focusing on depth, complexity of issues and more anecdotal evidence to add richness, it would be interesting to study the ratio of male to female senior managers in top management of organizations to see if that plays a role in determining who younger employees choose as mentors.

Mentorship and Promotion/Advancement of Career

Another aspect that distorts the mentorship process is the ability to climb the corporate ladder. "Men still dominate the top levels in the organizations that employ them and

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[42] Reskin, Barbara, Padavic Irene, *Women and Men at Work*, Sage Publications, 2002, pg 3

monopolize the highest ranks in most occupations and professions....Moreover; women supervise fewer subordinates than men and are less likely to control financial resources. Even female managers – whose numbers have grown dramatically- are less likely than male managers to make decisions, especially decisions that are vital for their employer (Jacob 1992; Reskin and Ross 1992)."[43] If this knowledge is applied to the mentorship theory then if there is equal likelihood of male and female mentors advocating within the organization for a mentees promotion, the male mentor who has more financial control and is making more of the companies vital decisions will be regarded as having more power and say in the matter. Hence whether you are male or female, odds are that a male mentor might have more power within the organization to influence your promotion. Employees in organizations are quick to assess who within the organization has power and what the informal mechanisms are despite the titles on an organization chart.

A study (Blake-Beard, Stacy, 2005) validating the success of mentorship for the career advancement of women showed that".......Out of 427 mid- to senior-level women, 82 percent had been involved in at least an informal mentoring relationship. The article profiled top corporate women who strongly value their mentoring relationships. "Often senior executives have to make far-reaching decisions without perfect knowledge and under tight time constraints. They need a safe place to test their hypothesis," said Stacy Blake-Beard, associate professor at Simmons School of Management." explaining why mentorship was valued at even a senior level in her published work.[44] Hence gender and sex play all kinds of obvious and more subtle roles in an individual's choice of a mentor.

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[43] Reskin, Barbara, Padavic Irene, *Women and Men at Work*, Sage Publications, 2002, pg 38-39
[44] http://www.simmons.edu/som/news/archives/2005/08/pink_magazine_f.shtml

How Organizations can Encourage Mentorship?

For any good policy it must be both efficient and equitable. However, there is a tension between equity and efficiency. Many companies like to offer incentives; others support it in principle and have subjective ways of rewarding positive company contribution without singling mentorship as an objective. For formal and informal Mentorship programs, Patricia Deyton, who has been involved in creating and designing formal mentorship programs, says some key elements that are needed are a clear understanding of the goal, commitment and incentives for senior management to change, and good program design.[45]

- **Having a clear goal/outcome expected from the program** adds structure, meaning and holds mentors, mentees and the organization accountable to achieving the goal. In the case of the Red Cross's Formal Mentorship plan where Patricia Deyton was one of the architects the goal was to create and develop leadership amongst the younger members of the organization. It is helpful to have a clear sense of how the process of formal mentorship is contributing to the organization. While the program needs to be given time and assessed in the long run rather than short run to see adequate change.

- **Aligning incentives for management and senior management.** In several of the interviews with mentor, recognition either financial or otherwise was an important theme. In fact non-compensatory recognition was a key factor. Heather Grady a mentor to several younger employees and interns at Realizing Rights mentioned that her boss, Mary

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[45] Mentor Interview, Patricia Deyton, Center for Gender in Organizations, Simmons School of Management.

Robinson often recognized Heather's positive contribution to the organization through mentoring employees. This further empowered and supported her in her efforts to develop talent and mentor within the organization. Had her initial efforts been ignored she may have not had the same zealous approach to mentoring or might have only mentored those that reached out to her.

- **Measurable and tangible results** so that both mentors and mentees can see a positive track record for their time and energy spent are crucial to creating a sustainable program. One major barrier to formal mentorship programs is a commitment of the organization to resources and energy on a sustained basis. If the program is unable to show changes however small, it is easy for energy to taper and organizations to become cynical about the program.

-**Increasing social capital** and opportunities for mingling where everyone can participate and help increase the efficiency of the process so that informal mentorship thrives as well to complement any formal structure.

-**Awareness of Unintended Biases**: Foster awareness when arranging activities so the activities do not segregate the group around class, gender, race etc. A lot of banks and consulting companies sponsor weekend retreats. Senior partners all head out to golf weekends. This unknowingly introduces a class bias and a gender bias. Poorer recruits that have not played are hesitant and often women gravitate to other activities. This pattern of social mingling reinforces old stereotypes and encourages mingling within

gender, class and race based groups resulting in more of the segregation rather than building relationship beyond immediate likeness.

One new trend that seems to be catching on is cooking competitions rather than the stereotypical golf outings. As the New York Times article states "Forget ropes courses and golf outings. Cooking is the new wave in corporate team-building exercises. And cooking schools across the country are expanding to meet demand. Last year, Hands on Gourmet, a company in San Francisco, tripled the number of chefs it has on call, to 32. Cooking by the Book, a company based in New York, did 178 team-building events, a 24 percent increase over 2005..... Companies like Amgen and Microsoft are sending their employees off to chop, dice and sauté their way to better sales and management skills. ...This is a wonderful way to break the ice and get people familiar with each other while getting them to do something as basic as cooking," said Stephen Gibbs, a co-owner of Hands On Gourmet.... Cooking events serve as an equalizer, Mr. Gibbs said, where the hierarchies of the office do not always translate. .....Bibby Gignilliat, the owner of Parties That Cook, which sent three chefs to work with the UBS group, said the change of scenery makes people see their colleagues in a different light....... "It breaks down your stereotype of people in the office," Ms. Gignilliat said. And fortunately most people are willing to give cooking a try, as the threshold to a minimal level of competence in wielding a kitchen knife is relatively low.....At a golf tournament, the better golfers will have more fun," said Mary Risley, the owner of Tante Marie's Cooking School in San Francisco."[46] With the list of companies that seem to be embracing this trend including

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[46] Hafner, Katie, Wielding Kitchen Knives and Honing Office Skills , Published in the New York Times, January 13, 2007

UBS, Fidelity Management, Genentech, Heinz, Amgen, and Microsoft, this kind of activity seems like a much more equitable one to create relationships as everyone has something to bring to the table and it can foster unusual partnerships and relationships.

- Create and help people rally around a new common identity or mission that supersedes the stereotypes that may hinder people's objective judgment. I once heard my friend, the proud owner of a Saab convertible say "a Saab owner always helps another Saab." The ability of the company not just to make its employees feel that sense of ownership and pride but even customers to take on the identity and empathize with the company vision is something that can help reduce policy resistance.

- Pay Attention and Factor in Time Delays

Often senior management does not give the mentorship policy enough time to be implemented and work. Our learning of system dynamics principles shows us that there will be delays throughout the system from delays in action, measurement, reporting, perception and implementation and decision making. To work the system would require adequate investment of effort, resources to reach the tipping point and enough time to overcome intermediate barriers to its success and show results.
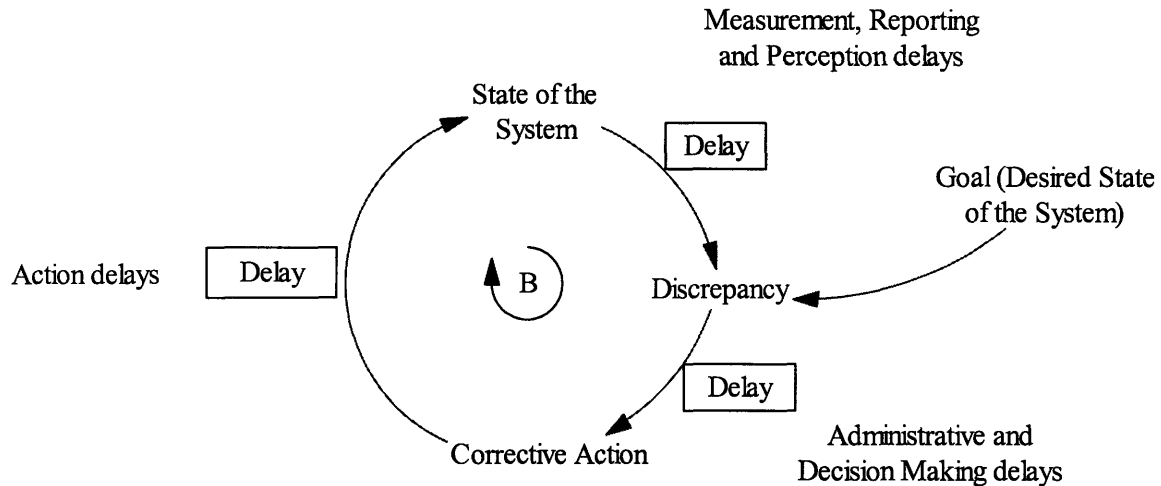
Figure: Time Delays in a System[47]

- Evaluate mentorship policy in light of the overall company culture and environment: When evaluating mentorship policy, all other HR and company policies should be viewed. Mentorship cannot be viewed in isolation from the rest of the company culture. Companies that have up or out policies and 10-15% of the bottom workforce fired rarely would have cultures to foster good mentorship practices. People have too much pressure to compete and helping someone else perform better might mean hurting oneself. Aside from that managers that are forced to mentor women but do not believe women deserve to be in the workforce might hurt the process.

Mentee Diana Carligeanu mentioned "I believe the key factor is who the main "players" are (top executives, top Partners etc) and what their view of a healthy culture, hierarchy and/or collaboration among people is; If they hire a balanced or non-balanced pool of candidates (*biases appear quite often in the hiring process!*), organizing firm events and

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[47] Sterman, John D., Business Dynamics, pg 114, publisher McGraw Hill, 2000

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deciding whether everyone is invited (including, say, secretaries or HR people) or only certain employees, and deciding how promotions are made and bonuses given."[48]

Any policy that is devised would need to be assessed realistically depending on the culture of the organization rather than idealistically to see what kind of resistance it will be met with. A strong commitment from the senior management needs to consider a zero tolerance policy for managers that undermine the effort.

- Assess retention levels for vulnerable groups that are hired. Often human resource departments of firms have targets to meet for hiring women and people of various ethnicities but have no efforts to help these groups assimilate in the culture or do not make any changes in company culture to make it friendlier to outside opinions. It has been shown that retention of women of color is positively correlated with supportive behavior of advisors[49] (Giscombe & Mattis, 2002). For all those companies that declare that they are equal opportunity employers, this is really not true unless when implemented their policies actually enable all employees to work at their full potential. While the ideal is rarely found in practice, it is worthwhile to aspire to. It is good to recognize how far the current companies that have best practices are from an optimal result. In a study done by the Catalyst group of 1735 women of color from 30 Fortune 1000 companies, 47% said that not having an influential mentor or sponsor was either a to a very great extent or great extent a major barrier that prevented them from advancing

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[48] Mentee Diana Carligneau, Law

[49] Giscombe, Katherine, Mattis, Mary C., *Leveling the Playing Field for Women of Color in Corporate Management: Is the Business Case Enough?*, Journal of Business Ethics, Vol. 37, 2002, Kluwer Academic Publishers

in their companies.[50] On the mentorship, companies have set a very low bar for themselves before they pat themselves on the back.

- Be careful to differentiate good ideas and bad implementation from bad ideas: Mentorship: The Cliché. In *Success Built to Last*, the authors describe how leadership skills and approaches have now reached the level of banal clichés. This is true in the case of mentorship as well. Every company these days says "You're only as good as your people…..indeed, most everybody gives it lip service but this doesn't mean it isn't true. One way you can tell whether you're witnessing the real deal is to apply the Porras Principle: "Don't believe in words- only believe in behaviors….People judge your values and character based on the difference between your words and your actions."51

For any company if the senior management is giving just lip service to the idea of mentorship would not be able to have a sustainable and successful mentorship. When senior management sets priorities, it is clear to all others within the company how important the particular ideal is to the company and to them. It is easy for people to suggest that formal mentorship does not work by watching a few examples of what is a good policy, not implemented successfully.

A Discussion between Formal and Informal Mentorship Programs

As companies study the mentorship policies of other companies, they often decide that that most formal mentorship programs are unable to achieve their goals. Their decision

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[50] Giscombe, Katherine, Mattis, Mary C., *Leveling the Playing Field for Women of Color in Corporate Management: Is the Business Case Enough?*, Journal of Business Ethics, Vol. 37, 2002, Kluwer Academic Publishers
[51] Success Built to Last, Porras, Jerry, Emery, Stewart, Thompson, Mark, Wharton School Publishing, Pg 205-206

tends to be to encourage a culture of mentorship and informal mentorship. Mentor Jag Duggal said when his company made a big push to adopt mentorship they went through such a debate. They wanted to create a formal process and took the effort to collect information from informal mentors and mentees. There was debate amongst partners whether the firm should assign mentors or not but a major sentiment was that "Mentors must be picked, they cannot be assigned". Mentoring was different from being an advisor, and basically depends on personal chemistry and chemistry is crucial element so that the mentee feels comfortable to ask for help. "There needs to be a high level of comfort to enable open communication as there is a gap in age, experience, and power. Only mentee can decide who they are comfortable or not."[52] Different companies reach a different equilibrium point for their own organization but there is an ongoing tension between equity and efficiency. While there are virtues both with formal and informal mentorship, it is important to see that both formal and informal mentorship policies have succeeded. The key seems to be cognizant of the environment and the dynamics and forces within the system and address them through implementation.

A Discussion between Same Race or Same Gender Mentorship vs. Across Race and Across Gender Mentorship

A key problem with self selection of mentor by the mentee themselves could be censorship where they try to pick someone of the same race, gender. Given the current demographics, there are fewer women and non-white individuals in senior management in the Fortune 500 companies. This would put them at a disadvantage. In fact Deher and Cox (June 1996) in their work on mentoring, study"…how race, gender, and mentoring

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[52] Mentor Interview, Jag Duggal, Consulting/Technology

experiences account for compensation outcomes among Master of Business

Administration (MBA) program graduates….. African-American and Hispanic MBAs

were less likely than their White counterparts to establish mentoring relationships with

White men. Women with MBAs were less likely than men with MBAs to form such

relationships. Graduates who had been able to establish mentoring relationships with

White men displayed an average annual compensation advantage of $16,840 over those

with mentors displaying other demographic profiles. There were no compensation

differences between those who had established mentoring relationships with women or

minority men and those who had not established a mentoring relationship."[53] This study

emphasizes the importance of cross-race and cross-gender mentorship.

Mentee Emmanuel Chukwudi mentioned that elements of racism and prejudice often

occurred at his work in manufacturing for an oil company. His mentor was a fellow

Nigerian who had empathy for him. "It is very much that minorities and women not

equal. There are some exceptions but across the board most people are not treated the

same."[54]

Other studies (Forret and Dougherty, 2004) find that increasing internal visibility and

professional activities within the organization through networking (mentorship being a

more sustained form of this.) led to an increase in compensations and promotions,

however there was a discrepancy between men and women with women actually showing

a small decline in compensation with increased professional activity. "Further more as

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[53]Dreher GF, Cox TH Jr., *Race, gender, and opportunity: a study of compensation attainment and the establishment of mentoring relationships.* Department of Management, School of Business, Indiana University, Bloomington 47405, USA. June 1996

[54] Mentee Emmanuel Chukwudi, Manufacturing

women have historically lacked access to important organizational contacts (e.g. Brass, 1985; Ibarra, 1993; Kanter, 1977; Morrison &Von Glinow, 1990; O'Leary & Ickovics, 1992; Powell & Mainiero, 1993; Ragins & Sunderstrom, 1989; Wellington & Catalyst, 2001), networking behavior has been thought to be especially critical because it is one strategy women can use to break through the glass ceiling....Networking behavior helps build relationships with others and may serve to extend women's reach into the upper echelons of organizations."[55] But to mistake this just as a women's issue would do it a disservice. "Gender should be seen as a central organizing feature of social life, with implications for women, men and how we get work done."[56] Like wise issues of race, ethnicity, age and diversity of perspectives is not about groups that are different but have consequences for every individuals learning and the growth of the organization to reflect reality and its customers.

Limitations of Study

In this study, I emphasized detailed interviews with mentors and mentees in an attempt to get a sense of complexity and subtlety of each experience. "The intersection of race and gender is a relatively new area of inquiry in the management literature. Kram (1985) discusses the need to utilize a flexible data collection method when studying a novel topic. As such, researchers should be open to using a variety of methodological approaches, including in-depth qualitative interviews as well as large-scale quantitative

[55] Forret, Monica L., Dougherty, Thomas W., *Networking Behaviors and Career Outcomes: Differences for Men and Women?*, Journal of Organization Behavior, May 2004, Vol.25

[56] Fletcher, Joyce K., Ely, Robin J. "*Introducing Gender*", CGO Insights, Center for Gender in Organizations, Simmons School of Management

surveys. Of course, these decisions about methodology are accompanied by tradeoffs; large-scale quantitative studies offer some measure of generalizability while in-depth qualitative studies may provide rich descriptive accounts. We will need inquiry from both perspectives to build our knowledge on the effects of race and gender on mentoring relationships."[57] By the choice of methodology of personal interviews, I eliminated the possibility of having a large enough sample size to be statistically significant. I believe a study of the number of cross-gender and cross-race mentorship actually occurring across companies would be useful as this would imply real progress and integration rather than pure levels of mentorship and be able to give us information across a larger sample.

Implications and Directions for Future research

This study is solely a first attempt to learn from the past studies on mentoring and apply a different framework of business dynamics to understand mentoring policy and the complex organizations around us. An area of study which was outside of the scope of this one would be to build a working system dynamics model such as the working People Express Model[58] so companies can model their demographics to understand at every stage, to achieve a change the number of women and diverse voices in the senior management, how many women and people of diversity they need to recruit, mentor with people in power, and retain before they can reach any sustainable level of change in the composition of the organization. When an human resources person is able to model every recruiting and mentoring decision and able to show the impact in clear terms to

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[57] Blake-Beard, Stacy, *Mentoring Relationships through the Lens of Race and Color*, CGO Insights Briefing Note 10, 2001, Center for Gender in Organizations, Simons School of Management

[58] Sterman, John, *Business Dynamics: Systems Thinking and Modeling for a Complex World,* MIT Sloan School of Management, 2000 published by McGraw Hill.

senior management they will be able to get the clear attention, effort and resources to implement and sustain an effective mentorship program. The key qualities that enabled mentees to recruit and keep mentors were trust, enthusiasm, and ability to show tangible results over time. I believe mentorship policy will need to demonstrate similar tangible results and concepts of business dynamics would be key tools and key concepts to model mentoring policy.

Results, Conclusions/Summary, and Recommendations:

> **We are shaping the world faster than we change ourselves, and we are applying to the present the habits of the past.**
>
> **- Winston Churchill[59]**

The fact that there is some mentorship in organizations is not to say that there is no problem. The people for whom the mentorship cycle is working do not see it as broken. They see it as a fault of other candidates being unable to make themselves as attractive to mentors to garner their attention and time. Mentorship in an organization should be about helping all employees or members live up to their potential; not just to allow those who would succeed anyway to make it in the system. This requires a deliberate change and action on the part of mentors and organizations to create an environment where mentorship flourishes and all groups have equal opportunity. Policies encouraging mentorship, buddy systems, advisors for employees and members need to factor in subtle ways that discrimination occurs. "Social interaction is to be found in social fixity and

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[59] Gardner, Howard. *Leading Minds: An Anatomy of Leadership,* published by HarperCollins, copyright 1995 Howard Gardner

persistence as well as in social change," Robert Nisbet observes. "That is why, if we are

to answer the question of causation in change, we are obliged to deal with, first, the

nature of social persistence and, then, with variables, not constants, when we turn to the

matter of what causes the observed change in structure, trait, or idea." Systems, once

established, generate countless forces and balances to perpetuate themselves. .....The

anthropologist Alfred R. Radcliffe- Brown noted the changes within structures that did

not affect the structural form of society. He made a sharp distinction between *system*

maintenance, the kind of readjustment that was essentially an adjustment of the

equilibrium of a social structure and what he called *system change*"[60]

What does one learn from mentorship that is unique? There is a unique value to

mentorship as that helps employees and members understand the informal rules and

hierarchy within the system. Without adequate mentorship opportunities, employees do

not have a way to navigate within the organization. They do not have a chance to

compete with others that have mentors in the senior management advocating for them.

Further usually the individuals that are unable to find the mentors are the most vulnerable

groups not because they are not competent but because they might be different from the

mainstream. Organizations thrive when they have the ability to hear different

perspectives and help different voices be heard. To that extent, mentors and organizations

that want to survive need to change and help all employees succeed especially vulnerable

and different voices.

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[60]Burns, James MacGregor (1978) *Leadership* Pg 18, Harper and Row Publishers, copyright 1978, James MacGregor Burns, pg 416-417

Organizational Dynamics thinking has some very important keys to understanding how

we can influence change to promote and encourage mentoring relationship. It helps us

understand that as the system has reinforcing loops, if the system if left alone, we help the

successful succeed and the vulnerable perish but this is not based on meritocracy it is

based on first impressions. Cross-race and cross-gender mentoring relationships are

crucial for change but mentors need to be coached or the system will backfire. Also the

initial actions in the mentoring relationship are very important as they set the system into

a reinforcing path after which it is much harder to intervene. We get a better

understanding of the policy resistance within a system and the reasons behind this

resistance. If senior management wants to see a change, we see through the interviews

and model that they need to have significant commitment and sustain resources and

attention to overcome barriers and time delays within the system. The advantage of the

reinforcing loop is that once it is set in a virtuous circle, it perpetuates itself to create

more successful mentoring relationships not just for a few people but for everyone in the

organization.

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Appendices:
Appendix A: Interview Questions for Mentors
Appendix B: Interview Questions for Mentees
Appendix C: System Dynamics Model of Mentorship within a Complex Organization

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Demographics

Name:
Company:
Industry:
Date of Interview:
Years of experience:
Race/Nationality:
Gender:

Mentor Questionnaire

1. Have you had mentors?

2. Were their any particular circumstances that made it difficult to reach your current position?

3. Any particular "at risk" situation/ circumstance: (tell me more about yourself and the particular challenges you faced in executing you job where it might have been helpful to have some guidance from within or outside the company)

4. Do you think that having mentors was "crucial" or "helpful" to your success?

5. Who were your mentors? Could you tell me a few stories about your relationship with each of them and why they were crucial/helpful/not helpful?

6. What do you believe motivated their interest in you?

7. In your past jobs, which companies had mentorship programs? What worked? What did not work?

8. Do you believe there were some really good people that left? Do you believe the company could have done something to keep them?

9. What determines company culture? How does one establish it?

10. Do you mentor?

11. Why do you mentor in spite of having so many demands on your time?

12. You would mentor more if .... (Barriers to mentoring currently)

13. Are there any incentives in your organization for mentorship?

14. What gets rewarded in your organization? What is the "relative importance" of mentorship to other metrics such as financial returns, profitability, attraction of new business, growth of practice?

Mentee Questionnaire:

1. Have you had mentors?

2. How many people have you approached? How many agreed? How many did not?

3. Have you sought mentors outside of the organization?

4. Do you tend to approach people of the same sex, race, or some common element?

5. Do you think that having mentors was "crucial" or "helpful" to your success?

6. Who were your mentors? Could you tell me a few stories about your relationship with each of them and why they were crucial/helpful/not helpful?

7. What do you believe motivated their interest in you?

8. In your past jobs, which companies had mentorship programs? What worked? What did not work?

9. Do you believe there were some really good people that left? Do you believe the company could have done something to keep them?

10. What determines company culture? How does one establish it?

11. Do you mentor?

12. Why do you mentor?

13. At what stage of your career do you believe you should start mentoring?

14. You would mentor more if ……… (Barriers to mentoring currently)

15. Are there any incentives in your organization for mentorship?

16. What gets rewarded in your organization? What is the "relative importance" of mentorship to other metrics such as financial returns, profitability, attraction of new business, growth of practice?