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Power/knowledge and Psychosocial Dynamics in Mentoring

Abstract *This article presents a case study of mentoring relations in a National Health Service Trust hospital. The hospital was undergoing a programme of change, which included a considerable investment in management development, supported by a mentoring programme. The research presented here included observations, interviews and research-focused discussions with managers and other participants in the mentoring programme, concentrating especially on the nature of the mentoring process and relationship. Contrasting interpretations and constructions of the meaning of the mentoring process are presented. It was found that the nature of mentoring relationships changed radically as mentees began to define themselves as being more competent and knowledgeable in management and that psychosocial functions in the mentoring relationships operated inversely to the direction of hierarchical authority present in these relationships.*

Introduction

The historical roots of mentoring lie in the Greek myth of Ulysses, who in preparation for his lengthy sea voyages entrusted his young son to the care of his old friend Mentor. Thereafter the name has been identified with a more experienced person who forms a relationship with a less experienced person in order to provide them with advice, support and encouragement (Collin, 1988). The activity of mentoring is normally linked to fostering career success, and it has been seen as a 'thread that connects all successful individuals' (Pearce, 1987).

Formal and informal mentoring have increasingly been seen as part of a human resource strategy (HRS) in which organizations seek to develop their human resources in a way which leads to competitive success (McKeen and Burke, 1989; Wright and Werther, 1991; Cunningham and Eberle, 1993). Inasmuch as mentoring can be seen as a key aspect of staff and management development (Whitely, Dougherty and Dreher, 1991) it is an integral part of a properly defined human resource strategy which must be concerned with the development of people in the

most effective manner (Keep, 1992). This understanding is associated with a 'soft' HRS and management style (Storey and Sisson, 1993) which seeks to develop abilities, competencies and concepts in people, and to facilitate and encourage their use, rather than creating a system of control and extrinsic motivation, the latter being seen as 'hard' HRS.

Kram (1988) identified two broad functions within mentoring. First, career functions, including sponsorship and coaching, which enhance career advancement (of the mentee). Second, psychosocial functions, including friendship, counselling and role modelling were identified as enhancing a sense of competence, identity and effectiveness in a professional role. Where career functions are the primary focus, which is often the case in formal mentoring programmes, the model tends to be knowledge-based, instrumental and carefully controlled. Alternatively, when psychosocial functions are primary the mentoring experience includes an intensity of emotion, risky self-transformation and development for both parties (Baum, 1992).

The benefits of career functions come largely from the experience, seniority and organizational ranking of the mentor, who is able to help the mentee to 'navigate effectively in the organisational world' (Kram, 1988). Psychosocial functions, on the other hand, rely on the quality of the interpersonal bond between mentor and mentee, and the degree of trust which exists within the relationship. Factors which influence the psychosocial bonding include mutual liking, respect, exclusivity, counselling skill and the desire for intimacy (Kram, 1988).

The potential for psychosocial functions to trigger feelings, fantasies and memories/experiences from the past, may take the relationship into the realms of therapy and the 'unfinished relationship'; a relationship deemed to obstruct the contractual work relationship as it transfers elements of past relationships into the present (Clarkson and Shaw, 1992). The projective fantasies which characterize such an unfinished relationship, while part of everyday life, can lead to inappropriate or exaggerated behaviour and so can be dysfunctional. Psychosocial functions, such as acceptance and confirmation/affirmation, are likely to enhance a 'developmental' relationship which provides the individual with the information, support and challenge which they need to meet their development needs (Clarkson and Shaw, 1992). The description of such a developmental alliance suggests a relationship based on explicit, consciously chosen contractual arrangements between the parties involved (Clarkson and Shaw, 1992). Active learning and development are likely to emerge from developmental relationships, where they occur, as such relationships foster autonomy and independence rather than passivity and dependence. Positive linkages between outcomes of career advancement and satisfaction and extensive developmental mentoring have been reported (Dreher and Ash, 1990).

The negative effects of passivity and powerlessness on learning and development have been emphasized by Freire (1972), and the necessary and sufficient conditions for the freedom to learn have been identified as including the psychosocial functions described above (Rogers, 1983). The superficial learning which occurs in situations of power imbalance may occur in mentoring situations and may, therefore, adversely affect perceptions of the relationship. In particular, where the mentor has hierarchical authority over the mentee, the psychosocial functions which support a developmental relationship may be inhibited by the power inherent in the relationship.

The superior-subordinate relationship known as the 'managerial couple' (Krantz, 1989) is loaded with shared fantasies, hopes and disappointments, as well as

'collusive, defensive patterns' (Krantz, 1989: 161). And the mentoring couple is likely to exhibit some of these characteristics for the same reason; the hierarchical boundary.

Strategies (likely to be unconscious) adopted by the mentoring couple include 'projective identification', 'splitting', 'pairing' and 'attribution error'. Projective identification occurs where either party desires to be the other, and may adopt imitative behaviours displaying a longing to be like the other (Horwitz, 1983). Splitting is defined in object relations theory as the unconscious polarization of persons or 'objects' so that good may remain uncontaminated by bad (Mitchell, 1986). Mature adaptations to the splitting tendency can be found where individuals can accept the best and worst in each other. The phenomenon of 'pairing' (Bion, 1959) has been identified in group dynamics and occurs where two people identify each other (unconsciously) as complementary in some way, and adopt behaviours to use this to mutual advantage. Attribution error, where outcomes are attributed mistakenly to dispositional factors like gender, age or relationship, rather than situational causes, may under-estimate external/organizational influences (Ross, 1977).

So, in mentoring pairs where a hierarchical boundary exists, we might expect to find reactions to authority, such as dependency and counter-dependency, where the authority figure is either lionized or rebelled against; idealization of the mentoring pair, where they and others romanticize the relationship, sometimes to the point of stimulating gossip; and intergroup dynamics leading to jealousy and attribution error (Ross, 1977). The ability to integrate the strengths and limitations in individuals characterizes maturity in the managerial couple (Lapierre, 1989).

The phases of a mentoring relationship have been identified as: initiation, cultivation, separation and re-definition (Kram, 1988; Levinson et al., 1978). The parallel with biological phases of development and mating behaviour has been noted, as well as the status and dependency implicit in the mentoring relationship (Bushardt, Fretwell and Holdnack, 1991; Auster, 1984). The parent/child analogy, noted by Levinson et al. (1978) and others (Kates, 1985; Kahn, 1981), and psychoanalytic analyses of mentoring have concentrated on the early life stages (including the Oedipal stage) with all the anger and aggression this implies (Baum, 1992). The power of unconscious expectations within mentoring pairs has been explored and findings reveal that mentoring relationships which the participants see as successful often incorporate an intensity of emotion not unlike parenting or falling in love (Phillips-Jones, 1982). Transactional analysis reflects some of the unconscious dynamics described in the mentoring relationship (Berne, 1964), and provides three categories (ego-states) covering: parent-type behaviours (either nurturing or critical); adult-type behaviours, typically displaying autonomy and objectivity; child-type behaviours (natural or adapted), often emotionally charged and typically experienced as powerlessness (Berne, 1964).

Mentoring can be conceived as a social relationship through which the mentee is socialized into the culture of an organization (Townley, 1994). It entails psychosocial processes which assimilate the mentee into the community. This involves the internalization of group norms, acceptable forms of thought and behaviour, and values, in short; the dominant 'discourse' which is defined as 'thought as a social practice' (Merquior, 1985: 18).

Townley (1993, 1994), who conducts an explicitly Foucauldian analysis of human

resource management (HRM) sees mentoring as a decentralized form of learning which focuses on a specific individual, and which may include an important element of 'confession' in which the learner reveals details about his or her weaknesses and learning/development needs. A Foucauldian 'historical analysis of the present', argues that a 'Greek' model of mentoring, where the mentee is led to a 'happy and autonomous life through good advice', has been replaced with what is referred to as a 'Christian' model where there is an emphasis on obedience and control of the mentee's behaviour by the mentor (Townley, 1994). In the latter form the end result is not autonomy of the mentee but a continuation of hierarchical dominance and control (i.e. the antithesis of a developmental relationship). Power in this context is not seen merely as crude coercion but as intrinsically linked to knowledge, as it is categories of thought and perception which determine further thoughts, understandings, actions and practices of the community that shares the discourse. The production of knowledge is, therefore, the production of power to think and act, and Foucault sees the two elements as part of one category: power/knowledge (Foucault, 1980).

In relation to this, mentoring can be conceived as a panoptic technique which potentially or actually renders the details of an individual's behaviour and thought visible to management. The effect of such a technique is to create self-disciplined behaviour among mentees. Grey (1994) argues that processes such as appraisal, selection and career development operate as panoptic techniques. It is not the case that the operation of panoptic techniques and power/knowledge are experienced as psychosocial dysfunctions. They are operating well when mentees are happy; partly because it is fulfilling for a self-managing subject to be measured through mentoring, appraisal and review, and partly because the processes are not conceived or experienced as unpleasant or coercive forms of control. The measurement of individuals reaffirms their own self-assessment approach, and even where the finding is negative (where the processes are reviewed as unsatisfactory), they may be unhappy at the outcome, but not at the justification for the process. The techniques of power/knowledge can be conceived as helpful from the employees' point of view because they enable the individuals to progress towards their goals (Grey, 1994). Although the employees are conforming, they believe that they are following their own will or best interests. Where a mentee experiences the techniques as unpleasant or coercive, then power/knowledge has ceased functioning effectively.

Method

Thirty-five middle and junior managers, from an NHS Trust hospital, who had attended university-based management development programmes (incorporating a Certificate of Management qualification) had mentors to support them throughout the programme (and potentially beyond). The pairings were arranged by a mixture of informal and formal procedures. The staff development department in the hospital endeavoured to take advantage of any informal relationships already in existence and invited the course participants to make a choice of mentor from among the managers on the grades above them. No attempt was made to prevent direct line managers being the mentor (although this type of arrangement has been criticized, Megginson, 1988). Short questionnaires had been distributed to all the

mentees before and after the course, and these provided some background information for the detailed analysis of interviewed pairs.

Mentoring was established with the purpose of supporting the course participants' learning and development. It sought to provide practical support, for example enabling mentees to gain access to people and information in the organization which would have been difficult for them to access alone. It was also expected that the mentor would give advice and help with ideas and direction for project work, and in applying ideas and techniques in the workplace. In addition to this it was envisaged that the process would also be developmental for the mentors. It would help them to develop their interpersonal and management skills, such as listening and coaching. At a more macro level, mentoring was part of the overall change programme which sought employee and management involvement at all levels.

This study focused specifically on mentoring and the interviews and discussions were directly concerned with the mentoring process, relationships and outcomes. Our general interest was in examining the way the mentoring relationships had developed and continued or declined. Our aim was to use different ways of accessing the perceptions of the actors involved and to attempt to interpret the meanings and understandings that the actors established. We were interested in examining what had occurred in the relationships. Had they, for example, proceeded through the various stages of 'maturity'? We were also seeking to understand any problems which had occurred.

Research-focused discussions were held with four training and development managers, and four pairs of mentor and mentee were studied in detail. Pairs were self-selecting based on the willingness of both to be interviewed, and the logistics of carrying out the research. In-depth open-ended interviews were carried out, and these were designed to enable respondents to focus on aspects of the relationship that held meaning and significance for them. The interviews were carried out over a period of a year after the end of the programme, and typically lasted between one and two hours. The members of each pair were interviewed separately by a different researcher, who then transcribed the interview. Comparisons of mentor and mentee perceptions of the same relationship were not made until after transcription.

Although the interviews were carried out over a year, and this may have had some delay effect, there was no clear indication that this had an effect on discernible patterns such as viewing the mentoring as useful/not useful, or viewing career prospects as good/bad. It may, theoretically, influence the view on the importance of 'follow-up action'. However, all respondents thought this was important, regardless of when they were interviewed. In all interview cases views formed were substantiated with examples from the time period within the change programme. Therefore, it is not thought that the time difference had a major impact on the outcomes of the research.

The approach taken was inductive and based on grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1992) and theoretical categories emerged from the data. Action research (Lewin, 1946, 1947) was also influential on the approach as the researchers were involved with interventions in the organization. While it is accepted that this means the research is not, in the strict sense, repeatable, we would agree with Eden and Huxham (1993) that uncertainty can be reduced by multiple perspectives on the situation, in this case from interviews, discussions and two researchers' involvement.

Findings and Analysis

Questionnaires were distributed to the mentees before and after the course. These indicated that most people had not got much out of the mentoring relationships, but the reasons for this were unclear, and possibly disguised in the questionnaire. Frequency of meeting, levels of confidentiality and directiveness were not reported as significant problems. Eighteen months after the course, mentees were contacted again to see what had happened in their careers. Of the 19 who responded 12 had not changed job, and of those who had only 1 felt that mentoring had been of assistance.

Open-ended Pair Interviews

All four mentors were women, with two male and two female mentees. A striking outcome of the transcriptions is the contradictory accounts given by the partners in each pair. A number of categories emerged from the data and the key ones have been labelled as follows:

- the relationship and psychosocial functions;
- management style;
- power/knowledge;
- career functions.

The categories bear relation to concepts in the literature, but they are not necessarily synonymous as they are theoretical categories which are links between, and derived from, the substantive data.

In the data presented below, participants are referred to with a name beginning with 'J' if they are a mentor, a name beginning with 'H' if they are a mentee, and 'C' if they are another person.

Pair 1: Judith and Hannah

The relationship Judith and Hannah are two women who had known each other for five years when the mentoring started. Judith was Hannah's direct line manager. Judith felt that she had an intense and emotional relationship with Hannah. When talking about Hannah she expressed admiration and deep concern, and reported cases of Hannah imitating her and an approach which can be seen as protective parenting. For example, Judith said of Hannah:

She's easily led. Sometimes I question her choice of friends. ... We got very intense, the relationship got very intense. It built up to a peak, and now there is a distance—more me than her—I'm sure she's noticed. I don't think she's unhappy. I think I was probably suffocating her—a bit too intense. I'd gone over the top with trying to help.

Judith's interpretation was that it was a one-way relationship, with Hannah 'absorbing' her, but that the relationship had declined, and this was evidenced by a sense of loss, and loss of control:

I don't know what's going on in her life anymore. When I do I think 'Oh God, Hannah' ... half of me thinks I want her to go, I want her to go out into the world, experience new things, but I'd just like to have her for a couple of years first.

Hannah's account is a total denial or concealment of the relationship described by her mentor. Hannah experienced a broken relationship with a partner which coincided with a cooling off between the two women, but, while this featured importantly in Judith's report of events, it is conspicuously absent from Hannah's account. Hannah did not express any of the intensity, emotion, closeness or feeling of loss which were evident in Judith's account. She claimed that mentoring did not really happen, and what did happen was absorbed into the normal working relationship.

The strong sense of 'identification' in Judith's account suggests that the relationship was deep and significant to her, meeting her need to be 'reproduced' in some way (Judith had been married and was childless), and this was borne out by the evidence of parent/child ego-state interactions, largely emanating from the nurturing parent ego-state (Berne, 1964). The professed unawareness of Hannah can be accounted for in the typical embarrassment of a child who is over-nurtured by an over-involved parent, or alternatively the denial of an adolescent who does not wish to appear to be still under the influence of his/her parents. It could be argued that such a conclusion may mark the end of a 'successful' mentoring relationship, but it may also indicate a failed one.

Management style Judith feels that she was too directive, and tried not to be.

I can hear myself doing it, dictating, directing too much so instead of gently easing them ... I do dictate, I know I do. I don't like it particularly. I see it as a weakness ... I find it frustrating. I've got to sit there and let them work it out for themselves. An hour later they've got to where I know they should be 5 minutes into the meeting ... I want them to be able to say 'I actually made that decision myself'.

For Hannah, however, management style does not seem to be an issue, and she does not mention it. The tortured wonderings of Judith suggest a struggle to leave the parent ego-state and adopt the adult mode, a struggle which she resolves by withdrawal.

Power/knowledge There is a distinction between direct knowledge in a traditional sense and the Foucauldian relational concept of power/knowledge. Both were significant for pair 1. The direct knowledge functions of the relationship were subordinate to the psychosocial functions for Judith. She did think that Hannah had 'picked up things' from her, and that she would not have reached the stage she was at without help from Judith:

I have certainly come up with things that she couldn't have as parts of the organization she couldn't have known things that I would. I've been dead chuffed when she's taken them on board and done very well. She's benefited from my knowledge,

but comments of this type were rare.

Conversely, for Hannah, knowledge was very important. She felt that the mentor-

ing relationship had never materialized, and this was largely because she perceived Judith to be lacking the necessary knowledge. She said:

I would prefer someone in the organization who knew what was going on ... I went to others who were higher, but no one had the knowledge to help. ... I suppose there was some emotional support and praise, but there was no input of ideas ... it was beyond her course. She had done the CMS, and what we did was totally different, it was far beyond.

The value Hannah placed on Judith as a person was declining as her perception of Judith's knowledge level declined. Over a period of years Hannah 'looked up to' Judith less and simultaneously 'confessed' less. She gradually stopped telling Judith about her personal life and matters of importance to her.

Hannah perceived the desirable skills of a mentor to be the same as those of a teacher; Judith was primarily concerned about the psychodynamics of the personal relationship. As a result the mentoring relationship never became established, and the couple were locked into a parent/child complementary interaction (Berne, 1964).

The power/knowledge relation contained contradictions. Judith saw herself as having a high level of knowledge; technically, generally and of Hannah. She saw herself as having 'empowered' Hannah. However, Hannah devalued the empowerment from Judith and saw herself (Hannah) as holding greater knowledge. Hannah was aware of the dynamic of the changing power/knowledge nexus, and her own withdrawal in a way that Judith was not. Judith's interpretation conformed broadly to the interactions as they occurred, except that her perception was not sensitive to the changes that were occurring, and this left her open to psychosocial dysfunction. In particular, her knowledge of Hannah was not as great as she thought. As a result Hannah's perception was more powerful and it protected her from the potential emotional hurt of withdrawal.

Career functions Judith expressed the desire and hope that she had contributed to Hannah's career development saying: 'I'd like to think that if she hadn't met me, she might not have got on'. Hannah had been promoted to her current position with the support of Judith. Hannah, however, did not see the mentorship as a major factor in her career, and although she expressed a considerable amount of concern about her career during informal conversation with the researcher, none of her envisaged solutions involved Judith or mentoring in general.

Pair 2: Jane and Hazel

Jane and Hazel were two women who had known each other for 10 years and Jane was Hazel's line manager until she left the organization during the planned mentoring period.

The relationship Jane and Hazel expressed a considerable amount of mutual respect, and had a friendly work-based relationship. Jane expressed guilty feelings that she had not spent enough time with Hazel, and she also expressed concern for Hazel. Hazel said that Jane was a very caring person and that she had never been so supported. Jane trusted Hazel and saw her as mature and a fellow professional.

The mentoring relationship was very informal, with Jane waiting for Hazel to make

the initial contact, and although there was professional respect, Hazel felt that there was very little input from Jane. This was not seen as a problem because Hazel perceived herself to have little need of a mentor: 'my needs were met because they were few'. Hazel felt that there had not really been any genuine mentoring, although there had been a 'safety net' of emotional support which could have been called on if needed. There was a sense of free movement between ego-states in this mentoring pair, with Jane ready to adopt a nurturing parent stance, should it be required, and Hazel aware of that option. However, the tenor of the relationship suggests adult-adult transactions, based on mutual respect and rationality.

Management style Jane had a developmental and participative management style. She encouraged meetings and collaborative working among those who reported to her, and strongly encouraged them to reorganize their work so that individuals, such as night-shift workers, would not be left isolated. She organized regular meetings at which views were aired, and solutions to problems sought in a participative manner. Jane described her management style as

the sort of thing you just do, you look after the people that work for you, you are a sort of buddy to them, to keep an eye on problems they might be having, to support them, to give advice, to facilitate their learning capacity.

It is interesting to note that Jane regarded problems as something her staff had, rather than something they caused. This form of attribution would tend to be associated with soft rather than hard management approaches.

Sometimes she went beyond a participative style and became almost passive in allowing staff a great amount of freedom, and trusting in their professionalism. Her concept of the management role was that of a 'buddy', and her concern was to look after the people who worked for her. The developmental aspects of Jane's management style utilized her nurturing parent ego-state to good effect.

Power/knowledge The relational development of power/knowledge in this pairing was established on mutual respect. The view each held of the other was of 'the whole person'. For example, there was an awareness of their reasons for pursuing a 'caring' career, and aspects such as management style, technical ability and professional skill were largely shared and were congruous with egalitarian interactions. The importance of factors such as professional skills and ethics united the two and supported the intuitive mutual attraction ('my sort of person') which had been experienced at their first meeting. The focus of power/knowledge was internal in unifying the sub-group (of specialist professionals) with which both identified, and external in differentiating the sub-group from other closely related groups. This particular sub-group held a higher status than others within the same profession. The in-group was not merely defined by functional speciality, but also by an espousal of purpose which was part of self-definition. That is, there is value in carrying out this function which forms part of the meaning of life for the participants. Non-identification within the pairing could, therefore, be a threat to the self as it could constitute a challenge to the prevailing (self) image.

Most of the interactions between Jane and Hazel could be characterized as adult-adult (Berne, 1964), and there is no evidence of the use of overt or coercive power or hierarchical authority. Jane did not emphasize management knowledge, and dis-

missed her own CMS course as 'embarrassing', and 'all stuff we knew already'. In so doing she was down-playing a difference between them. Hazel, conversely, did emphasize the importance of Jane's knowledge and experience as criteria for choosing her as mentor. She did not see her level in the organizational hierarchy as an important criterion, but the level of knowledge was stressed.

The image of this pair bore closest resemblance to the societally approved conception of nursing/caring professions of all of the pairs. The image was of devotion and non-instrumentality reflecting the capacity for vision and vigilance, creativity and care which characterizes maturity in the managerial couple (Lapierre, 1989). In this pair the image had lasted over 10 years of their careers. In other pairs the devotional image and the impact of power/knowledge on in-group/out-group images was not as unifying as in this one.

Career functions There were no clear references to career functions by either Jane or Hazel. Re-structuring within the organization threatened Jane's position and she may have been preoccupied with her own career planning at the time.

Pair 3: Jackie and Hillary

Jackie is female and is the line manager of Hillary, who is male.

The relationship The mentoring relationship between Jackie and Hillary was strongly influenced by their hierarchical relationship. As Hillary said: 'In hindsight, I wouldn't have picked her. ... We get on ... as subordinate and boss, but it is definitely hierarchical, and it isn't the relationship I would have benefited from as mentor/mentee'. While Jackie was more equivocal, it was clear that the relationship was not fulfilling psychosocial needs on either side. Hillary reported that there was some 'emotional' support (that is, directed to him 'as a person' rather than as a subordinate) at the beginning of the relationship, but this did not have enduring usefulness for him, particularly because it 'did not cross over into the practical'. Early adoption of the nurturing parent ego-state may have helped the relationship to begin, but it appears that disillusionment occurred early on, there was no progression to adult states and Jackie appeared to lose her confidence, possibly reverting to her own (hurt) child ego-state, feeling devalued and under-used.

Management style Jackie has an MBA and made a number of references to management theory and to applying what she had read. She was concerned with detail and her preferred learning style was to read widely, assimilate theoretical knowledge and then apply it. This did not fit easily with Hillary's style, as he took a more pragmatic approach, seeking to minimize reading and contemplation, and to achieve outputs in the shortest time possible (usually being deadline driven).

Jackie reported having an open style, and being concerned for the development of employees. She tried to interact with Hillary in a non-critical way and felt that this was successful. Jackie had been doubtful about appointing Hillary because of his more direct and pragmatic style which did not make him popular. The implication was that he lacked subtlety and interpersonal skills in interacting with other members of staff. However, Jackie felt she had facilitated his development. Hillary's

perception was different in that he acknowledged initial emotional support, but ultimately dismissed it as not being practical enough. He perceived Jackie as prescriptive about the way he should carry out his course work, but he was also critical of Jackie's management style for lacking direction. He felt that in some instances Jackie was incompetent.

Power/knowledge The assumption of this pair, and particularly Hillary, was that direct knowledge was important and valuable. A key factor in Hillary's selection of Jackie as a mentor was that fact that she had an MBA, however Hillary reported that the 'knowledge did not transfer readily to the course'. As time, and the course, progressed he increasingly judged Jackie to be incompetent. This change in evaluation altered the power/knowledge created within the pairing. Hillary became less willing to 'confess' by being open about his thoughts and feelings.

Inefficiencies in her style led to a dilution of my respect for her position. ... A problem was coursework on my own organization. It led to problems, especially where detrimental things were said about her management style. Some were problems between her and the structure that were of her own making.

At this point Hillary started to withhold information from Jackie, and stopped showing her his course work assignments. 'By then I realized I could do it efficiently without her.' Hillary specified that it was Jackie, rather than mentors in general, that he was better off without. This conclusion mirrors the break-up of parent and child following the disillusionment of adolescence and maturity, without the psychosocial basis of a continuing relationship (Berne, 1964).

Hillary had assumed that Jackie would be able to contribute knowledge to his strategy which, while not being purely instrumental, was focused on realizing career aspirations. Her knowledge was one of the keys to unlock the door to progression. However, when this turned out not to be the case, the relational operation of power/knowledge altered such that the balance began to reverse. Like pair 2, pair 3 work in a technical specialism, however, their function is less central than pair 2's, and while it is valued by other groups, their differentiation does not provide the same source of status as it does for pair 2. In the case of pair 3, power/knowledge did not operate to strengthen in-group ties. Rather it operated within the group in a way that threatened the established hierarchy. As with pair 1, Hillary's superior knowledge of his own perceptions and withdrawal intentions protected him from psychosocial dysfunction, while Jackie's self-image did not help her to perceive the way Hillary's conceptions were changing. If she had perceived it, she would probably have absorbed the new information into her image of Hillary as somewhat arrogant.

Career functions Although Jackie felt that her involvement in the development of Hillary would be useful for his career development, this was not the perception of Hillary, who did not feel that the mentoring had impacted on his development significantly. From his perspective the mentoring side of the relationship had ended after only about one and a half months, although in a formal, or superficial, sense it had continued for two years. Interestingly, Jackie had already been instrumental in Hillary's promotion to his present position, but Hillary was not aware of the thought process and slightly risky investment Jackie had made in him. He felt he had gained

his current position by right, and expected his own skill and knowledge to lead to future advancement.

Pair 4: Juliet and Harry

Juliet is female and the manager of Harry who is male. Catrina is female, a member of the department and was also mentored by Juliet.

The relationship Harry had shown some of his early work to Juliet, but had felt 'negative vibes' and wishing to preserve an 'amicable working relationship at all costs' had withdrawn from the mentoring aspects of the relationship at a very early stage (about one month into the course). Harry felt that he had not gained any benefits at all from the relationship. Although Harry was seeking to maintain an amicable working relationship, this does not match the perception presented by Juliet. Juliet saw the relationship as basically hierarchical, and many of the interactions as reported by Juliet are parent-child in transactional analysis terms (Berne, 1964), with Juliet predominantly in critical parent mode. However, Harry's report of interactions shows him trying to achieve adult-adult interactions, giving direct feedback and stating his position clearly. Juliet spoke quite extensively about Harry's criticisms of her (none of which Harry reported), for example, 'Harry has written things about me being autocratic. I'm not autocratic. He has no sense of awareness'. In every case her reaction to a perceived criticism was defensive and aggressive, and explicit threats were invariably made about Harry's job security. Harry did not disclose any of the threats during the interview, but he had withdrawn from mentoring interactions which may have broken complementary parent-child interactions.

Juliet made a number of judgements of Harry, including ones about his social life outside work, and used these as a basis for denying him time to work on his course assignments. She did not feel he deserved 'that type of support' because of his 'hectic' social life. She had tried to give Harry 'friendly advice' which entailed advising him to cut down on his social life because his job was not secure.

Juliet thought that Harry did not use her effectively as a mentor, and she attributed this to Harry attempting to conceal from her that his course work was incomplete. She gained this information from Catrina. 'He didn't want me to know how far behind he was with his college work. Catrina told me, she said he was an embarrassment. She was obtaining her certificate and he hadn't even completed the final piece of his work!' Juliet behaved like an angry and vengeful critical parent who had the power to punish Harry if she chose. He broke the transactions in order to preserve himself, having attempted to move the transactions to adult mode. There was evidence that Juliet was hurt and resentful about not being consulted, and rationalized Harry's reasons for avoiding contact with her in order to cope with the unacceptable possibility that he just did not want her.

Management style Juliet's style was directive and forceful. It was assumed that people respond best to pressure, and, therefore, the only way to command respect is to pressure them and make demands on them. Juliet thought that Harry did not command respect from his subordinates because his management style was not direct and forceful enough.

Juliet exhibited a lack of trust of employees and a considerable amount of effort was put into surveillance. Even though Harry is a middle ranking manager, Juliet suggested that he should stay at work to do his course work (and thereby be checkable), and she also said 'He's very forgetful. I keep an eye on his diary ... discreetly'. In addition to this Juliet formed views of Harry based on reports from Catrina who saw Harry as 'an embarrassment' in class and 'always late with his work'. This is a form of surveillance-at-a-distance, where Harry was observed away from the workplace, and reported back on by a 'loyal management subject'.

It is interesting to note that although Catrina's information is encouraged and apparently uncritically received, at one point 'she got ideas above her station ... once or twice I had to put her back'. By accepting this, and by adopting Juliet's approach to management (e.g. by achieving outcomes before deadlines, and by being overtly concerned for the reputation of the department), Catrina had proved herself to be a good management subject. Harry had singularly failed to achieve this by not responding to parent-child interactions with child-parent responses, and by not being compliant in *confession* of his outside work activities.

Power/knowledge Both Harry and Juliet assumed that Juliet had the power to adversely affect Harry's job (and life) and that he was not secure. This assumption encouraged him towards defensive withdrawal which just aggravated Juliet and made her want to exercise this perceived power. The effect on her was to become self-righteous, highly confident and to adopt a mono-perspective of events. She saw her view of events as real and the perceptions of others (especially Harry) as illusory. Although Juliet expressed high confidence and sureness, this could have been a defensive reaction to an inability to acknowledge self-doubt or challenge. She certainly perceived Harry as a threat to her image of 'how things ought to be', but she never acknowledged him as a threat, rather she constantly dismissed him as childish. To accept that Harry was right about the management style to be adopted and the avoidance of stress and perfectionism would have challenged Juliet's self and her view of how one gained position and status in society. Therefore, it was not a possibility in this circumstance and defensive aggression and withdrawal were the most likely dynamics.

Juliet made use of overt power a number of times, for example:

I said to him, 'you have a difficulty, you have to be praised all the time, well, I'm sorry I'm not going to change my ways, and if you have a difficulty with that you'd better find another job. I don't get any praise, I don't get praise'.

The idea of Harry finding another job was doubtful as, in Juliet's own words 'at the moment jobs are hard to come by' and she expressed the opinion that at Harry's age it would be difficult for him to leave:

It's time he was looking for something outside, but he's on good money here. ... if he doesn't go and get something else, he won't at his age, it's time to be going looking.

Most of this interaction is in critical parent mode, but there is a switch into child mode—'I don't get any praise, I don't get praise', in other words, 'if I don't have it, then you can't have it either' and 'what about me?' Other interactions are aggressive;

for example Juliet said that she was dis-establishing Harry. Normal procedure is to dis-establish the post rather than the person (and this would fit with a pattern of assertive behaviour; to focus on the person would be interpreted as aggressive).

It is interesting that, despite all the power that was being expressed, Harry felt that Juliet lacked the necessary knowledge. 'The mentor needs a recent management qualification or training to give the student insight into what the tutors are looking for'.

Harry did not disclose the threats, although after the interview, in conversation, he said he knew his position was not secure, and a considerable amount of time was spent discussing options for further study and alternative sources of employment.

Career functions Harry did not perceive any beneficial career functions to have derived from the mentoring relationship. Informal conversation revealed that he was concerned about his career, which he regarded as close to termination with the organization, and he had started to explore alternatives.

All Juliet's references to Harry's career path saw it as being downward and terminal. She felt hurt by his withdrawal and remained in critical parent mode, rather than moving, at Harry's invitation, into adult mode. Juliet had significant need requirements of her own and these could not be met in the mentoring relationship. Further, because her own psychological needs were not being met, an unfinished relationship of her past dominated the interactions, and she had neither interpersonal skills nor psychological resources to offer Harry.

Discussion

It was clear from the data that there were significant problems with the mentoring in the case-study organization. The majority of mentees indicated no benefits in terms of career or psychosocial functions. None of the pairs studied achieved 'developmental' relationships in which autonomy was fostered (Freire, 1972; Clarkson and Shaw, 1992). None of the pairs progressed through the envisaged stages of development (Kram, 1988; Levinson et al., 1978). In general there was premature cessation of effective relations, although formal, superficial relations may have continued. Career functions were not served.

A number of psychosocial dysfunctions were reported; for example there was evidence of an 'unfinished' relationship in pair 1—Jane expressed guilt and anxiety, and Juliet exhibited stress and defensive reactions. The literature would lead one to expect psychosocial dysfunctions for the mentees and the potential use of coercive power in hierarchical relationships, but in this case it was the *mentors* who were adversely affected even though the relationships were hierarchical. There are a number of potential reasons for this. First, there is the role conflict of being both supporter and assessor of the mentee. Most mentors were more comfortable with one or other side of the role, and the twin problems of insufficiently emphasizing the non-favourite side and of having to carry out behaviours which contradicted the favourite side flowed from this. Second, there is the tension that success is, to some extent, self-defeating. A successful conclusion means the mentee leaving the relationship or 'departing the nest'. Third, there is the issue that while things may appear to be working, there is some level of hidden withdrawal by the mentees, of

which the mentors are only peripherally aware. This may be very 'unsettling' for the mentors.

It is clear that cessation was initiated by the mentees rather than the mentors. Power/knowledge played both a direct and an indirect role in this. In Harry's case withdrawal was partly in order to protect the working relationship, but in all cases (including pair 4) knowledge was identified by the mentees as a key factor. Harry thought that mentors needed a recent management qualification in order to give insight into 'what the tutors were looking for'. Hillary lost respect for Jackie as he began to see her as inefficient and her knowledge as not being transferable or useful. Hazel stated that she would not have retained Jane as her mentor even if she (Jane) had remained with the organization because she lacked sufficient knowledge. This indicates a change as the perception of Jane as knowledgeable had been a factor in Hazel choosing her as mentor. However, Hazel now felt that her level of knowledge had surpassed that of Jane. Hannah's withdrawal was explicitly because of a perceived lack of knowledge on Judith's part. So in all cases perceived knowledge was an important factor in the breakdown of mentoring.

There is no reason to assume variation in the level of knowledge of the mentors, and this level was perceived by the mentees when they selected the mentors. In some cases (pairs 2 and 3) the mentor's knowledge was a positive criterion in making the choice. However, the level of knowledge of the mentees was changing relative to that of the mentors. The mentees came from functional, clinical or professional areas and were aiming to discover what management was about and 'how to do it'. They were seeking access to the thoughts as action, or discourse, of management. As the mentees became able to use the language and judge actions by use of the management discourse their mentoring relationships were affected. They began to perceive their mentors in management terms such as 'authoritarian', 'theory X' and 'inefficient'. This reflected the changing relational aspect of power. As assumptions and judgements about the validity and usefulness of the mentors were questioned by the mentees they began to seek knowledge from other sources such as higher levels of management and colleagues on the course. As the mentees increasingly came to define themselves (and to be defined by the university) as competent in management, they increasingly defined their mentors as incompetent. This process was accompanied by (and was contemporaneous with) the process of withdrawal from a meaningful relationship, leaving a superficial appearance of a relationship in place. Mentees withheld information, feelings and emotion.

Power/knowledge is not only observed in the power obtained by expert knowledge, it is revealed as a changing relational force which operates at the level of assumptions and covert aspects of the discourse. In all cases the mentees were assumed by both parties to be less skilled and knowledgeable than the mentors. With the exception of pair 2 the distinction was thought to be large and emphatic. This assumption created a power imbalance between mentor and mentee. In some cases (particularly pair 4) there was an assumption that the mentor had power of determination over the job, career and livelihood of the mentee. In pair 1 the mentor was perceived as having influence over career progression. In pair 3, although Hillary attributed career success to himself rather than to circumstances or the efforts of Jackie, there was an acknowledgement that while she was not a 'gatekeeper', her support would be important for progression.

The perception of power over job/career fostered the construction of misleading

images of each other within pairs. For the mentees, the image of the mentor as influential and guiding became something to break away from. In cases where the image was confirmed by expressions of overt power, the need to break free was accentuated and hastened. In other relationships where there was less or no explicit reference to overt power, the need to break free was from the image of an un-needed nurturing parent-child relationship.

The predominant image held by mentors of mentees was of a nurturing/developmental relationship. This meant a power imbalance that was not only just, but was also in the interest of the mentee. Advice-giving and guidance were felt to be appropriate, and the 'correct' action on the part of the mentee would be acceptance. Under this perception breaking free by mentees would be unnecessary and inappropriate. As a result the mentees had to disguise the thoughts which led to their withdrawal, and the fact of their withdrawal, so as to avoid the supposed potential negative impact of disapproval of the mentors.

According to a Foucauldian analysis 'the gaze' of surveillance (which seeks knowledge of the mentee) produces 'the look' by which those being surveyed create the impression of conformity. An example is shown in pair 4, where Harry singularly failed to achieve 'the look' (in contrast to Catrina who was compliant in the surveillance of Harry). In all cases mentees maintained 'the look' of compliance by carrying on with the superficial aspects of the relationship. For example, meetings were still held and discussions were conducted on relevant topics, but there was generally a withdrawal from the deeper aspects of the interaction. The mentees stopped revealing their genuine thoughts and feelings. In other words, they protected themselves against the outcomes of 'confession' (which could be equally part of 'Christian' and 'Greek' mentoring modes, 'hard' and 'soft' management styles) by appearing to reveal themselves while not actually doing so.

The breakdown of relationships could be linked in some instances to a breakdown in effective operation of mentoring as a power/knowledge panoptic technique. In pair 4, for example, surveillance became more overt and threatening as the more subtle technique of providing the mentee with supported means of self-development failed to deliver an appropriately pliant management subject.

It has been argued that processes such as career development can operate not only as panoptic techniques but as 'projects of the self' in which the individual becomes self-managing in a way which is both useful to the organization and more invasive than management processes could overtly seek to be. Grey (1994) explores the career as an organizing principle in the project of the self of accountants. A fundamental factor in career success is displaying and feeling the right enthusiasm, even for mundane trainee tasks. Review and appraisal operate panoptically to inspire enthusiasm in bored trainees, but this function is apparently redundant in trainees who are already highly dedicated and enthusiastic. However, Grey (1994) argues that the techniques are not actually redundant for the latter group. They can come to see the disciplinary techniques of review as a benevolent means to realize their own life projects. This is true even of those who are ejected from the system. Their complaints focus around the techniques not being sufficiently employed to help them change, not in them being over- or incorrectly employed, or indeed, employed at all.

Pair 4 is again an interesting example. Catrina's case would conform to this analysis. She saw the mentoring process as benevolent and helpful to her aim to become a more professional manager and rise up the 'career ladder'. Juliet clearly

conceives the mentoring process as benevolent, even though it is used as part of a range of coercive tools against Harry. For Catrina, power/knowledge has not broken down because she is happy and believes she is progressing. Conversely, Harry is unhappy, knows he is not progressing in the job, and for his relationship with Juliet, power/knowledge has broken down.

'Confessions' and self-revelation were occurring in peer groups of mentees who were mutually supportive. Thus, the mentees were receiving their 'strokes' elsewhere while the confessors/mentors received disguised 'discounts' from the ineffective confessions of mentoring meetings. This meant that power/knowledge was functioning such that, although the confessors should have been in a superior position with greater knowledge of the mentees than the mentees had of them, in fact there was a reversal. The mentees were in a superior position because, equipped with an understanding of management discourse, they could interrogate the rhetoric and behaviour of the mentor (both in general and in the mentoring discussions) and form judgements. These judgements were kept secret from the mentor, but were sometimes discussed with close peer groups and occasionally with wider groups such as the class. The mentees gained a superior position because they 'knew' of the failings of the mentor and protected themselves from being known by the mentor.

The mentors did not perceive or understand what had happened. In most cases they did realize that there was something wrong or something missing, but they were confused about what stage the relationship had reached, and even this limited realization did not occur until after the withdrawal had been effected. The mentors responded with a mixture of defensiveness, aggression, sorrow, and feelings of loss and guilt. It is clear that the mentors had suffered significant psychosocial dysfunction.

For the mentees other than Harry and Catrina it could be argued that the operation of power/knowledge broke down temporarily as their mentoring relationships collapsed. However, they established a peer self-help group which had the effect of carrying forward many of the objectives of the mentorship scheme. Not only were they conforming to desired management behaviour and thinking, they were voluntarily meeting in their free time and mixing management socialization with leisure activities. They were seeking, granting and receiving approval, ideas and practices which they believed improved them and made it more likely that they could achieve their potential to gain power in the organization and change it for the better. This was happening in a self-generating and reciprocal way.

This is analogous to Grey's (1994) comments on the invasion of career-oriented activities into the lives of the accountants he studied who had to have the 'right sort' of family, social activities and network in order to progress. But this was not experienced as imposed from without. It was all part of the individuals' freely chosen (as they thought) life plans. In the same way, for the aspiring health service managers, although they did not join the same clubs as their superiors, their careers and aspirations did operate as a technique of becoming self-managing. Although they did not view their experience of mentorship as an effective means for them to pursue their own life projects, they did not dismiss the concepts and processes of mentorship *per se*. They merely relocated these functions in a self-chosen peer group instead of a hierarchical mentor. Power/knowledge is relational and its exercise can inspire resistance. This can be collectively organized to a greater or lesser extent so as to form a basis from which a resistant discourse can operate

(Austrin, 1994). In this case, the resistance was partial and operated in an anti-hierarchical mode.

What emerges from this analysis is that while it is true, as the literature would have it, that power/knowledge and psychosocial functions are important, in this case they actually operate inversely to the hierarchical power structure of the organization. Foucault sees power/knowledge as operating on both subordinates and superordinates (Legge, 1995), and in this case the subordinates used knowledge as a way of assessing their superiors and then used their power as a member of a dyadic relationship to prevent meaningful interaction. The result was psychosocial dysfunction for the mentors.

The expectation is that where there is a hierarchical relationship between the mentor and mentee, the mentoring will lack openness, freedom and a developmental focus. The reason for this would be assumed to be the constraints on interaction imposed by the hierarchical power inherent in the relationship. In this case we can identify 'vicious spirals' of declining relationships where alterations in the power/knowledge balance were linked to psychosocial dysfunction.

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