

Chapter 61

Gendered Social–Networking Organizations: A View of the Sexed Mentorship Relationships

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ABSTRACT

Research has consistently documented that women are disproportionately represented in upper management and in positions of power and still continue to dominate traditionally female occupations. Hence, recognizing that effective efforts need to be made to assist women in their career development, many organizations have adopted mentoring programs to address gender differences in advancement without having a grounded plan. Organizations often do so out of competing for and achieving organizational longevity, organizational competitive advantage, or for legal accommodations for marketing purposes. Organizations often implement mentoring program(s) with the goal of having mentors provide mentees with psychosocial support, career development support, sponsorship and coaching, setting up challenging assignments, fostering positive visibility, and protecting the mentee from adverse forces. Hence, the purpose of this article will be on mentorship (brief historical coverage and definition), stereotypes of gendered advancement based on gender, and cross-gender mentorship in the U.S.

INTRODUCTION

Research has consistently documented, according to Rockwell, Leck, and Elliott (2013), that women are disproportionately represented in upper management and in positions of power (Tran, 2008, 2012, 2015) and still continue to dominate traditionally female occupations, such as administrative support and service workers (Burke, 2002; Hsieh & Winslow, 2006; Jacobs, 1999; Leck, 2002; MacRae, 2005; Schein, Mueller, Lituchy, & Liu, 1996; Tran, 2008, 2012, 2015). Catalyst, a non-profit organization whose mission is to work with organizations to expand opportunities for women, reported in 2011 that women are underrepresented as heads of Financial Post 500 organizations (5.6% in Canada, 3.2% in the U.S.),

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board directors (14% in Canada and 15.7% in the U.S.), senior officers (17.7% in Canada and 14.4% in the U.S.), and generally in management occupations (36.5% in Canada and 51.5% in the U.S.) although they represent almost 47% of the labor force in both countries (Rockwell et al., 2013). Furthermore, women represent only 6.2% of the FP500 top earners in Canada and 7.6% in the U.S. (Rockwell et al., 2013).

The aforementioned is a result of several factors, one of which is mentorship, or a lack of mentorship. According to Johnson (2002) and Ismail, Kho Khian Jui, and Zainal Shah (2011), based on Greek history, mentoring is first mentioned in the epic story of the *Odyssey* written by Homer. In this story, Odysseus tells his loyal and experienced friend, Mentor, who has great wisdom and trustworthy to teach his son, Telemachus, a mentee or protégé who has less experience about the tips for handling challenging lifestyles before he goes to the Trojan War (Edlind & Haensly, 1985; Merriam, 1993). Based on this story, mentoring is viewed as an important field of education (Johnson, Geroy, & Griego, 1991) and/or counseling (Gregson, 1994) where mentors are old men who have wisdom and can be trusted to educate who have little experience (Johnson et al., 1991; Kram, 1985; Russell & Adams, 1997; Wanguri, 1996). Hence, it has inspired Human Resource Development (HRD) scholars to generally interpret the concept and practice mentoring programs in line with the development of the current organizational practice (Dennison, 2000; Ismail, Boerhannoedin, & Rasip, 2009; Northcott, 2000; Oliver & Aggleton, 2002).

In an organizational perspective, mentoring is often seen as an important development method where it establishes a relationship between managers, who are more experienced, paired with another member who is less experienced. This mentoring relationship, if properly carried out, will increase group and/or individuals' potentials to handle successfully particular duties and responsibilities, familiarize with new techniques, and care for all aspects of mentees (Cummings & Worley, 2009; Johnson et al., 1991; Long, 2002). Mentoring models vary according to different organizational contexts and there is no one best model to fit all organizations. Existing models have been designed and administered based on differences and uniqueness of an organization in terms of beliefs, orientations, stresses, strengths, and weaknesses (Hawkey, 1997; Irving, Moore, & Hamilton, 2003; Ritchie & Conolly, 1993; Ritchie & Genoni, 1999). These factors have strongly affected the implementation of mentoring type in formal and/or informal mentoring activities in organizations (Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992; Ismail, Kho Khian Jui, & Abdullah, 2009; Ragins, 1997, 1999; Ragins & Cotton, 1993, 1999). Hence, the purpose of this article will be on mentorship (brief historical coverage and definition), stereotypes of gendered advancement based on gender, and cross-gender mentorship in the U.S.

MENTORSHIP RELATIONSHIP

Mentoring has been considered to be so effective as a management training and career development tool that organizations have been investigating formal programs designed to foster such relationships among their employees (Kram, 1985; McKeen & Nurke, 1989). Mentoring can be seen as having two components, one dealing with the transfer of marketable and often discipline-based skills, behaviors and attitudes, and the other related to the social and emotional interaction that makes the transfer of knowledge and skills possible (Hill, 1989; Schockett, 1985). According to Blackwell (1989), mentors perform a multitude of functions in order to foster professional development of protégés. According to Feist-Price (1994), such functions include: (1) providing training, (2) stimulating the acquisition of knowledge, (3) providing information about various programs within the setting, (4) providing emotional support and encouragement and helping the protégé develop coping strategies during periods of turmoil,

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