Toward Mentoring as Feminist Praxis: strategies for ourselves and others

PAMELA MOSS, *University of Victoria, Canada*

KAREN J. DEBRES, *Kansas State University, Manhattan, USA*

ALTHA CRAVEY, *University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, USA*

JENNIFER HYNDMAN, *Arizona State University, Phoenix, USA*

KATHERINE K. HIRSCHBOECK, *University of Arizona, Tucson, USA*

MICHELE MASUCCI, *Temple University, Philadelphia, USA*

ABSTRACT   *In this paper, we outline some strategies that we have found useful in our everyday practices as faculty members at a variety of universities in Canada and the USA. We first set a framework for being a mentor while engaging feminist praxis. We then discuss strategies that would be useful in choosing a mentor as well as being a mentor; for mentoring undergraduate students as well as graduate students. We conclude by suggesting that working toward self-mentoring is a goal.*

KEYWORDS   Mentoring, self-mentoring, students, faculty, feminism.

Mentoring in the academy is not new. It has been going on informally for decades, even centuries, but often within fairly narrow circles in an exclusive sort of way. Though the origin remains uncertain, *mentor* probably derived from a Latin word form meaning to remember, to think, to counsel. In combination, these acts form the basis upon which professors train protégé(e)s. As more women, people of colour and other marginalised persons become students and faculty in geography, we need to develop widely based mentoring strategies that seek to be inclusive rather than exclusive.

   We came together to discuss such mentoring strategies (which is *in itself* a mentoring
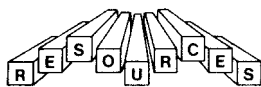
act) in a panel session at the 1998 Association of American Geographers (AAG) Meeting in Boston that Karen and Pamela organised. Altha, Jennifer, Katherine and Michele were panellists along with Mildred Berman. Given the positive response to the session, we decided to present our thoughts to a wider audience. Because of our various viewpoints, any singular or definitive description of mentoring remains elusive. Yet we do want to highlight that we see mentoring as part of feminist praxis [1]. By this we mean that through engaging in mentoring we share knowledge, experience and practical strategies that promote women, people of colour and others who are less favourably positioned within the academy. The increase in hiring 'minorities' (including women) and the introduction of strategies to recruit students who have been historically underrepresented in the academy does not simply mean that, once they become part of the academy, working and studying will be straightforward or easy. The experience of being the first or even second female faculty member in a geography department, for example, can be daunting, especially for a woman who is a feminist. Equally, graduate and undergraduate students who come from cultural backgrounds and political or sexual orientations other than those represented by professors may be less likely than 'traditional' students to continue along academic paths without active encouragement, support and accessible role models.

In what follows, we outline some strategies that we have found useful in our everyday practices as faculty members at a variety of universities in Canada and the United States. Although our experiences are specific to the North American milieu, they are not place-bound. Some adaptation of these strategies will no doubt be necessary in other contexts, given the variations in academic structures. We first set a framework for being a mentor while engaging feminist praxis. We describe the masculine dominance of geography in a variety of venues that involve mentoring, then draw out specific feminist political values through which we distinguish our suggested mentoring strategies from more 'traditional' ones. Next we turn to specific strategies useful in choosing a mentor, mentoring undergraduate students, mentoring graduate students and being a mentor. In closing, we suggest that working toward self-mentoring is useful both in the context of manoeuvring through the academy on our own as well as in assisting others.

Mentoring as Feminist Praxis

Mentoring as feminist praxis means promoting women, people of colour and others who are less favourably positioned within the academy and assisting them in negotiating the relations within the academy. Such a task is difficult because of the extensive masculinisation of the academy and the resulting masculine culture in geography. Also influencing our task is the pool of possible mentors. There are relatively fewer women, people of colour and other marginalised persons employed as faculty in higher education institutions. Moreover, feminist praxis is itself fraught with contradictions: being in the academy is problematic in the feminist community because of the detached position academics hold in relation to feminists on the 'front line'. We in turn discuss the masculinisation of the academy and geography, review the numbers of women in geography, and elaborate mentoring as feminist praxis.
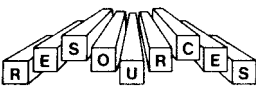
For the past three decades feminists have shown how masculine the academy is, not only in the production of knowledge, but also in its social practices (see e.g. Keller, 1985; Hekman, 1990; Harding, 1991; Alcoff, 1996; Oakley & Mitchell, 1997; Rudberg, 1997). Geography has not been immune to this masculinisation process (see Monk & Hanson, 1982; McDowell, 1990, 1992a, 1992b; McEwan, 1998). Two venues which

have had considerable influence in shaping geography's academic culture are fieldwork and training.

Rose (1993) shows in detail how the history of fieldwork is based on a heroic ethos which includes both images and practices of claiming the exotic as one's own, conquering the unknown and dominating the environment and all within it. This premise of heroism spins in several directions at once. Implicit is the notion that the wildness of nature can be, and indeed needs to be, captured through the geographer's experience and tamed through measurement and text. Having 'civilised' nature through lenses, sampling, surveys, experience, pen and paper (including urban, rural and natural landscapes), geographers celebrate the conquest through 'conventional' social interactions, such as social gatherings with food and drink. Nairn (1999a, 1999b) argues that the hegemonic norm dominant in geography ensures that these 'conventional' activities are masculinist, homophobic and anti-feminine in nature. She identifies practices including incessant heterosexist humour, a 'work hard/play hard' attitude and excessive alcohol consumption. She also points out that these social interactions not only draw particular types of people to the discipline, but also exclude those not 'fitting the bill', such as those who are not heterosexual, those who are disabled or ill and those who seek to transgress the masculine borders of defining a geographer.

This construction of the field contrasts sharply with feminist accounts of fieldwork. Feminist geographers agonise over whether or not doing fieldwork is an appropriate feminist act. Reflexive accounts of being in the field and notes on positionings *vis-à-vis* the other women in the research process dominate the literature (e.g. *Professional Geographer* 1994; Jones *et al.*, 1997). In fact, the field and doing fieldwork denotes more of a sense of belonging or fitting in while suffering the angst over knowing that we cannot (e.g. England, 1994; Farrow, 1995; Moss, 1995). Neither construction is especially useful for approaching mentoring. Like Rudberg (1997), we must remind ourselves that the pursuit of knowledge and our passion for learning need not be either masculinist or neurotic; rather, we can inscribe fieldwork, field trips and academic relationships with a competing sets of values—ones such as fostering community, cooperation and caring.

Training both undergraduate and graduate students is supposed to involve an introduction to the discipline. One medium through which this is accomplished is the obligatory field trip, where students become acquainted with this heroic ethos of being 'out there' amongst the 'others' (Rose, 1993, p. 70; Nairn, 1999b; see also Maguire, 1998). Another medium is the classroom where creating a competitive atmosphere is commonplace, where students are encouraged and rewarded for showing that someone else is 'wrong' rather than being 'right' (McDowell, 1992b, p. 402). Cook (forthcoming) addresses both these issues in an autobiographical essay about how he almost did not get his PhD. Initially he wanted to carry out fieldwork in Jamaica investigating the movement of plantation fruit to British grocery stores. He soon realised that his 'traditional' training made him uncomfortable, which forced him to find a different 'field' to carry out his research. This led him to his own history so that he could understand himself in the multiple contexts within which he exists—Jamaica, Britain, home, family, university. However, his supervisors did not support his shift and he had to struggle to compete in a milieu based on a different set of values. Although he may not interpret his plight in this way, we think that he came to realise that his training was so rooted in the masculinised practices of geography that to disentangle himself was tantamount to re-inscribing his entire schooling and re-inscribing himself with non-masculinist values. This process of re-inscription is not restricted to individual students or the classroom

(e.g. see Gibson-Graham, 1999); other sites of training—including field trips, fieldwork and mentoring—need to be scrutinised for masculinist and other exclusionary practices.

Although the proportion of female students studying geography is increasing in English-speaking countries, the same is not true for teaching and research positions at universities and colleges (e.g. Fournier, 1990; Lee, 1990; McDowell & Peake, 1990). Despite some improvement in ratios, geography is still overall a male discipline. In Canada, for example, MA and MSc students are roughly split between women and men; however, at the PhD level, the ratio drops sharply, with most female PhDs granted in social and cultural geography, and drops even further at each faculty rank (Mackenzie, 1990). Physical geography, a traditional masculine discipline, appears to be surpassed only by GIS (Geographic Information Systems) in the numerical dominance of males in the field (Dumayne-Peaty & Wellens, 1998). Fewer data on ratios of non-white and other marginalised persons exist. This happens in part because of the way statistics are collected (self-reporting of ethnicity and race is usually optional, and the personally sensitive information, for example sexual orientation, is not requested). Nevertheless, we think that we can safely assume that the numbers of non-whites and other marginalised persons are even more disproportionately low.

This imbalance in numbers of women and other marginalised people in positions of authority has implications for mentoring: there are fewer women whom other women can ask for guidance, particularly in the more masculinised sub-fields of geography; there are fewer alternative role models, the diversity of which is important in building academic careers for marginalised women (see Caplan, 1995) [2]; and there are increased workloads for the relatively few women and marginalised persons positioned within the academy (who are still more likely to be junior faculty) because of the additional responsibility of being both mentors and role models while making their own way through the academy.

Being a feminist mentor is especially crucial in light of the masculinisation of geography as both a social and physical science. If our feminist goal is to challenge masculinism in its various manifestations, then the academy serves as another terrain of struggle. Integrating feminist values into the specific acts of mentoring can benefit not only ourselves as women, but also other persons marginalised by similar social and political processes. The values upon which our suggestions are based include:

- *Working from a woman-centred approach.* Although not fashionable in some feminist circles, particularly in geography where men regularly contribute to the construction of feminist knowledge, we maintain a woman-centred approach. We do so because of the ways masculinisation processes work. Even with the argument that masculine knowledge is not linked to biology (see Hawkesworth, 1990), the material consequences of masculine dominance continue to favour men.
- *Allying ourselves with marginalised groups.* Similarly, as masculinism favours men, the whiteness, heterosexism and ableism within the discipline tends to exclude non-whites, non-heterosexuals and ill and disabled persons. Working-class students and persons from non-middle or upper class backgrounds are also excluded in routine and sometimes not so subtle ways.
- *Enabling democratic access to intellectual resources.* Increasingly, 'traditional' and non-'traditional' students are refusing mainstream knowledge and demanding other programmes to 'fit' their lives, recently illustrated by a hunger strike at University of California–Berkeley to save the ethnic studies programme. Women's and environmental studies are long-standing examples, but there are other programmes being estab-

lished, as for example, African-American and Hispanic Studies in the USA and Aboriginal Programmes in Canada.

- *Engaging in collective decision-making processes.* Permitting input and valuing consensus decision making are two different activities. For us, letting go of power and continually destabilising the authoritative voice in the classroom, in research and in our offices has to be an objective if we want to promote women and other marginalised persons. Creating environments through collaboration, respectful exchange, listening, building alliances and group consultation processes assists in establishing trust and common political ground.

- *Dismantling academic structures.* Although seemingly conventional mentoring acts, such as letter writing, advising or career counselling, can reinforce the academy as it is, we can also use these mechanisms to challenge the 'system'. We always have to remain sensitive to the extensiveness of the web of oppressive sets of power relations in which we exist and be prepared to negotiate the intersections of oppression and resistance.

The implications of acting on these values, or engaging feminist praxis in mentoring, are immense. Most prominent is the tension between wanting to dismantle the academy and at the same time taking on the responsibility of guiding others through the labyrinth. As well, there is the tension between not wanting to be a part of an oppressive institution, but still seeking guidance in order to 'make it' as an academic. This tension shapes much of the activities around teaching, training and mentoring for us as feminists. Like Ewick (1994), we want to promote critique, not (simple) criticism; we want to integrate feminist values into our acts as mentors. Unfortunately, and probably inevitably, there will be resistance and even hostility—from students, colleagues, administrators and (possibly even) community members. Yet we find that the positive aspects far outweigh the negative ones, or we would have all given up long ago.

Mentoring Strategies

In taking on the responsibility of mentoring others and seeking guidance ourselves, we want to be clear about our intentions and motives. We are feminist academics at various stages in our careers. We all desire to engage feminist praxis within the academy, especially in the context of mentoring. But this does not mean that our advice is flawless or that bad advice has never guided our actions; rather, it is the milieu within which advice is given and taken that is important.

With this in mind we provide some strategies that we have found useful in choosing a mentor, mentoring undergraduate students, mentoring graduate students and being a mentor. Though not fully cohesive or definitive, the following suggestions attempt to challenge the alienating and marginalising relations within the academy and to provide alternative routes through the academic labyrinth. Although some suggestions seem rather routine or standard, remember that for us it is the underlying values and context that define more fully what a particular act means.

Choosing a Mentor

We advocate a flexible approach to choosing a mentor, presenting first the basic elements, then additional considerations for those in overtly hostile environments.
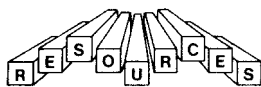
Seek Advice when you Need It. We all need guidance now and again. When faced with a decision affecting career development, job prospects or employment situation, talk with someone about your choices. You may discover options you had not previously considered.

Select more than One Mentor. In fact, the very idea of one mentor knowing all the details of your career path should be abandoned. Different people give different advice about the same situation. By consulting two or more advisers, you will have more ideas to work from as you formulate your own plan of action.

Choose a Mentor Who is in a Position of Power. As an undergraduate student, approach faculty who have an active research programme, a solid publication record and an interest in training graduate students. As graduate students and faculty, consult people who review grant proposals, write promotion letters and recommend people for key committees. In this way, you gain access to knowledge beyond your own years of experience.

Be Prepared to Take Advice without Seeking It. Be alert to seeking and getting advice through brief professional encounters. These partial and sometimes random mentoring contacts are constructive for long-range planning.

Seek a Mentor Outside your Daily Context. Gaining perspective is useful when bogged down with the details of everyday life. A mentor from another context may lend a fresh perspective and be better able to provide confidentiality. Peers or colleagues at a distance can provide advice about the situation that balances the particulars with the possibilities. Remember, too, that mentors exist outside the academy.

Refuse Bad Advice. One is never obliged to follow a mentor's suggestion. Any mentor's advice is partial. If a suggestion seems impractical or unwise, consult someone else and compare strategies. Consider possible consequences of various options and pursue a path that 'fits'.

Such simple strategies may seem strangely inadequate in the face of transition, as for example, from graduate student to faculty status, when all at once our networks of peers for support and intellectual exchange disappear only to be replaced by an array of unfamiliar faces and expectations. Without some guidance, the convergence of these events can be disorienting, destabilising, disconcerting and disillusioning. Dealing with transition, crisis or hostile environments requires additional strategies. In these situations, choosing an effective mentor may differ significantly from choosing a mentor in supportive contexts.

Access Available Services. For students, counselling services are usually available for personal and university-related matters. Their staff is used to dealing with a wide range of issues, such as illness, stress and career planning.

Use the Telephone. When facing a difficult situation or a new set of demands as a faculty member, telephone an acquaintance who accepted an appointment a few years ago. Sharing experiences helps get over the toughest moments. It is also a good idea to develop contacts and mentoring relationships with people outside academia in order to maintain perspective and confidentiality.

418
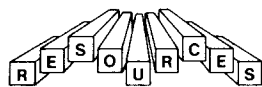
Recognise the Extra Challenge. It is important for those in hostile environments to realise that many faculty, colleagues and administrators do not understand the power dynamics of chilly climates and their impact on an individual's university experience, professional planning horizon and job satisfaction. It may be more fitting in these situations to choose a mentor who can validate experiences, rather than challenge them. A mentor who can acknowledge the complex feelings of harassment while identifying reasons to persevere is ideal. For academic survival, discuss immediate coping strategies in conjunction with long-term professional development.

Consult a Mentor who has Experienced Institutionalised Discrimination. Such a mentor may be able to identify avenues for possible positive outcomes—outcomes that are likely to be different from the ones envisioned while working or studying in a hostile environment. In drawing on her own experience, she may be helpful in assessing the best arena through which to challenge the environment and at what point to abandon the struggle.

Think about Younger Colleagues as Possible Mentors. Younger colleagues may operate with different expectations of the work environment and thus have fresh views about the workplace generally. They may also have had access to a different set of resources ranging from female faculty supervision to working within feminist contexts.

Learn to Self-advocate. This can be exceedingly difficult because other faculty, colleagues and administrators may be reluctant to accept responsibility for improving the quality of the collective work environment. Yet through accepting responsibility to contest the structure of hostility within the workplace—formally or informally—mentors may emerge inside and outside the academy who can then act as advocates. At the same time, continuing professional advancement focuses work energy. This double action—that of advocating for improved work conditions while pursuing professional goals—is a balance that permits immediate survival and forms part of the long-term collective feminist struggle for improved work conditions for all.

Mentoring Undergraduates

Assisting undergraduates' movements through the academy can be challenging at the very best of times. Frequently female faculty are encumbered with counselling responsibilities, often unofficially, because of widespread social expectations that women are naturally nurturing and sympathetic. Depending on the type of higher education institution, mentoring undergraduates may take up more or less of a female faculty member's time. However, this type of mentoring is of considerable importance, especially for those undergraduates who are marginalised because of their sexual orientation, class, race, ethnicity, ability and/or nationality. A few examples of simple strategies guide our relationships with undergraduates.

Imagine Mentoring as a Dialogue. Asking questions casually about goals, interests and background is more beneficial than jotting down facts and information. When several students have related issues, it might be useful to meet and mentor in groups, or through email. This act demonstrates the importance of peer learning and self-mentoring (see section 'Toward Self-Mentoring'). Such interaction demands focused attention, and a little more organisation, but the effects are well worth the effort, because when engaging
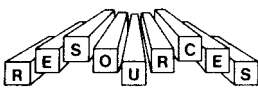
this process we feel less atomised within the university and more secure that the advice we give and take is reliable.

Maintain Awareness and Recognition of Power Dynamics. Even though we want to dismantle the structures of the academy, we still have to work within these structures in our dealings with undergraduates. Guiding students through these structures means that we ourselves need to be aware of how power operates on campus and in our own interactions with students and others. Assessing power, however, is not always an easy task. Self-critique and anticipation of possible repercussions of our actions are also necessary.

Keep a List of Resources Handy. Having a list of phone numbers on your desk can be tremendously useful in accessing services to deal with students' issues or problems. Such a list should include on- and off-campus services, as for example, counselling services, medical clinics, aboriginal student union, women's centres, campus gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender caucus, disability support group for students, intercultural friendship centres, the university ombudsperson and crisis help-lines for rape, suicide and sexually transmitted diseases. Alongside this list, post your campus's code on sexual harassment and other pertinent policies for easy reference.

Establish Clear Guidelines for Letters of Reference. Being up-front about whether or not you would be able to write a *positive* letter of recommendation for a student is a useful strategy, for both the faculty member and the student. For the faculty member, establishing clear guidelines can reduce the workload while making the task of writing recommendation letters easier and more pleasurable. Thoughtful consideration and professionalism should be given to all requests since these letters are crucial influences on students' careers. For undergraduate students, asking *explicitly* for a positive recommendation before passing on information about a job or a graduate school application is imperative. It is also wise for a student to prepare in advance as much information as possible—transcripts, written statement of research/job interests and goals, application forms, job description—in order to make a strong case.

In mentoring undergraduate students, we reaffirm our commitment to mentoring as feminist praxis. We do so when we align ourselves with marginalised groups of students. We practise our feminist values when we take time to analyse the ways in which we ourselves wield and challenge power. Because undergraduates are relatively powerless as a group, we are in touch with some of the most obvious manifestations of academic power whenever we are in dialogue with undergraduates. These suggestions assist in democratizing access to intellectual resources in the short term. In the long term, they assist in dismantling the structures within which we operate.

Mentoring Graduates

A graduate student's mentor serves in many ways as her guide into and through the academy. Mentors spend much time in general encouragement and support, especially in the transition period between undergraduate and graduate studies. In addition to academic training, providing mentoring for graduates involves activities outside the classroom that encourage learning and build careers. (Some of the strategies in this section were inspired by a position paper of the Graduate Council of the University of Arizona (1996).)

Provide Support to Ease the Transition. General support is vital for many students who find themselves, perhaps for the first time in their lives, severely overextended. A mentor can provide access to local information to ease the transition, as for example a collection of phone numbers for social and health service provision, particularly when graduates move across political borders to attend school. When entering graduate school, students live in a competitive fish bowl, where many of the traditional heterosexual masculine modes of competition and behaviour are rewarded, while other styles are not only not rewarded, but are also often punished. With time and experience, drawing on personal networks and anecdotal evidence can greatly enhance the quality of life for graduate students marginalized in the fray of hyped-up rivalry.

Create and Foster a Sense of Community Cooperation and Caring. This can be accomplished by providing venues for students to gather formally and informally both on their own and with faculty mentors. Guiding students to work cooperatively on research projects or as teaching assistants also models a caring collegial environment even when such may not be present in the larger academic setting. Fieldwork and field trips can provide significant opportunities for developing a sense of community and cooperation among students and between students and faculty. Senior graduate students can be particularly effective mentors for junior graduate students. Actively fostering such relationships builds a collective community.

Encourage Self-reflection. As graduate careers progress, ask students to reflect upon the positive qualities of the overall graduate student experience. Encouraging the documentation of this experience through creating and maintaining a file of successful papers, complimentary letters and momentoes of the 'good times' of graduate school is important to provide positive reinforcement (Caplan, 1995).

Model Activities that Enhance Scholarship. An indispensable part of any mentor's job is to encourage a passion for learning, often accomplished by example. Excitement over ideas is often infectious, and such activities can even result in research partnerships. Co-authorship is particularly valuable for female students who may find themselves excluded from an 'old boys' network' in the crucial early years of employment.

Equip Graduate Students with Skills for Successful Research Careers. Submitting proposals is a contemporary necessity in an academic's life. Some graduate programmes include a course in which application methods are discussed. When this is not available, the mentor can train students to secure funding for research, travel, scholarships and fellowships by including them in their own proposals or passing examples on as models.

Assist Graduate Students in Envisioning and Preparing for Professional Futures. Unlike undergraduates, many graduate students come to graduate school with a specific programme in mind, sometimes with the intent to study with a specific professor. In many instances, this is as far as their career planning goes. As early as the first semester, female graduate students (who often, because of family constraints, are not as mobile as their male counterparts) need to think through where they would like to be in 1, 2 and 5 years' time. Envisioning a career path assists in setting up an appropriate programme of study that will integrate academic with professional goals.
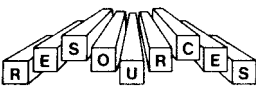
Facilitate Networking. Mentors have the responsibility to introduce students to others with similar research interests (on campus and within the discipline) and to keep apprised of the sorts of interests, skills and talents currently being sought in various job markets. Taking professional development classes can be beneficial in making graduates more marketable and setting realistic employment goals. Membership in and attendance at national professional organisations, such as the AAG and the Canadian Association of Geographers (CAG), link students to up-to-date information networks in the discipline through specialised committed and study groups. Study group activities, such as electronic discussion lists (e.g. geogfem@lsv.uky.edu) and business meetings, provide opportunities for graduate students to meet scholars with similar interests in less formal settings.

Provide Opportunities for 'Vita Building' Activities. 'Vita building' should be based on the type of employment (at least tentatively) sought by the student. Activities could include paper presentations at professional meetings, competitions for student paper awards, manuscript submissions to academic journals and board membership of specialty groups (e.g. Geographic Perspectives on Women). Of course, the type of professional and academic meetings a student attends should be determined by her own, rather than by the mentor's interests.

Abet Development of Oral Communication Skills. Teaching and oral communication skills are important in many types of professional careers, but not all graduate students may have an opportunity to gain formal teaching experience as teaching assistants. Graduate students can be encouraged to develop their own portfolios which document such activities as tutoring, training fellow students in the use of software or equipment, course material development and research presentations. A portfolio has the added benefit of helping the student to envision a pedagogy that exists outside the formal classroom into multiple facets of life both within and beyond the academy.

Build and Nurture an Ethical Milieu and Provide Ethical Role-modelling and Guidance. Mentoring graduates involves training academics to act professionally and ethically. In this sense, mentors should avoid drawing their students into 'departmental politics', and should serve as an example of professional behaviour while constructing and maintaining a collegial working atmosphere for graduates. This includes modelling and encouraging activities that value diversity across cultures, classes, sexualities and genders.

The graduate student also shares a responsibility in the mentoring process, which includes taking ownership of the programme of study while at the same time engaging the mentor's guidance and support. Graduate students need to view themselves as active contributors to the mentoring relationship, providing support, knowledge and intellectual stimulation for student peers. Graduate students should take full advantage of their years immersed in an exciting academic environment, for it is during this time that they have the opportunity to build the foundations of a network of support and collaboration that will sustain them throughout their careers.

Being a Mentor

The experience of being a mentor has many positive aspects. Mentoring can exert a direct and immediate impact on another's survival in the academy. At the same time, the mentoring relationships we establish shed light on the ways in which others have helped
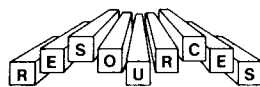
us in the past and the ways in which others may mentor us in the future. In short, we restore our own humanity and grow emotionally through the experience of being a mentor.

Recognise Multiple Roles and Responsibilities. Roles that a mentor might assume include: advisers who share their knowledge and experience; tutors who teach and provide feedback; sponsors who provide information and assist in obtaining opportunities; masters (i.e. trainers or employers) to whom one is apprenticed; supporters who provide emotional and moral encouragement; and models who image the attributes needed to survive and thrive in the academy (Zelditch, 1990).

Be Aware of Possible Tension. Depending on the personality of both mentor and protégé(e), some of these roles may come more easily than others, and some of the roles may be awkward to assume simultaneously. To avoid awkward and potentially disruptive situations, it is helpful to clarify the role one is assuming in any given mentoring interaction so that, for example, a student coming in seeking emotional encouragement is not confronted with a list of assistantship-related tasks.

Respect the Other Person's Autonomy at All Times. In entering into a mentoring relationship, people honour us with their trust. Yet it is easy to slip into a pattern of dispensing advice and expecting others to follow it. At most we can only hope that our protégé(e)s consider our thoughts.
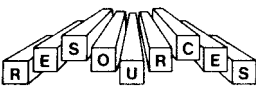
Be Attuned to Another's Needs. Individuals' mentoring needs vary. Mutual expectations and modes of interaction need to be assessed and redefined on an ongoing basis. Providing both formal and informal mentoring opportunities in either group or one-on-one settings may be useful to discover what works best for each individual.

Guard your Energy. Because the need for mentoring in the academy is so great, it is easy to overextend ourselves with commitments of too much time or commitments to too many people. Using email (especially over the summer months) for local and distant mentoring relationships and keeping to a pre-set amount of time to spend in mentoring students can protect both time and energy. Each relationship will have its own dynamic, of course, but we need to keep in mind how much energy we can devote to others and still maintain ourselves.

Up to this point we have spoken about mentoring as if it were something separate from other activities. In reality, mentoring permeates our routine research and teaching activities. Simple everyday acts such as the way we walk into a classroom and interact with students demonstrates to others both the possibilities and the limitations of our own position in the academy. Just 'being there' as a role model is one of the most powerful mentoring acts we can accomplish and one which may touch more lives or help to shape more future careers than we realise.

Toward Self-mentoring

Mentoring can be most fruitful when it is received by persons who know themselves well enough to integrate the input suitably and effectively into the reality of their lives. Those who make the transition from student to faculty or work positions will encounter many different persons who act in various mentoring capacities. Yet having so many mentors

opens the possibility of being faced with advice overload or conflicting recommended directions. When this happens, only the one being mentored can sort out the various threads in an appropriate and positive way—a skill that grows sharper with accumulated life experience and the wisdom gained from self-reflection.

One practical suggestion for making the most of the mentoring advice one receives at any stage of one's career is to keep a journal which can serve as a record of one's accumulated experience, as a measure of one's growth and progress and as a reminder of the consequences of decisions or actions related to mentoring input. The value of referring to the positive qualities of professional life at stressful times—in one's own writing—is immeasurable.

While engaging in mentoring as feminist praxis, we are still, ultimately our own mentors. We must remember and reflect on our own experiences, think for ourselves and counsel ourselves by taking on the role as our own, most trusted, guide. But we cannot grow by self-experience and self-analysis alone, especially when manoeuvering our way through the academic labyrinth and attempting to advise others. We need input and feedback from experienced guides and tutors who can help us through the maze of challenges and we need role models and supporters who can help us discover and integrate our career and our life direction, gradually over time. Borrowing a concept from the practice of counsellors and spiritual directors, the following aptly describes the journey toward self-mentoring:

> The daily situations in which we find ourselves are a source of directives for life. [Mentors] try, therefore, to help us clarify the meaning of such situations. They encourage us to read them rightly, to flow with them graciously. They, so to speak, refine our radar for what circumstances may communicate. Then they leave us on our own, allowing the life situation itself to be our guide. (van Kaam, 1976, p. 42)

Acknowledgements

Correspondence: Pamela Moss, Faculty of Human and Social Development, University of Victoria, Victoria, BC, Canada, V8W 3P5. Email: pamelam@uvic.ca

NOTE

[1] The panel session focused primarily on specific strategies for mentoring in geography. Even though not all of us engage with feminist theory or even think in terms of feminist praxis, we still managed to present a wide range of feminist practices at the session. Given how we envisioned the collective write-up of our thoughts on mentoring, we are not well positioned to discern individual viewpoints.

Yet it is important for us to note the divergence of views on the central organising theme of the article.

The notion of mentoring as feminist praxis only came into being through the revision of this text for publication. Although we have all agreed to the wording in defining mentoring as feminist praxis (see section with same title), the degree to which any one of us adheres to each of these principles varies. Being woman-centred for example was a point of contention. For some of us, non-feminist men have played important roles in our academic careers both as mentors and as people we mentor. In this sense, sympathetic men can certainly engage in mentoring as feminist praxis, just as feminists can mentor non-feminist men. For some of us, it is precisely the attempt to dismantle oppressive structures that sets the parameters for feminist action. Without it, feminism loses its ability to be an effective framework for political action.

We tried to be inclusive of each of our viewpoints without minimising or exalting any particular view. Rather than ironing out each difference and coming to a compromise, we defined mentoring as feminist praxis as a *possibility*—based on a set of principles. Thus, the 'we' we write with in this article is a fragmented 'we'; one with multiple and contradictory elements defining mentoring as feminist praxis.

[2] Caplan's (1995) book is an absolute 'must-read' for undergraduates, graduates and faculty. It is an amazing resource and handbook for mentoring yourself and others.

REFERENCES

ALCOFF, L.M. (1996) Feminist theory and social science: new knowledges, new epistemologies, in: N. DUNCAN (Ed.) *Body/Space*: *destabilizing geographies of gender and sexuality*, pp. 13–27 (New York, Routledge).

BERMAN, M. (1974) Sex discrimination in geography: the case of Ellen Churchill Semple, *Professional Geographer*, 26, pp. 8–11.

CAPLAN, P. (1995) *Lifting a Ton of Feathers* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press). [2]

COOK, I. (2000) 'You want to be careful you don't end up like Ian. He's all over the place.': autobiography in/of an expanded field, in: P. MOSS (ED.) *Placing Autobiography in Geography* (Syracuse, NY, University of Syracuse Press).

DUMAYNE-PEATY, L. & WELLENS J., (1998) Gender and physical geography in the United Kingdom, *Area* 30(3), pp. 197–205.

EWICK, P. (1994) Integrating feminist epistemologies in undergraduate research methods, *Gender & Society*, 8(1), pp. 92–108.

ENGLAND, K.V.L. (1994) Getting personal: reflexivity, positionality, and feminist research, *Professional Geographer*, 46(1), pp. 80–89.

FARROW, H. (1995) Researching popular theatre in southern Africa: comments on a methodological implementation, *Antipode*, 27(1), pp. 75–81.

FOURNIER, D.L. (1990) Defining feminist geography: an examination of how Canadian women geographers perceive feminist geography, unpublished MA thesis, Department of Geography, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada.

GIBSON-GRAHAM, J.-K. (1999) Queer(y)ing capitalism in and out of the classroom, *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 23(1), pp. 80–85.

GRADUATE COUNCIL (1996) Mentoring, the faculty–graduate student relationship, position paper prepared by the Graduate Council of the University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ, USA.

HARDING, S. (1991) *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking from women's lives* (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press).

HAWKESWORTH, M.E. (1990) *Beyond Oppression* (New York, Continuum).

HEKMAN, S. (1990) *Gender and Knowledge: elements of a postmodern feminism* (Boston, Northeastern University Press).

JONES, J.P, III, NAST H.J. & ROBERTS S.M. (Eds) (1997) *Thresholds in Feminist Geography: representation, methodology, difference* (Lanham, MA, Rowman & Littlefield).

KELLER, E. FOX (1985) *Reflections on Gender and Science* (New Haven, CT, Yale University Press).

LEE, D. (1990) The status of women in geography: things change, things remain the same, *Professional Geographer*, 42(2), pp. 202–211.

MAGUIRE, S. (1998) Gender differences in attitudes to undergraduate fieldwork, *Area*, 30(3), pp. 207–214.
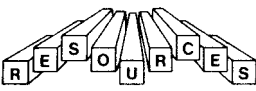
MACKENZIE, S. (1990) The status of women in Canadian geography, *Operational Geographer*, 7(3), pp. 2–8.

McDOWELL, L. (1990) Sex and power in academia, *Area* 22, pp. 323–332.

McDOWELL, L. (1992a) Multiple voices: speaking from inside and outside 'the project', *Antipode*, 24, pp. 56–72.

McDOWELL, L. (1992b) Doing gender: feminism, feminists and research methods in human geography, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 17, pp. 399–416.

McDOWELL, L. & PEAKE L. (1990) Women and geography revisited, *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 14, pp. 19–30.

McEWAN, C. (1998) Gender, science and physical geography in nineteenth-century Britain, *Area*, 30(3), pp. 215–223.

MOSS, P. (1995) Reflections on the 'gap' as part of the politics of research design, *Antipode*, 27(1), pp. 82–90.

MONK, J. & HANSON S. (1982) On not excluding half of the human in human geography, *Professional Geographer*, 24, pp. 11–23.

NAIRN, K. (1999a) Joke-work and the hetero-sexualising of geographic discourse, paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers, Honolulu, HA, March.

NAIRN, K. (1999b) The re-creation of geographers, paper presented at the Southern Regional Conference of the International Geographical Union, Commission on Gender, Dunedin, New Zealand, February.

OAKLEY, A. & MITCHELL, J. (Eds) (1997) *Who's afraid of Feminism? Seeing through the backlash* (New York, New Press).

PROFESSIONAL GEOGRAPHER (1994) Women in the field: critical feminist methodologies and theoretical perspectices, *Professional Geographer*, 46, pp. 54–102.

ROSE, G. (1993) *Feminism and Geography: the limits of geographical knowledge* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press).

RUDBERG, M. (1997) The researching body: the epistemophilic project, in: K. DAVIS (Ed.) *Embodied Practices: feminist perspectives on the body* (London, Sage).

VAN KAAM, A. (1976) *The Dynamics of Spiritual Self Direction* (New Jersey, Dimension Books).

ZELDITCH, M. (1990) Mentor roles, Proceedings of the 32nd Annual Meeting of the Western Association of Graduate Schools, Keynote address, meeting of the Western Association of Graduate Schools, Tempe, Arizona, March.

Appendix 1. Further Reading

This list includes mentoring, harassment and feminist frameworks for interpreting mentoring and harassment.

BANNERJI, H., CARTY, L., DEHLI, K., HEALD, S. & McKENNA, K. (Eds) (1991) *Unsettling Relations: the university as a site of feminist struggles* (Toronto, Women's Press).

CAPLAN, P. & TOTH E. (1997) *Ms Mentor's Impeccable Advice for Women in Academia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press).

CHILLY COLLECTIVE (Eds) (1995) *Breaking Anonymity: the chilly climate for women faculty* (Waterloo, ON, Wilfred Laurier University Press).

CLARK, V., NELSON, S., HIGONNET GARNER, M. & KATRAK, K.H. (Eds) (1996) *Antifeminism in the Academy* (New York, Routledge).

FREIRE, P. (Ed.) with FRASER J.W. (1997) *Mentoring the Mentor: a critical dialogue with Paulo Freire* (New York: Lang).

GALLOP, J. (1997) *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment* (Durham, NC, Duke University Press).

MAACK, M.N. & PASSET J. (1994) *Aspirations and Mentoring in an Academic Environment: women faculty in library and information science* (Westport, CT, Greenwood Press).

NEUMARK, D. & GARDECKI R. (1996) *Women Helping Women? Role-model and mentoring effects on female PhD students in economics*, Working Paper Series (Cambridge, MA, National Bureau of Economic Research).
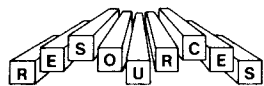
QUINA, K. & CARLSON N.L. (1989) *Rape, Incest, and Sexual Harassment: a guide for helping survivors* (New York, Praeger).

SUMRALL, A.C. (1992) *Sexual Harassment: women speak out* (Freedom, CA, Crossing Press).