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Mentoring as a tool for academic and personal development in the Mellon Mays undergraduate program.

Mabeta, Matsie Rebecca

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1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The Andrew Mellon Foundation was formed in the U.S.A. in June 1988 with a mission to eradicate under-representation of minority groups (African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans) among the academic staff of higher education institutions through the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship (MMUF). The aim of the foundation was to increase the number of minority students who would pursue a PhD in the core fields of Arts and Sciences.

The programme was then introduced in Africa, with the target being the previously[1] advantaged institutions (PAI) or liberal universities. The first country was South Africa, and the first institution to take part was the University of Cape Town. In 2007 the University of the Witwatersrand was invited to take part. Historically, the majority of students in these two institutions were white. It is only recently that there has been a large number of blacks, coloureds and Indians. In his proposal to the Mellon Foundation the Deputy Vice Chancellor stated that, since the end of *apartheid* in 1994, the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) had made major strides in attending to the equity and diversity profile of its student community. He said Wits was excited about the diversity of race, class, gender, religion and national origin of its students, particularly because of the way in which diversity enriches the intellectual development and experience of all who learn at the University.

> On the other hand, transformation of our academic staff profile has been much slower and is certainly not yet where Wits would like it to be. While progress has been made, the upper levels of the professoriate remain largely white and male and the overall proportion of black and female academics is unacceptably low. The reasons for this slow progress in attending to the equity and diversity profile of our academic staff are many and varied. The pool from which to attract high achieving black and women academics is relatively small in South Africa and most higher education institutions**,** business and government are seeking to attract staff from this same pool. This problem is further compounded by a national shortage of high level skills (Ballim, 2007).

[1] In the *apartheid* government, the education system consisted of separate education departments for white, black, Indian and coloured students. There were universities for white students, and separate institutions for black, Indian and coloured students. Universities that were mainly for white students, particularly the English medium universities (Wits, Cape Town, Rhodes and Natal Universities), were considered liberal universities which formed a conducive environment for MMUF on which to act.

The Deputy Vice Chancellor further stated that Wits recognised a large part of the solution lay in the development of new academics at the career entry level. In this regard, black and women students represent an important source of potential entrants into academic institutions throughout South Africa.

Meanwhile, Wits has implemented a number of postgraduate programmes aimed at nurturing and supporting the development of black and female staff in academia. Examples of these are:

1. Mellon Mays Postgraduate Fellowship; and
2. Growing Our Own Timber.

Growing Our Own Timber was a three-year programme designed to facilitate the development of black academic scholars within the institution. It sought to do this by enabling junior black academics to 'acquire post-graduate qualifications and be introduced to the world of academia as junior lecturers'. The intentions behind the programme were both pragmatic and transformative.

Yet there were few strategies to encourage undergraduates to take up academic careers. The proposal was therefore that Wits join the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship (MMUF) programme was therefore welcomed.
The MMUF aims to achieve its mission by identifying and supporting students of promise and helping them to become scholars.

In January 2008, an advertisement was submitted to the heads of departments in the faculties of Humanities and Science at Wits inviting them to recommend promising students. The advertisement also appeared on notice boards inviting undergraduate students who are in their third year of study to apply for the scholarship. The aim is to appoint five black students, men and women, who will take part in the fellowship each year for five years. The students are shortlisted after applying, and are called for an interview. The best or most promising students are then selected and a mentor is appointed for each student. What follows is how the program operates:

1. Once a mentor has been identified and the mentor has agreed to mentor a student, the MMUF coordinators send them guidelines for mentoring. According to the

requirements of the MMUF, the relationship should continue for two years. Students are appointed in their third year and they should complete their honours degree in the second year.

2. In their first year, after being selected, students take part in a summer programme at a University in the United States. This is where they start working on a research proposal with their South African mentors.
3. At the end of two years the students present a final research report at an annual presentation event organized for the South African cohort. During the two years students work on collecting data and the presentation of results with their mentors. On the day of the presentation, mentors are invited to attend.
4. Students qualify for an academic stipend of R11 000 for each of the two years they are on the programme. The sum is paid into their fees account. They have to attend an orientation session before going to the United States. In June, when they attend the summer programme in the U.SA, they get another stipend called the winter stipend. They receive an equivalence of $500. In the second year of the programme, if they have been approved to proceed, they attend another summer programme in Cape Town for a week. The expenses are also paid by the fellowship.

Mentors are experienced academics who can contribute to the students' personal development and sense of academic mission through the practical experience of 'doing research'.

1.2 Problem Statement

The MMUF has been in operation at the University of the Witwatersrand since 2008 and no investigation has yet been conducted into the success or failure of mentoring in the programme.

1.3 ResearchAim

The aim of this research is to explore mentoring as a tool for academic and personal development and to investigate how students and their mentors experience the benefits and difficulties of the mentoring relationship.

1.4 Research Questions:

1. Why is mentoring considered a powerful tool for academic and personal development?
2. How do participants (students and their mentors) in MMUF understand academic and personal development?
3. What difficulties are reported by students and their mentors in the student-mentor relationship?

   How do students and their mentors benefit from mentoring?

1.5 Background

The Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship (MMUF) seeks to identify and groom students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds into becoming academics. The programme appoints students in their final or third year of undergraduate study and supports them for two further years of study until they complete their honours degree. Financial support is provided. The support comes in a form of a stipend of R11 000 for the two years. Each student appointed by the fellowship has a mentor assigned to them. Mentors are supposed to help students with developing their proposal before they go to the U.S.A. On returning, mentors assist students to put a research paper together for presentation at the annual September conference hosted by Wits University in Johannesburg.

1.6 Rationale

The programme is coordinated by two staff members: an academic coordinator and an administrative coordinator under the supervision of both the Dean of Humanities and the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic).

As an administrative coordinator, I was aware of the relationships between the students and their mentors and regarded that research which looked at the problems and benefits of mentoring relationships could help other mentors and students to curb failure and increase successful mentoring relationships in the MMUF program.

1.7 My own Mentoring Experience

I was intrigued by this topic since I also benefited from a mentor when I was an undergraduate student at the University Fort Hare in the Eastern Cape from 1994–1995. We were not from the same department or faculty. My mentor was an academic from the Law

department and I was from Humanities, and so were most students he mentored. This is how it worked: he was already mentoring another student, Billy, from my church, and Billy introduced me to him. He asked me a lot of questions about my parents, where I come from and what degree I was pursuing. He asked me how I was doing study-wise and how I found the place (Alice, in the Eastern Cape). He then invited me and Billy and other students that he was already mentoring to his house for lunch. It was during lunch when he told us that he was expecting good results from us and we needed to get rid of any negative stimuli (anything that might distract us from our studies) to get good marks. He then went round the table asking us what would help us get good marks. Most students mentioned specific obstacles and frustrations. Mine was keeping in touch with my parents. In the Eastern Cape at that time there were few public telephones and it was very difficult to communicate with my parents in Johannesburg. Mr. Duba (later advocate) decided that he was going to help us all with our problems so we could get good marks. He sorted out my problem by telling me that whenever I needed to talk to my parents I could come to his office and he would make the call for me. That was a big bonus for me. After that, he monitored our performance and gave advice on how to study effectively. Indeed, my results improved. I graduated and left the university but still went to him for advice from time to time, and he was always ready to give advice and guide me.

1.8 Research Design and Methods

This qualitative study aims to explore the mentoring relationships in the MMUF programme. Interviews with mentors and students will be conducted and mentors written reports will be studied.

Chapter three provides further detailed information about the research design and methods.

1.9 Organisation of the Study

- Chapter one has introduced the study.
- Chapter two is the review of related literature.
- Chapter three outlines the research methodology.
- Chapter four presents the results of interviews with the mentors.
- Chapter five presents the results of interviews with students.
- Chapter six discusses the research results and concludes the study.

2. CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This literature review will discuss what mentorship is and why is it is regarded by different authors as a powerful tool for academic, personal and professional development. Relationships between the mentor and the mentee will also be examined, and the difference between a mentor and a supervisor explored.

Different authors use the term mentee, protégé and even apprentice. These terms have slightly different meanings which will be explored later in this review of literature. In the MMUF programme, we use the terms 'mentor' and 'student'. The mentor is the academic and the person being mentored is the student.

2.2 Mentoring

Mentoring dates back to ancient Greece when King Odysseus had to go to war. He left his son, Telemachus, in the care of his friend Mentor. Mentor looked after Telemachus and tutored, guided and protected him while his father was away. Thereafter anyone who was entrusted to guide a less experienced individual was known as a mentor (Shea, 1992, p. 11).

According to Clutterbuck (2006), mentoring is:

> A partnership between two people built upon trust. It is a process in which a mentor offers support and development opportunities to the mentee. Addressing issues and blockages identified by the mentee, the mentor offers guidance, counseling and support in the form of pragmatic and objective assistance. Both share a common purpose of developing a strong two-way learning relationship' (p. 13).

The duties of a mentor, according to Daloz (1986), are the 'transfer of knowledge, assistance in career advancement, personal development and role modelling'. Students are expected to shadow or model themselves on the mentor. Clutterbuck (2006) states that the mentor helps the mentee to literally think, to decide what they want, and plan how to achieve it.

Owen (1991) approaches mentoring as a 'deliberate pairing of a more skilled or experienced person with a lesser skilled or experienced one, with the agreed upon goal of having a lesser skilled person grow and develop specific competencies'(p. 14).

A mentor is defined by Shea (1992) as ’an individual, usually older, always more experienced, who helps and guides another person’s development‘(p. 31).

However, different authors place emphasis on different aspects of mentorship. Phillips (1979), as quoted by Lyons, Williams and Scroggins, points out that there is a difference between career mentoring in the workplace and academic mentoring at a university. He refers to mentoring in graduate school as a ’peculiar intimacy‘, and having an academic mentor as a central experience of graduate school (p. 3).

Another type of mentoring that is becoming increasingly popular, according to Shelmerdine and Louw (2008), is ’the intervention for dealing with the problem of youth considered at risk. These youths are at risk of abusing drugs or alcohol or play truant from school’ (p. 21). Through a programme called BBBS (Big Brother Big Sister), the at-risk youths get a mentor assigned to them and develop academically and personally through the guidance of their mentors.

While there are different contexts of mentoring, this literature review will be looking at mentoring at the University of the Witwatersrand in a project where each year five students have a mentor assigned to them. The students are expected to become members of the academic staff at the University, so mentors will be teaching/helping them how to do research and how to teach. For me this is something similar to a learnership or apprenticeship that occurs in business organizations where training and development are encouraged within the organisation.

Casto, Caldwell and Salazar (2005) agree that mentoring is an integral tool for students’ success. They say it is not always the best students who get through a difficult graduate programme. Success is often achieved because a student received support and guidance from a mentor.

Daloz (1986) states that ’mentors are inevitably engaged in one-to-one instruction and consequently more concerned than regular teachers with the individual learning needs and styles of their students‘ (p. 20). He says mentors are more concerned with promoting the development of the student than teachers and lecturers. Lee (2007) shares the same sentiments when he says: ’the mentor concentrates on providing support for career development.’ (p. 686).

Mentoring can be formal and informal; it can happen within a stated period of time or it can last a lifetime. Some organizations use mentoring to help employees adapt to the company. Mentoring may last a lifetime when a mentor-mentee relationship happens to work for both parties and the mentor becomes a source of support to the mentee; such a relationship may go beyond academic or working life.

At the University of the Witwatersrand School of Education, a mentorship programme was formed in 2008 to help new Bachelor of Education students adapt to university social and academic life. Although such mentoring occurs for a specific time period and is dissolved once students find their feet at university, some relationships are not terminated, and they have endured after students leave the university.

The formal mentor-mentee relationship has a clear purpose. Clutterbuck (2004) says, 'the mentor and the mentee are often under considerable time pressure' p. 28). They experience time pressure because they are expected to complete their degrees in four years. After that the relationship can be terminated. Unlike the informal mentoring relationship, Clutterbuck says people in formal mentoring relationships are much more satisfied with them; the relationships often take longer to get off the ground, and tend to last longer than informal ones.

Lee (2007) mentions that a mentor can be primary or secondary, explaining that 'the primary mentor can provide more profound experience, they provide acceptance and confirmation that the mentee is worthwhile and this leads to personal empowerment' (p. 686).

2.3 The Relationship between Mentor and Mentee

Features of the mentoring relationship serve career and psychosocial functions whereby the mentor teaches, advises, models, guides, and protects the mentee (Kram, 1985), in Ehrich, Hansford & Tennent (p 519).

According to Shea (1992), mentoring is a 'process whereby a mentor and mentee work together to discover and develop the mentee's latent abilities, to provide the mentee with knowledge and skills as opportunities and needs arise, and for the mentor to serve as an effective tutor, counsellor, friend and foil who enables the mentee to sharpen skills and hone her or his thinking'(p. 17).

Mentoring relationships, according to Shea (1992), have their downfalls and success stories. It is important for both parties to set ground rules for the relationship to be successful. Together they should articulate their expectations of each other. They both must respect each other's space and time.

Wareing (2000) made some suggestions for students to develop an effective mentoring relationship with their mentor:

- Ask for advice and welcome constructive criticism. She says, when asking for advice, mentees should be specific. And a good mentor will offer both constructive criticism and suggestions. Mentees need to be open to both.
- Be considerate of your mentor's time. The effort mentors make in agreeing to meet should be taken seriously, so mentees need to return calls and emails promptly and on time.
- Listen to what your mentor has to say. Even if advice might seem less relevant, mentors have experience. Take it.
- Seriously consider the advice given to you by your mentor, even if your immediate reaction is not positive.
- Show appreciation for the time and assistance given to you by your mentor. Always give feedback to show that their efforts did not go to waste.

- Make only positive or neutral comments about your mentor to others.

The point made by Wareing is that for a healthy relationship, mentees have a big role to play. Their role is of listening, being considerate and heeding the relationship with the mentor.

However, Wareing warns that a relationship can fail when the advice above is not heeded. Sometimes the reason is not because of the mentee or the mentor, or vice versa. Ehrich, et al (2004) argue that 'under various conditions, the mentoring relationship can be detrimental to the mentor, mentee or both'(p.520). The concerns regarding this could be: lack of time for mentoring; poor planning of the mentoring process; unsuccessful matching of mentors and mentees; lack of understanding about the mentoring process, and lack of access to mentors by minority groups.

2.4 Mentoring across Gender, Race and Social Class

Casto et al. (2005) state that there may be challenges for male mentors of female mentees to overcome, including pervasive or unaddressed sexist attitudes toward women, gender politics and power relations. Socialized roles may interfere in cross-gender mentoring as female mentees may find themselves in an awkward position as both student and woman (p.335).

In the same tone, Shea (1992) reports on a number of problems related to gossip, envy, suspicion, speculation, false assumptions, sexual stereotypes and charges of sexual harassment. He says these attitudes have lessened the effectiveness of cross-gender mentoring in some environments. He says, however, cross-gender mentoring can improve morale, enrich the lives of mentees and provide valuable insights and experience to each gender.

Casto et al. (2005) state that, due to a continued underrepresentation of academic staff of colour in the USA, the most likely cross-cultural mentoring relationship would be between a white mentor and a mentee of colour. The mentor needs to recognize how issues such as cross-cultural communication and power dynamics between the mentor and mentee may influence the mentoring relationship.

Casto et al. further state that mentees of colour may experience feelings of isolation in the relationship, particularly if they believe they must give up or deny aspects of their cultural identity when entering academia. They suggest that mentors can take steps to ease this isolation by introducing their mentees to culturally diverse staff who are successful in the field.

Stone (2004) argues that some people hold stereotypes of different cultures and have preconceived notions of how people from different cultures behave, which can be a block to truly understanding the mentee. I remember a certain mentor complaining about her mentee's failure to say 'thank you'; observing: 'she doesn't say 'thank you'. Obviously 'they' haven't been taught to say thank you (p.102). Shelmerdine (2008) calls this 'frequent indexing of individuals with plural pronouns, and attributing collective responsibility for individual actions '(p. 27).

I think these problems could be curbed if, at the beginning of the relationship, clear rules and expectations are set by both sides, so that at least they could form an agreement acceptable to both student and mentor.

Clutterbuck (2006) agrees that mentoring across gender and across culture is an excellent developmental experience for both parties and should be encouraged as an integral part of globalizing their cultures.

According to Casto et al. (2005):'Successful mentoring requires a mutual commitment to time, open communication, clear yet flexible boundaries and adjustment to new roles and rules as a mentee moves toward becoming a colleague' (p.339). They believe that women have a special ability to help other women, both professionally and personally in distinctive ways. I wanted to differ, but on second thoughts I agree because I believe women have an inborn nurturing trait that cannot be separated from their behaviour at work.

2.5 The Differences between a Mentor and a Supervisor

A supervisor is 'a member of the academic staff who is responsible for providing help, support and mentoring to a postgraduate student in order to enable the student to complete the research and produce a thesis to the best of the student's ability. The supervisor thus plays an important role during the student's candidature'. http://www.mentoring connection.com

To me there seems to be little difference between the two as both of them have the same primary goal of seeing the student excelling in the work in they are engaged.

Lee (2007) says that some supervisors might aim for development or transformation, for example, 'I want my students to be successful and achieve their goals', whilst another might seek a functional outcome: 'I want my students to apply what they have learned'.

Ngcongo (2001) shares the same sentiments about transformation. He says supervisors can lead students to transcend personal interests; they can enable students to fulfil university goals such as undertaking research beyond that required for degree purposes; and they can further enhance students' growth.

Ngcongo mentions these helpful behaviours of supervisors:

- willingness to enable students to master all different research stages;

- commitment to guiding students, meaning regular communication with students, availability, and suggestions regarding available literature on the subject studied;
- ability to guide students at every stage of their research;
- trust in students; and
- firmness and approachability.

Bova and Phillips (1981) claim that there are areas in which the function of supervisors and mentors overlap; yet they say that these terms are by no means interchangeable. The supervisor helps the student to:

1. plan their course of study;
2. enrol in the appropriate class; and
3. evaluate their progress and in general shepherd them through their degree (p. 35).

Wareing (2000), writing about supervision and mentorship in the workplace says; 'in some programs the supervisor fulfils the role of the mentor,' but she cautions against this practice as it 'can confuse the roles and severely limit mentee development opportunities.' She says that, although there may be variations in mentorship programs, the roles of mentor and supervisor differ in the following ways:

- The supervisor manages the on-the-job performance of the mentee and the mentor is not involved in performance assessment for purposes of employment or job certification. The mentor's role is to prompt the mentee to do a process of reflection and effective self assessment, followed by professional growth goal setting and planning.
- The supervisor has authority of hierarchical or positional and legal power over the mentee. The mentor guides, suggests, teaches, challenges, and coaches using the power of experience, expertise, and caring to influence the mentee's actions and growth.
- The supervisor's emphasis is more often on the meeting of short-term targets and effective day to day work focused on productivity and results, while the mentor will usually have a longer term, more strategic, focus on the mentee's development.

2.6 What is the Difference between a Supervisor and a Mentor in the MMUF?

MMUF students sometimes find themselves torn between their research supervisor and their MMUF mentor. In this context, the supervisor has been assigned to the student by the academic department and supervises the student's research, while the mentor does more academic advising, coaching, guiding and protecting the mentee.

2.7 Conclusion

Mentoring relationships occur informally or formally. It is a relationship between two people. The mentor is older and more experienced and the mentee younger and is less experienced. The aim for the relationship is to help, guide and coach and develop the less experienced person (the mentee) to adapt to a new community. The mentee has a duty to be observant, listen and be attentive for the relationship to be a success. The relationship can fail in situations where the mentor lacks time for the mentee or in cases of personality mismatch. Mentees sometimes encounter problems when they have both a supervisor and mentor and their roles become blurred or overlap.

3. CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

3.1 Introduction

This research sets out to investigate mentoring as a tool for academic and personal development in the MMUF programme at the University of the Witwatersrand. It is a qualitative research study which aims to provide an in-depth description of a programme, practice or setting (Merriam, 2001). While Macmillan and Schumacher (2006) define qualitative research as a research method used in describing and analyzing people's individual and collective actions, beliefs, thoughts and predictions, they further state that in qualitative research design most data is in the form of words rather than numbers and that in general the researcher must explore a variety of methods until understanding of a subject is achieved.

Maxwell (1996) proposes an interactive model of research design which consists of a series of stages or tasks in planning or conducting a study. He says that the activities are usually going on more or less simultaneously and each influences the other. He says the process involves tacking back and forth between different components.

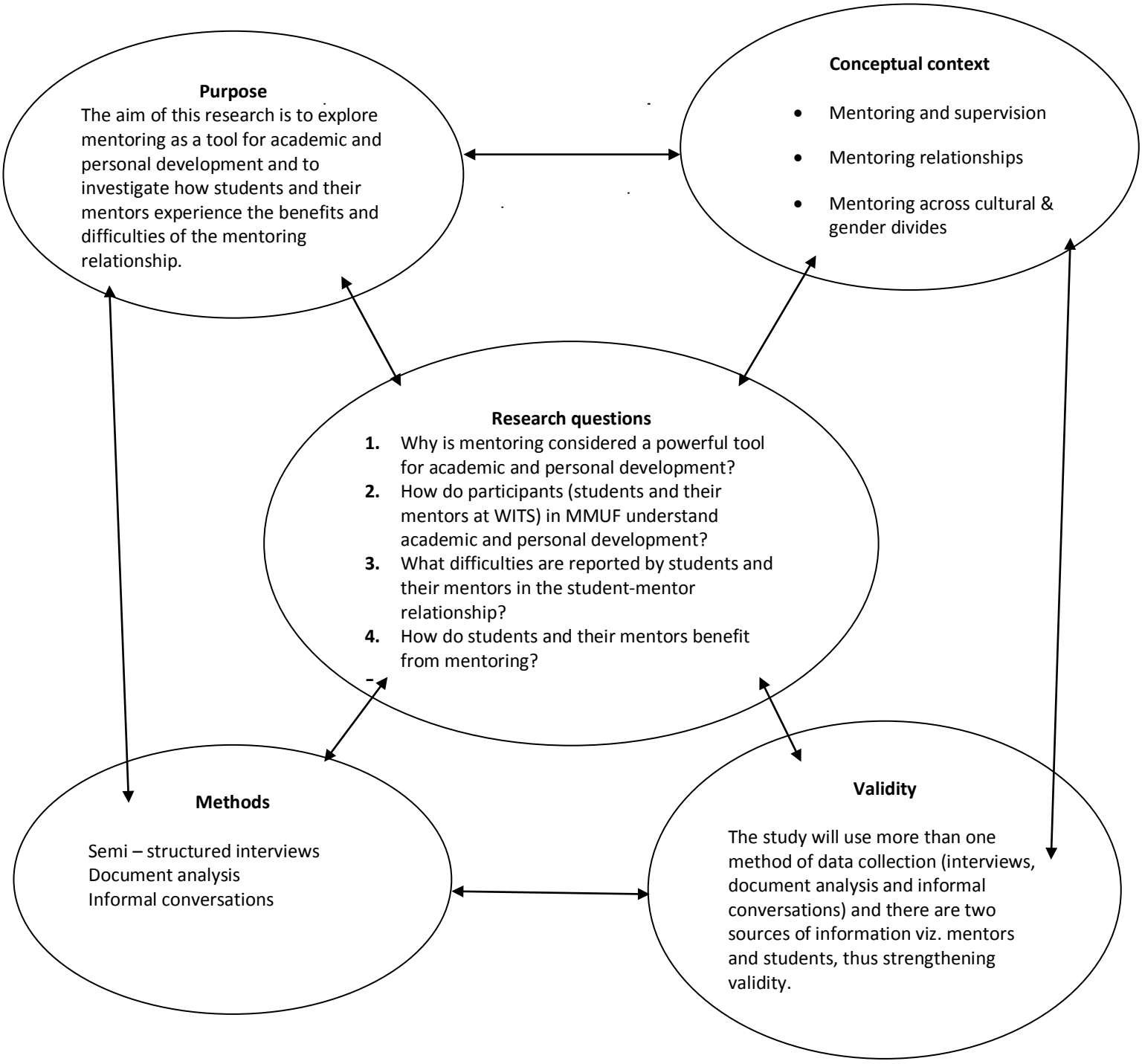


Figure 1: Interactive Model

The data collection technique used was the semi- structured interview and mentors and mentees were interviewed separately. This helped in understanding the respondents' point of view and ensured that the same topics were covered in each interview. Semi-structured interviews, according to Horton, Macve and Struyven (2004), are chosen in order to

> '…allow the interviewees a degree of freedom to explain their thoughts and to highlight areas of particular interest and expertise that they felt they had, as well as to enable certain responses to be questioned in greater depth, and in particular to bring out and resolve apparent contradictions. This kind of interviewing also allowed the researcher to weigh up the credibility of the responses for ourselves and explore some of the underlying motives more directly (p. 340).'

Merriam says interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behaviour, feelings, and how people interpret the world around them. She notes that it is also necessary to do interviews when we are interested in past events that are impossible to replicate. The mentoring relationships in this research were formed in 2008-2009, and the interviews took place in 2010.

Silverman (1993) concurs: 'Interviewees are viewed as experiencing subjects who actively construct their social worlds. The data generated gives an authentic insight into people's experiences and the main ways to achieve this is through unstructured interviews' (p. 91).

In my study an appointment was set up with the respondents to conduct an interview, and during the interview I used a voice recorder so as not to miss anything. Bergman, in a workshop held at the Wits School of Education in 2009, said that the less structured the interview is, the more people are willing to talk. People are willing to elaborate when the researcher has created a safe environment. What I did, following Bergman's advice, was to ask open-ended questions, while encouraging mentors and students to talk. I redirected them or asked for clarification when it was not clear to me what they were talking about. If respondents did not understand a question I rephrased or repeated it.

Most interviews with the mentors took place in their offices, and one mentor came to my office and we went to the staff lounge for the interview. Fortunately the staff lounge was quiet and there was no disturbance that day. The language used was mainly English, unlike the situation with mentees, where there was a lot of code switching. Most students were Zulu speaking and one was Venda, but we also used Sesotho, my home language. The interviews with mentees took place in five different places according to where the mentees preferred to meet. The interview with the first mentee took place at a hotel, and the reason for that was because we were both at an MMUF annual event in Braamfontein in September 2010. The

mentees did not have enough time to talk to me, so we thought of using that time for the interview. A downside on my part was that I did not have a tape recorder, so I used my cell phone to record the interview.

My interview guide appears below:

Discussion Themes for Mentors	**Discussion Themes for Students**
• Tell me, how did you become involved as a mentor in the MMUF programme? • Did you have any previous experience of mentoring? • Why did you agree to be a mentor on the MMUF programme? What did you bring to the mentoring? • You started in March 2008, it that right? Did you and your mentee talk about expectations or goals or establish ground rules? • How would you describe communication in the relationship? • Please tell me about your experience as a mentor in the MMUF programme. Does it make any difference if the mentor and the student are of different race groups, different gender, different research interests or different economic background? • You've talked about your experience; tell me whether …… (student's name) has grown academically and personally	• Tell me, how did you acquire a mentor in the MMUF programme? • Did you choose your mentor, or was he/she assigned to you? • You started in March 2008; did you and your mentor talk about expectations or goals or establish ground rules? • How would you describe communication in the relationship? • Please tell me about your experience as a mentee in the MMUF programme. Does it make any difference if the mentee and the mentor are of different race groups, different gender, different research interests or different economic background? • Do think you've grown academically personally while having a mentor? Please explain.

from mentoring…. • Can you give some examples? His/her marks? Reports?	

3.2 Document Analysis

The other form of data collection that I used is document analysis. The documents are reports that were submitted by mentors about the relationship. The MMUF requires reports twice a year in June and at the end of the year. Even though there is no specified length for the report, some mentors have never submitted any report and those who have submitted, they submitted only one report. Reports are kept in the office of the administrator (my office). Mertens (1996) says, 'The qualitative researcher must turn to these documents and records to get the necessary background of the situation.' Rummel (1964) says, 'these are records that already exist, and the researcher may a make survey of what is going on, or what has taken place as reported in written or printed materials (p. 164).'

3.3 Validity and Reliability

According to Golafshani (2003), reliability is the extent to which results are consistent over time and representation is accurate. This is the extent to which measures are free from error.

Maxwell says the major threat to valid interpretation in qualitative research is imposing one's own framework or meaning rather than understanding the perspective of the people studied and the meaning they attach to their words and action. Interpretations should have mutual meaning between the researcher and the participants.

For the research to yield valid results the use of triangulation was considered. Triangulation is the use of multiple data collection methods and sources of information and not relying on one tool or one source only. This study used interviews, document analysis and informal conversations as methods. Five mentor/student pairs provided sources of information. They were given the opportunity to review and amend the transcripts of their interviews, however

few of them took advantage of this opportunity. Selected interview transcripts are shown in appendices A to E.

3.4 Sampling

Sampling and selection of respondents is, according to Mason (2001), a vitally important and strategic element of qualitative research. It may not be easy or necessary to use a whole population. My study explored mentoring that the program started with in 2008 among the students and academics. I compared the mentors' experience with the students' experience in the relationship. The sample consisted of five students and five academics who were their mentors. All the participants were in their second year of the program in 2009 and they were chosen because they were the first cohort of the MMUF program. McMillan and Schumacher (2006) say, 'The logic of the sample size is related to the purpose, the research problem, the major data collection strategy and the availability of information-rich cases (McMillan and Schumacher, 2006 p.86), The study is a small scale, exploratory study. Generalisation to other academic mentoring programmes, even in the same institution, would be unwise. Nevertheless, the results of the study may be of interest to participants in the MMUF at Wits University and other participating institutions in South Africa'

3.5 Ethical Considerations

I applied for ethical clearance from the ethics committee in the Wits School of Education in 2009, when my proposal was passed. I then applied for consent from the heads of schools in which the students were registered. I informed the registrar's office about my intention to conduct the research. The students and their mentors also gave written consent to participate. I assured them that taking part in the research was voluntary and they could withdraw at any time for any reason. The study did not pose risks to participants as their identities and departmental affiliation was disguised. The data collected in this research will be kept in a locked cupboard in the MMUF office and it will be destroyed after five years. There are no participants under the age of consent in this study so I did not have to seek consent from parents. Informed consent was obtained before data collection was started. Respondents were informed about the study and what it hoped to achieve pseudonyms were used to disguise participants'identities throughout the report. The letter awarding ethics clearance is in appendix F.

3.6 Data Analysis

According to Maykurt and Morehouse (1994), this process is an analytical procedure that involves examining the meaning of people's words and actions. Data collected in interviews and documents is then grouped into patterns (p. 23).

Because I was looking at the benefits and difficulties that both students and mentors experienced, I compared and contrasted responses they gave and I interpreted them in relation to my research questions.

3.7 Dissemination of Results

This research report will be submitted to the Wits School of Education in the Faculty of Humanities for assessment, but the major results will be shared with other institutions that participate in the MMUF mentoring program. The findings will help the coordinators of this program at the University of the Witwatersrand to develop the MMUF, and possibly inform other programmes for student and academic development.

4. CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH RESULTS: MENTORS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on my interviews and conversations with mentors and the reports on students which mentors wrote. I will also be looking at the initial stages and the hardships encountered at the beginning and during the collection of data. There is no specific order in the discussions with mentors. The sequence here reflects the availability of mentors for interviews in 2010. To maintain confidentiality, the names used for mentors and their departments and schools are fictitious, except for one mentor who said I could use her real name.

I conducted the interviews with mentors in their offices except for one that took place in my office. In this case the mentor offered to come to my office. The times of interviews were different depending on the mentors' busy schedules. Most interviews were in the afternoon and one took place in the morning. There was a time when it seemed as if I wasn't going to get an interview with a particular mentor, and I offered to do it on a Saturday morning. Finally I managed to get an interview during office hours. I have included the transcripts of the interviews in Appendix 2.

Not all the mentors submitted reports on students they mentored. The MMUF expects mentors to submit two reports per year but this was unsuccessful with most mentors. The office expects the first report in June and the second one in November. Only two mentors submitted the November reports. These reports reflect two of the three successful mentoring relationships.

The reports contained different information. Professor Sani mentioned Kholeka's commitment and ambition, in her research work and she elaborated on what Kholeka was doing. I have attached the report. On the other hand Jeannette mentioned Tshepo's voracious appetite for learning, how Tshepo maintained contact when she went to the summer programme in the U.S.A. She also stated how Tshepo will become one of South Africa's leaders intellectually, politically and spiritually.

Further information came from informal conversations I had with two mentors: Khoisan and Jeanette. The conversations were ongoing and started even before I began data collection. Some of the information I got from Khoisan did not result from my interview with him;

perhaps it was not meant to be recorded. But with Jeanette, the interview, the report and the conversation we had were consistent. Her comments were the same except for very personal details that were not intended for the interview. The sequence of the interviews was as follows:

- Jennette Hannaford from the Anthropology Department;
- Prishani Naidoo from the Sociology Department;
- Sani Roberts from the Drama Department;
- Khoisan from the Media Department; and
- Ebrahim Moodley from the Computer Studies Department.

After presenting the interview data of interview, I will provide an analysis of the main themes that emerged from the data.

4.2 Interviews and Conversations with Mentors and Mentors' Reports

4.2.1 Jeanette Hannaford

She did not have second thoughts when I asked her for an interview. She offered to come to the Education campus where my office is, and we went to a less busy place where we could talk. The interview lasted for an hour and it could have gone on and on since she was relaxed and had set aside time to talk to me. At the beginning and end of the interview we spoke generally about mentoring relationships and about the MMUF programme.

Jeanette was based in the Department of Anthropology but had moved to a research and development unit. When she was approached by the MMUF coordinator to mentor Tshepo Moloi, who was doing her major in Jeanette's area of specialisation in the Faculty of Humanities, Jeanette was excited because she knew the Anthropology Department very well and it came as a bonus to her, because that particular department was a busy one and it was going to be difficult for Tshepo to find a mentor. According to Jeanette, the department would not give Tshepo the input and kind of pastoral care that she could give Tshepo. Jeanette said, 'You know, the first time I met her, I thought she would be shy, but she was confident. She asked me questions, and I thought she was an ideal mentee.'

Their personalities helped Jeanette and Tshepo to become ’friends, sisters and colleagues‘, as they would put it. Jeanette is a young white woman and Tshepo an even younger black woman but Jeanette would go about telling people that Tshepo was her younger sister. Jeanette said she had always been interested in supporting students from generally disadvantaged backgrounds. She said she was, and still is, interested in empowering them. She was interested in trying to undo the damage that Bantu education had done. ’Even though we are nominally a democracy, the education system is still a mess, there are still haves and have-nots in education‘, she remarked.

When I ask Jeanette if she hadn’t lost track of what was happening in Anthropology since she had left the department, she said, ’I did my Masters in anthropology and I am still interested in anthropology issues, so I still obviously read academic papers to keep up and I will give her [Tshepo] articles to read.’

At the end of the two-year relationship, Jeanette was pleased that Tshepo was able to write academically and was now emulating Jeanette in the tutorial sessions that Tshepo conducted in the department. She thinks Tshepo has become a mature young lady who could tackle any obstacle coming her way because of the guidance, support and nurturing Jeanette gave her.

Tshepo is now doing her master’s degree and the relationship is still active. I said to Jeanette, ’I realize that you are helping her with her proposal for her masters, even though you will not be paid’. Her response was: ’Yes, I mean, Matsie, mentoring is a two-way street. I have learnt so much from Tshepo, as much as she did from me, so it’s not as if she is getting the full benefit of all my experience. I am also getting something. You can’t put a rand amount on it, it’s priceless!’

Responding to my question about whether she thought Tshepo had grown personally and academically from mentoring, Jeanette said: ’She has grown phenomenally. Her writing, her ideas… The writing still needs work but from the first bit that I saw to now it has taken off. I think that had an effect because there are certain things I have said to her constantly, like: ‘Stop writing like you speak, because swopping speech from spoken to written is problematic’. She can now identify when she is doing that and she laughs because she knows that I am not going to like it. So she is reflecting on her writing. She is like,’I knew you were going to say that.’ So I think that she has grown.’

4.2.2 Prishani

Prishani is the examination coordinator in her department and could not make our first appointment because she had to attend to a crisis to do with examinations. We then set up another appointment which took place in her office. She was happy to see me again. We had met at a lunch with mentors and mentees in September 2009. The interview lasted for thirty minutes and could have gone way beyond that but, because our interview was during the final year examinations, she had work to do. At the beginning and at the end of the interview I started a general conversation about the mentoring relationship and about the MMUF program before I began my questions.

Prishani echoed much of what Jeanette said. Prishani is a South African woman of Indian descent, and her mentee is a young black South African woman. They are both in the Sociology Department. Prishani was also interested in grooming young black students as up-and-coming academics. She was less fortunate when she herself began to work at the university. In her department, people were not interested in grooming younger academics; people took care of their personal work and 'never noticed them [newcomers] swimming in frustration'. She said she was excited when the Memsa Mphapuli (her research student) asked her to be her mentor because that was exactly what she had always wanted to do. She said she had been mentoring students in her class. When I asked her whether it made any difference that the mentor and the mentee were from different racial or cultural backgrounds, she said no, and gave me an example of a female student that she had mentored informally. The student had missed some classes and finally missed a test. When the student came to explain to Prishani that she had been called by her ancestors to become a *sangoma*[2], she said no one in the department wanted to accept the urgency of this, that that the student was going to fail. Prishani was the only one who stood up for her and the student was able at a later time to write tests and submit assignments that were due. Prishani said that she was unhappy, though, because she felt like she did not give Memsa enough time, as Prishani was busy with her own PhD. But now that all that was over, she was ready to start another mentoring relationship.

[2] A *sangoma* is a word used for a traditional healer either male or female. A person becomes a *sangoma* once there has been a calling from the ancestors. They have to undergo a lengthy initiation period. Some people take longer than others, and it is believed that it depends on the direction and motivation provided by one's ancestors.

She felt that Memsa has grown both academically and personally: 'There is no way one can grow intellectually and not grow personally.'

4.2.3 Sani Roberts

My attempts to get an interview with her failed. She told me that she would happily give me an interview, but she was not available due to other commitments in the Drama Department. On the date we had set for an interview she sent me an email saying she was sorry she could not meet me because she had been called to attend to a crisis at one of the theatres where she was directing a play. She said that she was going to be unavailable for a long time. I tried to persuade her to at least respond to questions by email but she could not. Later she agreed to an appointment as she thought she might end up not seeing me at all. I was happy to at least have some time with her.

Sani Roberts also felt confident that her mentee, Kholeka Zungu, could 'go out there and face the academic world'. Professor Roberts is a white female academic and her mentee, Kholeka, is a young black female. Their relationship was formal, based on the work they both did. They never had time to relax and get to know each other better outside work. This was because Sani was a busy person. She never really had time to try to know Kholeka better. Sani is a Head of Department and is director of a dramatic society in Gauteng and she supervises PhD students. She says she knew Kholeka as a student in her first year class, and when Kholeka approached her to be her mentor, she was very pleased to accept. When I ask her whether she and her mentee ever did anything together besides review Kholeka's research, she said the most relaxing thing she could do with the mentee was to discuss her work over a cup of coffee, which she had hoped to do more often, but could not because of her work load. Giving Kholeka immediate feedback was important to her; something she would expect another person to do for her. She remarked that Kholeka was 'a self starter and very good at what she does, she just needed more guidance and coaching to get through'. I recalled the time when Kholeka had told Sani that her family wanted her to get a job after she graduated; Sani was very concerned and called the MMUF office to find out if there was anything the office could do to keep her at Wits. She told me that Kholeka had told her this in confidence and would not want other people to know about it. She was concerned that Kholeka would start work and forget about the academy. The MMUF office then approached the dean's office for help. However, Kholeka had applied to study in Oxford and had to wait until mid 2010 to hear whether she was accepted. Unfortunately, she was not, and it was late to take up an offer to study at Wits. So in 2010, she had a break year, and tried unsuccessfully to get a job

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4.2.4 Khoisan

My interview with Khoisan, who is a very busy person, happened in his office after several attempts to arrange an interview with him. One day I arrived at his office only to hear that meeting he had invited me to had been called off. The interview took place in his office and took twenty minutes because he needed time to prepare for his next meeting. At the beginning of the interview I started by asking general questions and then continued with more specific ones. At the end we spoke about the mentoring relationship and about the MMUF program in general.

Khoisan's relationship with his mentee was unsuccessful. Khoisan X is a black South African male and the mentee is a young black South African woman. They were both in the Commerce Faculty where Khoisan was the Head of School and was supervising several masters and PhD students. He said that he volunteered to mentor Seisa because she pursued a research topic that was interesting and in which he was a specialist. At the beginning of the relationship he and Seisa went through the guidelines about the mentoring relationship which were the guidelines that he was given by the MMUF office. He and Seisa set ground rules and set meeting times. He told Seisa that, despite his busy schedule, she was welcome to pop in at any time and he would give her a moment if time permitted. The relationship went well at the beginning but after a while he got busier and had less time for Seisa. He could only schedule meetings with her after office hours; 'something that did not go down well with her.'

In an informal chat, he told me that he helped Seisa by giving her money as well as guidance and support. Seisa enjoyed that and expected more. When he could not give her more, she resented him. Seisa started refusing to come to meetings outside office hours and that's when he realized that the relationship would not work and advised her to get a new mentor. Indeed she did start a relationship with Sonto, who was her research supervisor in the department. On the day of the presentation of the student's research findings[3], which was ten months later, Khoisan told me that he was impressed and

felt that his ground work with Seisa had helped her and he was happy with the work that her second mentor had done. He was confident that Seisa had grown tremendously, academically and personally.

[3] The day of presentation of findings is an annual event which occurs in September each year. The three South African institutions that are members of the Mellon Foundation come together in Johannesburg, where students who were selected the previous year and have completed their research and come together to share their findings.

4.2.5 Ebrahim Moodley

Ebrahim Moodley was a difficult person to find. After several attempts to set a date for an interview had failed, I asked if he could respond to questions via email. He agreed to this immediately.

Ebrahim Moodley was on sabbatical when his mentee, Peter Chipepereka, was assigned to him. Ebrahim never made it to the meetings scheduled with other mentors. When invited, he would respond that he was coming and then he did not appear.

Ebrahim is a male South African of Indian descent, and his mentee, Peter, is a male from Central Africa. Ebrahim was from the Department of Computer Science and Peter was from the Department of Actuarial Science.

In response to a question about why he agreed to be Peter's mentor and what he brought to the relationship, he said, 'I found the whole concept interesting and felt I would be able to make a contribution through interacting with Peter. I brought my academic knowledge and experience in writing academic papers as well as my personal experience as a mentor.'

Responding to a question on whether the two of them spoke about expectations or goals or established ground rules, he said, 'Yes, we did. The program also sent out clear guidelines, which were useful'. And, in describing their communication, he said, 'I think it was very friendly. We got on very well.'

Ebrahim confessed that, even though he had very little time for Peter, he managed to get some work done, noting that 'students should work on their own.' Although students should learn to work on their own, this was not what the MMUF was hoping to do with this group of students. They needed someone who specialized in research and teaching and who could coach, guide and support them to do the same.

I asked Ebrahim to tell me about his experience as a mentor in the MMUF programme. Did it make any difference if the mentor and mentee were of different race groups, different genders or different economic backgrounds? He said, 'The experience from my side was positive. In the Faculty of Science our interaction tends to be driven by our research interests more than by race/gender issues. Both Peter and I had an interest in financial modeling and this is what

we focused on. I did not notice any difference in my interactions with Peter when compared to my interactions with other students in the School.'

Responding to a question whether he thought Peter had grown personally or academically from mentoring, he said, 'I believe so. I think that the trip overseas was a worthwhile experience. When he came back he was much more focused and committed to his studies. He has now completed his studies in actuarial science and has graduated from the University.'

Ebrahim thought that Peter had grown because he is now doing his honours degree. In fact, Peter was dismissed from the programme. I don't think that Ebrahim was even aware that Peter could not be supported by the MMUF because he did not get the marks to qualify for honours the first time around.

4.2.6 Analysis

Out of the five mentoring relationships here, three were successful and two were not. The three relationships that were successful were: Jennette Hannaford and Tshepo Moloi; Prishani Naidoo and Memsa Mphaphuli; and Sani Roberts and Kholeka Zungu. The two relationships that did not work were: Khoisan and his mentee, Seisa, and Ebrahim and his mentee, Peter. It is interesting to note that the three successful mentoring relationships were female mentor-student pairs.

Mentors in successful relationship agreed that mentoring can be considered as a powerful tool for academic and personal development. They all agreed that there is no way one can grow intellectually and not grow personally. They all had a passion for helping the advantaged and younger academics in the making. Khoisan also had that passion but it disappeared when he encountered problems with Seisa.

The reported difficulties experienced by mentors are supported by literature which indicates that relationships fail because of lack of time, availability and not setting ground rules. Jeanette did not set ground rules but her relationship with Tshepo was successful. Their relationship was built on mutual liking, respect and trust, and even when they had disagreements, they were motivated to overcome them.

Successful mentors agreed that they learned things from and about their mentees which would help them understand students in general. The fact that mentors and mentees did not

come from same cultural or traditional background mentors brought a new insight about students and people in general.

The following chapter will present the results of interviews and conversation with mentees.

5. CHAPTER FIVE: MENTEES

5.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on interviews and informal conversations with mentees. The discussions with mentees will follow the same sequence as the mentors in the previous chapter. Mentor/mentee pairs are as follows:

- Jennette Hannaford with Tshepo Moloi
- Prishani Naidoo with Memsa Mphaphuli
- Sani Roberts with Kholeka Zungu
- Seisa Ndlovhu with KhoisanX
- Peter Chipepereka with Ebrahim Moodley.

Interviews with mentees took place at different venues and different times. I was open to what was suitable to them. One interview occurred in my office in the afternoon, the other one occurred after an MMUF gathering at a hotel in the evening. It was difficult to get an interview with Memsa because she was a master's degree student and she studied at a different institution. Two interviews took place in the seminar room at the Humanities Faculty.

At the end of this section I have included a document written by the 2010 mentees as guidelines for new mentees.

5.1.1 Tshepo Moloi

The interview with Tshepo Moloi was pleasant. When I asked her to take part in my study, she was happy to give me an interview. Because she was a busy master's degree student, we couldn't find time to do the interview. Finally, we made an arrangement to talk after supper at a hotel where the 2010 annual MMUF event was taking place. We went to my room and the interview lasted for over an hour. I did not have a proper recording system, so we used my cellphone, and, because I wasn't an expert at this, Tshepo helped by operating the recording function. I asked questions and started the conversation with how the event went in the afternoon, and, after a while, I asked her if we could start the interview. We spoke in isiZulu, when I asked her what language she would prefer to use for the interview, and she told me

she was comfortable using any language that I chose. I then decided to switch to English to make my transcription easier for the person who was to transcribe for me. As was the case with her mentor, Jeanette, the interview could have gone on and on since she was relaxed and had set aside time to talk to me. At the end of the interview we spoke generally about the mentoring relationship and I asked her if she would one day consider being a mentor in the programme. Her answer was an immediate, 'Yes, I can't wait to transfer what I learned from my mentor.'

Tshepo Moloi's mentor was chosen for her by the MMUF academic coordinator. Tshepo is a young black South African woman and her mentor, Jeanette, is a white woman. Neither of them seemed to notice their colour difference. Tshepo said that at their first meeting, when she was introduced to Jeanette, they had lunch, and it was at that meeting that they first spoke about her research interests. They then set up another meeting where they spoke about their expectations. Tshepo was very eager to learn and her eagerness made her mentor, Jeanette, more than ready to help her. She said they had an open relationship, not based only on the academic journey. I noticed how fondly she spoke of her mentor. She said, 'Jeanette believed that one's personal life affects one's academic life.

'She always said I should get rid of negative vibes that will hinder my studies. Because I stayed at the residence, she was concerned about what I eat.' Tshepo said Jeanette was concerned that she did not eat enough vegetables and fruit. Tshepo actually did not like them but Jeanette forced her to eat them. She laughed, and said to me, 'Today I eat everything. She must be proud of me.' When asked if their social and economic background made any difference in their relationship, Tshepo said, 'Jeanette did not look at who you are based on who you are, where you come from and where you are at, or what you have or did not have, she looks at the person that you are, and sees a potential that you have, and wants to help you in whatever way she can.' Tshepo refused to use her economic background (where she come from) as a problem; instead she looked at it as a springboard to work hard and grab the opportunity that she had with two hands and use it to her fullest advantage. Tshepo felt that Jeanette transferred her passion for teaching and research to her. She says she sees this when she teaches tutorials that she runs with undergraduates in her department. Every time she

teaches, she feels like she is a 'mini Jeanette.' She said Jeanette was a blessing to her. 'Where did she come from?' Tshepo looked up and said, 'Heavens — I must have done something right.' She said this with a happy face that showed her appreciation.

When I ask her if they ever quarrelled, she said that not every relationship was smooth. 'Yes, we did quarrel, she [Jeanette] was frustrated with her PhD and I was frustrated with [my] personal life, we soon realised that we were [too] much into each other's space and agreed that, much as we get along, we need to respect each other's space. I am happy that we did, because we both understood more about each other. I knew her bad side. She knew mine.'

When I asked Tshepo if she thought she had grown academically and personally, she said,

> I don't think so, I know so. You know I have definitely grown academically. As I have mentioned… I'm more confident in my work, I'm more confident in reading and understanding work, and I can also write better with more understanding now. I'm able to edit my work. You know sometimes I would edit my work and edit journals you know, like asking questions she would ask, by the time [Jeannette] reads it she would have no question to ask because I have edited properly. I'm able to present, that is what I have learned from her, because she presents a lot, so I have grown in every single aspect. I have grown academically.

And, personally, Tshepo also grew.

> I can say that before I met Jeanette I was a college girl but well, I'm still growing. I did not know anything, but through her guidance I was able to experience a lot of things in life and be able to make decisions for myself. She always told me, in life no one will make a difference for you and make sure whatever decision you make for yourself you will not regret it. She has been good to me both academically and personally. She was the best and I take my hat off for her.

5.1.2 Memsa Mphapuli

Memsa Mphapuli, like Tshepo, was also doing her master's degree at the time of the interview, although at a different institution, and it was difficult to find a suitable place and time for an interview. We hoped that we would have time at the annual MMUF presentation event in September 2010, but it didn't happen. We then set another date on a Saturday where we were going to meet at a shopping mall. We went to a Milky Lane, but it was too noisy and we decided to move to Wimpy in the non-smokers' corner because it was quieter, but we could not get in because there was a very long queue. We decided to call it off. We then made another appointment where she agreed to come to my office after her class and after work for me, which would be around five in the afternoon. It was just after four thirty when I got a call

from her saying she had to leave campus to babysit for her mother but was waiting for the nanny to come at any time, so it would be best if I came to her place. We both come from the South but she lived in the far South. She gave me directions to her place and I got there. We started the interview after six thirty and it went on until seven thirty because she kept on answering her phone saying the calls were important and that the calls contributed to her own research. I left her house just before eight in the evening but did not complain as I was happy that I finally got the interview. Our conversation was in Sesotho but when I started the interview we switched to English.

Memsa Mphapuli is a young black woman, and her mentor, Prishani Naidoo, is a South African woman of Indian descent. She approached Prishani after three weeks of not being able to contact the mentor chosen for her by the MMUF academic coordinator. Prishani had already supervised Memsa's sociology research report in Memsa's third year as an undergraduate. When approached, Prishani did not have second thoughts about the importance of mentoring; she was excited and felt honoured to be part of the project, even though she was not a big part of it. Mermsa remarked,'When Prishani tried to make suggestions about my work, I was not pleased, thinking that she wanted to take over my research and make it hers.' Memsa said she was on the defensive about this and went to a previous mentor to complain. But as time went on she understood Prishani's point of view.

When asked if they set ground rules at the beginning of the relationship, she said, 'Not really because the relationship was formal', so they did not think of making rules. Memsa said she supposed the relationship was more like a teacher-student relationship, where students should know their boundaries. Whenever students need to see a lecturer, they have to make an appointment and very seldom could she use her cellphone. She said Prishani suggested that whenever Memsa had a burning issue she could send a text message but Memsa preferred to use email instead.

When asked about communication between the two of them, Memsa said, 'She [Prishani] was an authority, and it's not something that was open to negotiations and I had to respect that.' I asked her if they were friends, she said because they were both chasing deadlines and did not really have time to bond, but towards the end they could talk about their personal lives. She said the thing that made them bond the most was that they were both feminists.

I asked her if she saw any difference between when she had a mentor and when she did not have a mentor. She said,

> I saw progress and a benefit of having a mentor. She [Prishani] was like a sounding board for a lot of my ideas — about papers that was I writing, she suggested books, articles journals that I could look at and have. She even offered to proofread some of my papers before I submitted them. She also helped me to deal with a lecturer who was very pushy and too domineering as far as my work was concerned. I felt the lecturer never allowed me space to grow and think; she wanted me to write as she did. I did not necessarily like her style of writing. We very often never understood each other or were never on a same page. But Prishani helped.

About different race groups she said,

> Well, we understood as far as our racial identities were concerned, we both understood ourselves as a young black woman especially interested in feminist ideologies, although she is Indian, we sort of took the categories that were given to us during apartheid that we were both black woman and as feminists we would like to see some kind of the social change concerning women's rights and gender equality, so those were our common interests and we found a lot to talk about besides work, meaning my academic work or her work. We would find a lot of things to talk about.

But even though they spoke about aspects of their lives very easily, when it came to their social lives, they had to tread very carefully. 'You know, I was too afraid to ask what her sexual orientation was, you know. We used to talk about our frustrations with our fathers, and how we sometimes couldn't stand them.'

I asked her if she thought she had grown personally and academically. She said, 'Most certainly, without doubt, from the way I articulate myself, I can speak with confidence, even my writing has improved, I'm no longer doubtful to put my point across. I most certainly have grown, I used to feel intimidated sometimes and believed that there are a lot of people who are smarter than me, but now I look at issues. I believe I have potential and I am intelligent.'

5.1.3 Kholeka Zungu

It was easy to set a meeting with Kholeka Zungu. She was the second last person I interviewed. I offered to come to her house in Edenvale but she already had an appointment to meet a friend at the university, so I conducted the interview in the Faculty of Humanities seminar room. Like the others, we used isiZulu in our conversation but when the interview started we switched to English. Kholeka had a one-week relationship with her first mentor

and decided that she did not like him, so I asked her to tell more about that person. She told me that the first mentor was a male, almost the same age group as her. His name was Manqoba. Kholeka said Manqoba made her uncomfortable whenever he touched her. She said she was also annoyed by how he would go on about a part he took in a television series. She got the impression that their meeting were supposed to be about listening to Manqoba talking about himself! Their relationship lasted a month and she then communicated her frustrations with the MMUF office and she approached Sani Roberts to be her mentor. I then proceeded to ask her my questions. I had to limit the interview to forty-five minutes because she had so much to say about her new mentor, Sani Roberts.

Kholeka Zungu is a black woman and she chose her mentor, who was a white woman. They already had a relationship as student and lecturer in Kholeka's undergraduate studies. She said she has had a relationship with Sani since her first year at the university.

I asked her if there was any difference between when she had a mentor and when she did not, that is, prior to Sani becoming her mentor, and she said that, although she did not go to a private school, Sani believed in her and thought she had potential, something that Kholeka had never thought she had.

They both came from different backgrounds and different race groups, but this did not make a difference to Kholeka. She said she was at ease because Sani was a woman and there would be no sexual attraction between them. She felt safe with Sani. 'She was like a mother to me.'

When I asked her about their disciplinary and research backgrounds, she said, 'Sani introduced me to John Kani. He was the guy whom I was interrogating his book for my research.' Kholeka told me that meeting with John Kani was the best thing that could happen to anyone. 'That was *theee* best thing. I will never forget it!'

I asked her if she thought she has grown personally and academically, and she said, 'Oh yes! I used to be so unsure of what I do, but now, whatever I do, I do it with confidence. I never thought I was smart. But with Sani's constant compliments and affirmation, I felt and started acting like an intellectual.'

5.1.4 Seisa Ndhlovhu

I tried to set up a meeting with Seisa several times but it just did not happen. I think she was reluctant to give me an interview. Then finally we agreed to meet on a Monday after work at six o'clock at Gold Reef City, which was close to where she lived. She was temporarily living in the south with a relative. She then sent me an SMS very early on Monday morning saying she would come to my office at one o'clock and that she would only have thirty minutes because she had to go to Sunninghill in the north of Johannesburg for an interview and she had to get public transport to be there on time. I did not argue. She came fifteen minutes late and was moody. I sensed she was getting ready not to say anything. She refused to allow me to use a tape recorder, even though she said she wasn't going to say anything about her mentor. I tried to guarantee her confidentiality and anonymity but it fell on deaf ears. We then proceeded with the interview even though I was a bit agitated because I was sensing hostile behaviour towards me for the first time. I was on the verge of calling the meeting off but I thought if I did, that would be the last time I would see her or talk to her. So I decided to ask her straightforward questions and go back to her with follow-up questions but she told me that, after the interview, when she got a job, she was going to be a very busy person, and she was going to be unreachable except through email. So we agreed that I would email her my follow-up questions. I am still waiting for her replies in April 2011. At some stage she said the text was unreadable and I should resend, which I did, but there was no response. I think she felt her information might be used against her since I was working under the supervision of her former mentor. She was just not cooperative. To my surprise she stayed longer than she had said she would and I wondered if there *was* a job interview because it was getting late for her to catch two modes of transport to get to her interview in Sunninghill.

Seisa Ndlovhu is a black South African woman and her mentor, Khoisan, is a black South African man. Seisa's mentor volunteered to mentor her because they were both in the same department and her research interests were similar to his. He was a specialist in the field that she had chosen as a major.

Siesa told me that, at their first meeting, they did not set ground rules nor did they talk about their expectations. There was no work schedule whatsoever. She would just go to his office and they would talk about whatever she wanted to at that time. When asked if she was ever

late for a meeting, she said whenever she got held up she would communicate it well before time, something that I know did not always occur.

She said communication in the relationship was too formal. They only discussed work, as she had to set a topic for research before she could go to the USA.

I asked her if they ever had a quarrel and she said, 'Yes, and I don't want to talk about it. He was a busy person and started to set meeting times outside office hours and I did not appreciate that.'

When the relationship was beginning to sour, he pointed out that her chosen research topic was going to present difficulties, or rather, she would not be able to pay for information she needed from libraries. This was something that her supervisor in the department had pointed out immediately when she saw Seisa's proposed research. At the department they had presentations every week, and Khoisan started criticizing her when she presented, embarrassing her in front of other students and staff members.

When asked whether it made a difference if mentor and mentee were of different race groups, different gender, different economic background or research interests, Seisa answered no, to all of them. She indicated that she was dissatisfied with the relationship but she would rather not talk about it. She had nothing good to say about her mentor and I thought I had to respect that.

She said that at the end of the MMUF program, she had grown because her new mentor, also her supervisor, stepped in. Sonto was a black woman in Khoisan and Seisa's department and she understood Seisa's research. 'I used to procrastinate, but ever since I had a relationship with Sonto, she disciplined me. She would give me enriching articles for both my research and for motivation. She did things that mentors do not do, [that is] she did not regard herself as superior to me. She had an open door policy. She was very approachable.'

5.1.5 Peter Chipepereka

When I asked Peter for an interview he did not delay or put me off. The university examinations were over and he was sorting out a study permit for 2011 before going on holiday. I arranged to meet him in the Faculty of Humanities committee room early in the morning for thirty minutes. The reason for this was that we had to leave the room as it was

booked for an event that could not be held elsewhere. Peter and I spoke English as he did not understand any isiZulu or Sesotho. He had a lot to say about his failed relationship with his mentor, and after the interview he wanted to air his disappointment about how he had been 'kicked out' of the MMUF programme unfairly. I gave him a chance to express his dissatisfaction with this.

Peter Chipepereka is a black man from Central Africa and his mentor is a South African man of Indian descent. He was assigned a mentor through Margarete, the MMUF coordinator. Although he had a certain professor in mind that he would have preferred to work with, he could not find a mentor in the Actuarial Science department, so Margarete managed to get Professor Ebrahim, at the School of Computer Science, for him. Peter said his preferred professor, Professor Mark Dazuel, was also extremely busy and not on campus most of the time. I asked him if he had a good relationship with Mark. He said, 'No it was just a lecturer-student relationship.'

When he started the mentoring relationship with Professor Ebrahim, they did not set rules nor talk about expectations; instead they spoke about themselves. Peter said, 'When we met we discussed personal stuff like, where I came from, what I intend to do and what were my research interests. I asked him what his majors at varsity were, his interests, and what he was teaching, how many publications he had, stuff like that.'

I asked him how many meetings they had, and he said, 'Because he was on sabbatical, we met not more than three times, and then our communication was mainly through email. And communication was two ways.'

I asked him to tell me about his experience as a mentee in the MMUF programme. Did it make any difference if the mentee and the mentor were of different race groups, different gender or different economic background? He said, 'Personally, for me, there was no difference.'

When asked if the mentor had given him valuable input on his research, he said, 'Yes, but it was on that topic and it was not enough.' About research and teaching, Peter said, 'He did [give advice], but it was hard because his focus was completely different.' I asked him if he thought he had grown personally and academically. He said that whatever the stage he was at it was not achieved through a mentor but through his own initiative. And he said he envied

people in his cohort because they had great relationships with their mentors, and he thought that was because they were from Humanities and things are not as concrete as was the case in the Science Faculty.

Peter thought the relationship was bound to fail because they both came from different departments. He thought that Ebrahim had no idea about what he was doing. Although he did not get support from the mentor, he only had himself to blame for not continuing with the MMUF program. He was too busy with students' issues in the SRC, so he could not make the grade required for him to be accepted into honours.

Below here are the recommendations from the 2010 MMUF students. These comments were made at the fortnight MMUF meetings that I, as a coordinator, facilitate. Because of the problems experienced in the relationships by the previous cohort, Margarete and I thought we should find out from them what they thought would make the mentoring relationships work. The students discussed the topic and one of them was the scribe. We told them that we were going to give their text to the next cohort as guidelines. They were happy to do this and felt that they also had a say in the future of the MMUF programme.

In conclusion, the 2008 mentees agreed that they were different from when they started at university and on the MMUF programme. The four girls said they could now stand up for what they believed in and they felt confident about their writing and speaking. The two students whose relationship with their mentors failed echoed the frustrations of busy, preoccupied mentors who were unavailable. Those who benefited agreed that the advantages of the programme were immeasurable.

Guidelines on Mentoring for the 2011 cohort by 2010 MMUF Cohort

Preparation

1. Coordinators should enlighten fellows about academic mentors; specifically their influence on research and reasonable expectations fellows could have about their academic mentors.
2. Coordinators should ensure that fellows know what research is.
3. Fellows should submit their preferred mentors and motivate whether the mentor meet the following criteria:
   - The mentor is accessible and available to the mentee:

- No communication barriers; in other words, the fellows can express themselves freely around their mentors:
- Common research interests;
- Mentors' recent focus, in other words, whether the mentor is still actively involved in research or the mentor's focus has shifted from research to other things.

4. Mentors could come from any department that might be aligned with their research interests.

Initiating local mentorship relationship

1. Fellows should communicate their research interests and mentorship expectations with their mentors.
2. Mentors and mentees should set boundaries that both of them are comfortable with and conducive to good research progress.
3. Before mentors commit to mentoring, they should know that they need to be available and easily accessible to mentees.
4. Mentors should encourage mentees to choose topics which are deeply rooted in literature.
5. Mentors should lead by example; in other words, mentors should show mentees how to search for materials specific to the field, then let mentees continue searching for materials on their own, occasionally checking the progress of the mentee.
6. Mentors need to start off with the intention of making mentees independent in the long run.
7. Mentees should develop the structure of their research (for example, find the primary and secondary sources required).

U.S trip

Before leaving:

1. Mentees should present their research topic briefly to the previous cohort. (The aim of this exercise is to make sure the mentees could talk about different aspects of the research, specifically, what they expected to accomplish while in the U.S, practicing how to make a good first impression on their U.S mentors. Previous cohorts could help the new cohort set reasonable expectations.
2. Coordinators should make sure that fellows know about their mentors as soon as possible then encourage early communication between mentees and U.S mentors.

In the U.S: If the U.S mentor expanded the topic, the mentee should communicate this development to the local mentor.

Maintaining the relationship

1. Mentees should organize meetings on time, pitch for the meetings (no excuses) and arrive early at meetings while in South Africa and in the U.S.A.
2. Mentees should make all meetings worthwhile for the mentor; this includes evaluating whether a subject needs to be discussed through e-mail or a personal meeting.
3. Meetings should not be limited to discussing research only. There needs to be room to discuss future career prospects, courses that will lead to the direction of the mentee's research interests and discussing the life of an academic.
4. Mentees and mentors should set specific goals, for example, set a number of journals to discuss per semester.
5. Mentees should give regular updates to the coordinators. If the mentoring relationship is not working, coordinators should give practical advice on how to fix the relationship.

The next chapter will discuss the research results in relation to the literature reviewed I chapter two and conclude the whole research.