FEMINIST MENTORING *for feminist futures*

THE THEORY

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FEMINIST MENTORING *for feminist futures*

PART 1
THE THEORY

by Tejinder Singh Bhogal
and Srilatha Batliwala

Acknowledgements

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Foreword by CREA

CREA is extremely proud to have supported the conceptualization, writing and release of "Feminist Mentoring for Feminist Futures" — this unique guide to feminist mentorship theory and practice. This guide, developed through CREA and the Global Fund for Women's SAYWLM initiative, has created a resource that is the first of its kind and can be used by others worldwide.

As feminists, we're interested in power: identifying it, exploring it, assessing its operation for good and ill in human interactions. Since its inception, CREA has focused on dismantling traditional models and notions of leadership and transforming how we as feminists practice power. We have insisted on capacitating individuals to lead differently — to transform themselves, their communities and societies at large, to embrace a feminist vision of inclusion and justice.

In recent years, CREA's own understanding of feminist leadership has been nuanced with an added layer. Through our Institutes and our own reflection on hierarchies within organizations and movements, we learned that conceptual understandings of feminist leadership do not always translate into practice. Capacity building is essential, but the work of undoing and rebuilding systemic sources of power requires structured and ongoing support. It was soon clear that the missing element in sustaining effective feminist leadership was, in fact, feminist mentoring.

This recognition deeply informed the South Asia Young Women's Leadership and Mentoring (SAYWLM) program, where ongoing feminist mentoring of the program's young activists was a critical element. Launched in 2017, SAYWLM trained feminist mentors to accompany 30 young women activists from 30 women's rights organizations across Bangladesh, India and Nepal, and supported the adaptation of this approach in Kenya and Tanzania through the East Africa Young Women's Leadership and Mentorship Initiative. SAYWLM's 30 young women leaders in turn trained and mentored over 300 young women activists in their communities to lead

feminist change processes in their contexts.

The theory and practice of feminist mentoring that has emerged from SAYWLM has broken traditional models of mentoring that often do not interrogate patriarchal power structures — including in the mentoring relationship itself — and thus centers and performs feminist values in the mentoring context.

This guide is as pioneering as it is timely. At the time of writing, the fault lines of societies around the world are being laid bare by the global pandemic. The novel coronavirus has highlighted the very exclusions we are working against and shown the world what feminist movements have long known: that our systems are deeply flawed and our societies urgently need to be reimagined. It has reaffirmed the need for transformational feminist leadership that shifts (and questions) practices of power at the most intimate levels of the self, as well as in private and public domains. But building such leadership is a challenging and long-term task that requires constant reflection and support to explore alternate ways of feeling, relating and doing, which is what feminist mentors provide.

As you read this guide, I hope that it will help you understand and value struggles outside your own. It is a valuable resource to deconstruct how feminist mentorship (and by extension, leadership) works in your contexts, and understand what changes need to be made to make it model feminist values in practice!

I also ask that you read this with the recognition that feminist leadership is a *means*, not an end. We invest in feminist leaders and mentors *for* something, *to do* something, or to *change* something. As summed up by the pathbreaking feminist scholar and co-author of this guide, Srilatha Batliwala, "We are going to grapple with our own deep structures of power, and struggle to create better rules of engagement that enable us to treat each other well, and harness our diverse strengths and experiences without the kinds of hierarchy and dominance and exclusion and aggression that has damaged us individually and organizationally in the past. We are going to learn to recognize the forces that divide us from ourselves and from each other. We are about to begin the next great feminist uprising."

Geetanjali Misra
Executive Director,
CREA

Foreword by Global Fund for Women

The seeds of this initiative that led to the creation of this guide were planted five years ago in a workshop by Global Fund for Women hosted in Sri Lanka. Looking for creative, transformative ways of deepening our support for the women's movements in South Asia, we had invited 30 feminist leaders from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka for a two-day co-learning workshop. It was a space for peer exchange and critical reflection on the state of the gender justice movements in each country and across the region. I was hoping to glean insights into how, as a funder, we could better support and advance the needs articulated by these movement leaders.

In the rich conversations that followed, many expressed one common need: leadership development, with an emphasis on building multiple layers and multi-generational leadership.

That led us to create a program to increase young women's engagement and participation in movement building in order to develop a strong young leadership pipeline in South Asia. CREA, with its deep commitment and experience in strengthening feminist leadership, particularly for young women, was a natural partner and ally in co-creating and implementing this initiative. Together we rarely continued down a path that we had originally planned for, but collectively and consistently changed course along the way in order to achieve greater impact.

I'd like to thank each and every mentor in the three countries. The sincerity and heart with which they guided the young women leaders (and in turn learned from them) is evident in this Feminist Mentoring Guidebook. A special thanks also to CREA's consultant (and co-author of this Guide) who was instrumental in developing the feminist mentorship model practiced in this initiative and supported the mentors throughout this process.

None of this would have been possible without the generous support and trust of The Kendeda Fund. In every conversation with them, the discussion was centered on learning and being flexible and thinking of even more innovative ways to achieve the outcomes we sought.

I cannot end without saying how grateful I am for having been part of this journey with the young women leaders themselves; of bearing witness to their incredible transformation and empowerment as individuals, community members, and leaders.

Sangeeta Chowdhry
Senior Program Director, Economic Justice
Global Fund for Women

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THE JOURNEY
that created this guide

CREA's Commitment to Building Young Feminist Leadership

Founded in 2000, CREA is one of the few international women's rights organizations based in the global South, led by Southern feminists working at the grassroots, national, regional and international levels. CREA's goals are to build feminist leadership, advance women's human rights and expand sexual and reproductive freedoms.

Since its inception, building and strengthening feminist leadership, especially the leadership of young women, has been one of CREA's core strategies towards bringing social change since its inception. Over the past twenty years, CREA has operationalized this strategy through its Feminist Leadership, Movement Building and Rights Institute in the South Asian, East African and MENA (Middle East and North African) regions, as well as its Sexuality, Gender and Rights Institutes. These Institutes follow a very different pedagogy with a focus not on the usual "how to" of most leadership training programs, but on the "why": viz., enabling participants to acquire critical concepts and analytical tools, feminist movement histories and political analysis of issues and contexts. This is based on the belief that leadership begins with a clearer understanding of the deeper structural roots and intersections of power, patriarchy and heteronormativity as well as of the root causes of injustice, exclusion, discrimination and violence. It also aims to sharpen our ability to apply a feminist lens not just to the issues we work on but to our own locations and practices

within systems of power. The capacity to develop the "how," we believe, then follows once participants understand what has to be changed and the most strategic routes to that change in their own contexts.

Our approach also emphasizes the importance of reclaiming and revitalizing movements and movement-building approaches for advancing feminist social transformation. We continue to witness the many forces that are driving women's rights work into a more NGO-ized, short-term, "results"-driven framework; weakening women's movements at a time when oppressive regimes and ideologies are already dismantling the rights they had won in the past and building a widespread resurgence of patriarchal values and norms. Women's movements are dealing with aging leadership and need to be reinforced with new layers of leadership to survive and regain their voice and space — signalling the need for new cadres of feminist leaders to energize and re-invent our movements in politically challenging times.

Longer-term evaluations of CREA's Institutes indicate that this approach, of deeper conceptual clarity and critical thinking, transformed the subsequent thinking and work of our Institute participants and enabled them to devise strategies designed to effect more transformative change.

The centerpiece of our leadership building pedagogy, however, was the need to challenge the way we, as feminists, practice power — to question the widespread notion that feminist leadership is simply about women playing leadership roles. The reality is that often women reproduce the patriarchal leadership model that they have seen and internalized throughout their lives based largely on the use of "power over." Social justice and feminist organizations too tend to reproduce, internally, the very power hierarchies and oppressive behavior that they seek to change in the larger world. CREA sought to dismantle these models and construct a new concept and practice of **feminist leadership** that would reflect and perform feminist values in action.[1] This is a process through which women assert their rights and challenge power structures while simultaneously reflecting on their own uses and abuses of power and their role in reinforcing existing power structures. At the same time,

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1   S. Batliwala, Feminist Leadership for Social Transformation: Clearing the Conceptual Cloud, New Delhi: CREA, (2011), https://creaworld.org/resource/feminist-leadership-for-social-transformation/; and S. Batliwala and Michel Friedman, Achieving Transformative Feminist Leadership: A Toolkit for Organisations and Movements, New Delhi: CREA, (2014), https://creaworld.org/resource/feminist-leadership-toolkit/.

developing innovative practices that consciously and purposefully change the way they understand and practice leadership.

The experience of our leadership Institutes, however, gradually revealed that building feminist leadership that goes against the grain of how most people understand leadership is a process that requires sustained support over a longer period of time — in other words, the need for mentoring, and particularly, feminist mentoring.[2] CREA Institute participants would often reach out to us, sometimes even years later, to share their strategic dilemmas and difficulties in applying concepts they had learnt to their work contexts and their personal struggles within organizations, families and relationships. It became very clear that building feminist leadership demands structured and ongoing support by feminist Mentors using feminist mentoring approaches.

The SAYWLM Initiative

All these insights led to the design of the SAYWLM (South Asia Young Women's Leadership and Mentoring) initiative by CREA and Global Fund for Women in 2016. Through this initiative, we tried to plug in four critical gaps towards sustaining and nurturing the women's movement in the region: lack of sustained strategies for building young women's leadership, lack of structured support and mentoring of young women leaders, "projectization" and lack of movement building approaches, and the need to nurture feminist leadership practices among a new generation of women's movement leaders.[3]

The initiative was launched in Bangladesh, India and Nepal in early 2017 in partnership with ten women's rights organizations in each country, who identified one young (below 35 years of age) woman activist in their team to participate in the initiative. A team of three feminist Mentors were brought together in each of the countries to mentor the ten Young Women Leaders (YWLs) individually and collectively over a period of time. The selection of the Mentors incorporated a further innovation: each team had one "senior feminist" with longer years of experience in

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2   S. Batliwala, T.S Bhogal, & L. Mehra, Feminist Mentoring: An approach to personal and political change, (2018) Presented at India ABS Summit.

3   Ibid.

the women's movement, one "young feminist" whom the YWLs could identify with but who brought strong political clarity to her role and one "creative feminist" — from backgrounds like theater, art and design, media and journalism — who could help the YWLs think of more creative approaches to their movement building work or personal reflection processes.

Each YWL in turn, with the support of her organization, had three key responsibilities:

1. Initiate a movement-building process in the community where she worked, around an issue or injustice that affected the most marginalized women and girls there;

2. Through the movement building process, identify and help build the leadership capacity of at least ten other young women in the community who would become the leaders and catalysts for mobilizing other affected people to tackle the injustice and achieve a visible change — whether in social norms or in access to their rights or resources; and

3. Participate actively and sincerely in both individual and group mentoring sessions that were provided by CREA as part of the project. In other words, the YWLs had to understand that participating in mentoring was essential, not optional, as a critical input into their growth as leaders.

Building a Feminist Mentoring Pedagogy and Training Feminist Mentors

Simultaneously, we realized that we cannot put in place a mentoring system without clarity about what feminist mentoring is and how it should be done. We could not simply leave it to each of our Mentors to figure out. We searched available resources for guidelines, frameworks, and tools of feminist mentoring but found no practice-oriented materials that could have guided us or our mentoring process. We realized we would have to create our own theory and practice of feminist mentoring, built around an explicit set of feminist principles and a set of shared norms and practices. Although daunting, this is what we did! We embarked on an exciting process of bringing in external expertise, adapting approaches from the relatively evolved disciplines of counseling, coaching and mentoring to our principles and purpose

and choosing a set of tools and practices that seemed most compatible with our politics and goals.

With these resources in hand, a training was organized for the nine Mentors in May 2017. The workshop validated our preparatory efforts in many ways. We saw that most of us carried a number of problematic assumptions about mentoring — especially that the Mentor's role is to diagnose the Mentee's[4] problems and offer advice and solutions, in other words, to be a "Doctor" or "Advisor." Thus the workshop focused on understanding and unpacking the power dynamics inherent to the Mentor-Mentee equation, and exploring techniques that would support the Mentee to analyze her situation in different ways and arrive at her own solutions and strategies. We role played mentoring in different issue and problem contexts, learnt a range of techniques and departed with a radically different understanding of what feminist mentoring is actually about.

The actual mentoring process then began using an equally innovative structure:

- Rather than the traditional one-to-one mentoring, we created a system of both individual and group mentoring sessions as a more feminist approach, so that peer solidarity, cross-learning and peer mentoring could also occur.

- Rather than the usual one Mentor assigned to specific Mentees for the duration of the project, we rotated Mentors and Mentees (within each country), so that every Mentee had a chance to interact with all three Mentors and benefit from the diversity of approaches, knowledge and experience that each Mentor brought to the process.

- In some country contexts like India, where the YWLs were geographically widely dispersed, face-to-face mentoring sessions were impossible. Accordingly, the challenges of virtual mentoring — and of building rapport and confidence — had to be tackled creatively and patiently.

Applying this entirely new and challenging framework and techniques in practice over the next two and a half years yielded a rich experience and a wide range of challenges and breakthroughs for both Mentors and Mentees. They grappled with and overcame multiple obstacles. For example, participating organizations were

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4   The term we shall hereafter use to signify the person being mentored.

required to ensure that the YWL had a protected time and space for the mentoring to take place with adequate privacy and confidentiality, but this did not always happen. Even when it did, internet connections were often unstable, and many sessions had to be held on mobile phones while YWLs were traveling on public transport or at their homes with family members talking or working in the background. Although this was not the norm, it did occur quite often. The fact that the mentoring process nevertheless made a profound impact on the young women and became a space of growth, confidence and insight for the majority is a testament to the commitment of our Mentors, and also to the value of that initial training.

We did not, however, stop with one mentorship training. Every year, a reflective space was created for Mentors to meet and analyze the past year's experience and learning, what worked and what didn't, what techniques and principles they had struggled to apply, how the Mentor-Mentee relationship had progressed — further refining and sharpening the overall framework and approach. We celebrated our breakthroughs and confronted our limitations with honesty and a spirit of learning. We also realized that the fruits of this exciting journey, the insights it generated and the practices it innovated should be shared with all those committed to building and supporting new generations of feminist leaders. And so, this guide was born.

This guide is the product of a challenging and creative but ultimately successful journey. We hope it will enable others embarking on the feminist mentoring pathway to begin far ahead of us and build on our framework and methodology.

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FEMINISM, FEMINIST LEADERSHIP AND FEMINIST MENTORING
unpacking the connections

A guide on feminist mentoring raises an immediate question about the link between feminism and mentoring — what is the connection? Why feminist mentoring and why does it matter? We may also wonder what is the role of feminist mentoring in feminist leadership? In this chapter, we attempt to unpack these concepts and analyze the links between them.

Let us begin with feminism. At CREA, we define feminism as *an ideology, a set of analytical frameworks and a social change strategy*. As an ideology, we consider feminism unique because it is not only about transforming social power structures that construct differences on the basis of gender, but because, while other ideologies stop outside the door, feminism questions power structures in the most **private and intimate spaces**. Feminism **opens the door** and analyzes how power is practiced inside the home, in marriage and the family, in customary institutions like castes and clans. Most importantly, feminism was the first ideology to recognize that our bodies and our sexuality are sites of power, discrimination, control and violence. As analytical frameworks, feminism created a whole range of new tools to unpack hitherto normalized or hidden discrimination and power dynamics, and with which to examine, for instance, how gender — working with other forms of power — determines our social, economic and political status and access to resources, opportunities, privileges and rights. Finally, feminism is not content to merely analyze discrimination and articulate visions of gender equality and justice. Instead, it seeks to actively pursue these goals in very particular ways in diverse socio-cultural and political contexts, through a unique set of strategies that amplify the voice, vision, experience and leadership of those most marginalized by gender power structures.

Because of this, feminism seeks a social transformation that is deeper and broader than any other: a fundamental change in all the spaces in which we transact our lives — intimate, private, public — within ourselves, in our homes, relationships and social spaces, in local and global policies, laws, economic structures, and in our relationship, as a species, with nature and the earth itself. Most importantly, feminism believes that personal transformation and social transformation are inextricably linked and that change begins with the self.

The feminist social transformation process, however, demands long-term sustained activism, strong feminist movements that reflect feminist values from the ground up and from inside out and layers and layers of multi-generational leadership. Most importantly, this kind of transformation demands a very different kind of leadership. At CREA, we define feminist leadership as
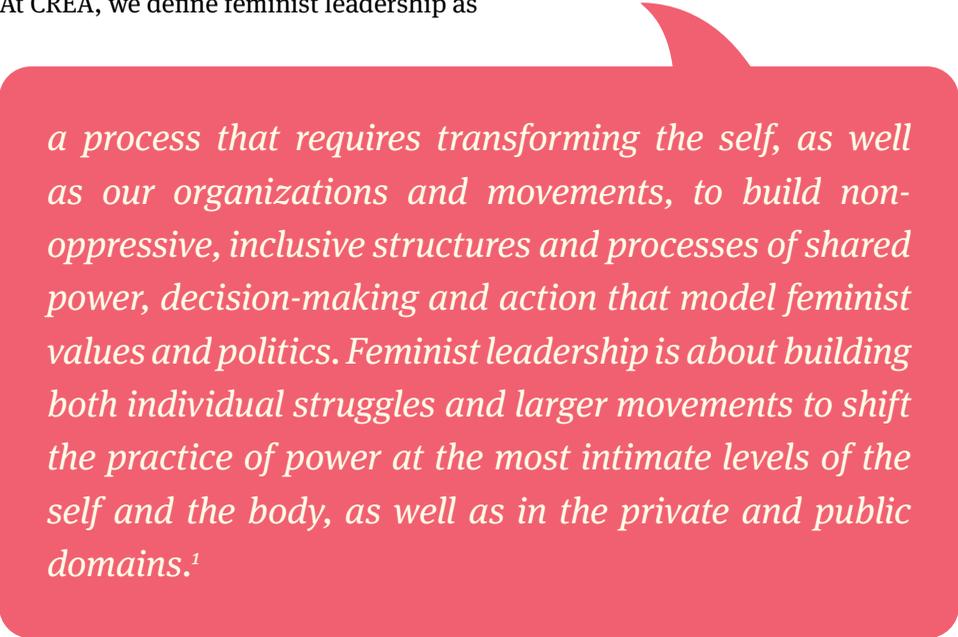
> *a process that requires transforming the self, as well as our organizations and movements, to build non-oppressive, inclusive structures and processes of shared power, decision-making and action that model feminist values and politics. Feminist leadership is about building both individual struggles and larger movements to shift the practice of power at the most intimate levels of the self and the body, as well as in the private and public domains.[1]*

Since feminism is a value-based ideology, and the transformation it seeks is rooted in and must reflect certain values, it is worth articulating what these are.

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1   CREA Position Paper, Feminist Leadership, (2018). *Available on request.*

CORE FEMINIST VALUES:[2]

While feminist values are often referenced, they are not always very clearly listed or explicitly articulated. Below, we present some core values (though by no means all) that have particular relevance in the feminist leadership and feminist mentoring contexts:

- **Gender is a social construction:** Gender is not innate or "natural," but a socially constructed difference taught and enforced by society through a range of rules, norms, expectations, rewards and penalties. Feminism also recognizes that even sex can be a social construct, such as when intersex people are assigned a particular sex at birth.

- **Challenging and dismantling patriarchy:** Gender discrimination is the product of patriarchy, which is one of the most pervasive and deeply embedded power structure that penetrates mindsets, behavior, social norms, rules and privileges from the individual to the systemic level, and must be challenged and dismantled in all the spaces in which it is located and reproduced — the self, as well as within institutions like the family, state and market.

- **Acting intersectionally:** Since patriarchy does not operate alone but works in cooperation and collaboration with multiple other power structures such as class, caste, ethnicity, race, age, ability, location, religion and heteronormativity, feminism requires us to take an intersectional approach that recognizes that gender discrimination does not occur in isolation but multiplies as it intersects other oppressions and exclusions people face.

- **Equality and rights for all:** Feminism believes in the equal and inalienable human rights of each person, regardless of their gender identity, class, caste, ethnicity, race, age, ability, health status, work or

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2   These are CREA's articulation of feminist values at the present time — they may vary in some respects from other articulations, but we believe that at the core, most of the values presented here are universal to all feminisms.

occupation, location, religion, or sexual expression. Further, feminism stands not just for the rights of individuals but for the collective rights of groups and communities that are excluded, marginalized or stigmatized for any of these reasons.

- **The personal is political:** Feminism believes that each individual is a site of change, and that change starts with us, not "them," and that each of us must reflect in our daily practices and interactions the feminist values that we seek to advocate in the larger world.

- **Bodily autonomy and integrity:** Feminism stands for the right of each individual — regardless of their gender or other identities — to ensure autonomy and integrity of their bodies and minds and freedom of choice and expression in their sexual and reproductive lives and decisions, without fear, coercion or violence of any kind.

- **Opposing embodied discrimination:** Feminism recognizes, challenges and seeks to eradicate all forms of discrimination arising from ideologies that privilege bodies that are white/fair-skinned, male, heterosexual and abled. Feminism opposes the resulting stigmatization of non-white people, LGBTQI people and people with disabilities, especially women and girls, and the denial of their right to bodily autonomy and decision-making power over their bodies and lives.

- **Non-violence, peace, and genuine security for all:** Feminism stands against the politics of hate, violence and conflict, challenges the forces promoting these in both private and public spaces, and works to advance the rights of all people to live in peace and harmony. Feminism challenges the militaristic definitions of "security" and advocates the concept of *genuine security* as not only freedom from violence and conflict, but a social, economic and political environment that enables each individual and community to live and thrive in their full humanity.

- **Respectful relationships with the earth and other living beings:** Feminism advocates ecological sustainability and protection of the earth

and its resources, and opposes the power structures that have enabled the destruction of the earth and its environment, catalyzed the climate crisis and polluted the earth's air and water. Feminists recognize the ecological crisis as deeply gendered and value and promote both feminist and other movements for the renewal of the earth and its resources.

- **Deep Democracy:** Feminism demands democratic practices *in all the spaces* in which we live, and in all the institutions that affect our lives, rather than at the political level alone. Feminism seeks more democratic systems particularly in the informal spaces where gender norms restrict women's voice and decision-making power (e.g., intimate relationships, families, communities and organizations).

As CREA's concept paper[3] and toolkit on feminist leadership[4] have highlighted, feminist leadership has to radically alter the dominant patriarchal and hierarchical models, and model these values. We have proposed that we need to develop leaders who reflect a different practice of power that requires balancing the four "Ps" of leadership — viz., **P**ower, **P**rinciples, **P**urpose and **P**ractices — and that this is only possible when we simultaneously recognize and address the ways in which the internal self and the baggage of our individual histories and experiences impact that balance, both positively and negatively.

Clarity about the need for this shift has emerged over the past two decades, with growing awareness of a range of leadership challenges within social change movements and organizations. Leadership structures and practices within this arena seem to be reproducing, rather than transforming the vertical hierarchies and the often oppressive power dynamics that are not only contrary to the stated values of social change, but result in organizational cultures that are often discriminatory, patriarchal and authoritarian. The persistence of gender discrimination and sexual harassment in many NGOs, the absence of women in key leadership positions and

3   S. Batliwala, Feminist Leadership for Social Transformation: Clearing the Conceptual Cloud, New Delhi: CREA, (2011), https://creaworld.org/resource/feminist-leadership-for-social-transformation/.

4   S. Batliwala and Michel Friedman, Achieving Transformative Feminist Leadership: A Toolkit for Organisations and Movements, New Delhi: CREA, (2014), https://creaworld.org/resource/feminist-leadership-toolkit/.

non-transparent decision-making are just some examples of such negative cultures.

These dynamics manifested in particular ways in feminist organizations and movements: the "aging out" of women's movement leaders and founders, the "founder syndrome," "in-groups" and "out-groups," ostensibly flat organizations but with deep, and usually hidden hierarchies of voice, power and privilege and a growing alienation of younger women activists who felt stifled, silenced or instrumentalized. In several instances, even avowedly feminist organizations struggled to create new models of leadership and power, often unconsciously reproducing the patriarchal practices they had set out to challenge. There seemed to be a yawning gap in many feminist settings between professed feminist values and the actual practice.

Clearly, leading a social change organization does not make you a socially just leader, and leading a feminist organization does not make you a feminist leader! It is clear that we need to invest in entirely new forms of leadership capacity building and create a new set of practices of feminist leadership focusing especially on young activists, if the feminist movement is to be sustained and mirror feminist values both internally — within its organizations and movements — as well as externally, in the kind of social transformation it seeks in society. Through often traumatic experiences, we have been forced to recognize that because feminism seeks change within the self, within private spaces and relationships, as well as in the public sphere of institutions, policies and social norms, feminist leadership has to be practiced in all these locations — so leadership training cannot be limited to formal organizational roles.

Recognizing this, there has been a strong focus in different parts of the world on building feminist leadership, mainly through training interventions and organizational change processes. CREA itself has pioneered feminist leadership capacity building through its Feminist Leadership, Movement Building and Rights Institutes, targeting young feminist activists in South Asia, East Africa, the Middle East and North Africa. The Institutes pioneered a curriculum that focuses both on internal and external transformation, with a strong emphasis on power and creating feminist practices of power in both private and public spaces. Many other organizations around the world similarly began to invest in feminist leadership capacity building.

The Need for Mentoring in Leadership Building

Through this process we have realized, as have many others, that feminist leadership training is only the beginning of the journey. Leadership training is the "macro" intervention that gives people conceptual clarity and analytical tools and builds strategic thinking — but its impact is limited or soon eroded if not followed up with some kind of "micro" mechanism of ongoing support.

At CREA, for instance, we observed that when our leadership training participants returned to their organizations, families and community spaces or launched their own organizations and initiatives, the mainstream social environment and existing organizational cultures posed a number of ongoing challenges. A concept that seemed so clear and compelling during the training became confusing or hard to translate into practice; attempts to gain more space or voice were pushed back by peers or supervisors and participants were sometimes ridiculed or attacked for proposing a different way of doing things. In short, the feminist practices that so excited them in the training context appeared too difficult and complex to implement, and it seemed easier to revert to the old ways rather than swimming against the tide. Even young women activists who rose into formal leadership positions struggled to apply the concepts and practices they had learnt in the training setting.

Apart from all this, many feminists in leadership roles — regardless of age, class, location — have spoken of how leadership can be a lonely, isolating experience, especially when transacted from formal positions of authority. People feel psychological and practical pressure to deliver results, provide solutions, hide their own uncertainties and confusion, raise funds and sustain their organizations, deal with challenges from their own teams as well as from often oppressive external actors and policies — and to get it all perfectly right! The practice of feminist leadership is even more challenging because there are no roadmaps, no tried and tested formulae, few existing role models to emulate, and it is easy to give up on the need for constant self-reflection and conscious effort.

The isolation and loneliness stemming from taking on the leadership role can have a diminishing or even a debilitating effect on the individual. A key concept to help understand this is the notion of the **"wounded self"** and the **"celebratory self."** These terms were coined by Simon Western, a renowned commentator on

professional coaching and mentoring. The term **"wounded self"** connotes the part of the self that is damaged, fragmented or emotionally hurt. The term **"celebratory self"** highlights the innate and universal human desire to self-actualize[5] and connect with their inner strength and joy.[6]

When we step into leadership roles, we cannot leave the "self" behind — it deeply shapes how we practice leadership. The leader of an organization, for example, brings into her workspace her wounded self — the part of her that has been damaged and hurt as a child, as an adolescent, throughout adult life, and which keeps getting bruised during her many interactions with peers and opponents, impacting her self-esteem. Thus, whenever things do not go smoothly at the workplace — colleagues are disgruntled or question her, staff members resign, or the funding scenario worsens — the wounded self can act up, forcing any of the three responses: **fight, flee or freeze.** While many of these responses may be helpful in particular situations, the fact that they are emotional, rather than objectively thought out, can actually worsen the situation and reflect poorly on her leadership capabilities. She may, for instance, have a screaming bout with a colleague or totally ignore the nature and importance of the issue on which the colleague is disagreeing with her. In the worst case, she may fall ill and go off on a sudden leave of absence to escape the stress.[7]

In such situations, it may frequently help if the individual not only realizes what the wounded self is doing to her in specific situations, but also that her celebratory self actually has many resources that can help her in that situation. Highlighting the celebratory self may help her recall her enormous resilience, her capacity to listen to opposite views, how to respond from her values rather than her ego, or join hands with her team to find creative solutions.[8]

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5   S. Western, Coaching and Mentoring: A Critical Text, (2012), 3-5.

6   Western presents the "celebrated self" as a more positive view of the individual (as opposed to the "wounded self"), where the focus on the interior life meant that individual identity became something to be celebrated. It was influenced by Maslow and others, and highlighted the innate human desire to self-actualize. It was reflected in messages such as "Trust your feelings, have faith in yourself, follow your bliss, listen to your child…" Ibid, 6-9.

7   Something that the writer of this guide can vouch from personal experience. A highly stressed organization head threw a tantrum ("Nobody is bothered here about how I feel!") during the annual retreat of the organization, and just walked off leaving others stunned and in total disarray. For the next two months, the leader was sick and on leave; it was not clear whether she was going to come back to work or not. You can only imagine the trauma and confusion that episode caused to all other organization members.

8   For those interested in the physiology of such reactions, have a look at Bessel van der Kolk's *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma.*

But to do this, a leader needs someone she can turn to, someone who can help her calm the reactivity provoked by her wounded self and recall what she had temporarily forgotten in the form of the resources of her celebratory self. It is only when she engages in this process of becoming calm and reflective that she is also able to generate creative options for problems that seemed, when under the influence of her emotional storm, insoluble.

However, there are also many other kinds of challenges that we face in leadership that go beyond problem-solving — the challenge of strategizing when the change process meets backlash or resistance, or quickly responding to an unexpected advocacy opportunity. How should a feminist leader, committed to feminist social transformation, navigate these kinds of contexts and opportunities and make strategic decisions?

It is for all these reasons that accompaniment by like-minded guides and supporters, i.e., feminist Mentors who create a safe space for venting, calming, reflection, analysis, self-critique, creative thinking and learning, makes the exploration and practice of feminist leadership less lonely and fraught. This is all the more so for those who are essaying into leadership roles for the first time. This is also why it has become increasingly evident that building sustainable alternative feminist leadership models requires ongoing support, reinforcement, clarity and encouragement. In other words, feminist mentoring!

But what, then, is mentoring, and how is feminist mentoring different? Although that's what this guide is about, and we will learn much more in the next chapters, let's unpack these concepts briefly to begin.

What is Mentoring?

Mentoring has been defined as "...help by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking,"[9] and also as a process of helping others learn.[10] Effective mentoring helps to **heal the wounded self** and **recognize the**

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9   David Clutterbuck, Learning Alliances: Tapping into Talent, Universities Press, (1998), 88. Provides The European Mentoring Centre's catch all definition of mentoring.

10 It is important to distinguish the European definition of mentoring from the American one. The American definition focuses on helping a person in her career; the European one on her learning. The American model assumes that the Mentor has more power: the Mentor is a person who typically expects loyalty

celebratory self. Contemporary mentorship theory has evolved to move away from these older models of advising and prescribing — which is at the core of the popular understanding — towards more conscious techniques that focus on empowering the mentored, supporting them to recognize and activate their agency and inner power, and helping them explore and analyze their challenges and locate their own solutions. Modern mentoring (as in the Schein model that was adapted for the SAYWLM initiative), also called developmental or process-based mentoring, has the following key characteristics:[11]

• The developmental mentoring process is a two-way street: the Mentors gain and grow alongside their Mentees.

• The effective Mentor typically holds back from giving advice or recounting from experience until the Mentee has been helped to think through the issues from her own perspective.

• The process of thinking through very often helps to translate tacit or implicit knowledge (or wisdom) to explicit knowledge.

• The key role of the Mentor is to respond to the Mentee's needs, rather than pushing them in a particular direction.

• Mentoring operates within certain critical boundaries: for example, the Mentor does not seek to set developmental goals for the Mentee, as is done in coaching. Nor will the Mentor adopt a "sponsorship" role,[12] or even provide therapeutic counseling for serious emotional trauma or mental health issues.

• Instead, a Mentor would help the Mentee/s set viable personal goals, challenge them when necessary and act as a critical friend and sounding board, listening, questioning and sharing knowledge (explaining how organizations work, for instance).

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in return for advice, guidance and a helping hand. The term protégé is typically used to describe the relationship… (where the stress is on providing) a lot of assistance with making the right career moves. (Clutterbuck, [1998], 87).

11   Paraphrased from Clutterbuck, (1998).

12   A sponsorship role is where the Mentor uses her contacts with the Mentee's organization to open doors and opportunities for the Mentee within her organization, and at times, to help solve problems she is facing, over which the Mentee has no control. This is a kind of role an American style Mentor is supposed to play.

Feminist mentoring does all of the above, and at times, even more effectively than conventional mentoring. But there are ways in which feminist mentoring makes major departures from the development mentoring model.

How is Feminist Mentoring Different?

Firstly, feminist mentoring recognizes that for women and other oppressed genders, there are **diverse and powerful systemic forces** that act to aggravate the wounded self and constrain the claiming and expressing of the celebratory self. They recognize how much wounding is caused by discriminatory patriarchal norms and practices rather than individual hurts and deprivations. For example, the unequal share of food, education, medical care or even mobility given to girl children in many societies around the world, or the fear of or actual experiences of sexual harassment and violence that distort their self-image and sense of possibility. Thus Mentors, like counselors, engage in a form of therapy to help the Mentee deal with their wounded selves. Through the gradual healing of the wounded self, they help Mentees recognize the resources they did not realize they have, to both celebrate having these resources and to build the courage to use them in multiple contexts.

Secondly, most conventional mentoring processes seek to help people navigate their existing environment more effectively and better succeed in the world around them — for example, to work better in organizations or have more harmonious relationships with family. While there is an attempt to both understand others as well as the self, and to assertively carve a space for herself, the focus is more on changing the self, rather than the world. It is about dealing with the world by changing the way you, as an individual, are dealing with it. In other words, the approach of conventional mentoring assumes, without saying so, that we cannot change the world, and so have to change ourselves to survive and flourish in the world as it is.

Feminist mentoring, on the other hand, while agreeing for the need to deal with the self, especially the wounded parts of the self, asserts that **society itself is flawed and needs to change/be changed**. While accepting that the individual is certainly flawed, feminism asserts that our societies are deeply damaged — divided and arranged around multiple forms of discrimination, exclusion, exploitation, stigma and violence on people and the planet. Feminist mentoring is thus not content to

equip individuals to "fit" into and accept these unjust but normalized structures and systems but to build the strength and capacity to challenge them — individually and collectively — and work together to create more equal, inclusive and peaceful societies. And unlike a conventional Mentor, the feminist Mentor is as vested in that change as is the Mentee!

Furthermore, feminist mentoring recognizes that we are all wounded by our gendered roles, particularly women, and that the mentoring process must not only support individual healing but the capacity to lead social healing and transformation. Feminist mentoring thus asks profound questions about the broader and deeper purpose of this rehabilitated self. However, like any other sound and theoretically grounded mentoring practice, feminist mentoring too does not tell the Mentees what exactly they have to do — the ownership of this change process lies with the Mentee.

Feminist Mentors tap into that part of the human psyche that wants to build a more just world, based on humanist and feminist principles, not just the desire for career advancement or organizational recognition. The feminist mentoring process helps clear the emotional and conceptual cobwebs impeding our capacity to change the world.

To sum up, feminist Mentors must be seen as feminist change makers, engaged in mentoring that supports not just individuals, but collectives of change activists, together working towards our larger and longer-term goals of feminist transformation. Therefore, feminist mentoring has to be a safe space created with and by Mentors who share the feminist ideology, vision and values. It must be dedicated to helping each Mentee realize her fullest leadership potential in her personal, organizational and larger social context, and supporting her to mobilize others and practice the kind of leadership that will both reflect and advance the larger change agenda to which we are all committed.

Linking Feminist Mentorship and Feminist Leadership

Feminist mentorship is therefore the bridge that links, facilitates and strengthens feminist leadership for feminist social transformation. It could be defined as *a process of building empowering reciprocal relationships of solidarity, mutual learning and support that enable committed individuals and groups to better advance the larger goals of feminist social transformation, in their own specific work and contexts.*

Why does this matter? Haven't feminists always supported/mentored each other, one way or another — isn't that what "sisterhood" is all about? While it's true that mentoring has occurred informally for as long as feminist movements and feminist activists have existed, these informal mentoring approaches were not informed by any explicitly articulated principles, norms or theories of mentoring — they were intuitive, and often based on giving advice and solutions for the challenges the Mentee was facing. There was little interrogation of the power dynamics — especially hidden power — embedded in these interactions.

The Need for a Clear Theory of Feminist Mentorship and Guidelines for Practice

Surprisingly, despite the challenge and the complexity of feminist mentorship there are few "how to" resources available to guide feminist mentoring. This is a critical gap given the fundamental role it can play in supporting the emergence of new forms of feminist leadership practice and in helping sustain and strengthen the larger feminist social transformation agenda.

While there is a plethora of curricula and training materials for feminist leadership capacity building, there do not appear to be any frameworks or guidelines available for the training of feminist Mentors. This poses a challenge, since we now know that enabling empowering mentoring is both a science and an art, and simply being a feminist does not necessarily make you an effective feminist Mentor! This guide was created to fill this need; to provide a concrete set of concepts and methodologies that

build feminist mentoring on a foundation of sound mentoring theory and feminist principles.

We need a legion of trained feminist Mentors to serve as champions, counselors and guides who support feminist leaders not through advice and solutions, but by encouraging us to explore and build our own strategies, solutions and skills, to discover and use our often unseen and untapped inner power. This also to help us recognize the inner self, and the role of the self in leadership, both positive and negative. Mentors re-motivate us when we feel discouraged or ready to abandon the feminist leadership pathway; they help us go back and re-clarify ideas and concepts and support us in applying these transformative ideas in mundane, daily contexts. Most of all, they hold up a mirror to help us see ourselves more clearly, both our internalized patriarchal and other biases, as well as our extraordinary inner power for change. The stories and examples in this guide demonstrate this repeatedly. There is little doubt, therefore, that

> *there is a deep connection between feminism, mentoring and leadership, and it is clear that sustained social transformation can be better achieved when feminist leaders are supported and accompanied by feminist Mentors.*

3

PRINCIPLES AND GOALS
of feminist mentoring

The previous chapter helped us locate the role of mentoring in building leadership for the broader goal of achieving feminist social transformation. In this chapter, we explore the principles that should guide both the theory and practice of feminist mentoring and its key goals. In other words, how do feminist values shape the nature of feminist mentoring and what should it aim to achieve in terms of outcomes.

Feminist Mentorship Principles

Feminist mentoring theory and practice is based on eight vital principles that attempt to consciously mirror and practice core feminist values of equality, reciprocity, intersectionality and the dismantling of patriarchal power hierarchies:

1. Feminist mentoring is **collaborative and mutually enhancing**, rather than uni-directional or hierarchical based on age, "seniority," position or particular types of education or "expertise." The Mentee is not viewed as a learner, nor the Mentor as a teacher. Instead, the Mentee is seen as bringing her own knowledge, lived experience and insights to the process, while simultaneously valuing the Mentor's knowledge and expertise as vital to the Mentee's growth.

2. Thus feminist mentorship values **different forms of knowledge and experience** and recognizes their complementarity as essential to achieve both general and specific gender justice goals and build feminist leadership.

3. Makes visible and understands **how gender has impacted the realization of our full potential** and that of all oppressed genders. Feminist Mentors and Mentees will actualize the "personal is political" principle by sharing the personal —

especially personal experiences of how their gender identity affects them — and together explore ways of confronting and coping with multiple forms of oppression in social systems based on the subordination and exploitation of women.

4. Consequently, feminist mentorship is **holistic and encompasses all aspects of the Mentees' lives**. Feminist mentorship recognizes and understands the intersecting dimensions of women's lives and seeks to mentor around both personal and professional domains as interconnected and affecting each other.

5. Feminist mentorship includes **mutual caring and emotional support** and is not concerned solely with how to get the job done more effectively or how the Mentee can advance professionally. But, extends to addressing the feelings and emotional state of the person engaged in the larger social change process.

6. Feminist mentorship recognizes the **intersecting facets of our identities** (race, class, caste, ethnicity, location — i.e., rural/urban, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity, ability and occupation) as well as personal background and histories. It realizes that these factors also influence what constitutes "expertise," the nature of exclusion and oppression faced by the individual and hence the nature of guidance and support that may be given or taken. For example, a Mentee belonging to an oppressed race, class, caste or ethnic group may have greater expertise and insight into caste and ethnicity based stigma than a Mentor from a more privileged race, class, caste or ethnic group, even if the Mentor has a higher academic degree or more years of experience in a particular field of work.

7. Feminist mentorship is not necessarily one-to-one, but a **multi-faceted, multi-person, circular process,** creating both collective as well as individual modes of mutual learning and support. This is a significant departure that feminist mentoring makes from conventional one-to-one mentoring approaches.

8. Feminist Mentors and Mentees embark on a **shared journey to challenge and change the socio-political, economic and psychic structures** that keep patriarchal and other unjust power structures, values, norms, rights, resources, privileges and policies in place. In the words of feminist mentoring theorist Pam Remer, "They are collaborative change agents."[1]

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1   Pam Remer, "Taking a Warm Feminist Bath: Feminist Mentoring," in Society for the Psychology of Women, News & Events, (2011), http://www.apadivisions.org/division-35/news-events/news/2011/feminist-mentorMentoring.aspx, accessed June 6, 2016.

The Goals of Feminist Mentoring

These principles reflect clearly that in order for feminist mentoring to be an important input in the feminist social transformation project, it must be aligned, in practice, with the norms, principles and approaches of feminist transformation. The primary goal of feminist mentoring, therefore, is to support both individual and groups of activists become effective leaders of feminist social transformation processes. Since feminist transformation is about dismantling power structures, however, the mentoring relationship cannot be created as a power-unequal or dependency-creating one. If the Mentee is going to always "look up" to the wisdom of the Mentor, then somewhere the mentoring process is working counter to the greater goal, and we end up replacing one authority figure, or patriarchal figure — father/husband/boss — with another.

For the Mentee, therefore, the goals of feminist mentoring are to:

- Learn to use the mentoring space in a constructive fashion for her own growth.

- Learn to reflect on what is happening to her, and over time, help enhance her self-esteem. This might include reflecting on how her own behaviors and values might be contributing to the very patriarchal system that she is dealing with.

- Deal with her family in a constructive way that also creates shifts in the family and other private and intimate spaces towards more feminist values, norms and practices.

- Navigate her organizational space and relationships with colleagues and peers in a way that the organization can become more feminist in its functioning and structure, particularly the way power is exercised by those in leadership.

- In the community, her goals are to:

  - Become more skilled and effective in mobilizing women and girls and in building feminist movements that challenge and gradually transform patriarchal norms, behaviors and ideological and other power structures from which these arise; and

  - Through the process (mentioned above) build and mentor other feminist leaders to sustain the movement over time.

The feminist Mentor does not stand outside this process because feminist mentoring has to be a **two-way process** of continuous learning, renewal and clarification, involving **both the Mentor and Mentee**. Both Mentor and Mentee must consider how to transform and strengthen themselves in order for the mentoring process to play an effective role in transforming external social realities.

All this is of course easier said than done. Both Mentors and Mentees tend to enter mentoring relationships with assumptions of Mentor's "superiority" and greater wisdom. The Mentor is seen as not only playing the role of a helper but is perceived (by both) as being somewhere "above" the Mentee. This assumption creates a peculiar dynamic in the relationship. The Mentee, while treating the Mentor as a "superior" or an authority figure, slips into one of two stances: that of a helpless child dependent on the care and support of the Mentor; or that of a rebel, subtly or obviously challenging what the Mentor has to say.

For feminist Mentors there are other complexities to navigate: what is the boundary, for instance, between challenging the Mentee on her responses or ways of dealing with situations — which may be essential for her growth — and unquestioning sisterhood or mothering? *"Sistering" and "mothering" are often tempting for feminist Mentors and can feel good both to the Mentor and Mentee in the short term, but when carried out in the mentoring context, they also carry the risk of creating a subtle dynamic of dependency and even resentment in the longer-term.* There are many other nuances of the dynamic between the Mentor and the Mentee that will be explored in this guide. Here, our aim is to highlight that the goal of feminist mentoring, for the Mentor, is to be aware of the psychodynamics and social dynamics that can erode the feminist mentoring principles outlined earlier.

> *Feminist mentoring is a constant tightrope walk, where the Mentor and Mentee have to both work to create a relationship of equals that balances sisterhood with fostering critical self-reflection and strategic clarity in the larger change process. Feminist Mentors must keep their eyes on this goal as they walk the tightrope.*

4

THE THEORETICAL BASIS
of feminist mentoring

The practice of feminist mentoring is both art and perspective, each informing and developing the other. On the one hand, the perspective is built through an understanding of theory — the core underlying principles that must inform and frame our practice. On the other, each practitioner develops their own "art" of mentoring based on the unique set of skills, experiences and insights they bring to the process. Both the art and the perspective depend on a strong and shared understanding of the critical theories of human psychology and feminist theories of growth and learning on which all feminist mentoring is based. Feminist mentoring does not require formal training in psychology or therapy, but is informed and influenced by advances in those disciplines. Feminist Mentors therefore require a good grasp of the theories that underlie the rationale behind the feminist mentoring approaches that are advocated in this guide.

This chapter attempts to provide such a foundation by familiarizing readers with the two sets of theories or principles that underlie feminist mentoring and which are therefore critical to its practice:

1. Theories that are common to all mentoring practitioners; and

2. Feminist theories that shape feminist mentoring in unique ways.

Generic Concepts Underlying Feminist Mentoring:

THEORIES THAT ARE COMMON TO ALL MENTORING PRACTITIONERS, FEMINIST OR OTHERWISE

These include:[1]

1. **The Unconscious and Defense Mechanisms**
   Sigmund Freud and Anna Freud

2. **A Humanist School View of Motivation and Self Transcendence**
   Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers

3. **Person Centered Therapy**
   Carl Rogers

4. **Reflective Space**
   David Clutterbuck

5. **The Flow Experience and Positive Psychology**
   Mihaly Czikzentmihalyi and Martin Seligman[2]

6. **Adult Learning or Andragogy**
   Malcolm Knowles

7. **The Authentic Self**
   Victor Frankl

8. **Stages of Life**
   Erik Erikson, Daniel Levinson and Gail Sheehy

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1   Skiffington and Zeus, The Coaching at Work Toolkit: A Complete Guide to Techniques and Practices, (2003).

2   This chapter details theories 1 to 4. For a summary of theories 5 to 8, please refer to the annexure.

1. The Unconscious and Defense Mechanisms

The Unconscious is that part of our psyche or mind of which we are not aware. Sigmund Freud[3] first postulated its existence, after which a series of psycho-analysis thinkers and practitioners expanded and developed the concept — one of the first being Anna Freud, his daughter.

According to Freud's model of the psyche, the id is the primitive and instinctual part of the mind that contains sexual and aggressive drives and hidden memories. While the superego operates as a moral conscience, the ego is the realistic part that mediates between the desires and dictates of the id and the superego respectively. People are not conscious of the id and large parts of the superego, which form part of the Unconscious. The ego, on the other hand, is the part of us about which we are partly conscious, and partly semi-conscious (or Preconscious). The model can be represented in the following diagram:
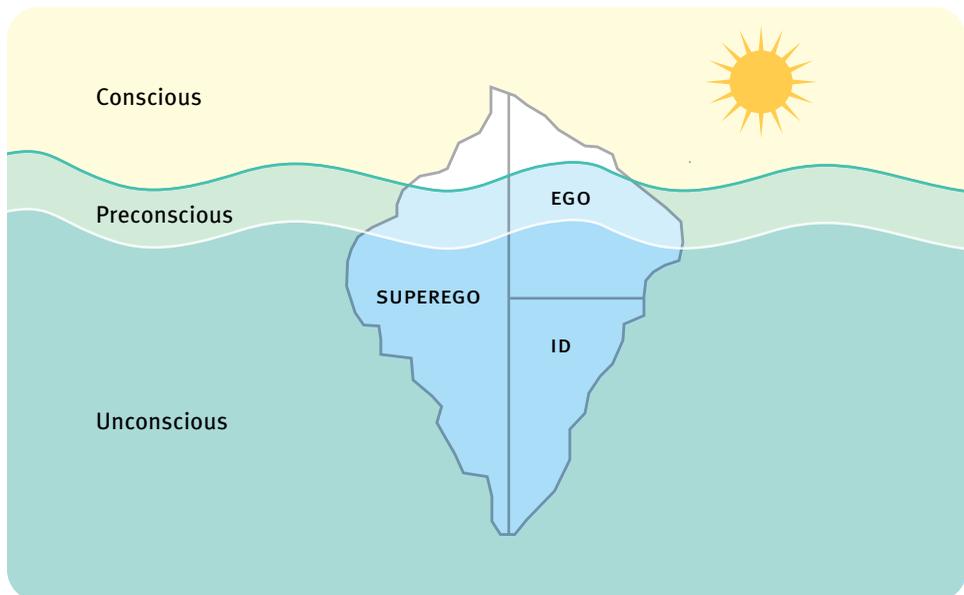

FIGURE 1: The Human Psyche, *adapted from Simply Psychology*

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3   Saul McLeod, "Id, Ego and Superego," in Simply Psychology, https://www.simplypsychology.org/psyche.html#:~:text=According%20to%20Freud%20 psychoanalytic%20theory,id%20and%20the%20super%2Dego.

Anna Freud posited that these three parts of the human psyche help create psychological defense mechanisms that not only help mediate between the id and ego, but also deal with unexpected events in our lives.[4]

Another way that an understanding of the Unconscious helps us is by understanding the role of psychological defense mechanisms. According to Anna Freud, when anxiety becomes too overwhelming, the ego employs defense mechanisms to protect the individual. Anxiety emerges because there are things that are happening (either due to internal urges or external events) which cannot be countenanced by the superego.

An example of a defense mechanism is displacement. This happens when a person takes out her anger on an individual who cannot fight back. For instance, an individual who has been beaten by her husband may displace her anger on to her child. If her defense mechanism is very strong it may even prevent her from recognizing that the root of her anger with her child is due to her husband's behavior. She may persist in saying that she beats her child because the child misbehaves.

Significance for Feminist Mentoring:

Understanding the existence and role of the Unconscious is critical for a Mentor because without it, there would be many things that the Mentee does or reports that would not make logical sense. For instance, why does a woman who is subject to violence from her husband, accept the idea that a man has the right to "punish" his wife if she does not "obey" him? We can understand her better if we realize that this belief is so deeply embedded in her Unconscious — in her superego — that she is not even aware of having internalized this belief. Consequently, when and if she defends herself by hitting back (a natural function of the id, to defend oneself), she may feel guilty and hold herself, rather than her husband, accountable for her reaction.

The Mentor may also realize that the Mentee is using her defense mechanism to avoid taking responsibility for some of the problems or issues she is grappling

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4   A. Freud, The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence, London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psycho-Analysis, (1937), (Revised edition: 1966 [US], 1968 [UK]).

with. For example, she may blame her supervisor at her current workplace for ignoring her; although the root of the supervisor's behavior might actually be due to the Mentee's behavior with the supervisor. It is possible that at a particular point in time the supervisor and Mentee were colleagues, and the present supervisor received a promotion for better performance. As a result, the Mentee has suppressed feelings of jealousy which lead her to act aloof from the supervisor, in turn causing the supervisor to ignore her.

Understanding the Unconscious is also key to understanding some persistent challenges with building second line leadership and in leadership transitions. For example, one common scenario is: the head of an organization retires and promotes the second line leader to take over. Even after having formally retired, however, and mouthing platitudes about how she wants the new leader to learn and succeed, the former leader (who may even be the founder of the organization) cannot let go or give up control entirely and openly criticizes the decisions and approaches of the newly promoted leader. This criticism results in undermining the effectiveness of the new leader in various ways: e.g., other staff may stop respecting or responding to the new leader or may ride on the opinion of the previous leader to undermine the current leader's decisions.

One way to understand this dynamic is to explore the role of the Unconscious. Thus, the former leader may want people to continue admiring her as the best leader of the organization or may wish to remain in the limelight as the person who knows most about the organization. Any apparent mistake by the new leader then allows the former leader's skills to shine in comparison and be praised by an admiring audience. These unconscious desires of the former leader are not apparent to her, and causes her to behave in a way that is directly opposite to her stated values and stated desires.

A Mentor supporting an organizational leadership transition can use these concepts to confront the former leader with the adverse consequences of her behavior on both the new leader and the organization, and even support her to let go and find new sites where she can use her skills and experience.

2. Maslow and Motivation

Abraham Maslow, the founder of humanistic psychology, postulated the concept of Deficit Needs and Being Needs.[5] He initially explained these Needs through a Hierarchy of Needs — neatly fitted into a pyramid. As per this hierarchy, the bottom of the pyramid consisted of four sets of Deficit Needs at successive stages of the pyramid. Starting from the bottom up these were Physiological, Safety and Security, Love and Belonging, and Esteem. They were also referred to as Deficit Needs because if you did not have enough you felt a deficit, a need, and you tried to ensure the fulfillment of these needs. If a person is hungry, she is motivated to get food; if she feels unsafe (say, on a street), she is driven to move to a safe place; if she feels lonely, she is likely to call up a friend or loved one to talk with; and if she feels she is not being valued, she works hard to show that she is valuable, and hence worthy of being esteemed. At the same time, when the need is met, there is no motivation to work any further to fulfill it. When she gets enough food, she stops bothering about food; when she reaches a safe place she stops worrying about feeling unsafe and starts thinking about other issues; when she has had her fill of talking to a friend/loved one she moves on to do something else (there always comes a time when you cannot have any more of sitting or talking with a loved one!).

Maslow considered all of these Deficit Needs as **survival needs**, i.e., fulfilling each of these needs were essential for the maintenance of a person's health, sense of wellbeing and everyday survival in the world. If a particular Deficit Need was not met for an extended period of time, it could lead to neurosis in individuals. For instance, a person who had lived for many months or years in situations of war and conflict, where the Need for Safety and Security was not met, tended to remain hypervigilant and anxious — even after the conflict was over or she had moved to a safe zone. While a person brought up unloved in an institution felt a constant need for love and tended to obsessively hold on to any relationships she developed.

Maslow extended the concept to understand the relation between an individual and larger society. Taking forward his concept, we may say that many societal arrangements such as patriarchy or totalitarianism create **society-level** neurosis. For instance, in patriarchal societies, often older people have a constant deficit of

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5   Abraham Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being, Start Publishing, (2012).

Esteem Needs. Which is why they constantly need the "respect" of younger people to feel validated. Similarly, men in such societies need the "respect" of women to feel the same. If a woman in their family (e.g., a person's wife, sister or daughter) speaks loudly or angrily to a man, he may feel that his need for respect has not been met (he feels deprived) and hence think he is allowed to "punish" her.

For a woman in a strongly patriarchal society, her Need for Esteem can be met only by negating herself, being deferential and not challenging male power. This forces women to be quiescent and passive, "learning" not to take the lead — because they are only esteemed if they behave in a passive fashion. This also stops them from learning and pursuing what is not considered right for women: being leaders, fighters, engineers, scientists, pilots and drivers. Consequently, their own Self Esteem Needs of being able to deal with the world as an equal are not met. A woman learns to esteem herself only if she is a good cook and house manager, is able to look beautiful and be respectful and obedient — for these are the only aspects larger society esteems them for. If she becomes competent in something else or learns to behave in a "un-womanlike" fashion, her guilt prevents her from feeling good about herself.

In contrast to Deficit Needs, Maslow posited Being or Growth Needs. Unlike the former, which can be saturated, no longer needing to be filled constantly (except in neurotic individuals), Growth Needs **increase in intensity the more they are fulfilled.** While Maslow's initial formulation of the pyramid of Needs talked about the Need for Self-Actualization, he later included the Need for Understanding and Cognition and Aesthetic Needs under the rubric of Being or Growth Needs. The process of fulfilling these needs is what leads to non-neurotic growth in individuals.

This state of intensifying Growth Needs is also where the person has achieved full humanness. Maslow suggests that the characteristics of this state could include: "Clearer, more efficient perception of reality. More openness to experience. Increased integration, wholeness, and unity of the person. Increased spontaneity, expressiveness; full functioning; aliveness. A real self; a firm identity; autonomy, uniqueness. Increased objectivity, detachment, transcendence of self. Recovery of creativeness. Ability to fuse concreteness and abstractness. Democratic character structure. Ability to love." At the very least, each of this characteristic also corresponds to a feminist ideal of full personhood!
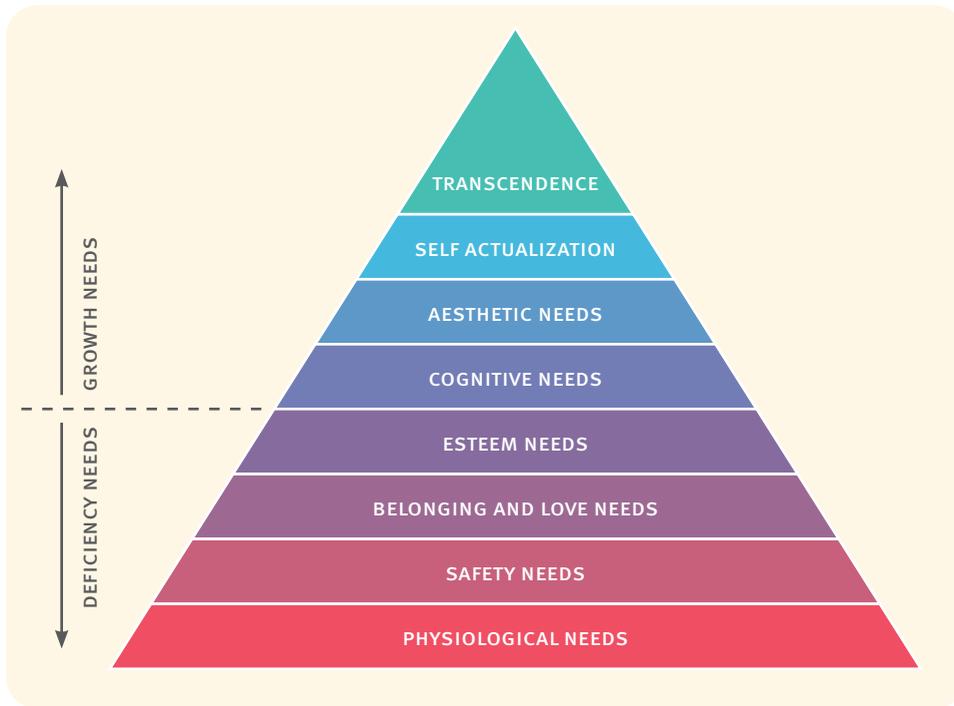
FIGURE 2: Maslow's Motivational Model, *adapted from Simply Psychology.*

Significance for Feminist Mentoring:

First and foremost, we must recognize that Maslow's description of the state of "full humanness" is, in a sense, the ultimate goal of feminist mentoring. Both the Deficiency Needs and Growth Needs that he identifies can be viewed through a feminist lens.

More specifically, understanding this framework is essential for a Mentor because it helps her locate areas of the **wounded self** that need to be worked on: is there neurosis brought on by specific unfulfilled Deficit Needs? Or is there neurosis because one basic need is being fulfilled at the cost of another? For instance, a Mentee may continue in a bad marriage because of her need for financial security, and the need for belonging (divorced or separated women find it more difficult to be accepted in larger society) is forcing her to

compromise on her need for love. It also helps to locate her **celebratory self**: which is about opportunities for and involvement in activities that lead to her growth and self-actualization.

The distinction between Deficiency and Growth Needs is also relevant from another angle. Deficiency Needs require **other people for fulfillment;** Growth Needs, on the other hand, are driven by the **internal potential of people**. As Maslow states, "Such people become far more self-sufficient and self-contained. The determinants which govern them are now primarily inner ones, rather than social or environmental. They are the laws of their own inner nature, their potentialities and capacities, their talents, their latent resources, their creative impulses, their needs to know themselves and to become more and more integrated and unified, more and more aware of what they really are, of what they really want, of what their call or vocation or fate is to be."

For a Mentor, knowledge of the above distinction will also help her recognize when and how the Mentee is being driven by Growth Needs vis-à-vis Deficiency Needs and accordingly allow her to change her response.

A third way in which the Maslow model can be used is to understand why some leaders can end up undermining the legitimate Esteem Needs of their team. This can happen if the Esteem Needs of the leader are so high — the needs are "neurotic," to use a technical term — that she finds it difficult to accept when any of her team members receive praise for their work or undertake something that benefits the organization. Somehow, the leader views this recognition of a team member as implying she is not as good as them! This very high need to be constantly praised, at the cost of recognition and affirmation that should legitimately go to others, leads to many highly talented staff feeling blocked and demotivated in the organization, or even leaving altogether because of the leadership culture.

For a Mentor working with such a leader, there is the possibility of helping her understand her behavior's effect on others, that her Esteem Needs do not have to be secured at the cost of others and how this impacts the morale and atmosphere within the organization.

3. Rogers and Person Centered Therapy

Carl Rogers was an American Psychologist and psycho-therapist and is considered one of the founders of Humanist Psychology. He is particularly important to the field of mentoring and feminist mentoring as he challenged the existing paradigm of psycho-analysis by introducing the concept of person or client-centered therapy. Hitherto, the therapist or the psycho-analyst approached the client as an "Expert" or a "Doctor," providing solutions for the client to adopt in her life. Rogers challenged this approach by developing and adopting client-centered therapy in which the focus was on the person's capacity for self-understanding, growth and recognizing internal strengths to cope constructively with life. He believed that the client could be trusted to make choices and find the courage to make responsible decisions.

Rogers posited that the role of the therapist is to create a psychological climate which would help the client in realizing her capacity to understand and manage her life. He identified three conditions for generating this growth-promoting climate:

- The therapist needs to be genuine and herself — congruent, putting up no professional front or personal façade. Practically this means that if the client is in distress, the therapist might feel warmth or compassion, but also anger or even fear with a destructive client. This condition is something that a feminist Mentor would intuitively understand, as it allows her to come as herself without putting on any airs of being a superior.

- The therapist needs to be accepting and caring, providing unconditional positive regard; a non-possessive caring for the Mentee. In other words, irrespective of the person's ability to articulate her social background and views about the world, the Mentor has to believe that this person has the full capacity to grow and change.

- The therapist needs to have empathetic understanding. That is, needs to accurately sense the feelings and meanings that the client is experiencing. "At its best the therapist is so much inside the private world of the client that she can clarify not only the meanings of which the client is aware but even those just below the awareness." The key aspect here is the ability to listen, deeply and empathically; characteristics which all feminist Mentors need to have.[6]

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6   C. R. Rogers, Carl Rogers On Personal Power: Inner Strength and Its Revolutionary Impact, New York: Delacorte Press, (1999).
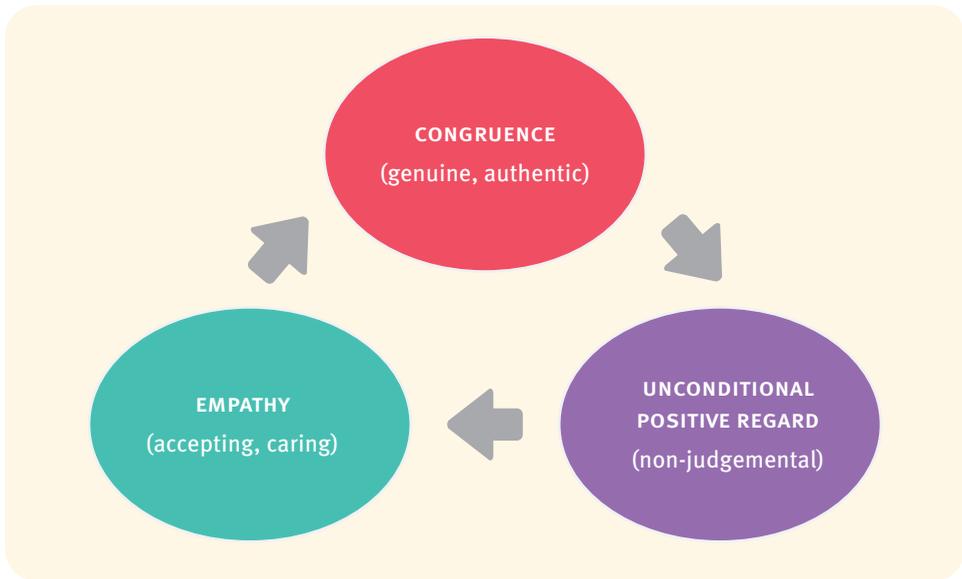
FIGURE 3: The Three Components of Person-Centered Therapy, *developed and based on Rogers' Person Centred Therapy*

If the therapist manages to create the psychological climate, the client would do the work herself. This is because Rogers believed that the client (in our case, the Mentee):

- Knows the areas of concern which she is ready to explore and is the best judge of the most desirable frequency of interviews;

- Can lead the way more efficiently than the therapist into deeper concerns;

- Will protect herself from panic by ceasing to explore an area which is too painful;

- Can and will uncover all of the repressed elements necessary to build a comfortable adjustment;

- Can achieve far truer and more sensitive and accurate insights for herself than can possibly be given to her;

- Is capable of translating these insights into constructive behavior that weighs her own needs and desires realistically against the demands of society; and

- Knows when therapy is complete and when she is ready to cope with life independently.

Significance for Feminist Mentoring:

Feminist mentoring is not therapy, nor are feminist Mentors, therapists. However, there are two significant advantages of adopting Carl Rogers' client centered or non-directive approach:

- Since feminist mentoring requires the Mentor to hold and convey a deep respect for the Mentee, the Mentee feels free to talk without constraint about herself. This allows the Mentee to increasingly talk about "intimate attitudes and feelings"[7] she has hidden from herself. This approach often simultaneously leads to the Mentee feeling elated by the very fact that she realizes that the Mentor thinks highly of her. The ability of the Mentee to explore her deeper self and feel respected by the Mentor, go hand in hand. And most importantly, this process leads to the Mentee reorganizing the way she looks at herself — from someone who holds a limited view of herself to one who has a more wholesome view of herself — which in turn leads her to change her behavior in the wider world.

- The second advantage is that it places a large amount of trust in the Mentee's ability to direct her own psychological growth. This is a deeply feminist practice and truly frees the Mentor from needing to have specific expertise in the psychological realm.

Finally, these changes can also translate into major leaps in the Mentee recognizing her true leadership capacity and consequently, in her present or potential leadership practice.

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7   C. R. Rogers, Some Observations on the Organization of Personality, (1947). Address of the retiring President of the American Psychological Association at the September 1947 Annual Meeting. First published in American Psychologist, 2, 358-368.

4. Reflective Space: Personal, Dyadic and Group

According to David Clutterbuck, the prolific writer on coaching and mentoring, learning for the Mentee takes place when a reflective space gets created. This reflective space is important at three levels: a quiet thinking time for the individual on her own; a dyadic one (that is, with one other person); and at a group level.

Before the transition into a reflective space, the mind is usually cluttered with all sorts of issues, concerns and thoughts. The transition to a Personal Reflective Space (PRS) usually takes place after some kind of trigger. This trigger could vary from moving to a quiet physical space, engaging in a repetitive activity or simply relaxing on the bed. On achieving PRS, the person starts focusing on a single issue for a period of quality time. Subconscious thinking that the individual has already engaged in is allowed to surface. The individual starts looking at the issue more objectively as if viewing it from outside and above. The mind may also rearrange the problem, leading to new insights.

One of the interesting aspects of PRS is the energy curve associated with it. Before going into PRS, people have a lot of externally expressed energy. The more reflective they become, the more that energy is focused internally. Once they come out of the PRS, having resolved the problem in their mind, typically there is a burst of external energy: they are now impatient to move forward and deal with the problem in the real world, as per their new understanding.
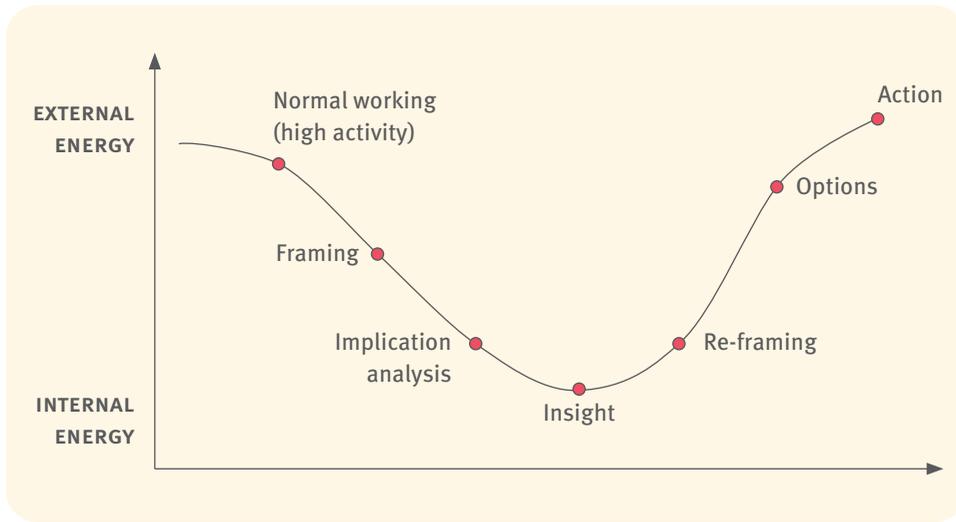
FIGURE 4: Phases of PRS[8], *adapted from The Handbook of Mentoring at Work: Theory, Research and Practice*

Significance for Feminist Mentoring:

Understanding the importance of PRS is key for the feminist Mentor, as a Mentee becoming quiet and still is a very good indicator or signal that she is getting into a reflective zone. The Mentor needs to be patient and give the person time to think things through for herself.

Occasionally, if the Mentee gets stuck in her thinking, the Mentor can intrude and create a Dyadic Reflection Space (DRS), in which both, together, ruminate about options. In this situation, however, the Mentor needs to be careful that she is not solving the problem for the Mentee, but only generating other ways of thinking about the issue. In short, the Mentor needs to be careful about entering the Mentee's PRS and converting it into a DRS; rather than seeing it as a "teaching moment" or an opportunity to "train" the Mentee.

8   D. Clutterbuck, An International Perspective on Mentoring, in Belle Rose Ragins and Kathey E. Kram (eds) The Handbook of Mentoring at Work: Theory, Research and Practice, (2008).

Specific Concepts used in Feminist Mentoring

Over and above the generic concepts used in mentoring, there are also certain specific concepts that are critical to the feminist mentoring approach:

FEMINIST THEORIES THAT SHAPE FEMINIST MENTORING IN UNIQUE WAYS

These include:

1. **The Scheinian models of Mentoring**
   Edgar H. Schein

2. **Power Equalization and Psycho-dynamics**
   Tavistock model, various authors

3. **Micro-aggression and other dynamics related to patriarchy**
   Derald Wing Sue and David Sue

4. **Recognizing and suggesting the use and non-use of different forms of power in feminist mentoring**
   Jo Rowlands and Steven Wineman

5. **Women's Ways of Knowing**
   Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger and Jill Maattuck Tarule

1. Scheinian models of Mentoring

Edgar Schein, a leading organizational development and group process expert, suggests that there are three different models for helping another person.[9] These models differ in terms of the power they give to the Mentee (especially in relation to the Mentor) and the way they work. These are:

- The Expert model

- The Doctor model

- Process-based Help models

Let us examine the strengths and weaknesses of each from a feminist perspective.

The Expert model:

In the Expert model, the Mentee identifies the specific problem and asks the Mentor to give advice. The Mentee might say, "My supervisor [at work] does not listen to me: what should I do?" The Mentor would be expected to provide tips on how to deal with this situation based on the Mentor's expert knowledge of what constitutes positive supervisor-supervisee relationships.

Interestingly, whenever the term "mentoring" is used, we generally assume that the Mentor will take on the role of the Expert. This model of the mentoring process, also called the "Expert model," is also a service-based model. The Mentee expects a particular service — a quick fix! — which the Mentor provides.

There are three disadvantages of the Expert model, particularly in the feminist mentoring context. Firstly, it assumes that the Mentee has fully understood the entirety of her own problem: she has worked out the different dimensions of the problem. Perhaps the problem is not with the supervisor, but with the Mentee's own behavior which in turn has led to the supervisor reacting in a particular way, but the Mentee is not aware of this. So when the Mentee claims that the supervisor does not listen to her, the Mentor may get locked into thinking that the issue is with the quality of the Mentee's communication and proceed to advise her on how to improve

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9   Edgar H. Schein, Process Consultation Revisited: Building the Helping Relationship, Prentice Hall, (1999).

that communication, rather than focusing on deepening the Mentee's understanding of other possible causes for this situation.

The second disadvantage is that after having heard the Mentor's advice, the Mentee may or may not apply it. If the Mentee senses at a deeper level that the problem is actually elsewhere, she may not actually pay much attention to the tips offered by the Mentor.

Third, and most problematic from a feminist mentoring perspective, is the power equation that the Expert approach creates. The Mentor is perceived as the knowing one and the Mentee's own knowledge and capacity becomes secondary or unimportant.

The Doctor model:

The second model, that of the Doctor, obviates some of the limitations of the Expert model. In this model, the Mentee hands over the responsibility of discovering the root of the problem as well as the responsibility for finding a solution, to the Mentor. Thus, if we take the same example given above, the Mentor will not accept at face value the problem indicated by the Mentee, i.e., the negative behavior of the Mentee's supervisor. Instead, the Mentor will help explore the issue by asking penetrating questions until the problem is explored at a deeper level. For instance, the problem may be related to some jealousy that the Mentee feels towards the supervisor. Perhaps the supervisor is younger than the Mentee, and resenting this the Mentee avoids interacting with the supervisor. The Mentee's behavior leads the supervisor to become dismissive towards the Mentee. An entire chain reaction occurs. The Mentor as "Doctor" identifies the root cause and explains that to the Mentee.

While the Doctor model is much better in helping the Mentee-Mentor duo get to a deeper and more authentic understanding of the issues affecting the Mentee, the model's disadvantage in the feminist mentoring context is that again, it vests too much power with the Mentor. The Mentee becomes highly dependent on the Mentor to analyze the problem, to go to its deeper source and suggest solutions. The Mentee does not develop her own resources and capacity to analyze her challenges at deep-seated levels and thus deal with them more effectively. In a sense, therefore, the Doctor model is worse than the Expert model. In the Expert model the Mentee is doing some analysis and stating her problem; here the Mentee just gives up and wants the Doctor to do everything

There is another risk related to the Doctor model. As we know, there are many times we ask for advice and then resent the advice given. This is because receiving advice makes us feel powerless, foolish, inferior or incompetent compared to the "Doctor," and we end up resenting the very person advising us, even when they do so at our request!

The third disadvantage is that when the Mentor starts using this model, each mentoring session becomes centered around a problem. The Mentee is expected to come up with a problem that needs a solution or define situations as problems. This not only prevents the Mentor from playing other roles with the Mentee (e.g. of a sounding board, someone to share breakthroughs and achievements with and develop a deeper relationship with), but also creates a constant pressure on both to find and resolve problems.

The Process-based model:

It is in order to achieve power equalization between the Mentee and the Mentor that Schein suggests the third model, what we may term as the Process-based model (Schein calls it the Process Consultation or PC model).

In this form of helping, the process of diagnosis and finding solutions is a joint one. Moreover, the diagnostic skills of the Mentor are also transferred to the Mentee and the Mentee's capacity for analysis, for going deeper, is activated and strengthened. Schein describes this model as follows:

"(the focus is on) building a relationship that permits both [the Mentor and the Mentee] to deal with reality, that removes [the Mentor's] areas of ignorance... all in the service of [giving the Mentee] insight into what is going on around them, within them, and between them and other people. Based on such insight [this model] helps [the Mentee] to figure out what they should do about the situation... at the core of the model is the philosophy that [Mentees] must be helped to remain proactive, in the sense of retaining both the diagnostic and remedial initiative..."

CASE EXAMPLE: Empathetic listening and hypotheses

A supervisor in a feminist organization talked about how she felt deeply hurt that her supervisee had never articulated appreciation for the supervisor's efforts in the project and organization, nor her attempts to support the supervisee's growth. According to the supervisor, while the supervisee was very efficient and responsible in her tasks, her inability to express any kind of positive affirmation had caused the supervisor a great deal of pain.

At the mentoring session, the supervisor tried to understand why she was affected and the probable reasons for the supervisee's behavior. Consequently, a key insight the supervisor had was that the supervisee's response was one of two kinds of responses that patriarchal societies have encouraged in dealing with superiors in a hierarchy: The first kind is fawning admiration, sycophancy or placing the leader on a pedestal. This kind of admiration is seen to be simultaneously "safe," as well as "inauthentic" (in that the admiration is not necessarily truly felt but rather put up like a show). As if in reaction to the above and to avoid being in that sycophantic category, some may completely ignore the good that has been done by the leader and focus instead on pointing out the flaws or deficiencies in the leader's actions. In this way, the individual tries to show that she is "authentic," as opposed to the "inauthentic" fan club kind of individual.

At the session it became clear to the supervisor that neither of the stances can be satisfying to a leader. In the former, there is a suspicion that the one admiring the leader is trying to curry favour; in the latter, there is the feeling of being negated, not being recognized or even taken for granted. Both stances fail to fully recognize the humanity of the leader, the desire of both being appreciated as well as accepted for what she is. The stances also militate against the underlying feminist value of acknowledging and affirming each other's contributions in change processes that are full of struggles and challenges with little external recognition.

Recognizing the possible reason why her supervisee had behaved this way helped to assuage some of the hurt that the supervisor was feeling and

> allowed her to think and explore further around this phenomenon.
>
> The key process element that allowed the supervisor to deal with her hurt, as well as develop insights into what had happened was that the Mentor was not only empathetic and a non-judging listener to what the supervisor had to say, but, even as the Mentor did suggest some hypotheses (e.g. was the supervisee's behavior a peculiar sign of patriarchy at work), the working out of the insights was almost largely the work of the supervisor. All that she had to do was to calm down, and access her own understanding and resources which were good enough to "solve" this problem. The Mentor, essentially, provided a non-judgemental container for the supervisor to vent her emotions, calm down and work through her confusions and hurt, in order to create satisfying insights and decide her future course of action.[10]

Given the emphasis on equality between the Mentor and the Mentee and on recognizing the capacities that both bring to the process, this is the model that best reflects feminist mentoring principles and goals discussed earlier.

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10 The case examples included in this Guide are part of longer interviews with Mentors and Mentees of the SAYWLM initiative. Some stories have been translated to English from Bangla, Hindi and Nepali and remain anonymous to maintain confidentiality and privacy norms built into mentoring.

2. Psycho-dynamics[11] and Power Equality

In the way the terms Mentor and Mentee are generally understood, there is a widely shared perception that the Mentor is in some ways superior, "the knowing one," and the Mentee is the learner, at a lower level of competence or understanding. After all, it is the Mentee who is seeking the help of the Mentor and not the other way around. Thus, the moment the Mentor and Mentee meet, they are already in an imbalanced relationship. This is further complicated by the cultural context of regions like South Asia, in which the SAYWLM project's feminist mentoring experiment took place. A long history of social hierarchies (based on age, gender, caste, class, education, urban-rural, etc.) and internalized social norms of respect, deference and the "guru-shishya" tradition[12] set up a range of unarticulated but very real expectations that intervene in the mentoring process, and further confound the practice of feminist mentorship principles.

These assumptions deny the Mentee's knowledge, experience and capacities, which may in some areas be greater than the Mentor's (for instance, on the power dynamics and stigmas related to a particular marginalized community, to which only the Mentee belongs). It also denies the Mentor the opportunity to learn, gain and grow through the mentoring process. These erroneous assumptions and socio-cultural baggage can create a range of feelings and responses between the Mentor and Mentee. Some of these include:

- **Deference:** The Mentee, consciously or as a result of social conditioning, distances the Mentor through deferential behavior: "You are the learned/superior one. Everything you say must be true, or at least I need to act deferentially to please you." Some degree of manipulation can also play in here, since Mentors in turn may unconsciously respond to the deference in problematic ways (such as extolling the Mentee for their deferential tone or expecting it as due).

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11 Psycho-dynamics is a key component of the Tavistock model to understand how organizations and systems function. There are various authors who have developed this concept. See, for example, Laurence Gould, Lionel Stapley, Mark Stein (ed), Experiential Learning in Organizations: Applications of the Tavistock Group Relations Approach, Karnac, (2004).

12 The "guru-shishya" tradition refers to a teacher-disciple relationship in ancient Indian culture, which was based on principles of complete reverence for and obedience of the teacher by the disciple, considered essential for real teaching and learning to be achieved. According to this tradition, "real teaching is believed to occur when the disciple has disciplined himself and is tuned to the wavelength of the guru." (From, M.K. Raina, Guru-Shishya Relationship in Indian Culture: The Possibility of a Creative Resilient Framework, [2002]).

- **Dependency/helplessness:** Feeling helpless and entirely dependent on the support of the Mentor. The Mentee may even feel anger and disappointment if the Mentor does not accept or cater to the dependency. "You are the learned/experienced one, the 'guru' — you should tell me how to solve my problems/what to do. If you do not, you are letting me down."

- **Resentment and defensiveness:** The Mentee may, subconsciously, start looking for opportunities to make the Mentor appear incompetent: "See, I tried what you suggested and it didn't work!"

- **A mixture of relief** (at having shared a problem) **and frustration** with oneself for being incapable of solving the problem on her own: "I didn't want to bring this issue to you but I just do not know what to do anymore. I'm too stupid to find a way out!"

- **Transference:** considering the Mentor to be friendly or unfriendly, supportive or unsupportive, because of similarities with another individual in the Mentee's life. Thinking to themselves, for instance, "She is just like my older sister, always criticizing whatever I do!" or "She is just like my mother, always accepts me no matter what mistakes I make."

- **Counter-transference:** the Mentor considering the Mentee to be pliable or otherwise, because of similarities with some other individual in the Mentor's life: "She reminds me a lot of that student of mine who always respected and followed my suggestions" or "She reminds me of my niece who always thinks she knows all the answers."

Significance for Feminist Mentoring:

These psychodynamics of power are a minefield. The different feelings within the Mentee (that of resentment, comfort or relief) can in turn seduce the Mentor into accepting the higher status offered by the Mentee. This is even more challenging in feminist mentoring, where both Mentor and Mentee have been conditioned in a deeply problematic social and patriarchal context of intersecting social hierarchies and gendered roles for women. In

such circumstances, there is a widely entrenched tendency to consciously or unconsciously reproduce familial roles in all interactions (mother-daughter, elder sister-younger sister, mother-in-law-daughter-in-law, etc.), and for women of different ages, classes, ethnicities, races and castes to relate to each other in particular ways, including patronage, deference (false or real) and manipulation.

Being aware of this is vital because once the Mentor accepts that higher status, she may start doing some or all of the following things:

- Dispensing premature wisdom or even complete solutions/strategies to the Mentee ("Okay, I have listened and I know exactly what you should do", or, "Trust me, I know what I am saying").

- Providing support and reassurance to the Mentee even when it is not required ("Oh how terrible. Do not worry I'm there to help you handle this").

- "Mothering" or "Sistering" the Mentee, wanting to be there for them at all times even if it breeds further dependency ("Whatever is happening, do not worry, I will always stand by you!").

- Responding to the defensiveness of the Mentee by applying even greater pressure ("I do not know why you are reacting like this. I'm only trying to help, but you have to do your part!").

- Considering the Mentee to be pro-active or helpless based on the similarity with some other individual in the Mentor's life (counter-transference). ("When I suggested this to my friend it really helped, I don't know why this girl isn't trying it", or "Oh good, this is just how my daughter handled that situation in her office").

Psychodynamics can also be presented diagrammatically as follows:
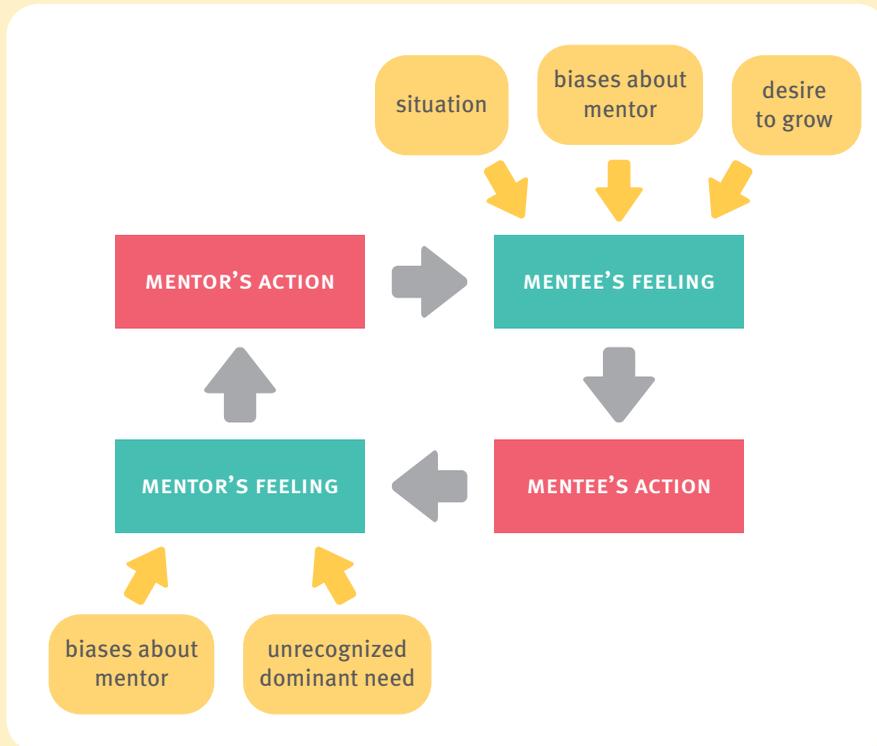
FIGURE 5: Psychodynamics of Mentoring, *developed and based on the Tavistock model and further work by various authors*

The psycho-dynamics of mentoring will also be present when a Mentor works with a senior leader such as an organizational head. In this case the Mentee would have made significant contributions in the feminist movement and in building a feminist organization. One of the biases the Mentor may suffer from is what is called the "halo effect" — assuming that the Mentee can do no wrong. While a positive acceptance of the Mentee by the Mentor is certainly an essential requirement, the risk of an unrecognized halo response is that the Mentor may not challenge the Mentee sufficiently, even when it is required for the Mentee's growth and insight.

CASE EXAMPLE: The "Halo Effect"

A charismatic organizational head of a feminist organization, talking to her Mentor, shared that she had been very tough during the performance appraisals of her subordinates. Her approach had even frightened the subordinates on the prospect of attending such future appraisal meetings. The Mentor realized that the Mentee's technique on handling appraisals was not feminist at all, but still did not confront the Mentee about this during the session. The problem was that the Mentor was slightly in awe of the leader, and was convinced that whatever the head did was likely to be correct.

3. Micro-aggression and other dynamics around Patriarchy

In their book on how to deal with cultural diversity, Derald Wing Sue and David Sue identify and describe the processes of what they termed **Micro-aggression — viz., Micro-assault, Micro-insults and Micro-invalidation.**[13] They define micro-aggression as "brief and commonplace daily verbal or behavioral indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative racial slights and insults that potentially have a harmful or unpleasant psychological impact on the target person or group." Examples of micro-aggression would be when a man says to a woman, "Wow, you're really intelligent for a woman!", when an assertive woman is referred to as a "bitch" or when an educated person from a developing country is told "You speak English really well for a foreigner!" or "Even though she is a housemaid's daughter she is very intelligent." It includes statements like "Men and women have equal opportunities to succeed" — implying that the problem is with women if they do not succeed.

Micro-assaults, micro-insults and micro-invalidations are specific forms of micro-aggression. Thus, micro-assault is, "a blatant verbal, nonverbal, or environmental attack intended to convey discriminatory and biased sentiments." micro-insults are defined as "unintentional behaviors or verbal comments that convey rudeness or insensitivity or demean a person's racial heritage/identity, gender identity, religion, ability or sexual orientation." In the Asian, African and Latin American context we would add caste, ethnicity, region occupation and age as the basis of micro-insults. Finally, "micro-invalidations are verbal comments or behaviors that exclude, negate or dismiss the psychological thoughts, feelings or experiential reality of the target group."

Micro-aggressions are important to recognize for a number of reasons. Firstly, because people who engage in them are not conscious of their bias, they truly believe that they are not biased against gender, race, sexuality, caste, religion or age. Secondly, the impact of micro-aggression is that it starts to wear down and disempower the person on the receiving end.

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13   Derald Wing Sue and David Sue, Counseling the Culturally Diverse, Hoboken N.J: John Wiley and Sons, (2013).

CASE EXAMPLE: Micro-aggression at work

There are many examples of micro-aggression used by senior leaders in feminist organizations and movements. In one case, a senior leader kept telling her colleagues that a certain young colleague in the organization, who had raised certain questions about organizational functioning, had a "personality problem." This, apart from undermining the need to explore the questions raised, resulted in discouraging the young colleague from asking further questions as well as doubting her own personality. Ultimately, the young colleague left the organization.

In another case, a feminist leader and a younger colleague were participating in a solidarity march, and the leader kept asking the younger activist whether she was capable of standing in the sun! The message was that while the older leaders had the toughness to face up to the rigors of such activism, the younger lot was too fragile, and, by implication, not capable of replacing the older leaders.

A third example is of an older feminist leader who dismissed a young activist's participation in a campaign just because the latter was a paid staff member — the leader's words were that the young activist had sold her activism "for peanuts." The comment not only ignored the difference in economic class between the two, but also the economic privilege that allowed the older leader to volunteer her time for such campaigns, while the younger activist had to earn and ensure her own survival.

Significance for Feminist Mentoring:

A number of feminist organizations around the world have recently been called out[14] for racism, ageism or discriminatory practices against certain staff in their internal environments; with micro-aggressions cited as the mode

14   Lori Adelman, "I've seen first-hand the toxic racism in international women's rights groups," https://www. theguardian.com/global-development/2020/aug/17/ive-seen-first-hand-the-toxic-racism-in-international-womens-rights-groups, August 17, 2020; and Katja Iverson, Statement on How Women Deliver will Reform, https://womendeliver.org/press/statement-on-how-women-deliver-will-reform/, July 2020.

through which much of that discrimination was exhibited and experienced.

As can be seen in the above cases, micro-aggressions also play a subtle but powerful role in undermining emerging young leaders, making them feel belittled, diminishing their confidence and self-esteem, and strengthening the sense of superiority of the older leader. Unfortunately, it is so normalized in many organizational and movement cultures and therefore not taken very seriously.

It is therefore doubly important for Mentors supporting feminist leadership processes to recognize these phenomena and be aware of them theoretically, not just intuitively.

Mentors need to play distinct roles in addressing micro-aggression with senior feminist leaders and the younger, upcoming leaders. Although, in rare cases, older leaders may also be the targets of micro-aggression by younger staff.

Working with senior feminist leaders, the Mentors need to have an approach that helps senior leadership develop a greater sensitivity to the use and consequences of micro-aggressions. They could do this by encouraging such leaders to seek genuine feedback about the kind of expressions and terms they use that may discourage or marginalize younger leaders in their organizations and movements.

With younger leaders, Mentors need to be fully open to the possibility that their Mentee could be at the receiving end of these micro-aggressions. Only then can the Mentor relate to and articulate the difficulties of the Mentee more empathetically — especially if the latter is from a discriminated and oppressed group/identity. This can help develop a closer bond of trust ("The Mentor truly understands me, she recognizes the ways I am often belittled") between the Mentor and Mentee. This will greatly strengthen the subsequent process of mentoring and feminist leadership building.

4. Dealing with Different Forms of Power: Power To, With, Within, Over,[15] and Under[16]

For the Mentee to grow it is important for her to recognize and access power, which is why we consider feminist mentoring a form of empowerment! This recognition is important because many of us engaged in the social change process tend to view power as negative and inevitably oppressive. But in fact, some forms of power are essential, desirable and liberating. The feminist mentoring process should enable the Mentee and the Mentor to recognize the former, but also foster and embrace the latter.

Desirable Powers: Power To, Power With, Power Within

Power To refers to the ability an individual has to do specific things. Thus, the Mentee may have the Power To listen to people, mediate between them, drive a scooter, repair the fuse or love themselves.

Power Within "is obtained when developing the inner knowledge, skills and confidence that increase the quality of our lives. Gaining Power Within includes learning, achieving success, and enjoying the feeling of self-worth that comes with personal growth. Something innate in human beings drives us to set goals, to achieve them, to improve upon what others have done before us, and creatively adapt to new situations."[17] Power Within is a deeper and bigger concept than Power To. While Power To is the capacity to do something, undertake an action, Power Within is the belief in one's own capacity to learn and do anything that is required.

Power With is "achieved when working cooperatively with others. This is also the power of human solidarity, of collective struggles for human rights and creative collaborations. It is the place where the need for power and the need for love and belonging intersect. If you think of the great achievements of the human race, they all resulted from humans working together or building on the achievements of those

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15 The concept of Power Over, Power To, Power Within and Power Over is credited to Jo Rowlands. Jo Rowlands, quoted in Duncan Green's "How Change Happens," OUP, Oxfam GB, 2016 (page 32).

16 The concept of Power Under is credited to Steven Wineman: Steven Wineman, "Power-Under: Trauma and Nonviolent Social Change" (2003), available as a downloadable text from http://www.traumaandnonviolence.com/.

17 Jo Rowlands in Green (2016).

who came before them. Power With has to do with finding common ground among different interests and building collective strength."[18]

"Healthy organizations and collaboration are an expression of this power, as are community struggles and social movements, when they use the unity gained from Power With in order to counter abusive Power Over."[19]

While Power With is generally considered a good thing, Power With can also be used destructively. For instance, an individual unhappy with the head of the organization, launched a campaign against the leader by involving all those who had previously left the organization and who had some grudge against the organization. The campaign turned out to be a mudslinging exercise, which worked in a one-sided fashion. It exaggerated the problems that had been created and ignored any good that had been done by the head. All those who did not agree with the approach were pressured into accepting or ignoring the campaign. The campaign was so "successful" that the organization Board unilaterally decided to remove the organizational head without examining the merits and demerits of the campaign. This resulted in not a transformed, but rather a decimated organization.

Problematic Powers: Power Over and Power Under

Power Over refers to "using or exercising one's influence over something or someone." This is how most people see power and why they do not want to talk about it. But a sculptor exercises power over her medium. The guitarist demonstrates power over his instrument. A mechanic exhibits power over an engine. These are examples of using power over inanimate objects, all positive. Many people use their influence over others for the greater good: Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr. and Mother Theresa, to name a few."[20]

Power Over is not, by definition, bad. It becomes problematic when used to exploit, manipulate, abuse, oppress and discriminate against others, deny their equality and rights or sanction and sustain injustice and inequality at an individual or societal level. It is problematic because our societies accord status and privilege on the basis

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18 Jo Rowlands in Green (2016).

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

of Power Over, and because all social hierarchies, especially patriarchy, are based on some individuals, groups or gender exercising systemic power over others. Feminist mentoring must avoid the use of Power Over because it is demeaning to the Mentee and will not enable her to grow into or recognize her own Power Within.

> ### CASE EXAMPLE: A problematic case of Power Over
>
> The director of a women's organization was displeased with the performance of a subordinate. So, she asked her subordinate to stay late and work at the director's home. The work continued till 9.30 pm, during which the director did not offer any food or snacks to the subordinate; nor, after the work was over, did she offer to drop her home, or even to the nearest safe place where she could take public transport back to her home. Worried about her job, the subordinate was unable to confront the director about her behavior and had to suffer both hunger and the terror of walking back home alone, late at night, on a road where a large number of trucks were plying.

In the above case, it was not clear whether the organizational head wanted to actually punish her subordinate by keeping her hungry and scared; or whether she was by nature so self-absorbed that she could not perceive her subordinate's need for either sustenance or a secure passage home. Either way, it is clearly a case of the misuse of Power Over, especially since the director's position in the organizational hierarchy excluded the possibility of being challenged for her insensitivity and lack of basic concern for the employee's safety. And yet, this next case shows that it does not make sense to just give up in the face of badly used Power Over. Power With strategies, used judiciously, can enhance the collaborative environment in an organization, and thus transform them.

Power Under is in some ways the most problematic of all kinds of power because it is the least recognized. The concept refers to the destructive use of Power Over — by people who always feel they are victims — especially over people seen as weaker than themselves. Developed by Steven Wineman, it is based on his work with a large number of survivors of violence and oppression of different kinds — battered

women, genocide survivors, rape and child abuse survivors.[21] Wineman found that even when the survivors escaped the situation that made them feel powerless, they carried within them what he called "powerless rage." When unrecognized and unhealed, this rage is taken out on anyone weaker than themselves, because these survivors of oppression or violence unconsciously carry the belief that if they do not act as the oppressor, they will end up being the oppressed. We could argue that it is not only individualized violence, but any kind of systematized oppression — such as patriarchy, caste system, racism or heteronormativity[22] — that creates a sense of powerless rage and a tendency to resort to Power Under behavior when one gains a position of relative power or authority.

CASE EXAMPLE: Power Over vs Power With and Power Within

A senior manager of an organization was upset with the working style of the organizational head. She found the head to be fickle, impatient, a poor listener, unable to build an environment of trust and not participative or consultative. The manager was getting very discouraged and was actively considering resigning from the organization.

A turning point came when the organizational head prepared the design for a key senior leadership meeting — a design that seemed to be neither participatory nor in line with the real issues of the organization. This design seemed like a typical inept use of Power Over, in which the organizational head forced everyone to accept her thinking unilaterally. Looking at that design, the manager felt like giving up and telling herself that nothing could now be done to save the organization.

At this point, the manager's Mentor helped her take stock of the situation. For one, the Mentor helped her to distinguish between her emotional reaction to the organizational head and the needs of the organization. In order to deal with her emotional reaction, the manager looked at the good qualities of the

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21 Steven Wineman, 2003, op.cit.

22 Heteronormativity is a belief that sexual and marital relations are most fitting between people of opposite sex. (From Harris J, White V [2018], A Dictionary of Social Work and Social Care).

head: her resilience, charisma, large heartedness, a love of fun, her great networking skills, etc. Having quietened her reaction, the manager could then develop a strategy that used Power With.

The first thing she did was to talk to her own team members and understand in depth their thinking around the issue that the organization was grappling with. There were previous presentations that had attempted to deal with this problem, and these were revised and redeveloped. In her discussions with her team, the manager came up with an alternative design and a clear argument for why it should be used for the meeting. So clear was this design and the articulation around it, that the organizational head readily accepted it and asked the manager to facilitate the meeting. Instead of an emotional reaction to a Power Over strategy, the manager learnt to use a Power With strategy — including both her team members and the organizational head in the process.

One final word: when the Mentee in this case, viz. the manager learned to recognize her visceral reactions and rise above them, she also discovered, developed and used her Power Within!

5. Women's Ways of Knowing

In Women's Ways of Knowing, the writers focus on how women learn cognitively.[23] This work is in response to a previous cognitive development scheme by William Perry in which he proposed a spiral process of growth passing through nine positions or coherent forms of thought. The scheme showed how a person becomes increasingly sophisticated, over time, in understanding and representing concepts. However, Perry's scheme was critiqued on two counts: it was developed studying a cohort of Harvard students, most of whom were men, and the sample studied showed little evidence of socio-economic or cultural diversity.

In contrast, Mary Belenky (et. al) developed a scheme of how people learn, after studying a group of diverse women — young, old, upper class, working class, of different races etc. The significant insight their study generated was that women do not just learn in classrooms, but also in relationships; by juggling life's multiple demands and dealing with crises in families and communities. The book Women's Ways of Knowing, based on this research, describes **five different perspectives** from which women view reality and draw conclusions about truth, knowledge and authority:

- **Silence**

- **Received Knowledge**
  Listening to the Voices of others

- **Subjective Knowledge**
  The Inner Voice and The Quest for Self

- **Procedural Knowledge**
  The Voice of Reason and Separate and Connected Knowing

- **Constructed Knowledge**
  Integrating the Voices

In all of the above, the apparent unifying theme is that of **voice** and **silence**; a metaphor that is distinct from that of **seeing** and **learning**, and is greatly responsible

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23 M. F. Belenky, B. Clinchy, N. R. Goldberger and J. M. Tarule, Women's, Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind, (1986).

for why women's right to a voice has become such a central part of feminist politics and agendas all around the world. Belenky and her colleagues show how women's self-concepts and ways of knowing are intertwined. They describe how women struggle to claim the power of their own minds, and examine how the two institutions primarily devoted to human development (the family and school) promote and hinder women's development. The book points out that men, drawing on their own perspectives and visions, have constructed the majority of current social, economic and political paradigms, written histories blind to women and other marginalized people and created social norms and values that have become the guiding principles for men and women alike.

SILENCE

CONSTRUCTED
KNOWLEDGE
(integrating
all the voices)

RECEIVED
KNOWLEDGE
(listening to
others voices)

THE FIVE
PERSPECTIVES
FROM WHICH WOMEN
VIEW REALITY AND
DERIVE TRUTH
AND KNOWLEDGE

PROCEDURAL
KNOWLEDGE
(the voice of reason and
connected knowing)

SUBJECTIVE
KNOWLEDGE
(listening to their
own voices)
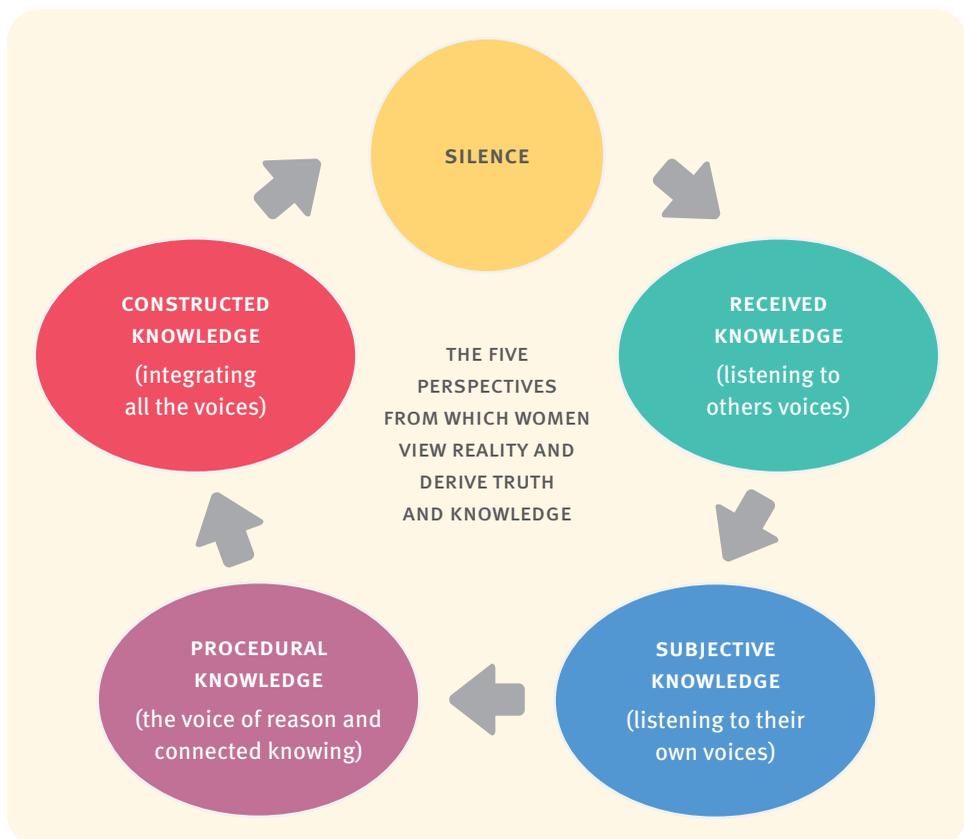
FIGURE 6: The Five Perspectives of Women's Ways of Knowing, *developed and based on Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind* [24]

24   M. F. Belenky, B. Clinchy, N. R. Goldberger and J. M. Tarule, Women's, Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind, (1986), 15.

Significance for Feminist Mentoring:

There are various ways Mentors could deepen their practice of feminist mentoring by delving into the concepts put forward in the above mentioned book. For example:

- They would have a better appreciation of women who are Silent (those apparently in the first stage of knowing), who have been silent sufferers of marginalization and violence, and have come to a situation where they have no trust in the knowledge put forth by others or by themselves. For them, the only way to survive is to remain silent. The Mentor would realize that working with such women (should they choose to work with them) would require enormous patience and time.

- The five-stage framework provides a broad road map of one kind of growth in women — the growth of their minds. Identifying a woman who is in a particular stage (e.g. second or third), the Mentor would have a broad sense of the kind of challenges the woman is likely to place in that stage, and therefore the kind of questions, challenges and perspectives that the Mentors could possibly provide to the Mentee in question, to help her develop to the next stage.

Let us illustrate the above with an example: if the Mentor has determined that the Mentee is in the second stage of her cognitive growth, it is a stage where she uncritically accepts the knowledge put forth by other adults in her life — father, mother, husband or teacher. The Mentor could begin to ask the Mentee to critically assess what has been told to her by comparing her own subjective experience of something. For instance, if she has been asked to get married to somebody whom she does not like, then the Mentor could encourage the Mentee to look at why she was succumbing to others' choices, rather than trusting her own intuition.

All in all, "Women's Ways of Knowing" is an important framework to help us understand women's reality from another perspective. Going through this text and adapting the concepts given therein for the mentoring process can only help deepen the work of feminist mentoring.

CASE EXAMPLE: Reconciling different knowledge forms for organizational growth

One of the dynamics that many feminist organizations face is tension between older members — many of who are from the community, have worked extensively in the field and do not have a higher college degree — and younger members who have come directly after completing formal education like a college degree.

If we use the above framework we can see that the former are very strong in **subjective knowledge** — having directly, viscerally experienced the problems and consequences of highly patriarchal societies. Those who come in with more formal education tend to be very strong in **procedural knowledge,** with the awareness of and comfort with the latest feminist debates and jargon, but with relatively limited personal, subjective experience (when compared to the former group).

These organizations, and their leadership need to tackle multiple challenges simultaneously. One, is how to get those whose subjective knowledge is strong to be able to absorb enough of the procedural knowledge so as to be able to establish their own **constructed knowledge**. Many of these people have developed a belief that they cannot understand these concepts, and hence tend to both ignore these concepts and dismiss those who talk about them.

The second challenge is to prevent the newer group of members from subtly dismissing the other group as "dumb," but also to understand the dynamic of how the older set of people could be dismissing them. The psycho-dynamics of both sides progressively diminishing and dismissing the other has to be understood by both groups.

Unfortunately, these psycho-dynamics are rarely solved in a way that helps both groups of people progress to the area of constructed knowledge. Invariably, if the organizational head is very strong in procedural knowledge, there is a subtle preference for those with college degrees, or vice-versa.

A Mentor working with both sets of individuals as well as the organizational leaders can help sensitize the whole team to the need to value and respect these different ways of women's knowing and help both groups participate in mutually aided growth towards higher quality constructed knowledge. This can integrate and then transform their intuitive knowledge and the insights of theory into a higher whole.

This chapter has attempted to create a strong theoretical foundation for anyone who wants to be a strong and effective feminist Mentor, drawing from both generic concepts and approaches applied in a range of helping professions (counseling, psycho-therapy, coaching), as well as specific theories that have strong links with feminist approaches such as feminist mentoring. In the next chapter (Part 2), we shall explore the key steps involved in practicing feminist mentoring where all these theories are applied.

Annexure

ADDITIONAL THEORIES THAT UNDERLIE MENTORING

1. Positive Psychology and Flow Experiences

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi is a Hungarian-American psychologist who introduced the concept of Flow, a psychological state characterized by great absorption and focus on a task (or a set of tasks) that the individual is proficient in, and is getting better at. This state is that of "happiness" in a philosophical sense, a state of deep satisfaction and total engagement with the task the individual is engaged in. We may say that a person who is in this state is in a state of self-actualization — the way Maslow defined it. This is because, when the person is in this state, the person is not bothered to meet any of her Deficit Needs. Being in this state is an addiction in itself, and the person wants to keep on engaging in it. And the more that person engages, the more the person grows in that competence.

While Flow sounds like, and is, fairly similar to the concept of the self-actualized state proposed by Maslow, the big advantage of this is that it is based on research of people actually found to be in a state of Flow. Thus, Csikszentmihalyi is able to show how people in very different modes of life are able to get into a state of Flow. These include dancers, athletes, practitioners of martial arts, musicians, cooks, painters, writers, scientists, doctors, community activists, etc.

Significance for Feminist Mentoring

For a Mentor, the concept of Flow can be used to help the Mentee visualize how her behavior or responses to a given situation might change if she is allowed herself to fully engage with her celebratory self.

2. Adult Learning

Malcolm Knowles was an American adult educator who developed the theory of Andragogy or Adult Learning. He theorized that adults can learn — and hence change! The principles of learning were as follows:

- Adults are motivated to learn as they experience needs and interests that learning will satisfy; therefore, these are the appropriate starting points for organizing Adult Learning activities.

- Adults' orientation to learning is life-centered; and so, the appropriate units for organizing Adult Learning are life situations, not topics or theories.

- Experience is the richest resource for adults' learning; accordingly the core methodology of adult education is the analysis of experience.

- Adults have a deep need to be self-directing; therefore, the role of the teacher is to engage in a process of mutual inquiry with them rather than to transmit his or her knowledge to them and then evaluate their conformity to it.

- Individual differences among people increase with age; thus, adult education must make optimal provision for differences in style, time, place and pace of learning.

Significance for Feminist Mentoring

Put in a mentoring context, Knowles' ideas imply that Mentees would engage more openly in the mentoring process if they genuinely think it is something they will learn and gain from. This implies that before any mentoring process actually begins, time has to be spent to get potential Mentees to understand what the mentoring process will do and what it will not. The best way to manage is to have a workshop with the Mentors and the Mentees that will help clarify the objectives, methodology, possible outcomes as well as the limits of this process. The workshop would be an opportunity for the Mentees to set their confusions at rest, as well as help them decide whether they would actually like to invest in this process.

3. The Authentic Self

Viktor Frankl was an Austrian neurologist, psychiatrist and a Holocaust survivor whose Logotherapy and Existential Analysis was based on three tenets:

a. Life has meaning under all circumstances;

b. The motivating force of life is the will to discover meaning; and

c. We have the freedom of will not only to seek meaning, but to embrace that meaning by living in its service.

Frankl believed that we discover meaning through self-transcendence — that is, by the giving of ourselves to others and the world. We do this in three possible ways. The first is through the use of our creative gifts; second, by our experience of love for someone else; and lastly, in the attitude we have in the face of unavoidable pain, guilt and death.

Significance for Feminist Mentoring

Frankl's approach is relevant for feminist Mentors because he provides an overarching view of the meaning of life. By emphasizing the importance of self-transcendence, of giving to others and the world, it validates the Mentee's approach to deal with her wounds by engaging with the world to bring about a feminist transformation that results in a more equal, just and peaceful world for all. It is about creating a deeper meaning for the Mentee about her work and her leadership,[1] — finding this meaning also, simultaneously, helps her deal with the injustices and wounds of her own life from a different perspective.

4. The Stages of Life

Erik Erikson was a German American development psychologist and psychoanalyst known for his theory of psychological development of human beings. Erikson divided the psychological development of human beings into nine stages: Infancy, Early Childhood, Play Age, School Age, Adolescence, Young Adulthood, Adulthood

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1   In fact, in some cases, this is why the Mentee is in this area of work — feminist social change!

and Old Age. While connecting the stages to different ages in a lifetime, Erikson suggests that it is better to remember each stage by a different term. These terms are Hope, Will, Purpose, Competence, Fidelity, Love, Care and Wisdom.

According to Erikson, at each stage the individual faces a psycho-social crisis. If the crisis is successfully resolved, then the individual would have achieved competence in that area. Thus, the psycho-social crisis faced by the individual during the stage of infancy is that between Basic Trust and Basic Mistrust. If the individual is able to deal with this stage successfully, the individual learns to have Basic Trust in the world; she is now hopeful about the world. In a similar way, a person in the Adolescent stage faces the crises of defining her identity vs. being confused about her identity. If she is able to resolve this successfully and define her identity to her satisfaction, she would have achieved competence in the area of "Fidelity" (understanding her own life's meaning). To take a third example, a person in Adulthood faces the psycho-social crisis of generativity vs. stagnation. If she is able to successfully deal with this crisis, she learns how to be generative — to keep growing, changing and giving.

It is the successful resolution of each of these crises that allows for the complete growth of the individual. Depending on how each stage is handled, both by the individual and the people around her, a person will either feel a sense of mastery or a sense of inadequacy and carry that sense to the next stage.

The strength of Erikson's model is that it shows how social interaction and relationships play a role in the development and growth of human beings, and has been very influential. But there are three critiques of Erikson that are important from a feminist mentoring perspective:

i.   It is highly androcentric, developed keeping the life stages of a typical man in mind;

ii. Life stages have changed since his work and no longer neatly correspond to the stages depicted by Erikson; and

iii. The empirical basis of the model is not clear since it is not based on actual research.

Gail Sheehy dealt with these three criticisms in her well known work "Passages" and the subsequent "New Passages," which mapped the stages of both men and women,

together and separately. The stages were researched and explored through hundreds of in-depth interviews of both men and women at different stages of their lives.

Sheehy's work had one other difference from what Erikson had put forward. Instead of looking at the entire life of the person, Sheehy focused on the stages of an adult life. She pointed out that unlike childhood stages, the stages of adult life are characterized not by physical growth but by stages of psychological and social growth. She termed Marriage, Childbirth, First Job, Empty Nest etc., as marker events, the concrete happenings in people's lives. However, she argued that it is not marker events that determine the adult developmental stage, but an underlying impulse towards change arising from an individual's psyche or inner realm. It is in this realm, Sheehy says, that we register the meaning of our participation in the external world: how do we feel about our job, family and social roles? In what ways are our values, goals and aspirations invigorated or violated by our present life structures? How many parts of our personality can we live out and what parts are we leaving out? Sheehy's point was that when we experience discontent in our inner realm, we are hearing the call to change and move to the next stage of development: to undertake a passage to the next stage.

Significance for Feminist Mentoring

The concept of stages can be very helpful in a Mentor's and Mentee's understanding of what is happening to the Mentee. Making a passage from one stage to another involves shedding a protective layer — much like a snake might shed its skin. This shedding is frightening since it can make the person feel vulnerable till she fully grows into the new stage. At the same time, this movement also revitalizes this individual in many ways — it is like being reborn.

Understanding such potential passage points can help Mentors more appropriately respond to Mentees when they reach a point in their lives when, knowingly or unknowingly, they decide to either shed the old protective shell and grow into something new or stagnate at the same level. Providing this framework can help strengthen the resolve of the Mentee to make this transition, and [for the Mentor] to support them as they do so.

About the Authors

Tejinder Singh Bhogal

Tejinder Singh Bhogal is a Director at Innobridge Consulting Pvt. Ltd. He works in two areas: organizational change consulting for the social sector and mentoring/coaching.

In the former, he has worked with a range of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations, donors, networks and government programs — those working on gender, education, reproductive health, mental health, children, environment, non-traditional livelihoods, etc., — many of these organizations being avowedly feminist. He believes that organization change work cannot be effective unless situated in broader social change processes. In the latter, apart from being formally trained in mentoring/coaching, his understanding of individuals (and contexts) has been aided by being a professional T-group trainer: something that involves working intensively on human processes with small groups of individuals.

Tejinder has helped many NGOs design and implement mentoring programs. He continues to mentor organizational leaders, community level workers and potential mentors. His present approach to mentoring is deeply informed by feminist mentoring precepts, which situates individual change within a rubric of larger social change. Prior to becoming a consultant he spent 13 years working in the villages of Gujarat and Chattisgarh, with a national level NGO, PRADAN. He is a graduate of the 1st batch of the Institute of Rural Management, Anand (IRMA) and a professional member of the Indian Society of Applied Behavioral Sciences (ISABS).

In his spare time he writes prose and poetry, and reads extensively in the areas of psychotherapy, science, sociology and literature. He is deeply interested in birds, insects and wildlife in general. He is also a published author in the areas of organizational development and human resource development.

Srilatha Batliwala

Srilatha Batliwala is Senior Advisor, Knowledge Building at CREA, a feminist human rights organization based in New Delhi, India. Her work focuses on capacity building and mentoring of young women activists in the global South, and on building new knowledge from the practice and insights of activists working with the most marginalized people.

Prior to CREA, Srilatha worked as Scholar Associate at AWID (Association for Women's Rights in Development), as Civil Society Research Fellow at the Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations in Harvard University, and as the Civil Society Program Officer at the Ford Foundation. Srilatha has a history of grassroots work in India, where she was involved in building large-scale women's movements that mobilized and empowered thousands of rural and urban women from the poorest communities in Mumbai and in the poorest districts of Karnataka state in South India.

Srilatha has published extensively on a range of women's issues, and is best known for her work on women's empowerment. Her most recent publications, "All About Power" and "All About Movements" discuss power equations in society and the potential for effective movements to challenge such power structures. She has also served on the governing boards of a number of international and Indian human rights, women's rights and development organizations.

Srilatha lives and works from twin bases in Bangalore and Coonoor in the Nilgiri Hills of South India. She prides herself on being an active feminist grandmother to her four grandchildren! She is also trying to model new ways of being an older feminist leader by supporting, mentoring and learning from younger feminist leaders and new movements. When she's not working, she bakes, reads and plays Sudoku.

Founded in 2000, CREA is a feminist human rights organization based in New Delhi, India. It is one of the few international women's rights organizations based in the global South and led by Southern feminists, which works at the grassroots, national, regional, and international levels.

CREA envisions a more just and peaceful world, where everyone lives with dignity, respect and equality. CREA builds feminist leadership, advances women's human rights, and expands sexual and reproductive freedoms for all people.

Illustration on back cover:

Two people face each other against a shaded orange background. Their faces are teal in color and they have red hair with wisps and patterns of white, wildly flowing in the background. They have their arms outstretched, seemingly in mid-conversation and are outlined in red and orange. The persons themselves are composed of a number of books stacked against each other, some vertical and some horizontal, all a mix of teal, blue, and light orange. A few books lay open on an orange surface in front of them. The books have dotted lines indicating text in the books.