When Authority Meets Love: Ambivalence in Mentorship

Bonnie D. Oglensky, PhD.
The City University of New York, School of Professional Studies

Authority is not a command but a connection, a making of the present meaningful through memory...One might say that authority is a creative remembering of the past in the present; it is a remembering of our beginnings that nonetheless enables events in the present to become unique. It reminds us of the others who preceded our existence, without whose actions we would not be; it has the humbling effect of reminding us that we did not give birth to ourselves.

*{PRIVATE }Kathleen
Jones, 1993*

While I've long been drawn to the topic of mentorship because of my own complicated ties to mentors and as a mentor, this paper is based on my social science research over the past twenty-five years—including scores of interviews, conversations, and reviews of written accounts of mentors and protégés involved in enduring, emotionally complicated, and often life changing relationships. By examining how dear and fraught these alliances are, I hope to show how ambivalent feelings and motivations are hardwired into the relationship. That is to say, ambivalence is *not* something that occurs when things go wrong. Indeed, it can be a sign that things are going right. (I will say more about this in a bit.)

Approaching mentorship with an eye on its complexity--the love and the hate, the good and the bad--resists the misleading trend in contemporary literature of splitting the positive and negative "sides" of the relation, myopically focusing on one side or the other. What remains hidden in the dichotomized approach is a messier but undoubtedly more realistic image of the relationship as having *both* positive and negative dynamics and consequences. Missing the boat in this way, Fineman (2000) rightly notes, is part of a broader problem in organizational research,

> Arguably the notion that our work lives are characterized by divisions of positive and negative feelings is a convenient social narrative. It permits the presentation of one's messy or inchoate feelings in any easy linguistic 'package,' a format with which some social scientists are content to collude. (p. 13)

Beyond looking at the good and the bad, it is critical to map out the interrelatedness of its so-called "sides." Mentor-protégé stories offer compelling testimony, that is, about the *dialectical* nature of intimacy in these relationships. Like other close relationships, mentorship has benefits and the promise of professional and personal satisfaction *as well as* disappointments, conflicts, and vulnerability to harm. But the clincher here—and what makes the approach I am outlining dialectical—is that it assumes that the former lays the groundwork for the latter. Consider, for example, the ways that idealizing one's mentor can spark inspiration and the desire to learn while weaving into a relationship emotionally

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intense fantasies and unrealistic expectations that can provoke disappointment, grueling developmental pressures, envy, and disillusionment. Likewise, think about how the dynamics of loyalty that produce a pleasurable sense of connection and commitment between a mentor and protégé also entangles the relationship with obligations and constraints that bring on displeasure, guilt-inducing choices, resentment, and curbs on freedom. And finally, picture how the process of generativity that lays the groundwork for a mentor to make a meaningful imprint on a protégé also can saddle the relationship with feelings of loss, competition, and fears of obsolescence.   Put simply, the bonds also bind. And in ways that might at first sound perverse, the binds also bond.

Ambivalence

Standing at the intersection of authority and love makes ambivalence a nearly inescapable fact of life for mentors and protégés. The nature of ambivalence, writes Neil Smelser, "is to hold two opposing *[ambi]* affective orientations [*valences*] toward the same person, object or symbol" (1998, p.5). In this case, mentor and protégé—two adults who come together originally, typically, in connection with their work— form a relationship. Following the work of Daniel Levinson (1978), I define *mentor* as an older, more experienced person who is teaching a younger person—the *protégé*—how to navigate in the adult world and world of work. As the authority figure, mentors are the ones who have power, often in the material sense when they are also the boss or senior colleague, but always symbolically and emotionally. Mentors know more and have more of something that the protégé wants (e.g., resources, networks, wisdom, skill, style, values). At the same time, authority entails reciprocity—leaders need followers just as mentors need protégés. Hence, among other emotionally thorny contradictions, mentorship is founded on tensions between mutuality and inequality.

Freud (1912b, 1914c) called attention to the phenomena of ambivalence in what we think of as the original authority relationship—that between children and parents. Borrowed from a paper written by Bleuler in 1910, Freud first used the term to account for the psychodynamics between son and father within the reconstructed family dramas that became the paradigmatic oedipal scenes of psychoanalysis. He interpreted the son as both loving and hating his father; as wanting to be close to him and simultaneously rid of him; both seeking his advice and resenting parental control (1923d).

Moving the discourse on mentoring forward by zeroing in on the unconscious emotional underpinnings of this relation, psychoanalytically-oriented organizational and management scholars recognise that the authority configuration of mentorship resembles the structure of the parent-child relationship and as such, calls forth and reactivates in transference its core paradoxical dynamics. The same pattern has been observed among students and teachers. Mediated by unequal power and strength, the

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emotional tie to parents, teachers, and mentors is ambivalent from the start because it is linked simultaneously to a desire to identify with and a desire to replace the authority figure. Although intuitively it may be easy to understand feelings of love and admiration towards parents, to help us make sense of the contempt and aggression we would do well to keep in mind how dependent children are on parents for survival. These relations, Smelser points out, "are those *from which the child cannot escape…"* (1998, p. 8)*.* That is to say, they contain elements of emotional unfreedom; they connect and constrain, socialise and control, nurture and clutch, protect and surround and they involve giving and loss.   And through experiences of inevitable deprivations, the child realizes that a perfect, easy, tension-free, pleasure-filled existence is not possible. They--parents and mentors, alike--remind us, that is, that we have no choice but to struggle to grow. Therein lies the hostility.

To be clear, I do not regard the experience of ambivalence per se as evidence of a troubled relationship. Over many years of interviewing people in long term mentorships, I cannot recall a single one that was free of such contradictory feelings. Indeed, some amount of ambivalence is normal and healthy in human relationships. Ashforth, et al. (2014) astutely note that "the more familiar an actor is with an object, the richer the store of information, and the greater the probability of having encountered the object's multiple facets and imperfections" (p. 1455). Healthy relationships are more likely to evolve and last if one recognises the negative as well as positive qualities and develops a realistic assessment of a partner. Some of the most satisfying and productive mentorships I've encountered were those in which parties had figured out ways to navigate or reconcile difficult feelings. Nevertheless, mentorships can sour when ambivalence is too intense or when the bad overruns the good; sometimes the intimacy that makes personal and professional growth possible in mentorship can lead to its demise. Ambivalence, thus, can be good for a relationship but it also can be bad—or perhaps, not ironically—both.

Three themes of central importance to elucidating mentorship ambivalence will be discussed in this paper: idealization, loyalty, and generativity. I view each as a primary mode of attachment or bonding in mentorship. While interrelated, each process helps mentors and protégés forge a distinctive bond through fantasy, deed, interpersonal communication, feeling, ritual, expectation, and shared experience. Each process is critical both for relationship development and for the progression and effectiveness of the mentoring process itself.

Idealization

Mentorship arouses idealization. It's built to do so. And within bounds, the process of putting another on a pedestal to admire and emulate is beneficial. "When we idealize others," writes Ruthellen Josselson (1996), "we locate in them qualities that we wish to own for ourselves...our longing is toward

possession of that which is outside of ourselves that appears far grander than what we know ourselves to be" (p. 127). Its potency lies in the ways the self imagines becoming greater, enhanced, and more perfect or powerful through linking oneself to the idealized other. Psychoanalysis has its most robust conception of idealization in the notion of the *ego ideal*, written about extensively by the French psychoanalyst Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel (1985). According to the theory of the ego ideal, a person projects onto parents first, and then onto other authority figures later on, an ideal conception of the self. The ego ideal is believed to originate during early infancy at the dawning recognition of human limitation and dependence. Psychically, it serves as a representation of hope for return to "lost paradise"—a wondrous state of complete love and power. Relationships with authority figures such as mentors—onto whom one may transfer parental imagos—rekindle the prospect that one may regain a state of perfection. The protégé hopes to attain his or her own sense of mastery and edge towards the ideal. Chasseguet-Smirgel aptly refers to this aspect of the ego ideal's function as a "maturation drive" (p. 44).

For some protégés, the idealized mentor appears to be extraordinary, embodying the image of perfection and the hope that one may attain that quality for him or herself. Sometimes the idealization is based on a projection backwards in time such as when a protégé imputes an aspect of greatness to the mentor's life in the past. (e.g., one protégé hailed her mentor as a courageous and committed activist during the sixties anti-war and civil rights movements in the U.S.—deifying him as "just shy of godliness.")

Not surprisingly, the fact that mentor and protégé are in an authority relation both feeds and amplifies the emotional hierarchy that frames idealization. Not only does it trigger transference reactions—evoking childhood fantasies of connection with parental perfection—it also adds other layers of feeling to the mix. The same perfect qualities that give rise to hope may also inspire fear--often blending trepidation and challenge (Sennett, 1980). Bowled over by her mentor, one protégé—a mid-level manager at a large publishing company—spoke of feeling "fear and revere." This was a common theme.

Idealization also links to power—both fantasized and real. A protégé who views the mentor as larger than life—a towering figure who can make things happen, set agendas, marshal resources, mingle with other prominent people, etc., may feel thrilled and emboldened by being associated to that power. Early wishes in the protégé to merge with an omnipotent parent are awakened. Tom Grimes (2010), an important American novelist, offers a delicious example of this in his memoir--a tribute to his mentor. As he listened to his mentor, Frank Conroy, go on about William Faulkner as if Faulkner, the great American novelist, was someone who lived down the street and, as if Faulkner and his mentor were intimate friends, Grimes seemed tickled, imagining himself as being linked (by association) to a literary star. Talk about feeling enlarged!

Building on fantasies of perfection and power is the mentor believed to be endowed with superhuman gifts. Protégés may be inspired by the notion that mentors possess some ultimate truth or kernel of essential wisdom which gives their opinions the weight of gospel. This helps explain why protégés will admit to "hanging onto every word" of a mentor, hearing suggestions as commands or exhortations, dissecting feedback for shades of hidden meaning, and feeling compelled to justify their own decisions meticulously in light of a mentor's advice. They do so out of regard for their mentors as a kind of seer or guru. Acknowledging the weightiness of her own influence, one mentor at an international media company seemed to relish the thought that she played a god-like role with her protégé—perhaps even more so than she was aware of—hinted at in her slip in speech: "Mentoring" she told me, "plays out in a very simple way...You make your vision very well *divined* [pause]...*defined*. And you choose people that can accept it."

Although mentors tend not to be so cognizant of the prophetic force of their words and actions, one mentor sensed that her protégé saw her as holding the key to secret knowledge which, if divulged, could instantly and magically make *her* wise too: She said, "I think Padma (her protege) feels like there's something I know that she would like to know...*some secret*, you know, *some something*. But the fact is that it's kind of experiential. You can't impart it because you learn it from experience."

Note that the *something* that the mentor possesses comes from experience and not from a mysterious secret. This leads us to a second key point about idealizing the mentor as a magical figure. This has to do with a belief that the mentor has attained ideal qualities because he or she is *endowed* with them. I have heard many protégés describe their mentors as innately exceptional, for example, in having "amazing intuition," "the patience of a saint," or again "godly" in possessing vast knowledge.

Of course, idealization does not necessarily find direct expression nor is it always observable. While excessive praise, compulsive obedience or acquiescence, and constant solicitations for approval can be read as pretty obvious signs of idealization, most times, it is expressed in more subtle ways. One protégé, Paola—a junior professor of English literature—told me a story, for example, that called attention to the fact that idealization is often acted out rather than verbalized. Once when her mentor was giving a paper at a conference overseas, Paola found herself spending more time than was usual or necessary to fulfill her research assistant hours in her mentor's office. She found herself somewhat "lost in time" as she carefully browsed through his library. Staggered by the scope of the mentor's knowledge (in her idealizing stance, she assumed he had read every book), Paola told me that she'd leafed through dozens of books to try to figure out what *she* would need to read to ascend to her mentor's league. Such an enactment—touching the books, glancing furtively at many of them—had all the signs of an idealizing protégé wowed by an epic sense of her mentor's intellectual prowess while trying to get some of that to rub off on her.

It is equally important to point out that while the process of idealization blossoms in fantasy, some people are more idealisable than others. That is, fantasy constructions are usually based on some actual attributes of the other. Certainly the amount of power and prestige that a mentor has in an organization or field are important factors. And the mentor's personal charisma obviously feeds the process as well. In the extreme, we hear the terms Svengali or guru applied to the hypnotic lure of a captivating mentor. At the same time, mentors who are less well regarded in their fields or careers, or who are struggling with their own insecurities about professional adequacy may not become objects of idealization in the same way as mentors who exude and feel confidence in their work and professional stature. All told, while there are broad trends in how idealization plays out in mentorship, there are many individual, dyadic, organizational and occupational particularities that must be kept in mind when analyzing this dynamic in any given relationship.

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Up to this point, I have looked at the longings and aspirations that fuel idealization as a more or less positive force and bonding agent in mentorship. But idealization also engenders difficult feelings and tensions. Under the best of circumstances, idealization entails some measure of surrender. Enthralled, the protégé allows self-other boundaries to become softened so as to internalize the good that mentor has to offer. As we envision this process, however, one can immediately sense professional and personal vulnerability. The dynamics of possibility that breathe life into idealization can also choke the mentoring process. Aiming to please a seemingly perfect mentor, one's rapture may lead to over-dependency, "good-girl" or "obedient son" syndromes, self-negation, envy and resentment. (Although not the norm, we also hear of sycophancy, ingratiation, slavish conformity, and other more explicitly dysfunctional dynamics.)

It is not hard to imagine how idealization might stir up negative feelings. Sizing oneself up against a puffed up mentor can lead protégés to feeling weak, inferior, under skilled, and lacking by comparison. Discouraged—mainly on the basis of elaborating a fantasy that to please the mentor one must be as perfect or powerful as said mentor appears to be—the protégé may wind up sabotaging his or her own work efforts or become disabled by anxiety or self-doubt. Still, whether one feels overshadowed by a mentor or imagines basking in his or her glow, the idea that the protégé *reflects something* or *anything* of the mentor can itself become binding. One protégé described an entrapping dynamic that she and her mentor had engaged in for some years at their publishing company--leading her to feel like she was seen in the company as a narcissistic appendage of the mentor--teasingly referred to by others as "frick and frack."

Envy, resentment, and guilt are also in the fallout from idealization. The idealized mentor seems to and of course does to some extent possess something that the protégé covets but does not have. Such

inequality can slide into a sense of inequity—and can easily trigger hostility for protégés who raise nagging questions such as: Why does it seem so easy for the mentor to perform the work (*when it's so hard for me*)? Why does he get all the glory and the credit (*when I get little or none for work I have done to help him*)? How come she gets to hobnob with all the important people in the field (*and I am in the background*)?

It should go without saying that the behavior and emotional needs of a mentor figure importantly into idealization tensions. Dramatic tales of mentors demanding adoration—some even extracting it coercively from disciple-like protégés—are common in published mentoring stories—particularly in stories where the relationship has gone bad. Depending on a mentor's own idiosyncratic proclivities—stemming from his or her own history and personality—and factoring in very real pressures from work or career, he or she can feel compelled to take advantage of the protégé's adoration. This can take a variety of forms including offloading one's work onto the protégé, soliciting constant praise, adopting the protégé's ideas without offering proper credit, and making vague career promises to induce loyalty, etc. Phillip Lopate, a popular American novelist, vividly refers to this latter dynamic as having a vampirish tinge (1994).

One should note that while exploitation of a protégé's idealization can be brazenly self-serving and manipulative—certainly the case when a mentor invites adulation and then dumps a follower—this behavior is not necessarily malevolent nor is it entirely narcissistic. Many find pleasure in the emotional attachment that emanates from protégés' idealization *at the same time* as using it to their professional advantage. And still, obviously, not all mentors take advantage of idealization. Indeed, there are those who actively work against it describing it as burdensome to have to deal with the protégé's grandiose expectations of them. The problem with idealization, related to me by one mentor who experienced it as a form of entrapment is that "you hold people to impossible standards and then hate them when they don't meet the impossible standard. Who needs *that*?"

Other mentors told me they found the idealization disturbing because it minimized their hard work and continuous effort to achieve and accomplish. This created ambivalence in those who wanted to be appreciated for years of working in the trenches, rising through the ranks, practicing and honing their skills, developing allies and networks, and paying political dues. At the same time, they felt entitled to enjoy the fruits of all of this labor and perseverance—including the fact that they perhaps didn't at this point in their careers have to struggle as much anymore at doing the work and managing their professional roles.

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How do protégés handle idealization conflicts? How do they navigate the ambivalence that grows out of idealization? Most of the time, protégés move though stances of idealizing and deidealizing their

mentors in relatively predictable and adaptive ways. Two particularly defensive and problematic responses to the idealization—to "give up" or "catch up"—stand out.

Protégés who view their mentors as magical are especially prone to conflicts about competition and ambition. If the mentor's ideal qualities are believed to have been divined or somehow effortlessly achieved, the protégé can easily end up feeling inferior: mal-equipped, lacking the right stuff—defeated from the starting gate, so to speak. This is logical from the point of view of the unconscious. Although protégés wish to identify with the mentor, this may be difficult because the latter's wondrous qualities can seem unattainable. The mentor appears to be in a different league (e.g., superhuman, "born with a silver spoon"). Rather than offering hope of identifying with someone whose example could be emulated—the idealization can thus have the reverse effect. It can dishearten and give rise to passivity—or what I am calling a "give up response."

There is a good chance that a transferential component and neurotic rewards are in the wings for protégés who assume this position. As noted earlier, reviving the oedipal dilemma, the mentor is perceived as having something that protégés want but believe they cannot have. They may withdraw, regress, or deskill to defend against making contact with competitive feelings, ambitions, resentments, anxieties, and self-doubt—evoked in the mentorship. It may feel emotionally safer for the protégé to give up—in the face of what could seem like overwhelming evidence that the mentor is simply superior in his or her talents— rather than face his or her own unconscious aggressive wishes and impulses towards the mentor. Such a defense lets the protégé off the ambition hook as it provides a plausible justification for the mentor's claim to professional goodies while sustaining a fiction that the protégé is not entitled to or does not have the wherewithal to gain access to these. The net result is that the protégé remains tentative about trying to get what the mentor has or removes him or herself from the endeavor completely.

In contrast to throwing in the towel, some protégés react to fantasies of magical mentors by trying to catch up to them—anyway they can, tout de suite. Placing emphasis on the perception that what the mentor does looks effortless, the protégé may try to acquire what the mentor has as if the *process of development itself* was magical. As if to say, "what my mentor has is marvelous and with a wave of the wand, I shall have that too," the protégé may in a metaphorical sense try to become an adult without having to grow up. Tapping primitive, pre-symbolic psychological wishes, this occurs through imitation, rather than identification. In Chasseguet-Smirgel's (1985) words:

> It is imitation when the child holds the newspaper *like* his father. It is identification when the child learns to read. Imitation means trying to *be* the envied parent and not necessarily to *become* it. This is the domain of magical achievements (p. 111).

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In the definitions of imitation against identification, there is always the idea of magically being able not to *become* big, but to *be* big immediately, thus bypassing the process of maturation (p. 114).

Adopting the catch up position are protégés who make superficial attempts to gain knowledge, skill, or competency that mentors display—looking for short-cuts and trying to skip steps—as if they believe that no work, adversity, risk, or struggle should be required in development. Marlena, a literary agent, puzzled over Paola's dilettantish attempt to acquire a depth of perspective that took decades of hard work for her to cultivate. She said to me, "Paola asks me, 'Well, what's the *one* book I can read to understand what it took you twenty years to understand!?' (*laughs raucously*) and then I think (*gasps*) "Uh oh!" And then I find out that she's *read* the fucking book! That's when I said, "Well read it again!"

The fiction that a seemingly effortless performance creates is that the mentor does not and has not ever had to deal with obstacles—like all other mortals—to hone his or her craft, compete with colleagues, develop a professional identity, etc. For this reason, how competent the mentor appears day to day in carrying out work and life roles—how much doubt, vulnerability, error, etc. he or she shows matters. Exposure to seeing the mentor struggle—or lack of it--can diffuse or feed the myth of the mentor's magic.

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One cannot look into idealization in mentorship without taking up its corollary—deidealization. Opposite sides of the same emotional coin, they are both modes of attachment propelled by the protégé's appraisal of the mentor. Whereas idealization lives through aggrandizing images of the mentor, deidealization takes mentor back down to grounded reality. Exulting fantasies and projections give way to the development of a more realistic assessment of the mentor. His or her flaws and limitations become more prominent in the protégé's thinking and emotional stance. Adoration is replaced by reservation, skepticism, disappointment, and sometimes disparagement, denigration, and rejection. Under optimal conditions, deidealization leads to an appreciation of mentor's humanity, helping protégé to tolerate imperfection in him or herself, and to come to some acceptance that growth can be challenging and at times painful for everyone.

A first type of deidealization stems from the impulse to *differentiate* one's identity and starts in mentorship almost from the start of the relationship alongside of the emergence of idealization--running as a parallel or counter process. Even when idealization is very strong, the protégé doesn't idealize *everything* about his or her mentor. To express one's separateness and primordial desire and capacity to distinguish oneself and one's agency, the protégé almost always finds some faults in his or her mentor. While it may read like nitpicking, the content of criticism matters less than the act of asserting oneself as distinct and

able—even under the weight of considerable admiration—to assert agency and retain an independent center of gravity.

A second type of deidealization entails *disillusionment*—a loss of belief in the mentor's greatness and all that such a belief has come to represent to the protégé. While it ultimately leads to a crucial phase of maturation for the protégé, this creates more emotional turmoil for the protégé than differentiation. Because mentors inevitably fail to live up to grandiose expectations, deidealization leads to disappointment and a sense of loss. Protégés face difficult truths that mentors struggle and are as flawed and imperfect as the next person. And as it becomes apparent that mentor will not serve as a ticket to an existential Easy Street, protégés realize that salvation or return to lost paradise—that is, the fantasy of recapturing one's ego ideal—is not an option. Mentor's fall from grace, in other words, is the protégé's as well.

Loyalty

Embodied in the pledge to stand by another, loyalty is identified as a cornerstone of mentorship--it is core to its emotional glue.   According to Webster's Dictionary (1986), the word *loyal* means that one has "unswerving allegiance: faithful in allegiance to one's lawful sovereign or government; or faithful to a private person to whom fidelity is due; or faithful to a cause, ideal or custom." Focused on constancy in allegiance—at the macro level of institutions and the micro-level of personal relationships—such a definition gives us only a hint of the emotionally transactional and layered character of loyalty. While idealization expresses the protégé's wish to be like his or her mentor and leads to emulation and a vital sense of hope about attaining ideals, loyalty acts as the sealing agent in the relationship impelling both parties to want to stick by, aid, and protect each another. It functions to hold the relationship together even when or perhaps more consequentially—especially when—times are tough.

While many believe that mentors offer assistance freely—that is, when it is not part of a formal program—and protégés freely make choices about how they'll make use of that assistance, it is misleading to frame mentorship as a "gift relationship." Despite the seemingly voluntary nature of the exchange and the fact that parties rarely form any explicit agreement on its terms, there usually is an assumption of quid pro quo. Mentor accounts show that over time, the process of coming to see oneself and one's role partner as belonging to and having a stake in the relationship paves the way for the elaboration and imposition of expectations and obligations—conscious and not so conscious ones. It is within this nexus of give and take that loyalty finds its home. Concerned with interactional nuts and bolts, mentorship loyalty revolves around the question of 'who does what for whom.' Royce (1908) was astute on this point in *The Philosophy of Loyalty* when he wrote,

> [The loyal person's] devotion is practical…He does something. This something serves his cause. Loyalty is never mere emotion. Adoration and affection may go with loyalty, but can never alone constitute loyalty. (18)

Loyalty, thus enacted, is woven into a system of mutual obligations between mentors and protégés. It is tacitly understood as both an expression of care and an imposition of debt. The anticipation of reciprocity which lays the foundation of loyalty is captured well by legal scholar George Fletcher when he writes that "loyalty gets its grip in relationships with others" (1993:14). The elusive but ineluctable dualism of loyalty as both a bond and a bind crystallizes in the image of it as something that *grips*.

Sometimes starkly, but most often with varying degrees of nuance, mentors and protégés articulate the feeling that they owe each other and are entitled to make claims on each other for such things as time, favors, plum work assignments, free labor, endorsements, sympathy, ego boosting, contacts, a listening ear, the inside scoop, emotional succor, etc. Themes of sacrifice, protection, pardon, rescue, advocacy, gratitude, cocooning, and devotion are embedded in stories about what mentors and protégés do for and expect of their other half in the name of loyalty.   At the same time, because mentorship is an authority relationship, the dynamics and expression of loyalty are inherently asymmetrical. Obviously, reciprocity in mentorship does not mean equality or sameness of exchange. By definition, mentor and protégé are not equally beholden to each other; the protégé owes the mentor more and in a different way than the mentor owes the protégé. Exercising influence on behalf of one's protégé is the standard way for mentor to express loyalty. Because of his or her position and experience, the mentor has the resources, capacity, and responsibility to look after and thus demonstrate loyalty to a protégé in ways that the protégé cannot reciprocate. For better and worse, loyalty--as enacted in various forms of material and emotional labor-- becomes indispensible to protégés as a currency of exchange. It is one type of offering the protégé *can* make in return for the mentor's special attention and assistance.

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Beyond displaying enthusiasm in carrying out work tasks to help the mentor--anything from high-level strategic collaboration on projects to doing menial clerical and "housecleaning" tasks to clear the way for the mentor to do his or her work--protégés engage in other forms of emotion work (Hochschild, 1983) to act out loyalty as they perform various caretaker roles and manage delicate situations for mentors. As a *gatekeeper*, for example, protégés screen contacts to liberate mentor from unnecessary details and distractions. Sometimes protégés act as *emissaries* when mentors have reputations of being difficult to deal with. In this role, protégés try to protect mentors if they think others in the organization see *them* as the more amiable and accessible partner in the duo.   Conversely, when called for, sometimes protégés accede

to play the role of *scapegoat.* Pamela, for example, tacitly agreeing to play "the heavy" when interacting with subordinates--did so partly to preserve an idealized image of her mentor as a benevolent leader and to help maintain the latter's credibility among employees.

Pamela: Some people found that Marta overestimated how quickly things could get done or how cheaply things could get done. And people started to come to me and say, "Is that true? Can you really produce this report in this amount of time?" But I respected Marta and I always followed through on what she said even if I disagreed with her even though there were times when I was horrified at some of things that she asked for—I felt that it put me in a really tough spot. Once I had to tell staff they were going to have to work late on a Friday night to get something done because Marta promised it without checking to see if we could do it first.

It was very embarrassing and difficult for me. But I had this sense of obligation to her because—she always came through on a personal level for me. When she said she was going to get me a promotion, she did. When she said she was going to get me a raise, she did. So, I felt a sense of loyalty to her. I still do.

One of the most common roles for protégés is the *good listener*, providing a trusty sounding board and repository for the mentor's troublesome feelings. In these interactions, mentors feel safe to express frustrations, denounce the organization, question directives from superordinates, and come to depend on protégés as confidantes.   One protégé put it this way, "my mentor had a need for someone in the workplace to relate to on a personal level…there was an insane amount of work and incredible stress…she definitely wants an ally…somebody whose loyalty could not be questioned…" I asked 'what does she get from knowing you?' to which the protégé responded: "An ear--a really discreet ear."

By observing and listening, protégés become extremely attuned to the smallest details of their mentors' personalities. They learn to read them astutely—their likes, dislikes, hot buttons, mood swings, pet peeves, etc. Sensitized by this knowledge, protégés will work around these things—for example, by avoiding touchy subjects, ignoring eccentricities, rationalizing capricious behaviours, or by denying the mentor's weaknesses or vulnerabilities. Hence, in the *diverter* role, the protégé cultivates and uses emotional radar to help move attention away from the mentor's foibles. In some cases, diversion is used to cover up for the mentor. One example is a regional manager who was willing to act out the part of a "ditzy" protégé in order to play up an image of her mentor as the "stoic," and as "tough as nails." In so doing, she protected the mentor from owning up to her own frailties; yet this has a cost to the protégé who had to downplay her own competency and repute as a serious contender in their company.

In contrast to the general sociological view that the performance of this kind of emotional labor is onerous, my conversations show that protégés seem to find pleasure in the loyalty rituals. Especially as they look back on the early years in the relationship, protégés' stories reflect eagerness, pride, and playfulness in carrying out both material and emotion work for the mentor. They seem to welcome opportunities to show appreciation and identify themselves as standing with the mentor by "doing for" them. As it happens, carrying out much of this emotion work actually affords protégés a measure of control and influence as they safeguard information shared by mentors in confidence, counsel others about how to most effectively approach the mentor, provide relief and support to the mentor under stress, and hone an emotional understanding about how to relate to and manage the space around the mentor. Through these acts of emotional catering, protégés carve out a niche of utility and a deep affinity to mentors and in the process attempt to satisfy the condition of reciprocity in the loyalty. This is often a satisfying way to pay mentor back.

Nevertheless, even as protégés seem to pull the strings of their own loyalty enactments, they do not always do so without reservation. As relationships progress, loyalty demands on protégés evoke mixed feelings including doubt about the need for them to play out such roles, fear of reprisal for competing with or succeeding the mentor, anxiety about and wishes to separate, and envy of the mentor's power. Hence, even though one protégé, for example, was content to do "shit work" for her mentor, over time she began to worry about trying to chart her own course as a novelist--as if cultivating her own style might be construed by her mentor as a betrayal. And while the protégé with the "really discreet ear"--mentioned a moment ago--was flattered to have her mentor count on her as a confidante, her eager attitude gave way to frustration and an upsetting sense of inequity as she came to feel there was little airtime for *her* in the relationship. And while Pamela--also just mentioned--felt compelled to cover for her mentor's grueling call to overload employees with work—allowing her mentor to retain the "good-cop" image in their good-cop-bad-cop duo—she disappointed herself by "sitting on" grievances about her mentor's seemingly arbitrary demands. Each conflict and compromise underscored the web of connection and constraint brought on by the goal of preserving loyalty.

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Part of what gives loyalty its holding power is that it articulates a boundary around the pair. It signals commitment and declares that the parties feel a sense of "we-ness" as dyadic attention and affection become more pronounced. This is because loyalty flirts with exclusivity as mentor and protégé share something special that leaves or pushes others out. "Stand by me" would be a meaningless phrase unless it contained the implicit understanding that one will not abandon the other in order to side with

someone or something else. Thus, loyalty entails sacrifice and restraint. When loyalty is tested, someone or something—for example, a principle, a person, a part of the self, or a belief—will have to be rejected to prove one's loyalty towards the other. Indeed, the fullness of loyalty, it could be argued, can be measured by the extent to which temptations to betray are resisted. The pair defines itself *as a pair* against or in light of something outside of itself. This is critical because, of course, mentors and protégés do not operate in a vacuum but rather interact with a world of colleagues and organizational actors—any of whom can play the role of the "third term" in enunciating or threatening the pair's loyalty.

As one might guess, this motif—that of dyadic loyalty forged in the context of a third party—contains elements that can set off all kinds of oedipal maneuverings in mentoring relationships. Mentors and protégés will sometimes conscript and 'use' others from their professions and companies to mark relational boundaries and solidify their allegiance. Needless to say, dyadic allegiance among mentors and protégés in a professional or organizational context can be a precarious affair. In a word, loyalty breeds favoritism; by gearing one' loyalty towards a special employee or colleague, a mentor engages in preferential treatment. As Fletcher (1993) points out, this is inevitable because even in a world that holds moral impartiality as a virtue, the ideal of equality cannot be achieved. Loyalty lives in the world of personal attachments to particular others, while impartiality exists in the realm of abstract universals. Such a bias can have a significant impact on parties in the mentorship and their interactions with others. So while there is a good deal of evidence to suggest that creating and sustaining a tight and even exclusive working relationship can be tremendously productive and satisfying for mentor and protégé, it can easily set off inter-colleague hostility, jealousy, and organizational mistrust.

Like the enactments of emotional labor, creating a boundary around the pair to display loyalty has dramatic qualities. Two of the more common methods I've heard mentors and protégés use to act this out are entrusting each other with secrets and banding together in opposition to a third party. Picking up on oedipal themes, interactions like these help to create and maintain the sense of exclusivity between the pair; the primary group sensibility (the "we-ness") both reflects and reaffirms their loyal ties. That said, the process of accentuating the pair's boundaries need not be public. While there may be official or widely shared recognition of the mentor-protégé alliance in an organization or professional network, often it is only the mentor and protégé who are aware (and oft times only barely so) that they are engaging in the collusive boundary marking and loyalty affirming processes.   Typically this occurs by excluding or repudiating others to play up fidelity towards each other.

Sharing secrets--another mechanism to mark boundaries--at once solidifies and tests loyalty as it tethers mentors and protégés into a commitment of restraint; parties agree to withhold the content of the

secret from others. Keeping the secret confirms allegiance, but it does so as the classic German sociologist Georg Simmel (1950) sharply observed, only because the chance to expose it and thus to betray the other are resisted.   The word secret comes from the French root *secernere* which means to separate, distinguish, or set apart. Drawing lines around who gets to know the secret and who does not inflates its value; by necessitating that as others are excluded from knowing the secret, the information seems all the more dear and parties privy to it—for good or for bad—feel special. Nevertheless, being expected to hold secrets in an organizational or professional context can put mentors and protégés in a dreadful bind.

One mentor I spoke to, Manolo, had the wrenching task of having to execute two rounds of layoffs over the time he worked with his protégé, Paulette. Both times the fact that he gave Paulette advance warning of the layoffs was of small comfort to her in that she learned that at least *she* would not be fired. And after five years of working closely together and basically learning the retail business from her mentor, Paulette's loyalty was hard to shake. Still, she felt saddled with unwanted, oppressive details of the retrenchment, given the fact that some of her co-workers were scheduled to be laid off. Being asked to hold the secret pit her between her colleagues and mentor in a test of loyalty.

Bonnie: Did he ask you to hold secrets for him?

Paulette: Well, yes—about the first downsizings. I knew who was going to go and I was neither allowed to share the knowledge, obviously with the people who'd be affected nor to let on that I knew. My god, at that point I was *really* ambivalent about it. I was very conflicted. I felt very, very, very guilty toward the people who weren't going to have jobs anymore.

Sadly, the second round of layoffs at the firm occurred between my first and second interview with Paulette. So, when we met for the second interview the ordeal was fresh and the upset about keeping the secret was palpable:

Paulette: A third of our department just lost their jobs. It's been a really traumatic week at work...I've had a lot of difficulty coming to terms with it even though I knew it was in the offing...Obviously, everybody around me—my colleagues who I have really close relationships with—some of them aren't there anymore. And it's really just been a big huge adjustment for everybody. And a really sad and bitter one at the same time...We were a department of 25. We're now a department of 15.

Bonnie: Was this a shock to you?

Paulette: It was. I felt the impact as a great shock because...just the emotions that were stirred up by it. In point of fact, it was something that Manolo had told me about but no one else. And he told me not so much because it was a function of my job to know as because it was really impossible for him to carry it around by himself.

So, I had kind of been repressing the knowledge...We were talking about it to a certain extent, privately, before any of this was announced...He told me over a month ago...I hope and trust that having someone on the scene in the workplace to share the knowledge with did make it somewhat easier for him. It was very strange because one of things that absolutely, obviously, I can't say anywhere at work is that I was privy to this knowledge beforehand. It would put him in a lot of jeopardy. Obviously, my colleagues wouldn't regard me the same way either.

Not all secrets, of course, are so high stakes. One pair, for example, told me about trying to keep *the fact of their mentoring relationship* a secret. The mentor was extremely cautious in her dealings with the protégé so that other employees wouldn't become jealous. She was nervous about how the intensity of her affection and attention towards the protégé would be interpreted by others in the department. Mainly, however, she wanted to avoid a situation she'd experienced when she was being mentored decades prior: she didn't want to be seen as inseparable from her protégé nor did she want her protégé to be perceived as inseparable from her. Hence, many of their sometimes ten times a day meetings took on the aura of a clandestine affair. They met behind closed doors, and to ensure that there would be no charge of favoritism, the mentor never lunched or socialized with her protégé outside of work.

Bonnie: So the specialness of the relationship wasn't apparent to other people? Do you think it was apparent to Patrice [the protégé] that there was something unique going on here?

Martha: Oh yeah. We would talk about it that way. I would say, "Look, you understand that *this* is different. This is special. This means something more to me."...I would let her know that within the context of an average relationship, this is how I would handle it and that I'm giving her *more information* because I want her to understand the process and not just the result. And that she had to understand that this was because of the context of our relationship. Our relationship was more intense than most boss and subordinate relationships. And Patrice, yes, she did understand that.

Bonnie: How would she take that?

Martha: She would appreciate it—that's why it continued. She was grateful. I let her know that I was giving her more information than I usually would or when something was happening in the group—it was *she* I would select to share it with so that she could have the input. Because I felt that Patrice's and my thinking on something was the total picture. I didn't need my other two managers to give me the total picture. They were unaware that I had already met with her. She was very good at never indicating that and never going beyond the information that she knew was

right for that context. Although between us there was that "*there's more to this and we both know it*."

The more the mentor tried to conceal the alliance--that is, the more ostensibly "secret" it became, the more "dear" or precious it evidently seemed to others in the department. Quite predictably, in the protégé's opinion, *this* secret was in fact no secret at all:

Patrice: It was clear that Martha and I were more than just manager and sub-ordinate. You could just sense that about people. I think people knew that. I think that people were—is 'jealous' the right word (?)—that I had that close relationship with her. I'm sure that people were upset that Martha gave me opportunities that they didn't get from their managers. She was protective of me and some managers were not protective of their staff.

Similar to the ways in which secrets are used to create and sustain a dyadic huddle, another way that mentors and protégés close ranks—albeit with more aggression—involves projection, scapegoating, spoiling, or engaging in other kinds of malicious gossip about a third party. In his piercing analysis of the *folie à deux* dynamics between organizational partners, Kets de Vries (1980) sums this process up as "the search for the enemy" (p. 103). The third party can be anyone: most often in the stories I have heard it includes colleagues, managers, executives, or sometimes even company leaders. (I have yet to hear of subordinates or novice professionals as targets of this process.) The main boundary declaring mechanism here involves transmuting the third party into an "other"—someone perceived as different and *lesser* than the pair. Even in instances when the third party is envied (rather than being seen as inferior), the pair engages in spoiling—denying the good the third party may possess. In the process of taking down a third party, the pair affirms their good fortune or sense of superiority and takes pride in the tenacity of their bond. I use the phrase "three to tango" to evoke an image of this dynamic wherein a third party is conscripted into a dance with the mentorship dyad in ways which strengthen the boundary around the pair.

While other individuals are drawn into boundary defining activity, it is a subtle process and is rarely detected or named. What I mean by *use* of a third party, however, is crucial: *often the third party does not do anything per se to the dyad* but instead serves as a target or repository of the dyad's collusive projections. Noted earlier, the mentoring pair may be cognizant of its use of the third party or oblivious to it. They may know that allegiance to the mentorship heats up because of maneuvers against the third party or this impact may go unattributed. Allegiance was more firmly etched, for example, as Pearl and Miro began to verbalize their common disregard of another manager, Dina—a woman they derided for "bad morals." Pearl lamented, "we both thought it was disgusting that this woman Dina was cheating on her

husband." Patting themselves on the back as being more virtuous than their allegedly unscrupulous colleague, Pearl remembered her relationship with Miro intensifying:

Pearl: Dina was walking around like she was the Queen Bee when she wasn't. Frankly, Dina was sleeping with clients and she was cheating on her husband. That bothered both of us. And as we realized that neither of us could stand her and that we had little respect for her, Miro and Dina's relationship deteriorated. Interestingly, Miro and my relationship stepped up from there.

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While creating a cocoon of trust and enhancing the conditions for creative and at times impassioned collaboration, we see that loyalty also curbs freedom. In its hold, mentors and protégés feel less free to stray, walk away, or turn their backs on commitments. The safety net created by loyalty runs the risk of suppressing voice. Parties feel inhibited to speak their minds—especially to criticize the other or express dissenting opinions when they depend upon the other for protection and support. Pressing for solidarity and exclusivity, loyalty can also lead parties to limit opportunities for meaningful connection with colleagues who could potentially lure them away from the dyadic huddle. In extreme cases, parties may become insulated from important input from other people, ideas can become stale, and jealousy and gossip may be provoked among colleagues. Further, there can be a loss of individual identity as the pair defines itself and comes to be perceived by others as an inseparable duo. One could say that by generating "we-ness," loyalty can also threaten to submerge "me-ness." Individual difference and distinctiveness may be squelched.

Whatever the protégé's positional disadvantage in this dynamic, there is no question that the dialectic in loyalty imperils the mentor as well. In long-term relationships it does not seem any easier for mentors than it is for protégés, emotionally speaking, to distance themselves or breach the alliance—even when remaining loyal entails substantial sacrifice or exposure. Mentorship carries political and reputational risks; in some ways the stakes can be higher for the mentor who, depending upon his or her professional biography, may in fact have more to lose.

Hence, the build-up of loyalty that drives mentor and protégé to go to great lengths to boost each other's careers can also blind them from seeing each other's flaws, stymie the development of independent thought and result in cloning, create dilemmas about whether to pursue challenging opportunities that could distance parties organizationally or philosophically, and lead to sacrifices that sabotage careers. There is no way to be in a loyalty dynamic without debt or reins on freedom. The case of mentorship depicted here illuminates the force that loyalty has in establishing and sustaining

conditions and expectations for reciprocity and sacrifice in intimate relationships. Disloyalty is not the only risk that loyalty carries: loyalty itself is risky.

At the same time as loyalty binds mentors and protégés in allegiances that can at times become too confining for its own good, generativity--a process I turn to next--is a process that involves imagining what sticks to the partners after they separate.

Generativity

My final topic today is to explore the character and dynamics of generativity in mentorship. This is the process of making an imprint on another person as a form of legacy--capturing a large part of the motivation to mentor. At core is the desire to transcend one's individual existence. That is, mentors wish to give something of themselves to protégés in order to extend their ideas, values, beliefs, professional acumen, and ways of being into the future. This can serve as an expression of the mentor's purpose and potency–a sense that what he or she knows and has accomplished has made a mark on the world. Sometimes that mark is very literal, such as when mentors "dot their networks with people who grew up under them," to use a phrase of one executive I spoke with—using generativity to pave the way for succession.

While it can have concrete manifestations–such as training a protégé in a specific skill, giving practical advice about personal or professional aspirations, or preparing the protégé to take over one's job– generative activity tends to be elusive. Often it is unseen, woven into the fabric of routine interactions between mentors and protégés. Moreover, what exactly the mentor wishes to impart, how he or she goes about doing so, and how and what the protégé takes in from the process are not usually mapped out in advance, nor do they tend to leave an observable imprint. It is not unusual for protégés to talk about something ineffable that happened to them as a result of knowing their mentor–some indescribable way in which their lives were lifted by the mentorship experience. And it is also not uncommon for either party— mentor or protégé—not to know when the influence took hold or what acts lead to the imprint. While the process can be deeply nourishing, conversations with both mentors and protégés suggest that generative activity can also be surprisingly disappointing, conflict-laden, and even depleting. My aim in this section will be to shed light on the ways that mixed feelings like these are intrinsic to and produced by this process.

Generativity encompasses a distinct kind of influence. Whether or not the protégé acknowledges it, the imprint has the signature of the mentor. This is an elaboration of Harold Bloom's weighty insight in *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973), a book in which the urge to be original is explored in the context of unconscious appropriation between poets and their predecessors. Bloom forcefully argued that no matter how much we might strive to create something wholly original, something that comes from a pure solitary

creative impulse, we can't escape influence from teachers and forbearers. That is also to say that we can't exist outside of culture. Conception is not immaculate.

Although it is suffused with authority dynamics, generativity does not concern the bureaucratic type of influence. Training a protégé because it is mandated as part of one's job as supervisor is not itself an example of generativity. To be generative, the act must come from personal motivation. John Kotre (1996) captures the essence of this personal interest as "a desire to invest one's substance in forms of life and work that will outlive the self" (p. 10). An act becomes generative he writes, "only when it is imbued with the sense of extending oneself into the apprentice or attaching oneself to a lasting art" (p. 13). Be that as it may, generative influence does not necessarily unfold consciously on the part of the mentor. Sometimes the mentor is unaware of his or her wish to influence, defends against it, or doesn't grasp how much impact he or she has on the protégé. Sometimes the mentor struggles with the boundaries of his or her influence, or becomes anxious about losing control over that which is passed on to the protégé or, for some, about being given *too* much control in this process.

Just as I have explored the contradictory nature of idealization and loyalty in mentorship, so too should we approach generative influence as ambivalent—at once vital and risky. While the mentor's influence can be altruistic—leading to satisfying professional and personal development for a protégé, or communal—aimed at making positive contributions to a professional community writ large, it can also be narcissistic—self-serving for the mentor and in some cases, exploitative of the protégé. When protégés are used primarily as receptacles for immortalizing a mentor's achievements or teachings, generative influence can stunt rather than promote individual growth and cultural enrichment. And although it probably goes without saying— not everything deserves to be passed on. Indeed, some may take solace in the fact that a harmful trend is *not transmitted*. "This ends here," says the mentor who, acting as a buffer, decides to stop a pattern (e.g., professional hazing) that has caused suffering.

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Protégés, of course, do not swallow whole what their mentors offer. In theory, though generativity could inch towards cloning–turning professional development into something like a rote, two-dimensional process of copying one's mentor–agency and emotional tensions are invariably implicated in and stir up the process. That is, protégés are to some extent mindful of and selective about what they identify with and try to adopt from the mentor. At the same time, owing to psychodynamic, social, and cultural prohibitions, they may also try to distance themselves from and try to negate the mentors' influence. What is internalized gets metabolized through filters of conscious and unconscious meanings gleaned from the

protégé's life experience, situational and professional context, and a backdrop of societal norms and cultural codes.

For one thing, a protégé's desire and openness to be influenced by and learn from a mentor may be restrained because of taboos over the idea of accepting help. The "I did it on my own" and "I pulled myself up by my bootstraps" ethos, so valorized in American culture inhibits those who wish to receive guidance. Moreover, possessiveness of knowledge (e.g., "that was *my* idea") and priority (e.g., "I had that idea *first*")—two dominant values rooted in individualism—conflict with the pleasure in sharing and the communal process of creation that is part of generativity. Protégés may be less receptive, that is, to a mentor's influence because of pressures like these to be self-made and original. Similarly, a protégé may disavow a mentor's influence because of feeling ashamed of dependency longings that surface during the learning process. I have also met protégés who kept arms length from generative engagement in order to avoid experiencing their own aggression, provoked by envy of what the mentor possessed and they felt they lacked. All of that said, the filters on protégé internalization clearly have many strains that can work against the mentor's generative efforts. Yet not all are as potentially self-defeating as the ones just described. On the positive side are developmental filters, or perhaps better thought of as nudges, that draw protégés not so much away from mentor influence but toward something else. In other words, rather than react defensively, protégés may detach from a mentor's influence out of a healthy push towards autonomy–that is, to distinguish themselves as individuals on a separate course from mentors.

Like their protégés, mentors are also conflicted about and feel pulled away from wholehearted engagement in generativity. Though it provides them with an enriching sense of personal and professional satisfaction and can offer instrumental rewards such as increased political clout and spread of influence, generativity entails loss. In the act of sharing knowledge, skill, life philosophies, values, etc., the mentor gives up a piece of him or herself. In a sense, mentors surrender their convictions and most passionately held ideas by making them available for internalization and thus interpretation and transformation by someone else. They lose control, that is, over their "precious substance and objects" (Kotre, 1996). The hope, of course, is that the protégé will elaborate in a good way whatever is taken in from the mentor. But there is also the risk that the protégé will twist or misrepresent these things.

Moreover, on some level, mentors are aware that protégés could become competitors–using what they have gained from them against them. Here, the sense of loss may be experienced with hostility as a threat, a theft, or betrayal. Mentors can find themselves treading a delicate course, aware of the risk of undercutting themselves as they prepare protégés to replace them. To make a detour around this bind, some take pre-emptive steps by scaling back generative efforts. The "Salieri phenomenon" (Lorber, 1984)

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captures this well. Named for the Court composer who kept the genius of his protégé, Mozart, from being publicly recognized, Salieri withheld efforts to showcase Mozart to his extensive network of patrons. In so doing, he jealously subverted the opportunity to be generative in order to prevent the outstanding work of his protégé from receiving just acclaim.

Even in the most benign of circumstances, the sense of loss or even the anticipation of it is experienced as bittersweet as the protégé's promise is an indelible reminder of the mentor's inevitable obsolescence and mortality. Mentors can become defensive as protégés find their footing in ways that could upstage them. Percy experienced this directly from his mentor and was puzzled and hurt by it. An emerging poet beginning to gain some attention in local circles, he recalled a number of stinging conversations he'd had with his mentor, Marion, a well- regarded professor in the Creative Writing department at their Brooklyn-based college.

Percy: I keep running into Maurice Manning at readings I've been going to. I remember once, when I went to one of his seminars, all the attendees gushed over his work. He's pretty famous–one of the finalists for the Pulitzer prize in poetry a few years ago. Anyway, so he knows me a little bit too...he liked the work that I turned in during a Caldera residency I took with him a couple of years ago. So, whenever we see each other, he's really friendly.

Bonnie: Does Marion know him?

Percy: Sure–everyone does, but that's the thing. A few times over the last few months after I ran into him and we'd chatted, I'd mentioned this to Marion. I thought she would be delighted because Manning would be such a good contact for me. Instead, each time, Marion acted like she "forgot" (*made air quotes with his fingers*) that I knew him and would sarcastically say, "Oh *you* know *him*?"

To Percy, the put-down in his mentor's snarky response spoke volumes about her annoyance over having to deal with a protégé who in her eyes might have been getting too big for his britches.

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Mentors occasionally admit to having mixed feelings about the responsibility that comes with generativity. However primordial the desire to pass on the fruits of one's experience, some view it as burdensome as it brings them face to face with their limitations and imperfections. Generativity taps into doubts about adequacy and competence—about whether mentors measure up to their own or their protégés' ideals of authority and expertise and can deliver on those expectations. Several who worried about whether they deserved to have this kind of influence said to me that they felt like "imposters."

Finally, generativity may be approached reluctantly as mentors recall and vicariously relive the struggles they faced in the course of their own professional development. While they do find pleasure in

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sharing their skills and talents, I have met mentors who also resent or are dubious about the process if they perceive protégés as acquiring insight, skills, access, and poise too easily. One such mentor, Melissa, the founder of a tech start-up firm, remembered feeling irked by the way it seemed that her protégé could "just slide into" the firm's management tier after she herself had toiled to seed and grow their company from the ground up. Her feeling was "I had to struggle, why shouldn't you?" Mentors can feel inclined to give and withhold–alternating between wanting to pave the way and remove obstacles for protégés to develop professionally, yet recalling—sometimes bitterly and other times with pride—the hard knocks that they faced while building their own careers. This conflict is most acute when protégés act as if they are entitled to professional spoon-feeding from mentors to bypass the pains and struggles of learning. It is not hard to imagine that this dynamic could put a damper on mentors' enthusiasm about sharing what they have.

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Identification is an essential building block of generativity. That is, there needs to be resonance between a mentor's experiences, interests, and values and those of the protégé. The image of passing something onto to a person who can be trusted to make something good of it in the future links to this basic sense of identification–seeing another as like oneself. Obviously, the fact that mentors care about what happens to generative objects suggests that they are not really "freely" offered. There is always an element of self-interest in the giving. With a healthy dose of narcissism, mentors may ask themselves, *do I feel the protégé is like me? Could this person be like me? Does he or she come from a similar place that I do? Does he or she remind me of myself or anyone I admired when I was younger? Will this person reflect well on me in the years ahead?* Mentors who cannot answer yes to any of these questions because they do not feel a sense of similitude in relation to protégés–or cannot imagine the possibility of ever feeling strongly in this way tend to be conflicted about assuming the generative role and as a result, constrict their efforts.

Psychoanalysis helps us understand that identification is complex. It is not necessarily based on qualities that are obvious, immediate, or even reality-based. A mentor may feel a strong emotional attraction to a protégé but have only a vague sense of why that is. His or her investment in the protégé's welfare may go beyond the norm for reasons that elude. Such pulls are typically rooted in identification based on a mixture of real attributes and experiences as well as unconscious fantasies, transference reactions, and qualities projected onto the protégé. These deeper, less conscious psychological sources of identification animate and organize generative efforts, breathing a sense of urgency and intensity into the process.

That said, even in the most satisfying and productive mentorships identifications are ambivalent, partial, and change over time. Just as a mentor and protégé might come into the relationship with common

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backgrounds and proclivities that might predispose them to identify with each other initially, each party is also affected by the other and by the situations they go through together as the mentorship evolves. Events and exchanges that alter perceptions or feelings about the likeness, appeal, sense of camaraderie, mutuality, or shared understandings will have an impact upon identification which in turn will affect generativity. And as relationships progress, mentors may come to view protégés as becoming more like them or as individuals whose ability to carry on their good name become more evident. It may also be the case that as time goes on, mentors may identify less with protégés. Fantasies about likeness and resonance are subject to testing against real situations and events as the mentorship progresses. Hence, while contoured by biography, identification is a fluid, interactional process—not a foreordained *thing*.

When identifications are built on fragile or faulty foundations based on projections or distorted appraisals of the other, unrealistic expectations and disappointments often follow and can wind up misguiding generative efforts. One problematic pattern comes from over-identification—that is, when mentors see protégés as so much like themselves that judgment about what protégés need and can accept in the way of generative influence becomes clouded. Mentors who over-identify with protégés tend to want to "fix" aspects of protégés that they find unacceptable in themselves. Here they risk collapsing likeness with sameness, pushing generativity in the direction of cloning. *Since my protégé is like me, I assume he or she is interested in X, Y and Z because I can relate to these things.* It is easy to see how one could slip into forgetting the subjectivity of the other person when identification and fantasies of narcissistic gratification around that are strong. At the same time, this can lead to frustration and misdirected anger at protégés when attempts to fix or replicate oneself don't take. In contrast, under-identification—when mentors see protégés as too little like themselves to be entrusted with care of generative objects. Mentors who under-identify with protégés move away from generative activity because they fear losing control over their "precious substance"—referred to earlier. This can lead to a generativity stalemate, provoking a fair amount of guilt and frustration for the mentor and dilute the mentoring process.

My view is that both types of identification mishaps reflect narcissistic dilemmas set off in the generativity process. That is, mentors become distressed as they confuse what is for them and what is for the protégé in the relationship. Ultimately, the efficacy of the imprinting process is impaired.

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The extent to which mentors feel authorized to pass something on to protégés is also a crucial element of generativity. They may hold back because of mixed feelings over the legitimacy of their role as authority figures, leaving them sapped of generative desire. Many speak about feeling burdened by lofty expectations that they put on themselves or are projected by protégés, while others shy away from

accepting credit for being an influential person in the lives of protégés. Some equivocate about whether they have anything much to contribute to their protégé's growth; and others feel fraudulent in claiming expertise. Balking at images of themselves as potent authority figures seems to help some mentors keep their generative zeal in check—guarding themselves, perhaps, from the temptation of becoming too grandiose or exploitative.

Occasionally, ideological objections and real world constraints to taking up authority are woven into the emotional ambivalence that mentors experience. Some reflect on their entitlement to authority—referring to their anti-authoritarian rejection or post-modernist skepticism of authority--dating some mentors who are clearly conflicted about whether they even want to be seen as legitimate authority figures. For others who might be happy to take up authority, the changing landscape of work can impede legitimacy. As companies reorganize to meet emerging demands of global and postindustrial economies, well established organizational hierarchies and ways of doing business are being reconfigured. This ultimately impacts on generativity. For instance, retooling workplace technology often places mentors and protégés on more equal footing regarding technical skills. Inevitably, as the digital world takes over, mentors and protégés both find themselves in the position of learner. Both come to depend upon each other–sometimes the mentor is in an even more dependent position, as the protégé, typically more recently trained is likely to be better versed in the new technology. This reversal encroaches on the image of mentor as the "older and wiser" figure. While there are relational benefits to leveling authority (e.g., protégés can view mentors as "more human"), old ways of doing business that date the mentors' expertise call into question the relevance of their generative goods and consequently the legitimacy of their authority.

Taken together, the cause for a mentor's ambivalent feelings and reservations about embracing the authority role–as it is entailed in generativity–is multi-determined. Beliefs and feelings about authority–the need for it, the legitimacy of it, its value, its perceived hazards, whether one has it, whether one should be subject to it—are emotionally loaded, fueled by transference and linked to deep seated fantasies and judgments concerning strength, power, control, expertise, dependency, inexperience, vulnerability, etc. But these things can also be greatly affected by a mentor's personal philosophy and ideological attitudes towards authority as well as societal events and transformations that impact careers and lives. However resolved or conflicted they are regarding their entitlement to take up authority, mentors need to *feel they have* and *actually do have something* to convey. This is not always a given.

In the final analysis, whether generativity happens at all depends on the extent to which mentors are enfranchised by and invested in creating a legacy. "First you need a sense of belonging to a culture in order to feel responsible to pass it on," wrote Ronald Manheimer (1995, p. 15) in a critical essay on the

limits of generativity. At the heart of the matter, thus, are questions about the extent to which mentors have a stake in passing something on to future generations. This partially depends upon whether mentors *feel* a personal connection or claim to ideas, traditions, canons, values, skills, ways of being, et al. or an allegiance to institutions, organizations, or professional fields. Nevertheless, the *psychological investment* in passing something on is only half of the legacy equation. The other half relates to *what is realistically available* in the work culture to be passed on.

Professional satisfaction and success are critical to a mentor's eagerness and sense of responsibility to create a legacy. The extent to which mentors have accomplished their own career goals affects their sense of place in the organization or field in which they work. In turn, this sense of place—of feeling oneself to be a member or leader of an organization or field—fans a mentor's desire and calling to be generative. It stands to reason that mentors will feel more open and hopeful about welcoming protégés into the fold if things have gone well for them–because *they* feel themselves to be a part of that fold.

Mentors whose careers have gone well also tend to feel more potent and perceive themselves as having more to offer. Of course, this aligns with the fact that they usually *are* better connected and more powerful than mentors whose careers have stagnated or plateaued. Mentors who are unsatisfied with their careers or who have been unable to come to terms with thwarted ambitions are not terribly anxious to create legacies, often questioning whether they have the emotional wherewithal to help protégés settle into organizations or fields that have not served them well. Michael, a sports team executive whose career got stunted at middle management, put it this way, "Of course I want Pete to succeed…but why would I want him to be thinking long-term in the company—it's a shitty place to work." Verging on sour grapes, this attitude undoubtedly lines the underbelly of the Salieri phenomenon described earlier. In sum, mentors' perceptions of their generative capacity (e.g., what they *believe* they can offer), their generative desire (e.g., what they *would like* to offer), and the generative reality (e.g., what they *can offer*–practically speaking)–are all informed by career biography–past and present–aspirations and achievements.

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Historical, economic, and social structural forces also play a role in creating and sustaining the conditions in which professional connectedness and legacies either flourish or fade. In this respect, recent work world transformations are enormously important. Due to mergers, downsizings, reorganization schemes, technology conversions, and globalization, individuals are more vulnerable these days to career dislocation. Even professional fields—long thought to be sheltered from bottom-line demands—are rethinking strategic plans to gain competitive edge in the marketplace. For generativity, one implication is

that learning to manage change and tolerate expendability may now be more valuable legacy skills than elaborating or reproducing tradition.

Given our current state of transitory ties to organizations and specific jobs, it is easy to understand why a mentor might feel neither the desire nor the obligation to groom protégés to carry on institutional traditions. When work life doesn't function as a cultural envelope—that is to say, tying individuals to history and to a larger sense of vocational purpose—attachments become fleeting and aspects of generativity can seem irrelevant. Sadly, mounting evidence suggests that many individuals do not feel connected to a professional or institutional home and are provided with little—at least, of cultural value—to pass on to heirs. The fact that mentors have mixed feelings and agendas about generativity should not come as a surprise. Mentors experience doubt, sometimes even dread at the thought of taking up authority. As I have discussed, some of this is rooted in emotional conflict about one's entitlement to power and the associated responsibilities. I am also convinced, however, that some of the anxiety is reality-based. That is, the ambivalence of authority is partly a reaction to the fact that professions and organizations are not supplying mentors with the *stuff* to pass on. The vacuum of values and traditions created by post-industrial transience and instability leaves mentors little of cultural import to hand down. Rather than undermining this central function of mentorship, I'd like to think that it poses new challenges for redefining generativity in this relationship.

Final Thoughts

It has been my aim in this paper to put the spotlight on the intersection of authority and love in mentorship--as a crystallization of the complex nature of intimacy in this relationship, driven by the ambivalent forces of desire and power. Mentorship cannot be understood apart from its authority basis, nor can it be understood apart from its emotional strivings. I hope the reader is convinced of that. To build the case, I hope the reader comes away with a more fleshed out understanding of how idealization, loyalty, and generativity bond and bind in mentorship. I have tried to show how and why idealization inspires and distorts, loyalty connects and confines, and generativity entails giving and loss. I have tried to show the conditions under which the ambivalence generated by these processes can be managed or goes awry. I have tried to humanize these discussions by presenting the stories and voices of many mentors and protégés I've come across through interviews and reading. Finally, I hope that from my analysis, it is clear that the ambivalent processes in mentorship must not only be seen in the psychoanalytical context of individuals in particular relationships, but also as a hugely important social relation set against the backdrop of the wider social, cultural, and historical context of work and love.

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It seems only fitting to end the paper by posing the question: must ambivalence in mentorship be resolved? The short answer is yes, no, and maybe. Extreme ambivalence can of course lead to incapacitating states of excessive rumination, mental or emotional paralysis (Ashforth, et al., 2014), and exhausting vacillation—leading one to act in erratic ways tied to the fluctuations of feeling. This makes it nearly impossible for a person to make critical decisions, act on their own behalf, or stabilize relationships. Resolution is surely required for relief as well as for the ability to move out of a stuck or self-defeating position. In long term emotionally bonded mentorships—the kind that I study—I have not seen this kind of suffering. I suspect that mentors or protégés who might be prone to experiencing ambivalence at such acute levels would not be able to sustain the connection. We do hear the occasional story about relationships where mentors and protégés act out in histrionic swings of highs and lows—seesawing from slavish devotion to vengeful betrayal, for example. These are not the types of mentorship that I studied or that I set out to study.

On this point, I do acknowledge that my research can be taken to task for its obvious gaps. My decision to study continuous, long-term mentorships built in a self-selection bias towards sturdy, matured relationships. This all but precluded an exploration of the conditions under which ambivalent strains might lead to a breakup or to a failure to take off in the first place. Left untouched are the kinds of emotional pressures that cannot be sustained. I deliberately chose to study long-lasting mentorships to find out what holds them together. What leads to their demise clearly deserves at least equal time. Studies of fractured and terminated relationships should be pursued to trace the role of emotional conflict in endings—certainly a worthy topic, for another book.

All of that being said, studying mentors and protégés in relatively healthy relationships does make one question claims about the alleged dysfunctionality of ambivalence. Emerging research in the psychology of workplace relationships, in fact, indicates that ambivalence can lead to positive outcomes. For example, some studies show that ambivalence makes people more likely to take the perspective of others, and leads people to make better decisions (Rothman and Melwani, 2016). Seeing things from other people's point of view allows one to see more sides of an issue, allowing one to fully think through the issue before coming to a decision. Ambivalence, that is, provides opportunities to wrestle with divergence.

In addition to enhanced empathy and decision-making, being able to tolerate opposing feelings, pushes and pulls, tensions, and conflict is interpersonally adaptive. It can even strengthen rather than harm our most important relationships. In the face of uncertainty, the ability to handle anxious feelings, to be able to live with unresolved questions, and still press on and move forward—is a skill set picked up on by

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several authors who posit that ambivalence underlies some of our most enduring commitments (e.g., Brickman, et al., 1987). Indeed, they argue that doubt—the grist of ambivalence—is what prompts people to make commitments. That is to say, if there is no doubt about one's connection to another person or cause, the connection is simply taken for granted. Consequently, there is no need to think about, devote oneself to, or cognitively or emotionally invest oneself in the establishment or maintenance of a commitment.

As we mull over this paradox—that doubt is what keeps us steady in relationships—it makes sense to ask how mentors and protégés manage their doubts to stay the course. To that end, rather than looking to see how pairs resolve mentorship tensions and difficulties, therefore, I have tried to get at how they negotiate them. Even if it was a goal, there is something about the notion of 'resolving' ambivalence—as if this could be done once and for all and completely at that—that doesn't synch up with the ways in which mentors and protégés talk about handling the tensions in their relationships. So when I say *negotiate*, I mean this in the same way that a gymnast is said to negotiate steps on a balance beam; she maneuvers in a space in which gravity is always pulling in one direction or another yet she resists the oscillations so she can stay on the beam. Likewise for mentorship, the ambiguous structure and ambivalent dynamics exert contradictory tugs and interject uncertainty into the alliance, creating fine lines that mentors and protégés need to traverse if they are to hang in there and take what's good from the relationship—even if it isn't everything.

Even if it isn't everything. Beyond the tangible career advances and professional growth that can come from mentorship, the process of working through difficult feelings, making peace with the imperfections of the other person, coming to terms with the limits of one's control, and grasping what functions mentorship can and cannot serve is its own benefit. Protégés come to realize that mentors can't and won't deliver a work life of ease—forever standing by and protecting them, generously passing along gems of their personal wisdom and professional capital. And as the relation unfolds, mentors see that protégés can't and won't always admire or accept their influence and will move on (especially if they have done a good job) and leave them behind. The growth process as the relationship evolves and each party's maturation as a result of staying the course to work things out is itself an important mentorship function with its own developmental value. This also includes being able to appraise the relationship and walk away when it is clear that one can or must separate. In this sense, mentorship is no different from any other significant life relationship. In this regard, when things go well, one could say that mentorship's contribution to human relations is that each party comes to appreciate that we can't be all things to all people.

The disappointed self is able to recognize what cannot be changed and learn from it; in fact such learning is part of the disappointment, and it involves the recognition of one's own shadow, the integration of the 'bad' parents, and through this the recognition of one's own limitations. (Craib, 1994, p.176)

In his gutsy and highly original book, *The Importance of Disappointment* (1994), Ian Craib heralds this theme as a corrective to late modern society's proclivity toward cheerful optimism, in the tendency to hold out hope for perfectly attuned and responsive partnerships, and in bromides about quick-fix solutions to problems that normally involve struggle and are unpredictable in their course. The thought that everything will be better and can be made to be better is an illusion, Craib argues, as it denies our very real human vulnerabilities and limitations. Accepting the limits of a role partner is part of the process of coming to terms with and learning from disappointment. *This* is perhaps the most freeing lesson that mentorship has to offer.

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