Mentoring and Networking:
A Swiss Example of Peer-Mentoring and Critical Thoughts about the Establishment of Formal Mentoring Programs,
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I. Networking as Part of a Formal Mentoring Program

The launching in 2000 of the Swiss Federal Program for Equality of Opportunity in Academic Careers opened up possibilities for the creation and pursuance of new 'Measures for Promoting Women in Academia'.[1] It cites one preeminent goal: to double the number of female professors in Switzerland (around 8% presently) by 2006 by means of mentoring. Other measures to be undertaken are improvement of child care facilities and an incentive system for the universities to hire female professors. Over the past few years mentoring as a method to foster women´s careers has been set up also among university officers and administrators in Switzerland. In 1999 a local workshop on mentoring opened up perspectives on mentoring and disseminated information about the effects of different models of mentoring.[2] Results of the workshop showed networking to be as important as mentoring.

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[1] See article of Katharina von Salis in this volume and www.shk.ch

[2] Julie Page und Regula Julia Leemann (Eds.) Karriere von Akademikerinnen, Bedeutung des Mentoring als Instrument der Nachwuchsförderung, Published by the Swiss Ministry of Education and Science (Bundesamt für

In 2000 the second European Conference on "Gender Equality in Higher Education" in Zurich led to similar results concerning the effect of networking and mentoring.[3] Mentoring encompasses a wide range of activities, chief among them networking, one-to-one mentoring and peer mentoring. In addition to the one-to-one mentoring, which can be extremely useful and fruitful, there is a broad field of networking activities that we consider of crucial importance. We therefore would like to foster the definition of AWIS (Association for Women in Science) that includes networking and peer mentoring as well as other measures: "In a broad sense, mentoring is the set of developmental activities through which role models pass on strategies, values, skills and knowledge."[4]

We support this broad concept of mentoring because we are convinced that young women academics need a close involvement with the academic community as one of the decisive factors for a successful academic career. The university structure in Germany, Austria and Switzerland is similar, and based upon the Humboldtian Ideal of the unity of research and teaching. Particularly in the humanities this characteristic shape of the academic curriculum causes an extreme understructuring (Clark) of doctoral studies Doctoral students are often isolated from their advisors.[5] This situation worsens for post-docs who pursue the specifically German qualification of "Habilitation" that is still relevant in many disciplines. This "third" tier of the academic qualification is even less structured and often isolates scholars from the university, since they may not even be registered with the university during this long period. At the same time it is essential for an academic career to pass successfully the stages of the Doctorate and the "Habilitation". [6]

The light structuring of the German model is precarious for applicants for an academic career, since they may drop out of the "pipeline" because of a lack of involvement in the academic community. But also in other disciplines that are more structured, there is a drop-

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Bildung und Wissenschaft, BBW) in 2000, print version or online version available at:
http://www.admin.ch/bbw/d/schriften/mentoring2000/inhalt.html

[3] This publication consists of contributions to the Conference.

[4] Mentoring means Future Scientists, a Guide to developing Mentoring Programs based on the AWIS-Mentoring Project, Washington 1993, p. 15.

[5] Burton R. Clark, Places of Inquiry, Research and Advanced Education in Modern Universities, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1995, p. 19-55.

out of women. Mentoring for women aims to focus on the individual or disciplinary conditions that cause so many women to drop out of their pursuit of a career. Another factor that might to some extent be responsible is the extended period until a permanent position has been obtained, and there are very few "permanent" jobs. After each qualification step there is fresh uncertainty as to whether the academic career will continue at all. This leads to hard-to-bear situations described by scholars as oscillation between becoming a taxi driver or a tenured full professor.[7]

Although we find it deplorable that the academic university job market is restricted by these conditions we aim Women to get a realistic view on the actual conditions. A further "goal" would be – as often argued by Women – to create totally different assignment profiles. Therefore we argue that young academics have to make sure if they want to stay in the academic review and recognition system. Being known and recognized is the key qualification for successfully remaining part of the community.[8] Therefore networking abilities and strategies can have a decisive role in planning and pursuing one´s academic careers.

II. The Zurich Example of Peer-Mentoring: *MentoringWerkstatt*

The *MentoringWerkstatt* is an experimental peer mentoring Program with groups which support one another. It started in spring 2001 and is part of the Swiss Federal Equal Opportunities program. [9]

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[6] Currently the importance of the Habilitation is fading since Germany has decided to abolish it. Albeit for the Humanities it remains relevant for the present.

[7] Thomas Meyer, Bettiny Nyffeler, Akademische Nachwuchsförderung im Spannungsfeld zwischen Beruf und Berufung, Bericht zur qualitativen Befragung 2000, BBW 2001, p. 11, print version and online: http://www.admin.ch/bbw/d/schriften/schriften.html#3

[8] Karin Zimmermann,, Wissenschaftliche Netzwerke im deutsch-deutschen Wissenschaftsverkehr, in: Sabine Lang, Birgit Sauer (Eds.), Wissenschaft als Arbeit - Arbeit als Wissenschaftlerin, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt, New York 1997, p. 247-262.

[9] See for further information: www.mentoring.unizh.ch. The Mentoring Programm will is accompanied by Pro➜Wiss, a Support Program that includes Public Lectures on important academic career steps, qualifying courses

In our concept of mentoring, peers act as role models and network partners, since they support each other in their academic advancement and Career planning. The idea is to encourage young women scientists and researchers to pursue an academic career and to support those who are already doing so.[10] The focus is on doctoral students or post-doctoral scholars and ranges up to "Habilitierte Wissenschaftlerinnen", i.e. women scientists who have passed their *Habilitation* exam but have not yet been appointed a professorship.

As part of the *MentoringWerkstatt* the applicants to the Program were to gather as a group and develop a concept of networking in the academic community. The women were free to decide whether they wanted to include male members and members of different disciplines . Considered of most importance was the inclusion of researchers from other universities in order to establish an international network.

The concept further comprises a professorial Advisory Board chosen by the groups themselves, with the groups specifying the nature of the Board members' participation (general advice of personal experience of the Advisors Career).

The program supports these groups financially in their networking process, i.e., it provides funds for organizing conferences, meetings, workshops and for inviting speakers from abroad, for sustaining homepages, and more. By these means the young scientists can either pursue an internal process of supporting their mutual career plans or they can act as a group in the academic community by organizing professional meetings, thereby making progress in their research work and they can at the same time optimize their qualifications by advisory support. The structural weaknesses in the doctoral tier and the post-doctoral stage can be compensated for by means by this Mentoring Program that brings women closer into the academic community.

By the end of 2000, following public announcement of the program thirty-seven groups of young scientists had applied. Roughly half of the applicants were doctoral students and half post-docs. We believe that the great interest shown in the program reflects a concrete

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and a web based career orientation. All of these measures are part of a strategy clearly delineating the profile and shape of academic career paths.

[10] *Scientist* and *Researcher* are synonymously used terms in this article since in German *Scientist* can as well mean *Researcher* in the Humanities.

need – that young academics wish to interact more closely with their peers and spend less of their time in isolated laboring for qualification.

The concepts of mentoring developed by the applying groups differed widely. About half of the groups focused more on research goals than on the networking process, as required by the program. This represents the fact that explicitly naming networking and networking strategies is unusual and was for the first time (in the careers of these young researchers) requested by our formal peer mentoring program.

The representation of faculties reflected the proportions of the faculties at the University of Zurich only approximately . While little more than 50% of the disciplines belong to the humanities, more than three-quarters of the applications for the *MentoringWerkstatt* derived from the humanities. Less represented are the other faculties such as economics, law and life and natural sciences. Since the *MentoringWerkstatt* is a new means for fostering the careers of women in academia, we will discuss whether this result means that this concept of mentoring could be less ideal for faculties that have constellations different from those of the humanities. Especially Medicine might be a subject because no application was handed in from that faculty. An evaluation of the program will be made which will also consider questions such as these.

The public announcement elicited the involvement of more than 200 scientists (among them about two dozen men) within only six weeks. We interpret this accrual as being representative of a widespread interest in the model that we presented. The first phase of the *MentoringWerkstatt* will end in spring 2003, and the program on equal opportunity is projected to continue until 2006.

In January 2001 a jury chose the groups listed below for participation in the mentoring workshop. The criteria were their respective networking concepts and chances of being successfully realized, a general consideration of the academic career path for women and a certain diversity of concepts among the different disciplines.

- **Incagroup.net** an interdisciplinary and international group composed mainly of doctoral students in business management and linguistics.[11]
- **Integration of the Defiant**: an interdisciplinary group mainly involved in literary studies.[12]
- **Net or Never**: a group consisting primarily of members of communication and publication sciences.
- **Publication Workshop**: a group with members from business management and economics.
- **Romance literature scholar: academic career or honorary post?** ("Romanistin") this group consists of doctoral students, post-docs and two private lecturers in Romance languages and literature focusing on the situation of female scholars in Zurich.[13]
- **Environmental Women** ("UmFrauen")**:** the focus of the group is the environmental sciences and/or evolutionary ecology; most of its members are biologists, one is a philosopher, one an economist and one a mathematician.[14]

Additionally the jury chose **Geo-Vip** (Social and Economic Geography) to fuse with UmFrauen and two projects from theology and from history. Additional funds could be raised to finance these groups in addition.

The *MentoringWerkstatt* provides rooms with work stations where the members, in individual group sessions but also larger meetings, can gather and network.[15] It seems to be very important for young researchers to have an "official" address at the University to signal that they are institutionally integrated in the scientific community.

One of the most important goals is the dissemination of career-relevant information among the young researchers. The peers in the groups are those who gather and dispense

[11] www.ifi.unizh.ch/groups/se/research/INCAGROUP.NET/
[12] www.mymentoring.com
[13] http://www.unizh.ch/rose/Mentoring_Romanistin/Romanistin_1Titelseite.htm
[14] www.mentoring.unizh.ch/umfrauen
[15] As required with Federal Programs the University of Zurich is providing 50 percent of the costs of the program.

information about how a career can be started, how it can be managed and what the hidden curricula are. In complete independence and with the help of their Advisory Board of professors the groups gather formal as well as informal information in accord with the requirements of their respective disciplines.[16]

Although the program is still very new the groups have begun to achieve their individual goals, as shown by the following examples:

Incagroup.net is a group that aims to create an international network of doctoral students that inlcudes the German University Witten-Herdecke and the Graz University. *GeoVip* and *Romanistin* are groups with more local spheres in networking; it is their goal to connect the female researchers within the existing disciplinary field. So we have a first difference in goals between international networking and national or even local consolidation. Both goals are legitimate and their success depends on the individual goals of the groups.

All of the groups are planning and carrying out formal and informal activities. Formal activities include inviting outstanding scientific role models and/or researchers to Zurich. Other goals are the organization of workshops and conferences or publishing activities. More informal activities are internal meetings with role models/mentors, coaching sessions and/or courses/classes in "soft" skills, business lunches, breakfasts and dinners, recreational activities. Many of the activities have practical aspects such as provision of informal career information ("How to do things"), and the groups benefit from their exclusive relationship with the professors of their Advisory Board. The groups of women scientists or researchers are enabled to do this kind of networking through the financial funds available to them to sustain this sort of activity. One example of the self-organized flow of career-relevant information is the "Mentoring Day" that one group organized. They invited two professors (one of them from their advisory board) to spend an entire day to

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[16] Women are - as a recent study argues – less integrated in the scientific community in the early years of their careers and might therefore be less productive. See Regula Julia Leemann, Bettina Heintz, Mentoring und Networking beim wissenschaftlichen Nachwuchs, Empirische Ergebnisse einer Studie zu Karriereverläufen von Frauen und Männern an den Schweizer Hochschulen, in: Leemann, Page (Eds.), Karriere von Akademikerinnen, p. 49-72. But: Leeman and Heintz conclude that these disadvantages disappear over time as women pursue their academic careers.

dispense expert advice on how to obtain invitations to conferences, how to present themselves to the academic community, how to apply for an academic job and in general on the ideal profile of the academic career path. One of the results was that the group, consisting principally of doctoral students, was confronted with the concrete requirements for pursuing an academic career. For some, this experience was disillusioning because they realized that they lacked the needed profile to successfully pursue an academic career. One of the facts that will be discussed in the *MentoringWerkstatt* is the relevance of "objective" career restrictions such as age, that are actually heavily weighted by science politics and which function as barriers for many women. Would it make sense to withdraw from the field if one of these restrictions is relevant? Or would it be better to attempt to pursue a personal academic life goal, ignoring any barriers while hoping to find an assignment somewhere in the academic world? Among other things the *MentoringWerkstatt* aspires to be a place where personal career considerations can be examined, with input from others, to facilitate the making of sound decisions.

In order to spread information about career-relevant qualifications, another group organized a series of public lectures on academic qualification stages such as the doctorate, habilitation and academic mobility.

We are aware that not all involved Women (and some male) scientists will some day become tenured full professors. This is another purpose of peer mentoring: to admit some light into the often murky process of professional life decision-making. For instance the group *Net or Never* plans to impart knowledge on strategies of publishing, applying, asserting, leadership and on developing alternative career plans. "UmFrauen" is a group closely connected with a doctoral program that offers courses in academic writing, self-, time- and stress-management and other useful skills. It is a new method for promoting women´s careers by presenting realistic views on the projected career path and rendering visible the personal qualifications and capabilities that women have gained. Courses concerning capability are highly valued by doctoral students and post-docs.

The activities of some other groups are closely related to the research work of the participants. The main goal of the *Publikationswerkstatt* is to improve publications of the

members of the group. Since many groups are inter-disciplinarily composed the interaction of scientists from different fields may also stimulate new scientific questions and provide new perceptions of the individuals' own particular research field.

By these means and activities the *MentoringWerkstatt* intends to establish a new research culture among young researchers, one distinguished by mutual motivation and trust. The result of enhanced motivation is usually greater commitment and productivity. Mutual exchange leads to a supportive situation and to more widespread acknowledgment of young academics. The latter is of particular value, as pointed out by a female professor in a German University journal.[17]

III. Things to Consider When Establishing a Mentoring Program for Women

When working with the peer mentoring program we realized that certain crucial points occur when establishing formal mentoring programs for women. Each new method involves risks and has unforeseen effects. We would therefore like to mention certain points that we consider crucial and that should not be overlooked when setting up mentoring programs.

Special Programs for Women: Burden or Opportunity?

Do mentoring programs for women create yet another backlash for women? Are they seen as "needy"? Should not the university as an institution feel greater responsibility for the promotion of women rather than for establishing a "Minority Program" for them? Is there a danger of their being stigmatized as "bad scientists" if women take part in a formal career program?

Special programs for women are useful as long as they are not adequately represented in the academic world. Such programs are needed as long as there is a dearth of role models,

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[17] „Women lack Acknowledgment", according to a short invocation by Prof. Dr. Beate Krais, a German Sociologist at the Technical University Darmstadt, in: Deutsche Universitätszeitung 7/2001, p. 7.

although special programs for women could have the effect that those engaged in them will be considered "needy" or simply less competent than other researchers. Women and organizers of the program will have to live with this prejudice. In general, women reap great personal benefit from participating in such programs.

Special programs for women can also be laboratories for developing new ways for promoting young researchers, which is what we hope for the *MentoringWerkstatt*. Nevertheless, and over the long-term, fostering programs for both sexes are important, because for men as well, the academic path is not easy to follow, strewn as it is with both challenges and risks. Men should be encouraged to reflect their role as fathers and/or partners. Still many women in an academic career lack "back-office" support. Even in the high academic ranks men tend more often to be married and have a family than do women, and generally when women do have a family - at least in Switzerland – their husbands do not assume an equal share of the mutual home responsibilities.

New ways of supporting young academics should involve reflections on gender reality and encourage both sexes to explore new field of professional and private work. If a new research culture is a goal, then an attempt should be made to shift the reproductive structures for women and men to create a more balanced professional life for both sexes.

Dependence and Trust

One-to-one mentoring and the master-apprentice relationship of the doctoral tier in German-speaking countries can produce uneven and unequal dependencies, without women even realizing it. To prevent unwanted results the goals of mentoring should always be clear: to pass on career-relevant information and to support the career decisions of the mentee. With more independent knowledge and self-confidence women and men are less susceptible to unhealthy and domineering influences.

Domineering professional relationships in academia must be prevented, but the academic world is full of hierarchies. Although this contradictory situation exists, young scientists should be enabled to find "gatekeepers" where they need them. There is no way to elude

allhierarchical relationships because any gatekeeper or mentor is older, wiser, of greater reputation and experienced. A young woman researcher has to be aware of this fact and be able to evade hierarchical relationships that are not fruitful. At the same time she must be able to accept hierarchies when they offer her a competent and trusted gatekeeper. Therefore she must be able to distinguish between "good" hierarchy and "bad" hierarchy, and she must be prepared to trust, as well as to assume risks, for her personal and scientific development.

Only open-minded and wide-ranged networking furthers advancement in the academic community. There should be no hesitation to contact people who might be helpful. This is even more important since research results on career paths show that woman tend to wait to be invited to apply for jobs or grants or to take the next career step. These studies also point out that women tend to network along the edges of sympathy rather than instrumentality, while men are more inclined to act in the opposite way.[18] Women should therefore be aware of the fact that relying mainly on sympathy is not the only way of networking, that over the long-term it can in fact lead to disadvantages.

Another important point concerning networking and trust is the fact that women are sometimes inclined to openly talk about their personal situations or problems. Unfortunately, this is not always rewarded but rather can be counter-productive; openness can be perceived as weakness, and women need to be aware of this tendency and practice greater reserve in the matter of their personal views.

Excellence and Diversity

Universities want to foster excellence and excellence is viewed as a result of objective criteria. Traditional evaluations of academic quality do not include structural disadvantages of women in academia. Therefore women are evaluated by the male standard that does not usually consider gendered views, i.e. structures, cultures, women´s and men's working attitudes or habits or career paths. Excellence is not seen as a result of a formational

process but as natural talent. Therefore mentoring programs can be difficult to establish because they seem to support the wrong people: not the best but the most needy. They attack the persistent myth that excellence is objectively definable.

Moreover, some women are appalled by the traditionally traded image of a researcher who is male, a professor and presumed excellent. Since excellence is defined as male, women don´t belong to the peer group of excellent competitors. There is a dual problem with how women are perceived. Either they are not considered at all because of their gender, or they are not seen as excellent - again because they are women. It takes a conscious act of awareness to change the perception of women in academia. This is why it is important to include the term diversity in the discussion of excellence. The latter term is not yet established in the German-speaking academic field. Diversity has not yet been discovered as adding quality to excellence. Diversity is, in the words of Harvard University's Affirmative Action Plan Reaffirmation, "advancing the academic purposes of the University and an affirmative action policy is essential to achieving such diversity".[19] Using this idea Diversity in Swiss Context would mean measures to promote representation of under-represented groups, sexes, people of different origins etc. in the public sphere; here: in academia. Diversity is therefore seen as a democratic means to add quality to a existing society.

Therefore the promotion of women does not solely depend on their individual performance but mostly on structures and cultures that perceive and esteem them. Academic structures should start to reward diverse persons and performances as completing quality.

Gender Competence and Gender-Mainstreaming

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[18] Minu Hemmati: Informal Networking: Barriers and Opportunities for Women; Presentation at the Congress „Gender Equality in Higher Education", Zurich 2000.

[19] Neil L. Rudenstine, March 23, 2000, in:Harvard University, Affirmative Action Plan 2000, Office to the President, published as Online-document, p.iii.

Where and how should mentoring programs be implemented? How does "gender-mainstreaming" interfere with mentoring? Who is responsible for mentoring and gender-mainstreaming?

Equal Opportunities Officers are promoting gender equality at Universities but the responsibility of guaranteeing gender equality lies basically with the University and its decision-makers itself. They decide about funds, assignments and whether it will take gender-mainstreaming into account at all.

But not every executive of gender equality is competent to pursue gender-mainstreaming activities or has a professional background or enough work resources or infrastructure to be effective. Gender-mainstreaming as new concept promoted by the European Community to create gender equality is a tool that has to be handled professionally.[20] Equal Opportunity Officers need professional training to develop and pursue measures for promoting women and gender equality. Measures need to be taken for the long-term to guarantee effectiveness. Officers need to have enough personal and financial resources to do their work. They need to communicate and cooperate closely with the deans and other leaders at the university.

Also decision-makers and administrators (men and women) need gender competence and awareness, if gender-mainstreaming is to be realized. Projects like the mentoring workshop contribute to this development if they are created, developed and implemented in close cooperation with the university administrators. Mentoring programs are part of a successful team-work of university executives and equal opportunities officers. It is not enough to pronounce a willingness to support women; competent measures have to be undertaken. All measures have to be evaluated carefully to balance the successes and risks of mentoring measures.

Academic career paths differ widely in each discipline and require measures that are highly individualized. Qualification stages like the doctorate or the habilitation have different reputations like in medicine or in the humanities. Equal Opportunity Officers need to know

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[20] **URL von ETAN.Report**

these differences. Promoters of women (or men) in the academic career path have to be familiar with these different research cultures. Equal Opportunity Officers have to be aware of the conflict that can arise when they try to implement promotional programs for women. They have to be aware that promoting people (including men) openly can be perceived as an attack on the traditional structures of the University. They have to know the arguments and have to have answers to hard questions. New concepts for promoting young academics differ from the conventional belief in natural talent and training by the unity of research and teaching of the Humboldtian era.

Mentoring and a belief in diversity are important factors in establishing a new research culture for promotion of greater opportunities for all.

Biography

Elisabeth Maurer:

Born in Switzerland she went to school in Germany. 1975 until 1986 she worked as child-care coordinator in the area of educational practice. 1987 – 1991 she trained Teamdeveloppement- and Communication-skills in banking areas. 1994 Masters degree in Political Science and Educational Science. 1995 Assistant at the Office of Equal Opportunities at the University of St. Gallen. Since 1996 she is Director of the *UniFrauenstelle – Office for Equal Opportunities at the University of Zurich*, Switzerland. Currently Elisabeth Maurer is finishing her dissertation on "Possibilities to develop gender competence in Higher Education Policy".

Ursula Meyerhofer:

Born in Basel, Switzerland, she studied Modern History and German Literature in Berlin/Germany. Research Assistant as a student. Master of Arts in 1994. Graduated Research Assistant for State Law in Zurich. Doctoral Thesis in Berlin in 1999 on National Integration in Switzerland in the 19th Century (published in 2000). For several Years she

was leading member of an informal Coaching Group of graduate students. Since 2000 Project Manager for the Establishment of formal Mentoring Programs at the University of Zurich and research assistant at the *UniFrauenstelle – Office for Equal Opportunities.*