

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

**“She’s me, the whole of me”:  
Constructing mentoring as a feminine gendered  
connection for women’s professional identity**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of

Master of Science

in

Psychology

at Massey University, Manawatū,

New Zealand.

Bianca Claire Haemmerle

2016

Copyright is reserved by the author of this thesis. The author holds moral rights to be identified as the sole author for the complete thesis content. Permission for reproduction in any form is given for individual research and private study purposes only.

## **Abstract**

Despite the increased numbers of women in the New Zealand labour market, gendered segregation of the workforce, pay inequality and a lack of women in leadership roles are still gendered issues facing women in employment today.

Mentoring is a widely accepted strategy to improve women's employment issues and career opportunities. While the promise of mentoring seems to offer women many rewards at work, this study reveals mentoring for women is complex, with gender implicated in the complexities.

This study is informed by feminist poststructuralist theory. The basis for analysis is a Foucauldian Discourse framework. Unstructured, conversational interviews with nine New Zealand, mid-career, professional women were used to gather mentoring narratives at work. The women discursively drew on various constructions of a 'connection'. Connectedness talk with mentors was constrained and/or enabled through two key elements of mentoring: institutionalised relationships and positioning.

Institutional mentoring with managers and partners as mentors and the resulting power relations, constrain the women's ability to make meaningful connections with mentors. Importantly, women actively position themselves and their women mentors through feminine discourse. This takes into account the psycho-social and emotional qualities of women at work and their various work-mothering responsibilities. A 'feminine gendered connection' enables the women to positively transform how they view themselves and their professional identity at work.

## **Dedication**

To my mother, friend and mentor -

Words cannot express my gratitude, love and admiration I have for you. I am eternally grateful for everything you have sacrificed in order to get me here. You have tirelessly supported me and given me strength to keep persevering throughout this journey, and I wouldn't know where I would be in this world without you. You are courageous, loyal and a role model. I aspire to be like you.

## **Acknowledgements**

I wish to sincerely express my gratitude and warm wishes to several important people who have significantly contributed to the completion of this thesis, as without them I wouldn't have developed the same sense of purpose and sense of being a woman.

To my supervisor, Professor Mandy Morgan, Massey University – Manawatū, your endless wisdom and knowledge has been an invaluable asset for me. I am warmly grateful for your continuous support and guidance in nurturing my skills as a feminist researcher.

To the nine women participants, I warmly thank you for giving up your time to be interviewed for this study. You have all been completely honest and shown integrity in our discussions and I appreciate such interesting and insightful mentoring narratives that you have provided for me. You have been a crucial resource to the complexity of mentoring.

To Rohini Subbian, Head of Lending and Document Supply, from the Albany Campus Library, who gave up her time to help me put together the appendices.

My research project was deemed 'Low Risk' from the Massey University Ethics Committee.

To my loving and generous parents, Linda and Enrico, thank you for keeping me sane throughout this emotional rollercoaster. You have allowed me to flourish in more ways than I can imagine. You have taught me to never give up on my dreams, be myself and most importantly be happy.

To my sister Corina, a strong and beautiful woman, I am extremely thankful for you always believing in me and being a continual source of encouragement. You have taught me to be resilient and independent. I am proud to be your sister.

## Table of contents

<i>Abstract</i> .....	<i>iii</i>
<i>Dedication</i> .....	<i>iv</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i> .....	<i>v</i>
<i>Table of contents</i> .....	<i>vi</i>
<i>List of figures</i> .....	<i>ix</i>
<b>Chapter I Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<i>Gendered issues of women at work</i> .....	<i>1</i>
Gender segregation at work.....	1
Pay inequality between genders.....	2
Women in leadership .....	3
<i>Promise for a brighter future</i> .....	<i>4</i>
<i>My interest with mentoring and women</i> .....	<i>5</i>
Mentoring scenario one: Formal mentoring .....	5
Mentoring scenario two: Informal mentoring .....	6
<b>Chapter II Literature review</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<i>Mentoring as we know it</i> .....	<i>9</i>
<i>In theory</i> .....	<i>11</i>
<i>Feminist empiricism</i> .....	<i>13</i>
A woman's place .....	13
Contribution of feminist empiricism to mentoring .....	14
<i>Feminist standpoint</i> .....	<i>15</i>
Through the looking glass .....	16
Contribution of feminist standpoint to mentoring .....	17
<i>Feminist poststructuralism</i> .....	<i>19</i>
Key principles.....	19
The question of power and the gendered subject.....	21
Contribution of feminist poststructuralism to mentoring .....	22

<i>Summary</i> .....	24
<i>Setting the scene</i> .....	24
Reflexivity .....	26
<i>Aims of the study</i> .....	27
<b>Chapter III Research Methodology</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<i>Power/knowledge</i> .....	28
<i>Significance of power</i> .....	29
<i>Disciplinary power</i> .....	30
<i>Governmentality</i> .....	32
<i>Discourse</i> .....	33
<i>Summary</i> .....	33
<i>Research design and method</i> .....	34
Participant recruitment .....	35
Reflexivity .....	36
Participants .....	37
Interviews .....	39
Reflexivity .....	40
Transcription .....	41
Analysis .....	43
Reflexivity of connection .....	46
Summary .....	46
<b>Chapter IV Analysis of institutionalised relationships</b> .....	<b>47</b>
<i>Socio-political work context</i> .....	48
<i>Mentors with direct line of responsibility</i> .....	48
Work context .....	49
Dynamic between managers and women .....	50
Forming a meaningful ‘connection’ .....	51
Reflexivity .....	52
<i>Institutionalised employment relations</i> .....	53



Reflexivity .....	55
<i>Summary</i> .....	56
<i>Mentors without direct line responsibility</i> .....	56
Work context .....	56
Dynamic between mentoring dyad .....	59
<i>Summary</i> .....	61
<b>Chapter V Analysis of positioning</b> .....	<b>62</b>
<i>Institutionalised positioning</i> .....	62
Gendering of women at work .....	63
Reflexivity .....	65
<i>Summary</i> .....	67
<i>Gendered positioning</i> .....	67
Men are ‘different’ to women .....	68
Reflexivity .....	69
Constructions of a ‘feminine connection’ .....	69
Women’s issues .....	70
Transformative professional identity .....	72
<i>Summary</i> .....	73
<b>Chapter VI Conclusion</b> .....	<b>75</b>
Reflexivity .....	78
<i>References</i> .....	81
<i>Appendices</i> .....	89

## **List of figures**

Figure 1: Initial coding of mentoring experiences Page 43

Figure 2: Second coding phase of mentoring as a 'connection' Page 44

