Being heard: Mentoring as part of a community media intervention

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Abstract
The AuSud Media Project is a community media intervention aimed at enabling Sudanese-Australian to develop a media voice. One of the elements of the project was a mentoring program that partnered Sudanese-Australians with working journalists. This article investigates the experiences and assessments of the mentoring program, highlighting different aspirations held by participants, language tutors and journalists, and the power relationships involved. We find that although mentors and participants had different goals for their mentoring experience, the participants felt heard by their mentors and by extension the Australian media. However the mentoring relationships also took place in a system of broader inequalities and structures that raise questions about how to effect change through such media interventions.

Keywords: Media intervention, Mentoring, Sudanese-Australians

Introduction

In 2009 the AuSud Media Project, a community media intervention, was initiated to enable Sudanese-Australians living in the Australian city of Melbourne to develop a media voice (see Marjoribanks et al., 2013 for a description of the development of the project). Since their arrival in Australia, through the Australian Humanitarian Program and other processes of immigration, studies have demonstrated that Sudanese Australians have been the subject of negative media representations, wherein a majority of media coverage has framed Sudanese Australians as a 'problem community' in stories linking crime, violence and an alleged 'gang culture' with ethnicity (Due, 2008, Nolan et al., 2011). An additional critical issue with the representations of African Australians, including Sudanese Australians, is that they are rarely given the opportunity to have a voice in news reports involving their communities, with police or government officials instead speaking on their behalf (Windle, 2008). Such reporting is not only problematic in its own terms, but also because of the impacts it has on life chances for members of the Sudanese Australian community more generally in areas including employment, education and health (AHRC, 2010).

Located within this media context, the AuSud project was organised around a journalism training program that had a number of elements, including a mentoring program that paired Sudanese participants ('protégés') with working journalists (mentors). This article considers the results of this journalism mentoring program, focusing on the extent to which it helped the training participants to develop a media voice. Through interviews with program participants, we find that mentors and protégés had different expectations of the mentoring relationships, with numerous mentors having instrumental and goal-oriented expectations

which the protégés did not necessarily share. Nevertheless, the protégés reported that having working journalists as mentors was important for them, in particular making the trainees feel as though they had a legitimate voice and were being heard (Dreher 2009). In considering this finding, we consider how the training program and its outcomes is necessarily situated within a wider field of power relations that both influence it and in relation to which it operates as a potentially transformative intervention. Indeed, our findings suggest that, while both groups recognise the potential for the program to bridge and transform existing relations of inequality, it is nevertheless significantly structured by these in ways that cannot simply be transcended.

Background: the AuSud Media Project

The AuSud Media Project was a community media intervention (Dreher, 2010a) that started in 2009 in Melbourne, Australia. Supported by an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant, the project developed as an attempt to better understand, and potentially to shift, media representations of Sudanese people in Melbourne's news media. The project developed as a research and training collaboration between a group of university-based researchers and industry partners, who jointly worked to develop a project that would provide opportunities for Sudanese people to develop resources and opportunities that would facilitate an increased voice in processes of representation. With this aim, the researchers worked with public service media provider the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and migrant services provider AMES (Adult Multicultural Education Services) to develop and assess a community media intervention, in the form of a voluntary media training program that was offered to and taken up by Sudanese Australians in the Melbourne area.

Community media is argued to offer the possibility of empowering groups who are 'misrepresented or ignored' through both community and mainstream media engagement (Meadows, Forde & Foxwell 2009), challenging cultural homogenisation situated within the context of globalisation (Howley 2005). Within this field, Downing (2005) calls upon those who share concerns regarding media representations of minority ethnic communities to highlight the absence of broad agreement of the need to respect diversity within the media (Downing 2005). In response to such concerns, media interventions are emerging.

Community media interventions, in Tanja Dreher's (2010a, p. 86) conceptualisation of the term, seek to enable members within stigmatised communities to 'speak back to mainstream news media'. In seeking to achieve such goals, community media interventions use the strategies of, first, skill development for members of the marginalised community and, second, fostering relationships between the community and the mainstream news media. The AuSud project employed both strategies of skill development and fostering relationships. In terms of skill development, a journalism training program, intended to provide Sudanese-Australians with the skills needed to engage with and participate in mainstream news media, was developed and implemented.

Three training programs were run, with each being conducted over 12 weeks, and involving weekly sessions on topics including journalism skills such as writing, editing and interviewing, as well as sessions on the media context including defamation and media ownership. While sessions involved delivery of significant content, there was a focus on active participation and practical activities. In designing the training, it was considered that it might also potentially influence practising journalists' coverage of the Sudanese by fostering relationships between journalists and members of the Sudanese-Australian community. On both these grounds, and to draw on their expertise, current journalists were invited to deliver the training and to contribute to a mentoring program for the Sudanese participants. It was intended that this relationship building might enable the journalists to develop better links with the Sudanese and promote the inclusion of Sudanese voices in news coverage. The

mentoring program also enabled trainees to gain insights into the working lives of journalists outside of the classroom by, for example, visiting newsrooms and by having a journalist discuss and review their material. Creating these relationships also offered the opportunity to develop a form of journalistic education that is concerned not only with providing voice, but also with providing an opportunity for listening to different peoples' concerns including, potentially, concerns about existing news media practices. As Dreher (2009) notes, while much research on challenging dominant media representations focuses on the question of providing voice, it is also critical to ask who is listening to that voice. Related to this, there is also a need to ensure that the responsibility for voice and listening is not located only with the marginalised group or community. Those who are in dominant positions within society must also take responsibility that is informed by listening (Dreher 2009). Further, the work of Couldry (2010) on sociologies of voice highlights what he refers to as a duality of voice expressed through both sustaining and validating voice. Attaining these attributes of voice, value is thought to be achieved (Couldry 2010). However care must be taken not to reaffirm binary conceptualisations of the powerful versus the powerless. As Rodriguez (2002) argues, a potential result of such framing may unnecessarily place limitations upon mainstream resistance and hide the diverse social changes that can emerge through what she terms 'citizens' media'. Broadening the theoretical view of alternative media, Atton (2002) characterises alternative media in terms of 'process' and 'relation' in the pursuit of transformation, encompassing cultural practices alongside journalism.

Some difficulties of projects seeking to respond to media representations are highlighted in the work of Threadgold (2006). This work presents women's stories of seeking asylum in the UK in 2004 with the desire for these women to tell their stories in the hope of making a difference in response to what is described as anti-asylum media discourse characterised within a context of endemic dehumanisation. Of interest for the work of the AuSud Media Project engaging with migrants is Threadgold's concern with putting forward asylum-seeker voices and the provision of media training for such a group. Specifically, a concern exists regarding the power differences between the participants of such a group and the institution their voices are being placed within, and what she terms the 'capacity building' to achieve this which can exclude those with limited English and potentially also women due to domestic duties (Threadgold 2006). While the AuSud Project aimed to alleviate some of these issues by providing both English language tutoring and editing to participants it nevertheless, as we go on to discuss, confronted similar difficulties and challenges.

An additional concern regarding gender is highlighted in the work of Dreher (2010b) who identifies that journalists may seek a community leader, and as such, potentially give greater representation to someone who may be more likely to be male, and potentially conservative also, though this in itself may be a stereotype. Importantly, Dreher (2010b) also cautions against the rigid assumptions that may be applied with reference to 'community' or 'culture' in such projects, which can potentially serve as essentialising. The AuSud Media Project does refer to the Sudanese and South-Sudanese Australian communities, though it should be noted that this is not intended to generalise the experiences of the AuSud participants onto the wider groups.

This article reports on and analyses the mentoring program that was integral to the AuSud media training program. In discussing this, we draw on the terminology of 'mentors' and 'protégés' drawn from a field of existing work on mentoring. These terms are not entirely unproblematic, given the potential for different agendas and interests between the respective parties in mentoring relationships. However, they usefully highlight the usually hierarchical relations that exist between partners in mentoring relationships, and simultaneously indicate that such relationships also serve to potentially capacitate and empower the protégé. In the AuSud mentoring program, all Sudanese trainees were paired with a working journalist who

would act as their mentor. Mentors were asked to meet with their protégé, show them their workplace, and provide feedback on any articles they wrote. The mentoring relationships were otherwise unstructured: mentor/protégé pairs were expected to work out a suitable frequency for their meetings and determine what their activities would be. Most mentors were journalists with the ABC, a partner in the project, but others worked at the major print newspapers and television stations in Melbourne. Trainees were also offered the support of writing tutors provided by AMES. Writing tutors are members of the community who volunteer with AMES to provide English-language tutoring for newly arrived migrants. In the context of AuSud, the writing support was voluntary, and anyone who wanted feedback on their writing could request a tutor. The writing tutors therefore also acted in a supportive and mentoring role with the trainees. Like the formal mentoring program, relationships between writing tutors and trainees were unstructured and shaped by both parties.

Understanding and Analysing Mentoring

Most research to date on mentoring has been from a psychological or psychosocial perspective and has focused on mentoring in workplaces. Mentoring has been associated with positive outcomes for protégés. The foundational work of Kram (1983) suggests that mentoring can facilitate both psychosocial development, which encompasses role modelling, acceptance and confirmation, counselling and friendship to generate a sense of competence, confidence and effectiveness, as well as career development. Another study found that, compared with people who have not been mentored, protégés felt a greater desire for power, described as a desire for influence and control, and a greater desire for achievement, outlined as a desire to excel and gain feedback (Fagenson, 1992). In this respect, drawing on the terms of Pierre Bourdieu's schema (Bourdieu, 1986), mentoring relations can both enhance 'social capital' (connections to influential social networks) and 'cultural capital' (socially valued skills and knowledges) that underpin both dispositions and capacities to advance their social standing. It should be noted, however, that Bourdieu's work also proposes that systems of capital also exist as hierarchically organised systems of power, an issue we return to below.

Although mentoring can foster psychosocial support (Kram, 1983), which can lead to feelings of satisfaction with the mentoring relationship, what is sought by mentors and protégés may not be in agreement (Young and Perrewe, 2000). Young and Perrewe (2000) found that mentors' perceptions of trust in their protégés were enhanced when protégés were open to advice, coaching and showed effort, whereas protégés' perceptions of trust in their mentors were enhanced when offered social support. From the perspective of protégés, then, psychosocial support is desired and beneficial in achieving trust. However, it should also be acknowledged that psychosocial support can also be achieved when protégés share their mentor's 'learning goal orientation' (Godshalk and Sosik, 2003), characterised by Dweck (1986) as developing competency and being challenged to promote learning (Dweck, 1986). Sometimes, though, there is a disjuncture between what mentors and protégés want from the mentoring relationship. Protégés generally seek social support, such as encouragement and friendly personal discussions, while mentors tend to be more goal oriented (Young and Perrewe, 2000). However, work on mentoring also indicates that psychosocial support is one of the key aspects of successful mentoring, with psychosocial support being empirically linked with enhanced career outcomes (Scandura, 1992).

Another factor that shapes whether the mentoring is a 'success' is how formal the relationships are. Research on mentoring suggests that informal relationships, formed through personal commitment, provide more psychosocial support than more formal ones (Fagenson-Eland, 1997). Formal mentoring pairs tend to communicate less often than informal pairs (Fagenson-Eland, 1997), and informal relationships appear to have better outcomes for mentees (Smith et al., 2005). Informal mentoring relationships cannot always be achieved

due to such constraints as time, and as this is the case, it is important to acknowledge that formal mentoring is still preferable to no mentoring (Seibert, 1999). Further, formal mentoring may be required in contexts where informal mentoring relationships are not emerging organically.

Another important dimension of mentoring relates to the power dynamics of the relationships involved, but this is an area that has been less studied to date. Communication research, for example, has not fully examined the relationship between structural power evident in wider social relations, such as structural inequalities experienced by racialised minority groups, and the manner in which this impacts on daily social interactions including those that operate within mentoring relationships (Schippers, 2008). It has been suggested that, if it can engage with such issues, mentoring may have the capacity to foster linguistic, emotional and cultural capital to develop the agency of protégés that is not otherwise available in a context of oppressive social relations where such inequalities are generally unacknowledged (Dumenden, 2011). In addition, offering culturally appropriate and sensitive mentoring can aid forms of social inclusion (Griffiths et al., 2009). However, to achieve these outcomes, there needs to be a reflexive awareness of the power dynamics of social relations, such as forms of discriminatory treatment experienced by racialised minorities, as well forms of socio-economic inequality, and their role in shaping mentoring relations. Indeed, by engaging with issues of power within mentoring relations, the mentoring process may be able to more fully achieve its stated objectives.

In sum, the findings of mentoring research suggest that mentoring can have positive impacts in workplace contexts, in particular but not only when those relationships are created informally between mentors and protégés. However, questions of power, in particular the relations between broader societal power relations and relations within the mentoring relationship, have been relatively understudied to date. This is important not only because the issue of power bears upon the effectiveness of mentoring, however, but also upon how 'success' is measured. For example, returning to the Bourdieuian framework introduced previously, it is notable that in this framework the development of networks (social capital) and skills and knowledge (cultural capital) do not just potentially 'empower' protégés. They also, importantly, may serve to acculturate them to the existing dispositions, ways of seeing and forms of practice (what Bourdieu refers to as 'habitus') of their mentors (see Bourdieu, 1990). As the basis for facilitating 'voice' within an unequally structured field of media representation, this may present clear limitations. This suggests it is important to consider whether mentors consider, and take into account, the structured inequalities that form the context of mentoring relationships. It also suggests it is important to consider whether mentors *listen* to protégés in ways that might not only serve to underpin more effective mentoring but also, because it is a two-way relationship, be potentially transformative for both parties. In addition, with much of the literature focusing on the workplace, there is little research on the role of voluntary mentoring, such as that provided as part of the AuSud community media intervention, in which the provision of mentoring to journalism trainees offers the opportunity to be evaluated by working journalists (Gondo, 2012). The mentoring element of the project was connected to its skills development and community building aims. It was also a formal mentoring program, with mentors and protégés assigned to each other without prior relationship building. Our analysis explores the mentoring program through the views of the Sudanese-Australian protégés and the journalists and writing tutors who acted as mentors.

In seeking to address our central question of whether the journalism mentoring program helped the training participants to develop a media voice, our research explored a range of questions. Why did mentors and protégés become involved in the AuSud project? What did they expect their roles to entail? What did their roles actually entail? It also asked trainees

what their aspirations were and whether the project met their needs. In so doing, the article contributes to and builds on existing literature on mentoring, in particular through engaging with questions of power in a media intervention program.

Research Methods

The study investigated how participants, mentors and writing teachers experienced a mentoring program that was part of a community media intervention project. Qualitative research is appropriate for exploring questions of experiences and process, in particular because it enables engagement with the meaning that people make of those experiences and processes (Liamputtong, 2009). In this case we explored participants' motivations for being involved in the AuSud project, what they did in their mentoring relationships and whether the mentoring met their expectations. While not generalizable, this type of research provides insights into the mechanisms behind social actions, and the meaning that people make of those actions that may at the least be of relevance to other similar processes.

In-depth semi-structured interviews were held with 14 mentors, 23 trainees and 4 writing teachers in 2012-2013. Interviews with the mentors and writing teachers focused on the mentoring relationships with their protégés while the interviews with the protégés were broader, covering multiple aspects of their participation in the AuSud project, including the mentoring. The transcripts were transcribed and analysed thematically (Liamputtong, 2009), seeking to uncover both similarities and variations in experiences of the mentoring program among the 41 people interviewed. As part of the ethics process informing this research, participants were offered confidentiality, so no names have been used, and people are only identified by their role in the mentoring program. In addition, due to the small numbers of participants, and the potential for participants to identify each other (internal confidentiality) (Tolich, 2004), and possibly to be identified by other members of the Sudanese-Australian and media communities, we have excluded any potentially identifying characteristics.

Findings and Discussion

The interviews revealed that the motivations held by the participants, mentors and writing teachers for their involvement with the AuSud media project were, in some respects, closely aligned. For the protégés, the primary motivation for participation was to develop a voice to counter negative representations of the Sudanese Australian community within the media, and because of the potential provided by the project to allow them to 'talk back' (Dreher 2003). As one protégé put it:

> … it was a concern for lots of Sudanese Australians in a sense that they were being negatively stereotyped and represented in the media … there was no medium to be able to respond to misrepresentation, and when that came up obviously it found a greater interest not only in me but I think to a lot of other people as well to get in and learn the basic skills and obviously be in a position to explore how they can respond to those should the situation arise (Protégé).

Indeed, initial recruiting for the training was generated through a series of roundtable forums, organised by the research team, in which Sudanese Australians participated in discussions that revolved around concerns about media representations. While it is conceivable such events might have influenced participants' understanding of the program's significance, it is nevertheless notable that such concerns continued to be prominent throughout the life of the project, and were consistently referenced as a point of motivation.

For the mentors and writing teachers, motivations to participate included the desire to 'empower' the Sudanese Australian community, to share journalistic knowledge, and an altruistic desire to help a community in need. Nevertheless, despite the complementarity of the motivations of both parties, the actual mentoring experiences revealed a certain disjuncture between them. Mentors and writing teachers tended to focus instrumentally on the development of journalistic writing skills, while participants sought the chance to have their grievances regarding media representations heard by their mentors and writing teachers, as well as the program trainers.

Why did mentors and protégés become involved in the mentoring?

The desire held by protégés to gain empowerment by developing a voice was a clear motivator for their involvement in the training program. Through its training program, the project was seen to offer them the opportunity to develop the necessary skills to respond to the issues of misrepresentation:

> … all of us as Sudanese hope to join the Australian media, because we need to discuss our problems through the media … I think we need to see some of our leaders working in television or radio to cover our problems in our community. (Protégé)

Notably, this quote emphasises not only a need for skills, but also the opportunity to create representations that encompass positive experiences and stories from within the community. This was seen as being in contrast to the predominantly negative representations of Sudanese Australians that were perceived by participants to dominate the mainstream media:

> …most of the representation that we got was not a representation for the majority, it was just for the few young kids that were … causing the problems and … the media made it look like it was the whole community, you know, just to make them realise that there are other people doing really important things in the community too. (Protégé)

For some protégés, the project not only offered the chance to develop a voice, but also pragmatically to gain writing skills. As one participant put it:

> I found (that) it's a very great opportunity to (be) involve(d) in writing in English … and it makes sense to build your own voice. (Protégé)

Notably, it is unclear here whether the motivation for participating in the project was mainly a personal one, in so far as it represented an opportunity to improve English-writing skills, and by extension potential career opportunities. However, the unprompted expression of a desire to 'build your own voice' again suggests that it was perceived that this potentially offered both personal and collective opportunities to gain increased influence in a wider societal field of representation.

As with the protégés, a key motivating factor for involvement on the part of the mentors and writing teachers was also aligned with empowerment. As one mentor commented:

> … I also see myself as playing a certain role in Australian society as well, and that is providing a bridge between migrant communities and the rest of Australia, but as well trying to reflect a part of Australia that I think isn't reflected in mainstream media is the reality of migrant experiences over here, and what they want to and can and do contribute to Australian life. (Journalist)

While this comment aligns strongly with the concern of protégés to gain access to writing skills that might enable them to speak to the broader community, it is nevertheless important to note the difference in the way in which this problem is represented. In this reflection, the problem of representation appears as the absence of particular voices, and the lack of a 'bridge' that would allow for an increased diversity of voices. While this is undoubtedly significant, this problematic of 'absence' does not emphasise the problematic nature of predominant media representations in the way that protégés did. Such a framing also risks placing a 'burden of representation' on those who are subject to racialised media coverage, in that it positions the problem of countering such representation as ultimately their (not our) responsibility (Mercer, 1990).

An emphasis on expansion was also apparent in other responses from mentors. For example, in the following segment one mentor refers, implicitly, to the increased opportunities for representation afforded by digital platforms for an increased array of media voices from beyond traditional media outlets:

> I am keen to I guess try and contribute to the next generation of journalists but not just people who are necessarily going to work in the industry; I think you know, a general improved understanding of how the media works and I guess trying to empower disenfranchised minority communities, people without a voice in the wider society I think is good for all of society and for the media. (Journalist)

In this quote, the motivation to be involved is informed not by an ambition that protégés will go on to work in mainstream media, but rather to provide opportunities for 'talking back' to media. Notably, this is not just a question of providing skills, although these are also emphasised, and it is significant that this mentor's desire to 'contribute to the next generation of journalists' refers not just to those in the industry, but those who potentially operate outside it. It is also about providing understanding of 'how the media works', such that practices of journalism outside the industry might, by empowering disenfranchised minority communities, serve to both adapt to, as well as potentially transform, those within it.

This implied emphasis on an understanding of how media works as the basis for transformation was more explicitly positioned as a motivation by the following mentor, who clearly saw media transformation as an important ambition, but positioned this as a gradual process of mutual adaptation:

> …a big part of what I've also noticed is how other media engage with the community and some of the issues with reporting them and seeing that there's certainly some room there for, I guess, better education for the media to understand the community better, but also that there's a need there for them to become a little more, savvy is not the word I'm after but I guess just to have some of those tools for engaging with the media and getting some more of their stories across … this is something I could actually use the skills I do have to help out a little more directly. (Journalist)

While some, in this respect, connected the project with a concern for change, for other mentors the desire to participate derived from a concern to 'do something worthwhile', a concern that is linked to the construction of self-identity:

> I think it's a really worthwhile project … I was filling out a census form a couple of months back, I had to write zero in the box where it says how many hours do you spend volunteering a week, so I just thought that it's about time that I volunteered for something and this came up and I jumped at the chance, yes. (Journalist)

In this instance, it is difficult to decipher whether what is judged worthwhile about the project is linked to a concern for change, or a process of self-reflection. Nevertheless, it is possible that, even if such a linkage is not made, that the process and outcomes of mentoring can nevertheless lead to an increased awareness of other perspectives, thus facilitating a process of listening and, through this, greater understanding. As one writing tutor put it, commenting on a booklet in which some protégés told their own stories:

> … when you read in that little book that's been put out what they've been through, and I mean some of them were in a camp for 15 years and they've gone on to do double degree courses and you can't help but be proud of them. (Writing Tutor)

In this quote, the tutor refers to a key issue – namely, the disparity in educational experiences between Sudanese Australians, whose educational experiences have often been severely disrupted by the political circumstances that led to their migration to Australia, and the wider population. Here, via a process of listening that is facilitated by the intervention itself, the tutor takes this history into account in assessing participants' achievements 'against the odds'. Nevertheless, this disparity of circumstances remained a more problematic issue than this quote implies, as we shall go on to discuss.

What were the participants' experiences of the mentoring program?

As we have seen, although the motivation of protégés to become involved in the program tended to be connected to a more strongly critical perspective on existing media practices than those of the journalist-mentors, it can nevertheless be argued that there was a certain complementarity, if not quite alignment, between their respective agendas. In practice, however, the experiences of the individual mentoring relationships as discussed by participants in interviews reveal something of a disjuncture between what the mentors and protégés thought the relationships would entail and what they hoped to gain from them. The majority of the mentors placed a much greater importance upon the vocational written assessments and article production than the protégés did, suggesting that the mentors held a learning goal orientation (Godshalk and Sosik, 2003) that the protégés did not necessarily share. This is evident in the following comment made by a mentor reflecting their intention to develop writing skills:

> I think we really should be aiming as much as possible to be looking to get people's work publicised and published and promoted so I would really hope that that's … I mean that's obviously going to be a good measure of the impact of the program. (Journalist)

For this mentor, the mentoring program had an instrumental purpose, namely to get the protégés' work 'published and promoted'. The type of voice being developed, in this view, was a public media voice. The mentors would help to develop and promote this voice. The intention to use the mentoring relationships for developing writing skills is clearly apparent on the part of the mentors, with a number also commenting that little initiative for discussing writing was coming from participants themselves:

> I've sent a couple of emails just saying, you know, when you'd next like to catch up, let me know but I've seen that there's not a lot of his work sort of going up online directly and I do know that written English is certainly an issue for him. His spoken is quite good and our conversations run quite well but there's definitely not a lot of confidence in terms of from the writing side of things. (Journalist)

Regarding the relationships between the protégés and mentors, the interviews provide little direct evidence to suggest that protégés felt a lack of confidence to reveal their work to journalists. A lack of acknowledgement of this from the participants, however, could not be considered sufficient to discount this as a possibility, given the asymmetrical power relation that exists between mentors and protégés. Protégés did indicate that they looked up to the journalists, but did not raise this issue as a concern. This might suggest either that they did not share this concern or that they were uncomfortable to do so. The mentors, however, repeatedly commented upon the lack of production of writing as a major concern.

There were some mentoring relationships, however, where protégés did share their writing, although here again mentors discussed the challenges writing in English presented to them:

> I printed out a couple of his pieces and went through them with him at one of our meetings and he's quite interested in grammar and has really quite high level aspirations and he gets frustrated by the fact that he can't properly write at the level at which he thinks and wanting to have a really sophisticated vocabulary and grasp his idioms and to be able to get everything right. So I guess interpreting what his aspirations are and his interest in grammar, I went through it with a fine toothed comb … So he seemed to be appreciative of that. (Journalist)

Here, the support provided by mentors and language tutors represents an opportunity to gain linguistic capital (see Dumenden, 2011). However, it is evident that the substantial disparities in capital, presented by the very different histories and opportunities available to mentors and protégés, made the project of producing written stories an exceedingly difficult one. In this respect, while the AuSud Project might itself be positioned as a project that is concerned to facilitate an increased equality of opportunity to gain access to forms of cultural capital, the very existence of deep structural inequalities render this an extremely difficult outcome to achieve. Nevertheless, as exemplified in this case, there were examples where mentors put considerable efforts into not only addressing this concern, but doing so in a way that took account of the particular concerns, challenges and aspirations of the protégé. As English was a second (or later) language for all of the Sudanese-Australian participants, the importance of applying sensitivity (Griffiths et al., 2009) and bringing an awareness of the power imbalance (Kalbfleisch, 2002) between mentor and participant was particularly important.

Concerns regarding a power imbalance were also raised by mentors in relation to a concern that their protégés were not approaching them because they would be taking up too much of their time, as exemplified by the following comment:

> I would like (them) to use me a bit more I suppose, in terms of sending me her work or whatever that she hasn't really been forthcoming in that but that's fine but I'm just worried she might, she said a few times, you're too busy or, you don't want to do that, and I'll just say, no of course, of course it's fine. I don't know, I just sort of get this sense that they think it might be too much work or too hard or something. (Journalist)

The problem of managing time in mentoring relationships came up in other ways, with several mentors and protégés commenting on the difficulties of meeting. In both cases, this was usually a consequence of both parties being challenged by the pressures of other work commitments, in the context of a program in which both protégés and mentors participated on a purely voluntary basis. In the case of protégés in particular, however, this might again be seen to highlight the challenges of overcoming structural inequalities, given their generally lower socio-economic status and financial pressures stemming from that. In addition, however, the suggestion here that this disparity also informs a discomfort in approaching mentors suggests another issue that derives from a disparity of power in these mentoring

relations. This issue was also highlighted by another of the journalists, previously quoted above, who was acutely aware of the language challenges faced by his protégé. When asked for suggestions of how to improve the mentoring relationships, this journalist also highlighted the importance of ensuring participants felt comfortable in seeking journalists' assistance:

> … just reminding them that I'm sure the mentors would be more than happy to give up their time to help wherever they can and to actually read through essays and assignments that they're working on and they shouldn't feel as though it's a burden on us to do that, because we're voluntarily signing up to be involved for that exact reason, and I'm sure that has been articulated to them. (Journalist)

These examples of concern and reflexive acknowledgement of the effects of disparities of power, articulated by highly committed mentors, reiterate previous findings regarding the importance of such concern within mentoring relationships (cf Young and Perrewe 2000). Indeed, a strong finding of our own research, lending further support to such findings, was that mentors who were willing to engage with their protégés on a personal level, providing psychosocial support, seemed to have a more positive mentoring experience than those who wanted to provide more purely instrumental support in the form of skills-based teaching. Such social aspects of the mentoring relations were also highly valued by protégés, as demonstrated by the following comments:

> The project is excellent, people who involved in [the] project are very nice, we appreciate that… we appreciate that people who like I say, 'hold our hands to assist us'. (Protégé)

> One of the things I liked about the project was how we meet people we wouldn't meet, like this high profile journalist … I had a friend from the ABC … she was a good lady, she was my mentor and she's amazing. I miss her really. (Protégé)

Here, it is notable that emphasis is not only placed on the expertise of the mentors and the delivery of skills, but their 'niceness' and their willingness to both engage on an interpersonal level with protégés and offer them social support. Indeed, in the second of these quotes this relationship is valued as 'friendship', suggesting a genuine bridging and levelling of power disparities, even while the value placed on having 'a friend from the ABC' reminds us that personal relations and socio-political economies of capital are seldom entirely distinct. This value placed on the interpersonal and social aspects of relations was also clearly emphasised by some mentors, as exemplified in the following story that not only illustrated how mentoring relations extended into interpersonal ones, but the value the mentor placed on this:

> I went out and visited her and spent a couple of hours with her … a few weeks ago that was really good. [They were] helping a friend of theirs who has twins and [their] friend had to go to the doctor, so I went out there and sat with [them] and the twins and did a bit of nursing of the twins myself. We just sat and we just talked about, we talked about just life as well as what [they were] to do with the project. But you know just talking about life, it was great … The time we have spent together has been very good. (Journalist)

Did the program meet the participants' expectations?

In reflecting on the question of the success of the project, it is interesting to consider the relationship between what participants felt they got out of the project relative to what they nominated as their motivations for becoming involved in it. In the case of protégés, the value

placed upon interpersonal relationships again intersects with issues of social capital, such that there is a clear connection being made between the personal value placed on relations and their wider social utility:

> I've got people now outside the Sudanese community that I can also to some degree relate to and continue to educate myself from their experiences. (Protégé)

It is notable here that a focus on self-education is also connected to extending social networks beyond the Sudanese community. In another example, the value placed on friendships is again not only connected to the social positions of those friends, but also to their cultural identity:

> We go also to other places like [the] ABC newsroom, we've got some friends there and in SBS… and then when you have many friends they can call you out sometimes and then you go out with them and then you learn different things rather than stay with one person. And also you learn how the culture is different and also how you're going to fit yourself in. (Protégé)

Here, the extension of friendship and social networks both into national cultural institutions and with people who stand as *cultural* mentors might, perhaps, also be read as reflecting the increased prevalence of integrationism that has been a prominent aspect of public and political discourse in recent years, in which a strong emphasis is placed on immigrants to 'integrate' to the prevalent social and cultural norms of the national community, albeit these are, more often than not, only vaguely articulated (McPherson, 2010, Poynting, 2008). It also, however, leads us to reflect on previous perspectives on the 'empowering' dimensions of mentoring (Fagenson, 1992). This quote appears to support earlier suggestions that mentoring can serve to support a level of assertiveness and that, for protégés, this is connected to an increased confidence in one's own capacities to act as a subject that is included within, rather than excluded from, networks of social capital. In this respect, the mentoring itself might be read as successfully empowering protégés, in that it serves to increase both their level of self-confidence and, crucially, their connections to other actors within networks of institutional power. At the same time, the manner in which this appears to manifest as an increased trust in media institutions, and is framed as a means to the end of national integration (echoing forms of political discourse that have been criticised as a conservative departure from multiculturalism, and the reassertion of a 'soft' neo-assimilationism), suggests that 'empowerment' might also, and perhaps worryingly, serve as a means by which protégés effectively become acculturated to the culture and norms of the very institutions and practices they originally viewed as highly problematic.

From this perspective, the gratifying sense that the experience of the project was a positive experience for the protégés is tempered by the discomfiting possibility that the project might also have served as a mechanism for reproducing and normalising, rather than challenging, what might from a different perspective be viewed as problematic institutional norms and practices. In addition, the asymmetric relation between 'helpers' and 'beneficiaries' might also be seen to, albeit unintentionally, reinforce a hierarchy of voice that is implicit in a master/apprentice model of mentoring. This inequality, that implicitly derives from the mentoring model itself, could be seen as manifest in a discourse of gratitude that was prevalent in protégés accounts of what they valued in the program:

> Actually, the people they did a great job, absolutely, we were so spoilt. To have a lot of professional people, really high, respected in Australian media come to support us. That

was really one thing, really I do appreciate it very much, and that knowledge they give us. (Protégé)

Such responses gave us pause for thought about a community media intervention designed to facilitate both voice for marginalised communities and an increased opportunity for that voice to be heard. Indeed, given that in practice many protégés appeared less concerned to produce traditional forms of journalism (i.e. news stories) than to write about their own stories and issues that concerned them, this raised questions about how the program itself might be seen to operate within networks of power. While the instrumental concerns of mentors regarding levels of writing skills were perhaps understandable, might these be seen to reflect a process whereby the norms of an existent institutional culture became, in effect, the measure of 'success'? Or, to put it in Bourdieuian terms, did the project ultimately serve to reproduce both an economy of 'capital' and forms of habitus that are already prevalent within the field of journalism, rather than work to challenge these?

While these are valid concerns, however, such self-critique should perhaps be tempered in light of other perspectives. Firstly, it might be argued that this is not a damning criticism, but merely serves to highlight how political relations, including those relations that serve to inform modes of public representation, cannot easily be transformed. This is not only because these are deeply embedded in institutional and professional cultures but, as we have seen, it is also because of the very inequalities of capital that serve to delineate between relatively dominant and marginalised groups. Indeed, such inequalities raise difficult problems for media interventions. Should these be targeted at members of communities who already possess relatively high levels of educational and linguistic capital, in order to be successful, or does this merely serve to reproduce and reinforce other dimensions of marginalisation? Such questions are discomfiting, as there is no easy answer. Secondly, it should be noted that it was not simply the case that, in all cases, an appreciation of the work of mentors simply displaced a concern for change. Consider, for example, the following articulation of the value of the project:

> We really get the opportunity to tell our lecturers, the people, our hosts, we tell them how we feel as Sudanese about the Australian media, and what is the sort of thing that we're really looking forward to seeing in the future time, especially when people say Australia is a multicultural country, and you don't see any black man or woman represented in the mainstream media … (Protégé)

This response suggests that a concern to 'talk back', originally nominated as a major motivation for protégés to participate in the project, not only persisted but also gained a mechanism whereby it might also be at least partially effective. It is, of course, difficult to measure the practical effects of this, in terms of the degree to which it changed the perspectives and practices of journalists, and whether this served to transform media representations of Sudanese Australians. Nevertheless, the fact that protégés had this avenue for talking back might be viewed as significant in itself. It is also notable that at least some of the journalist-mentors also saw this as important, and indeed as a means to a longer-term goal whereby, as journalists are increasingly placed in contact with the communities they represent, this informs an avenue whereby coverage might be transformed both by a wider diversity of perspectives and by an increased and better informed process of reflection on the part of journalists.

Conclusion

This article has considered mentoring relations in the context of a community media intervention concerned to facilitate enhanced opportunities for voice and listening as means to address both problematic media representations in the Sudanese community, and forms of social inequality that both inform and are reproduced by relations of power in which media representations are implicated. To this end, we drew upon existing literature that has considered mentoring relationships in the context of workplaces, while extending consideration to address both non-workplace mentoring and issues of power in mentoring relations.

   To a large extent, our findings reiterated findings and lessons drawn from previous research. As previous work has found, there tended to be a stronger instrumental orientation among mentors than tutors, and the most effective mentoring relations were those that extended beyond instrumental goals to providing social support and developing interpersonal relations. Framing these findings in relation to issues of power, however, renders such findings more complex, as it requires that researchers consider the relationship between mentoring relations, wider relations of social inequality that serve to structure these, and the degree to which mentoring may serve to challenge and/or reinforce these. Here, we found that 'success' could not be reduced to instrumental terms, but had to consider the wider goals surrounding the intervention itself. Doing so did not serve to diminish the value of the intervention, which we found was valued by both mentors and protégés, but nevertheless raised difficult issues surrounding the problematic of developing media interventions that seek to overcome inequality. These served to highlight both the difficulties of achieving change and the manner in which such interventions themselves become caught up in existing power relations. This raises problematic and discomfiting issues that, we would suggest, do not ultimately negate the value of media interventions, but do support the findings of previous work that has emphasised the need to reflectively consider and take into account how relations of power are implicated in mentoring programs.

Acknowledgements

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