Sub/versing Mentoring Expectations:

Duration, Discernment, Diffraction

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For over fifteen years, The Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative has paired rising artists with established artists for a year of collaboration in areas such as dance, literature, music, film, theatre and visual art, producing many creative and multi-generational exchanges. In conversation with art critic Richard Cork (2011), visual art mentor Anish Kapoor disclosed that the one-year mentoring program was not long enough. In his opinion, "mentorship is about having a poetic dialogue" (p. 86) and it is something that "[cannot] be had in a hurry" (p. 88). In the context of higher education with a particular focus on mentoring doctoral students in post-graduate programs, we acknowledge that these mentorships often span several years. In Canada, it takes an average of six to nine years of full-time study to complete a PhD in the humanities[1] whereas in the United States, the average time for completion is seven to eight.[2] One might imagine the intensity involved in a mentoring relationship between doctoral students and their supervisors based on the sheer amount of time spent together. Although time is indeed an important factor, it does not paint an adequate picture, nor does it address the expectations of how the process can subvert these expectations when working together in the context of the academy – both during and after PhD. Time plays a pivotal though mutating role in mentoring, and what we refer to as co-mentoring, by creating the conditions for an embodied, dynamic, and relational practice to unfold, almost at its own rate and speed.

Relationality of Co-Mentoring

Prior scholarship on mentoring in academia suggests that its purpose is for personal growth and career development (Paglis, Green & Bauer, 2006; Mullen & Schunk, 2010; Tarr, 2010; Yob & Crawford, 2012). At the turn of the 21st century, co-mentoring models emerged within feminist discourse, challenging more masculine values in the academy such as hierarchy, competition, and objectivity (see Bona, Rinehart & Rolbrecht, 1995; Kochan & Trimble, 2000; McGuire & Reger, 2003; Mullen, 2000). In the chapter, A Relational Approach to Mentoring Women Doctoral Students, Gammel & Rutstein-Riley (2016) argue, "doctoral students and advisors enter the dyadic doctoral relationship with the expectation, based on past experiences and social norms, that their relationship will be hierarchical, unidirectional, and career-focused" (p. 28). Co-mentoring, as a form of 'relational mentoring,' challenges traditional styles of mentoring in which the advisor holds the power or steers the outcomes. It rather places emphasis on the potential growth of both the mentor and the mentee by bringing them into new places – professionally, collaboratively, and personally —while helping to re-define power, hierarchy, formality and directionality.

Power is of central concern for Hayes & Koro-Ljungberg (2011), particularly how power is negotiated between mentors and mentees. They argue that there are differences between power with, power over, and power disowned

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1 Retrieved from https://www.universityaffairs.ca/opinion/margin-notes/phd-completion-rates-and-times-to-completion-in-canada/

2 Retrieved from https://www.cgsnet.org/ckfinder/userfiles/files/Data-Sources_2010_03.pdf

relationships. The authors argue that women benefit most from mentors who own their legitimate power and nurture their mentees' professional growth through the sharing of power and the negotiation of difference (Heinrich; Storrs, Putsche, & Taylor, 2008). However, for these authors, only mentors have legitimate power.

Thus, we wonder how might co-mentoring speak to the complex negotiations that occur in mentoring relationships? What are the roles and responsibilities of co-mentors in the context of the academy and how are these understood? What role should co-mentors play in the imagined future lives of others? When do they make an impact? If co-mentors teach, guide, communicate, coach, exhibit enthusiasm, remain flexible, and attune their attention to the empowerment of others, is everyone capable of doing so, and thus, becoming a co-mentor? How might co-mentors help guide others on their own paths in the indeterminacy of their own becoming? How can all these speak to legitimate forms of power within co-mentoring?

The three of us are women at different stages in our academic careers. We met at the University of British Columbia (UBC) where two of us continue to work, one as full professor with over 25 years' experience in the field, and the other, a recent graduate in the early stages of her career. The third member of our triad is a tenured faculty member in a predominant institution in Canada and UBC alumni. We initially came together to present at the National Art Education Association annual convention and share some of the ideas that we discuss here. Rita was invited to speak about mentorship in the academy, in and through time, and she extended this invitation to Natalie and Valerie who eagerly joined the dialogue, creating a community of practice in which the thinking, being, and doing of writing, presenting, and

philosophizing spoke to co-mentoring through the concepts of duration, discernment, and diffraction.

After our presentation, we were asked to discuss our co-mentoring experiences as women. In the context of co-mentoring, are women expected to display certain qualities? In turn, are they not? How do the dynamics of co-mentoring change if/when men are involved – or those who identify as being different or queer? How does co-mentoring subvert expectations through differences in gender, culture or race? How does co-mentoring subvert expectations we have of ourselves and our own individual subjectivities?

For Shore and colleagues (2008), reciprocity is a fundamental concern of mentoring relationships and ethical dilemmas will naturally arise when the expectations of reciprocity are not aligned between the mentor and the mentee. Cultural differences and differences in gender can bring forth multiple misalignments in expectations. Gormley (2008) expands on some of these ideas by addressing mentoring within the context of attachment theory. Some of the expectations examined include closeness and trust, the idea that co-mentors will be 'friends,' etc.

For art educator Terry Barrett (2000), co-mentoring acknowledges that roles change depending on circumstances. The idea of reciprocity in this relationship is imperative. He understands it as a shared responsibility in which both parties abolish the need to be 'right' and relinquish the pressure of finding a single solution to a problem. His understandings of co-mentoring emerged in his own experiences as an instructor leading studio critiques in which he recognized the power of mutual respect. Instead of diminishing his students' sense of self-worth and undermining their confidence, he listened to his students' perspectives which were different from his own, and came to

realize the importance of being heard rather than enduring an alienating experience based in isolation. This falls most in line with our understanding for reasons we will expand on later. It is our intention that this paper will disrupt mentoring expectations through a subversive imagination in which we perform co-mentoring as a creative practice (Irwin, LeBlanc & Triggs, 2018). In doing so, we hope to contribute to the discourse of co-mentoring beyond conventional understandings. Next, we begin by briefly describing the theory informing our position.

Subverting Co-Mentoring Expectations in and through Practice

"The more that is hidden and suppressed, the more simplistic the representation of daily life, the more one-dimensional and caught in the dominant ideology the society is, the more art must reveal." (Carol Becker, 1994, p. xiii)

The arts have long been used to re-imagine alternative ways of living and working with/in the academy and for challenging systems that sustain and normalize social constructs (Wilson, Shields, Guyotte & Hofsess, 2016). In her book, The Subversive Imagination, Becker (1994) called on contemporary artists to investigate the rules and categories that create "the illusion of order" (p. xiii) by revealing contradictions underlying systemic ideologies. Becker argued that art, as a mode of investigation, renders the complexity of things in the real world by pulling them apart and leaving them exposed for others to see, experience, and respond to. As art educators at multiple stages in our careers, our understandings of co-mentoring have been shaped by our individual and collaborative art practices that shift focus away from the art object (form) to the social relations created by the experience (formations). Our stance is informed by social art practices (Thompson,

2012), particularly those that encourage shared processes of making, teaching and learning (Irwin, LeBlanc, Ryu & Belliveau, 2018). Our disposition is informed by our experiences with the ways in which people, ideas and experiences connect, disconnect, change and mutate, in and through practice, in and through time (see LeBlanc, Davidson, Ryu & Irwin, 2015).

In describing co-mentoring and what it offers, we draw on the work of new materialist Karen Barad. New materialism is an approach to research that moves away from thinking in terms of disconnects and a need to bridge those disconnects, as well as away from humanist linear cause and effect assumptions. From a humanist perspective, humans possess the ability to act on the world with their choices and to exert a unidirectional relationship with a knowable world but in new materialism, neither mentors nor mentees are totally in charge and neither can predetermine what happens. New materialism argues that "the forces at work in the materialization of bodies and subjects are not only social and the bodies produced are not all human" (Barad, 2007, p. 225), drawing attention to a world of subjects that are all in a process of becoming. We extend this subjective becoming to other forms of knowledge production such as concepts and in particular, co-mentoring which is continually moving into new material relationships.

For Massumi (2011), 'relational architecture' is a disseminating practice "toward potential expansion" (p. 53) that places emphasis on the lived relation, thereby creating ways of making the lived relation appear in the real. Unlike processes of reflection that "invite the illusion of mirroring of essential or fixed positions" (Taguchi, 2012), we engage in a creative practice oriented towards patterns of difference (LeBlanc & Irwin, 2019; Triggs & Irwin, 2019). Discernment, diffraction, and duration

are concepts which we have found helpful for thinking with and about mentorship, in ways that produce a different kind of encounter than traditional models where a mentor socializes an other into an already established community by promoting self-awareness and access to institutional norms, or where a mentor is provided as a support system to a mentee's work of building on their strengths and needs. Our mentoring experiences have been so rich that we wanted to revisit them by shaking ourselves out of any complacency of thinking about mentoring in terms of a rational way to approach it, where there are commitments to already established understandings of what it means to be a mentor. Instead, we wanted to consider avenues through which to open mentoring up from the inside of this practice.

We each take 'turns' contextualizing co-mentoring through three concepts: 1) duration, 2) discernment, and 3) diffraction that invite us to consider the intra-actions of co-mentorship. We conclude by bringing forth some of the dis/continuities (Barad, 2010) of co-mentoring within the academy. In keeping with the theme of this volume, we play with the prefix sub, meaning under, below, beneath, slightly, imperfectly, nearly, secondary, or subordinate. In a traditional mentoring model, the sub pertains to the mentee, the grad student, the inductee, the one who is hierarchically below the mentor in the relationship. From a practice-based, new materialist lens, we demonstrate how co-mentoring subverts expectations of mentoring in higher education coming near to normative understandings of mentoring but never fully matching up. In this article, the verse, are short descriptions of actual mentoring situations. We consider verse specifically in relation to its Latin roots vertere: to turn in which we attempt to overturn traditional conceptions of mentoring in favor of a more responsive and relational approach,

one in which co-mentoring, turns and becomes, through diffraction, discernment, and duration, generative spaces of potential.

In many ways, co-mentoring relationships are spaces filled with potential – perhaps like lingering in a doorway where one feels an ongoing invitation for surprise, never fully knowing what the experience will become but being open and sensitive to its inextricable movement. Rather than something additional to add to a limit, the threshold, as Giorgio Agamben (2005) explains, is what we experience in transit, one that foregrounds the dynamic, ongoing relational movement of living.

Duration as a Subversive Quality in Co-Mentoring

Natalie's Turn: In spring 2009, I received an acceptance letter from UBC to commence my PhD for which I left my job, my studio, my apartment, my car, my cat, my family, and my ten-year relationship and moved 3000 miles away with a feeling that 'it just might work.' Rita's scholarly engagement and commitment to art education were the reason why I applied to the program and she was my supervisor in that capacity for six years. In the beginning, things were awkward. Like an arranged marriage between two partners who had never met before but had committed themselves to a lifelong relationship. In a sense, I felt as though I had already committed before committing and perhaps this speaks to the feelings I had of awkwardness. But it also speaks to the hope that I had —and to the faith —that things would work out.

Rita was the associate dean of teacher education and seeing her required setting up meetings sometimes months in advance. Going to her office entailed being on time, using time wisely and finishing in a timely manner.

There was a formality to our meetings and an anxiousness, at least on my part. I felt I needed to prepare —over prepare in fact and that I had to use time —her time effectively. As a keener (aren't all PhD students?), my attention was not on my time but on Rita's time and I tried at all costs not to waste it. As such, I spent whatever time was needed studying, researching, teaching, making websites, joining multiple collaborative and on-going projects. I never said 'no' to the opportunities that came my way in fear that they would stop. I looked to Rita for guidance and I found it in all the opportunities that she offered me. I have since learned that it is not uncommon for mentees to, on the onset, expect a hierarchical mentoring relationship with their advisors (see Storrs et al., 2008). Although I didn't know it at the time, these expectations were based on my previous experiences in the academy with my Master's supervisor at another institution where our relationship was more traditional, more maternal in which the mentor played a more motherly role and I, the child. In that dynamic, the mentor knew more and I, less. The mother (oops, mentor) transmitted information and the mentee received it, if receptive. The mentee did the grunt work, and the mentor stood back (or over) —distanced —offering advice. This is not to say that working with Rita was unlike that. At times, it was. But over time, she became more of a confidant. She listened to my ideas and offered others and as we studied, researched, taught, published, presented, and travelled together and shared in the planning, writing, submitting, and all the ups and downs that being accepted and rejected within the hustle and bustle of preparing and delivering that academia demands, our relationship changed —and the ideas that I had about mentoring changed as I changed and our relationship changed.

My PhD experience was not all rosy, in fact the discomfort was palpable. I have argued elsewhere (see Boulton-Funke, Irwin, LeBlanc & May, 2016) that living and learning with/in the context of the academy is not always a comfortable place. In that chapter, I described the difficulty in navigating emerging contradictions between research designs, course objectives, professors and my conflicting identities as a teacher, co-teacher, researcher, artist, and learner that forced me to re-contextualize my assumptions about art, research, education, and pedagogy. The process produced an embodied sensitivity where emotional response, affections, perceptions, reflections and stimuli created multiple aversions. During this time, I also met and married my partner, experienced the death of a close family member and a close PhD friend and colleague and was trying to put things in place that could not be put in place. I was living liminally —something my professors applauded if not romanticised for its pedagogical potential (Sameshima & Irwin, 2008; Leggo, Sinner, Irwin, Pantaleo, Gouzouasis & Grauer, 2011) but something I grew to resent after years of living its reality and not knowing when I would finish, what would come next, or if I could pay my rent. It was a difficult time. A suspended and suspenseful time. A volunteered time. How could I forget all of this and give myself to my work, nonetheless? But nonetheless, I did. And to do so, I had to consciously avoid thinking of time – especially time lost.

Drawing from Bergson, Deleuze (1991) explains that the concept of duration (durée) is time as it relates to the individual. That is, duration pertains to a person's experience of the passing of time as it endures within practical activity, rather than as an objective, linear or chronological time. For Boulton-Funke (2014) duration is "a dynamic process that contracts to draw the virtual as past recollections

and memories and future desires into the present moment, rendering them amenable to change" (p. 7). As a subversive encounter, co-mentoring challenged my previous and situated understandings of mentoring, of being mentored, and the responsibility and accountability involved in both. It disrupted my expectations of what relationships can look like in the academy and exposed what a dematerialized art practice can do. Through the multiple and on-going projects that I participated in and the numerous roles that I assumed, I learned that each interaction, relation and encounter caused a series of effects and that my practices, doings, and actions (Barad, 2007) had the potential of producing multiple other complex connections, relationships and assemblages that could continuously generate new effects. I bring forth these autobiographical details to demonstrate how co-mentoring is an experience-in-practice (Barrett & Bolt, 2013), and knowledge-in-the-making (Massumi, 2011), thoughts that for myself, brought excitement back into the process.

Co-mentoring requires working closely with one another to plan, to negotiate, and to execute research-related and artistic-educational activities involving moments of "intense proximity" (Lucero & Garoian, 2017, p. 451), which also asks that we spend long periods of time apart to study, prepare and share in the responsibilities of work — physical and emotional work — and leading, which entails searching for opportunities, taking risks, and having the courage to go for it ¬—all energies directed to the task — and in. Even when co-mentors are apart, there is a closeness and an adjacency. There is a comfort to this, like a studio mate, both working on individual projects with a similar, but different goal. It requires taking the time to listen, to observe, and to carefully consider what is being said

and done and to what is not being said or done and to the juxtapositions between (Lucero & Garoian, 2017). It is through this unscripted and temporal movement that connections are made, unmade or remade. This is not to say that within the parameters of the academy, hierarchical roles of mentor and mentee are abolished. It is to reinforce the idea that throughout the course of co-mentoring, the boundaries and the planes between the mentor and mentee can change and at times, entangle. Through this lens, co-mentoring requires being (and remaining) committed to the messy and complicated process of learning within these re/configurations (Barad, 2010). It is a process of giving in to the collaborative and collegial relationships when they do emerge in lieu of a more instrumental or utility-driven approach for reaching the finish line because the finish line is not always the focus nor is it always in sight.

Discernment as a Subversive Quality in Co-Mentoring

Rita's Turn: Most of us have a difficult time making decisions especially when we think we are searching for the right decision. How does one determine the criteria for a decision? Discernment is a concept that may help us understand the art of decision making.

Those of us who are supervisors have likely experienced the supervisor-student or expert-novice binary perception automatically granted to us. While I understand this perception, at the PhD level, I have found this binary to quickly give way. Discernment is a quality of engagement that is emergent and forever curious about concepts, topics and issues that take our attention. Discernment challenges the binary premise and offers an invitation to listen carefully, to be pedagogically astute and to creatively play with ideas with and through another person. This creates an in-

between space where scholarship exists in a coming community of practice (Agamben, 1993/2005). When this happens, both individuals become attentive to the ideas, excitements and hesitations of the other as they focus on learning with and through the other. It is in this learning with and through the other that co-mentoring emerges (Carter, Triggs, Irwin, 2017). "The first rule in life is to put up with things. The second rule is to not put up with things. The third is to learn to discern the difference" (author unknown in Beth O'Hara, 2013). To me this describes the challenges of graduate experiences for both supervisors and students. Learning what to pay attention to and what not to pay attention to, resides in a co-mentoring relationship where art educators come together to discern such differences by imaginatively subverting our knowledge base of the field, our understanding of art practice itself, and our expectations of education. The advantage for art educators is that we gravitate to Becker's notion of a subversive imagination. These differences are not readily apparent but emerge through thinking, making and doing, separately and together, amidst a commitment to questioning and listening.

As a co-mentor, I know that it is the deep questioning and listening that distinguishes a mentor from a supervisor, and a mentor from an academic colleague. This deep questioning and listening unfolds, emerges and evolves (Kiechle, 2005). These qualities of discernment may not be the same from one encounter to another and yet they sustain us, and they remind us of the direction[s] we are seeking. As a co-mentor, I've always found myself listening deeply as I grappled with questions such as: When do I appreciate what the other has learned and when do I suggest that another direction should be pursued? In other words, when do I choose comfort and when do I choose discomfort? When do I assert myself and my views and when

do I trust the process to unfold? When do I meet the needs of the other and when do I choose not to do so? Often it is with answering questions with new questions that performs an interactive discernment of potential.

Yet, this may be the greatest joy in the academy—the potential for co-mentoring when distinctions between the roles of individuals are known yet blurred in favour of learning alongside and through one another. Co-mentoring nurtures a spirit of following one's passions while respecting another's individualized pursuits (Bresler & Murray-Tiedge, 2017). When one experiences co-mentoring, scholarship, artistry and learning almost sparkle with enthusiasm and delight – as quests for perceiving to become more acute, when studying challenging concepts becomes somehow clearer in the midst of complexity, and when our making and doing together and separately are held in honoured conversations.

Yet, there are times, when co-mentoring may not be possible, and perhaps more importantly, when a subversive imagination may not be enough. While roles may be blurred in co-mentoring, the blurring happens, ironically, as directions are crystallized. When students struggle, truly struggle, to find those directions, and as a co-mentor, my listening and attentive engagement has not been able to discern what is needed in their search, then discernment may call out the greatest subversion: we must ask ourselves if the people involved are the right co-mentors for us. After all, a subversive imagination isn't limited to the substantive nature of our scholarly work. It is also essential to our relational encounters. There are indeed times when relational decisions need to be made that are truly uncomfortable. The art of decision making, discernment, for co-mentors, or supervisors and students, includes this very question.

Despite the occasional times when co-mentoring is not possible, our experience suggests that it is possible much of the time. Moreover, it is not only possible, it is essential for art educators to embrace their subversive imaginations through the entangling of duration, discernment and diffraction as subversive qualities necessary for co-mentoring in the academy.

Diffraction as a Subversive Quality in Co-Mentoring

Valerie's Turn: After completing my doctoral work and now, working in a tenured academic position, I am a mentor myself. I have mentored new colleagues—three in a row, in fact. We set up regular meetings and I loved these visits. We talked about difficulties and joys and also logistics. In those moments, I was not thinking about mentoring at all; I was in the midst. I also mentor graduate and undergraduate students which is one of my favourite parts of my academic life. In most situations however, I am not far from feelings of uncertainty, inadequacy, of being excessive, perhaps too conservative and of not having immediate access to words that might express my thoughts more clearly. My face expresses things that I am not even aware of. I speak too soon, offer solutions too quickly. I do not listen long enough. I say something that is not exactly what I mean and later is too late to make it more articulate. Sometimes I lose my train of thought in the middle of everything and think of more useful or more precise responses hours later in the middle of the night. I assign too much responsibility to my own involvement and I am often awkward. Despite having great mentorship experiences as a mentee, I have come to realize I do not know how to mentor and I do not fully know mentorship. It seems instead, that mentoring subverts me.

Diffraction is a concept which we have found helpful in thinking about a more relational and responsive mentorship. When considering mentoring in terms of diffractive movement, it may be less stabilized or essentialized by categories of mentor and mentee. Instead, everything is in the midst of shifting in response to social relations, historical experiences, material conditions including details such as where we are meeting, the sharing of tea, the table around which we gather and the afternoon light. Practices of knowing and being are not isolated from one another and neither the materiality nor the social or cultural is privileged over one another. As we've already brought forward, mentoring is related to living. And these entanglements of living require deep listening to where meaning interferes with itself as it re-materializes—making unexpected things possible.

Diffraction is central to new materialism. It involves patterns made by overlapping disturbances produced by water, light, as well as the physicalities of other social movement. Diffraction makes light's wave-like behavior explicit and Barad (2007) describes it as a method and a practice that pays attention to material engagement with data and the 'relations of difference and how they matter' (p. 71). Diffraction is understood by Barad as a process of being attentive to how differences get made and what the effects of these differences are. When the materiality of movement encounters an obstacle or passes the edge of other matter (a mentor), one can observe the effects of this difference.

Mapping diffraction patterns reveal the entangled effects that difference makes. It is a way of reading texts, or subjects, through each other and in this way, diffraction provides a helpful alternative to reflection which is a

pervasive understanding for knowing and which suggests a mirroring of sameness. While reflection is considered a critical method of self-positioning, Barad claims it gets caught up in arrangements of sameness. Diffraction includes disjunction and interference, necessitating continuous displacement; it moves in the amplitudes and enhancements that intra-acting waves generate. It offers an embrace of hotspots, places of interference, movement in more than one direction, and ambiguity.

In co-mentoring discernment aligns with diffraction, when distinctions between the roles of individuals are known yet blurred in favour of learning alongside and through one another.

Thus, grappling with diffraction in this paper is not just an opportunity for me to read and share mentorship with a new materialist lens but also to consider and remember what diffraction invites in relation to honouring the vitality of mentorship as a field of practice that has sustained generations of experimentation, eluding complete human control. Diffraction draws our attention to mentoring's 'need' for becoming in ways that are always, not exactly what we expected mentoring to be and always, not exactly something knowable or something to be mastered.

Our bodies are already familiar with this practice. For example, Brian Massumi (2008) explains the way in which body perception is lived out rather than lived in. Any thing or any body, and in this case, we refer his ideas to mentoring, is not just what it is; it's also like itself which gives every experience in mentoring a sense of connectedness as well as of disconnectedness. Mentoring's likeness to mentoring provides a sense of the "moreness" (Massumi, 2008, p. 6) to things. It includes the feeling of "the fact that it is always passing through its own potential" (Massumi, 2008,

p. 6). In this diffractive way, mentoring never exactly means what it wants nor does it exactly want what it means; it's excessive and fragile just like its participants. Seemingly, mentoring not only subverts its participants; it also subverts itself.

The Dis/continuities of Co-Mentoring

Barad uses the concept of intra-activity to provide an understanding of how diffractive patterns and movement arise. Bodies and things mutually intra-connect thereby influencing themselves, their learning and the production of knowledge (Barad, 2007, p. 149). As well, intra-activity brings attention to the agency of the environment, things, materials and places in the ongoing interrelations and mutual processes of transformation (or events) emerging in-between human organisms and matter and in-between different matter outside of human intervention.

Historically, mentoring has been defined in terms of interpersonal relationships between mentor and mentee, sometimes in hierarchical relationships and in others as bi-directional, mutual and reciprocal. Often these forms of interaction assign change to the interaction between one already determined entity and another, or between measurement and observed phenomena. Intra-action however, refuses a closed system for fixed meaning and instead recognizes that everything is relational already and not just when acted upon by external agents in cause and effect associations.

Descartes provided a foundation for modern assumptions about the world as acting only when acted upon by an external agenda, and as doing so in a cause and effect relationship. Because of advances in quantum physics however, as well as feminist theorizing about difference, new light has been given to socio-

material and aesthetic processes, understanding them as part of a "wider natural environment" (Coole & Frost, 2010, p.13), one that is not completely knowable nor easily observed. These new highlights have made a significant contribution to the recognition of duration, discernment and diffraction as concepts with which to understand the relationality of mentoring.

In the intra-active assemblage, the mentor is just one part of a set of linkages and connections with other things and other bodies.

Mentoring is constructed in relationships with self, others and everyday practices. Practices of knowing and being are not isolated from one another and neither the material nor the discursive are privileged over one another. As discernment observes, mentoring is related to living. And these entanglements of living require deep listening to where meaning interferes with itself as it materializes.

Regarding our own mentorship experiences, we feel that our co-mentors offered us, and continue to offer us, the belief that our involvement adds something interesting and useful. These collaborative manifestations are hybrids of art, educational practice and research in which we participate in what seems well described by Agamben (1993/2005) as a contemporary form of sociality in which a community is defined by the threshold of exposure to an exteriority that is not already known. In such a communal experience the newcomer finds a place in the midst of becoming more sensitive to opportunities of being in the midst of series of waves of interference patterns.

In our ongoing mentoring relationships, we try not to use calculated or discrete instruction to move others to an already determined place

and instead, mentor by inviting what we do not know and by inviting what is not already determined. Mentoring events are verses (events that turn and become) compelling us close to mentoring as something already understood, but not precisely in alignment with any fixed or completed form. For both Natalie and Valerie, being on the student side of this relationship for many years made the uncertainty part feel somehow more appropriate. Now they see that the indeterminacy is inherent and this does not always guarantee a sense of personal satisfaction. More practice only creates more 'verses' about indeterminacy. Rather than looking for foregone conclusions, evidence or reasons for why something happens, the experience in mentoring has taught us to look for what difficulties offer, what mentoring produces, how it works towards something else, how we might together make something that matters. In this entangled state of agencies there is a sense of being in the midst of things and our responsibility is to ensure that our mentoring of others is just a little bit different than everyone involved imagined. Not entirely pinning mentoring down leaves a diffractive wave of potential for the duration and discernment of others.

Thinking about mentoring with diffraction raises questions of where difference is already playing out differently. Rather than looking for evidence or reasons why something happens, we look for what difficulties offer, what mentoring produces, how it works towards something else; we look for mutual constitution of agency both material and discursive. Where is the mentoring product, meaning and materializing at the same time, differently? Diffraction discerns the entangled state of agencies that create a belonging on the inside where it is not an inner mental activity inside separated human beings but rather intra-connected movement where

making something matter is not just about "the head but also of the heart and hands: it has to do with a scholarly engagement with care, social justice and seeing oneself as part of a world" (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017, p. 118).

In this paper, we have provided theoretical and practical examples for each of the three qualities and a discussion around the possible merits of these qualities for encouraging co-mentoring relationships in today's academy. In Natalie's turn, we learn how duration stands for the quality of time experienced by those involved in mentoring relationships.

Here is where co-mentoring becomes visible through a collaboration over time where co-labouring occurs in the events of learning together regardless of institutional assignments. When one agrees to mentor or be mentored, one commits to a relationship over time, despite distance or time apart (Bresler & Murray-Tiedge, 2017). Mentoring becomes co-mentoring when duration is experienced in and through practice, in and through time indeed, teaching and learning from, through and with one other as roles are exchanged.

For Rita, discernment is a quality of engagement that is persistent, curious, and emergent. Academic mentoring relationships are often based on a supervisor-student model under the assumption of expert-novice. Discernment as a mentoring quality challenges this premise and offers an invitation to linger together, to listen carefully, to engage creatively, to play with ideas, to nurture an in-between space where scholarship is evoked in community. In these moments of discernment both individuals are attentive to the other for the purpose of engagement, of learning, of being with the other. In this being with the other, co-mentoring emerges.

And for Valerie, co-mentoring brings forth diffraction as another quality of engagement that focuses on the potential in those moments when both individuals respond to each other's ideas, surrendering to the expansive potential or diffraction of ideas. In the co-mentoring relationship, one gives oneself to the process to unfold not only through the content being studied but also through the form of the relationships between and among people and ideas.

Co-mentoring means living through a 'subversive imagination' (Becker, 1994) that discerns how one may turn an assumed reality into an artistic event that confronts, exposes, disrupts, and interrogates the habitually perceived normalities of our structured lives. Co-mentoring becomes a verse within a subversion of academic structures. It imagines the potential of mentoring as a subversive encounter itself, an imaginative moment that is utterly and completely about asking more, feeling differently, exposing ourselves, and challenging the status quo. In these moments, the relationship of the co-mentors dismantles the hierarchy of the academy as well as societal expectations for an art practice and creates subversive encounters. The academic hierarchy is dismantled and is replaced by a socially engaged co-mentoring that embraces the encounter as an artistic process of learning through the qualities of difference permeating all aspects of the encounter. Through duration, discernment, and diffraction, co-mentoring is inherently an artistic encounter itself.

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