



**Mentorship expectations differences
across generations: A study of South
African Black women**

A Dissertation
presented to

The Master of Philosophy (MPhil)

Graduate School of Business
University of Cape Town

In fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Philosophy in Inclusive Innovation

by
Amantle, Kanyuchi
MKBAMA001

October, 2024

Supervisor: Dr Babar Dharani

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the differing mentorship expectations among African-Black women across three generational cohorts: the Struggle Generation (ages 42–61), the Transition Generation (ages 29–41), and the Born Free Generation (ages 22–28). Recognizing mentorship as a vital coping strategy in workplace environments, the study employs qualitative research to explore how factors like historical context, technology, and intersectionality shape these expectations.

The study employs a qualitative methodology to explore mentorship relationship expectations among different generational cohorts of African black women in South Africa. Through in-depth interviews with participants from the Struggle, Transition, and Born Free Generations, the research uncovers nuanced experiences and expectations surrounding mentorship. A semi-structured format facilitated open dialogue, allowing participants to share their beliefs and motivations. Data collection adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring confidentiality, while thematic and narrative analysis identified key patterns and themes. This approach captures diverse perspectives, contributing to a deeper understanding of mentorship dynamics within this demographic.

Findings reveal that while the cohorts share a common understanding of mentorship, they differ in preferred formats, key factors for effective relationships, and desired qualities in mentors and mentees. The Struggle Generation balances professional and familial roles, the Born Free Generation seeks digital and informal avenues, and the Transition Generation emphasises proactive engagement.

Ultimately, this dissertation highlights that for mentorship to deliver on its promise of fostering both professional growth and personal empowerment, it needs to be dynamic and evolve with the changing needs of generations. The insights underscore the need for tailored mentorship programs that address the diverse needs of African-Black women.

Keywords: Mentorship, intergenerational relationships, women in leadership, career development, cross-generational mentoring.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This journey in exploring mentorship has profoundly shaped my career in marketing and social impact. I am deeply grateful to my supervisor, family, and employers—Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator, Future Females Business School, and Afrittude Communications—and the incredible women who shared their mentorship experiences with me.

To my supervisor, Dr. Babar Dharani, thank you for reigniting my passion and providing the encouragement I needed throughout this process. Your guidance made research less daunting and kept my curiosity alive.

To my loving husband, Fungayi Kanyuchi, thank you for sharing countless sleepless nights over coffee. Your daily question, "How can I make your day lighter?" helped me focus on completing this degree, and I appreciate your unwavering support.

To our beautiful daughter, Tafadzwa Kanyuchi, thank you for inspiring me to reach the finish line and for showing me that I can achieve so much more with dedication, perseverance, and making time for rest and play.

To my mom, Joyce Mokubung, I am grateful for your sacrifices that paved my way forward. Your encouragement to continue pursuing my studies has been invaluable.

To my accountability partner, Rudo Nyangulu-Mungofa, I cherish the day the universe aligned for us to support one another. Thank you for holding my hand to the finish line.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my mentors, Pride Maunatlala and Zipporah Maubane. Your support and guidance have been instrumental in shaping this paper and inspiring my journey. I am truly grateful for the wisdom and encouragement you both provided along the way.

Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to my beloved late dad, Thabo Mokubung. Though you were not here in person, I felt your spirit guiding me every step of the way. I hope this work makes you proud.



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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Context and background

Research has increasingly identified mentorship as a critical relational dynamic between two individuals, one of whom is typically more experienced and knowledgeable, aimed at fostering the learning and developmental processes necessary for career advancement. According to Pinho et al. (2005) mentorship is a two-person relationship where a more experienced member of an organization helps a junior employee grow and develop until they become a skilled professional. It is seen as a dynamic and supportive connection built on trust and mutual benefit, aimed at enhancing the psychological growth and career progression of junior members while also benefiting the mentor and the organization. A developmental relationship inspires individuals to learn and grow by providing them with new opportunities and the necessary support. While the positive impact of mentorship on the career trajectories of mentees is well documented, it is imperative to recognize that existing mentorship frameworks frequently overlook the multifaceted complexities. Some of these may arise from and be associated with various forms of oppression, particularly those experienced by African-Black women. These complexities encompass a myriad of factors, including but not limited to race, generational cohort, gender, culture, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic class. For Black South African women, an additional layer of complexity emerges from the divergent experiences associated with being born, raised, educated, and employed—or self-employed—within the contrasting sociopolitical contexts of democratic South Africa versus apartheid South Africa.

Since a significant portion of the South African workforce operates within organisations where cross-generational mentorship is an everyday reality, mentors tasked with guiding recruits frequently belong to dramatically different lived experiences due to the relatively recent sociopolitical shift. Furthermore, those who entered the workforce following the COVID-19 pandemic, which began in March 2020, face an added challenge of imparting the skills necessary for survival and success in virtual or hybrid work environments. This scenario underscores the dual role of mentorship as both a means of assisting Black female mentees in navigating an oppressive system and as a potential mechanism that inadvertently perpetuates the status quo, thereby leaving the broader oppressive structures unchanged.

It was discovered that women leaders receive career guidance and advice from their mentors, which contributed to their career advancement. Women admitted that their mentors guided

them and were there for them to offer advice on how they can arrange their careers to succeed in academia. Evidence shows that this contributed to them making the right decisions, which led to their career success (Madonda, 2022). However, according to Business Process Enabling South Africa (BPESA), in 2021 the Businesswomen's Association of South Africa published the Women in Leadership Census which reported that only 27.7% of directors and 29.4% of executive managers were women, thereby underscoring the pressing need for targeted mentorship initiatives aimed at women of colour who are now occupying roles traditionally held by men. In response to the myriad challenges, stereotypes, and expectations that women often encounter in environments historically designed for their white, male counterparts, many have sought both formal and informal mentorship relationships that refine their skills and enhance their adaptability.

An illustrative example of the challenges women face in corporate environments is highlighted in Sheryl Sandberg's (2013) recounting of her own experience, wherein male colleagues inviting her to a boardroom pitch were unaware of the location of the women's restroom. This anecdote underscores the ongoing struggle for the visibility and inclusion of women in leadership roles, revealing that inviting women to participate in key organisational discussions remains a departure from the norm in many workplaces.

Khuzwayo (2018) points out that a substantial body of research has been dedicated to examining the barriers that women encounter in their career advancement within workplace settings. These barriers are multifaceted, encompassing individual, interpersonal, organisational, social, and cultural dimensions, as well as the phenomenon known as the "glass ceiling" (Khuzwayo, 2018, p. 17; Cain, 2015, p. 3). Furthermore, African American women, as noted by Blake-Beard et al. (2006) face even greater obstacles, including negative stereotypes and what is referred to as the "concrete ceiling," a metaphorical barrier that obstructs their access to equitable opportunities in professional settings (Blake-Beard et al, 2006). The cumulative effect of these barriers not only restricts meaningful contributions from these women within the workplace but also limits their opportunities to attain and retain senior roles. In their pursuit of overcoming these pervasive challenges, women have increasingly adopted a variety of coping strategies. Holder et al. (2015, p. 168) delineate these strategies, which encompass avenues such as religion and spirituality, emotional resilience (termed "armoring"), role-shifting, the cultivation of support networks, sponsorship, self-care practices, and, crucially, mentorship. Mentorship, as defined by Montgomery (2017), involves an experienced

individual providing guidance and sharing their expertise with a less experienced counterpart. Anderson (2021), in her influential work, *Intelligence Isn't Enough: A Black Professional's Guide to Thriving in the Workplace* posits mentorship as one of the essential components for professional success.

The nature of mentor-mentee relationships varies significantly; some are self-matched while others are established through employer-designed programs that facilitate the pairing of mentees with mentors. In an interview conducted by the Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator in August 2021, Anderson (personal communication, 16/07/2021) referenced the 70-20-10 Model for Learning and Development. This model serves as a framework for organisations striving to optimise employee learning and development, positing that 70% of an employee's learning derives from on-the-job experiences, 20% from interpersonal relationships (including mentorship and sponsorship), and 10% from formal training.

Despite the extensive literature exploring the impacts and benefits of mentorship, empirical research examining the experiences of Black South African women of diverse ages within mentorship frameworks remains conspicuously underexplored. The entry of Generation Z into workplace environments introduces new dynamics and challenges that necessitate re-evaluation of traditional mentorship paradigms (Novazi, 2019). The generational disparities experienced by Black women, particularly within the South African context shaped by the legacy of apartheid, present a unique context for forthcoming studies.

According to Chen (2015), empirical studies indicate that a strong rapport between mentor and mentee significantly enhances the effectiveness of mentorship relationships. Junior employees can improve their promotion prospects by actively seeking guidance from senior colleagues. As information technology progresses, reverse mentoring—where younger employees impart contemporary ideas and digital media skills to their senior counterparts—has become increasingly popular among global corporations. Notably, companies like IBM, recognized as one of the top training organizations worldwide, and the public relations firm Burson-Marsteller have implemented structured reverse mentoring programs within their operations (Chen, 2015). In traditional mentoring, newer or less experienced employees benefit from the guidance of their senior colleagues. This mentoring approach positively influences career advancement, provides psychological support, and serves as a form of role modeling. It alleviates workplace stress, enhances job performance, lessens the conflict between work and family life, decreases turnover rates, and fosters individual social connections (Chen, 2015).



Social impact initiatives, such as those spearheaded by the Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator and the presidential youth employment intervention program, 'SA Youth,' underscore the necessity for innovative solutions that support the career trajectories of South African youth.¹ The 'Breaking Barriers' report published by Harambee in August 2019 elucidates the gender-specific challenges faced by young women before securing employment (Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator, 2019). These challenges encompass barriers related to access to social networks, societal gender expectations, job location, transportation issues, and the nature of available employment. The findings from this research endeavour aim to illuminate the evolving mentorship needs experienced by Black women in South Africa across generations, thereby providing invaluable insights for the development of mentorship programs tailored for youth.

A 2021 learning brief titled 'Disrupting the Youth Labour Market - Harambee and Systems Change' indicates that WhatsApp has emerged as a vital tool for fostering motivation, generating ideas, and connecting mentees with mentors. This digital platform has effectively lowered barriers to youth inclusion by minimising data costs and granting access to credible mentors who may otherwise be unreachable.

1.2. Purpose of study

As the landscape of work continues to evolve, characterised by the emergence of new roles and industries, this research endeavours to assist new workforce members in collaboratively creating mentorship and career support programs that cultivate a new generation of Black women poised for senior leadership positions. A notable limitation of this phenomenological research design lies in the disparity between the substantial number of Black women in corporate South Africa and the sample size that can be realistically assessed. Consequently, this research does not aspire to substantiate a theoretical framework but rather seeks to explore and gain an enhanced understanding of how the socio-politically exacerbated generational gap experienced by Black women in South Africa has reshaped mentorship needs. Given the premise that older Black women are likely to mentor younger Black women, this exploration

¹ Harambee is a non-profit organization dedicated to combating youth unemployment in South Africa and Rwanda. It partners with government entities, private sectors, civil society, and over three million youth to create programs that facilitate entry-level employment for individuals with limited or no prior work experience. In 2020, Harambee and various stakeholders launched sayouth.mobi, a platform offering data-free access to learning and earning opportunities, as well as content to expand career perspectives for young individuals.

serves as a critical tool for mentors to discern the evolving mentorship needs of younger Black South African women, particularly in light of the dramatic sociopolitical transitions from apartheid to democracy.

Additionally, this unique context presents a useful setting for researching the dynamic nature of mentorship needs across generations. The sociopolitical shift has seen the greatest shift in the social hierarchy for blacks and for women. This is evident in the fact that policy-based, macro-level initiatives for overcoming historical marginalization have been adopted specifically for addressing the gross marginalization of this identity group. Affirmative action in South Africa, measured through a scorecard known as Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment, specifically gives points for black and female empowerment (Dharani, 2024). As such, at the intersection of these identities (Crenshaw, 1991) lies the greater generational shift, making it optimally suitable for researching the phenomenon of generational differences in mentorship expectations.

1.3. Research Question

The principal research question that underpins and organises the structure of this study is: *How do expectations regarding mentorship relationships vary across generations of Black-African women?* This inquiry specifically focuses on Black women of diverse age groups engaged in the corporate landscape of South Africa. Additionally, a pertinent sub-question is posed to facilitate further exploration: *What are the common expectations regarding mentorship relationships shared among the various generational cohorts?*

Miss Matsi Modise, the Vice-Chairperson of SiMODiSA and the Founding CEO of Furaha Afrika Holdings, articulated a significant concern regarding the phenomenon of Black women being "over-mentored" (personal communication, 31/05/2021).² She emphasised the necessity for Black women to clearly articulate their specific needs within mentorship relationships with influential figures who possess the capacity and authority to unlock new growth opportunities. This raises critical questions: Could it be that there exist unarticulated expectations within mentorship relationships? What implications might this have for the effectiveness of

In May 2021, Veuve Clicquot published the International Women Entrepreneur Barometer study, which highlighted critical insights into women's entrepreneurship within the South African context (Veuve Clicquot, 2021). This publication was accompanied by a virtual event featuring a distinguished panel of South African industry experts and accomplished businesswomen who deliberated on the significance of networking and relationship-building in the pursuit of professional success.

mentorship relationships, as well as for the developmental trajectories of both mentors and mentees?

1.4. Significance of This Study

The current landscape reveals that Black, South African women may be experiencing a paradoxical situation in which they are "over-mentored" yet "under-sponsored." This reality significantly impedes their ability to transcend traditional barriers and to ascend into roles and spaces where their presence is often deemed unexpected. For both individuals and organisations committed to fostering the professional growth of Black, South African women, it is imperative to develop a nuanced understanding of the motivations underlying the search for mentorship, as well as to examine the proliferation of virtual mentorship programs tailored to meet the unique needs of these women. Such understanding will contribute to addressing the existing literature gap in this field.

The objectives of this study include gaining a comprehensive understanding of the structural dynamics of mentorship relationships, exploring the underlying motivations for such relationships, and analysing the variances in mentorship expectations across different generational cohorts. By doing so, this research aspires to identify innovative mentorship programs and methodologies that not only enhance the sponsorship opportunities for mentees but also facilitate a more effective mentoring experience as contributions to practice. Additionally, the contribution to theory lies in exploring the relatively unexplored area of research about the dynamism of mentorship needs.

1.5. Overview of Chapters

Chapter 1: This introductory chapter provides an overview of the study, articulating the central research question that anchors the investigation. It engages with contemporary industry discussions surrounding mentorship and highlights key literary contributions that underscore mentorship as a vital factor for Black women.

Chapter 2: The second chapter offers a comprehensive literature review that delineates the concept of mentorship and its critical role in career development. It synthesises findings from various studies that examine the differences in mentorship expectations among generational

cohorts. Additionally, it explores how age and a nation's political history can influence the nature and dynamics of mentorship relationships.

Chapter 3: The third chapter outlines the research objectives and methodology employed to address the primary research question: “*How do mentorship relationship expectations differ among the generations of African-Black women?*” It also addresses secondary questions. This chapter details the sample selection process, as well as the data collection and analysis methods utilised in the study.

Chapter 4: The fourth chapter presents the findings from the investigation into the mentorship expectations of African-Black women across different generations. It includes an overview of the demographic characteristics and occupational affiliations of the participants, highlighting emerging patterns from their shared mentorship experiences as captured during the interviews.

Chapter 5: This chapter synthesises and analyses the findings derived from the previous chapters.

Chapter 6: The final chapter of this dissertation presents a summary of the findings, concludes, and offers recommendations based on the gaps in the literature addressed through this research. The chapter provides actionable insights that can contribute to the ongoing discourse on mentorship and its implications for career development among African-Black women.

1.6. Key Terms

This section aims to define key terms that are essential for understanding the concepts and frameworks discussed throughout the study. Clearly articulating these terms is crucial, as they serve as the foundational building blocks for the research and are frequently referenced throughout the dissertation. By providing precise definitions, this section imparts the meaning of these terms within the specific context of this study, ensuring that a clear and consistent understanding of the language is provided. Each key term will be elaborated upon, highlighting its relevance to the research questions and objectives. This approach not only enhances comprehension but also situates the terminology within the broader academic discourse surrounding mentorship and career development. By establishing clear definitions, this section facilitates a more nuanced discussion of the findings and implications that arise from the research.

Mentorship	Mentorship, as defined by Montgomery (2017), involves an experienced individual providing guidance and sharing their expertise with a less experienced counterpart.
Generational cohorts	According to Fernandez-Duran (2016), the generational cohort theory states that groups of individuals who experienced the same social, economic, political, and cultural events during early adulthood (17–23 years) would share similar values throughout their lives.
Intergenerational mentorship	Intergenerational mentoring fosters a multigenerational workforce by promoting the exchange of knowledge, skills, competencies, norms, and values between enthusiastic younger employees and experienced senior staff. This definition is based on the work of Madhavanprabhakaran et al. (2022).
Intersectionality	According to Cole (2009), intersectionality defines the experiences of individuals with multiple disadvantaged or privileged identities. It is important to note that some individuals within disadvantaged groups may also possess privileged identities, such as middle-class Black individuals or White women. This suggests that while much of the intersectionality literature focuses on those facing various disadvantages, the framework can also enhance our understanding of privileged groups (Crenshaw, 1991).
Formal mentorship	Formal mentoring programs are those in which an organisation assigns or pairs mentors and mentees. These programs typically include support from top management, a comprehensive orientation for participants, clearly defined responsibilities for each party, a specified duration and frequency of contact, and a focus on establishing realistic expectations for the mentoring relationship. (Cunningham, 1993 as cited in Pinho et al, 2005)

<p>Informal mentorship</p>	<p>Informal mentoring is characterised by a more casual atmosphere where the mentoring relationship evolves organically (Pinho et al, 2005). According to Young and Perrewe (2004), this type of mentoring is seen as a dynamic relationship that is continually negotiated between the two partners involved.</p>
<p>Phenomenology</p>	<p>Phenomenology provides the most suitable qualitative study tool for mapping the qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualise, perceive, and understand various aspects of mentorship. The approach allows researchers to understand the varied conceptions that members of a particular group have about a single phenomenon (Smith & Paretti, 2015, p. 7).</p>
<p>Born Free Generation</p>	<p>In South Africa, the term "born-free" pertains to individuals who were born or raised following the conclusion of the apartheid era. This definition is drawn from Vandeyar's study (2019).</p>
<p>Struggle Generation</p>	<p>This refers to individuals born between 1961 and 1980. Also known as Generation X. (Padayachee, 2017)</p>
<p>Transition Generation</p>	<p>This refers to individuals born between 1982-1991. Also known as the Net Generation or the Generation Y. (Padayachee, 2017)</p>
<p>Sponsorship</p>	<p>Holder et al. (2015, p. 177) describe sponsorship as a professional relationship that extends beyond traditional mentoring, which typically centers on offering feedback and guidance (Ibarra, Carter, & Silva, 2010). It offers access to power and influence within organizations. Sponsors can shape how Black women are viewed in terms of competence; a perception that varies based on the observer. This is especially crucial for Black women, given the widespread stereotype questioning their intelligence.</p>
<p>Traditional mentorship</p>	<p>Traditional mentoring is a system where junior or new employees gain knowledge and skills from more experienced employees within an organisation (Chen, 2015).</p>

Concrete ceiling	A metaphorical barrier that obstructs Black women access to equitable opportunities in professional settings (Black-Beard et al., 2006, p. 6).
Glass ceiling	Despite years of advancement, women are still underrepresented in the highest segments of the earnings distribution, a situation often referred to as the "glass ceiling" (Bertrand, 2018).
Reverse mentoring	Reverse mentoring (RM) is a cross-generational strategy in which talented and willing younger employees serve as mentors to senior employees. This approach is supported by the organisational vision to bridge the technological gap between the two generations and to foster the development of future leaders (Madhavanprabhakaran et al., 2022)
Peer mentoring	Peer mentorship is a reciprocal relationship where two individuals with similar levels of experience engage with each other to offer personal, professional, or a combination of both types of support (Christensen & Villanueva Alarcón, 2022).
E-Mentoring	E-mentoring is a modern approach to mentoring that establishes a mutually beneficial relationship between a mentor and a protégé, offering new learning opportunities along with career and emotional support, primarily through email and other electronic means (Ensher, 2013).
Black Girl Magic	Black Girl Magic offers women a chance to break free from constraints, fostering a positive community where they can share knowledge, access resources, and collaborate. This concept aligns with the principle of Ubuntu, which emphasises the interconnectedness of individuals and the importance of understanding differences to achieve harmony (Mansingh, 2022).

This introductory chapter has explored the critical role of mentorship in career advancement, particularly for Black South African women navigating complex professional landscapes. The evidence presented underscores the multifaceted challenges these women face, influenced by



various forms of oppression and the contrasting sociopolitical contexts of apartheid and democracy in South Africa.

This chapter has also highlighted the importance of recognizing the evolving nature of mentorship needs across generations, especially in light of recent shifts brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. It sets the stage for a deeper examination of the literature on mentorship in Chapter 2, where existing research on generational differences in mentorship expectations and how these dynamics inform the professional experiences of Black women in South Africa will be analysed.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the literature surrounding mentorship, a multifaceted concept that plays a crucial role in personal and professional development. The exploration begins with a detailed definition of mentorship, distinguishing it from related terms such as coaching and sponsorship. While these terms are often used interchangeably, understanding their unique characteristics is essential for grasping the dynamics of effective mentoring relationships.

The review highlights the historical evolution of mentorship practices, particularly in the context of varying generational expectations and experiences. As the workplace continues to diversify, especially with the entry of younger generations, the interplay of age, gender, and race becomes increasingly relevant. This chapter examines the emergence of cross-generational mentorship dynamics, particularly the interactions between the 'Born Free Generation' and the 'Apartheid Generation' in South Africa. By considering the unique challenges and opportunities presented by these generational shifts, this section aims to illustrate how mentorship can facilitate meaningful engagement across age groups.

Furthermore, the chapter focuses specifically on the experiences of African black women in mentorship contexts, shedding light on the intersectionality of their identities and the implications for their career trajectories. The discussion emphasises the necessity of developing innovative mentorship programs that reflect the diverse needs and aspirations of all participants, especially in light of technological advancements and changing workplace dynamics.

Ultimately, this literature review aims to establish a foundation for understanding the complexities of mentorship, providing insights that will inform the subsequent research findings and practical recommendations for enhancing mentorship effectiveness within contemporary organisational settings.

2.2. Defining mentorship

Mentorship, coaching, and sponsorship are terms that are frequently conflated and, at times, used interchangeably in both academic and professional discourse. Despite some overlaps in their definitions, a lack of consensus persists in the literature regarding their precise meanings.

Pelan (2012) asserts that the future of successful businesses will hinge upon the cultivation of talented human capital. One vital method by which individuals currently in leadership roles can foster the development of future leaders is by creating and nurturing an organisational culture that values mentorship, coaching, and timely feedback.

Coaching typically involves strategies for navigating specific situations, whereas mentorship emphasises providing overarching guidance, with the two often serving as complementary processes. Sharma et al. (2019) delineate sponsorship as distinct from mentorship, identifying sponsors—whether situated within or outside an organisation—as pivotal figures who significantly influence promotion, recognition, and access to networks conducive to career advancement.

Seehusen et al. articulate the distinctions among these three concepts based on their respective goals, time frames, and methodologies: coaching is characterised by time-sensitive feedback aimed at enhancing performance in particular tasks; mentorship is understood as a longitudinal relationship that facilitates professional development through guidance; and sponsorship is described as episodic public support from a prominent individual, aimed at fostering professional advancement.

Pelan (2012) defines mentorship as the provision of guidance to a protégé, thereby enabling success in an industry, organisation, or career trajectory. The author posits that mentorship is particularly effective at the onset of a protégé's career or within a new role. Mentors are conceptualised as role models who encourage self-development and often advocate for their mentees in pursuit of prestigious positions and competitive salary packages. Conversely, coaching, according to Pelan, is more concentrated on enhancing performance and skills through a collaborative, confidential relationship between peers. Coaches provide continuous encouragement and pose open-ended questions, thereby guiding the coachee toward strategizing solutions and actions for which they are held accountable. In the realm of leadership coaching, emphasis is often placed on refining interpersonal communication styles and decision-making capabilities, ultimately aiming to bolster productivity and engagement over time.

Interestingly, an employee may receive guidance from both a mentor and a coach, with the former serving as a role model who aids in managing potential shifts in the individual's career focus. In an insightful interview conducted by Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator, Carice Anderson highlights the 70-20-10 Model for Learning and Development (Anderson,

2021). This model posits that the key sources of learning contributing to an employee's career success are derived from 70% on-the-job experiences, 20% from relationships—including those with mentors and sponsors—and a mere 10% from formal training. Anderson elucidates that while mentorship may be solicited by the mentee, sponsorship is typically earned through demonstrated excellence and is often bestowed by individuals in senior positions who recognize the beneficiary's exceptional work ethic. These sponsors possess the influence necessary to advocate for the beneficiary's career progression, encompassing promotions and salary increases.

Ahmadmehrabi (2021) underscores that traditional mentorship has historically emphasised the transmission of accumulated wisdom from mentor to mentee, with the latter often emulating the well-regarded attributes of the former. While independence and individuality may eventually emerge from this emulation, the mentor's limited experiences can inadvertently constrain the scope and structure of learning. Ahmadmehrabi (2021) also notes that, although the objectives of mentorship remain timeless, contemporary approaches necessitate an active, structured, and inclusive methodology. Mentoring with vision, purpose, and equity requires intentional outreach and a commitment to serving the aspirations of the mentee. Recognizing that our journeys may differ, it is essential to acknowledge that they are inextricably intertwined in the pursuit of lifelong growth and discovery.

2.3. Cross-Generational Mentorship Dynamics

The entry of the 'Born Free generation' (born between 1994 and 2000) into the workplace coincides with the exit of the 'Apartheid generation' (born between 1938 and 1960), creating fertile ground for cross-generational mentorship relationships. As seasoned professionals impart their knowledge to emerging leaders, it is crucial to recognize that the expectations of mentors and mentees may vary significantly due to intersectional factors such as age, gender, and race.

Pinho et al. (2005) conducted a study examining the expectations and challenges of formal mentoring relationships in professional settings. The findings revealed notable differences between male and female mentees regarding their expectations and perceptions of challenges in mentorship. Male mentees primarily sought career advancement opportunities, while female mentees focused on guidance, direction, and psychosocial support. The motivation for female mentees to enrol in formal mentorship programs often stemmed from recommendations by their

line management. Furthermore, their participation was influenced by concerns such as "balancing work-family life," "gaining confidence in making career decisions," "navigating personality conflicts," and "building trust." This gendered perspective aligns with Holder et al. (2015, p. 168), who theorise that mentorship serves as a vital coping strategy for black women facing microaggressions in the workplace.

While Pinho's study indicated that mentee expectations varied—encompassing career development, marketability, emotional support, and business acumen—it also highlighted that female mentees' expectations were dynamic and subject to change. Research has shown that shared values, mutual respect, and the mentor's industry knowledge significantly influence mentee selection. Conversely, mentors often choose mentees based on traits such as competence, individuality, work ethic, and shared values. Mentors typically expect a reciprocal relationship, where mentees actively engage in their own growth and accountability. Additionally, mentors hope to use these relationships to reflect on their own career journeys while sharing insights with their mentees.

Mullen (2013) observes that mentees and mentors are often drawn to individuals they perceive as interpersonally competent. Moreover, mentors tend to favour mentees who exhibit characteristics akin to their own, often resembling efficient junior colleagues (Clutterbuck et al., 2002).

Curtis (2017) highlights the complex interplay of gender in shaping the relationship between societal expectations of womanhood and leadership. Khuzwayo (2018) emphasises that women continue to seek strategies to overcome barriers to success in the workplace, which include individual, interpersonal, organisational, social, and cultural factors, as well as negative stereotypes and the metaphorical "concrete ceiling" that obstructs equal (Blake-Beard et al., 2006) identify various coping strategies employed by women, including mentorship, which serves as a critical tool for navigating workplace challenges. Carice Anderson (2021) underscores mentorship as an essential element for thriving in professional environments in her best-selling book, *Intelligence Isn't Enough: A Black Professional's Guide to Thriving in the Workplace*.

Pinho et al. (2005) further explore the expectations and perceived challenges of both mentees and mentors within South African workplaces. Their study indicates that mentors often anticipate mentees to take ownership of the relationship, relying less on them while using mentors as sounding boards throughout their career journeys. In contrast, mentees frequently

expect their mentors to assume the role of sponsors, providing not only career growth opportunities but also socio-emotional support and the tools necessary to bolster their decision-making confidence.

2.4. Do generational differences have an impact on mentorship?

A generation can be characterised as a distinct cohort of individuals sharing commonalities in their birth intervals, geographical contexts, and significant life events encountered during pivotal developmental stages (Kuron, 2014). This cohort often cultivates a shared worldview shaped by the historical and socio-cultural environments in which they were raised. Major socio-cultural events play a crucial role in defining the boundaries of generational cohorts, influencing their perspectives, beliefs, and ultimately, the choices they make in both their professional and personal lives. However, generational classifications are not universally applicable; for instance, South Africa’s unique history of apartheid has differentially impacted various racial groups, resulting in divergent generational outlooks shaped by distinct nurturing experiences. Consequently, South African generational cohorts exhibit notable differences when compared to those in the United Kingdom and the United States.

Figure 1: Generational cohort comparison (UK, USA, South Africa)

USA	Baby Boomers [1946-1963]	Generation X [1964-1979]	Generation Y / Millennials [1980-2000]	
UK	Baby Boomers [1946-1960]	Generation X [1960-1979]	Generation Y / Millennials [1980-2000]	
South Africa	Apartheid Generation [1938-1960]	Struggle Generation [1961-1980]	Transition Generation [1981-1993]	‘Born Free’ Generation [1994 - 2000]

Note. Retrieved from Lenses into Diversity in South Africa (p136), by P.Daya, 2021, KR Publishing.

Understanding the unique experiences of different generational cohorts is critical in workplace contexts, as these experiences inform values, expectations, and intergenerational work relationships across all sectors. Each cohort has the potential to contribute uniquely to an

organisation, yet employers face the challenge of creating cohesive and efficient work environments that cater to diverse needs, values, and motivations. To retain talent, organisations must gain a nuanced understanding of the differing needs and motivations of each generational cohort. Mentorship is often highlighted as a valuable mechanism for fostering a sense of belonging and accountability among employees, as well as aligning their contributions with organisational values.

The dynamics between the Apartheid Generation in the workplace and the Born Free Generation pose unique challenges, particularly as the latter is expected to demonstrate competence and adaptability. Many South African employers are aware of the pitfalls of racial stereotyping and may inadvertently engage in generational stereotyping by oversimplifying differences across generations without considering their broader context.

A study conducted by PriceWaterhouseCoopers (2011) elucidates that the Born Free Generation has grown up in a digitally connected environment, affording them immediate access to information and an understanding of essential business tools that often surpass those of their senior counterparts. This generation anticipates employers to provide a robust technology ecosystem that includes social networking, instant messaging, video-on-demand, blogs, and wikis. Such technological fluency enables them to enhance productivity by maintaining engagement and connectivity with colleagues and leaders in a manner that aligns with their natural inclinations. Their priorities in the workplace revolve around rapid career progression, competitive salaries, alignment with corporate social responsibility values, opportunities for continuous learning, flexible working arrangements, diverse and engaging career paths, and consistent feedback. Conversely, the Apartheid Generation places a premium on job security, stability, organisational loyalty, status sensitivity, and opportunities to mentor others.

The Transition Generation, comprising mid-career professionals, exhibits characteristics associated with effective leadership while remaining motivated to advance their careers. This cohort is often perceived as sceptical and less loyal, approaching work with a sense of independence, creativity, technical proficiency, and a willingness to embrace change, diversity, and multitasking. Their reluctance to demonstrate loyalty to organisations stems from witnessing the redundancy faced by their parents (from the Apartheid Generation), prompting them to seek work-life balance as a means of regaining control over their lives.

Knapp (2018) highlights that the Born Free Generation is frequently misunderstood by older generational cohorts within the workplace. Research conducted by Knapp (2018) emphasises the efficacy of reverse mentoring as a strategy for bridging generational divides, fostering an environment conducive to the exchange of knowledge and the development of leadership skills among younger generations. This approach enables emerging professionals to adopt mentorship roles, sharing their self-taught expertise in efficiency—often derived from their technological adeptness—with senior leaders who then assume the role of mentees.

While reverse mentorship is a crucial element in fostering intergenerational collaboration, it remains imperative to keep the Apartheid Generation engaged and motivated as they prepare for retirement. The Born Free Generation's reliance on technology, along with their propensity to curate an idealised online persona, may hinder authentic in-person communication—an essential avenue for receiving constructive feedback and criticism that emerges from genuine interpersonal relationships. Unlike the instantaneous feedback associated with their online interactions, face-to-face exchanges require time and patience to cultivate, thereby enriching the learning experience.

The Born Free Generation seeks job satisfaction and fulfilment; however, they must come to recognize that the development of confidence, skill sets, and robust professional relationships requires time, patience, and guidance. Furthermore, career paths often entail failures and setbacks—an unfamiliar concept for this generation, who have often been shielded from adversity by parenting strategies focused on protection and positivity. These character-building experiences represent valuable opportunities for employers to mentor and coach this generation, instilling resilience, patience, and effective communication skills while helping them navigate the balance between life and their dependence on technology.

As Chaudhuri (2012) asserts, clearly defined mentorship outcomes for each generational cohort can facilitate the ongoing feedback and growth desired by the Born Free Generation, aligning with their preference for coaching over traditional hierarchical management. Such mentorship relationships can encompass access to information, professional respect, the cultivation of personal power, self-actualization, and enhanced self-confidence. Ultimately, mentorship has the potential to guide this generation toward a deeper understanding of their work's significance, empowering them to make meaningful contributions. Creating a cross-generational learning experience through reverse mentoring not only provides traditional mentors with insights into the challenges posed by outdated work practices but also empowers the Born Free Generation

to voice their perspectives and influence discussions surrounding technology, social media, and contemporary trends. This mentorship model serves as both a platform for networking and an avenue for the exchange of unique expertise across generations, thereby fostering commitment from the Born Free Generation and engagement from the Apartheid Generation.

2.5. A focus on African-black women

The existing body of literature on mentorship illuminates the complex intersectionality of age, gender, and race, particularly concerning African-black women, thereby providing a nuanced understanding of the motivations driving their pursuit of mentorship throughout their career journeys. By applying a generational lens within the context of South Africa's apartheid history, we can better delineate the divergent mentorship expectations that exist among black women of varying ages. This approach underscores the vast potential for structuring innovative mentorship programs that incorporate cross-age peer mentoring, group mentoring, e-mentoring, and intergenerational mentoring.

As the Born Free Generation—those born in the post-apartheid era—enters the workforce, they arrive with social media-influenced perceptions of what career success entails. These preconceived notions can lead to disillusionment when they encounter the reality that career advancement is often not characterised by instant gratification. The social media phenomenon encapsulated by the hashtag #Blackgirlmagic celebrates the achievements of black women, yet this notion of excellence may differ significantly from what the Transition Generation perceives as success or trailblazing within professional settings. Moreover, the Born Free Generation's conceptualization of mentorship may not align with the traditional programs designed by large corporations, presenting a critical opportunity for these organisations to engage the younger generations in the mentorship program design process. This engagement is essential, as it fosters a collaborative atmosphere that bridges generational divides and ensures that mentorship initiatives are relevant and effective for all participants.

This proposed study holds significant relevance, as it aims to facilitate meaningful engagement between both generational cohorts, encompassing both the recipients and providers of mentorship experiences. If organisations fail to effectively manage the involvement of the Born Free Generation in mentorship initiatives—through strategies such as "mentoring up" or co-designed programs—they risk misunderstanding, failing to satisfy, and ultimately losing younger employees.

Another notable gap in the literature pertains to the impact of technology on the mentorship experiences of the Born Free Generation. This generation often encounters mentorship opportunities that consist of one-off online interactions with public figures, who provide insights and lessons from their own careers while briefly addressing mentees' queries. Such ephemeral engagements rarely foster the depth of relationship necessary for sustained personal and professional growth, as they typically have a narrow focus on specific learning objectives or career-related themes.

For instance, prominent businesswoman and CEO of the project management firm Uyandiswa, Dambuza, garnered a substantial following of over 50,000 on Instagram in 2021. During an SME Feature on Classic FM in June 2021, Dambuza articulated the value she places on mentorship for career development; however, she acknowledged her inability to accommodate one-on-one mentorship requests. Instead, she chooses to share her expertise by incubating emerging business women within her company. Additionally, she compiles questions received from her online followers and dedicates two hours monthly to respond to them on her YouTube channel, Vastly Sage.

Recognizing her limitations in providing individual mentorship, business leader and philanthropist Yolanda Cuba introduced 'The Mentorship Boardroom' in June 2021 ((Masango, 2021, para. 6). This initiative offered individuals seeking mentorship the opportunity to engage in a 67-minute session with a mentor of their choice on Mandela Day, July 18, 2021. Notable mentors included the former University of Cape Town Vice-Chancellor Prof. Mamokgethi Phakeng, radio host Anele Mdoda, and Facebook's Regional Director Nunu Ntshingila, among others. While The Mentorship Boardroom presented a remarkable opportunity for mentees, it differed from traditional mentorship programs in several key ways:

- **Format:** The mentorship consisted of a one-off, 67-minute online interaction rather than regular, ongoing engagement, which often occurs in person.
- **Request Submission:** Mentees were required to submit three sentences outlining their identity, occupation, and reasons for selecting their chosen mentor. Typically, in traditional programs, mentees are matched to mentors based on predefined criteria or shared career paths.

Increasing efforts are being made to enhance the accessibility of mentorship opportunities for black women across various age groups.



In summary, this literature review underscores the multifaceted nature of mentorship and its critical importance in fostering personal and professional development. By differentiating between mentorship, coaching, and sponsorship, this chapter has highlighted the distinct roles these relationships play in supporting individuals as they navigate their career paths. The examination of cross-generational mentorship dynamics reveals significant variances in expectations and experiences, particularly between the Born Free Generation and the Apartheid Generation in South Africa. Understanding these differences is crucial for organisations aiming to create inclusive environments that leverage the strengths of diverse age cohorts.

Additionally, the exploration of mentorship through the lens of African-black women emphasises the intersectionality of gender, race, and age in shaping mentorship experiences. As this group faces unique challenges in the workplace, it becomes evident that mentorship must evolve to address their specific needs and aspirations. The insights gained from this review highlight the necessity of designing mentorship programs that not only accommodate but also actively engage younger generations, ensuring that mentorship remains relevant and impactful in an increasingly digital and fast-paced world.

The findings from this literature review will inform the subsequent research and practical recommendations aimed at enhancing mentorship effectiveness. By cultivating a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in mentorship relationships, organisations can be better equipped to foster supportive environments that empower all individuals to thrive.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the objectives and methodology of the study aimed at answering the question: "How do mentorship relationship expectations across the different generations of African black women differ?" Understanding the complexities of mentorship requires a thorough examination of the factors that shape these expectations, particularly in a culturally rich and diverse context such as South Africa.

To achieve this, the chapter details the selection of participants, the processes involved in collecting and analysing data, and the theoretical frameworks that guided the research. By adopting a qualitative approach, the study seeks to delve deeply into the nuanced experiences of mentorship across generational cohorts—specifically the Struggle Generation, Transition Generation, and Born Free Generation. Through in-depth interviews, the research aims to uncover the beliefs, motivations, and relational dynamics that inform mentorship expectations among African black women.

The subsequent sections will provide a comprehensive overview of the research design, data collection methods, analysis techniques, and ethical considerations that underpin this investigation, ensuring a robust framework for understanding the mentorship landscape within this demographic.

3.2. Research Approach

In the context of research classification, Taherdoost (2022) outlines several criteria that researchers must consider, including the intended application of the study, the research objectives, and the specific types of information being sought. A key distinction within the realm of research methodologies is the division between qualitative and quantitative approaches. Quantitative research typically focuses on numerical data and statistical analysis, whereas qualitative research delves into the nuanced understanding of human experiences and behaviours.

Qualitative research is particularly valuable when the goal is to explore complex phenomena, uncover underlying motivations, and generate new insights or theories. It seeks to answer

questions about "how" and "why," making it an effective method for examining the intricacies of human interactions and societal trends. This approach is especially pertinent when researchers aim to understand subjective experiences, as it allows for a richer, more comprehensive exploration of the topic at hand.

Given the specific focus of this study—understanding how mentorship expectations vary across different generational cohorts—a qualitative methodology was deemed most appropriate. This decision was driven by the need to capture the depth and richness of participants' perspectives, which cannot be adequately represented through quantitative metrics alone. By conducting in-depth interviews with a carefully selected sample, the research aimed to uncover the meanings, beliefs, and motivations that influence mentorship expectations among various generations. Such qualitative insights provide a more profound understanding of the dynamics at play, facilitating a deeper exploration of the subject matter and contributing to the development of relevant theories in the field.

3.3. Research design

Mohajan (2018) states that qualitative research is a method that captures people's perceptions in a natural setting. It explores people's social reality by focusing on how they interpret their experiences and beliefs intending to understand why or how a certain social phenomenon operates how it does. From this qualitative researchers can interpret issues from the perspective of the sample being studied and use this to generate new concepts and theories. It is often used to study a phenomenon that has never been studied before. Through interviews, focus groups, introspection, and participant observation among the many qualitative research methods, the researcher can understand the social phenomenon from the respondents' perspective as opposed to explaining it from outside.

According to Anas (2022), qualitative research is a systematic scientific method of inquiry that aims to build a holistic narrative, and description to inform the researcher's understanding of social or cultural phenomena. It provides a broader understanding of how and why people behave the way they do. To answer the research question "How do mentorship relationship expectations across the different generations of African black women differ?", a qualitative research approach was undertaken for this study.

An inductive research approach was fundamental to answering the research question as compared to a deductive research approach which Woiceshyn (2018) describes as starting with

a theory and using it to test a hypothesis and review the theory. Inductive research presented the opportunity to regard mentorship as a phenomenon from concepts and develop theories based on observations, rather than attempting to prove any theory that a deductive approach takes.

Phenomenology provides the most suitable qualitative study tool for mapping the qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualise, perceive, and understand various aspects of mentorship. The approach allows researchers to understand the varied conceptions that members of a particular group have about a single phenomenon (Smith & Paretti, 2015, p. 7). No theories or hypotheses were applicable before the commencement of this study. The study relied on patterns from the data collection samples that formed part of the following identified South African generational cohorts:

1. Struggle Generation: Born 1961 - 1980
2. Transition Generation: Born 1981 - 1993
3. Born Free Generation: Born 1994 - 2000

The main objective of this study was to investigate how mentorship expectations of black South African women differ across various generational cohorts. Through this objective, the study would reveal:

1. Mentor-to-mentee expectation patterns that exist within and across the identified generational cohorts
2. The common motives behind black women of different ages seeking mentors and mentees
3. Characteristics that make a good mentorship relationship
4. South African black women's experience mentorship
5. The impact that technology has on traditional mentorship formats

3.4. Data collection

The data for this study was collected with the primary aim of exploring several key dimensions of mentorship as experienced by the participants. Specifically, the research sought to understand:

1. How participants experience mentorship: This involves examining the various ways in which mentorship manifests in their professional lives, including the dynamics of their relationships with mentors and the contextual factors influencing these interactions.
2. Participants' expectations of mentorship: This aspect focuses on what individuals anticipate from their mentorship experiences, including the support, guidance, and resources they believe are necessary for their personal and professional development.
3. The role of mentorship in their respective career journeys: Understanding this dimension requires investigating how mentorship influences participants' career trajectories, decision-making processes, and overall professional growth.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of these facets, a qualitative research approach was employed, utilising in-depth interviews as the primary data collection method. Qualitative research was particularly well-suited for this investigation because it allows for a nuanced exploration of participants' beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviours, and interactions with mentorship. By engaging in open-ended discussions, the study aimed to capture the complexities and subtleties of each participant's mentorship journey.

The interviews were designed to facilitate complex questioning and allow for considerable probing, which is essential for uncovering deeper insights and understanding the meanings behind participants' responses. Each interview was scheduled to last between 30 to 45 minutes and was conducted via Zoom to facilitate recording and transcription. This virtual format not only ensured the safety and convenience of participants but also allowed for a broader reach in terms of participant recruitment, as individuals from diverse geographic locations could easily take part.

The use of Zoom for interviews created a comfortable environment for participants, encouraging them to share their thoughts and experiences more freely. This method provided rich, qualitative data that contributed significantly to the study's objectives, allowing for a thorough analysis of mentorship's multifaceted role in the participants' career development.

3.5. Data Collection Procedure

Ethical clearance for this study was obtained from the University of Cape Town Faculty of Commerce Ethics Committee (REF: REC2021/09/017, Appendix A). Following this approval, an interview consent form was developed, which included:

- The background and purpose of the study

- Confirmation of ethical clearance from the Faculty of Commerce
- Assurance of confidentiality for participants
- Details regarding the duration and format of the interviews (initially set for 45-60 minutes, but adjusted to 30-minute Zoom calls based on participant availability)

To guide the interviews, a structured list of questions was created, which can be found in the data collection tools section.

The recruitment process aimed to engage a diverse group of black women aged 22 to 61 years from various organisations willing to participate in the study. The sample comprised women from the following generational cohorts:

- Struggle Generation: Born 1961 - 1980
- Transition Generation: Born 1981 - 1993
- Born Free Generation: Born 1994 - 2000

Identified organisations for participant recruitment included:

1. Future Females: A global movement led by entrepreneur Lauren Dallas, aimed at inspiring, empowering, and connecting female entrepreneurs through digital content and events.
2. Agenda Women: Founded by businesswoman Nomndeni Mdakhi, this online platform fosters connections among women through shared experiences in work and wellness.
3. The Mentorship Boardroom: Established by business leader Yolanda Cuba, this platform initially facilitated brief mentorship sessions on Mandela Day 2021 and continued to connect mentors and mentees thereafter.

Challenges arose due to South Africa's Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), which restricts access to organisational databases without consent from members. This necessitated sourcing participants directly via social media platforms such as LinkedIn and Instagram, as well as through referrals from personal networks based on participants' public profiles. The target for the study was 21 participants (7 from each generation), although the number was flexible if data saturation was reached beforehand.

Ultimately, eighteen (18) women were identified and interviewed, with the sample group comprising seven Struggle Generation women, eleven Transition Generation women, and seven Born Free Generation women. Selection criteria included:

- Black

- Female
- South African
- Aged between 22 and 61 years
- Prior experience as either a mentor or mentee

Notably, 56% of participants identified as female entrepreneurs. Recruitment efforts utilised Instagram stories, LinkedIn posts, and personal networks. Each potential participant received a personalised message detailing:

- The researcher's background
- The motivation for reaching out
- The focus of the research
- The interview format and duration
- Proposed interview date
- A copy of the research consent form

Recruiting from the Struggle and Born Free generations presented more challenges than the oversubscribed Transition Generation. Women aged 40 to 61 from the Struggle Generation often struggled to find time for Zoom calls due to their demanding roles, while some declined interviews or required appointments to be arranged through personal assistants. This led to increased reliance on word-of-mouth referrals and a LinkedIn post requesting participation from eligible black women willing to share their mentorship experiences. Three leads were generated through LinkedIn, while additional participants were sourced through existing contacts.

The researcher's age may have influenced the oversubscription of the Transition Generation cohort, as recruitment was primarily achieved through direct contacts and word-of-mouth, rather than social media outreach.

Recruitment for the Born Free Generation was particularly challenging, as many members had not yet entered the workforce or experienced mentorship. This necessitated a focus on existing networks and referrals to enhance the likelihood of finding eligible participants with relevant mentorship experiences.

3.6. Data Collection Tools and Analysis

The primary data collection tool for this study was a series of 30-minute interviews conducted via Zoom. Each session was recorded, with prior permission obtained from participants before commencing. The interviews began with an introduction that included:

- The interviewer's name and professional background
- The purpose of the study
- An overview of the interview format and the types of questions participants could expect

Employing a semi-structured format allowed participants the freedom to respond to questions in their own words while also enabling the researcher to ask follow-up questions for clarification. The questions were derived from the central research question: "How do mentorship relationship expectations across the different generations of African black women differ?" Key questions included:

- What does mentorship mean to you?
- What qualities and traits do you look for in a mentor, mentee, or mentorship relationship?
- How has mentorship played a role in the development of your career?

Secondary questions were designed to delve deeper into participants' experiences:

- What were your reasons for seeking a mentorship relationship?
- Who were the mentors that contributed to your growth?

After each interview, participants were asked to sign the UCT Graduate Business School consent form, which provided an overview of the study and confirmed that their participation was voluntary and unpaid. To systematically manage the interview process, the researcher created a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to track the status of interview requests. The spreadsheet included the following fields:

- Name and surname of the participant
- Designation
- Age group/generational cohort
- Date of the interview
- A summary of the interview
- Insights from the interview

Upon completing all scheduled interviews, the spreadsheet was anonymized to protect participants' identities, in compliance with the UCT Graduate Business School consent form.

This form stipulated that participants would not be identified by name in any reports generated from the study and that their confidentiality would be ensured. The amended spreadsheet retained the following fields:

- Interview month
- Generation cohort
- Employment status (employed or self-employed)
- Summary of the interview (names omitted for anonymity)
- Insights from the interview

This structured approach to data collection and management facilitated a thorough analysis of the mentorship experiences and expectations across different generations of African black women.

3.7. Data Collection Personnel and Management

The management of data collected during this study was executed meticulously, utilising a password-protected laptop to ensure the security and confidentiality of all information. Each of the interviews conducted was recorded and subsequently stored in a secure, password-protected environment and on Zoom's cloud platform. This practice not only safeguarded the integrity of the data but also facilitated easy access for transcription and analysis.

Additionally, a dedicated Google Drive folder was established to organise and store various critical documents, including the live draft of the dissertation master copy, interview consent forms, and transcripts of the interviews. This folder was made accessible to the supervisor, allowing for ongoing feedback and enabling effective tracking of the study's progress. The careful management of data ensured that all materials were systematically organised, which is essential for maintaining the reliability and validity of the research process.

3.8. Data Analysis

The analysis of the collected data was carried out through the integration of thematic and narrative analysis, both of which are well-established qualitative research methodologies. These two approaches are not only complementary but are frequently employed together to provide a nuanced understanding of complex datasets.

According to Alhojailan (2012), thematic analysis serves as a method for identifying, analysing, and presenting patterns (themes) within qualitative data. This approach enables the researcher to classify recurring themes across the dataset, thus facilitating a deeper understanding of the underlying issues and perspectives represented by the participants. On the other hand, Oliver (1998) posits that narrative analysis is particularly effective in capturing individuals' interpretations of their life experiences. By employing this method, the research was able to explore how different generations of African black women articulate their mentorship experiences, thereby shedding light on their unique narratives.

The study adopted a cross-sectional research design, which proved to be suitable for examining how mentorship experiences vary across distinct age groups. Unlike longitudinal studies, which observe changes over time, this approach allowed for the simultaneous comparison of the three generational cohorts at a single point in time. This method was deemed sufficient for understanding the mentorship landscape among the selected groups, given the focused nature of the inquiry.

3.9. Quality Criteria

To ensure the reliability and validity of the data collected, a rigorous validation process was employed. This involved conducting thorough online and social media searches to corroborate the brief career summaries provided by participants through referrals. Such diligence was necessary to enhance the credibility of the data and the findings derived from it. Moreover, the researcher took care to avoid leading questions during the interviews, instead opting to ask clarifying questions that encouraged more in-depth and descriptive responses. This strategy not only enriched the data collected but also fostered a more open dialogue between the researcher and the participants, leading to a deeper exploration of their mentorship experiences.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the meticulous methodologies employed for data collection and analysis within this study. From the systematic management of data to the integration of qualitative analytical techniques, each aspect was designed to ensure a robust and credible research process. By adhering to rigorous quality criteria and utilising secure data management practices, the study aims to contribute valuable insights into the differing mentorship



relationship expectations across generations of African black women. The subsequent chapters will build upon these foundations to further explore and interpret the findings derived from this comprehensive investigation.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter meticulously delineates the findings derived from the comprehensive investigation into the nuanced expectations surrounding mentorship relationships as experienced by African-Black women across distinct generational cohorts. The forthcoming sections will provide an extensive overview of the demographic characteristics, occupational affiliations, and emergent patterns evident in the mentorship experiences articulated by the participants during in-depth interviews. This study endeavours to illuminate the variances in mentorship experiences among African-Black women who are categorised into three specific generational cohorts:

1. The Struggle Generation (1961–1980)
2. The Transition Generation (1981–1993)
3. The Born Free Generation (1994–2000)

The analysis will be grounded in several pivotal dimensions:

- The participants' conceptualizations of mentorship, encompassing its inherent structural dynamics,
- The myriad factors that contribute to the establishment and maintenance of effective mentorship relationships,
- The discernible impacts of mentorship on the participants' respective career trajectories, and
- The essential qualities and attributes that characterise both effective mentors and mentees.

A total of eighteen African-Black women were meticulously selected to constitute the research sample, ensuring that each generational cohort was equally represented by six participants. The stringent criteria for selection included the following parameters:

- Participants must identify as Black females,
- Individuals must have been born within the years spanning from 1961 to 2000 (thereby falling within the age range of 28 to 61 years as of the year 2022),
- Participants must have previously engaged in a mentorship relationship.

Participant ID	Age group	Generational cohort	Employed/Self-employed	Occupation
P1	22-28	Born Free	Self-employed	Founder: Haircare brand
P2	22-28	Born Free	Self-employed	Founder: Tech business
P3	22-28	Born Free	Employed	Account Director
P4	22-28	Born Free	Employed	Remediation Consultant
P5	22-28	Born Free	Employed	Sales Representative
P6	22-28	Born Free	Self-employed	Trader: Steel industry
P7	29-41	Transition	Self-employed	Conversation Strategist
P8	29-41	Transition	Self-employed	Founder: Start-up incubator
P9	29-41	Transition	Employed	Attorney
P10	29-41	Transition	Self-employed	Founder of an empowerment platform
P11	29-41	Transition	Employed	Business/Unit Manager
P12	29-41	Transition	Self-employed	Conversation Strategist
P13	42-61	Struggle	Employed	Managing Partner
P14	42-61	Struggle	Employed	Executive Group Head of Marketing
P15	42-61	Struggle	Self-employed	Business Executive Coach
P16	42-61	Struggle	Employed	Self-reinvention Coach
P17	42-61	Struggle	Self-employed	Business & Media Lawyer
P18	42-61	Struggle	Employed	Training Coordinator

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Research Participants

4.2. Employment Data of the Research Sample

The role of small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) in shaping the employment landscape of South Africa cannot be overstated. According to the Momentum/UNISA Science of Success Insights report from 2022, it was noted that "in Q3 2021, SMMEs employed 9,758,314 individuals, which accounted for an impressive 68.3% of all jobs" within the country. Therefore, this research needed to include a representative segment of respondents from the SMME sector.

In analysing the employment statuses of the participants, it was found that half of the respondents were self-employed, while the remaining half were engaged in various forms of employment. Specifically, within the Struggle Generation cohort (ages 42–61), four out of the six participants reported being employed, whereas two out of the six members of the Transition Generation cohort (ages 29–41) were similarly employed. Notably, the Born Free Generation cohort (ages 22–28) exhibited an equal distribution of employment status, with three participants being employed and three being self-employed.

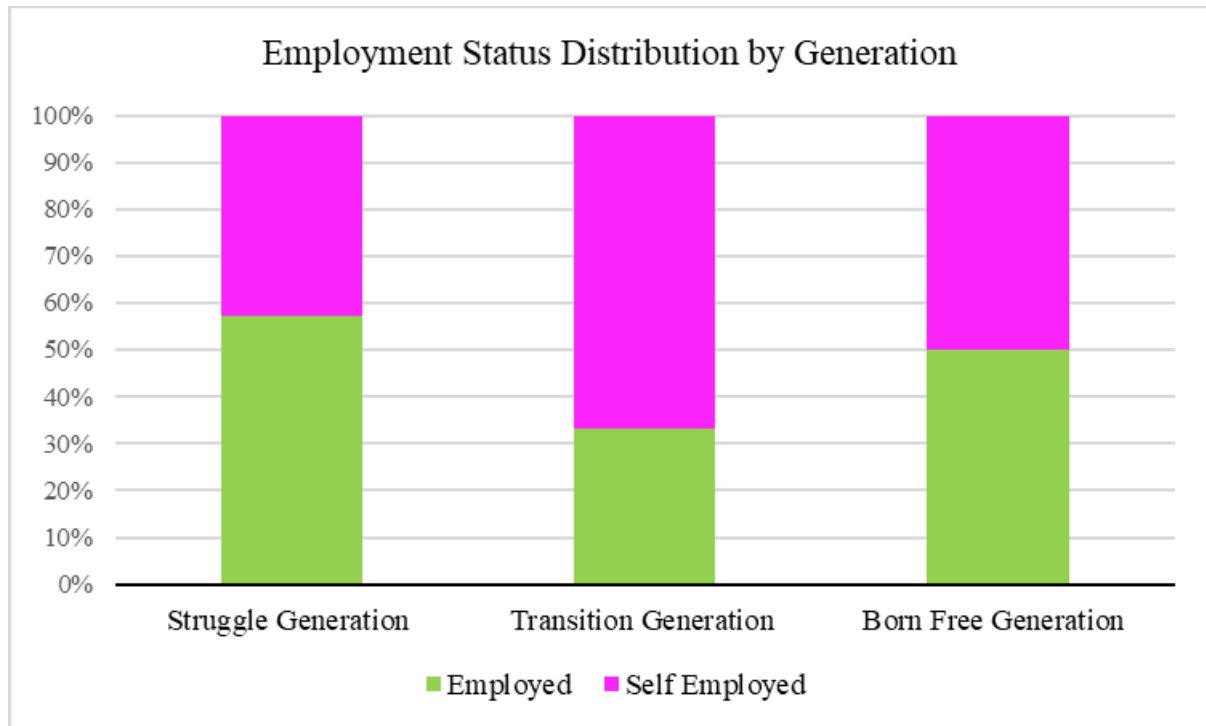


Table 2: Employment status distribution by age

The self-employed respondents represented a diverse array of industries, encompassing sectors such as haircare, steel manufacturing, marketing and media, legal services, enterprise development, as well as training and coaching. Conversely, the employed participants were predominantly engaged in fields such as sales and marketing, business management, legal services, banking, and media. This rich diversity across industries provided invaluable context, facilitating a deeper understanding of the sector-specific complexities that inform the various coping mechanisms employed by Black women, which prominently include mentorship as a significant resource.

4.3. Perceptions of Mentorship Across Generations

Mentorship has been defined by Seehusen et al. as a longitudinal relationship through which individuals receive guidance aimed at fostering their professional development. The respondents of this research study articulated their definitions of mentorship, each reflecting their unique generational perspectives and individual experiences.

A respondent from the Born Free Generation articulated mentorship as follows:

"Mentorship is an invisible guardian, guiding you in a path that is uncomfortable for you to develop and where you are scared to actually open the door and face the challenges of that path. It is an invisible guardian telling you and guiding you in terms of which path to take. They are not always physically there, but they are advising you areas of improvement. They don't tell you what exactly to do or where to go but they show you the root of getting and ending up at that door and you knocking and it being opened." (P6, 99: 4)

This definition underscores a sense of empowerment derived from mentorship, portraying it as a form of support that is both intangible and enduring. In contrast, a participant from the Transition Generation expressed her understanding of mentorship in a different light:

"Mentorship has been about having access to sounding boards who are much more experienced than I am in specific fields—not necessarily industrially, but even in life's agenda. When I think about the mentorship, I received from Oskido³, I'll share some insights that will help you formulate your understanding. Oskido has been a great mentor for me, especially in observing how he navigates relationships in a very unstructured space. That has been a key lesson for me. Much of this stems from his personality and his beliefs about how to build a business. It wasn't about structure; it was more about values alignment. I saw him and thought, "Wow, I wish I could do that." I tend to be more structured and believe that things should be done in a certain way, whereas his lack of structure taught me how to navigate chaos. By watching him and having access to his experiences, I learned to manage the combination of structure and chaos, which has empowered me to navigate success in a much better way than someone who has only worked for a structured company like McKinsey." (P10, 118: 10)

This perspective highlights mentorship as a dynamic interplay of structure and improvisation, emphasising the importance of experiential learning. Similarly, a respondent from the Struggle Generation defined mentorship as:

" Well, mentorship for me is asking or helping someone. As a mentor, I help you achieve some of the things that I have managed to achieve. So, it's literally hand holding you to the next level that you want to be at, which will be a bit different from coach, because I'm also practicing as a coach. So as a coach, I've got the tools while I might not have

³ Oskido, a founding father of Kwaito—a South African genre characterized by its blend of house music, hip-hop, and African sounds—has played a pivotal role in shaping South African music. As a producer and entrepreneur, he has significantly influenced the industry while mentoring emerging artists and promoting cultural expression.

done what you've done. For me, that's mentorship. A big sister or a big brother kind of who's gone through what I've gone through, and that will be my simple definition of mentorship." (P16, 130: 2)

This definition reflects a more traditional understanding of mentorship as a nurturing relationship characterised by direct support and interaction. While each respondent articulated a distinct interpretation of mentorship, a recurring theme emerged: the predominant use of the term "guide" in their descriptions. This commonality aligns closely with each respondent's personal experiences of mentorship, illuminating the unique roles played by different generational cohorts. The Born Free Generation appeared to embody the role of mentees who possess the autonomy to choose both in-person and digital mentorship relationships, dictating the frequency of knowledge exchange and the pace of their learning journey.

Conversely, the Transition Generation identified themselves as active collaborators in knowledge acquisition and dissemination, engaging in informal relationships that allow for a fluid exchange of insights.

Finally, the Struggle Generation was perceived as the givers and facilitators of mentorship, possessing a wealth of knowledge and experience that they impart to younger or less experienced mentees.

4.4. Exploring Mentorship Formats

In comparing the mentorship formats preferred by the different generational cohorts represented in this research, it becomes evident that the 'Born Free Generation' respondents exhibited a marked inclination towards technology-driven methods and remarkable flexibility in their career trajectories. This cohort has been significantly exposed to the gig economy, characterised by its propensity to navigate diverse industries and organisational divisions. Consequently, the guidance they seek from mentorship necessitates a multifaceted approach, leveraging various platforms to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge tailored to their inquiries while ensuring ease of access to mentorship and support. Notably, three out of the five respondents from the Born Free Generation reported actively engaging with podcasts, YouTube channels, and influential social media personalities whose professional endeavours, values, and aspirations resonate with their own.

These respondents consistently sought out mentorship by proactively visiting the identified digital mentors' social media accounts, thereby establishing a routine that ensured regular

access to insights and guidance. Moreover, they capitalised on interactive opportunities presented by their digital mentors through platforms such as Facebook and Instagram Live sessions, where they could pose questions and engage in real-time discussions. As one participant articulated:

" I go physically to their pages, like religiously so. Sometimes I wake up and think, "Okay, who didn't I check today?" I check up on them, especially Lebo Lion. She is always engaging on social media, especially on Twitter. She is always engaging. When I comment or ask something, she's always quick to reply and help me out and answer anything that we need to. I relate to her a lot because of that; she's open to communication." (P1,91:20)

The respondents from the Born Free Generation also accessed a comprehensive array of content offerings from their digital mentors, which ranged from live sessions to email communications designed to ensure they remained abreast of vital information that could enhance their learning experiences.

" It has been all about going on to YouTube, searching for motivational content and then finding someone that speaks to what you are looking for. Initially when I started back in 2017 going through YouTube videos consistently, one of the first people I came across was someone called Marie Forleo. That is pretty much my very first digital mentor. I followed her videos religiously. I was subscribed to her email marketing newsletters. So that is really the first person that I was following when I started out. I don't follow her as much anymore. I feel like her content is highly guided towards people that are starting out and looking for that first in into the entrepreneur world, they are completely lost as I was and right now, I can't relate to her content as much because I have already gone through that phase where I have to find motivation, I have to push myself. My focus is now on individuals like Gary Vaynerchuk. I'm not sure if you've heard of him, and his focus is mainly on motivational content and marketing content. I can relate well to that because I'm in the marketing business, and I need advice on how to improve my craft as a marketer. For me mentorship is really about going through different phases of your life and finding people within those phases that can assist you. And it doesn't have to be one on one. It can definitely be virtual, like I've done a lot of times." (P2, 93: 9)

This testimony exemplifies how the Born Free Generation actively seeks mentorship from individuals whose digital presence aligns with their aspirations and career trajectories. They exhibit a comfort level in soliciting guidance online from a diverse array of individuals across various industries. Often, they may never have the opportunity to meet their digital mentors face-to-face or establish one-on-one relationships, opting instead to gather, consume, and utilise the resources available online, switching mentors as necessary to meet their evolving needs. In contrast, the 'Transition Generation' respondents expressed preferences for mentorship formats that were markedly different. Within this group, there was a division of opinions; some participants leaned towards formal mentorship structures, while others articulated a preference for informal mentorship relationships. Additionally, a subset of respondents reported having cultivated a network of credible individuals from whom they could seek advice and support concerning the challenges they encounter in their respective career paths. However, they noted that these relationships often lacked the formal designation of mentorship, as they were frequently blurred by the emergence of friendships and other social roles.

As one Transition Generation respondent noted:

“I think we often undermine peer-to-peer mentorship. Peer-to-peer mentorship is crucial for us as we build our platform. My experiences have shaped my capabilities as an entrepreneur. Kgomotso is the same age as me, we went to varsity together, we all studied marketing, she followed a different path which is corporate South Africa. The insights I would get from her versus the insights someone would get from me around marketing are different. Mentorship isn't just about the years someone has been in a role; sometimes, it's about access to information. Access to guidance can depend on what you're looking for. There are ways someone my age can mentor me, even if we're in the same industry. It doesn't always come from a Basetsana Khumalo⁴, there's ways that Basetsana can't mentor me. Even if I am in the same industry as her, the era in which she built her business and the era in which I am building my business are totally different. So I benefit more from peer-to-peer mentorship. At different times, you look for different forms of mentorship, and I think there's so much value in peer-to-peer mentorship. It has its hurdles but if you get it right through value exchange then it makes sense.” (P10, 121:17)

⁴ Basetsana Khumalo is a prominent South African television personality, entrepreneur, and philanthropist, celebrated for her influential role in media and business. With a dynamic career that spans over two decades, she inspires many through her commitment to empowering women and driving social change.

This perspective indicates a shift towards a more fluid understanding of mentorship, where relationships are characterised by accessibility and reciprocity rather than rigid structures. Respondents in this cohort conveyed a preference for mentorship dynamics that allow for mutual learning and open dialogue, rather than strictly defined mentee-mentor roles. The ease of access to mentors whenever guidance is needed, coupled with the absence of pre-scheduled appointments, fosters quicker responses and facilitates a more organic learning process.

"But I realized that people, in any way or form, don't mind giving guidance, they sometimes hesitant to be a mentor in the official sense because that now puts more of an obligation to spend time, versus if I give you my number and you are able to reach out to me as and when you have questions and I'm able to respond and assist you and guide you. Then sure. So loose relations or loose mentorships is what I realize people rather prefer versus in the official sense because now there is a clear commitment that you're my mentor. So that's me as a mentee. I've realized that people would rather, if they're keen to assist, give me their contact details and I'm able to then reach out to them and be able to engage them as and when and where I need some guidance and advice. As a mentor, I do also prefer to give somebody my details and I'm on WhatsApp, they're more than welcome to reach out if they need some information, some guidance. I'm able to do that. I prefer that versus having being somebody's mentor in the official sense, when I was supposed to have X amount of meeting times once a month. I don't like that because I have come to realize that a lot of the people I've asked to guide me are very busy people. They don't have the time to say, "Okay, once a month, I commit myself to this" but as and when I need assistance, I pop them a WhatsApp or an email and they'll be able to assist me." (P8: 108:20)

Among the Transition Generation respondents, the four self-employed participants emphasised a desire for non-hierarchical mentorship relationships characterised by mutual respect and learning. One respondent articulated this sentiment by stating:

"For me, informal has worked because I think once you start to formalize it, it limits how far you can help me. Then, in your head, I'm in a specific category. You know, I'm here to ask you something. It makes me a mentee, and the idea of mentee-mentor has a hierarchy. Immediately when it gets formalized, the mentee is the one who is always seeking assistance. The informal structure of mentorship and guidance becomes very conversational, where even Kgomo can pick up the phone and ask for my guidance.

Then it becomes a mutually beneficial relationship. I have another mentor I know, and all of mine are unofficial. There's no official mentor in my life. It's very difficult for me to formalize mentorship. (P10,122:4)

Conversely, two respondents who were not self-employed expressed a preference for more structured mentorship arrangements, emphasising the importance of scheduled meetings and pre-defined agendas. They underscored the necessity for mentees to take an active role in the mentorship relationship by maintaining regular communication with their mentors, scheduling meetings, preparing pertinent questions, and diligently applying the insights gained during their interactions.

" We need to plan for our session and say, "okay, in the next session, this is what we're going to focus on". It's so that I can prep. When we meet, it becomes a fruitful exercise for us. We can't just jump in and ask each other what we are talking about on the day. We need to decide on what we'll be talking about in our next session, and then I prep around that and when we meet. That person also needs to prep so that he or she's able to ask some questions where needed, right? So pre is very important. Otherwise, we can't just shoot in the dark." (P14,127:1)

This perspective highlights the belief among these respondents that effective mentorship requires alignment of values, interests, and career objectives. Furthermore, they posited that mentees must actively demonstrate their commitment and enthusiasm for the mentorship process to earn the mentor's time and attention.

" I think a lot of people want mentorship without having to do the work. I went on Google and I studied her. Obviously, a person's personal life and their professional life are sometimes two different things, but sometimes the lines can be a bit blurred. After a month I made contact with her again and spoke about a book that she had mentioned in an interview. I read the book and texted her on WhatsApp to pick her brain about it. We had a conversation about that and she shared some insights with me. I remember one of the things that she had said to me was that power is subjective, and that has always followed me. Power is subjective. It doesn't matter who we think is powerful out there, but if you don't think that there's power that lies within you, you're not going to be ambitious. So that's one of the things that I've carried with me. I continue to learn her as a person, and when I want her time, I make sure that I prepare. The best way to appeal to a mentor is to first show an interest in who they are. You need to show that

you're interested in them as a person because the relationship of mentorship is actually give and take. You can't just be taking.” (P9,115:19)

The findings of this study revealed a spectrum of mentorship preferences within the Transition Generation, reflecting their diverse experiences with different formats. Self-employed respondents expressed a strong inclination towards informal mentorship relationships that foster immediate access to individuals capable of assisting, while those who were formally employed demonstrated a preference for structured mentorship relationships characterised by scheduled meetings and established agendas. The Transition Generation exhibited notable comfort with both formal and informal mentorship structures. They placed a premium on the diligence and effort their mentees invest in preparing for mentorship sessions, as well as the subsequent application of lessons learned from their mentors.

Lastly, within the Struggle Generation, four out of six respondents also expressed a preference for informal mentorship arrangements. Nonetheless, they placed significant value on the preparation that mentees undertake before mentorship meetings, as well as the frequency of these interactions.

“I think, as a mentee, you need to be teachable. I’m assuming, if you have consented to be in a mentorship relationship, you should already have that mindset. Secondly, you need to take the initiative. You have to own the outcome you want from that relationship. It’s not about being a burden on someone’s time. People are busy and have a lot on their minds. You can’t expect them to do all the thinking for you. When you finally schedule a meeting, you shouldn’t expect them to do all the talking. You need to come prepared: What do you want out of this? What have you done? You should show that you are taking initiative.” (P17,137:11)

While the Struggle Generation is often regarded as a group that receives requests for mentorship, it is noteworthy that some members within this cohort are aware of the crucial role they fulfil as informal mentors within their work and home environments.

“ We have a greater responsibility for family. Charity begins at home. I honestly cannot be out there mentoring the world and not doing the same at home, you know? And the reality is that the closer ones are often the most challenging. That’s real. They’re the most difficult compared strangers. But having said that, you cannot outsource family. It is what it is. So, we have a huge responsibility. I find that I do a lot for my family, but also, I think it just goes with one’s character, one’s personality.” (P17,138:7)

This observation underscores the complexity of mentorship dynamics, as some members of the Struggle Generation may prefer informal mentorship relationships while simultaneously appreciating the advantages of formal structures, such as scheduled meetings and regular interactions, combined with the expectation that mentees take ownership of the mentorship process.

Table 3: Summary of Mentorship Preferences Across Generations

Aspect	Born Free Generation	Transition Generation	Struggle Generation
Mentorship format preference	Technology-driven, flexible, informal	Mix of formal and informal, fluid relationships	Informal mentorship preferred, value on preparation
Engagement platforms	Podcasts, YouTube, social media	Social interactions, informal networks	Work/home environments, informal settings
Access to mentors	Proactive digital engagement, real-time discussions	Non-hierarchical, accessible as needed	Emphasises informal mentoring dynamics
Role of mentee	Active seeker of guidance, follows digital mentors	Owens process, may blur lines with friendships	Takes initiative, prepares for meetings
Preferred interaction style	Asynchronous, self-driven learning	Conversational, mutual learning	Scheduled with clear agenda, yet informal
Importance of preparation	Not explicitly mentioned, more about access	Critical for structured mentorship	Essential for productive interactions
Perception of mentorship	Dynamic and evolving, often without face-to-face contact	Fluid, less hierarchical, focuses on mutual respect	Acknowledges informal roles while valuing structure

This table summarises the key differences and similarities among the three cohorts in terms of their mentorship preferences. The exploration of mentorship formats across different generational cohorts reveals distinct preferences and approaches to mentorship.

Born Free Generation respondents demonstrate a strong inclination towards technology-driven and flexible mentorship methods. They actively seek guidance through platforms such as podcasts, YouTube, and social media, where they engage with digital mentors who resonate with their professional aspirations. This generation values access and responsiveness, often establishing routines to connect with their mentors online. Their approach to mentorship is characterised by informal, asynchronous learning, allowing them to gather insights at their convenience.

In contrast, the **Transition Generation** displays a more varied perspective on mentorship formats. This cohort navigates between formal and informal structures, often blurring the lines between mentorship and friendship. While some participants appreciate the structure of scheduled meetings and predefined agendas, others prefer a more fluid approach that emphasises mutual learning and accessibility. This generation places significant importance on the mentee's role in the mentorship process, advocating for active engagement and preparation to ensure meaningful interactions.

Lastly, the **Struggle Generation** also favours informal mentorship relationships but underscores the necessity of preparation and initiative. Although they often find themselves in mentorship roles, they acknowledge the importance of having clear objectives and being proactive in their interactions. This group values the balance between informal dynamics and the benefits of structured engagements, highlighting that effective mentorship requires both commitment from the mentee and respect for the mentor's time.

Together, these insights illustrate a spectrum of mentorship preferences, reflecting each generation's unique experiences and expectations in their pursuit of guidance and support.

In summary, the insights gathered from the various generational cohorts illuminate a nuanced understanding of mentorship. The Struggle Generation seeks to balance professional and familial obligations while embodying their feminine strengths. The Born Free Generation gravitates towards digital and informal mentorship opportunities, navigating the challenges of accessibility and fear of rejection. Meanwhile, the Transition Generation emphasises proactive engagement and mutual investment in the mentorship relationship. Collectively, these findings underscore the complexity and diversity of mentorship dynamics, revealing the essential qualities that foster successful mentor-mentee relationships across different contexts.

4.5. The Qualities and Traits of an Effective Mentor, Mentee, or Mentorship Relationship

In exploring the qualities and traits that respondents seek and value in a mentor or mentee, a common theme emerged across the different generational cohorts: the importance of relatability, which is often established through shared values and comparable career paths. Both mentors and mentees interviewed for this study expressed a strong appreciation for inspiring conversations and practical guidance. Such interactions not only foster a supportive environment but also help to make their goals and aspirations more attainable. This emphasis on alignment in values and experiences underscores the critical role that interpersonal connections play in the effectiveness of mentorship relationships.

The Struggle Generation	The Transition Generation	The Born Free Generation
<p>Openness to a mutual learning experience</p> <p>Aligned values</p> <p>Anchored in family</p> <p>Intellectual</p>	<p>Intentional</p> <p>Strategic</p> <p>Disciplined</p> <p>Willing to listen</p> <p>Take criticism</p>	<p>Relatability (A mentor with a career journey that the mentee can emulate)</p> <p>Someone the mentee sees themselves in</p> <p>Self-confidence</p> <p>Aligned values</p>

Action-oriented		Regular and open communication
Feminine power	Apply the lessons shared in mentorship sessions	Settled in one's career (is not striving for the same things as their mentee)
Experienced mentor		Provides realistic advice
Teachable	Results-driven	
Humility	Intellectual	
Self-confidence	Innate curiosity	
	Show up for oneself	
	Proactive	
	Authenticity	

Table 4: Valued qualities and traits of a good mentor, mentee or mentorship relationship by generational cohort

The Struggle Generation articulated a profound appreciation for mentorship relationships that facilitate the integration of work and family responsibilities. This preference is particularly salient given their current life stage, wherein they are not only advancing in their careers but also fulfilling family obligations. Respondents indicated that they draw inspiration from male counterparts who, despite often being less qualified, exhibit higher levels of confidence and assertiveness. However, they remain committed to embodying their feminine power in the workplace, which allows them to engage with colleagues and subordinates in a manner that is graceful, nurturing, and humble.

One participant noted,

"What I look for in a mentor is, "did they go through it"? Did they get where I want to get to, showing up as women? I had two female mentors. I wanted to understand the

balance of finesse and also being a kick ass boss, if you may call it that, especially when I went into senior management. I didn't want to show up like a man, but I could tell the environment I was in was very masculine. It was a science environment, so it was very masculine. So, I look for people who have shown up as female, very feminine in the way they dress up. I was more into my masculinity, I was a blue, grey, navy suit kind of girl. I really wanted my softness to come out. So, when I look for a female mentor, I look for those kinds of qualities and also someone that can teach me how to balance my home life and work life. Going into senior management, I had just gotten married and just had a child, so at that particular time, I wanted to know, how do I show up in the office and also not be absent at home. How I showed up physically was important. I even had to join Toastmasters to package my story and that I don't come across forceful. I would go into a meeting very dominant and so I wanted to move away from force going into power. We can come into a space, command power and make sure that your word is final, but in a way of inclusivity, where you're not pushing. That was my main game. So that's also what I looked for in women.” (P16, 131:5)

This cohort, having been among the first women to occupy certain leadership roles in their early careers, has had to work diligently to cultivate the confidence necessary for success. They frequently referenced drawing inspiration from other leaders, stating,

“ One of my female mentors was a Director General at the time. She literally was chairing most of the international platforms and how she showed up, she, she really was not a pusher like I viewed myself to be. She was always very calm, always very soft spoken, but everyone, even the most powerful man in the room, would literally bow down to her. So, I wanted to know, how do you actually have that? How do you send people to the drawing board? Those are the kind of qualities I wanted to embody and to learn about. She was very nurturing and motherly, all of us went to her as a mother. So, I also wanted to know, how do you show up like that? How do you not have people take advantage of you? Why are you also helping as a big sister? Mentorship is quite tricky, because you're a big fan, you might be over giving. So how do you draw the boundary, but in a nice way that you're still you're still that nurturing person.” (P16, 131:19)

In discussing the qualities of mentorship, two of the three generational cohorts emphasised the significance of a results-driven relationship. The absence of this quality in the Born Free

Generation's discourse may be attributed to their fluid career paths and the self-directed nature of their digital mentorship experiences. While many expressed a desire for the freedom to choose their mentors, they acknowledged challenges in accessing suitable individuals. Notably, half of the respondents from the Born Free Generation reported engaging in informal, digital, self-guided mentorship.

"I also find that getting someone to mentor you one-on-one, first of all, it is difficult. People that are in the space to mentor others either don't want to do it, they don't have the time to do it, and you might not have access to the types of individuals that have the type of knowledge that you're looking for. When you go virtual, it's just so much easier because the person there wants to be in that space, they are more than excited to give all of the advice for free. So, it just makes it so much easier when you go the virtual route." (P2, 93:24)

A respondent from the Born Free Generation articulated a fear of rejection when reaching out to potential mentors, preferring to select mentors online and engage with their content through social media platforms.

"Yes, I want to mention that I am scared of reaching out to potential mentors. I hesitate to message them because I don't want to intrude. I think, "Maybe they won't reply," and I'm afraid of rejection. So, I just follow their content and mostly interact in the comments. I find a lot of mentorship in the comments too because the people who follow them are often doing what I'm doing. They are also seeking skills and information, so I network that way." (P1, 91:8)

Those in the Born Free Generation who have benefited from mentorship appreciated mentors who were confident, relatable, and responsive.

"I go physically to their pages, like religiously so. Sometimes I wake up and think, "Okay, who didn't I check today?" I check up on them, especially Lebo Lion. She is always engaging on social media, especially on Twitter. She is always engaging. When I comment or ask something, she's always quick to reply and help me out and answer anything that we need to. I relate to her a lot because of that; she's open to communication." (P1,91:20)

In contrast, the Transition Generation highly values proactive mentees who take ownership of their formal mentorship relationships. They emphasised the importance of communication and availability. One respondent remarked,

"Communication and availability are very important for me. You must be available for the person that you are mentoring if you have a busy schedule like my one. You need to come up with a schedule. This is our timetable. I will make it to a point that I avail myself at that specific time, even if it is in the evening, after hours or on weekends. It's okay for me because most of the time we are working. You must be available, you must communicate. You must check up on the person that you are mentoring because you cannot mentor a person and then you don't see the progress." (P14, 126:18)

While mentors provide guidance, this generation expressed a desire for mentees to actively invest time and resources in their development. One respondent articulated the rationale behind her decision to offer mass mentorship via social media and shared her philosophy on mentorship:

" One of my prayer points is, may my life be a lesson. I'm happy to have anybody to learn from my life. Please. I bear my life on social media, and I do it like that, as openly and as authentically as possible because I want people to learn what they want to learn from me. My approach is I want to learn from whoever in an informal perspective, and you pick and choose what you want. I'm all for people going around and learning lessons from my life. I don't want to ever sit there and be put on a pedestal and have self-glorification of the number of people I am assisting. That's not the point for me. The point is I would rather have 100 000 people, millions of people, learning from my life, from me being authentic on social media than actually trying to formalize it and losing the plot. It then becomes about me. How many girls are following me? I need to teach them all the time, because it can become rigid if I only select a few people that I need to mentor, and there's deadlines to that. If it's fluid and it's just you watching on my life and learning what you need to learn, then it's it allows it to be as authentic as possible. So, I never say to people, "no, I can't mentor you right now". I encourage people to just watch my life and to take the teachings. Always feel free if you want to throw a question at me without us having to formalize it. So, I want anybody and everybody to learn. Otherwise, I've wasted God's time putting all these things that he's helped me overcome in painful ways, in great ways, in successful ways and unsuccessful ways, if I'm not using my life as a lesson to others openly. When it's done authentically, it means that I've allowed those who want to learn how I parent to learn from me, those who want to learn how I work to learn from me. Those who want to learn how I write to learn from

me. Those who want to learn how I friendship, to learn from me. It doesn't box it, because a lot of times mentorship also becomes just about work. But I'm so much more than work. Like, don't you want to know how I also wife and mom? There's so much more than just how I run being a message architect.” (P7, 106:29)

This cohort appreciated mentors and mentees who exhibit humility and a willingness to give as much as they receive. As one participant remarked,

“People want to feel nurtured as well. What do you have to offer? Even if it's asking and checking in. Even with Piggz⁵, I was very complimentary my reason for being in her office. “I'm so inspired by your story.” The reason why she probably brought me in closer over time is because naturally, I'm a nurturing person. How can I be of assistance? Over time, it's not just about taking. You have something to offer, even if it's an ear, a shoulder. When we meet somebody for the first time, they also want to be asked, how are they doing. You know, so you kind of work the room. People don't want to just always be giving. They also want to get something out of an interaction, and that's what stands out. As you're talking, I'm thinking, that's what stands out and makes a person remember you even more. She asked me how I was. She didn't just talk about my work, she was genuinely concerned and engaged in the conversation that we were having. I also leave feeling like, “oh, today, for a change, I'm actually human, and I'm less my companies. Yes, they are important to me, and probably we are here to engage on that and learn from that experience. But the reality is, we also human at the end of the day. So between the back to back Zoom sessions that you're having today, one person actually was genuinely concerned about how you feeling or how you doing. So it's so small little things you can also figure out what else, either asking how they do it, or making a reflection of what you read about them and saying or congratulations on that. Now that sticks out as mastering the art of leaving a lasting impression.” (P8, 111: 11)

Others reflected on organic mentorship relationships rooted in relatability, with one noting,

There's a lady I recently interviewed. Literally I wish I could just go to her on Sunday and have lunch and just speak about life. That's how much I was touched by who she is and how she is. But I always feel like, if I then go to her and say, “Oh, can I come and speak to you?” it just creates a very different dynamic versus allowing it to happen, you

⁵ A nickname given to Peggy-Sue Khumalo; a dynamic leader and trailblazer in the South African banking sector, known for her exceptional mentorship and unwavering commitment to empowering women in business. Her inspiring journey and remarkable achievements have made her a role model for many aspiring professionals.

know? And also, because we're in different generations, it's very difficult. I'm still trying to figure out if I would like to pursue that. I often think that credibility in mentorship allows for an organic relationship with your mentor. I feel like I always, when I meet people like how I met her, I always wait for a moment when she meets someone who she believes is credible, who then says, "Oh, I know her. She's amazing," and then that her coming back—this is how it normally happens—her coming back to me and saying, "Oh my gosh, I met this person, and they were talking about you. I'm so proud of the work that you do." Credibility a very important piece when it comes to authentic and empowering mentorship relationships, right?" (P10, 122: 22)

Overall, the respondents highlighted the importance of intentionality in mentorship. The participant went on to further explain,

"I don't want to say there's no intentionality, but there really isn't. Let's step back and consider: what does networking do for creating mentorship relationships? For me, it doesn't start with the mentorship relationship; it starts with networking. I'm very intentional about my network—not so much about mentorship, but very intentional about my network. I network with like-minded people, which makes it easier to find mentorship. It's easy for me to say yes to you because we are like-minded and have been informally networking on social media. I haven't been mentoring you in a formal sense, but perhaps I've been mentoring you by observing. It starts with the networking. You've been very visible in my social media, supporting our initiatives and giving feedback. I know your name; I recognize your investment. If you ask me for time, I'll give it to you because I see a like-mindedness and shared values. From that network, I might speak to someone I met at an event with whom I've built a relationship based on shared values. They might say, "I know a person who can help you with that." That's how my mentorship has evolved." (P10, 120: 3)

Prominent among these are concepts such as "guidance" and the notion of exchanging lessons, which emphasise the importance of creating and recognizing opportunities for mutual learning. This thematic resonance across the various generational cohorts represented in the research sample indicates that, despite differences in age and mentorship experiences, there exists a shared understanding of the fundamental essence of mentorship. Nonetheless, the expectations regarding the format, frequency of engagement, and other critical elements constitutive of the mentorship experience may indeed vary among the generations.

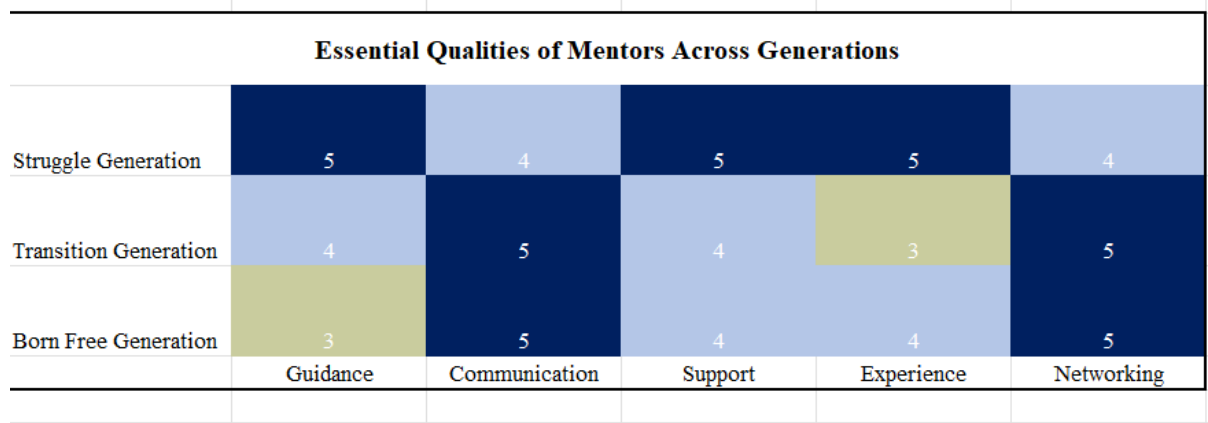


Table 5: A heatmap highlighting how each generational cohort values different mentorship qualities

The above heatmap visualises the essential qualities of mentors as perceived by participants across three generational cohorts: the Struggle Generation (1961–1980), the Transition Generation (1981–1993), and the Born Free Generation (1994–2000). It displays how each group prioritises five key mentorship qualities: guidance, communication, support, experience, and networking. The intensity of the colour represents the importance placed on each quality, with darker shades and blues indicating higher relevance. The Born Free Generation and the Transition Generation value communication and establishing networks while the Struggle Generation places more value on guidance, on-going support and the mentor’s experience.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter serves to synthesise and analyse the findings derived from the previous chapters, specifically focusing on the mentorship expectations of African-Black women across distinct generational cohorts. The research aimed to illuminate the nuanced ways in which mentorship experiences are shaped by the historical, social, and economic contexts pertinent to each generation. The participants were categorised into three generations: the Struggle Generation (ages 42 to 61), the Transition Generation (ages 29 to 41), and the Born Free Generation (ages 22 to 28).

The overarching goal of the study was to explore the intricacies of how these different generations perceive and experience mentorship. Key areas of investigation included the factors that contribute to effective mentorship relationships, the attributes valued in mentors, specific expectations regarding mentorship, and the impact of these relationships on the participants' career trajectories.

A total of eighteen Black women were recruited for this research, with each generational cohort represented by six participants. Each individual met the predetermined criteria: being Black, female, born between 1961 and 2000, and having previously engaged in a mentorship relationship. The participants encompassed a diverse array of professional backgrounds, including self-employed individuals from industries such as haircare, steel, marketing, media, legal, enterprise development, and training and coaching. Additionally, employed participants came from sectors including sales and marketing, business management, legal, banking, and media. This diversity allowed for a comprehensive examination of the industry-specific complexities that inform the various coping mechanisms employed by Black women, including the pivotal role of mentorship.

In this chapter, the research findings will be meticulously discussed, highlighting the key themes that emerged from the interviews conducted throughout the study. By analysing these themes, the chapter will elucidate the commonalities and differences in mentorship expectations across the generational cohorts, ultimately contributing to a deeper understanding of the mentorship landscape for Black South African women.

The subsequent sections will provide an in-depth examination of the findings, contextualising them within the broader literature on mentorship and generational differences, and offering

insights into how these findings can inform future mentorship initiatives and programs tailored to meet the unique needs of Black women across different stages of their professional journeys.

5.2. What does mentorship mean to you?

Mentorship is fundamentally a guiding force in one's professional journey—a compass navigating the complex landscape of career growth and personal development. As Pelan (2012) articulately notes, mentorship encompasses the provision of guidance that empowers protégés to thrive within their chosen industries, companies, or broader career paths. This guiding relationship is particularly transformative during pivotal early stages in a mentee's career or when embarking on new roles. Here, mentors often assume the dual role of role models and advocates, encouraging self-development while opening doors to opportunities that enhance visibility and earning potential.

When participants in this research were invited to share their definitions of mentorship, their responses consistently revolved around the concepts of “guidance” and “guide.” This shared understanding underscores a collective recognition that mentorship is not merely about providing definitive answers; rather, it is about facilitating a journey toward self-discovery and decision-making. Mentorship, in essence, carves a pathway toward the mentee's next career phase, offering insights that encourage personal agency.

Through attentive listening to the narratives shared by mentors, mentees glean valuable lessons that inform their approach to challenges. The mentor's wealth of experience becomes a roadmap, guiding mentees through both professional and personal hurdles. While guidance is offered, it is crucial that mentees retain the autonomy to make their own decisions, drawing from the options presented rather than relying solely on prescriptive advice. This dynamic emphasises mentorship as an empowering process—one that cultivates independence and critical thinking.

5.2.1. Mentorship: Options on demand, powered by technology

The evolution of mentorship has been significantly influenced by technological advancements, leading to a variety of formats that extend beyond traditional one-on-one

interactions. Digital mentorship has emerged as a vital resource, particularly for those seeking remote guidance or scalable mentorship opportunities. The Born Free Generation, characterised by their desire for instant solutions and expansive choices, thrives in this digital landscape. They benefit from the flexibility to shift their digital mentorship connections as their careers evolve, thereby allowing their professional interests to dictate their mentorship relationships without the burden of guilt.

This flexibility is complemented by access to an expansive pool of mentors across various industries and career stages, albeit at the potential cost of building deep, lasting networks. While digital platforms enable rapid access to information and mentorship, they may simultaneously dilute the depth of interpersonal connections that characterise traditional mentorship. Nevertheless, technology also fosters collaborative networks that allow mentees to engage with curated content and participate in communal learning experiences. These networks can bridge gaps in knowledge and create spaces for nuanced discussions around career growth.

Prominent figures like Nozipho Tshabalala, a Conversation Strategist, exemplify the potential of technology to democratise mentorship. Her "Mentorship Mondays" sessions, broadcast on Instagram, attract thousands of viewers globally, creating an interactive space for mentorship that transcends geographical boundaries. Similarly, entrepreneurs like Gary Vaynerchuk serve as distant mentors, offering insights and inspiration to audiences eager for guidance. This new paradigm of mentorship facilitates a dynamic interchange of ideas and experiences, enhancing accessibility for all involved.

However, the Transition Generation respondents noted that the overwhelming volume of mentorship requests often compels them to explore scalable solutions. By developing platforms and virtual sessions that address common inquiries, they not only disseminate knowledge but also position themselves as thought leaders within their communities. These initiatives, coupled with innovative approaches to content creation, enable mentors to engage effectively with their digital mentees.

Furthermore, the Struggle Generation has also harnessed technology to facilitate mentorship, employing platforms like Zoom and Google Meet to connect with their mentees. This inclusivity demonstrates that technology serves as a vital bridge across generations, enhancing the mentorship experience for all involved.

5.2.2. Mentorship: A breeding ground for new ideas

Mentees often seek out mentors during times of transition or when facing significant challenges, hoping to draw on their insights and experiences. Participants in this study articulated mentorship as a reciprocal learning experience—an exchange that enriches both parties. Mentors reported that engaging with their mentees not only revitalises their perspectives but also inspires innovative thinking. As they share their own journeys, mentors find themselves challenged and enriched by the fresh ideas and viewpoints presented by the younger generations.

This symbiotic relationship is particularly pertinent in light of the growing entrepreneurial spirit among South African women, as highlighted by the Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs. The findings reveal that, while many countries saw a decline in women's entrepreneurial activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, South Africa emerged as a beacon of growth. Mentorship stands out as a crucial ingredient for fostering this progress, nurturing personal development and business innovation among women from the Born Free and Transition Generations. As these women engage with mentors from the Struggle Generation, they tap into a reservoir of wisdom and experience, receiving guidance through various channels, including keynote talks and one-on-one sessions.

In instances where mentees present bold, untested ideas, mentors serve as invaluable sounding boards. They create a safe space for exploration, allowing mentees to express their challenges without fear of judgement. This nurturing dynamic empowers mentees to iterate on their ideas and develop strategies that align with their aspirations.

5.2.3. Mentorship: A collaborative network

The respondents in this research study highlighted the importance of networks that facilitate subtle mentorship opportunities. Black women often congregate in circles of like-minded individuals through platforms like *Agenda Women* and *She Says Cape Town*, where they share knowledge and create opportunities for collaboration. These networks enable women to nurture professional relationships that extend beyond formal mentorship, fostering an environment of mutual support and accountability.

One Transition Generation respondent, who founded a platform aimed at assisting women in navigating their multifaceted roles, emphasised the profound impact of her network. These

informal relationships allowed for sustainable mentorship devoid of rigid expectations, facilitating a more organic and supportive mentorship dynamic. The reduced pressure associated with these fluid connections encourages cross-generational exchanges, addressing the challenges faced by black women in a landscape where they may feel over-mentored yet under-sponsored.

Through various engagement opportunities, such as webinars and networking events, women gain access to potential mentors who might otherwise remain out of reach. These interactions provide invaluable opportunities for personal growth and professional development, enabling mentees to build relationships with influential figures in their fields.

A Transition Generation respondent noted the intentionality behind her network-building efforts, highlighting the value of carefully selecting relationships that foster mutual growth. This conscious approach not only enhances her professional visibility but also creates a foundation for collaborative endeavours that align with her aspirations.

Ultimately, these collaborative mentorship networks thrive on authenticity and transparency, requiring a commitment from both mentors and mentees to nurture relationships and share knowledge. Through engagement and co-creation, women from diverse backgrounds can learn from one another, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and adaptability.

5.2.4. Exploring the diverse formats of mentorship

The findings of this study emphasise that mentorship is not confined to formal relationships; it can thrive even at a distance. While one-on-one mentorship is ideal for many, participants expressed hesitation in reaching out to potential mentors due to uncertainties regarding responsiveness. As time constraints and access challenges loom large, mentorship can manifest in alternative forms—such as motivational content and digital interactions—that inspire and guide mentees along their paths.

Social media platforms have become rich landscapes for mentorship, allowing mentees to engage with successful black entrepreneurs whose journeys resonate with their own. This democratisation of mentorship exemplifies the diverse formats available, emphasising that mentorship is a fluid and evolving process. Additionally, the preference for same-gender mentorship speaks to the shared experiences and understanding that can facilitate deeper connections.

Moreover, the participants highlighted a growing recognition of sponsorship as a crucial component of career advancement, often overshadowing traditional mentorship. This shift underscores the need for mentorship to evolve alongside the aspirations of today's professionals, reinforcing the notion that effective mentorship is a blend of guidance and tangible support for career progression.

5.3. What qualities and traits do you look for in a mentor, mentee, or mentorship relationship?

5.3.1. Relatability and openness: Cornerstones of effective mentorship

In the realm of mentorship, the qualities of relatability and openness emerge as indispensable pillars in cultivating robust and meaningful relationships. Respondents overwhelmingly highlighted that mentorship transcends the confines of professional development; it often interweaves with personal experiences, reflecting the essential principle that individuals must bring their authentic selves to work. To foster an environment where both mentors and mentees can thrive, they need to embrace transparency regarding their challenges, setbacks, and the support they require from one another. Authenticity demands a commitment to open communication about personal values, which, in turn, nurtures trust—an essential ingredient for any successful mentorship.

The insights drawn from the data reveal a rich tapestry of valued traits that contribute to effective mentorship. Key themes identified across the generational cohorts in this study include:

- **Work-Life Integration:** Recognizing that personal and professional lives are intricately linked, fostering a holistic approach to mentorship.
- **Mutual Learning:** Acknowledging that both parties can grow and learn from each other's experiences.
- **Results-Driven Focus:** Emphasising outcomes while maintaining a collaborative spirit.
- **Mentor's Work Experience:** Valuing the real-world insights that seasoned mentors bring to the table.
- **Disciplined Approach:** Proactivity in applying lessons learned and strategies discussed during mentorship sessions.
- **Regular and Open Communication:** Ensuring ongoing dialogue to adapt and respond to evolving needs.

Interestingly, while there are commonalities among generational groups, the order of priority for these qualities varies. Such differences may stem from the unique challenges each cohort faces, shaped by workplace stereotypes, varying levels of experience, and individual growth areas. Understanding these nuances is crucial in tailoring mentorship approaches to meet specific needs effectively.

5.3.2. A holistic approach is critical for selecting effective mentors

The mentor's role is akin to that of a guide, essential for unlocking access to vital information and resources that propel career advancement. Participants emphasised that mentors should embrace their journeys without the shadow of competition; confidence in one's path enhances the mentoring relationship. An emotionally healthy mentor, capable of providing supportive guidance, is highly sought after.

Successful mentorship is grounded in clarity of purpose—mentees must articulate their goals and understand why they seek out specific mentors. Relationships thrive when mentors and mentees operate within the same field and share aligned values. Effective mentorship hinges on several key elements: clear communication, strategic planning, and regular check-ins. Patience and the ability to offer constructive perspectives are also paramount traits for mentors. Conversely, effective mentees exhibit curiosity, proactivity, and a steadfast commitment to their growth.

At its core, effective mentorship is about leading through experience and serving as a sounding board, instilling in mentees a belief in their potential. Nurturing informal relationships where mentees feel at ease to ask questions and seek advice is vital. Mentorship is inherently collaborative, requiring an alignment of personalities and a sharing of skills that often develop organically, with expectations evolving.

Participants acknowledged the value of "mentors from afar"—those who are already established in desired fields—who can impart invaluable insights through storytelling on social media. These narratives not only help mentees visualise their potential but also serve as inspiration. The quality of conversations within mentorship relationships is paramount; mentees should feel a deep sense of alignment with their mentors.

Ultimately, mentorship is characterised by an exchange of life experiences, offering mentees strategies to navigate and avoid common pitfalls in their career journeys. Respondents expressed a preference for mentors who possess relevant experience, confidence, and

intentionality. Social media has emerged as a modern platform for storytelling, enabling potential mentees to engage with their mentors and lay the groundwork for meaningful relationships. Maintaining ongoing, energising conversations is essential to ensure that both parties continue to grow and innovate within the mentorship framework.

5.4. How has mentorship played a role in the development of your career?

5.4.1. Mentorship as a Performance Management Tool

In the contemporary work environment, the meticulous tracking of employee performance stands as a cornerstone for aligning team efforts with the overarching goals of the organisation. Within this framework, mentorship emerges as a vital strategy that not only enhances training but also ensures a continuous loop of feedback. This dynamic alignment between organisational objectives and the skills, experiences, interests, and abilities of employees is essential for fostering growth.

Mentors are empowered to engage in candid conversations that illuminate the mentee's journey, encouraging deep reflection on their growth, identifying blind spots, and pinpointing areas ripe for development. This proactive feedback mechanism serves as a crucial instrument for organisations to gauge a mentee's potential and contributions throughout their tenure. Such insights pave the way for collaborative efforts in career path planning, ultimately feeding into the organisation's succession strategies. In this context, mentorship becomes not merely an ancillary support system but a robust framework for professional performance management.

5.4.2. Mentorship as a Source of Inspiration

When individuals encounter transitions in their careers or personal lives, they often turn to mentors for guidance and inspiration. The selection of a mentor frequently hinges on shared values, the mentor's achievements, and their proximity to the mentee's aspirations. The wisdom imparted by mentors serves as a beacon, illuminating the path forward and offering critical insights that inform the mentee's next steps. Moreover, mentors inspire profound

transformations in their mentees' approaches to work. They cultivate a mindset that encourages the tracking of goals, adeptly navigating challenges, and reshaping detrimental habits—such as inconsistency and poor time management—that can create a deadlock for growth. For many, especially students and emerging businesswomen, adapting to change can be daunting; thus,

reinforcing theoretical lessons through repetition becomes vital. This iterative process not only instills confidence in the mentee's potential but also ensures that the advice given is internalised and applied consistently over time.

5.4.3. Mentorship as a Personal Branding Tool

For many, mentorship serves as a powerful catalyst for personal branding. One respondent from the Transition Generation articulated how mentorship has enabled her to present the best version of herself in new environments and collaborative networks. By aligning her career aspirations with the insights gained from mentorship, she meticulously prepares for professional engagements, enhancing her visibility in spaces that promote growth. Through conversations with influential mentors, mentees gain unprecedented access to boardrooms and discussions that might otherwise remain closed to them. This proximity to established figures allows mentees to glean insights into the personal brands and career trajectories they aspire to emulate. Additionally, mentors can serve as advocates, recommending mentees' services and capabilities, thus becoming valuable referral sources who can attest to their work to prospective clients. In this way, mentorship acts not just as guidance but as a strategic tool for personal and professional visibility.

5.4.4. Mentorship as a Driver of Personal Development

Informal mentorship relationships hold the potential to significantly expand perspectives, facilitating a meaningful exchange of ideas between mentors and mentees. These connections often thrive on the sharing of successes within a network of informal mentors, making it easier for individuals to seek guidance when needed. This highlights the importance of intentionally establishing networks and maintaining credibility throughout one's career journey. Mentorship is an intricate process that empowers individuals to articulate their career paths and achieve their aspirations. It thrives on a foundation of trust, respect, and a shared commitment to growth. Particularly effective mentorship relationships navigate both personal

and professional challenges, guiding mentees toward informed decision-making that supports their development. Exemplary mentors do more than just offer direction; they cultivate the next generation of mentors, fostering a self-sustaining cycle of support and development. Moreover, mentorship transcends formal arrangements; it can flourish through informal conversations that

impart invaluable wisdom and knowledge. Engaging with mentors of diverse backgrounds—particularly those of different genders—offers fresh perspectives on navigating the complexities of workplace dynamics. Ultimately, effective mentorship is characterised by a reciprocal relationship that nurtures mutual learning and growth, reinforcing the notion that success is not merely an individual achievement but a collective outcome enriched by shared experiences.

5.5. Emerging insights by generation

5.5.1. Born Free Generation (Ages: 22 to 28)

The findings from the interviews with the Born Free Generation illuminate a profound and evolving understanding of mentorship, underscoring that it need not always manifest as a traditional, direct relationship. In an age where accessibility can be a significant barrier, mentorship can thrive even from a distance, particularly through platforms such as social media. Many respondents from this generation expressed a keen interest in following black entrepreneurs online, highlighting how these digital interactions provide invaluable insights into their journeys, skills, and the practical application of their experiences. This reveals a critical shift in mentorship paradigms, where individuals derive motivation and guidance from the successes and stories of those they admire, even if they have not established personal connections.

Central to this exploration is the recognition that mentorship extends beyond mere guidance; it embodies a reciprocal exchange of wisdom and encouragement, enabling mentees to navigate their professional landscapes with confidence. While one-on-one mentorship is often idealised, many individuals experience trepidation in reaching out due to the fear of rejection. Consequently, mentorship can take various forms, including motivational content available on platforms like YouTube, which allows for the immediate application of shared advice, thus fostering a practical approach to personal and professional growth.

The interviews also revealed a nuanced understanding of mentorship dynamics. Participants expressed a preference for same-sex mentorship, citing greater comfort and relatability, which further highlights the importance of emotional resonance in these relationships. Moreover, the participants placed a higher value on sponsorship over mentorship, indicating a desire for tangible career advancement rather than sole guidance. Effective mentors are described as confident, secure individuals who view their role as facilitators of growth rather than

competitors, emphasising the need for mentors to possess emotional health to guide others positively.

An essential aspect of mentorship is its capacity to motivate and open doors to opportunities that may otherwise remain inaccessible. The significance of informal relationships emerged as a key theme, where nurturing connections allow mentees to freely seek advice and pose questions, fostering an environment conducive to learning and growth. This relational aspect of mentorship highlights the importance of quality interactions, as they can influence the mentee's decision to pursue mentorship and the overall trajectory of their career.

Furthermore, the concept of mentorship as a collective circle of individuals, rather than a singular relationship, emerged as a powerful insight. This approach encourages the alignment of personalities and the exchange of diverse skills, enhancing the mentee's access to a broader array of opportunities. As mentorship relationships develop organically, they often provide practical lessons that transcend traditional boundaries, emphasising the importance of setting and adjusting expectations over time.

Lastly, the interviews underscore that mentorship is not about delivering all the answers but rather serving as a guiding force, illuminating the path ahead. Mentors act as invisible guardians, fostering patience, adaptability, and effective communication, while instilling a sense of social responsibility. The cyclical nature of mentorship is emphasised, where receiving guidance along one's career journey fosters an innate desire to reciprocate by becoming a mentor, thus perpetuating the cycle of support and growth within communities. Overall, these insights illustrate that mentorship is a dynamic and multifaceted process, rich with potential for personal and professional transformation.

5.5.2. The Transition Generation (Ages: 29 to 41)

The insights derived from the interviews with the Transition Generation reveal a compelling narrative about the nature of mentorship, advocating for a fluid, adaptable approach rather than rigid, hierarchical structures. Participants of this generation articulated a vision of mentorship that transcends mere self-gratification; it is fundamentally about fostering authenticity and enabling individuals to realise their fullest potential. The concept of "people-watching" emerged as a significant theme, wherein individuals glean valuable lessons from observing others, even from a distance, and selectively applying these insights to their own lives.

At its core, mentorship is framed as a dynamic process of reciprocal learning and guidance, where individuals with greater experience illuminate pathways for those navigating similar

landscapes. The interviews underscored the essential qualities of effective mentees, such as curiosity and the proactive ability to engage and ask questions. Equally crucial is the role of mentors in fostering an accessible and supportive environment, where mentees feel empowered to seek guidance. A mentor who recognizes and nurtures a mentee's potential is invaluable, highlighting the importance of qualities such as relatability, authenticity, and an energetic presence.

The metaphor of mentorship as a baton-passing exercise resonates deeply within this context, emphasising the importance of sharing wisdom and life lessons that can avert common pitfalls along a career trajectory. Participants valued mentors who possess relevant experience and exhibit confidence, intentionality, and the ability to empower others without exerting dominance. Interestingly, similarities between mentors and mentees—often rooted in familial ties—can enhance relatability and foster deeper connections.

The influence of social media as a storytelling platform was also highlighted, illustrating how compelling narratives shared through digital channels can enhance the mentorship experience. Engaging deeply with potential mentors and investing time in preparation are vital steps in establishing and nurturing meaningful mentorship relationships. The importance of maintaining vibrant, ongoing conversations that invigorate both mentors and mentees emerged as a key insight, reinforcing the idea that mentorship is an evolving journey of growth and reinvention. Additionally, the findings emphasise the role of mentorship as a sounding board for ideas and a source of critical information. Informal mentorship relationships expand the horizon of possibilities, promoting mutual benefit where both parties contribute actively. It was noted that mentorship does not always provide direct answers; rather, it often offers insights that stimulate creative thinking and innovation. Intentional networking, coupled with a clear understanding of personal branding, emerged as essential strategies for mentees seeking to shape how they are perceived within their professional communities.

Mentees were encouraged to articulate their aspirations and clarify their reasons for selecting specific mentors. Relationships were found to flourish when mentees operate in the same field as their mentors and align with their values. Key components of successful mentorship include effective communication, proactive scheduling, and regular check-ins, all of which foster clarity and continuity in the mentorship process.

The interviews also revealed that mentorship is inherently a two-way street, characterised by a cycle of multiple-loop learning—where experiences are shared and reflected upon collectively.

This reciprocal dynamic not only enhances individual growth but also reinforces the idea that success is a cumulative product of the influences and relationships that shape one's life. The concept of the "River of Life" was introduced as a powerful metaphor for navigating the mentorship journey, underscoring the importance of aligning values and maintaining mutual effort in mentorship relationships.

The insights gleaned from these interviews paint a rich and multifaceted picture of mentorship as a collaborative, intentional, and transformative process that adapts to the needs and aspirations of both mentors and mentees. The findings from this group suggest that mentorship thrives in diverse environments and platforms, fostering opportunities for both individual and group learning.

5.5.3. The Struggle Generation (Ages: 42 to 61)

At its essence, mentorship is portrayed as a structured process aimed at helping mentees articulate their career pathways. It is a collaborative journey where the mentee drives the agenda, articulating their goals while benefiting from the mentor's guidance. Trust is a critical component; a mentor must genuinely believe in the mentee's potential and provide them with opportunities that enhance their relevance and credibility within professional networks. The role of mentorship extends beyond mere guidance; it is about overcoming personal hurdles by leveraging the mentor's life experiences and insights.

The interviews conducted with the Struggle Generation reveal profound insights into the nature and dynamics of mentorship, emphasising the paramount importance of human connection and the alignment of values. Central to the mentorship experience is the underlying fear of the unknown—what individuals do not yet comprehend about their potential and the paths available to them. This intrinsic uncertainty often catalyses the desire for mentorship, coupled with a deep-seated need for community and support.

A striking takeaway from the findings is that mentorship does not necessitate formal arrangements; rather, valuable lessons can be gleaned from informal conversations and interactions with respected figures within one's industry. Participants from the Struggle Generation highlighted the enriching experience of learning from individuals of the opposite gender, noting that such interactions offer new perspectives and broaden worldviews. The qualities admired in mentors encompass not only conversational skills and technical expertise

but also a deep understanding of family dynamics, parenting nuances, and the complexities of balancing career ambitions with personal life.

The findings illuminate that mentorship can manifest in various forms—structured, informal, or even distant relationships. The most effective mentorship experiences are those that inspire rather than impose, offering avenues for reflection, idea generation, and constructive feedback. Interestingly, parents are often recognized as potential mentors, adding value to their children's career trajectories while also inspiring the idea of mentoring younger family members. This familial approach underscores the importance of building networks proactively, emphasising that relationships must be cultivated before they are needed.

Participants from this generational cohort identified several key traits of effective mentees, including initiative, accountability, and a readiness to contribute actively to the mentorship dynamic. Conversely, mentors are encouraged to maintain healthy boundaries, engage in mutually beneficial exchanges, and challenge their mentees in positive ways. This dual responsibility underscores that mentorship is not merely a one-sided transaction; it is a partnership built on shared objectives, mutual respect, and a commitment to growth.

The interviews further emphasised that mentorship serves as a vital tool for navigating unfamiliar environments and achieving aspirations that may once have seemed unattainable. Described as a supportive presence akin to a big sister or brother, mentors provide the necessary guidance to help mentees elevate their professional standing. This mentorship process is characterised by a shared mindset, aligned values, and an ongoing exchange of lessons that enrich both parties.

For many women who form part of the Struggle Generation, mentorship also represents a means of mastering work-life integration while developing an inclusive approach to power dynamics and leadership. Insights gleaned from mentorship experiences can encompass a wide range of competencies, such as professionalism, reliability, and the importance of delivering high-quality work. A proactive mentee who drives the agenda and maintains open communication is more likely to benefit from these relationships.

Ultimately, the essence of mentorship lies in fostering an environment of trust and respect, where both mentors and mentees hold each other in high regard. The mentor's role is not diminished by the mentee's quest for guidance; rather, it enhances the mentee's journey toward self-discovery and professional development. The data also indicated that mentoring

relationships can significantly influence an individual's trajectory, from securing promotions to navigating workplace dynamics with greater confidence.

Notably, the interviews pointed out that men can serve as mentors to women, helping them decode male perspectives and assertiveness in professional settings. This dynamic presents an opportunity for women to balance assertiveness with finesse in leadership roles, while also addressing tendencies toward aggression in certain contexts. The qualities that characterise effective mentors include self-confidence, vision, humility, and a consistent commitment to knowledge sharing.

5.6. Conclusion

In closing, mentorship is a dynamic and multifaceted process integral to personal and professional growth. Mentorship is characterised by its technological accessibility, collaborative nature, and diverse formats, emphasising the importance of relatability and a holistic approach in selecting effective mentors. Mentorship serves as a guiding force, acting as a performance management tool, a source of inspiration, and a driver of personal development. As articulated by Pelan (2012), it empowers protégés through guidance, facilitating their journey of self-discovery and career navigation. Participants consistently defined mentorship through concepts of guidance and support, underscoring its role in fostering autonomy and critical thinking. The findings illustrate mentorship as an intentional and transformative relationship that adapts to the unique needs of both mentors and mentees. By fostering a culture of continuous learning and mutual support, mentorship becomes a catalyst for personal and professional transformation, ultimately shaping the leaders of tomorrow.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Introduction

In today's dynamic work environment, mentorship has emerged as a pivotal force driving personal and professional growth. As explored in the previous sections, mentorship transcends traditional paradigms, evolving into a multifaceted process that encompasses performance management, inspiration, personal branding, and holistic development. This chapter delves deeper into these themes, synthesising insights gleaned from various generational perspectives on mentorship.

This chapter explores how mentorship serves as an effective performance management tool, aligning individual aspirations with organisational goals while fostering a culture of continuous feedback. Additionally, this chapter examines the inspirational role mentors play during critical transitions, empowering mentees to navigate challenges and reshape their professional identities. This chapter also highlights mentorship's significant impact on personal branding, illustrating how mentors can help mentees enhance their visibility and credibility within their industries.

Furthermore, the discussion will include the reciprocal nature of mentorship, emphasising the importance of shared experiences and mutual learning. Through these insights, this chapter aims to provide actionable recommendations for organisations and individuals seeking to cultivate effective mentorship relationships across generational cohorts. By recognizing mentorship as a strategic asset, we can unlock its potential to shape the leaders of tomorrow and foster a culture of growth and collaboration.

6.2. Conclusions on Mentorship Across Generations

This study reveals distinct mentorship expectations across the Struggle, Transition, and Born Free generations. Each cohort interprets mentorship through the lens of its unique historical and socio-economic contexts, shaping their definitions and expectations. Despite these differences, mentorship is universally recognized as a transformative process that empowers mentees. Participants highlighted mentorship as a guiding force, where mentors provide valuable insights while allowing mentees the autonomy to make their own decisions.

Successful mentorship relies on emotionally healthy, confident mentors who are willing to share their experiences without the shadow of competition. Mentees, in turn, should embody curiosity, proactivity, and a commitment to their development. The rise of digital platforms has significantly reshaped mentorship dynamics, particularly for the Born Free Generation, who appreciate the flexibility and immediate access to a diverse pool of mentors. Social media has enabled the concept of "mentors from afar," allowing potential mentees to glean valuable insights and inspiration without the need for direct relationships. This modern approach to mentorship complements traditional methods but raises concerns regarding the depth of connections compared to conventional mentorship.

The mentorship experience is inherently reciprocal, with both mentors and mentees learning from one another. This dynamic enriches the relationship and enhances the growth of both parties involved. While common traits such as relatability and openness are valued across generations, the prioritisation of these qualities varies, making it essential to tailor mentorship approaches to meet specific cohort needs and challenges. The notion that mentorship is a two-way street fosters innovation and reinvigorates perspectives, ultimately benefiting the broader professional community.

Emerging informal mentorship networks have become vital spaces for support and growth, offering platforms for authentic connections. These networks facilitate organic mentorship relationships that alleviate the pressure often associated with formal arrangements. Trust and authentic communication are crucial in building strong mentorship relationships, as they encourage both parties to share personal and professional challenges. Effective mentorship recognizes the interconnectedness of personal and professional lives, supporting mentees in integrating these aspects to promote overall well-being and growth.

The findings underscore that mentorship can exist beyond formal settings. With the advent of social media and online content, mentorship has become more accessible, yet there is a growing recognition of the need for sponsorship in addition to mere guidance. Mentorship aligns employee development with organisational goals, providing a structured feedback loop that enhances professional growth and helps organisations identify and nurture talent effectively.

Mentors play a critical role in inspiring mentees, particularly during career transitions. Their guidance fosters resilience, effective goal-tracking, and the development of productive habits,

essential for navigating challenges and achieving success. Mentorship significantly enhances personal branding by providing mentees access to networks and insights that improve their professional visibility. Through strategic guidance and advocacy, mentors help shape mentees' professional identities.

Informal mentorship relationships enrich personal development by promoting the exchange of ideas and broadening perspectives. These relationships thrive on trust and mutual respect, facilitating informed decision-making and long-term growth. Effective mentorship is characterised by a reciprocal dynamic, where both mentors and mentees benefit from shared experiences and insights, fostering a culture of continuous learning and support.

Ultimately, mentorship is increasingly seen as a fluid and multifaceted process that extends beyond traditional, direct relationships. The Born Free Generation highlights the value of digital interactions, while the Transition Generation advocates for a more adaptable and observational approach. Across all generations, effective mentorship is marked by relatability, openness, and mutual learning. Each generational cohort brings unique perspectives and priorities to mentorship. The Born Free Generation seeks sponsorship and motivation from afar, the Transition Generation values reciprocal learning and adaptability, and the Struggle Generation emphasises structured guidance and community support.

Digital platforms play a crucial role in modern mentorship, democratising access and enabling individuals to engage with mentors beyond geographical constraints. This trend fosters a culture of support, encouraging mentees to eventually become mentors themselves. As such, mentorship is essential for navigating career challenges and accessing opportunities, significantly influencing an individual's trajectory and enhancing confidence and competence in professional settings.

6.3. Recommendations

6.3.1. Tailored Mentorship Programs

To optimise the impact of mentorship, organisations should develop programs that specifically address the unique expectations of each generational cohort of African-Black women. Recognizing that the Struggle, Transition, and Born Free generations possess distinct historical and socio-economic contexts, tailored initiatives can enhance engagement and

effectiveness. By considering factors such as technological preferences, professional aspirations, and desired outcomes, mentorship programs can facilitate deeper connections that resonate with individual experiences. This customization not only enriches the mentorship experience but also aligns individual growth with organisational objectives, directly addressing the varying expectations highlighted in the research.

6.3.2. Emphasise Digital Literacy

As digital platforms reshape the mentorship landscape, equipping participants—especially those from older generations—with the skills to navigate these tools effectively is crucial. Training on leveraging technology for mentorship can bridge generational gaps, ensuring meaningful engagement between mentors and younger mentees. This focus on digital literacy not only democratises access to mentorship but also allows participants to explore diverse formats, including virtual networking events and online workshops. By fostering confidence in using digital tools, organisations can create a more inclusive mentorship environment that aligns with the preferences expressed by the Born Free Generation.

6.3.3. Promote Reciprocal Mentorship Models

Encouraging frameworks that facilitate reciprocal learning is essential for cultivating a collaborative mentorship environment among African-Black women across generations. Organisations should design workshops and training sessions that highlight the value of shared experiences, allowing both mentors and mentees to grow together. This reciprocal approach reinforces the idea that mentorship is a two-way street, enriching relationships and enhancing the development of both parties. By fostering environments where mentors can share their insights while mentees articulate their challenges, organisations can address the different expectations regarding autonomy and guidance identified in the research.

6.3.4. Expand Collaborative Networks

Facilitating the creation of informal mentorship networks is vital for promoting authentic connections among African-Black women. By organising regular networking events, webinars, and community platforms, organisations can encourage participants to share experiences and seek guidance in a relaxed setting. These collaborative networks allow

individuals to engage in organic mentorship, alleviating the pressure often associated with formal arrangements. As mentors and mentees connect over shared cultural and professional experiences, they can build relationships that enrich their journeys and align with the diverse mentorship expectations identified in the research.

6.3.5. Incorporate Sponsorship Training

Recognizing the emerging importance of sponsorship in career advancement, organisations should develop programs that educate both mentors and mentees on cultivating sponsorship relationships. This includes teaching mentors how to advocate for their mentees and provide tangible support for career growth. By emphasising the role of sponsorship within mentorship frameworks, organisations can empower African-Black women to navigate their career paths more effectively. This initiative not only enhances the mentorship experience but also addresses the research findings that highlight the need for mentorship to include not just guidance but also advocacy.

6.3.6. Continuous Feedback Mechanisms

Establishing systems for ongoing feedback from participants in mentorship programs is critical for ensuring their effectiveness. Regular surveys or focus groups can help assess mentorship experiences and identify areas for improvement. This iterative feedback loop enables organisations to adapt their programs, ensuring they remain relevant and impactful. By actively seeking input from both mentors and mentees, organisations can create a culture of continuous learning and support that acknowledges the varying expectations across generations.

6.3.7. Highlight Diverse Mentorship Formats

Encouraging mentees to explore various mentorship formats beyond traditional one-on-one relationships can broaden their experiences. This could include group mentorship, peer mentorship, and engagement through social media platforms. By promoting diverse mentorship avenues, organisations can cater to different learning styles and preferences, allowing participants to engage with a wider array of insights and experiences that reflect their unique generational expectations.

6.3.8. Cultivate Authenticity in Programs

Designing mentorship programs that promote open communication and relatability is crucial for building strong relationships among African-Black women. Incorporating activities that encourage personal sharing, such as icebreakers and storytelling workshops, can help establish trust among participants. By fostering an environment where mentors and mentees feel comfortable sharing their challenges and successes, organisations can enhance the effectiveness of mentorship relationships and better meet the expectations outlined in the research.

6.4. Future research direction

As the landscape of mentorship continues to evolve, future research can explore several key areas to enhance our understanding of this dynamic process. One promising direction is the investigation of the impact of virtual mentorship on professional development across diverse fields. With the increasing reliance on digital platforms, understanding how virtual interactions influence mentor-mentee relationships, engagement, and outcomes will provide valuable insights into the future of mentorship. Research could also examine the effectiveness of various digital tools and platforms in fostering meaningful connections among mentors and mentees from different generations.

Another important area for future exploration is the role of intersectionality in mentorship experiences. While this study has focused on generational differences, it is essential to consider how factors such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and other identity markers intersect with mentorship dynamics. Understanding these complexities can lead to the development of more inclusive mentorship programs that address the unique challenges faced by diverse groups of mentees.

Additionally, the integration of sponsorship within mentorship frameworks offers a fruitful avenue for future research. Investigating how mentorship relationships can evolve into sponsorship opportunities and the implications of this transition for career advancement will provide critical insights into enhancing the efficacy of mentorship programs. This research could explore the specific actions and behaviors that mentors can adopt to effectively advocate for their mentees, thus bridging the gap between guidance and active support.

Moreover, longitudinal studies examining the long-term effects of mentorship on career trajectories will add depth to the current understanding of mentorship's impact. By following participants over extended periods, researchers can uncover how mentorship influences career progression, job satisfaction, and professional identity development across different life stages. Finally, exploring the potential of peer mentorship models, especially among younger generations, presents another intriguing research direction. Peer mentorship can foster a sense of community and support that is particularly valuable in rapidly changing work environments. Future studies could assess the effectiveness of peer mentorship in promoting skill development, confidence, and collaboration among individuals at similar career stages. In conclusion, the field of mentorship is ripe for further investigation. By exploring these future research directions, scholars and practitioners can continue to refine mentorship practices, ensuring they are relevant and impactful for the diverse needs of emerging professionals. This ongoing inquiry will contribute to the development of more robust mentorship frameworks that empower individuals and foster inclusive environments in the workplace.

6.5. Conclusion

In closing, this dissertation has illuminated the intricate landscape of mentorship relationships among African-Black women across three distinct generational cohorts: the Struggle, Transition, and Born Free generations. Through qualitative research and analysis, it has become evident that mentorship is not a one-size-fits-all endeavour; rather, it is deeply influenced by the unique historical, cultural, and socio-economic contexts in which each generation operates. Each cohort brings its own set of expectations, values, and preferences to mentorship, highlighting the necessity for tailored approaches that address these diverse needs.

The findings underscore that mentorship is fundamentally a transformative process, serving not only as a vehicle for professional growth but also as a means of personal empowerment. Participants articulated a clear desire for mentorship that allows for autonomy while providing insightful guidance. This duality—of seeking independence yet valuing support—speaks to the broader theme of empowerment that resonates across all generations. As organisations and individuals look to harness the potential of mentorship, the recommendations presented herein serve as a roadmap for creating effective, inclusive, and dynamic mentorship programs that cater to the specific needs of African-Black women.



Moreover, the integration of technology and the rise of digital platforms have further reshaped mentorship, particularly for the Born Free Generation, allowing for new forms of connection and learning. As these trends continue to evolve, mentorship initiatives must embrace flexibility and innovation while remaining grounded in the core principles of trust, respect, and mutual growth. By recognizing the importance of sponsorship alongside guidance, organisations can better support the career trajectories of their mentees, facilitating pathways to success that transcend traditional boundaries.

Ultimately, this research not only contributes to the existing literature on mentorship but also emphasises the importance of fostering a culture of mentorship that is responsive to the diverse needs of different generations. By embracing the rich tapestry of experiences and insights offered by each cohort, we can cultivate a more supportive and empowering environment for African-Black women. The journey of mentorship is ongoing, and as future generations continue to emerge, the lessons learned from this study will undoubtedly serve as a foundation for nurturing resilient and dynamic leaders who can navigate the complexities of their personal and professional landscapes with confidence and grace.



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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Ethics Approval Letter



Faculty of Commerce

Private Bag X3, Rondebosch, 7701
2.26 Leslie Commerce Building, Upper Campus
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 4375/ 5748 Fax: +27 (0) 21 650 4369
E-mail: jacques.rousseau@uct.ac.za
Internet: www.uct.ac.za



@Commerce UCT



UCT Commerce Faculty Office

27 09 2021

Amantle Mokubung
Graduate School of Business
University of Cape Town
REF: REC 2021/09/017

How do mentorship relationship expectations across the different generations of African black women differ?

We are pleased to inform you that your ethics application has been approved. Unless otherwise specified this ethical clearance is valid until 31-Aug-2023 .

Your clearance may be renewed upon application.

Please be aware that you need to notify the Ethics Committee immediately should any aspect of your study regarding the engagement with participants as approved in this application, change. This may include aspects such as changes to the research design, questionnaires, or choice of participants.

The ongoing ethical conduct throughout the duration of the study remains the responsibility of the principal investigator.

We wish you well for your research.

2021.09.27
10:15:03 +02'00'

Jacques Rousseau
Commerce Research Ethics Chair
University of Cape Town
Commerce Faculty Office
Room 2.26 | Leslie Commerce Building

Office Telephone: +27 (0)21 650 2695 / 4375
Office Fax: +27 (0)21 650 4369
E-mail: jacques.rousseau@uct.ac.za
Website: <http://www.commerce.uct.ac.za/com/Ethics-in-Research>

Appendix B: Interview Consent Form

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN INCLUSIVE INNOVATION

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM:

Participant name:

.....

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by **Amantle Mokubung** as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MPhil Degree at the Graduate School of Business. I understand that the research is designed to gather information about **How African women of different ages are experiencing mentorship in the workplace** and that I will be one of approximately 40 people being interviewed for this research.

Background and purpose of the research

As the world of work gets more complex and introduces new roles and industries based on how the world is shifting, the outcome of this research aims to help guide new workforce entrants in co-creating mentorship and career support programmes that further develop new generation of black women for senior positions. The study is based on understanding how different the mentorship needs of African women of different ages in the workplace in South Africa are and what the common mentorship relationship expectations across the different generations are.

Ethics approval

Ethical consent for the study has been approved by the *UCT Commerce Faculty Ethics in Research Committee*.

Participation and confidentiality

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary, that I will not be compensated and that I may withdraw at any time.

The interview will take approximately 45 - 60 minutes to complete and will be audio recorded.

I understand that I will not be identified by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.

Consent

I consent to participate in this interview, based on the terms outlined above and subject to the following additional condition of my own (if any).

Signed by interviewee

Date



**APPENDIX C: Veuve Clicquot Women's Entrepreneurship Barometer South Africa
Virtual Event, *Panel discussion conducted by Rapelang Rabana***

Questions for Vice-Chairperson of SiMODiSA and Founding CEO of Furaha Afrika Holdings,
Miss Matsi Modise:

1. Some of the insights we gained from the Barometer was that 90% of women and men agree that mentorship is key for those who aspire to entrepreneurship. Do you have a mentor and what impact have they had on your business journey?
2. Can you elaborate on what mentorship means to you in your life?
3. How can people build credibility with you so that you are willing to open doors for them? What tips would you give to people who are seeking sponsorship?



APPENDIX D: Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator, Online interview conducted by Chief Impact Officer Sharmi Surianarain & Learning Design Manager Amantle Kanyuchi (née Mokubung)

Questions for the author of "Intelligence isn't enough: A Black Professional's Guide to Thriving in the Workplace", Carice Anderson:

1. Tell us a little bit about your journey - what is your "origin story"? How did a girl with roots in Alabama, the United States of America (US), and Harvard Business School, marry someone from Zimbabwe, live in South Africa, and now live in the USA?
2. Tell us a little bit about your book – Intelligence is not enough. Why did you write the book and what was the process of writing it?
3. We at Harambee have so many parallels in terms of what matters for youth – that employers and institutions over-emphasize credentials and qualifications versus actual fit for the job. In the preface of your book, you rightly point out that career advice can never be a one-size-fits-all approach. Looking at the size and the vast profiles of the candidates who form part of Harambee's work-seeker network, if they had joined this call, possibly not knowing what they don't know and are the first in their families to take up white-collar jobs, which key tips from your book would you choose to share with them?
4. A quote from your book: "Sponsors are earned, mentors are requested." Another quote from you: "Most black people are over-mentored and under-sponsored." In your opinion, what are some of the gaps that we struggle to close and find ourselves great at making out requests for mentorship but struggling on the part of earning sponsors? Can you define what you mean by sponsors and mentors?
5. At Harambee, we work on understanding signals as a way of giving employers comfort in offering work to youth who have little or no prior experience. In a recent interview with Polity SA, you mentioned that degrees account for about 30% of one's career success. You also mentioned the 70/20/10 formula, can you expand more on this?
6. What advice would you give to organisations trying to promote and nurture black talent in South Africa?
7. Let's chat briefly about the pandemic – what routines and rituals helped you through this difficult time? What made you choose to go back to the US?



8. Lastly, a question that we usually wrap up with - what gives you hope during this time?

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEWS WITH RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

PARTICIPANTS

Participant Profile

Identifier: P1

Generational cohort: Born Free Generation

Designation: Founder: Haircare brand

INTERVIEWER: How has mentorship been useful to you as a business person?

P1: For me, when it comes to mentorship, I always thought mentorship was a good idea when I started my business. Having a mentor is like having someone who is more knowledgeable—someone who can provide information and guidance. But as I became more involved in my business, I realized that I didn't know how to find a mentor. I didn't know how to approach people or how to find the right ones. People always tell us, “Okay, try out this mentorship programme,” but how do you find the right mentor for you—someone who resonates with your business and understands your vision? So for me, in terms of my business now, I feel like most of my mentorship has come from social media. I've been following people to learn how they are mentoring others online, especially older women who have established hair care businesses similar to mine. I've also gained insights from Lebo Lion and a lot of women on social media. I feel like that's where I've been getting most of my mentorship—just following the right people in the business because I don't know how to approach a mentor. I don't know where to find them, if they get paid, or how to pay them. So if I do get a mentor, where do I look? Which door do I knock on?

INTERVIEWER: Understandable. When you find the women you're following, is it mainly women, men, or a bit of both?

P1: I think it's a bit of both, but mostly women. I follow a few men, like the owner of a black-owned business and the owner of a sneaker brand like Theo Baloyi. I feel like we can learn from each other in terms of business; it doesn't have to be limited to the hair care industry. So, mostly women, but a bit of both.

INTERVIEWER: What are the key things you look for when you choose to follow someone? What are the main qualities you see?

P1: I look for someone who talks about their skills and how they apply them to what they do. They don't just talk; they know what they are talking about. I also resonate with them as business people. Secondly, I follow people who are doing well in their field and who are open to sharing information online.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything else?

P1: Yes, I want to mention that I am scared of reaching out to potential mentors. I hesitate to message them because I don't want to intrude. I think, "Maybe they won't reply," and I'm afraid of rejection. So I just follow their content and mostly interact in the comments. I find a lot of mentorship in the comments too because the people who follow them are often doing what I'm doing. They are also seeking skills and information, so I network that way.

INTERVIEWER: Great! If you had to put together a top five of mentors you follow, who would they be and why? I heard you mention Lebo Lion.

P1: Lebo Lion, Nozipho Tshabalala, Gorgeous Mbali, I follow her a lot as well. Who else? It's hard to remember off the top of my head, but there are a lot of them. I also follow Lekau Sehoana; he inspires me. And I mentioned Theo Baloyi as well.

INTERVIEWER: Do you go to their pages directly, or do you come across their content while scrolling on social media?

P1: I go physically to their pages, like religiously so. Sometimes I wake up and think, "Okay, who didn't I check today?" I check up on them, especially Lebo Lion. She is always engaging on social media, especially on Twitter. She is always engaging. When I comment or ask something, she's always quick to reply and help me out and answer anything that we need to. I relate to her a lot because of that; she's open to communication.

INTERVIEWER: Do you feel you've benefited from following these people or being mentored by them from afar? What are some of the things you've gained?

P1: One of the most important things I've benefited from is consistency in my business. I feel like I'm winning more because I've been following them and gaining inspiration from them. Before, I didn't used to be consistent; I was unsure about where I was going. Business has its



ups and downs, but following the right people helps me stay consistent and remain teachable, rather than thinking I know everything.

INTERVIEWER: Would you ever consider becoming a mentor?

P1: I feel like I would, but only if I accumulate more knowledge and learn how to be a mentor. Right now, I enjoy being taught. The idea of having to guide someone is daunting; I don't want to lead them astray.

INTERVIEWER: If you could change how you are currently being mentored by these amazing people, what would you add or remove? Would you add a one-on-one experience?

P1: I think it's perfect as it is, but I would love to have a one-on-one mentor and be in partnership with them to learn from them. Before starting my business, I thought, "I need to find a mentor." When I realized I couldn't, I decided to just start learning from others along the way. I believe mentorship is crucial, especially for young black women entrepreneurs. Some say, "You don't need mentors; you're doing fine." But I think mentorship is vital because you gain so much knowledge and improve your leadership skills. It doesn't just have to be about business; it's important for personal growth, too.

Participant Profile

Identifier: P2

Generational cohort: Born Free Generation

Designation: Founder: Tech business

INTERVIEWER: What does mentorship mean to you?

P2: Oh, okay, so there's two answers to this question. When you say, what does mentorship mean to me? The first part, I'm thinking just the formal answer, which is, mentorship is about teaching another person some tips and tricks on how to navigate a certain space. So that's the idea that comes to mind whenever I think of mentorship. Usually, it is done on a one-on-one basis. You've got someone that is much older who has gone through exactly what you plan or intend on going through, and they are able to guide you through that journey because they already have the answers that you potentially seek. But for me, I have not had that type of mentorship like I explained. It has been all about going on to YouTube, searching for motivational content and then finding someone that speaks to what you are looking for. Initially when I started back in 2017 going through YouTube videos consistently, one of the first people I came across was someone called Marie Forleo. That is pretty much my very first digital mentor. I followed her videos religiously. I was subscribed to her email marketing newsletters. So that is really the first person that I was following when I started out. I don't follow her as much anymore. I feel like her content is highly guided towards people that are starting out and looking for that first in into the entrepreneur world, they are completely lost as I was and right now, I can't relate to her content as much because I have already gone through that phase where I have to find motivation, I have to push myself. My focus is now on individuals like Gary Vaynerchuk. I'm not sure if you've heard of him, and his focus is mainly on motivational content and marketing content. I can relate well to that because I'm in the marketing business, and I need advice on how to improve my craft as a marketer. For me mentorship is really about going through different phases of your life and finding people within those phases that can assist you. And it doesn't have to be one on one. It can definitely be virtual, like I've done a lot of times. I also find that getting someone to mentor you one-on-one, first of all, it is difficult. People that are in the space to mentor others either don't want to do it, they don't have the time to do it, and you might not have access to the types of individuals that have the type of knowledge that you're looking for. When you go virtual, it's just so much easy because the person there wants to be in

that space, they are more than excited to give all of the advice for free. So, it just makes it so much easier when you go the virtual route. I never stop there.

INTERVIEWER: I never thought of the fact that the people that are virtual actually want to be in that space. It's always about, what the mentee wants.

P2: The mentor also has to be in the space where they're excited to be sharing their knowledge. They're not annoyed every time they receive a message saying, "Hey, um, I'm needing help with A, B and C." They're not too busy to they've prepared themselves mentally to be in that position.

INTERVIEW: Ah, that's so true. Who are they those mentors that have had a positive impact on your career, and what exactly did you pick from them? I know you said with Marie, it was more of starting out content, trying to figure things out. Then with Gary you were focused on taking your business to the next level and also becoming more specialized. Are there any other mentors you wish to mention and what did you pick up from them?

P2: Another person that I can point to from when I was starting out is Ramit Sethi. He is an author and motivational speaker who is more on the financial side of things. He wrote a book called *I will teach you how to be rich*. He teaches individuals how to gain financial freedom through business and investing. At that time, that was exactly what I needed. I was confused gaining wealth in this world. I had just come out of varsity. I was broke, unemployed, unemployable at some point and I was trying to figure out ways I could make money in this world, except going the traditional corporate routes.

INTERVIEWER: You could have chosen other people in finance, other people that can offer you marketing advice but you weren't specific. With those three mentors in mind, what do you look for in a mentor, even if it's a mentor from afar, apart from them having the knowledge that you're looking for? Are there other qualities that you seek?

P2: I suppose the only other thing that I would be looking for is realistic advice, so advice that I can actually apply in my life. There are other people who are able to give you financial advice but they're giving it you as someone who is working with a savings account of R1000. Now let's grow that. Whereas in my mind, I am looking for someone who can say "Hey, you can be absolutely flat broke today and I can still teach you". So, it is about finding someone that is able to provide you with the advice based on your own circumstances. So that is one of the other things that I look for.

INTERVIEW: Alright. I was going to ask you, what makes a mentorship relationship work, but with your experience having been virtual, I am keen on finding out what makes you consistent in that process of being mentored. Do you physically go onto these people's pages on a daily basis? Do you dedicate time on your end? Do you follow your mentors' interviews? What's making this unsaid or unformalized mentorship relationship work with them?

P2: 100%. So, for me, it was literally subscribing to like either the YouTube channel or their email newsletter. I'm able to get that information come to me organically and consistently. With Marie and Ramit especially, they would have weekly newsletters where they're sharing certain advice based on what it is that you pretty much requested as you were signing up. So with them, it was just about signing up to their email newsletter and getting that email. Everyone checks their emails almost daily so you would be able to get that information that you need, and then also seeing how you can apply whatever they are giving in that specific newsletter. A lot of times when it comes to virtual mentors, they give advice that you can apply immediately. But sometimes you have to work up to it because they don't know you personally. They don't know what stage of in your journey you are. So they give pretty much broad advice, and hope that from whoever is listening, there's at least one person out there that's able to take that piece of information and use it. As a virtual mentee, I would have to find the tips within whatever newsletter they're providing and see how can I apply that to my life right now. If not, how can I work up to that. With regards to Gary Vaynerchuk, he has a YouTube channel. I have subscribed to his YouTube channel and then I get notifications. With regards to how that relationship works, it's about you trying to find that information, or have that information come to you naturally so that you don't have to work so hard for it. I would say that when it comes to a one-on-one mentorship program, one of the ways that that can work, or how it should work, rather, what I believe is implementing what your mentor actually tells you. I think it will be very annoying. If you ask for advice, they give it to you, and you either hold off or you procrastinate, or you're like, "oh, I don't really want to do that". It is about taking that advice that they give you and applying it to your life. I guess with a one-on-one mentor, they're giving you advice based on what you ask them. It's not like they're sharing broad advice. You say "hey, I'm looking for this". They're saying, "Hey, this is the answer. This is what I've used try it", and then if you don't do that, I think that could break that relationship and make it more difficult to manage over time.

INTERVIEWER: Another thing that I find interesting about the mentors that you mentioned is the different genders, that it's not just females that you're looking at, which makes it very interesting for me, and it reminds me of the conversations that I've been having this week, around mentorship, and somebody spoke of a toxic relationship that they had with the same sex mentor. A female. She had a mentor in the workplace, and it didn't quite work out because they seem to be chasing the same thing. And it was someone who was not settled in their own career. So seeing that the mentee is doing better, or has the potential to actually surpass what they could, what's then there to offer? It became a bit of a problem, and the relationship didn't work out. Another person mentioned how they tapped into being mentored by a guy, and it worked for them, because they were getting a different world view. She felt that it was good to be mentored by another black woman but it would be even better to see the world from somebody else's perspective. What's your view on the male or same sex mentorship relationships?

P2: I can imagine having to be mentored not just by a female, but again, by a female who's not ready for that role. So, as I mentioned, the mentor has to be mentally ready to take on mentorship and mentor someone that is still coming up and trying to build up to their status, and not just someone that is coming up and now trying to do better than them. It is going to get very complicated in that sense. I totally understand why that did not work for me. I just find sometimes the advice that I'm getting from men that are mentoring me, so to speak, I just feel like I can apply it so much more easily. I honestly have not really sat down and considered why that is the case, so I'm unfortunately not able to give you a very clear answer on that. But I guess I get what both of those individuals are saying that. Understanding life from a different perspective, not just your female gaze, can definitely be helpful. I've had someone ask me why I don't I want to be a housewife. I feel they were taking this too. He wanted me to go find a housewife who is married to a man that is very, very rich and successful and see what their life is actually like. He felt that my view of a housewife is that person that's cooking and cleaning and scrubbing the floors in a very broke sort of sense. He suggested that I go and find someone who is in a wealthy relationship and is managing the household. So, I guess when you are talking to different people and getting different perspectives and views, you are able to open your eyes to other things that are possible in this world. Being a female boss lady, female mentors are going to try define a specific route for you whereas someone else could have something different in mind. I get why getting different people's opinions is definitely going to be helpful.

INTERVIEW: How has mentorship helped you grow?

P2: The first one is finding that motivation to actually get up and do something with my life. Back in the day I was very lost. I had absolutely no direction. I literally did not know what to do and how I could improve my life. I knew that I wanted to be better. I knew that I was destined for so much more than just finding a call center job, but I do not understand exactly how I can get to the next stage. I find that sitting down and listening to a lot of this video content is helpful. Another platform that I have subscribed to is Tom Bilyeu's *Impact Theory*. He interviews people that he believes are successful. He would talk to just about anyone and everyone that is either successful. From entrepreneurs, doctors to neuroscientists. You get to learn all of these different tips and information about how to improve your life. I find that over time, I've applied those things in my life. It did not happen instantly but sometimes when I come across a piece of information, I go, "Oh man, I've seen this before! I know this. This is what I've been doing". I know that this comes from all of this content that I've been feeding myself all of these years. So, I definitely think it's a very slow journey. You can't expect to be mentored for six months and suddenly become the boss. It's very gradual. Secondly, it's about getting the same piece of information over and over and over again. Eventually you are going to implement it. One of the pieces of information that I can point to as well is with Gary Vaynerchuk. He emphasized going onto LinkedIn to post content, and mentioned it over and over for about two months. Eventually I said to myself, "Okay, let me get onto LinkedIn and post content". So, it is definitely a gradual progression to getting your goals, and it definitely takes a lot of time. It's about receiving that information consistently and applying it over time. It happens very, very subtly. You won't even notice it. I'm actually someone that's motivated now, yeah. I remember those times where I was, very lazy. But now that I understand where I want to be in life. You finally get pumped up to do things.

INTERVIEWER: I suppose that's how we learn as humans. When you look at a child, they are taught the same thing a couple of times before they can actually do it. As adults, we expect to get things right the first time. We lose the child-like mentality where we have to learn things gradually. We expect to get things right the first time. If we don't, we feel like it's not for us. In closing, do you feel your experience of mentorship has encouraged or discouraged you from becoming a mentor yourself? What happens tomorrow if someone asks you to be their mentor?

P2: I feel like I would be discouraged by that approach. I feel like I'm not in a position right now to mentor someone one-on-one. I don't have the time for that. I also don't see myself as



that type of person. I'm open to sharing any of my thoughts and ideas. On my LinkedIn, I post a lot of motivational content. As and when it comes up, I'm happy to share this piece of information but I'm not sure if I'd ever be able to mentor someone one-on-one but it's not something I'm completely closed to. I don't know what the future will bring, but as it stands right now in my life, I don't see myself going that route.

INTERVIEWER: In terms of sharing the content or rather going the route that Gary Vee and them are going, is it something that you are more open to doing?

P2: 100% so I'm all about sharing my tips and providing other people with motivation through online platforms. I enjoy doing that.

Participant Profile

Identifier: P6

Generational cohort: Born Free Generation

Designation: Trader: Steel Industry

INTERVIEWER: If you were to define what mentorship is for somebody who has never experienced it or has heard the word mentorship but they don't necessarily understand what it is. What is it? What is being mentored.

P6: Mentorship is an invisible guardian, guiding you in a path that is uncomfortable for you to develop and where you are scared to actually open the door and face the challenges of that path. It is an invisible guardian telling you and guiding you in terms of which path to take. They are not always physically there, but they are advising you areas of improvement. They don't tell you what exactly to do or where to go but they show you the root of getting and ending up at that door and you knocking and it being opened.

INTERVIEWER: I love that. In your opinion and based on your experience, what makes a good mentorship relationship?

P6: It's upon two individuals to create and work hard towards a goal that they both want to see grow.

INTERVIEWER: And what makes a good mentor? What inspires you to reach out to someone and request for them to become your mentor?

P6: It's that person being able to be comfortable with the challenges I bring to her. Not blocking me but accepting and trying to mould me in being a better person than how she or he found me.

INTERVIEWER: What makes a good mentee and based on your experience, what would you say are the expectations of a mentor if you are being mentored?

P6: Communication is key. Be open to asking if you don't know something, even if you have always believed you are an expert at it. Things change daily, get guidance from others. You may have reached a certain point in your career but you are most likely to have walked a different path as compared to the next person.

INTERVIEWER: Are there specific mentors that stand out as having immensely contributed to your growth?

P6: So far it has been the officials at the NYDA⁶. They are people that I have worked with and wanted to see me grow as an intern because they also have their own targets. They have really moulded me into becoming the person that I am and I am still becoming.

INTERVIEWER: That's beautiful. Do you feel they were going over and beyond their call of duty, giving you the guidance and advice that you were not even expecting?

P6: Yes. They would remind me that life isn't just about my business. They understood that as youth, we also have other challenges; personal and challenges from home. So they created an environment where I was able to communicate and for them to guide me to be wiser as well.

INTERVIEWER: What are some of the key things that your current mentor contributed or poured into you, and what do you value the most about your mentorship relationship with her?

P6: She reminds me that I won't be a young lady for years to come, I am being moulded into becoming a woman and potentially someone's wife. I'm being moulded into becoming someone's role model. I'm being moulded into my own brand. So I must be wise with the decisions that I make, and not to compromise myself. Always improve on who I want to become, and that won't limit the next generation of interns.

INTERVIEWER: What has been the tangible growth from the mentorship experience with her and the rest of the officials in your environment?

P6: I have been able to apply for funds that were risk bound, and I told myself that with her mentoring me, it meant something to say that I am growing and my dream is becoming a reality. So, I can't be in a shallow grave, remain scared that things might not work out, what if they do? She also if they don't work out, how do I work on getting better? The steps that I take will make things easier for those that come after me. She also helped boost my self-confidence. She would remind me that money and shyness don't go together, and that I need to work on my shyness by opening up a bit while setting boundaries.

INTERVIEWER: Earlier you mentioned that one of the important things when we are being mentored is to ensure that you are constantly communicating either as a mentor or a mentee. To expand on that thought, and maybe specifically looking at your relationship with your current mentor, what would you say really made the relationship work between the two of you?

⁶ The National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) is a South African government agency aimed at promoting youth development and empowerment through various programs, including skills training, employment opportunities, and entrepreneurship support.

P6: Yeah, I have her WhatsApp number. I have her contact details. If ever I feel uncomfortable with something and I feel that she is the best person to give guidance in that moment, I contact her and I let her and I share what I'm going through. I'm surrounded by many wise women but each and every one of them have their own challenges. But she encourages me to reach out, even if it's a text on WhatsApp that she doesn't reply to immediately, I know she will attend to it when she is free.

INTERVIEWER: Looking back at your mentorship experiences, is there, anything specific that you would have added, changed or fixed?

P6: You know, I am a person who likes to be in their own corner. I think I shouldn't have been scared to communicate about my pain whenever I needed to. I also only share good news or the outcomes of my applications when I have completed the entire process. My mentor doesn't like that because she believes that she could have assisted to speed up the process or make it lighter for me.

INTERVIEWER: My final question is, based on your mentorship experiences, are you encouraged or discouraged to become a mentor?

P6: I'm not discouraged, but what I have come to learn is that while the government encourages us to start businesses, people tend to think that they are entitled whatever that the government has available for them. Some people tend to think that employment is an investment and start getting into debt instead of focusing on becoming an asset to others. If you are an administrative assistant, think of how many people you could train when as an administrative assistant to help them improve their businesses, and not just think of your role as just "I work here". Take your skills further to help others. In other countries you find that even if a person is a fitness trainer, when the day ends at work, they go on to train old people come under a tree because he's not only teaching them about their health, but he's also making them aware of how they could live longer.

INTERVIEWER: That's powerful and it reminds of how COVID taught a lot of people that very hard lesson you are sharing. The view of working a nine to five forever versus building on your own. Very great lesson to bring forward. Would you in future, become a mentor?

P6: Yes, I would. Why? Because it keeps building. I would pay it forward and improve on what my mentor has taught me.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you. This was really a beautiful conversation. Firstly, I think you and your mentor are blessed to have each other as a mentor and a mentee. I see a lot of you in



her and a lot of her in you. The beautiful thing that I picked up and learned from you today is your apart from the lessons, there's so much strength in the way that you deliver rich content effortlessly. It's such a beautiful thing to see. Thank you so much.



Participant Profile

Identifier: P7

Generational cohort: Transition Generation

Designation: Conversation Strategist

INTERVIEWER: What does mentorship mean to you? What is mentorship in your context?

P7: There are two different types of contexts that I see it from, and I say this prior to being what society deems me successful. I always thought that mentorship was where somebody takes you under their wing, and then they go and they teach you their life lessons, and you are meant to replicate it. I use that word with a pinch of salt, replicate, and I think that kind of adds to what I see mentorship as. Now I actually I'm laughing at I don't believe in coincidence, so I believe everything is done for a reason. So, I have this platform that's called Thoughtful Tuesday that I paused for nine months and it's back. I found mentorship to be very watered down now in this day and age, and I find it watered down because mentorship now, for me, the way I see it is people wanting others to become like them. But I can't become like you because I'm born to be myself. I just need to learn the lessons of so I don't make the same mistakes as you. Mentorship has become such a self-gratification thing for those who call the same for themselves. Mentors and mentees are falling into this trap of, "I need to be like so and so". But no, then who must take up your seat at the table if you're wanting to be a complete duplicate of somebody else?

INTERVIEWER: Where does that place mentorship for you? What does it mean to be there?

P7: So, I don't believe in one-on-one mentorship anymore. I don't believe in that stuff. I don't believe that I need to spend time consciously and box the word mentorship when I hang out with people. For me, mentorship is when I hang out with anybody. The things you're going to say to me today that's already mentorship for me, the things that I hear from my husband is mentorship. The things I hear from my friends, my family, my colleagues, my client, that's mentorship. I find mentorship, for me, works when it's not labelled. The minute it has a label it has, it's a problem because now I've made you feel like you're superior to me, which means you can't now learn from me. I must just now learn from you. I'm enjoying mentorship, being fluid. Can Oprah mentor me? She has no cooking clue. She mentors me. It's a fluid process, and that's where I've left mentorship in my life. I don't ever want to say to people, "you know you are my mentor". I prefer to say, "hey, I look up to you when you do ABCD". So, it doesn't elevate anybody. We are all humans teaching it.

INTERVIEW: I recently joined an Instagram mentorship session during which the facilitator reminded us that if a mentorship relationship no longer works, you've got permission to fire your mentor. You should start thinking in that way to say, "well, maybe they've served their purpose". Accept it and then release them, so that they can also release you, and then you can do what you are meant to be doing.

P7: I'm a message architect, and words really matter to me. You know, I don't believe in the notion that you must fire a mentor, because you are saying to the person, "you are not good enough, and I'm getting rid of you in my life". So, the word fire for me kind of makes me cringe. The whole reason why mentorship and mentee relationships are not working is exactly that. Is there's a whole entitlement of superior and non-superior, and that goes for anything in society. Even when you spoke about young girls not being exposed to certain opportunities. Now, I'm a mother of boys, and I find we have a serious problem, because we're going on this whole girl situation. Who are these girls marrying, who are they partners with, who they're going to be working with, who are they intimate relationship with? So, if we're just pushing for take a girl child to work, what are you saying to my kids? We're perpetuating a situation. We will have a complete opposite problem in not so long from now. I say all of this to get back to the fact that when mentorship is not working is because people want a relationship where they are superior to somebody else. Where they say, "I will tell you how you need to run your life". You need to go to corporate and according to what their standards are. You're sitting there going, "No, no, hold on. I'm a grown up, right? I can make the decisions. You were just my guide and you can't dictate to me." Now, the minute you say a mentee, can fire somebody, what you're saying is I'm now in control, and I can tell you whether you're good enough in my world or you aren't good enough. We need to take away this whole notion of somebody's better than the other or somebody knows more than the other. We're all coaching each other through life. Life. Everybody actually doesn't know what's going on. Let's all be frank. It's just that some people have higher titles than others because it's their journey.

INTERVIEWER: I like the word that you used earlier on, where you said guide as opposed to mentorship. Are these some of the words that you would use to try and frame or describe what we should be?

P7: We don't want to label it but what we should be referring to mentorship as a guide you might need. One of my prayer points is I want my life to be a lesson to other people, and I want my lessons to be lessons to other people. Who those people are, I don't know. God will make it

very clear to me. Even in my TEDx talk, it's just lessons about the things that I have come across in my in my corporate world, and so the things that come to my head is I want to learn. It's a learning situation. The minute I say I'm learning from you; you give me the power to choose what I want to learn from you and what I don't want to learn from you. The minute you say mentor, it means everything you say goes in my life but it doesn't we are all learning from each other. When we're learning from each other, it means I can say it's like a hamburger. I like the lettuce, but not so much the tomato for me, whereas the next person can say, "Oh, the tomato I like, not so much the lettuce for me. We need to be able to pick and choose what we're learning from each other in accordance to where our respective journeys are headed.

INTERVIEWER: Who are some of the people that you would say have played an important role in guiding you?

P7: My mom is my biggest guide. She still is right now. I'm just not as absorbent as I used to be when I was a child because life has taught me a thing or two that I can teach her. So, my mom, I think, from a really early age, has really guided me into things that I should have gone into and things that I shouldn't have gone into, which is also great teaching lessons because my mom wanted me to be a chartered accountant so bad that she shoved me into the corner. This was fantastic because being shoved into that corner showed me what I should not be. I also learned that guidance is not necessarily just pushing you in the right direction. Guidance can also be pushing you to the wrong direction so you can totally repel against what's not meant for you and then be shoved into what is meant for you. So, she's really played a huge role in that. Another lady for me is Evelyn. She was my manager and an EXCO member at the Innovation Hub. She really steered me into growing up. I was already a mom, was already somebody's soon to be wife. I think sometimes when we use the word maturity, people think "I'm mature, I'm a mom, I'm married, I already have a house and a car". Maturity is a bigger thing than that. So, she really helped me mature a lot in getting to just sit in who I am and saying "I'm flipping great at the work that I'm doing, but it's not who I am". So, she helped me really just sit in who I am and be uncomfortable with who I was becoming as my boss at that stage. I have so many; Torah, Miranda, I self-gave her to be my godmother and she's one of my mom's best friends and a chartered accountant of note; those black ladies who came up at a very early age. She sits on multiple boards. Everybody thought I should be a chartered accountant and so she brought me on board as a PA in a company called Mahogany Capital. I don't belong there, whether it has money or not, I don't belong there. I'm glad she's also one of the people helped me sit in my

mistakes. She didn't bail me out of my mistakes. She made me sit in it until it burnt, and then I learned how to jump out of it so and she continues to do that for me today. People think your mentors are just meant to open doors for you, put you in the right jobs so that you are moneyed, and everything works for you. If that's what mentorship is for you, good luck because I'd rather the mentors who leave me to burn because I need to learn so that those mistakes can become a lesson for somebody else as well in the future who's watching my life. There's a number I can speak about; my aunt who's unfortunately passed on. My mom's sister. I can speak about a number of friends and family who've come around me. I have been fortunate to work for the likes of Johanna Mukoki, Basetsana Khumalo, I'm surrounded by so many powerful women, and I love that in watching their lives. I'm taught what to do, but also watching their lives, I'm taught what not to do.

INTERVIEWER: Do you lean more towards informal or formal mentorship relationships?

P7: I definitely think it's informal for me. I prefer a loose approach to mentorship, where I can pick and choose who to learn from, whether they know I'm learning from them or not.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. What are some of the other qualities that you look for in these women or in these mentors that you end up identifying as people that significantly touch your life?

P7: I look for what resonates with where my life is at, at that point in time. I'm ever evolving. If I'm going to say to you, "oh, I look for somebody who is so astute in finance", in five years' time, I may not need that. That quality is what resonates with me at that point in time. Who I am now is not the same person I was a year ago or two years ago. You know that now, if I had to pick a mentor according to quality, I would be making that mentor feel inadequate now, because my life is on a different trajectory. So, I don't believe in finding people to according to qualities. I like finding and learning from certain individuals according to what resonates with my journey and my trajectory at that point in time.

INTERVIEWER: In closing, has your experience allowed you to be okay with becoming a mentor to others in a formal way? Have you become one to push that idea of mentoring others away because of how you view mentorship or have you been welcoming some of these requests?

P7: One of my prayer points is, may my life be a lesson. I'm happy to have anybody to learn from my life. Please. I bear my life on social media, and I do it like that, as openly and as authentically as possible because I want people to learn what they want to learn from me. My approach is I want to learn from whoever in an informal perspective, and you pick and choose



what you want. I'm all for people going around and learning lessons from my life. I don't want to ever sit there and be put on a pedestal and have self-glorification of the number of people I am assisting. That's not the point for me. The point is I would rather have 100 000 people, millions of people, learning from my life, from me being authentic on social media than actually trying to formalize it and losing the plot. It then becomes about me. How many girls are following me? I need to teach them all the time, because it can become rigid if I only select a few people that I need to mentor, and there's deadlines to that. If it's fluid and it's just you watching on my life and learning what you need to learn, then it's it allows it to be as authentic as possible. So, I never say to people, "no, I can't mentor you right now". I encourage people to just watch my life and to take the teachings. Always feel free if you want to throw a question at me without us having to formalize it. So, I want anybody and everybody to learn. Otherwise, I've wasted God's time putting all these things that he's helped me overcome in painful ways, in great ways, in successful ways and unsuccessful ways, if I'm not using my life as a lesson to others openly. When it's done authentically, it means that I've allowed those who want to learn how I parent to learn from me, those who want to learn how I work to learn from me. Those who want to learn how I write to learn from me. Those who want to learn how I friendship, to learn from me. It doesn't box it, because a lot of times mentorship also becomes just about work. But I'm so much more than work. Like, don't you want to know how I also wife and mom? There's so much more than just how I run being a message architect.

INTERVIEWER: I loved this conversation with you. I actually thought it would be longer but you are so clear and consistent with what you're putting up. I tried to ask you other questions. I knew you had said it, but I wanted to actually emphasize and tell me if I'm hearing the right thing.

P7: That's it. So back to it. I want my life to be a lesson. And that's, that's all. That's how I see mentorship.



Participant Profile

Identifier: P8

Generational cohort: Transition Generation

Designation: Founder: Start-up incubator

INTERVIEWER: I was listening to a panel discussion you did for Veuve Clicquot in 2020. You talked about how Black women in South Africa are over-mentored and under-sponsored. You also shared an interesting bit about mentorship and what it looks like for a young black woman in South Africa, especially ones that are going into business. So, I thought you'd be the ideal person to actually chat to and get their view of, firstly, what is mentorship to you?

P8: Mentorship to me means a guide, somebody that can guide me through a process that they are experienced and familiar with, and this is something that I would need more information on or guidance on. So, a mentor is somebody who will sit you down and will be able to guide you through the process, because are somebody who is new in the space, you have a lot of questions, queries, concerns, and it's also nice to have somebody who will just say, "I've travelled that journey, and this is what it looks like, and this is how I've been able to do it". And perhaps you can learn from that. It's a learning journey between two people and a guiding journey, learning and guiding journey between two people.

INTERVIEWER: How has that materialized in your life, either as a mentor or a mentee? Perhaps we can start with your experience as a mentee.

P8: As a mentee, I'm a curious person, and if I am entering an environment and I identify somebody who's done it before, I would then approach them and ask them questions. Either approach them loosely, not in a formal way. I would reach out and I'd ask questions. In the past I would identify them as my potential mentor, and then I'll go speak to them and say, "I would like for you to be my mentor". But I realized that people, in any way or form, don't mind giving guidance, they sometimes hesitant to be a mentor in the official sense because that now puts more of an obligation to spend time, versus if I give you my number and you are able to reach out to me as and when you have questions and I'm able to respond and assist you and guide you. Then sure. So loose relations or loose mentorships is what I realize people rather prefer versus in the official sense because now there is a clear commitment that you're my mentor. So that's me as a mentee. I've realized that people would rather, if they're keen to assist, give me

their contact details and I'm able to then reach out to them and be able to engage them as and when and where I need some guidance and advice. As a mentor, I do also prefer to give somebody my details and I'm on WhatsApp, they're more than welcome to reach out if they need some information, some guidance. I'm able to do that. I prefer that versus having being somebody's mentor in the official sense, when I was supposed to have X amount of meeting times once a month. I don't like that because I have come to realize that a lot of the people, I've asked to guide me are very busy people. They don't have the time to say, "Okay, once a month, I commit myself to this" but as and when I need assistance, I pop them a WhatsApp or an email and they'll be able to assist me.

INTERVIEWER: Who have been some of the mentors that contributed to your growth? What key lessons did you pick up from them?

P8: So, my first mentor that I would say I had was when I was working in the bank. I did an internship with Investec between 2009 and 2010, I was only there for 18 months. When Destiny magazine launched, Peggy Sue Kumalo was on the second cover and I knew about her, but for the first time, I really read her remarkable story. Knowing that I was joining Investec where Peggy-Sue worked, I literally walked up to her office and asked her to mentor me. She was kind of taken aback by how bold and brave I was to kind of literally go up to her and ask her on the spot. I didn't mince my words or mill around and ask her for lunch. She agreed. That relationship has become a sisterhood and now I am the godmother to her two gorgeous girls. I've kind of travelled a journey with her since 2009 to a point where she's now an older sister to me. So that was my first experience asking somebody officially as a mentor. Peggy-Sue would take me everywhere. I mean, I've met the ministers, I've been we've been hosted at the governor's homes, and she would always take me as her plus one, and that's how the sisterhood developed over time.

That was my first mentorship experience and it was also a different kind of mentorship relationship, because she went over and above, but I also suppose it's just my energy. I later got into a partnership with a training company. The founder was an old Jewish man, probably around 76 and still running his company. I would spend time with him and at times ask to have breakfast with him. They had a stake in my business and I learned a lot from him. He would say things like, "when you out there selling, don't go there as a nice to do, go there with a mission. Go there knowing that when you leave you have to have signed something, or there has to be an intention of doing business, or these people are not interested. So don't just go

there. Present yourself. Present what your company does. Be clear as to what you want from them when you leave, there has to be certain clear things. Either you coming back for more because they're interested, because they've expressed that, or they're not interested. Don't waste your time type situation.” So that's the kind of mentorship I received from Mr. Katz, it wasn't formal. But once in a while, I would always reach out to him. We'd have conversations on WhatsApp if I have problems with his team members. I would chat to him, and he'd be able to see things through. So those are the two key mentorship relationships that I've had, but also having a network of strong women like Sis Sindi Mabaso who is a dynamic and phenomenal businesswoman. I met her through Peggy-Sue, she sits on boards. So when it comes to board related issues that I have, I would call Sis Sindi and she'll be able to assist me. If I need her to call upon somebody or introduce me to somebody, I would reach out to her, and she'd be able to do that. So those are my mentorship relationships, very informal except for when I asked Peggy-Sue because I was young entering the corporate world. It's more leveraging off the networks that I have. If I know that Sis Sindi knows this person, she would then be able to do introduce me to them.

INTERVIEWER: What did you see in these mentors that indicated they could contribute to your career growth?

P8: It's about knowing who knows what and who does what. With Mr. Katz, I recognized his extensive experience in business and wanted to learn from that. With Peggy-Sue, I saw an opportunity to connect with someone already established in banking, which was crucial for my development.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think made these mentorship relationships work, even if they were informal?

P8: I was just myself. I'm a relatable person. I'm very good with relationships. That's actually a strength. I'm very good with harnessing relationships. It's also just your energy. You know, when people align to your ease and your calm. Just reflect on the energy that you give off. You need to be trustworthy; you need to be relatable and also be willing to give you can't just be taking it has to be a value exchange between two people. So when people, without you saying it see that you go over and beyond, even with Piggz (Peggy-Sue), our friendship has become a sisterhood, you know, to a point where, when I have little tips and quibbles with her, my mom would remind me, “you guys are sisters, you have to sort this out”. It's because I was just present. I was relatable. I was also keen to be more than just a mentee. When you have

somebody who can be a sister figure, go for it. You know. Don't hold back. Check in with your energy. I don't go to people when I'm actually not in a good space because I wonder, "what kind of energy am I presenting like right now?"

INTERVIEWER: That's a very powerful reflection and lesson to share, especially the way in which you package it. I always beat myself up about, how I relate to people when meeting them for the first time and now I realise that it might have been an energy thing. What I'm learning from you is to rather package it as energy because that is something that's easier to reflect on and have control over. Be intentional about it and be mindful of it as you're engaging with people. I never thought of it that way.

P8: You always have to, because when you meet somebody for the first time, even if you need something from them, ask them how they are doing. People want to feel nurtured as well. What do you have to offer? Even if it's asking and checking in. Even with Piggz, I was very complimentary my reason for being in her office. "I'm so inspired by your story." The reason why she probably brought me in closer over time is because naturally, I'm a nurturing person. How can I be of assistance? Over time, it's not just about taking. You have something to offer, even if it's an ear, a shoulder. When we meet somebody for the first time, they also want to be asked, how are they doing. You know, so you kind of work the room. People don't want to just always be giving. They also want to get something out of an interaction, and that's what stands out. As you're talking, I'm thinking, that's what stands out and makes a person remember you even more. She asked me how I was. She didn't just talk about my work, she was genuinely concerned and engaged in the conversation that we were having. I also leave feeling like, "oh, today, for a change, I'm actually human, and I'm less my companies. Yes, they are important to me, and probably we are here to engage on that and learn from that experience. But the reality is, we also human at the end of the day. So between the back to back Zoom sessions that you're having today, one person actually was genuinely concerned about how you feeling or how you doing. So it's so small little things you can also figure out what else, either asking how they do it, or making a reflection of what you read about them and saying or congratulations on that. Now that sticks out as mastering the art of leaving a lasting impression. So there's a partnership that I've just struck with a Danish organization, and the founder told me, "I'm doing this because of you. I could go to China, I could go to other markets, but I'm doing this because of you. I love your energy. I love your passion for your continent. I love how you actually always deliver. I've met so many people. I've been doing this for many years, but you stuck out." He echoed

that when I was now in Denmark, to spend a week with us to solidify this partnership. But you could see that I was very clear and intentional. It's like nuts. It's you, nothing else. So your energy is so important. How you conduct yourself, how you reflect yourself through the eyes and the experiences of others is also important. It's not just about you. You at the end of the day, and you need to be a person of your word. You know, when people see that you actually do mean what you say and you do what you say, it goes a long way because there are lots of flaky people. People always put their best foot out, right? But I'm also aware that sometimes people are flakes. And now, how do you determine, you know, whether somebody will pursue you as another flake because, you know, sometimes you get to a point where it's like you always regard people as flakes until proven. I feel like it's, it's a skill now to actually be able to see or discern who is possibly here for other things, or who is just here for this moment, and who is genuinely here for me or about me, not that everything is about you, but who is here for the true connection, and who is something, somebody that I can keep next to me. I feel like it's an extreme sport. It's a skill that everyone is trying to master now. Over time, you get a natural sense for people, for things and some will shock you because you never saw this coming, but others will surprise you so but you just need to be true to who you are, right? You have to be a toughie.

INTERVIEWER: Having experienced what you experienced over the years when it comes to mentorship, are you encouraged you or discouraged from becoming a mentor going forward?

P8: For me, it's a timing thing. I've overly committed myself a lot of times, and I regret it but I know that kind of person, if I've committed to something, I will do it, and then it puts a lot of strain on my time to do things that I need to do. So the only time when I am discouraged to be a mentor is time I don't have the time to do it. But then I would say, listen, here's my number. If you ever have a question around X, Y and Z, or whatever it is you're asking me about. Drop me a WhatsApp. I'm very quick on WhatsApp, like, drop me an Insta. I'm always on Instagram. So if you reach out on Instagram, you'll probably have a good chance of me getting back to you, which is the case in point, right? You reached out the other day and I was able to respond and say, "speak to this person, because she's able to set up time". Here we are few days later. I see myself as a mentor in an unconventional way, not in the formal way. I can guide you if you need guidance. Just blast me on my Instagram. Blast me on my WhatsApp. When I have the time, I will definitely respond.



INTERVIEWER: Thank you so much for making the time. I really appreciate it. I know I said it at the beginning of the call but I know you're very busy, and having made the time to talk to me for the 30 minutes and also sharing what your experience has been like, I really appreciate that.

P8: It's really a pleasure, and all the best for the work that you're doing.



Participant Profile

Identifier: P9

Generational cohort: Transition Generation

Designation: Attorney

INTERVIEWER: What does mentorship mean to you?

P9: Mentorship to me is being able to pass the baton. I don't think there's enough time for everybody in the world to make the same mistakes. So, if there's a chance that somebody has been on a specific career path and certain things didn't work out for them, or they learned how to navigate a specific profession and they managed to figure out the hacks of how to get through that profession, it's up to them to then share some of those tips with the people who after them. It's not necessarily an age thing, but it can be any barrier to access a certain profession. For example, in the legal profession, if you want to become an advocate, you have to go through pupillage. During pupillage, you are basically a student again. This is unpaid, and it's very difficult and very challenging for somebody from a disadvantaged background to get into pupillage after four years of financially struggling to get through school. So, mentorship comes in, where somebody who is already on the other side and understands help with mapping out a way for them so that once they get in a foot in the door, they at least understand the further sacrifices that they have to make over and above the financial sacrifices,

INTERVIEWER: Who have been the people on the other side that have served as mentors in your life, especially those that stand out?

P9: At the moment, I have a mentor. Her name is Phindile Baleni. She's quite older than me. She is currently in the office of the presidency. She has a rich legal background and has characteristics that remind me of my mom. She is a gentle woman but not a pushover, she is very confident about who she is and very intentional about what she wants to do in the legal profession. Then my big, big celebrity crush; definitely Michelle Obama who also has a legal background. When I specifically read her book, one of the things that made me fall in love with her even more is that at the beginning of her legal career she knew it wasn't for her. I remember feeling like that as well. I remember when I left practice, I felt like such a failure because I questioned myself about what I had been working towards for the past seven years. I've been working towards getting into practice, getting admitted as an attorney, and after all of that I felt very lost. How else can I pursue something that I can use still to empower others, to give back

to the community, without necessarily having to be in practice? She had this stunning resume, Harvard Law student who did really well and was at one of the best law firms, but she then figured out that wasn't for her. I want to actually serve the public, but I want to serve the public without being in practice, and that's how, basically, I landed on my practice. It was still a way of serving the public, empowering, especially black women without me having to be basically in a suit and tie every day.

INTERVIEWER: Let's talk about your mentorship formats. One is a mentor from afar and the other mentor is closer; where you have a one-on-one relationship. Do you meet up with your mentor regularly? What happens when you meet? Or is it something that is very fluid, very informal?

P9: I was fortunate that somebody introduced me to her. She mentioned that their church was looking for someone who could address women about domestic issues that are a form of gender-based violence. That was my engagement ever and I felt I wasn't ready for something of that magnitude. I remember, I remember the lady who put me in touch with my reminding me that I know more than the people I would be addressing, so I just had to be confident on that basis. I remember tackling it and making a good impression. I was motivated to do something about the fact that I now knew someone from the presidency office and so I continued speaking to her on WhatsApp, I went out of my way to make sure I made a good impression. I had met her on her birthday and so I added the birthday reminder to my calendar. I think a lot of people want mentorship without having to do the work. I went on Google and I studied her. Obviously, a person's personal life and their professional life are sometimes two different things, but sometimes the lines can be a bit blurred. After a month I made contact with her again and spoke about a book that she had mentioned in an interview. I read the book and texted her on WhatsApp to pick her brain about it. We had a conversation about that and she shared some insights with me. I remember one of the things that she had said to me was that power is subjective, and that has always followed me. Power is subjective. It doesn't matter who we think is powerful out there, but if you don't think that there's power that lies within you, you're not going to be ambitious. So that's one of the things that I've carried with me. I continue to learn her as a person, and when I want her time, I make sure that I prepare. The best way to appeal to a mentor is to first show an interest in who they are. You need to show that you're interested in them as a person because the relationship of mentorship is actually give and take. You can't just be taking.

INTERVIEWER: How does it play out with your mentor from afar, Michelle Obama? Do you set out time to tap into a content, or is it a thing of just constantly ensuring that you keep her your eye on what she's doing?

P9: The relationship that I have with her, in my head is that she's actually a really great storyteller. She always posts long captions and always makes you think of something from a different perspective. I really enjoy reading her long captions on social media. She's a great orator and those are the kind of things that I that I love about her that I've taken from her, that your story matters. That's one of the things she constantly says, "your story matters". How you perceive yourself in the world matters. Michelle isn't the only mentor from afar. I'm very intentional about the kind of content that I consume, the kind of podcasts I listen to, the kind of articles I read, the kind of conversations I want to have with people. I'm not saying you have the same conversation with everybody that you meet but there are certain people that you meet that you learn things from, just through the way they direct the conversation.

INTERVIEWER: When you look at what you appreciate about the mentors, how would you say your career has changed because you were deliberate about these relationships?

P9: These relationships have definitely allowed me to want to do more and to keep reinventing myself. I think that's the most important thing I've learned from my mentor. Whenever I share with her my next move but I feel it's cheesy. She asks me why? "Why do you want it to follow a specific structure? Why do you want to know what it looks like?" Sometimes you have to go into something not knowing what it looks like, and you build as you go along. If you don't start building, you're going to look back and see that you still at the foundation phase. So, build as you go along. If there's something that you don't like, you can remove the bricks, start again, but keep on building. Keep going forward.

INTERVIEWER: Revisiting these two relationships that we're talking about, have they encouraged you or discouraged you from becoming a mentor yourself?

P9: I have been an intentional mentor in the past, so basically setting up quarterly meetings with the 10 students that I was mentoring; ten black females who are studying law. I was intentional about that. We had a good relationship. I was taking on ten a year. However, towards the end of last year and this year due to pregnancy and then having a baby, I just didn't have capacity. But I have an open-door policy. Generally, if you just ask me for ten to thirty minutes of my time, and I can make time for you, I definitely will make time for you. I believe that even



if I don't have anything to teach somebody at the moment at that time, that they need my help, the fact that they could use me as a sounding board is enough at that time for them.



Participant Profile

Identifier: P10

Generational cohort: Transition Generation

Designation: Founder of a Female Empowerment Platform

INTERVIEWER: To kick off, I'm going to ask you: what is mentorship to you? What does it mean to you?

P10: For me, what it has looked like—because I'll be speaking more from my personal experiences—is much more valuable than just my ideas. Ideas are always informed by someone who did what you're doing now, and then I read it somewhere and thought, "That's what it is." So, I believe the power of research lies in personal experiences versus what we've learned elsewhere. For me, mentorship has been about having access to sounding boards who are much more experienced than I am in specific fields—not necessarily industrially, but even in life's agenda. When I think about the mentorship, I received from Oskido, I'll share some insights that will help you formulate your understanding. Oskido has been a great mentor for me, especially in observing how he navigates relationships in a very unstructured space. That has been a key lesson for me. Much of this stems from his personality and his beliefs about how to build a business. It wasn't about structure; it was more about values alignment. I saw him and thought, "Wow, I wish I could do that." I tend to be more structured and believe that things should be done in a certain way, whereas his lack of structure taught me how to navigate chaos.

By watching him and having access to his experiences, I learned to manage the combination of structure and chaos, which has empowered me to navigate success in a much better way than someone who has only worked for a structured company like McKinsey. For someone like me, who is building a business without a clear precedent, that perspective was powerful. Then I moved from Oskido to someone like the Head of Marketing at Samsung South Africa; Kgomotso Mosiane, who I consider both a mentor and a friend. When I need to make marketing decisions informed by corporate South African marketing structures look, I give her a call. I have my ideas about how I want to approach something, and she provides insights about what's happening inside the industry, which allows me to craft a better proposition for my partners. A lot of my mentorship experience has involved picking up the phone and saying, "This is what I'm thinking. Am I on the right track? Is there something else I need to consider?" Particularly



when you're an entrepreneur, and many people talk about it being a lonely journey, having that sounding board is crucial for making quick decisions.

I recently spoke to another guy who represents a different form of mentorship for me. He is a friend who said, "I know someone I think you should speak to." I met with that person for three hours, and they completely transformed my perspective on how to think about my business. I went in knowing what I should be doing better, but without affirmation. Intuitively, I knew that a lot of my revenue was coming from corporate partnerships, but I questioned how sustainable that model was. What happens when those partnerships end? What are the risks involved? I am building a brand that requires me to partner with other brands, which means I need to dilute my brand to make the partnerships work. What does that mean for my business's sustainability? I was already thinking along those lines but wasn't taking the time to find solutions because I was too operationally focused. I struggled to balance my time between strategy and operations. During that meeting, so much unfolded. When I tried to present my business, the person said, "Close your laptop and tell me what your business is." I was thinking about refining my elevator pitch, but this person pushed me to articulate my business verbally. In that moment, I realized I needed to do more work in defining my business clearly. So all of it is sounding boards, but also access to people who are much more refined in specific areas than I am. The conversation goes on, and the person says, "You're spending too much time building; you don't have a clear business proposition. You have a good marketing proposition; that's why the marketers are latching onto you. But you need a clear business proposition so that your financial projections make sense." Now, that's something I've been thinking about, but here I am across the table from someone who's saying, "This is something you need to consider and improve." I walk away already thinking, "Okay, I need to enhance our content, but how do we think about doing that financially?"

As I'm heading into the summit, I know it's going to be profitable. Now, I need to have a clear plan for how to take those profits and start creating content, and what that content is going to do for us. These are things that seem obvious, but when you're running a business, they pop into your mind while you're also thinking, "I need to send that email; I need to do this." So, for me, mentorship has been really about access and sounding boards. I don't want to say people are holding my hand, as that implies, they're guiding me through everything. There's a lot I figure out on my own, but in those moments when I need to make quick decisions and pivots, mentorship has been crucial.

INTERVIEWER: How do you identify these sounding boards, or what do you look for in those specific sounding boards?

P10: I don't want to say there's no intentionality, but there really isn't. Let's step back and consider: what does networking do for creating mentorship relationships? For me, it doesn't start with the mentorship relationship; it starts with networking. I'm very intentional about my network—not so much about mentorship, but very intentional about my network. I network with like-minded people, which makes it easier to find mentorship. It's easy for me to say yes to you because we are like-minded and have been informally networking on social media. I haven't been mentoring you in a formal sense, but perhaps I've been mentoring you by observing. It starts with the networking. You've been very visible in my social media, supporting our initiatives and giving feedback. I know your name; I recognize your investment. If you ask me for time, I'll give it to you because I see a like-mindedness and shared values. From that network, I might speak to someone I met at an event with whom I've built a relationship based on shared values. They might say, "I know a person who can help you with that." That's how my mentorship has evolved.

When I reflect on the beginning of my journey, there's a difference between starting out and having built a reputation. For instance, when I worked with Zinhle, who I grew up with, there was intentionality about how I wanted to be perceived by those around us. It's networking without talking. My approach to networking was subtle—how I showed up created opportunities for me without even verbalizing it. If I'm intentional about how I want to be perceived and consistently present myself that way, it's easier to say, "Let's work together." With Oskido, it wasn't a goal or a mistake; I was clear about how I wanted to be perceived. In contrast to Zinhle, who is a celebrity, my approach was strategic. When I approached him, I had already established that I was capable. He may not have known the extent of my capabilities, but he could see that the project was running smoothly and I was the operational force behind it. I then approached him to work together, not for mentorship, but to solve my financial challenges. When I entered that space, I was clear that I wanted him to rely on me. If he relied on me, he'd see my value; if he saw my value, he'd be willing to invest in that.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned that it's more about your network than creating a mentorship relationship. How does that play into your agenda for your business, a platform you're creating for women?



P10: I think it's smart to consider the networking aspect, but I also recognize there are barriers in accessing specific people to build those networks. If someone has been engaging with me but is based in Cape Town and can't afford to attend my event, they have networked with me, but how far can that take them? With our platform, we aim to create networking opportunities through our events, but we also want to facilitate direct mentorship relationships. Networking helps establish the credibility that makes mentorship decisions easier for potential mentors. If you need networking for credibility, I can help with that. When I call on my network to mentor someone, I'm lending my credibility to that relationship. So, we are about eliminating barriers to networking and credibility in mentorship, allowing people to engage in a credible space. Once that space is created, it becomes the individual's opportunity to emerge. Even with mentors, there are individuals who have sat with people they don't remember, while others have had memorable experiences. We aim to provide opportunities for people to connect with long-term mentors, saying, "I'm bringing them to you; now do what you need to do."

INTERVIEWER: Regarding the idea of exploring whether there are differences in expectations across generations, why did you specifically choose to involve mentors of different ages?

P10: I think we often undermine peer-to-peer mentorship. Peer-to-peer mentorship is crucial for us as we build our platform. My experiences have shaped my capabilities as an entrepreneur. Kgomotso is the same age as me, we went to varsity together, we all studied marketing, she followed a different path which is corporate South Africa. The insights I would get from her versus the insights someone would get from me around marketing are different. Mentorship isn't just about the years someone has been in a role; sometimes, it's about access to information. Access to guidance can depend on what you're looking for. There are ways someone my age can mentor me, even if we're in the same industry. It doesn't always come from a Basetsana Khumalo, there's ways that Basetsana can't mentor me. Even if I am in the same industry as her, the era in which she built her business and the era in which I am building my business are totally different. So I benefit more from peer-to-peer mentorship. At different times, you look for different forms of mentorship, and I think there's so much value in peer-to-peer mentorship. It has its hurdles but if you get it right through value exchange then it makes sense.

INTERVIEWER: Earlier, you mentioned how it's easy for you to pick up the phone and get what you need at that moment. It sounds like you have established relationships with these

people. This isn't just a casual interaction; it's something you are very intentional about building. What is your view on formal versus informal mentorship relationships? Where do you sit most comfortably?

P10: Informal, definitely. For me, informal has worked because I think once you start to formalize it, it limits how far you can help me. Then, in your head, I'm in a specific category. You know, I'm here to ask you something. It makes me a mentee, and the idea of mentee-mentor has a hierarchy. Immediately when it gets formalized, the mentee is the one who is always seeking assistance. The informal structure of mentorship and guidance becomes very conversational, where even Kgomoitso can pick up the phone and ask for my guidance. Then it becomes a mutually beneficial relationship. I have another mentor I know, and all of mine are unofficial. There's no official mentor in my life. It's very difficult for me to formalize mentorship. There's a lady I recently interviewed. Literally I wish I could just go to her on Sunday and have lunch and just speak about life. That's how much I was touched by who she is and how she is. But I always feel like, if I then go to her and say, "Oh, can I come and speak to you?" it just creates a very different dynamic versus allowing it to happen, you know? And also, because we're in different generations, it's very difficult. I'm still trying to figure out if I would like to pursue that. I often think that credibility in mentorship allows for an organic relationship with your mentor. I feel like I always, when I meet people like how I met her, I always wait for a moment when she meets someone who she believes is credible, who then says, "Oh, I know her. She's amazing," and then that her coming back—this is how it normally happens—her coming back to me and saying, "Oh my gosh, I met this person, and they were talking about you. I'm so proud of the work that you do." Credibility a very important piece when it comes to authentic and empowering mentorship relationships, right?

So I have another friend who really is a mentor for me. His name is Masai Ujiri. He is the president of the Toronto Raptors, which is an NBA team. He is 51 years old. He's born on the same day as me. Yes he's a friend but I am inspired by him—intentionality, focus, a clear idea around leadership. But he does it in a very similar way to me. It's unwritten but you know how to do it from experience. So this is what I mean when I say even when you're dealing with powerful people, there has to be mutual respect. So sometimes, when he's building stuff for his foundation, he'll send me a message and say, "What do you think about this? Can you read through this and tell me what you think?" Right? So he'll sit with his team and they'll build a deck, and I'm like, "Why do you think—like, out of all the people you've hired, why me?" But

it's important because then it demonstrates to me that he values me, which makes it easy for me to go to him when I need help and not feel like I'm constantly asking him for things. Credibility and informality of relationships have worked for me. Maybe when you speak to someone who does have formal mentorship, they would have a different take. I would actually be very curious to hear someone speak of a formal mentorship relationship and how it's helped them. Because I think within corporate structures, it might be effective because then your mentor knows how they benefit from you growing. Well, maybe in corporate and formalized structures, it does work because the thing about human beings is no one does anything without them benefiting from it. No one. Every single thing we do, by the nature of how we are, there is a piece of something that would benefit, whether it's fulfilment or whatever, and my fulfilment as your mentor might be determined not by our conversations but by me seeing your growth. What happens if your growth is slow or you don't grow? Is it a sustainable relationship? Yet, you see, for me, those are all the things that even make this conversation is illuminating to me, that we need to think about mentorship and be able to advise young people around how to see it through different experiences of successful mentorship relationships. So I think mutual benefits are quite crucial, and everyone must know what they're benefiting. And it's a very difficult thing to assess on the basis of, "I asked you to be my mentor." By virtue of me asking it creates a dynamic.

INTERVIEWER: As somebody who gravitates more towards informal mentorship relationships, how do you ensure that these relationships stay alive?

P10: So, I'll come back to that. I just thought of a mentorship relationship that I actually had as a mentor, which was formal. I was a mentor at Phakama Academy. It's run by Koo Govender and they assign final year students to mentors in a formal way. The first year I was assigned to someone, I had no interest in pursuing them. For me, it was, "You are here. You want this mentorship. Tell me what you want." And they slacked. I think I spoke to them once, and it didn't affect me. I then continued to fulfil my obligation because I said I'm a mentor. And then the second year, I got assigned a new girl. She was energetic and proactive. She would call me to request time and would come see me at the office. That was interesting. I would sit with her for an hour. We speak. She leaves, she goes home. I tell her, "If you need anything, WhatsApp me." She does WhatsApp me sometimes. And then she comes and says, "Can we meet at this time?" I was impressed by her level of commitment as a varsity student, I then hired her as an intern. I was paying her a lot of money because I could see the drive that she had. I could see

her hunger to succeed, and I also understood her situation at home. And then when she eventually left my business, she was offered an opportunity by someone who paid her less. I discouraged from taking on the opportunity and shared with her that once she agrees to that salary range, she can't go back. So then our mentorship relationship was always formal, but she was extremely proactive about her needs. And to this day, I speak to her, like, just randomly. She'll call me and ask for an hour on the phone or if we can do lunch. It feels like I have an investment in her because I've grown to know her, you know? I guess the informal does work if the formula is very clear. As a mentor, it fulfils me to work with someone who I can see has the potential to grow. Then I become invested in that because when I see her wins, they feel like my wins as well. She recently wrote an article that I'm going to publish on our platform. She loves writing. So sometimes when we need something to be written, I'll just call her. You see, there's also benefit for me in that she's someone I can call on for that, and then she delivers it to me. She gets credits from the article; she loves writing. She can create that as a portfolio for her in the future if she goes on to just do that kind of work. So the benefit must be there. There must be some level of benefit by nature of us being human beings, whether the benefit comes from the organization giving you some kind of recognition for mentoring people, maybe it doesn't come from the mentee, but it has to be somewhere—a benefit for you being part of a mentorship relationship.

INTERVIEWER: And how do you nurture it?

P10: These are informal relationships with people who I have aligned values with. So for instance, the guy I went to who was referred to me by a friend, I haven't had a need to speak to him since, you know, but I know that he respects me. He sees my work; by virtue of us being in neutral circles, my name comes up, and it comes up in a way that is credible. I don't need to speak to him every day. All I need to do is to remain credible. Six months down the line, if I pick up the phone and call him, he's going to pick up on the basis of my credibility. So others become friends that I speak to all the time. Others become friends that I speak to once every three months. But by virtue of alignment of values, they will know what I'm doing and my credibility. And I think if you're not maybe doing it the way that I do it where my credibility is public, I think just send the person your updates of what's happening in your life. Send them your wins.

INTERVIEWER: Thirty minutes went by very quickly. I learned a lot from this conversation and getting to know what mentorship looks and feels like to you. I hope our conversation was



useful for you as well. Thank you so much. I'm going to keep you posted regarding the development of the paper, and I will send the consent form to Thando for her to sign.

P10: Not a problem. Thank you so much. Have a good day. Thank you. And if you need anything, please just speak to Thando, and we'll make time.

INTERVIEWER: Alright, thank you. I'll do that. Thank you. Alright, thank you. Bye-bye.

Participant Profile

Identifier: P14

Generational cohort: Transition Generation

Designation: Executive Group Head of Marketing

INTERVIEWER: To kick us off, my first question to you is, what does mentorship mean to you?

P14: I think it differs on how people look at it. For me, mentorship is about helping someone to realize his or her dream at the end of the day. I strongly believe that people look at you and kind of like, appreciate you and appreciate the work that you do, and appreciate the kind of a person that you are before they even ask you to mentor them. So, you cannot just mentor anybody. There's something that attracts people to you so that you become their mentor, right? At the end of the day as a mentor, for me, it's all about making sure that somebody gets the guidance and realize their dreams.

INTERVIEWER: I like how you mentioned that appreciation plays a role. In your experience as a mentor, what makes you say yes or no to someone who asks you to mentor them?

P14: First, I need to understand what they want. What do they want to become? And why me, specifically? It's important to gauge their perspective to see what they see in me that makes them believe I could be a good mentor. Additionally, I consider the field they're in. For instance, I can't mentor someone who is a medical doctor because that's not my area. If I don't think I can assist them, I'll refer them to someone else.

INTERVIEWER: What makes a good mentorship relationship for you?

P14: Communication and availability are very important for me. You must be available for the person that you are mentoring if you have a busy schedule like my one. You need to come up with a schedule. This is our timetable. I will make it to a point that I avail myself at that specific time, even if it is in the evening, after hours or on weekends. It's okay for me because most of the time we are working. You must be available, you must communicate. You must check up on the person that you are mentoring because you cannot mentor a person and then you don't see the progress.

INTERVIEWER: When you talk about scheduling, how does the conversation typically unfold? Is it pre-planned?

P14: We need to plan for our session and say, “okay, in the next session, this is what we're going to focus on”. It's so that I can prep. When we meet, it becomes a fruitful exercise for us. We can't just jump in and ask each other what we are talking about on the day. We need to decide on what we'll be talking about in our next session, and then I prep around that and when we meet. That person also needs to prep so that he or she's able to ask some questions where needed, right? So pre is very important. Otherwise, we can't just shoot in the dark.

INTERVIEWER: In your experience as a mentee, have you had formal mentorship relationships? Who stands out to you?

P14: I've had mentors and I'm not sure if it's a good thing to mention that most of them are men. I think it's because I relate more with men than women. I grew up in a family where there's a lot of men and when my parents passed away, my brother became like a mother, a father and a sister to me. So, I kind of relate more with men than women. There are two people that really have played a critical role, like in my life, as mentors. The first person was Mr Nhloko, who was the station manager at Metro FM when I joined Metro FM⁷. Even when he left Metro to join the TV side, he continued to mentor me. Then the other person who mentored me when I became the marketing manager at Metro, is Thinasiphelele Sixaso who was the head of marketing for all radio stations. So, he helped me a lot in making sure that I make the right decisions, and I can always ask him for help when I need it. Those are the two people that have played like a critical role in my life.

INTERVIEWER: What are some of the things that they taught you that that really stayed with you or contributed towards your growth?

P14: Making the right decisions. They have taught me not to be afraid of making decisions. In terms of my personality, I'm a very calm person in nature, I'm a very nice person, like a sweet person. Sometimes people look at that as a weakness, not knowing that it's actually a strength that's part of your personality. When it comes to the issues of leadership and making decisions, they then see a different side of you that they didn't know. So, one of the things that has pushed me to do is to remind me that as much as I am soft, I shouldn't allow people to just jump on my head. When it's time to say no, you must be able to say no. When it's time to make decisions, you must be able to make a decision and stand for it.

INTERVIEWER: Did you look for these mentors, or did they approach you?

⁷ Metro FM is a popular South African radio station known for its music, entertainment, and talk shows, primarily targeting urban youth and featuring a mix of local and international content.

P14: I did not look for them. With Mr Nkholo, when I started at Metro he interviewed me and I kind of opened up to him to ask that he helps me out and to just guide me when he sees my mistakes. So, it just happened, without making it a formal thing, it happened automatically. Also the fact that I love what I do, I put all my energy into my work so it becomes very easy for people to help me out because they know that I love what I do. I'm a very focused person. So, it wasn't a formal thing, but it ended up becoming formal although it was never the intention. Let me put it like that.

INTERVIEWER: What qualities do you appreciate in your mentors?

P14: They are very results driven. I appreciate somebody who shows results. I also love books and I am forever studying. Right now, I'm busy with my PhD. So, I love people who are into studying because one can never say they know it all. Even if you have your honors, your masters, you still need to learn more. So, I like people who are not afraid to grow and to learn. That's very important to me because I can always bounce some ideas off them and it's always interesting to converse with somebody who is into books. You know that whatever they say doesn't just come from their mind but it's always linked to theory that they read somewhere. So, for me the conversation becomes very interesting. I love intelligent people.

INTERVIEWER: If you could add anything to your mentorship relationships, what would it be?

P14: Trust me, nothing. I still regard them as the best. I have good relationships with them. They appreciate me a lot and the fact that I took what they told me and they see me growing in my career life, right? I always go back to them, bounce some things for some guidance and so they are still the best.

INTERVIEWER: With your mentees, is there anything you would add?

P14: I'm a very pushy person. But when I mentor somebody, the first thing that I say to them is, "please don't be like me, just be yourself". I have this crazy energy; I was born like that. I have energy for days; I don't even sleep at night. I sleep like for a few hours. My mind is forever busy. So, I always encourage them not to be like me. Just be yourself, and if you feel like I'm pushing you like a lot, please just tell me. I want a person to feel comfortable and not feel like I'm just too much or that they can't approach me or they are scared of asking questions because I'm forever pushing that person's brain. I want more. So, I tell them, "When you feel like I'm just too much, please just tell me so that I can calm down because I don't expect you to have the same energy that I have".

INTERVIEWER: Do you feel that works for them?

P14: It definitely works because I create a friendly environment with whoever that I'm mentoring so that it's not like a teacher, student, kind of thing., I create a very friendly, open, nice relationship with them and I expect them to look at me as a sister more than just a mentor. They can be free to just call me anytime, share whatever they wish to share or ask for any kind of help even if it's outside of what we are doing. So that's the kind of relationship that I build.

INTERVIEWER: Talking about that flow of relationships that are mutually beneficial and do not feel like one person is superior than the other, what are you learning? What are your mentees teaching you about yourself?

P14: Patience. They are teaching me to be patient because we are on different levels. I think I grew up being a very impatient person, I want things to happen now and to happen the way I want them. If they don't, I will get upset and feel like I'm a failure, right? If I don't get the marks that I want, I'll feel like I'm not doing well. Why is this one getting more marks than me because I know I'm smarter than her or him. So, they are teaching me to be patient with them and I allow them to be themselves. I appreciate it a lot because it calms me down a little bit.

INTERVIEWER: In wrapping up, what about the relationships that you've had with your mentors has encouraged you to pay it forward by saying yes to mentoring others?

P14: The relationships that I had and that I still have are so important because I'm where I am because of other people. I'm where I am because of them and the help that that they gave me. right? They were not selfish with their knowledge which allowed me to grow. They were not selfish about that. They taught me to do the same thing for other people. I must not be selfish with my time. I must not be selfish with my knowledge. I must not be selfish with my resources, right? As long as that person is willing to learn from me, then my hands are open.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you for being generous with your time, especially on a weekday evening in between travel and making sure that you at least share this time with me to reflect on what mentorship has looked like for you and what it means, and also just using the lessons that you're sharing to recommend what mentorship can look like going forward. I really took a lot from the conversation, and I believe it's going to add to what I'm trying to build here. So thank you so much.

P14: Thank you so much, and anytime you need me, please just shout.

Participant Profile

Identifier: P16

Generational cohort: Struggle Generation

Designation: Self-reinvention Coach

INTERVIEWER: What does mentorship mean to you, how do you define it?

P16: Well, mentorship for me is asking or helping someone. As a mentor, I help you achieve some of the things that I have managed to achieve. So, it's literally hand holding you to the next level that you want to be at, which will be a bit different from coach, because I'm also practicing as a coach. So as a coach, I've got the tools while I might not have done what you've done. For me, that's mentorship. A big sister or a big brother kind of who's gone through what I've gone through, and that will be my simple definition of mentorship.

INTERVIEWER: What do you feel makes a good mentorship relationship?

P16: Aligned values. When people reach out to me to ask if I can mentor them, I have chat with them and actually ask them if we can do a value assessment because one thing that I know about aligned values is that if we need to achieve the same things and we are of the same mindset, it's easy for me to share stuff with you that you will quickly catch than having to go and shift your mindset. Mentorship is more of a partnership that the two of you go into. I also learn from you as a mentor. You learn from me as a mentee. But also, I don't want it to be as formal as it would be in coaching. In coaching, I drive you. In coaching, it's my responsibility to make sure that you deliver what you need to deliver. I extract what I need to extract out of you. But in mentorship, I sit back and you ask the questions, and some of those when I explain to you, at least if we have aligned values, it will be easy for you to figure it out. It's actually advice that I got from my mentor. He insisted that I reach out to this guy on LinkedIn when I was looking for mentors. I was leaving public service and wanted to start my own company. I didn't have the experience of running a company and I needed someone who had done a lateral shift in in careers. When I found him, he suggested a casual chat and offered to mentor me for an hour every month. He also suggested that I give an hour a month to someone younger. I went back to him to ask what the initial chat was about and he confirmed that he wanted to check if our values were aligned. As a coach, I was always formal. So that's where I started to actually soften it up and not make conversations a questionnaire. Before you aligned values. Perhaps you wish to reach the same goals so those experiences and the way that you will approach things will



come from the same kind of foundation. It will be easy for you to grow faster. It won't be like attending class and talking about aligned values.

INTERVIEWER: What do you look for in a mentor?

P16: What I look for in a mentor is, “did they go through it”? Did they get where I want to get to, showing up as women? I had two female mentors. I wanted to understand the balance of finesse and also being a kick ass boss, if you may call it that, especially when I went into senior management. I didn't want to show up like a man, but I could tell the environment I was in was very masculine. It was a science environment, so it was very masculine. So, I look for people who have shown up as female, very feminine in the way they dress up. I was more into my masculinity, I was a blue, grey, navy suit kind of girl. I really wanted my softness to come out. So, when I look for a female mentor, I look for those kinds of qualities and also someone that can teach me how to balance my home life and work life. Going into senior management, I had just gotten married and just had a child, so at that particular time, I wanted to know, how do I show up in the office and also not be absent at home. How I showed up physically was important. I even had to join Toastmasters to package my story and that I don't come across forceful. I would go into a meeting very dominant and so I wanted to move away from force going into power. We can come into a space, command power and make sure that your word is final, but in a way of inclusivity, where you're not pushing. That was my main game. So that's also what I looked for in women. One of my female mentors was a Director General at the time. She literally was chairing most of the international platforms and how she showed up, she, she really was not a pusher like I viewed myself to be. She was always very calm, always very soft spoken, but everyone, even the most powerful man in the room, would literally bow down to her. So I wanted to know, how do you actually have that? How do you send people to the drawing board? Those are the kind of qualities I wanted to embody and to learn about. She was very nurturing and motherly, all of us went to her as a mother. So, I also wanted to know, how do you show up like that? How do you not have people take advantage of you? Why are you also helping as a big sister? Mentorship is quite tricky, because you're a big fan, you might be over giving. So how do you draw the boundary, but in a nice way that you're still you're still that nurturing person. So yeah, that's what I personally look out for, and literally, and the last one is excellence. How do you show up on time? How do you make sure that you deliver the content at a quality that it's supposed to be delivered on. I think we loosely call it black excellence, but literally, how do you become that professional person that also is reliable.

INTERVIEWER: Are there specific mentors, either two or three, that have really made an impact in your career? Who are they and what big lesson did you take from them?

P16: Okay, the Director General that I'm talking about is Linda Maule Sharpe. I think that's how she still goes. She used to be a director general of Department of Communications back then, when I was there. The second one is my previous Director General. I used to support him, especially at international platforms. How he showed up and how he commanded respect without being pushy, was one of the things that I learned from him. The other one is my present mentor, who's been mentoring me ever since. He used to work for SARS, and then he ventured out. He's an engineer, so we've got the same background as that. He worked as a public servant in SARS, and he went on as a leadership coach and started his own business from there. So that's one of the people that I wanted to learn from. What I learned from all of them is that my personal development and my mental state, health state, is literally my responsibility. So, if I want to grow, it's not about my employer, it's not about my boss, it's about me. I drive that agenda. I guess it also enhanced how I drive my own agenda when I ask for mentorship, because mostly when people come for mentorship, they actually want you to drive the agenda. If you come in as my mentee, you manage the calendar. You ask for appointments. I will commit to them. You have an agenda. You have your questions ready, you do the action points. We give feedback, and this is how I'd like the session to be programmed, but you also tell me how you want it, but in terms of the questions that you're going to ask, the things that you want clarity on. It's driven by you. So that's what I learned from them, even running the business. My main target is actually to help people that come out of sticky situations to gain their confidence back and then break that glass ceiling. He pushed me to become a relationship coach and actually qualify in it. Also the aligned values and how to see your life through values. He's a student of Dr John Demartini, whom I'm also a student of. So, the two of us find it easy to look at life at least from similar lens, because it's not necessarily the same lens. He's a man, I'm a woman. We give ourselves permission to show up in our own values.

INTERVIEWER: My final question, what about your mentorship relationships has encouraged you to continue being a mentor to others?

P16: Understanding how challenging it is to navigate life in general, but mostly to navigate in an environment where you've never been to. When I work with Abasa graduates, there are little things that they are not aware of that I'm now aware of, like their employment contract. Some of them go into employment, they start work, they don't have a contract, and when they hit a



brick wall, they get frustrated because they've been students, so it's something that they are not aware of. So, the whole idea of mentorship is, let me share with you things that took me 25 years to learn, to actually help you shrink them into one week, to shrink them into three months, because then you can go further. That's the whole idea of mentorship. Let's close that gap. I'm a very nurturing person. I'm a giving person. I'm one of those people that even when I decided to leave my job, I had discovered that majority of the time that I enjoy spending in the office was with young people. That's why I decided to start this. But I also looked at my own values. I'm driven by personal development. I'm driven by teaching or speaking, and I'm also driven by reading and writing. When I now go into that space of giving myself permission to do that, it's easy for me to want to continue to give to the next person and show them how to close the loop. There's so much potential out there, but if we all have to start from scratch, then it means that we cannot build those legacies that we want to build. We can't bridge the divide that is between societies, and we literally can't give the heritage that we want our kids to have in this country because it means they will always have to start from scratch. I have the information that can be shared in an hour, and if I'm not doing that, I'm not helping someone close the gap. So yes, that's the main reason I will continue to mentor. And yes, it's beautiful, because now I can, I can do both. People can pay me for it. I still have a percentage of my time that I actually still give out to people for mentorship, for those that actually have the intention to grow their careers.



Participant Profile

Identifier: P17

Generational cohort: Struggle Generation

Designation: Business & Media Lawyer

INTERVIEWER: What is mentorship to you, and why is it important?

P17: I think mentorship really is an opportunity to overcome many of the hurdles brought by the real-life process. You tap into someone else's life who has gone ahead of you, and you use that to empower yourself to navigate what you are still going to go through. That, for me, is just—I hope I put it in a way that makes sense.

INTERVIEWER: It does. And is mentorship, just the concept of it, important to you personally?

P17: It is absolutely important. For growth, you need to be teachable. You need to have a teachable attitude; otherwise, you won't grow. One of the things that mentorship does, in my view, is become that teaching platform. So, I definitely think it's important.

INTERVIEWER: How has mentorship manifested in your life? What has mentorship looked like for you over the years? Was it one-on-one mentorship, or a different form? How did it materialize for you?

P17: I think it has taken many shapes over the years—many shapes, forms, and formats. In certain instances, it was structured; in other instances, it was not. By structured, I mean you are part of a program that offers mentorship, where there is oversight and a clear format to follow. In other cases, it has been informal, arising from personal relationships, whether directly with the mentor or indirectly. It's more informal, without much structure. There have also been instances where it was from a distance. In those cases, the person I see as a mentor may not even be aware they are mentoring me. I may not have any direct relationship with them, but I go out of my way to study their life and experiences in the areas where I look to them as a mentor. So, it becomes one-sided, as I'm the one learning from them without their knowledge. It's imperfect because there's no direct link, but I have benefited a lot from those arms-length mentorship structures.



INTERVIEWER: Talking about benefits, how have you benefited from mentorship across all these structures—distant, direct, or structured? What are some key takeaways from mentorship?

P17: I think I have gained direction. When I found myself at a crossroads—whether in my career, business, or life—connecting with a mentor has helped me get direction. Not that they impose that direction, but they can mirror back my challenges to me, and the solution often comes from within. The benefit I gained from them is perspective more than direction. Perspective is the correct word. As I engage, I'm able to look at my current challenges very differently. It's like having another set of eyes, another lens through which to see what lies before me. I've also benefited by receiving new ideas about how to approach certain tasks. I've been challenged as well; whatever views or beliefs I held strongly about a particular direction have been put to the test through the mentorship exercise. This process has strengthened my resolve regarding certain beliefs or shown me that holding onto them was not taking me where I wanted to go. So, being challenged has also been a benefit.

INTERVIEWER: Let's start with structured mentorship. Who are some of the people you can point to? You can mention two people per type of mentorship. Who stood out for you in structured mentorship over the years?

P17: I would say my father. He has mentored me in various ways—formally, informally, and sometimes even indirectly, as I observe his life. I'm lucky because he was in the same profession as I am; he's also a lawyer. So, it was easy for him to be that mentor for me. I would also say my mother, who was in different professions and mentored me indirectly. She had various career phases—starting as a nurse to support my father through university, then running her own business, and eventually becoming a teacher. Her experiences informed my decisions as a professional woman and how to navigate life's intersections with career. Additionally, as a CEO, I had chairpersons of boards I reported to, and they became mentors. They were my bosses, but they had a vested interest in guiding me beyond just being my superior. Some conversations were more personal, where they would offer advice like an older sister. Their insights were grounded in what they observed about my leadership.

INTERVIEWER: Can you share more about other mentors you've had?

P17: Yes, being a spiritual woman and Christian by faith, I've had mentors who are strong in their faith and also leaders in business. One mentor who stands out is a pastor who is also a

Chief Operations Officer of one of the big four banks. That combination of applying faith in the marketplace has been quite impactful for me.

INTERVIEWER: What about mentors from a distance? Who stands out?

P17: I'm trying to think now about mentors from a distance. Mentors from a distance that stand out... Maybe I will remember. Can we skip this?

INTERVIEWER: Yes, that's fine.

P17: And in terms of you seeking a mentor, what drew you to the idea that you needed to find a mentor? Or was it more often that you weren't even aware that someone was mentoring you?

P17: I think I have gone all out quite often to seek mentorship. As I said, I value feedback a lot, and I value opportunities to learn and grow. I always seek out opportunities to learn from someone else. I have sought out mentors, whether those relationships end up being direct or indirect. For the direct ones, I have a business coach now. I sought that out because I knew there were certain things I felt I needed to have someone to work with. I needed a person who isn't just a professional coach but someone who runs a multi-million Rand business, which is my vision as well. I reached out to a couple of my networks and told them what I was looking for—someone with these qualities—and they referred me to a few people. I had several conversations and ended up deciding on one. They were also amenable to taking on someone like me, so it's been a mutual arrangement.

INTERVIEWER: Talking about networks, how important are they, especially as potential mentors who are not necessarily part of a formal structure? How have you been able to build a network of people that you feel can help you realize your vision of becoming the owner of a multi-million Rand business?

P17: Networks are critical. You build those networks over time, and you need to be okay with the fact that it takes time. You should build those networks before you need them. You must constantly be building your network. Thirdly, the way to build a network is to be a person of value to others. I believe that no person should come into contact with me and leave the same if I can help in any way. As I engage with people, I'm always looking for ways to be of value and contribute to their journeys. By doing that, I believe that somewhere down the line, whether with that same person or someone else, they will do the same for me.

INTERVIEWER: That's one of the most valuable takeaways I've had. I've been having these conversations for the past two to three weeks, and this one stands out because it reminds me of instances where you can pick up the phone and reach out to someone because you've built an

authentic relationship, and they are willing to contribute back because you've been of value to them over time.

P17: Completely. Without any planning or structuring, it's about building authentic relationships. When you target people solely based on their titles, those are often the people you never get to connect with. True, you might be shocked to find out they're not nice human beings.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, that's so true. I have spent so much time trying to get through to someone to connect with another person, only to find out they're not what I expected.

P17: Exactly. So, let's go with authentic relationships.

INTERVIEWER: What do you feel makes a mentorship relationship work?

P17: I think, as a mentee, you need to be teachable. I'm assuming, if you have consented to be in a mentorship relationship, you already have that. But secondly, you need to be a network person that takes the initiative. You're going to stay owning your outcome; what do you want out of that relationship? You know, it's not about you coming in and being a burden into someone's time and someone's base and someone's whatever. No. People are busy. People are hectic. People are you have a lot on their minds as well. You can't add onto their plate that they are the ones that must do all the thinking for you. How do you want this thing to move? What's next? When you finally schedule a coffee, you can't expect me to do all the talking. Why are you here? What do you want out of this? What have you done? I've done X, Y, Z, and this is where I need you, you know, but not just come in blank, because you are just going to be draining that person that clearly is already busy. I think you need to be a person that takes the initiative because it shows that you are not there to hand over your life into someone's hands, "Oh, I'm stuck so that you can tell me what I need to do". But having but having said that. I think even you as a mentor need to firstly be able to say no, if it's just not going to work because of time or because of just the energy between you and that person just doesn't work. Rather let the person know upfront. You know, don't lead the person on when you can't do it. I think doing that and also being open to for a mutual learning experience. I have also learned a lot from people that have approached me to mentor them. They challenged my thinking. They challenged my way of doing business or doing life in a very positive way. I've been grateful for that. So I think even as a mentor it becomes good if you do not rob yourself off the opportunity of learning from those that approach you for mentorship.

INTERVIEWER: In closing, have the mentorship relationships you've had encouraged or discouraged you from becoming a mentor?

P17: I don't know if sometimes as black people, with black tax⁸ we have an option. Whether you call it mentorship or kicking everyone on their backside to get on with it, and hold them accountable. Who knows but? But looking at my experience and all the people that have mentored me, I think it has inspired me, because I have seen the impact that it has had on me. We have a greater responsibility for family. Charity begins at home. I honestly cannot be out there mentoring the world and not doing the same at home, you know? And the reality is that the closer ones are often the most challenging. That's real. They're the most difficult compared strangers. But having said that, you cannot outsource family. It is what it is. So we have a huge responsibility. I find that I do a lot for my family, but also, I think it just goes with one's character, one's personality. I would also be very keen from the outcome of your studies as to what you will find in terms of the impact of personality types. Maybe that's not your question. I am just curious about the personality types, mentor types. How do different personality types impact whether a person can be a mentor or not. I'm very curious. It can't be that just because you have done something then you can become a mentor.

INTERVIEWER: That's interesting. There's actually a lady that I spoke to earlier in the week, she is 26 and she stated that she is very picky about who becomes her mentor. Just because you have achieved a certain level of success doesn't mean that you actually make a good mentor. I guess it speaks to what you are asking. Maybe you are giving me homework.

P17: It's another MPhil on its own, probably a psychology one. I know how it goes, as you peel the onion, it becomes more and more exciting. But stay within your golden thread. Stick to your golden thread.

⁸ Black tax refers to the financial support that black professionals in South Africa often provide to their families or communities, reflecting socio-economic responsibilities stemming from historical disparities.