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Mentoring as affective governmentality: Shame, (un)happiness and the (re)production of masculine leadership

ABSTRACT This article contributes to current discussions on the effectiveness of mentoring as a gender equality tool, but also focuses on the emotions and bodily (dis)comforts mentoring produces in addition to linguistic discourses, thus offering a novel take on how the tool operates. Drawing on a case study of a Danish mentoring program aimed at establishing the organizational space of leadership as more gender equal, the article demonstrates how, in producing shame and (un)happiness, mentoring (re)produces leadership as an organizational space dominated by masculine norms and work practices. The findings of the article support literature arguing that mentoring is an ineffective gender equality tool. However, the article does not entirely discard mentoring for this purpose, instead suggesting that scholars and practitioners look to literature on queered forms of mentoring for inspiration on how to use mentoring as a tool that carries the potential of truly promoting gender equality.

Keywords: leadership, gender equality, mentoring, governmentality, affect/emotions

INTRODUCTION Scholars today are focusing increasing attention on the use of mentoring as a gender equality tool (e.g., Durbin & Tomlinson, 2014; Dworkin et al., 2012; McDonald & Westphal, 2013; Bower 2012; Ramaswami et al., 2010, 2014; Block & Tietjen-Smith, 2016). However, its effectiveness in promoting gender equality in gendered organizations (Acker, 1990, 2006; Hearn, 1998) remains highly contested, with some scholars finding the tool beneficial (e.g., Leenders et al., 2019; Ghosh & Reio, 2013; Holmes, 2005) and others not (e.g., Daspher, 2019; Brabazon & Schulz, 2018; Devos, 2004, 2008). This article contributes to the ongoing discussion of this topic by asking a series of questions: How does the tool of mentoring operate? What roles do affect and emotions play in that operation? And how effective is mentoring when the roles of affect and emotions are considered?

A few contributions to this journal have already covered current scholars' various perspectives on whether mentoring promotes gender equality in gendered organizations. For example, Leenders et al. (2019) belong to a group of scholars arguing that mentoring has the potential to change the norms and work practices of gendered organizations and is therefore an effective gender equality tool (see also de Vries, 2010; de Vries and van den Brink, 2016; Ghosh & Reio, 2013). They contend that mentoring operates by producing linguistic discourses that give mentors insights into the structural obstacles to gendered minorities' equal representation and thereby enable such mentors to act on this new knowledge (de Vries, 2010; de Vries & van den Brink, 2016; Baugh & Fagenson-Eland, 2007; Ragins, 2016).

Daspher (2019) is among those who conversely argue that mentoring is an ineffective gender equality tool, although she agrees with the above group that mentoring operates through the production of linguistic discourses. Daspher and scholars like her maintain that the linguistic discourses mentoring produces provide knowledge on what behaviors make gendered minorities seen as right for or fitting in with gendered organizations. Consequently, mentoring also motivates gendered minorities to adopt specific right and/or fitting gendered behaviors that (re)produce the gendered norms and work practices of organizations, rather than behaviors that challenge these (see also Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Devos, 2004, 2008). The analytical findings of this article support the argument of the latter group of scholars. However, I have analyzed mentoring from the novel perspective of affect and emotions rather than through the linguistic discourse production on which the tool operates.

As such, the article contends that mentoring does not operate solely through linguistic discourse production, but rather equally through the production of emotions and bodily (dis)comforts. I begin by elaborating on the concept of governmentality, placing the literature that argues mentoring operates through linguistic discourse production within a theoretical framework of governmentality

studies. Second, I build a new theoretical framework, combining governmentality studies with feminist theories on affect and emotions. More specifically, I construct a shame/(un)happiness framework based on theories arguing that shame produces a bodily discomfort, and happiness an opposite bodily comfort, while the emotions also govern behaviors of turning away from and turning toward, respectively. As such, the framework allows me to analyze how mentoring governs gendered behaviors on different (im)material levels, all of which one must consider to achieve an understanding of the tool's full effects. Third, I present the case of a specific mentoring program in Denmark aimed at establishing a more equal gender balance within an organizational space dominated by masculine norms and work practices, namely that of leadership (Cook & Glass, 2013; Muhr, 2011; Liu et al., 2015). Lastly, I analyze the case in the context of the shame/(un)happiness framework, in this process finding that mentoring (re)produces the masculine norms and work practices of leadership by producing shame and (un)happiness. In addition to this main finding, I also find that (1) mentoring establishes leadership as a highly paradoxical (gendered) space to navigate; (2) the shame and (un)happiness produced by mentoring are co-constitutive; and (3) mentoring operates by subordinating mentees to social norms even as it endeavors to liberate them from these. I finish by suggesting that we look to literature on queered forms of mentoring for inspiration on how to use mentoring as an effective gender equality tool.

GOVERNMENTALITY AND LINGUISTIC DISCOURSES Mentoring is increasingly used to promote gender equality in organizations (e.g., Leenders et al., 2019; Ghosh & Reio, 2013; Snoeren et al., 2016; Baugh & Fagenson-Eland, 2007) and has gained particular popularity as a tool for advancing women's career in leadership (e.g., Devos, 2010; Brabazon & Schulz, 2018; Linehan & Scullion, 2008). The popularity of mentoring can be ascribed to its positive influence on the number of women who enter leadership (e.g., Dworkin et al., 2012; Ramaswami et al., 2010, 2014; Hilmer & Hilmer, 2006, 2007; Inzer & Crawford, 2005), as well as to the relative ease with which

organizations can implement and use the tool (see Colley, 2002; Kram, 1983, 1985; Ragins, 1989; Ragins & Cotton, 1991, 1999; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990). Organizations carry out mentoring programs by matching women with senior leaders, who then engage in personal conversations with the women to “provide [them] with access to relevant knowledge, networks and information to advance their careers” (Leenders et al., 2019, p. 3). Mentoring is thus a more or less self-running tool requiring little facilitation once introduced between a senior leader and a woman – a mentor and a mentee.

Because mentoring works through the elements of knowledge-sharing and conversation, scholars of varying disciplines have theorized the tool as a site of governmentality (see e.g., Odih, 2002; Rosén, 2011; Manathunga, 2007; Lindekilde, 2012, 2015; Devos 2004, 2008, 2010). Governmentality is a concept that concerns a form of power exercised not through external regulations and corporeal disciplining, but through productions of linguistic discourses (e.g., conversations, books, documents, etc.) that motivate individuals to govern their own behavior in specific ways (Foucault, 1982; Foucault, 1988; Foucault, 1991).

Governmentality scholars describe how discursive productions of knowledge give individuals insights into the behaviors required for them to become recognizable as right and/or fitting subjects, who can then benefit from the privileges attached to being such subjects (Rose, 1996, 1999; see also Dean, 2010). For instance, Foucault demonstrates in his work on subjectivity how the knowledge on sexuality provided by early medical books served as a device that enabled individuals “to question their own conduct, to watch over and give shape to it and to shape themselves as ethical subjects” (1992, p. 16). Hence, Foucault describes how the linguistic discourses produced by medical books governed individuals to self-govern toward particularly right and/or fitting (hetero)sexual behaviors that gave them access to privileges denied to individuals performing wrong and/or unfitting (homo)sexual behaviors (Foucault, 1992). Governmentality is thus a concept that explains the

governance of human behavior as a matter of producing linguistic discourses that make certain actions appear as more attractive than others and thereby subtly persuade individuals to adopt those actions.

Gender scholars who maintain that mentoring can be seen as a site of governmentality have not only argued that mentoring operates through productions of linguistic discourses but have also identified the knowledge that these linguistic discourses provide in regard to right and/or fitting behavior in leadership. Focusing on a mentoring program that aims at advancing women's leadership career, Devos (2004, 2008), for instance, has showed that the linguistic discourses regarding right and/or fitting leadership behavior produced by mentoring excludes motherhood while also promoting elements of a career outside the home, such as long working hours and a lesser focus on children and family obligations. Based on Devos' findings, one can thus conclude that mentoring produces linguistic discourses that present a (hegemonic) masculine (Peukert, 2018) behavior as right and/or fitting behavior in leadership.

Like Devos, Brabazon and Schulz (2018) have demonstrated how mentoring produces linguistic discourses that present a (hegemonic) masculine behavior as right and/or fitting in leadership. Analyzing a mentoring program aiming at creating a more equal gender balance in academic leadership, Brabazon and Schulz show how the linguistic discourses produced by mentoring center on the success indicators of "publication outputs in high impact journals, and winning competitive grants" (2018, p. 3), and that, although seemingly non-gendered, these indicators are highly gendered. This is the case, as women in academia tend to have more teaching and supervision responsibilities than tasks directly related to research, for which reason publication and grant search activities also better match a male than a female behavior (Brabazon & Schulz, 2018; see also Lu, 2018).

While supporting the findings of Devos and of Brabazon and Schulz, Daspher's (2019) research on mentoring introduces a further element. So, as in addition to showing how mentoring produces linguistic discourses that present a (hegemonic) masculine behavior as right and/or fitting behavior in leadership, she also determines that these discourses are produced because of a phenomenon termed "gender fatigue" (Kelan, 2009) and because mentors do not critically reflect on their gendered experiences with leadership. Focusing on a mentoring program in the events industry, Daspher thus shows masculine norms to be so entrenched in leadership that mentors cannot see how their masculine experiences are in fact gendered and that they therefore come to share masculine experiences in spite of intending to foster gender-inclusivity with their participation in mentoring.

Because mentoring produces linguistic discourses that present (hegemonic) masculine behaviors as right and/or fitting for leadership, mentoring is arguably a tool that governs individuals to self-govern toward (hegemonic) masculine behaviors in order to enter leadership. Mentoring can thus be seen as a tool that (re)produces leadership as a masculine organizational space rather than a tool that challenges the masculine norms and work practices of leadership. In the following sections, I elaborate on the (re)producing effects of mentoring, but nevertheless take a different approach to how mentoring governs individuals to self-govern, since I argue that mentoring operates through the production not only of linguistic discourses but also of emotions and bodily (dis)comforts. By arguing for a new focus on emotions and bodily (dis)comforts, I do not aim to discard the current literature focused on the power and governing potential of linguistic discourses in a mentoring context, but rather to acknowledge this important finding while contending that the power and governing potential of linguistic discourses are *also* contained in affect and emotions. Hence, to understand the full effects of mentoring we need to consider *both* linguistic discourses and affect and emotions.

A NEW FOCUS: GOVERNMENTALITY AND AFFECT The past decade has seen a rapidly growing interest in the role of affect in social research (e.g., Gregg & Seigworth, 2010; Clough, 2007), and scholars have shown renewed interest in understanding the governance of behavior through affect rather than through linguistic discourses (e.g., Fotaki et al., 2017; Pors, 2019; Staunæs & Pors, 2015; Blackman, 2012; Brennan, 2004). Working in the organizational context of the school, Bjerg and Staunæs (2011) have, for instance, showed, that although affect is often seen as taking an autonomous, indeterminate, and pre-discursive shape (e.g., Massumi, 2002; Thrift, 2000, 2004), it still serves the same function as linguistic discourses in moving and transforming the behaviors of young students. Building on Staunæs and Bjerg's (2011) argument, Dar and Ibrahim (2019) have similarly demonstrated how the evocation of bodily discomfort governs "Blackened" women toward silence in the "White academy" (p. 1242) while thus sustaining a racialized-gendered hierarchy in the academy.

Although the theories of affect presented above form the basis of this article's arguments, I have been primarily inspired by Sara Ahmed's work (2004a, 2004b, 2010; Schmitz & Ahmed, 2014) on affect. Like the above scholars, Ahmed argues that affect has a governing character, but she stands apart in her contention that affect should be neither separated from linguistic discourses nor perceived as a phenomenon that works in parallel to it (see also Hemmings, 2005; Wetherell, 2013). Rather, affect and linguistic discourses should be seen as inextricably entangled phenomena (Ahmed, 2004a, 2004b, 2010).

Because Ahmed sees affect and linguistic discourses as entangled, she works with the concepts of affect and emotions interchangeably, despite the fact that emotions are often considered as linguistically "arrested" affect (Staunæs, 2011, p. 233) and thus as contrasting what is described as pure, authentic affect (Massumi, 2002; Deleuze, 1997). Ahmed (2010, p. 230) writes:

I think that the distinction between affect/emotion can under-describe the work of emotions, which involve forms of intensity, bodily orientation, and direction that are not simply about “subjective content” or qualification of intensity. Emotions are not afterthoughts but shape how bodies are moved by the worlds they inhabit.

This view leads Ahmed to argue that emotions and emotional states are not produced or inhabited by the body as an autonomous and socially detached corpus. Rather, emotions and emotional states are evoked and shaped in the encounter and intra-action (Barad, 2007) between a body and a given discursively shaped object (Ahmed, 2010). Objects are understood broadly and as not only material matters, but also non-material ones, such as senses of value, practices, aspirations, and behaviors (Ahmed, 2010, p. 29).

Ahmed (2004a, 2010) contends that when a body encounters an object, it is already invested with a discursive meaning that governs the body’s social judgment of and thus emotional reaction to the object. The body never experiences the surrounding world as a *tabula rasa*; instead, social experiences will always be interpreted in relation to prior categorizations of emotions, while the body is always predisposed to rationally interpret certain physical states as particular emotional ones. The body *knows* that the physical state it reaches when standing in front of an aggressive mob should be categorized as fear rather than pleasure, as it similarly *knows* that when it cries at a wedding or childbirth its physical state comes under the joy rather than the sadness category.

Emotional states may be evoked in the encounter and intra-action between a body and a discursively shaped object, but this does not mean that the encounter alone can be seen as the “it” that evokes these emotional states, as a social context will always surround the encounter and co-shape its emotional outcome. According to Ahmed (2004a, 2004b), the body has embodied, historical experiences that precisely the social context surrounding the encounter between a body and an object triggers. Accordingly, an object is not fearsome or exciting, *per se*, but fearsome or exciting to

someone or *somebody* in a particular social context (Ahmed, 2004a). For example, the object of a snake might be amusing to an individual who experiences it safely trapped inside a glass terrarium, whereas the snake will seem dangerous to an individual experiencing it in the wild.

The shame/(un)happiness framework

Emotions do not have governing effects alone; they have *particular* governing effects. The emotion of shame, for example, has been theorized to govern individuals to self-govern towards turning away from objects (Tomkins, 1995; see also Bjerg & Staunæs, 2011), as shame provokes the uncomfortable bodily state of “sickness within the self” (Tomkins, 1995, p. 136), which individuals will attempt to escape by turning away from objects that co-evoked shame and turning toward alternative objects that can (re)establish bodily comfort. Bjerg and Staunæs (2011) write: “If the subject is to disengage himself from the shame, he must also disengage himself from the object or relation in which he has invested himself ... Shame makes the self *turn away* [emphasis added] from the object that triggered shame, but still keeps up the wish to maintain or re-establish the relation in order to *regain access to positive affect* [emphasis added]” (p. 146).

The above description shows that the negative emotion of shame is closely linked to positive emotions, understood as emotions that can (re)establish the bodily state of comfort that shame disturbs. According to Ahmed (2010), happiness is one such positive emotion. In her norm-critical work on the promise of happiness, Ahmed (2010) describes how the promise of happiness contrary to shame “*turns us toward* [emphasis added] objects” (p. 21) when she discusses the functions of promises of happiness. This governing character is generated by individuals’ drive to feel comfortable and thus tendency to navigate towards objects that promise to bring them the bodily comfort brought by happiness (Ahmed, 2010; see also Frey & Stutzer, 2002).

Indeed, the promise of happiness governs a turning toward behavior, but so does the promise of unhappiness, as it paradoxically also constitutes promises of happiness.

Through a queer genealogy, Ahmed (2010, pp. 88ff) demonstrates how throughout Western history queerness has been discursively shaped as a shameful object that brings unhappiness (hence the close connection between shame and (un)happiness) while also governing individuals to govern themselves toward the opposite object of heteronormativity in their quest for happiness (see also Sedgwick, 2003). As such, Ahmed uses her queer genealogy to demonstrate how investing an object with a promise of unhappiness simultaneously invests an opposite object with a promise of happiness, thus pointing to a double movement in and between these promises that underlines how promises of happiness and unhappiness can and should be read and interpreted through each other.

The intra-active movement between shame and (un)happiness – and thus the intra-action between the bodily (dis)comforts related to the two phenomena – seems to manifest itself in a particular governing shame/(un)happiness dynamic that motivates turning away from/turning toward behaviors. As Ahmed's examples of queerness and heteronormativity illustrate, the shame/(un)happiness dynamic is highly relevant for bringing insights into how normative and thus gendered behaviors are governed and (re)produced. Hence, after presenting the case of a Danish mentoring program aimed at creating a more equal gender balance in leadership, I analyze my empirical findings in the context of the shame/(un)happiness framework, thus demonstrating how mentoring oscillates between discursively shaping objects of differently gendered behaviors as either being shameful or bringing (un)happiness.

CASE DESCRIPTION AND METHODOLOGY My empirical case study involves a Danish mentoring program for young women aiming to enter leadership. Although Denmark is renowned for its ranking among the world's most gender-equal countries, this is not the case when it comes to leadership (e.g., Christensen & Muhr, 2019). Current figures from the OECD (2017) show that Denmark performs below not only the other Nordic countries but also the general OECD average, and this holds true for women in both public- and private-sector leadership. In Denmark women

make up only 26% of leadership, compared to 40% in Sweden, 38% in Iceland, 36% in Norway, 33% in Finland, and an OECD average of 31% (OECD, 2017).

The mentoring program was established in 2010 by a Danish trade union (Organization X) that represents professionals in the business and law sectors. All female union members in the early stages of their career may apply to participate in the program, and 160 women have participated so far. The program is intended to empower women to experience themselves as relevant for leadership and hence to make women see themselves as potential leaders that can challenge and change the masculine norms and work practices of leadership. As such, the program does not have an aim of “fixing the women” (Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Liff & Cameron, 1997) and train women in masculine competencies, but to establish all levels of Danish leadership as more gender-inclusive organizational spaces.

Acceptance to the mentoring program is competitive, with only 20 out of more than 100 applicants being enrolled annually (Organization X, 2016). All mentors in the program are required to be women leaders and are recruited from a wide variety of fields so that they can be suitably matched with mentees whose leadership ambitions differ. Mentors therefore represent leadership experience from both public and private organizations, and this experience ranges from middle to top management.

Once accepted, participants are allocated a personal mentor and attend four mandatory events where a woman keynote speaker is invited to share her personal experiences with leadership. A mentoring relationship usually runs for nine months and typically involves five or more meetings between a mentee and her mentor.

Data generation

I base the empirical case study on eight in-depth interviews (Brinkman & Kvale, 2018) – four done with mentors and four done with mentees. An additional interview was done with the program

coordinator, Charlotte, because as the program designer she could provide insights into the program aims and ambitions. As such, the interview samples are limited, though efforts were made to ensure that they accommodate a varied representation of mentors as well as mentees, as mentors and mentees were all chosen based on specific selection criteria.

Organization X contacted both the mentors and mentees to be interviewed, but the specific selection criteria were agreed on with me. A first criterion was that mentors had to represent both older and younger leaders, as age appears to influence how leaders are met and approached (Rosing & Jungmann, 2015), which may in turn impact the experience of leadership mentors pass on to mentees. Mentors further had to represent positions in both public and private organizations, a criterion intended to ensure that their leadership experience came from different fields. Lastly, mentors had to represent middle as well as top management, as the data should include experience from different types of leadership. See Table 1.

Table 1

Mentees were selected to represent different years of participation in the program, for which reason they were aged between 28 and 34 years. One (former) mentee had already entered leadership, two were in the process of positioning themselves as relevant for leadership, and one was finishing her master's studies while also working in an assistant position in government. See Table 2.

Table 2

All names in the article, including that of Organization X, are pseudonyms. I have further omitted detailed information about mentees, which was an express wish of mentees, as they found themselves in the sensitive position of trying to build and improve their leadership careers while fearing that some of the information shared with me might curtail this ambition.

Conversations between mentors and mentees are confidential due to the vulnerable character the conversations often take. For ethical reasons, I therefore decided not to ask for permission to be present during these conversations, instead conducting interviews where mentees in particular could discuss only the matters they felt comfortable sharing. Guided by a semi-structured interview guide, the interviews lasted between 54 and 82 minutes and focused on leadership experience as well as passed-on knowledge and experiences. All interviews were done face-to-face so I could observe interviewees' body language and bodily reactions in addition to linguistics.

To ensure variation in the generated data and to gain greater insights into the actions and effects of the mentoring program, I additionally generated qualitative data from Organization X's website, as well as from evaluation documents from the mentoring program. I read and weighted the supporting data in a way similar to the interview data, although interview data is the primary source for analysis in this article.

Data analysis

Interviews were digitally recorded with the explicit permission of the participants and then transcribed and translated verbatim. Interviews were done in Danish to allow participants to express themselves as fully and with as much nuance as possible. While generating the data, I performed the first step of an inductive qualitative content analysis to trace immediate themes and patterns (Stemler, 2001; Mayring, 2000). In the second and third steps of the qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), I searched more closely for key statements showing objects of gendered behaviors as well as elements of affect and emotions. The focus on gendered behaviors, affect, and emotions, seemed a relevant way of capturing gendered norms and work practices and thus the potential of mentoring to alter or challenge these specific norms and work practices. This is the case, as objects of gendered behavior co-evoking negative affect, as well as objects of gendered behavior co-evoking positive affect, govern the precise turning away from/turning toward behavior I aim to

analyze (see, e.g., Kantola et al., 2019). The three objects of gendered behaviors that I traced from the qualitative content analysis were *niceness*, *emotionality*, and *high priority of family*. In the following sections, I elaborate on these gendered behaviors and analyze the discursive shapings to which mentoring exposes them.

ANALYTICAL FINDINGS One of the first things the analysis of the different data revealed was that the mentoring in the mentoring program was performed in a highly affectively charged space, and that mentors as well as mentees invested a lot of affect and emotions in the mentoring. In the interviews a mentor, Ellie, stated:

You become very involved in your mentee and in making her succeed. I still follow some of my old mentees; it's funny to see how they get closer and closer to their aim. And you can't help but feel a little proud when they finally succeed.

Additionally, a mentee, Harper, said:

I just think – or I actually kind of knew – that leadership is right for me ... So, I was, of course, thrilled when I found out [that I had been accepted to the mentoring program], because finally things seemed to be taking off.

Zoe, a mentee, further stated:

I was, of course, happy when I was chosen for the program, I was proud ... I mean, I always knew that I wanted to be a leader, it's been, well, kind of a dream, I guess.

These quotes illustrate that the mentors were emotionally invested in their mentees and that happiness was produced among mentors when their mentees succeeded. Similarly, the quotes show that mentoring is shaped as a form of “happy object” (Ahmed, 2010, p. 21) and hence as an object that mentees turn toward to fulfil their hopes and dreams of becoming leaders. The immediate affect

and emotions produced by the mentoring were thus positive, eliciting pleasure among the program participants. In the following three sections, I delve more deeply into the mentoring's production of affect and emotions, focusing on the discursive shapings that the mentoring performed in regard to objects of gendered behaviors.

Niceness and the (gendered) paradox of leadership

The first object traced from the qualitative content analysis was *niceness*. Niceness is described as a feminine behavior, associated with the female body (e.g., Roseberry & Roos, 2016). As this section shows, the mentoring similarly associated the behavior of niceness with women, while also communicating that the behavior was shameful and one that mentees should avoid in order to make themselves relevant for leadership.

The first statement showing how the mentoring shames niceness was made by coordinator Charlotte:

And another thing is that they [mentees] should let go of their niceness. When they're in a forum, and if there's this task that needs to be done, and it's, like, "Who's taking this one on?", then they shouldn't just sit there and wait to be asked if they would be interested. They just need to be like: I got it! I've talked to so many of them [mentees], and they have a great potential, and their talent is obvious, but they're just sitting there waiting to be seen, and you don't have to do that, you need to go for it. And it's okay to steal from other people's food bowl, it doesn't matter ... If we could just get them to loosen the harness, these dear little ladies, then we would come a long way.

As seen above, Charlotte stated that mentees "should let go of their niceness," while also saying that mentees needed to be more assertive and pro-active to succeed in leadership. Further, Charlotte arguably shamed the polite behavior of "just sitting there waiting to be seen" by indicating that mentees were themselves guilty of not being a part of leadership, for they engaged in a kind of

behavior that prevented them from taking on tasks or even “steal[ing] [them] from other people’s food bowl.”

Throughout the interview Charlotte produced great care for the mentees. However, her choice of belittling words and a harsh tone of voice suggest that she was also slightly annoyed with the “dear little ladies,” who she thought had to demonstrate greater willpower by “loosen[ing] the harness” and “go for it.” The annoyance expressed by Charlotte shows that mentees in the mentoring program were met with not only positive emotions and affect, but also a negative and somewhat shaming attitude of not behaving in a right and/or fitting manner for leadership.

The following statement made by Ellie reinforces the shaming seen in Charlotte’s statement:

You should have a certain humility, but you shouldn’t be humble in a way that doesn’t promote yourself. That, they [mentees] need to learn, to bring themselves forward, to the front position, so they don’t just end up being the ones that carry the bags. You need to fight for it!

In this case, Ellie stated that mentees should have “a certain humility,” but she also said that mentees that did not “bring themselves forward, to the front position” would end up “carry[ing] the bags” for others, thus obtaining an inferior and likely shameful position in the organizational hierarchy.

Ellie produced not only shame but also anger. For example, when she exclaimed “You need to fight for it!” she banged her clenched fist on the table and her face maintained a stern look. The anger seemed slightly performed, but the red rash that broke out on Ellie’s neck when she banged her fist revealed that she was, in fact, negatively aroused by mentees that behaved too nicely in their quest for leadership. Ellie’s anger, like Charlotte’s annoyance, indicate that mentees in the mentoring program were met with a negative and somewhat shaming attitude of not behaving in a right and/or fitting manner for leadership.

In addition to producing shame and anger, Ellie's statement produced an interesting paradox that mentees will need to navigate in order to enter leadership. As such, Ellie stated that to become leaders, mentees "should have a certain humility," but she also said that mentees should perform this humility assertively to ensure that they brought "themselves forward, to the front position." Ellie thus stated that mentees should be nice and humble, but in a way that partly negates that very niceness and humility.

The paradoxical act of navigating leadership was similarly produced in a statement made by Riley, a mentor:

I mean you shouldn't bully anyone, but you need to fight for it. You shouldn't let yourself get hammered into place. I mean, it's fine to help other people to a certain extent, but don't be an underdog [wags her finger to indicate a "no"].

In this instance, Riley stated that mentees wanting to enter leadership could help others, but only to an extent that did not leave them in the humiliating position of "underdog." Hence, Riley was saying that mentees should behave nicely, but in a manner that in fact compromised behaving nicely.

The above statements show how mentoring in the mentoring program discursively shaped the object of a feminine nice behavior as shameful in a social context of leadership. As such, the mentoring constituted niceness as an object that mentees would self-govern away from, both to avoid bodily discomfort and to enter leadership. Further, the statements reveal that mentoring seems to establish leadership as a paradoxical (gendered) space to navigate for mentees. Thus, according to mentors, mentees should behave nicely to enter leadership, but not too nicely – in other words, mentees should at once behave nicely and not nicely to make themselves relevant for leadership.

Emotionality and the co-constitutive character of shame/(un)happiness

The second object traced from the qualitative content analysis was *emotionality*, which, like the object of niceness, is labeled as a feminine behavior, associated with the female body (e.g., Roseberry & Roos, 2015; see also Gherardi & Poggio, 2001). As in the previous section, in this next section I analyze how mentoring in the mentoring program communicates about emotionality as a shameful behavior that mentees should eschew in order to enter leadership. I further analyze how shame appears to intra-act with (un)happiness, and thus how the two phenomena can be seen as co-constitutive of each other.

Evelyn, a mentor, made the following statement showing a shaming of emotionality:

I think that I'm a very rational person, so when I'm at work, I turn on, I mean then it's the rational [Evelyn] that's at work. So that thing about feeling, I really don't do that a lot when I ... [pauses], I mean of course, I'm not totally numb, but, I mean, it's just the rational part of me that takes over when I'm at work. And I think that it's an advantage, because then you avoid going into a form of behavior that isn't appropriate, and that just ... You need to keep your dignity, if you become too emotional then you just become too vulnerable.

Evelyn stated that she considered her own leadership to be based on a rational approach and that rationality is an important quality in a leader. As such, she said that "that thing about feeling" was an inappropriate behavior because being over-emotional would prevent you from "keep[ing] your dignity." The word "dignity" is key in revealing Evelyn's shaming of emotionality, as losing dignity is described as the equivalent of being humiliated and enduring the bodily discomfort of humiliation and shame (Tomkins, 1995, p. 133-136).

The shaming seen in Evelyn's statement is reflected in this statement by Ava, a mentee:

I've talked to my mentor about how you handle these difficult things. I mean things such as letting people go, telling them that their work isn't sufficient, all those things. And she told me

that once when she was a young leader, like, very young and inexperienced, she had been in a situation where she had to let an employee go. But then she told me how she had been so affected by the whole thing that she couldn't help but to shed a tear. And she had felt, well, kind of embarrassed, because you don't do that, you need to be in control. You need to be professional; you need to show your employees that they can trust you, that you're doing the right thing.

Ava stated that being “affected” in leadership was “embarrass[sing]” and thus something that would make one feel that way. Her statement thus compares an emotional behavior to a shameful behavior, while also implying that an emotional behavior signals a lack of the “professional[ism]” required to be a part of leadership.

Ava's statement arguably added further shame to emotionality by connecting an emotional behavior to “a young leader, like really young and inexperienced.” So, as the connection suggests that an emotional behavior is not something in which experienced leaders with “professional” leadership skills engage. Only young and inexperienced leaders would be excused to “shed a tear” or fail to “be in control.”

Although shame appears to dominate Ava's statement, on closer examination, shame cannot be seen as disentangled from (un)happiness, even though the emotions govern opposite behaviors. Ava's statement thus demonstrates how avoiding shame could also bring happiness, for avoiding the shameful behavior of being emotional would help fulfil the hopes and dreams of becoming a leader that people can “trust” to do “the right thing.”

Ellie's statement also indicates that shame and (un)happiness – and their related productions of bodily discomforts and comforts – co-constitute each other:

You cannot be emotionally engaged, because then you cannot manage your job. It's not fun to fire people, but it can be necessary because of cuts, or because they don't perform, and then I have to do it in the best possible way. And that requires that I'm professional. If I sit down and cry with the other person, then I'm not helping that other person, the only thing that will happen is that afterwards, the other person will be like, "What the hell just happened?" And then he will call me unprofessional. If I want to do my work right, then I have to park the personal – it can be both sympathies and antipathies – and be like, "I just need to do this."

Like Ava, Ellie shamed emotionality by stating that it was a behavior that would make people judge someone as "unprofessional," and by presenting emotionality in leadership as a behavior that would make mentees appear inappropriate and as not behaving "right." When viewed against the notes I took during the interview, Ellie's shaming assumes an interesting shape. In my notes I observed how Ellie "lean[ed] back in her chair as if making herself more comfortable" when she communicated about herself as not being emotionally engaged in actions like letting people go. As such, the notes reveal how Ellie seemed to find comfort when she distanced herself from a behavior that produced discomfort, while Ellie's behavior also physically manifested how the avoidance of a shameful behavior equated with a bodily comfort associated with happiness.

From the above statements, one can see that mentoring in the mentoring program discursively shaped the object of feminine emotional behavior as shameful, while also constituting emotionality as an object that mentees would self-govern away from in a social context of leadership. The statements further show how shame and (un)happiness, despite governing opposite behaviors of turning away from and turning toward, appear to co-constitute each other in a dynamic intra-action. As such, one can infer from the statements that the avoidance of uncomfortable shameful behavior either leads to a happy fulfilment of hopes and dreams of leadership or to behaviors that produce a bodily comfort linked to happiness.

Priority of family and subordination to social norms

The third and last object traced from the qualitative content analysis was *high priority of family*, which, like the other two traced objects, has been referred to as a feminine behavior, associated with the female body (e.g., Raddon, 2002). Still, as the mentors' and mentees' communication about this object differed from the communication on niceness and emotionality, the analysis in this section has a focus that differs from that of the other two sections. In this section I thus analyze how mentoring in the mentoring program invests the object of high priority of family with a promise of unhappiness while simultaneously investing a promise of happiness in an opposite (hegemonic) masculine life of prioritizing a career outside the home (Peukert, 2018).

Harper, a mentee, made the below statement showing how a life where family is a high priority was invested with a promise of unhappiness by mentoring. Harper, who had become a mother a few years before the interview, was visibly distressed when sharing her family's routines. I read her discomfort as a dissatisfaction with her current way of practicing parenthood in tandem with an ambitious career as a soon-to-be middle manager in a prestigious ministry. However, Harper stated:

I mean, I don't think ... I'm not a better mother because I pick up my child at 3:00 p.m., it's not making me happy, and it doesn't make my son happy either. I think that if I could see that he was obviously happy when I picked him up at 3 o'clock, then ... But he just gets annoyed. [Pauses] I mean there are some of my girlfriends, they're like, they want part-time jobs, and I'm, like, good for you, but I would be bored as hell! And it's really nice to know from other people [keynote speakers] that it's normal to feel that way.

In this instance, Harper stated that the women leaders delivering keynotes at the mandatory events of the mentoring program communicated about a life where family has high priority as not bringing happiness. This came to light when Harper said that picking up her son early from kindergarten was "not making [her] happy" and "it doesn't make [her] son happy either" while also pointing to this

attitude as being endorsed by the keynote speakers, who expressed that “it’s normal to feel that way.” Harper further noted that the keynote speakers confirmed that finding “part-time jobs ... bor[ing] as hell!” was “normal,” which settles that prioritizing family higher than work leads to a life with less fun and happiness than a life prioritizing work.

Similarly to Harper, Evelyn stated:

Obviously, you can’t pick up your child every day at 2:00 p.m. if you have a job as a leader. I mean, you need to not do that. And then you need to be, like, that’s fine and the children are fine where they are. And the children will also benefit from having some time off from their parents. I’ve told my mentees that I think that it’s very important that children have the right to have some space, and that they’re allowed to be humans and not just fulfil a need of the parents. Because children very easily come to do that. If you don’t go to work – just to say it a little caricatured – then you would be a stay-at-home-mom, and, well, then what’s your *raison d’être*? It’s to be a mother to these children, and if these children are suddenly not there, then ...

In this case, Evelyn stated that if mentees primarily focused on family, rather than a career outside the home, they would eventually lose their “*raison d’être*,” or reason for being. Evelyn thus went on to say that children were the *raison d’être* of “stay-at-home-mom[s],” and since children at some point leave home, “stay-at-home-mom[s]” would one day also lose their reason for being. Evelyn’s statement might have been exaggerated, or as Evelyn herself put it “caricatured,” but it nevertheless illustrates how Evelyn sees prioritizing a career outside the home as a necessity for a long happy life.

Evelyn not only stated that a high priority of family would lead to an unhappy life for mentees, but she also indicated that it would lead to an unhappy life for mentees’ children. She said she thought it “very important that children have the right to have some space, and that they’re allowed to be

humans,” thereby indicating that prioritizing children too high violates children’s right to human freedom.

Evelyn’s statement not only invests a promise of unhappiness in a life where family has high priority, but also adds an interesting dimension to the operation of mentoring. Accordingly, her statement suggests that despite attempting to operate as a tool that liberates mentees from social norms, mentoring operates as a tool of oppression, something that make mentees subordinate to (alternative) social norms. Evelyn’s statement shows how mentoring, far from providing mentees with guidance on how to navigate family life in ways that could be aligned with leadership, instead imposes restrictions that limit mentees from making time spent with their children a higher priority than work. Evelyn’s statement thus demonstrates how mentoring gives this explanation to mentees: “Obviously, you can’t pick up your child every day at 2:00 p.m. if you have a job as a leader. I mean, you need to not do that.” The statement underlines that picking up children early is not something that mentees *should not* do, but something they *need not* to do.

If one returns to Harper’s statement, it seems to support the notion that mentoring works through restrictions rather than liberation. As such, Harper’s visible discomfort when communicating about putting work before picking up her son early signals that this choice was not necessarily a matter of Harper following her own personal desires as much as one of following the social norms set up for leadership.

The next and last statement illustrating a restricting quality of mentoring was made by Mary, a mentor:

You have to be very much aware of not subordinating yourself to the idea other people have about the life that’s right and wrong for you. You won’t become the perfect mother – or the perfect father – who will show up at all the parent meetings, and who shows up with freshly

baked bread, and who can just show up at 11 Friday morning, because the school or kindergarten is like “you have to do that.”

In this statement Mary was communicating about a life where family has a high priority as a life based on social subordination rather than personal desires. As such, Mary stated that “showing up at all parent meetings” or “show[ing] up at 11 Friday morning” is something “the school or kindergarten” demand more than something the individual desires. The statement of Mary further indicates that mentoring restricts mentees from living a life as “the perfect mother – or the perfect father” and thus from prioritizing their children above work. Indeed, Mary said: “You have to be very much aware of not subordinating yourself to the idea that other people have about the life that’s right and wrong for you.” As such, she communicated to mentees that a life with a high priority of family is one they have to avoid subordinating themselves to because it is “wrong” and not “right.”

The above statements show how mentoring in the mentoring program discursively shaped the object of making family a high priority as one that brings unhappiness in a social context of leadership, while simultaneously shaping a contrary object of prioritizing a career outside the home as bringing happiness. Hence, it can also be argued that the mentoring discursively shaped a life of prioritizing family high in a way that would govern mentees to self-govern away from it and toward another form of life prioritizing a career outside the home higher. The statements further suggest that mentoring, despite attempting to operate as a tool that liberates mentees from social norms related to family life, similarly operates through restrictions that govern mentees to subordinate themselves to (alternative) social norms related to leadership.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION Current literature on mentoring as a gender equality tool have an isolated focus on the tool as operating through the production of linguistic discourses (e.g., Daspher, 2019; Devos, 2004; Brabazon & Schulz, 2018). In this article I have taken a different

approach, arguing that mentoring does not operate solely through productions of linguistic discourses, but equally operates through productions of emotions and bodily (dis)comforts. As such, I have sought to demonstrate how mentoring produces a range of emotions and bodily (dis)comforts that govern a behavior of turning away from/turning toward specific objects of gendered behaviors among mentees. In the following, I expand on the developments and findings of this article and comment on the relevance and usefulness they might hold in both current and future settings.

Broadening the shame/(un)happiness framework

To analyze the specific roles affect and emotions play in the operation of mentoring, I have constructed a new shame/(un)happiness framework. The framework is based on theories arguing that shame produces a bodily discomfort, and happiness an opposite bodily comfort, while the emotions govern behaviors of turning away from and turning toward, respectively. The unique governing characteristics of shame and (un)happiness are found in individuals' desire to feel bodily comfort and thus their avoidance of (shameful) behaviors that make them feel bodily discomfort and a striving for (happy) behaviors that bring bodily comfort.

The findings of the article point to a need for us to start analyzing gender equality tools by focusing on affect and emotions in addition to linguistic discourses in order to understand the full effects of these tools. Since the shame/(un)happiness framework specifically focuses on the emotions of shame and (un)happiness, its focus might be too narrow for analyzing gender equality tools at large. The framework can, however, be expanded to a more general negative/positive affect framework, as it builds on a notion of shame and (un)happiness as phenomena that govern through productions of bodily (dis)comforts, and hence on a notion of shame and (un)happiness as phenomena that condense precisely negative and positive affect in the form of specific emotions. If the shame/(un)happiness framework was broadened to a negative/positive affect framework, it would enable us to analyze the affective and emotional productions of a broader range of gender equality tools than just mentoring.

As such, the negative/positive affect framework could make a valuable contribution to (further) analyses of the effects and hence (in)effectiveness of gender equality tools.

A queered form of mentoring: Reverse mentoring

In addition to the main finding that mentoring operates through a production of emotions and bodily (dis)comforts, another finding is that mentoring governs by way of (re)producing masculine norms and work practices of leadership. The article has thus demonstrated how mentoring shames objects of feminine behavior in a social context of leadership, while also investing an object of (hegemonic) masculine behavior with a promise of happiness. The article has further shown that (1) mentoring establishes leadership as a highly paradoxical (gendered) space to navigate; (2) the shame and (un)happiness produced by mentoring are co-constitutive; and (3) mentoring operates by subordinating women to social norms, despite aiming to liberate them from such. The findings of the article support literature arguing that mentoring is an ineffective gender equality tool (e.g., Daspher, 2019; Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Devos, 2004, 2008; Brabazon & Schulz, 2018) while also demonstrating how mentoring operates on different (im)material levels, all of which require consideration for us to understand the (in)effectiveness and thus (new) potentials of mentoring.

Although mentoring is found here to be an ineffective gender equality tool, it should not be fully discarded. Rather, I suggest that we look to literature on *reverse mentoring* for insights into how mentoring can be used as a more effective gender equality tool. To this end, I use the remainder of the article to briefly introduce literature on reverse mentoring and to explain the potential of this queered form of mentoring in a gender equality context.

Gender inequality is seen as a matter of discriminating structures that hinder both women and men in performing the given gendered behaviors they prefer. These structures occur in societal settings (e.g., Langton & Konrad, 1998; Adamson, 2014) as well as in organizational ones (e.g., Bryant & Garnham, 2014; Hughes et al., 2017). Accordingly, if the reason for gender inequality can be found

in discriminating structures, then the solution to it must lie in structural changes. As such, using mentoring as a tool that operates on a structural level, instead of on the level of the singular mentee, could make mentoring a more effective tool (see Leenders et al., 2019).

Human resource studies have long focused on reverse mentoring as a relevant tool for motivating structural changes. It is a tool that queers the role of mentors and mentees, thus placing the mentor of traditional mentor relationships in the learning role of the mentee (Murphy, 2012; Chaudhuri & Ghosh, 2012; Chen, 2013; Leh, 2005). In this way, reverse mentoring is a tool that mobilizes (affective) knowledge-sharing in the same way as conventional mentoring does. However, the (affective) knowledge-sharing goes from bottom (mentee) to top (mentor) instead of from top to bottom.

Literature on reverse mentoring primarily focuses on intergenerational knowledge-sharing. For example, Murphy (2012) has argued that reverse mentoring is a useful tool for updating older employees on new technological developments, and Chaudhuri and Ghosh (2012) have demonstrated how reverse mentoring is a tool that helps inform baby boomers of the innovative developments that constitute the everyday life of younger millennials. Murphy (2012) and Chaudhuri and Ghosh (2012) have therefore also pointed to reverse mentoring as a relevant tool for overcoming generational clefs and misunderstandings that can create organizational tensions.

Although literature on reverse mentoring primarily focuses on intergenerational knowledge-sharing, I argue that reverse mentoring could also be used for gendered (affective) knowledge-sharing. Then, we could design mentoring programs where “mentees” share their knowledge on the structural discrimination they face in regard, for example, to entering leadership with “mentors”, thus perhaps influencing “mentors” to disrupt the relevant discriminating structures (see Leenders et al., 2019). As such, through meetings with “mentees,” “mentors” would be able to see how the low representation

of women in leadership is often not a matter of individual lack and incompetence but of structural discrimination.

Concluding remarks

The findings of this article suggest that analyses of gender equality tools also focused on affect and emotions are needed if we are to understand the full effects and thus (in)effectiveness of such tools. An analysis of the gender equality tool of mentoring focused on affect and emotions reveals that the tool is ineffective and (re)produces gendered norms and work practices. However, this finding does not mean the tool should be fully discarded. Rather, this article suggests that we look to queered forms of mentoring, namely reverse mentoring, for ideas on how to use mentoring as an effective gender equality tool. However, this suggestion calls for further research, raising critical questions such as: What roles do affect and emotions play in the operations of reverse mentoring? How is power at play between “mentors” and “mentees” in reverse mentoring? Why do women mentors (re)produce masculine norms and work practices, when they presumably have first-hand knowledge regarding discriminating gendered structures? And how can this pattern be changed? Without answers to these questions, we might risk using reverse mentoring to (re)produce the same gendered norms and work practices as conventional mentoring does. Hence, more research on different forms of mentoring is needed before we fully praise or discard the tool.

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Table 1 Overview of interviewed mentors

Mentor	Age	Professional field	Level of leadership	Leadership experience	Mentor experience	Family / children
Ellie	64	Government (public org.)	Top Management	23 years	6 years	Yes/Yes
Riley	52	Finance (private org.)	Top Management	15 years	5 years	Yes/Yes
Mary	51	Consultancy (public org.)	Middle Management	9 years	4 years	Yes/No
Evelyn	42	Law (private org.)	Top Management	6 years	4 years	Yes/Yes

Table 2 Overview of interviewed mentees

Mentee	Age	Professional field	Family / Children
Zoe	32	Consultancy (private org.)	Yes/No
Harper	34	Government (public org.)	Yes/Yes
Ava	28	Master's student	No/No
Hettie	33	Policy (public org.)	Yes/No