Developmental Community

The Three Essential Communities for a Healthy Society and Nation
Robert Jahner

"In our African Language we say "a person is a person through other persons". I would not know how to be a human at all except I learned this from other human beings. We are made for a delicate network of relationships of interdependence. We are meant to complement each other. All kinds of things go horribly wrong when we break that fundamental law of our being".

The Words of Archbishop Desmond TuTu

"True integration will be achieved by true neighbors who are willingly obedient to unenforceable obligations."
Martin Luther King



"Change is" for the frosted rose

A nation that considers every investment and significant decision it makes against a priority set that supports these three developmental communities will thrive. These three communities are not just good ideas, but they are developmental patterns that govern the growth of all human beings. These communities are impervious to politics, philosophy, therapy, money and influence. They simply are and a nation, organization, business or family that ignores these communities and what they need to operate ignores them at their peril. Archbishop Desmond TuTu knew what he was talking about. Building a healthy society around these communities is what MLK was talking about when he articulated the role of "unenforceable obligations". They may be unenforceable, but they are perfect for aspirational.

The Three Developmental Communities

A healthy individual in a healthy community unfolds more like a waltz in three quarter time track. Nurturance, Vocation and Mentors are our three communities working to build the whole person. Sooner or later every institution you can think of will be an expression of one or more of these basic building block communities. Parents, teachers, managers, human service volunteers, churches and mental health professionals can find guidance in applying the understanding of these three interconnected communities. You, as an individual may find this model to be a way to inventory your own social assets and help your children build their own stronger support. Let's start at the beginning: The Nurturance Community.

I. THE NURTURANCE COMMUNITY

The Nurturance Community, represents a core of nurturing and sustaining relationships supporting you from the beginning and throughout your life. These critical nurturance relationships are the foundation that have made it possible for you to initially physically survive and subsequently thrive on life's journey. As a western culture we seem to be rediscovering what has always been known across time and globe. Health is built on the strength of these first relationships. These nurturance relationships must support all human children as they move and develop from dependence into the realms of interdependence. The human developmental process demands everyone draw on the benefits of nurturance relationships with a circadian regularity or face the possibility of failure to thrive. This absolute and lifelong dependence on a specific kind of relationship shapes human culture, enterprise, and behavior in every dimension of life and vocation. The Nurturance Relationship is defined by these central characteristics:

1. **Bonded and Non-Conditional**
2. **Outside of Time**
3. **Sustained through Affection**
4. **Grieved at loss.**

1. Bonded and Non-Conditional

The absolute and long-term vulnerability of the human infant places an extraordinary importance on the initial bonds he or she has with mother and or the first community of caretakers. The infant bond must be strong enough to hold the caretaker and child in a focus of nurturing for an extended period at great personal sacrifice to the caretaker. Bond, in this model, is an operative force that works at the sufferance of both infant and caretaker. This "life and death" nature of the infant's need for certain levels of attention and safety is continuous for years, and in that period the individual caretakers will encounter conflicts between their own system of personal needs and those of the ever-needy infant. The birth of the Nurturance Community and its intensely unique strength originates out of this universal, cultural, and biological necessity. Regardless of who provides the caretaking, the network of care must be seamless or, depending on the nature of the rupture, damage up to catastrophic may be done to the child's emerging patterns of belief and trust. The effects of this damage to the primal belief system will find expression throughout the child's future life. For this reason, the needs of the child must be met by a sustained network of caregivers. Most importantly these caregivers must be able to consciously accommodate each other's needs and conditions while caring for this child. The members of the Nurturance Community must operate at deep levels of intimacy not only with the child, but with each other. The experience for the child must be a community that will not abandon, condemn, or judge beyond the reasonable rituals of training and requirements of safety. The health of any society's culture and future is measured by the strength of its nurturance networks. A successful childhood immeasurably increases your capacity as an adult to enter with trust into bonded friendships, relationships, marriage, and enterprise.

Part of your thriving is maintaining a continuous central ring of nurturance throughout the productive life. It is this core community that provides the anchoring balance for the storms and tribulations of the vocational relationships found in the next ring of relationship (Vocational Community). The impressive social service network of our culture devotes its huge energy and resources largely to those individuals who through accident, misfortune, biology, or neglect, have had breaks in nurturance.

2. Outside of Time

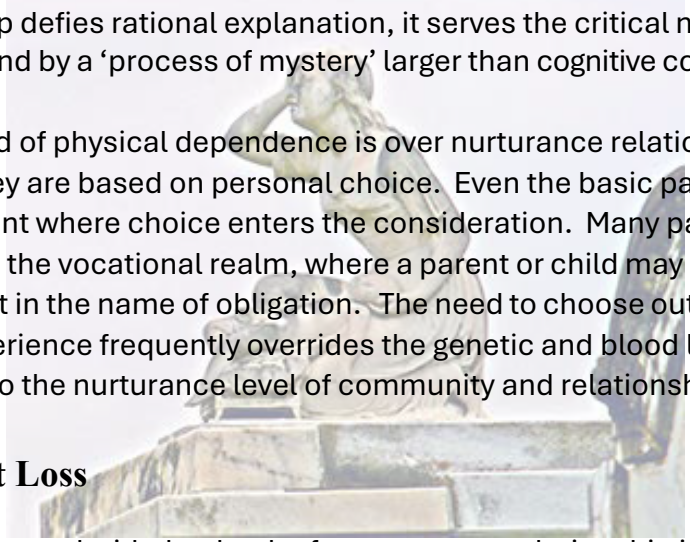
The nurturance community operates outside of time. Time is a learned concept. Time seems to be an aspect of human consciousness more needed to manage the affairs of Vocational Community. Nurturance relationships seem to fill the need of both child and adult for regular encounters with "timelessness" in human relationship. Perhaps the word rhythm more accurately reflects the flow of nurturance relationships. The infant

expresses need and receives gratification more out an internal rhythm than “by the clock”. Marriage vows, friendships, and certain commitments are made in Nurturance Communities and very frequently those vows are characterized by timeless commitment language such as; “forever after,” “till death do us part” or similar phrasing. As the infant and elder represent the human experience either entering life from a timeless place or exiting life toward a timeless state, it seems again part of the necessary nurturance rhythm of the human is to encounter relationships which are not always defined by the limitations of time.

3. Sustained Through Affection

One of the mysteries of life is how people love people who, to members of the community outside the nurturance ring, appear to be unlovable. Why certain relatives or friends connect with a person and “stay the course of a lifetime” goes beyond objective analysis and control. There exist no definitive criteria around which these connections occur. While it is doubtful this thing called codependence could ever be completely absent from any relationship, in terms of determining the difference between a grossly co-dependent relationship and a Nurturance relationship, the co-dependent relationship reveals itself objectively in terms of one or both parties having points of absolute dependence. Nurturance relationships are, on balance, more supportive than transactional. The participants of nurturance relationships are capable of sacrifice for one another. This unique level of relationship defies conventional wisdom and explanation. Nurturance relationships are the wellspring of inspiration that fuel artistic and creative expression. The volatility and vitality of this relationship is its strength and weakness. Simply because this relationship defies rational explanation, it serves the critical need for humans to be connected to and by a ‘process of mystery’ larger than cognitive comprehension.

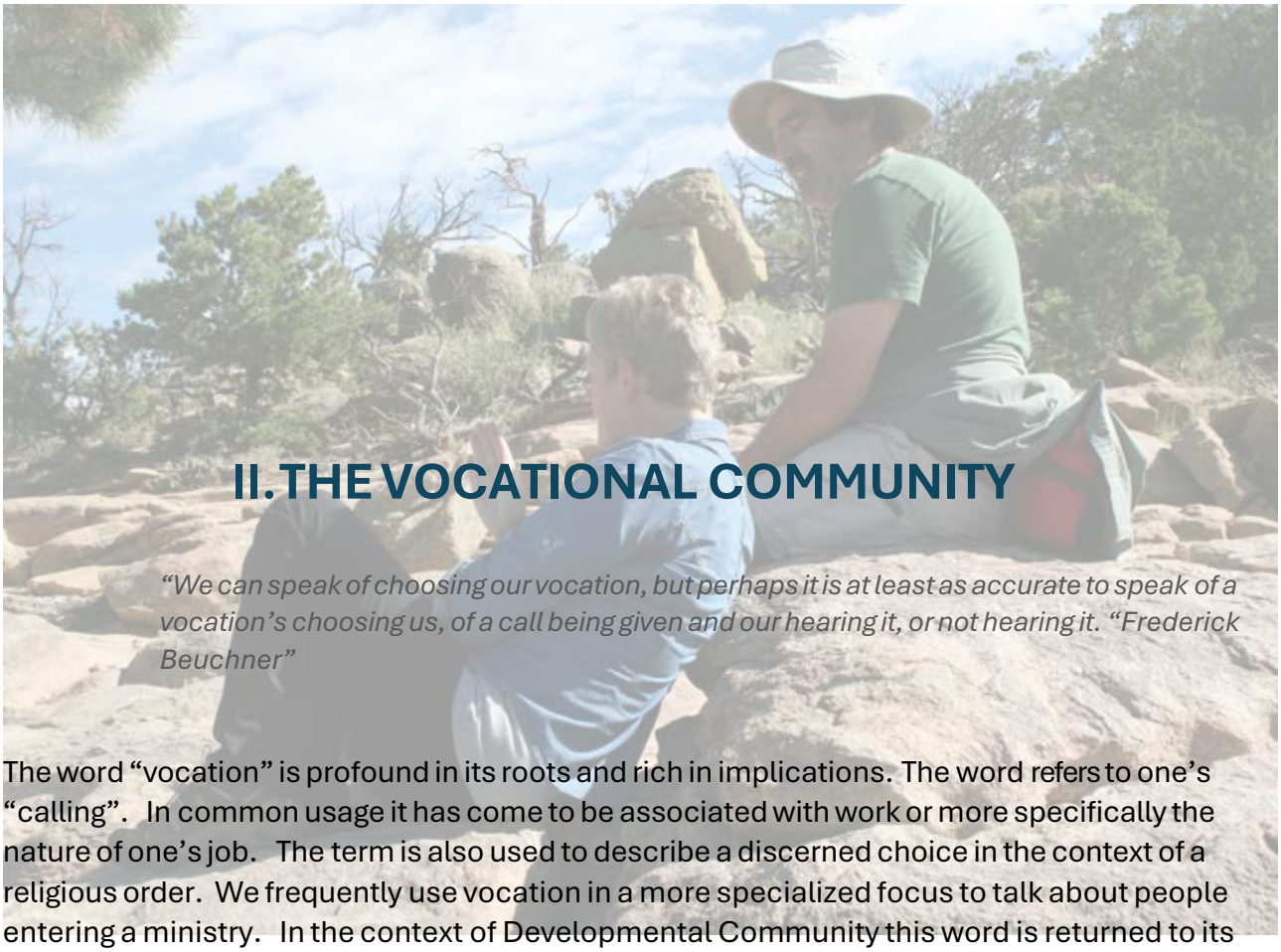
Once the period of physical dependence is over nurturance relationships evolve to the point where they are based on personal choice. Even the basic parent child relationship can reach a point where choice enters the consideration. Many parent/child relationships slip quietly into the vocational realm, where a parent or child may simply objectively provide support in the name of obligation. The need to choose out the authority of one’s unique life experience frequently overrides the genetic and blood lines, and this lends a kind of vitality to the nurturance level of community and relationship.



4. Grieved At Loss

The grief experienced with the death of a nurturance relationship is often a deep, acutely painful change experience for the survivor. We sometimes only discover the depth of the relationship after that person dies or is permanently separated from us. These losses and the subsequent grief are for some people the way in which they consciously discover that their lost friend or relative was uniquely important in their lives.

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II. THE VOCATIONAL COMMUNITY

"We can speak of choosing our vocation, but perhaps it is at least as accurate to speak of a vocation's choosing us, of a call being given and our hearing it, or not hearing it. "Frederick Beuchner"

The word "vocation" is profound in its roots and rich in implications. The word refers to one's "calling". In common usage it has come to be associated with work or more specifically the nature of one's job. The term is also used to describe a discerned choice in the context of a religious order. We frequently use vocation in a more specialized focus to talk about people entering a ministry. In the context of Developmental Community this word is returned to its original breadth and scope. Vocation refers to a component of human development that requires the movement of a person's individual spirit and energy to enter community and public expression. Vocation is a universal energy that works through every human being. Vocation moves what is inside us out into this world as expression. While this form of expression most often occurs in the context of a person's work, every time a story is told, a picture taken, an apron sewn, bread baked, guitar strummed, drumbeat, car driven and onward across the vast range of human activity, the energy of vocation is expressed. Each human being, regardless of gift, must deal with an internal requirement imprinted in their nature to express. The forms of expression are as infinite as are the humans themselves. If the role of the nurturance community is to support a stable, positive, belief system out of which a person operates, the vocational community exists to provide a manageable arena or discipline for the potent force of personal vocation. The child begins in the context of the first

family to practice expressions of unique vocation. That practice expands into school, church, and extended family. The general developmental movement is again moving from the safe familiar of nurturance relationships ever outward to the exciting, challenging unfamiliar. Whether the movement outward is perceived by the individual as an "exciting journey towards adventure" or a "terrifying excursion away from safety" has a great deal to do with the subjective and primarily unconscious elements of his or her belief systems laid down in Nurturance Community. The Vocational Communities and relationships distinguish themselves qualitatively from the nurturance relationships. In a sense, vocation offers life its scope and range while nurturance offers depth, meaning, and stability. Those who work with people professionally or in a management, supervisory capacity must have, at some level, an awareness of these distinctions or face profound frustration. A deep, intuitive, understanding of these two levels of relationship will allow the leader to achieve an organizational balance that is long lasting, profoundly stable, and finally surprisingly productive. And productivity is the reason for vocational community.

The Vocational Community relationships are recognized by these central characteristics:

1. **Unbonded, conditional, relationships.**
2. **Time-defined commitments.**
3. **Pragmatic and rational.**
4. **Ending not subject to deep grief.**

1. Unbonded Conditional Relationships

A person who has reached maturity and adulthood will find him or herself moving through several vocational relationships at any given point in life as well as throughout life. These are the butcher, baker, candlestick maker relationships. These are also the classmates at school who, remembered as friendly, are not life's sustaining friends. These are also your many teachers who perhaps know you by name, but each year as you move on, they accept another wave of students in their role as teachers. These are the coworkers who may spend thirty years with you, at your side fighting the good fight for the organization, but upon retirement they disappear out of your life. Remarkably in these vocational relationships, for all the apparent intensity of the working relationship and given the sheer quantity of time spent together, the grief cycle upon separation is very often a shallow cut if it is felt at all. We all probably are aware of the unfortunate occurrence of the person who retires and dies within months out of a sense of loss and uselessness. In this model the deep sense of loss is not necessarily over the loss of vocational community, but from the sudden awareness of the inadequacy of one's Nurturance Community. It is not uncommon, and to some degree universal, to discover after years of intense personal investment in your work realm that your coworkers can get along just fine without you. The camaraderie was meaningful, but not essential in the same way as in the Nurturance Communities. Still the tendency to blend your

sense of nurturance with your vocational relationships can result in an imbalance or an unhealthy dependence on the vocational community. In the more extreme expression, a person can neglect and lose the inner ring of relationships to the larger work community. The vocational expression is a lifelong need and the sudden termination of a vocational range of expression can disrupt and injure the individual regardless of age depending on their community "balance". In some ways we are indeed 'human being/doings'. Vocational relationships are purposeful in nature. The purpose is typically in the language shared by the relaters. Conditionality is an ethic. At the broad level, the language of this community defines common mission. Within the context of mission, the social contract defines the strategy of the purpose in terms of measurable goals and accountable criteria. The strategy invariably strives to accomplish the vision of mission statement. In Vocational Community, the mission is primary and people in the relationship are subordinate to the mission. This may sound like large corporate culture because the baker down on the corner doesn't typically publish a mission statement and evaluation criteria. In fact, the successful baker and the corporate president have much in common. If one were to sit and listen to that baker what you would eventually hear is the commitment to the baking of bread that tastes good and sells. The amount of the sales and a steady stream of satisfied customers is the built-in scale of evaluation. When the baker sends the lazy apprentice packing, the baker is not absolutely consigning that person to alienation and trauma, but rather to another vocational pursuit. This "portability" is a feature of vocational community. The vocational relationships are the relationships that introduce creative fluidity in the workings of society that would not be possible if there were only pure nurturance relationships. The bond that holds the vulnerable and the caretaker in a stable configuration is balanced by the this next level of developmental relationship that has a flexible, ethical, and legal standard of behavior through which people can move and operate rationally. The rational mind rather than the bonded heart is the primary operator.

2. TIME DEFINED COMMITMENT:

The language of time is sewn into the workings of vocational community. Even the artist who apparently operates in an unstructured life, must relate to the natural boundaries of vocational time through which the artistic expression can be brought into this world for public response. At the extreme end of vocational community, time is cut into segments for the purpose of attaching a monetary value to productive human activity. A person's vocational relationships often evolve around eight-hour shifts, forty- or sixty-hour weeks, three-year grants, thirty year careers. The nature of the time is often contained in a formal contract that is negotiated in the context of vocational relationship. The rules of the relationship are external and understood at the outset. Even in the age we are currently navigating, with the advent of home office, the nature of these adapted vocational relationships is being built into the remodeling and architectural elements of building and personal habits in the home.

3. *PRAGMATIC AND RATIONAL*

The contractual nature of this community and its relationships defines limits of the boundaries of commitment and value. A contract contains the possibilities of the relationship in rational boundaries. This "external language" gives identity and accountable power to the affairs of the members of this community. The definitive nature creates portable "pieces" of enterprise and politics. Law is the ultimate social contract and public law gives some level of predictability and order to the human community. The contribution of the process of democracy to the evolution of social human community is that it is a system of continuous response and hopefully improvement in the realm community organization. Vocational relationships fill the need in a person's life for an arena of expression that is both flexible and limited. One is never as secure in the vocational community as one would be in the true nurturance relationships. While there is risk in vocational relationships, the absence of the nurturance bond helps to limit and contain the loss that is possible for the participants in vocational relationships. The working assumption of the vocational is that all participants have a nurturance level of community on which to fall back. The fear of risk in the vocational relationships increases dramatically for the participants who have transferred their nurturance relationship energy into this realm of pragmatism and calculating rationality.

Vocational relationships occur in subordination to systems that can be described not only in terms of products, but also beliefs. In this level of community, Methodists meet Methodists, Catholics meet other Catholics, engineers meet engineers, social workers meet social workers and so forth. The context and pretext for the contact is predetermined by the existing system. Vocational community is often the setting in which true nurturance friendships are formed. Once these relationships are formed, they are nurturance level and no longer vocational. The test of the true level of the relationship occurs when the terms of the vocational relationship are met. When the contract is fulfilled, and the check stops, or the agenda runs out, the friends one still relates to on a regular basis are the nurturance relationships. The role of a Church is ambiguous in the sense that the church is often for many people a lifelong relationship. But even so, churches are structured so the minister can move from church to church, and the congregants can do the same. The churches of this world tend to fall into the realm of the vocational even though they can be inclusive and with commitment less conditional than other organizations.

4. ENDING NOT DIRECTLY SUBJECT TO GRIEF

Friendship and affection when ending in the work setting do not necessarily trigger a deep grief reaction. Vocational relationships may be characterized by common proximity and rituals of friendship, but the personal identity component is more externalized than is the case in Nurturance Community. In many ways grief is a process of personal re-identification, and the bond of Nurturance Community is a kind of prosthesis that holds you in place while re-identification occurs. When a bonded relationship is ended, the experience is profoundly more disorientating and painful.



III. THE MENTOR COMMUNITY

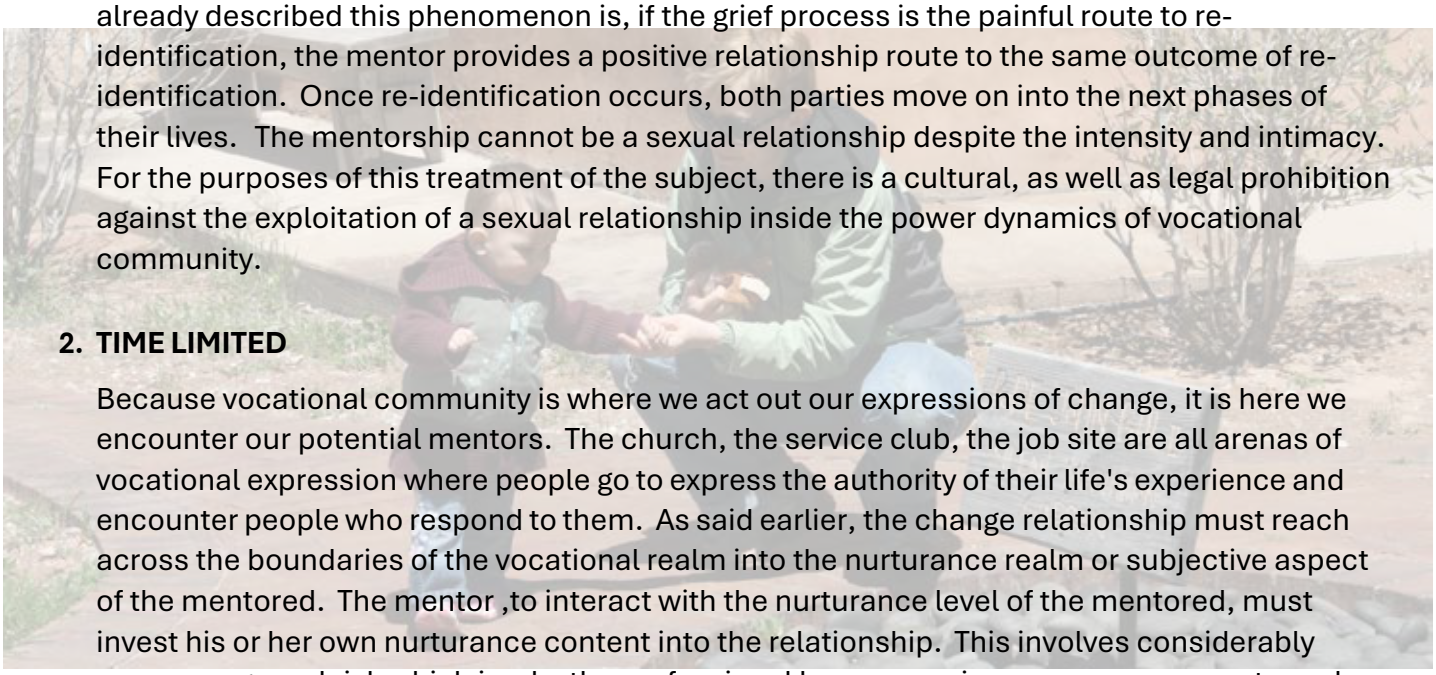
The movement toward the balanced life for the individual is made possible by a third form of relationship which is a composition of both the nurturance and vocational communities and yet uniquely different from both. This is a relationship that serves as a catalyst for changes within the individual's belief system that must occur for the individual to succeed within the fluid world of vocation. A change in careers, jobs, or lifestyles can necessitate the assistance of the mentor relationship. Because, in the experience of life, there is not clean line of demarcation which separates vocation from nurturance, the transitional zone is actually bridged by teachers, trainers, or mentors. A characteristic of successful individuals seems to be their innate ability to attract mentors. Conversely people who exhibit personality disorders, or who have experienced devastating traumas which have distorted their path of development, often find themselves estranged and incapable of attracting this kind of relationship. In the world of disability, often a difficult situation is made vastly more difficult for the lack of available mentors. Successful cultures and communities facilitate and encourage the crucial transitional mentor relationship. This is the catalyst relationship that maintains the balance of the stabilizing center of nurturance and the creative vitality of vocation. Stories in the media and studies in human services literature show a resurgent interest in the mentor relationship. While it is obvious, we are interested in the power and effectiveness of this relationship, we are not as certain as to its definition and scope. Because this relationship is really a blended form of nurturance and vocational relationships, it tends to defy clear objective definition or become confused with Nurturance or Vocational Community. What follows is a narrative which attempts to focus the mentor relationship by describing both what it appears to be and also, what is not.

The Mentor Relationship is:

1. **Bonded Conditional**
2. **Time limited**
3. **Choice based within syste**m

1. CONDITIONAL BONDED

As said earlier the, mentor is a change agent. For a human to change, changes must occur subjectively within the person's belief system regarding assumptions of reality. The belief system is in part a nonconscious collection of assumptions about what in the experience of the world is fundamentally safe and valuable and conversely, what isn't. The mentor works with the mentored at the developmental level, which was set in place through primarily nurturance experience, but which now must interact effectively with vocational energy and conditions. Anytime two people relate at these deep levels of assumption, the very intimacy required establishes a bond. For this reason, the mentorship is bonded, even though the setting of the mentor's connection to the person's life is the conditional vocational realm. Therefore, unlike the nurturance relationship, these bonded relationship occur to assist a defined purposeful transition in the lives of both the mentor and mentored. There is a mysterious sense of "synchronicity" experienced by both parties because this relationship occurs in response to aspects of both persons that form largely within the nonconscious. However once the conditional demands of the transition are met, the relationship can end naturally with the same kind mystery as accompanied its appearance. Another benefit of the mentoring relationship is that when concluded, it is not accompanied by a deep grief cycle as will always be the case with the termination of deep nurturance relationships. Another way we have already described this phenomenon is, if the grief process is the painful route to re-identification, the mentor provides a positive relationship route to the same outcome of re-identification. Once re-identification occurs, both parties move on into the next phases of their lives. The mentorship cannot be a sexual relationship despite the intensity and intimacy. For the purposes of this treatment of the subject, there is a cultural, as well as legal prohibition against the exploitation of a sexual relationship inside the power dynamics of vocational community.



2. TIME LIMITED

Because vocational community is where we act out our expressions of change, it is here we encounter our potential mentors. The church, the service club, the job site are all arenas of vocational expression where people go to express the authority of their life's experience and encounter people who respond to them. As said earlier, the change relationship must reach across the boundaries of the vocational realm into the nurturance realm or subjective aspect of the mentored. The mentor ,to interact with the nurturance level of the mentored, must invest his or her own nurturance content into the relationship. This involves considerably more energy and risk which is why the professional human services person may mentor only a

very small percentage of a caseload at a given time. This crossover experience emulates the nurturance relationship except when the time constraints of vocational community impose themselves on the relationship, unlike the nurturance relationship, the mentor relationship ends. Like the chemical catalyst, once the change has occurred, the agent disappears.

3. CHOICE WITHIN SYSTEM

The mentor relationship is a true paradox. Mentoring is a matter of the heart (subjective, affectionate and bonded) and yet at the same time pragmatic (purposeful in relationship to an objective external system). The true mentor relationship is nearly impossible to engineer. For instance, for those people whose personalities or appearance repel potential mentors, efforts have been made to pay the "mentor" to compensate. The coach is a good example of the paid trainer who can effectively train in lieu of mentors. The professional coach experiences his or her limitations in not having the funding to be present. Whether it be disability services, counseling, psychotherapy, or ministry, the limitations of financial resource, given the scope of the developmental problems illustrate the vulnerability of the purely vocational solution. The other problem for the professional the professional is often not part of the "system" of the host vocational community. The strength of the coach is often the coach's services "hold" a person in the vocational system until that the person being mentored is accepted on their own merits. Once the "stranger anxiety" is overcome very often the community generates a true mentor who will take over the bulk of the professional coach's responsibility out of a sense of bonded service. Anytime a person receives compensation for being in relationship, this becomes a vocational relationship. The closeness of the mentor relationship can cause some grief and the end point for both and mentor and mentored, but that grief is bearable if the relationship stayed close to its purpose, which is reidentification within the bounds of the vocational community.

This distinction should not be taken as a demeaning of the professional relationship, but rather a recognition of the limits of effectiveness. The professional relationship is truly the prosthetic applied until "nature" re-establishes a more enduring pattern of sustaining relationships. At the same time there is probably very few teachers, counselors, or administrators who don't recall certain students, clients, or subordinates with whom they formed the mentor connection while concurrently serving the balance of their responsibilities. The possibility and occurrence of the mentoring relationship is often the experience that inspires the professional and creates the energy and deep motivation to carry out the balance of the job. A healthy culture will recognize and support this unique relationship as the highest order relationship of the community.