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Security Nexus Conversation

"MEN AS ENABLERS AND MENTORS IN WOMEN'S ROLES IN PEACE AND SECURITY"

WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY CONVERSATIONS WITH THOUGHT LEADERS

An Interview with Dr. Dave Smith, Ms. Sharon Feist, Ms. Monica Herrera & Dr. Delaina Sawyers

Interviewed by Dr. Saira Yamin and Professor Al Shimkus*

Transcript prepared with assistance from Ms. Kamaile Patton, DKI APCSS Intern

The full video podcast interview is available [at this link](#).

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*As Associate Professor of Sociology in the College of Leadership and Ethics at the U.S. Naval War College, Dr. Dave Smith has focused his current and former research on gender in the workplace, co-authoring *Athena Rising: How and Why Men Should Mentor Women* and his forthcoming book *Good Guys: How Men Can Be Better Allies for Women in the Workplace*. Both books emphasize the crucial role of mentoring relationships across genders to ensure a more gender equal and inclusive workplace.*



Ms. Sharon Feist is the first Gender Advisor to the Commander, USINDOPACOM, and serves as the principal advisor on WPS within the Indo-Pacific. Her work focuses on mainstreaming a gender perspective throughout military analysis, planning, operations, and assessment to improve military effects and to emphasize the key link between gender equality and regional security.



Formerly serving 20 years in the Army as a Medical Service Corp officer, Dr. Dee Sawyers now works as a Gender Advisor on the WPS team at USINDOPACOM, conducting research and gender-based analysis to include the dimensions of political, social, economic, and security contexts to further the organization's policies and plans for increased gender equity.



Supporting the implementation of the U.S. strategy on WPS, Monica Herrera is the Women, Peace & Security (WPS) Curriculum Developer for USINDOPACOM. Her work includes mainstreaming gender perspectives into planning, policies, and programs at all levels. She is also a certified Gender Advisor (GENAD) with expertise in Gender in Military Operations. Monica formerly served on active duty as a Foreign Area Officer at Pacific Air Forces and is a Major in the Air Force Reserves.

Summary

This interview transcript from the Women, Peace, and Security: Conversations with Thought Leaders podcast series explores the important role men play in mentoring and enabling women in peace and security roles. It draws upon Dr. Dave Smith's extensive research on the topic and the wealth of experience within the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's team of Gender Advisers and Analysts, represented here by Ms. Sharon Feist, Ms. Monica Herrera, and Dr. Dee Sawyers. They bring to the fore cultural nuances on cross-gender mentoring relationships in the U.S. and the Indo-Pacific region. They also highlight opportunities for broadening mentoring activities and their potential for contributing to greater efficiency of an organization.

Saira Yamin (SY): We especially invited Dr. Dave Smith to share his research findings on men's role as mentors and allies for women in the workplace. To get us started, Professor Shimkus, please share some insights from your work experience with Dr. Smith. We are particularly interested in his philosophy and attitude towards gender in the workplace?

Al Shimkus (AS): Dave Smith and I go back a few years when I was on the Naval War College faculty. Dave joined us from the U.S. Naval Academy, and he immediately began to influence how we deliver our educational product at the Naval War College. He brought a deep understanding of the sociological elements related to how women influence and sometimes do not influence leaders and decision-makers. He also brought the ability to influence the syllabus in our intermediate and senior courses. Thereby, he was able to fundamentally change what we did in the initial part of our courses. We started focusing on the right things at the right time for men and women, both civilian and military, our students. It encouraged them to think about the nature of their responsibility after they graduate from the War College -- and then to go back into leadership positions across the world as we do have international officers joining us as well. So the exposure to the rigor that Dave brought made our curriculum and overall educational product better for his influence.

So Dave, what I would like to do now is ask you the first question about what influenced you to write your first book [*Athena Rising: How and Why Men Should Mentor Women?*](#)

Dave Smith (DS): Al, thank you for the kind remarks. To answer your question, this goes back to my research and understanding of some of the inequities that women face in the workplace, and indeed, even today, we still find that they are excluded. They are not recruited in the same way. They are certainly not retained, promoted, advanced, and paid in the same way, with the gender pay equity gap still there, that men are. Interestingly, when you ask men about this, some recognize these gaps and inequities about how women's experiences are very different in the workplace than their own. But many of them don't see it, and part of the challenge, particularly around some of the gender gaps that we have in the workplace, is around acknowledging and seeing the problem. I have been working with my good friend and colleague at the Naval Academy, Dr. Brad Johnson, a clinical psychologist by training. Brad has done all of his research over the years in mentoring and mentoring relationships: what makes for great mentoring relationships and what we should be looking for in developing mentors. We considered how we could level the playing field if you think about it as a professional development resource, and that's everything from mentoring and coaching, sponsoring, or advocacy.

There are really tangible differences in how women have access to this, in the same way men do. There are also other socio-demographic differences there as well, as you might imagine. We focused on a gender perspective and set out to research because it hadn't been done across-gender or looking at mentoring across difference. And the difference here was gender in particular, and we pulled together what was out there in terms of the best social science and behavioral science research. And it became clear that there was something else that was missing. It was interesting to talk to our female colleagues about what we were doing in writing about gender in the workplace and cross-gender mentoring. They would look at us funny and question why two men were writing about women and gender in the workplace. It was an important point. Women's voices needed to be front and center as we were having these conversations, primarily as two men writing about this to engage other men in doing this and doing it better.

We set out to do the book's interviews, and we had the great fortune to interview women across every industry. The military, in particular, was well-represented with all the services. We had four-star generals and admirals in some cases for the women whom we were able to interview and to get their personal and very first-hand understanding of what worked well for them. When it came to mentoring, and if they had male mentors, they wanted other men to know about this. They also shared what was most valued in their experience and wanted men to understand what worked. Then in many cases, we got a chance to interview the men who were these male mentors, very senior men in most cases, and learn about how they approached mentoring across differences, in this case, gender, and what they learned from it. It probably won't surprise you, all of these men were very humble, and in many cases, they didn't even consider themselves to be mentors because they weren't in formal mentoring programs or pairings. But they all had a sense of how much they were able to learn from the relationship. I think that's important as we think about the qualities that go into these kinds of developmental relationships.

SY: Dave, how did men and women around the world respond to your research after it was published?

DS: That's a great question. Thanks for asking because I think it is interesting to see. And let me tell you first very briefly from a military perspective, followed by some other industries, and connect it to the national security environment in particular. What's interesting with the military is that we expected there to be a lot of pushback, and there wasn't a lot. In many cases, men were very aware that there was a problem, and they weren't sure what to do about it, and they were looking for solutions. That was one thing many of them would tell us afterward as we were speaking and holding workshops with people across the world on this topic. They were thankful to have a roadmap and a toolbox of skills. And that's one of the things that we focused on with the book, making it very action-oriented with micro-skills.

We do a lot of workshops offering skill development for men in particular, but also for women. It helps to advance the understanding that great mentorship looks the same for both. It doesn't matter what the gender of the person who is doing the mentoring is versus the person who is receiving it. The relief is observable when someone says, "So you are finally going to talk to us about how we have more women in the military now, and that we are going to have various kinds of professional relationships with them and what those relationships should look like? And why maybe, in many cases, we were reluctant or a little anxious about those relationships, to begin with? So now we can begin to get past that and get into the meat of what the

relationship is all about." Again, this is about developing people and helping them reach their career goals and dreams. So, in general, it has been very positive.

I will tell you that there was some pushback, and it came in different forms. There is the ideological perspective, the belief that women don't belong, which is probably not a surprise in very traditional industries and professions. Or that men and women shouldn't be spending time together in close quarters that these types of work relationships demand to get the most out of them. It doesn't help when senior government leaders sometimes say things like they don't think it's acceptable or appropriate for men and women to get together and have a professional conversation over dinner. Those kinds of statements are generally not helpful. They might have been okay in 1920, but this is 2020, and we are moving into a very diverse workplace, and we need this talent in the workforce. So, there was some of that. There was also, I think, getting back to my earlier point about the lack of understanding of what the gap is. So there were a lot of men who felt like, "Wait a minute, we have women we work with. We have integrated units and squadrons and ships and battalions. Why are we even talking about this today? We are so far past this." It demonstrated that they didn't understand or see the inequities, the gaps that still exist for women, and how disconnected they were, in some cases, from what was going on. They were, in most cases, very quickly corrected by their peers. It was always nice to hear other people speak up about what others weren't sensing, so I think that's an interesting part of it. I think there was an overwhelming sense, however, of, "So finally, we're talking about this in a way that gets to professional relationships. And that we know we need to cultivate, but nobody has ever really spent a lot of time talking to us about how to do this and do it well."

AS: For our United States Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) team, how does the notion of men as mentors and enablers of women relate to Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) with relevance to your work?

Sharon Feist (SF): I think it's important to recognize that both men and women have multi-faceted contributions to advancing the global WPS agenda and gender equality as a whole. If you are going to advance these types of principles – on women's meaningful participation at all levels – you have to recognize the system you are in and be deliberate about whom you engage. For the defense sector, which we know is predominantly male, it is essential to engage male counterparts across a continuum to solicit the support needed to improve the system and reduce gender inequities. That means engaging men as allies, as champions, mentors, and as enablers of WPS. And each of those roles may be slightly different depending on the person, to refer to an [article by Dr. Smith in Harvard Business Review](#) where he cited diversity consultant Jennifer Brown. Brown frames, and I quote, "male allyship on a continuum, ranging from apathetic (clueless and disinterested regarding gender issues) to aware (has some grasp of the issues but not at all active or engaged in addressing them) to active (well-informed and willing to engage in gender equity efforts, but only when asked) to advocate (routinely and proactively champions gender inclusion)." In our Gender Advisor training, we teach the importance of having a gender perspective and underscore, at the very least, that our military operations must be gender-sensitive. Neither cause harm nor perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes, or be "aware," as Brown describes. We hope for our military analysis, policies, planning, and operations to be gender-responsive, and even further in an ideal end state, to be gender transformative. The [Department of Defense's Women, Peace and Security Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan](#) (SFIP), released in June 2020, has the potential to be transformative. DoD's holistic approach will lead to a unifying policy that codifies best practices to support our national security objectives further. The end goal is to

integrate WPS as a strategic enabling theme across our activities, vice a separate, discrete concept. This means that DoD women and men have an equally important role in WPS implementation to ensure our security outcomes are both inclusive and sustainable.

SY: What about your thoughts on culture? Does culture play a role in men's ability to mentor women?

Monica Herrera (MH): This is an excellent question because it touches on the fact that gender is socially constructed, which means that groups of people create a shared meaning about something. In the case of gender -- societies, cultures, communities, and even institutions can create a shared understanding of what it means to be a man, woman, boy, or girl. Unpacking gender means understanding the roles, rights, responsibilities, and behaviors expected of men and women, as well as the normative relationships that exist between men and women, within a given social context. So the short answer to your question is yes, because as a social construct, conceptions about gender vary across time, geographic space, and across cultures as well, which means mentoring relationships between men and women are also likely to vary.

But it's also important to recognize that culture is extremely nuanced. In our coursework, we teach the importance of suspending our assumptions about particular cultures, especially our assumptions about the way one culture or another might view gender because culture is not immutable either. We emphasize conducting a gender analysis to provide a more thorough examination of gender within another culture's broader context. That can help us better understand how the gender landscape might shape our specific engagements or our understanding of the norms we see within institutions. To get back to your question, even within a single culture, the practice of men mentoring women might be viewed differently depending on the context.

SF: As Monica noted, it seems to vary by cultural context, including laws within countries and prioritization toward gender equality, gender norms and roles, and institutional barriers, but by and large, there seem to be common denominators. Current examples tend to showcase a mixed mentorship model, or instead, only highlight women mentoring women models. In Mongolia, for example, trends in gender parity are encouraging. Yet [World Bank](#) data suggests fewer women are in senior positions, although more urban women have post-secondary degrees and are better equipped than men to work in the formal employment sector. On the national level, Mongolia has demonstrated a strong commitment to gender equality – their lead government agency is the National Committee on Gender Equality, which oversees compliance with the Law on Gender Equality. Yet, there is a gap in women's representation at senior decision-making levels and a gap between urban and rural women, specifically in access to higher education and employment opportunities. The Zorig Foundation, a Mongolian NGO, aims to close that gap and promote gender equality. They employ a mixed model of men and women mentoring women. U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and U.S. Army Pacific have worked with the Zorig Foundation on two specific programs: First, the Rural Women Change-Makers program designed to provide leadership training to rural Mongolian women, and second, through the [Women's Mentorship Program](#), a training designed for Mongolian women serving in the Armed Forces or other areas of government. Both activities have a mix of male and female instructors. So in this particular context, it's not a simple binary of males mentoring females or vice versa, but more of a hybrid model to promote institutional capacity building.

There are more examples today of this hybrid model of mentorship for women, such as in training women in peacekeeping by both genders and training women in police and security forces. Interpol has a robust training and mentoring program for women's leadership in law enforcement. Last year, our military co-hosted a ["Women in Law Enforcement" Symposium](#) with the Philippines National Police – again, these kinds of mentoring and training programs are aimed at institutional capacity building. As another example of a mixed-gender mentoring model, in fisheries and aquaculture sectors, men and women engage in distinct but complementary activities.

[Half of global seafood workers are women](#), yet as in many industries, they are over-represented in the lowest paid, lower-valued positions like fish gutting, canning, other processing, or small-scale fisheries underrepresented in management positions. More men are represented in catching, but more women are represented in harvesting. But interestingly, gender dynamics are changing in fisheries due to a changing climate and overfishing. For instance, in the Philippines, women play a more significant role in seaweed farming in Palawan, to supplement their husbands' income as fishers. Men assist their wives with seaweed farming on their days off. There are other tangible benefits for women, too – as members of the local seaweed association, they are provided livelihood and training. They, in turn, pass on their knowledge to fellow farmers, men, and women alike. It's an interrelated ecosystem of mentoring, training, and sharing knowledge.

There are other industry-specific examples as in the technology industry where research suggests that mentorship increases the female retention rate. According to an [article by Microsoft](#), "The rate at which women quit is more than double that of men ... one of the biggest barriers identified for the advancement of women in technology is a lack of female mentors and role models in the workplace." Per the [National Centre for Women and Information Technology](#), despite 80 percent of women in Science, Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) careers reporting they love their work, 32 percent are likely to quit their jobs within a year. It is also [reported that for women in STEM](#), "mentors in the workplace are like 'social vaccines,'" helping reinforce, affirm, and immunize women against negative biases. There also seems to be success in peer mentoring as all parties can benefit and learn from the other.

In the defense and security sectors, views are beginning to shift. [Major General Suzanne Vares-Lum](#), our USINDOPACOM Mobilization Assistant to the Commander, gave a keynote address to the 25th Infantry Division last week – celebrating the Centennial of the 19th Amendment ratification of women's right to vote. She addressed mentorship – how it is every senior leader's obligation to recognize and nurture every single soldier's talent – females included. She also referenced Dr. Smith's book – *Athena Rising*, which happened to be on the Indo-Pacific Commander's Reading List, and emphasized how women in the military have been taking responsibility for their rise.

DS: To add a few insights from our research, although cross-cultural perspectives vary quite a bit, Monica raised this idea around assumptions, which is related to bias and different kinds of implicit associations or perceptions we have of people. It often comes up in various settings. It is one reason why sometimes men were not even aware of having implicit perceptions about women influencing their decision to invest time and resources. So, for example, if men hold a bias or a perception about women as not strong enough or not leadership material, they are perceived as a risky investment, as a woman being "a flight risk." In such

instances, they are probably not going to invest the kind of time and resources in women they would with men. So perceptions played out in a big way there.

The other part is about assumptions that we make, and I will give you one example of a very senior man in this case, who was the acting administrator of NASA at the time. He was one of the male mentors that we had a chance to interview, and his mentee was the deputy director of the Kennedy Space Center, so these are both some very senior people within the government. On his part, the male mentor considered himself a "gender savvy guy" who understood things well. But then he shared a story about how he was on a hiring committee, and they were about to make an offer with only four candidates left, including one woman who was by far and very clearly the best candidate for the job. And as they were getting ready to decide on the offer, he said that he felt like he had to say something being a gender savvy man. He thought that the job, which required a lot of travel, may not be the right fit for her as she had just had a baby about three weeks ago. But fortunately for him, he said there was a woman on the committee sitting right across the table from him, looking like she had flames coming out of her eyes, and she said to him, "Robert, first I think she's a pretty smart woman. She applied for the job, and she probably knows that it requires a lot of travel, and second, I am sure she knows she had a baby three weeks ago. So why don't we just let her make that decision?" So for Robert, it was a light bulb moment, an epiphany, the realization that he thought he was gender savvy and always doing the right thing, but he had missed it. So he said, sometimes along the way, we have to begin to think or have others help us see our blind spots and challenge these assumptions, that in some cases, we believe we understand, but we really don't. We are not always making the best decisions for our people and our organizations out there.

AS: I would like to drill down a moment into thinking about bias, but more specifically about open-mindedness in the Mongolian context that Sharon brought up earlier. Did you find that in Mongolia that there was a certain open-mindedness demonstrated by those senior leaders who are seemingly, at least by a description, empowering gender equality?

SF: I would say by and large, on a national level, Mongolia is very committed to gender equality. I mentioned before that they have legislation, and they do prioritize that. But we spoke to Mongolian women who didn't feel they could advance to senior decision-making levels. There is a strong interest, and Mongolian women have been and are continuing to make the case that gender equality matters. Ultimately the advancement of their perspectives at senior decision levels will help make Mongolia a more peaceful and stable country. They are more advanced than in other countries as far as gender quality, but I would say it's a work in progress.

DS: One of the things we found in the research for our two books *Athena Rising* and *Good Guys*, is that open-mindedness, as you're referring to here, is undoubtedly a characteristic or trait that is helpful as we think about men that have a different, or a more inclusive perspective in particular of gender. It probably extends beyond gender as well. In some cases, it's part of how they were socialized. In other cases, it was part of important experiences in their lives. Or it might have been an influential person in their life that helped bring them to this open-mindedness. In all these cases, they have much less of a hierarchical approach to relationships broadly, and much more of egalitarian or powered-down dynamics that tend to be inherent in relationships. This open-mindedness comes from, as we found in our latest research on allies, particularly men who are actively involved in solving various gender inequities, including mentoring, that they had three

kinds of motivations to do this work. One is the personal connection, and it might have been an important family member. It could have been an important person, a colleague or peer or mentor or mentee, but somebody who shared that experience with them. It opened their eyes and helped them get in touch with their sense of fairness and justice. It begins to motivate people to take action, and that's what this is all about. It's not about talk. It's about action.

The second one is primarily a WPS perspective. We must focus on this from a mission- effectiveness or an outcome-based view, and we have to continually keep this tied to that. And because leaders in this case, if they are men, to keep them involved and engaged in this work. They have to see that it is connected to who they are as leaders, to their organization, and their effectiveness in doing the job. It's a critical driver of their open-mindedness. The last motivation we found was altruism. This doesn't come as a surprise. It involves social justice warriors and altruistic people in particular and it comes naturally to them. To share a story from AFRICOM (U.S. Africa Command), we had the opportunity to interview Ambassador Donald Steinberg. He is a gender equity advocate and ally. He told us about his eye-opening experience when he was a special envoy to Angola during the peace process which kept falling apart and he couldn't figure out why. Then a reporter asked him if he had taken gender into account. The Ambassador assured him that it was a gender-neutral process. But months later he said, you know that was kind of a stupid thing to say because they had not taken gender into account at all and it became very apparent to him as the process kept falling apart. It was because they didn't have the intel and the information to know and predict where the next violations of the peace treaty were going to come from. They didn't know it because the people who had that information were community women who were not part of the peace process, at any level, all the way down to the people who were implementing it on the ground. Who knew? Because if they knew that the information was in the marketplaces, and women were the ones who were right there, then they were the ones who had it. Thereafter, the Ambassador involved women in all levels of the peace process and it was quite instrumental.

AS: For our INDOPACOM team and Dave, could you identify across the spectrum what might be some barriers that would prevent your vision of WPS from coming to fruition?

MH: I think it's important first to acknowledge that the security sector globally is male-dominated. And what I mean by that is that men occupy positions at all levels in far greater numbers, and they also occupy positions of decision-making authority at disproportionately higher rates. This is really at the heart of why the international WPS agenda exists -- because it recognizes the urgent need to meaningfully include women in every space where conversations about security are occurring. The evidence is clear: gender equality improves security outcomes. The first significant opportunity is for men to recognize this and acknowledge not only that they *can* be part of the solution, but also, if they're genuinely concerned about the security of their communities, societies, and states, that it is their *responsibility* to use their influence toward positive change. Mentoring women within the security sector is undoubtedly one excellent avenue to do this.

But the barriers can be pretty immense. And as I mentioned earlier, some of these challenges look different from place to place. For example, in some communities where it's not socially acceptable for women to participate in the police or military forces, women can face social stigma or even experience domestic violence for attempting to join these occupations. All the best mentoring in the world within an institution can mean very little within a community where social norms have not changed to be more accepting of

women in these roles. In the Indo-Pacific, over 70% of the region is covered by water, and a considerable part of the security sector resides in the maritime domain. [Our Secure Future recently published an excellent policy brief](#) outlining some of the unique challenges for women in this security sub-sector. And the first Women in Maritime Association was established in this region, in Fiji, in 2005. Women play essential roles throughout the maritime space, and it's important to acknowledge their impact by institutionalizing and reinforcing their participation within existing frameworks. So that's an area ripe with opportunity

SY: How could we advance an organizational culture where men are more deliberate about broadening their mentorship activities so wouldn't need to rely exclusively on "good guys"? How would we make mentoring part and parcel of our organizations?

MH: A lot of what we do at the INDOPACOM headquarters, why we have a WPS program and an office now, to begin with, is because we do need to dedicate some resources towards implementation, and we focus a lot on institutionalization and a process called gender-mainstreaming. This means looking at all the policies, programs, guidance, everything that comes out and doing a level of analysis to help determine where some of the gaps are and where we can deliberately build this into the system. That's true institutionalization. [One of the three objectives in our U.S. strategy on WPS](#) is building institutional capacity both within our organizations and taking it to our partners and allies, and encouraging them. The other key point is the need to have an assessment, monitoring, and evaluation framework to determine the baseline and then work towards an outcome. With that, I will turn it over to Dr. Sawyers, our analyst and who's really working to build that kind of framework.

Dee Sawyers(DS): First, I would like to thank Dr. Smith for his insights and work on the inclusion of women in deliberate mentoring "how to's" for men in the workplace. As Dr. Smith points out, any activity to broaden mentoring must consider our relationship with gender roles and expectations and the influence of these past learning experiences on present-day work mentorship opportunities, the giving, *and* the receiving.

Recently, I was struck by something I read on social media. "YOU CAN'T INTIMIDATE ME; I USED TO HOLD THE FLASHLIGHT FOR MY DAD." It resonated with me. Truly a high stakes scenario: very time-sensitive (the car is up on blocks, and the engine or something mechanical under the hood must be repaired in time to get to work, or the electrical wiring had to be connected just right, or there would be an explosion, or under the dark underbelly of the house something was lurking that had to be gotten rid of. And everything depended on my child hands holding the flashlight just right. I often did not receive measured instructional mentoring from my Dad, but I did feel like I was a part of the process and needed for successful outcomes. Unlikely as this early mentoring experience seems, years later, it would benefit me in my future high performance, competitive, demanding military career choice.

Like the military, social institutions provide structure to mentor women if men utilize mechanisms and processes built into the organizational framework. I had three very good mentors in the Army who did just that. The first one selected me for company command because of my performance in past difficult staff duty positions, hard work, intellect, and in his words, "there was no one else more qualified than me." I *could* hold the flashlight. My confidence soared. My second mentor reassigned me from a dead-end position after reading my personnel file and I was recruited on the lookout for new talent. I was *needed* to hold the

flashlight. My third mentor managed force structure and did so with an even and open opportunity leadership style. Schools, industry internships, fellowships, and deployments were equally managed and fairly distributed. Counseling sessions, officer evaluations, and team trainings were all a part of the section's daily operation tempo. I was selected for schools, duty positions such as executive officer, and theater deployment, actions which enhanced my career leading to promotions. I was a *valued* flashlight holder due to all the investments. All of these actions utilized organizational processes and mechanisms. I don't remember too many mentoring conversations, but I do remember being given equal time briefing officials, school training, meaningful career counseling sessions, and beneficial temporary duty assignments. A career built on flashlight holding!

AS: Both Dave and Sharon mentioned success stories by definition about the importance of inclusion. Are there any others within INDOPACOM that you could cite as situations in which 'this is really working, and we have the organization valuing their personnel regardless of gender?'

SF: We are fortunate at INDOPACOM to have senior leadership support and gender champions, both male and female, for implementing WPS. We have a channel with Major General Suzanne Vares-Lum, the Mobilization Assistant to the Commander, and our J9 (Indo-Pacific Outreach) Director, Dr. Wood. When we were in Mongolia, I prepared to speak on a panel with other esteemed Mongolian speakers – all women, to discuss the importance of WPS advancement within the security sector. However, we made a last-minute change to have Dr. Wood address the audience, a mix of men and women, but mostly men in the Mongolian Armed Forces. Even though he carried the same message as I would have, it was more powerful – and more effective, that he could champion WPS principles as a senior male leader. Both the delivery and the messenger, as well as the message, matter in our world.

Examples of women leaders who provide successful mentorship are often only focused on women mentoring only women, and there are even fewer examples of women mentoring men. It's crucial that we observe and tell these kinds of stories too – so that we change – and not reinforce - current stereotypes. I did a little digging – and it was tough, but here are some I would like to mention:

- Albert Einstein held Marie Curie – the first female to win the Nobel Prize (twice) for her discovery of polonium and radium and related research – in high esteem. [Einstein wrote her a letter](#) in 1911, during a time when the media was attacking her personal life, stating how much he admired her intellect, her drive, and objectivity. They later became close friends, and he has described their friendship as "[sublime and unclouded](#)."
- An example from the culinary world: The iconic chef Julia Child, the first woman to own a televised cooking show - was instrumental in establishing the James Beard Foundation, which recognizes emerging culinary talent. She advised Peter Kump, a former student of James Beard, to [purchase the late James Beard's brownstone](#) and preserve it as a gathering place. Many chefs today – men and women alike - were either mentored by Julia Child or inspired to the culinary world by her cookbook, "Mastering the Art of French Cooking."
- Former CEO of PepsiCo Indra Nooyi was at the company for 24 years and spent 12 years as the CEO; she was the [company's first female chief executive officer](#). She has often stated that she's a great

mentoring and coaching product and credited her mentors for helping her break glass ceilings. [Under her leadership](#), PepsiCo's net revenue grew from \$35 billion in 2006 to \$63.5 billion in 2017, a compound annual growth rate of 5.5%. Her successor, Ramon Laguarta, cited Indra Nooyi as his mentor.

- Former First Lady Michelle Obama first met President Barack Obama at their law firm – she was [assigned as his mentor](#), as he was a new junior associate.
- It's also important to keep in mind that when we use the word "mentor," we often assume formal mentorship, but many women serve in informal mentoring roles such as mothers and grandmothers.
- Speaking of family mentors: Daniel Anthony was a dedicated women's rights advocate and role model for his daughter, Susan B. Anthony. As a child, her school refused to teach girls math, so her father opened a school where girls and boys were taught equally.
- Highlighting the 19th Amendment, the deciding vote came down to a [24-year-old Tennessee legislator](#) who was poised to vote against the amendment but received a letter from his college-educated mother who advised him on the importance of support for the amendment. Later, when asked about changing his mind, he said he trusted his mother, which was the right thing to do. The 19th amendment's success was built upon relationships between men and women and would not have been successful without both.

Overall, for WPS to succeed – we need male allies and champions, and yes, mentors. I have always been struck by Our Secure Future's policy brief, entitled, ["Not the Usual Suspects, Engaging Male Champions of Women, Peace, and Security."](#) One of their key takeaways from surveying multiple focus groups is that "Men can convey a persuasive message about the relevance and importance of gender equality principles. When men deliver the message, it is given more weight precisely because WPS is often perceived as a "women's issue."

AS: Dave, anything from your view that would demonstrate 'it's really working when one puts their efforts into doing the right thing'?

DS: Several organizations I have worked with have had what I would call semi-structured formal programs to find high potential talent within the organization and then find or match mentors for them. Across the board with all of those programs, what I found interesting was, especially with extremely large organizations, like INDOPACOM, where we can find ourselves spread out across large distances that mentoring doesn't have to always be in person. It doesn't always have to be in a formal program. I think we have heard that over and over again today, and it doesn't always have to be somebody senior to you either. It could be a peer as well. So, that was one of the interesting things that we found with these programs. Also, they especially focused on having people from different parts of the organization. So, you might have somebody from J7 [Joint Civil-Military Operations] who is mentoring somebody in J3 [Operations Directorate] and various other parts of the organization. That way, this cross-functional piece is vital for learning and demonstrating how we can both learn. To me, this is really key in understanding that mentoring isn't a one-way relationship. It is a two-way relationship, and by the way, the research shows the best ones are mutual and reciprocal in nature. In other words, there is learning that goes back and forth on these, and I think, in particular, that came out in

our interviews. Almost every senior male mentor that we talked to told us that by the end of the interview, on their own, without being specifically asked. They said they felt a bit guilty about the mentoring relationship because they were getting more out of the mentorship than their female counterparts.

It speaks to how these men had a lot of cultural humility in not making assumptions about needs or wants based on gender. It also speaks to their learning orientation, this open-mindedness that we talked about earlier, that they were willing and open to learning from their mentees. The really interesting part of this is the benefits for mentors -- and in this case, for male mentors. It works both ways. But for the men in particular who are mentoring women, they are getting increased access to information and other parts of the organization they wouldn't otherwise have. It made them more effective leaders. We see that they will have wider, more diverse networks, both internal to the organization and external. Again, you can see this from a collaboration and a cooperation perspective. This is important across their area of responsibility. Then I think finally, from a more micro-perspective, we found that these men had better interpersonal skills, so more E.Q. [Emotional Intelligence] and more empathy, important attributes for leaders. The best part of it is that you get to take it home with you, and we find it makes the mentors better partners, better spouses, and better parents when they take those skills home. We tend to focus on the mentees, but there are such great benefits for the mentor, and of course, we know that there are incredible benefits for the organization broadly.

The views expressed in this article are the author's alone, and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the DKI APCSS or the United States Government.
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