Collectors, Nightlights, and Allies, Oh My! White Mentors in the Academy

Marisela Martinez-Cola
Utah State University

Abstract

As more students of Color enter into Historically White Institutions (HWIs), the dearth of mentors of Color continues to be an issue leaving students to rely on White mentors within academia. Much of the literature regarding mentoring discusses its definitions and best practices. It does not, however, capture the experiences of students of Color and their perceptions of their White mentors. It also fails to challenge White mentors who other, tokenize, or fail to understand their mentees. Through autoethnography rooted in Critical Race Theory counternarratives, I identify, define, and discuss three roles White mentors play for students of Color.

Keywords: critical race theory, counternarrative, autoethnography, cross-racial mentoring

Marisela Martinez-Cola joined the faculty at Utah State University in the Fall of 2018 after receiving her PhD from Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. The first in her family to attend college, she is also an alumnus of the University of Michigan, where she majored in African American Studies. She then earned a law degree at Loyola University Chicago School of Law. She credits her varied educational experiences for contributing to her interdisciplinary approach to research and teaching. Her research largely focuses on the critical comparative study of race, class, and gender as it relates to culture, social movements, and comparative/historical sociology. Her current book project is entitled *The Bricks Before Brown* and is a comparative historical case study of the construction of race, class, and gender in Mexican American, Chinese American, and Native American school desegregation cases that came before the 1954 Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

During my graduate school career, I was often asked to speak with or mentor young undergraduates. As a first-generation Chicana pursuing a PhD, I received these requests often. In reality, I have always been asked to participate in these kinds of events ever since high school, into college, throughout law school, graduate school, and now as an assistant professor. These requests are both an opportunity and a challenge. I truly appreciate sharing my experiences with students with whom I have so much in common. It is a form of giving back to the various scholars of Color who were generous to me. It can be challenging, however, when attempting to manufacture more time to write, research, teach, and be a mother.

On this particular occasion, I was asked to network with a group of incredibly talented Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellows (MMUF). The MMUF is a fellowship named after noted scholar and educator Benjamin Elijah Mays that is designed to support and encourage underrepresented minority groups to pursue a PhD. The group was small enough to provide an opportunity to have protected, "real" conversations. One student asked, "What should we look for in a mentor?" Most of the time, I would give a fairly general answer about how having a good mentor requires that you are a good mentee—and so forth. However, on this particular occasion, I was experiencing an intense moment of clarity and candor. I realized that I had spent most of my academic career, K–12, college, law school, and graduate school (approximately 25 years total) in predominantly White spaces. I explained to them that, though there are few in HWI, they will interact with and find mentors of Color who may be able to share their experiences. However, most of their mentors will likely be White. I shared,

"White mentors are very interesting. You have to get to know them and how to interact with them. You will likely encounter Collectors or Nightlights." I had never used these descriptors before in a public setting, but in a room full of people of Color, I felt comfortable enough to name my experiences.

This article is a result of that very frank and honest conversation. Ever since that meeting, I have played those conversations in my mind, shared these classifications with colleagues, and added the third category of Allies.[i] In sharing this conversation with fellow people of Color, I have found that naming these experiences with White mentors provided much-needed validation in an academic setting where my presence is problematic. In sharing these ideas with White faculty, I have encountered surprise, reflection, and some push back. As some of my colleagues have shared, generally speaking, "White folks don't like being told about themselves."

The under-representation of faculty of Color in the academy ensures the chances that students of Color will likely look to White faculty as mentors. Research from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) shows that Black male, Black female, and Latino professors account for 3% each, with Latinas accounting for 2%, Native Americans less than 1%, and Asian American male and female faculty representing 6% and 4%, respectively (see Figure 1). In the meantime, the NCES also reports that in postsecondary institutions students of Color comprise approximately 42% of college enrollment distributed in the following manner: Black (14.1%), Latinx students (17.3%), Asian American (6.8%), Native American (0.8%), and Multiracial (3.5%). With the ever-changing diversification of higher education, the onus
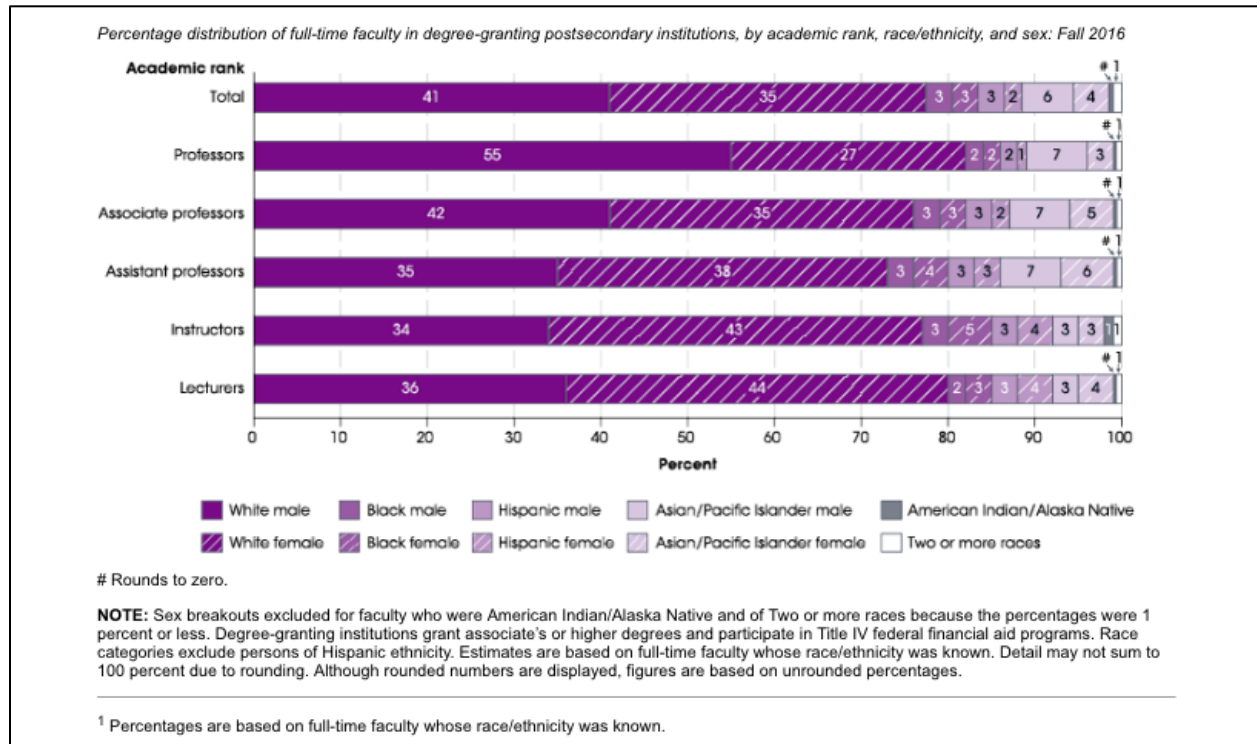
Percentage distribution of full-time faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by academic rank, race/ethnicity, and sex: Fall 2016

Rounds to zero.

NOTE: Sex breakouts excluded for faculty who were American Indian/Alaska Native and of Two or more races because the percentages were 1 percent or less. Degree-granting institutions grant associate's or higher degrees and participate in Title IV federal financial aid programs. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity. Estimates are based on full-time faculty whose race/ethnicity was known. Detail may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding. Although rounded numbers are displayed, figures are based on unrounded percentages.

[1] Percentages are based on full-time faculty whose race/ethnicity was known.

Figure 1: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2018). The Condition of Education (NCES, 2018, p. 144).

for mentoring falls mostly on White faculty, a role they may or may not be prepared to undertake.

In the next section, I will review the literature regarding cross-racial mentoring and argue that, despite the mountain of information available, the critical lens has yet to be turned towards White mentors from their student of Color mentees. Next, I define and provide examples of Collectors, Nightlights, and Allies whom I have experienced during my academic journey. In doing so, I describe the specific ways White mentoring behavior presents itself in the academy. Through autoethnography and storytelling rooted in Critical Race Theory, I ultimately hope to generate meaningful dialogue and self-reflection between and among White mentors as well as shared stories or debates among scholars of Color.

Literature Review

Because mentoring is such a challenging relationship to define, this article will not focus on defining mentoring. Kerry Ann Rockquemore (2016) correctly assesses that

> [I]f you ask 10 different faculty members what mentoring is, how it works, what it looks like, and how to tell if it's effective, you will get 10 different responses ranging from a once-a-year coffee date to a quasi-parental, lifelong relationship. (p. 1).

Instead, this article focuses on the participants and subjects of the literature on mentoring. Much of the literature regarding mentoring discusses its definitions and best practices. However, it does not completely capture how students of Color experience

their White mentors. The closest example of ascertaining a protégé of Color's experience is Reddick and Ortego Pritchett's (2015) analysis of six interviews with White faculty who were mentoring Black students. However, the reporting was the White faculty's experience of mentoring rather than the Black students' experience of them. This one-sided reporting is problematic, considering that such mentoring programs are often designed to remedy the inequality in academia by addressing the needs of underrepresented or marginalized communities. One may consider the numerous "how to be an ally" or "learning antiracism" articles and publications that advise White faculty (Bishop, 2015; Derman-Sparks, Brunson Phillips, & Hilliard III, 1997). However, those articles fail to challenge White mentors who, *despite their best intentions*, continue to other, tokenize, and fail to understand their mentees and the challenges they confront in White spaces.

Much of the literature discusses what it means to be a good mentor or mentee generally (Allen, 2007; Fletcher & Mullen, 2012). While some of the literature is helpful, much of it is very much rooted in a deficit model. Similar to the "fix the woman" perspective studied within gender studies, such literature often describes these students as lacking some kinds of skills or knowledge, rather than emphasizing their strengths or focusing on structural inequalities (Hewlett, 2013; Hewlett, Peraino, Sherbin, & Sumberg, 2010; Ibarra, Carter, & Silva, 2010). For example, in his research of how students of Color interact with professors, Jack (2016) labels students at elite universities who are low-income and attended boarding, day, or prep school versus those who are poor and remaining in their communities as the "Privileged Poor" and "Doubly Disadvantaged," respectively.

Mentoring studies also imply that mentoring students of Color requires a great deal of investment in time, emotion, and resources. In a recent article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Brad Johnson (2017), a professor of psychology at the U.S. Naval Academy, shares that mentoring "minority students and/or faculty" requires practicing cultural humility; being willing to take action to tackle racism, discrimination, and other inequities; publicly advocating or singing the praises of their scholarly work; and being familiar with the resources available on campus. By this description, mentoring students of Color sounds like a mammoth undertaking. However, such an undertaking pales in comparison to the emotional labor experienced by faculty of Color who mentor students of Color while needing mentoring themselves (Calafell, 2007; Hochschild, 1983; Katzew, 2009; Padilla, 1994).

Much of the literature on mentoring can be grouped into the following themes or purposes:

- Addresses the needs of graduate students of color generally, Black graduate students specifically (Barker, 2011, 2016; DeWalt, 2004; Patton, 2009; Smith & Davidson, 1992; Twale, Weidman, & Bethea, 2016)
- The dearth of faculty of Color contributing to lack of mentors for students of Color (DeFour & Hirsch, 1990; Ellis 2001; Felder, Stevenson, & Gasman, 2014; Johnson-Bailey, Valentine, Cervero, & Bowles, 2009; Margolis & Romero, 1998; Patton, 2009; Patton & Harper, 2003)
- White peers/colleagues having greater access to departmental resources (Acker & Hague, 2015;

Cohen & Steele, 2002; García, 2005; McGuire & Reger, 2003)

- Students of Color lacking trust or experiencing isolation, microaggressions, tokenism, and/or stereotyping (Daniel, 2007; Johnson-Bailey, Valentine, Cervero, & Bowles, 2009; Monforti & Michelson, 2008; Ramirez, 2014; Schlemper & Monk, 2011; Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000)
- Understanding, describing, or explaining how to mentor students of Color (Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Griffin, Muñiz, & Smith, 2016; Johnson-Baily & Cervero, 2004)

What is demonstratively missing is the point of view of the students themselves and their experiences (good, bad, or indifferent) of White faculty mentors outside of the classroom. The closest examination of a mentoring program that reports a mentee's experience is Phelps-Ward and DeAngelo's (2016) research on a doctoral education pipeline created for Black students. They found, "When aspects of frequent contact, closeness, reciprocity, friendship, and trust are present in a relationship between a student and faculty member, the student is more likely to benefit from the psychosocial and instrumental functions of mentoring" (p. 120). While their findings are in line with the needs of students of Color, it is based on interviews of four Black mentees and their White mentors who are reporting on the reciprocal nature of the mentor/mentee relationship.

This article is intended to fill the gap that much of the mentoring scholarship is missing. How do students of Color perceive their White faculty mentors? This article centers the point of analysis from those in power to the individual most impacted by unequal power dynamics. If the goal is to recruit, retain, and advance students of Color, then it is critical to learn how they navigate White mentoring relationships within historically White spaces. This article is intended to begin a conversation that begins with the student of Color.

Methodology and Theory

To begin this conversation, I utilize an autoethnographic approach rooted in the counternarrative tradition of Critical Race Theory. Autoethnographies are "highly personalized accounts that draw upon the experience of the author for the purposes of extending sociological understanding" (Sparks, 2000, p. 21). This is an approach used to describe the experiences of gender or racial bias in the tenure process (Bailey & Helvie-Mason, 2011; Edwards, 2017; Hellsten, Martin, McIntyre, & Kinzel, 2011) and the experiences of faculty of Color at HWIs (Griffin, 2012; Miller, 2008). This methodology is based on the claim that "narratives form a structure within which to think about our daily lives and about the magic and mess of human possibilities" (Dillow, 2009, p. 1344).

Counternarratives add a dimension to autoethnography that invites the experiences of the marginalized other to speak their truth to power. Raúl Alberto Mora (2014) writes that "A counternarrative goes beyond the notion that those in relative positions of power can just tell the stories of those in the margins. Instead, these must come from the margins, from the perspectives and voices of those individuals" (p. 1). As demonstrated, the experience of students of Color of the different types of mentors in their lives has not really been captured in the literature. This is largely because the literature is written by those in relative positions of power who may not have considered asking their mentees to contribute to an article. As a

result, many people of Color have to rely on others to "tell their story." Counternarratives offer a solution for that oversight, in this case, by inviting the mentees of Color to reveal their experiences of White mentors.

Ultimately, the goal of an autoethnographic approach is to make sense of everyday experiences by connecting it to sociological principles—connecting the micro to the macro, the personal to the structural. This is what separates it from everyday storytelling or personal accounts. For the purposes of this article, my narrative inquiry is, generally, limited to my pre-graduate school experience as well as my time in Multicultural Affairs. I use this approach to minimize the risk of easily identifying my mentors and colleagues at a certain university. In the next section, I pick up on my conversation with the MMUF to define Collectors, Nightlights, and Allies and provide examples from my own experiences with various mentors in education.

Collectors

Back with the MMUF students, I began to describe/define the role of White mentors whom I called Collectors:

> There are White mentors who will "collect you." They are mentors who will want to add you to the cadre of students of Color that they have decided to help. These are the ones that will "trot" you out to events, ask you to represent the University at some panel during the admissions process, or ask you to serve on some type of diversity committee to help them figure

out a solution to a problem they created for themselves.

Around the room, I saw heads beginning to nod in understanding. I continued, "Collectors are the ones that will ask you to be in photographs or public relations materials on behalf of the university. They also often limit their interactions with students of Color to 'diversity' events." Again, a room full of heads nodded in acquiescence. The other graduate students and faculty of Color added their experiences with Collectors as well. One undergraduate lamented in frustration, "Ugh! I hate it when people are like that." I urged them not to dismiss or overlook Collectors because they, I believe, are often *unintentional* in their condescension. Their value often lies in knowing the resources available within and outside of the institution. Collectors are not bad people. I shared that they are genuine in their desire to help. This desire, however, may be misguided and motivated by what has been identified as a "White savior complex" to "rescue" those who need their help (Hughey, 2014). I have also heard these progressive Whites referred to colloquially as "well-meaning White folk." It just feels like your purpose, as a student of Color, is either to assuage their White liberal guilt or publicly demonstrate their commitment to diversity, or both.

The most frequent kind of mentor I have had is Collectors. From kindergarten to law school, it was usually the teacher or administrator who thought of me for every opportunity designed to benefit a student of Color. If an organization was looking for a Latinx student, my name was usually the first, maybe only, to be put forth. Perhaps one of the strongest examples of a Collector I encountered was Karen, a White woman who administered a program that benefited Latinx students.[ii] Because of her genuine

enthusiasm and ability to speak Spanish, she was beloved by the students. Her sincerity was never in question. However, she was also the person who, in an effort to connect with students of Color, wore outfits or carried purses from the Latin American country where she had some kind of transformative experience. This particular Collector spoke of one country so frequently that the students could predict when she would say, "During my time in….". It became a running joke among the students to count how many times she uttered the phrase.

This particular Collector was notorious for inviting students to events under the guise of networking but then did not introduce them to anyone who could help them advance or establish professional relationships. What made things worse was that when she spoke about the students in the program during administrative meetings, she would refer to them as "my little Latino students," or "my name of the Latino organization" students. It was never simply "my students" or a recognition of their value by saying, "What I have learned from my students is…." While faculty often use the phrase "my students," her particular use of it seemed like a claim of ownership instead of a connection.

Collector behavior also reveals itself in the types of invitations one receives. For example, Madeline, a Collector from my time in Multicultural Affairs, would frequently invite me to cultural or diversity events but offer my White colleagues tickets to football games or even invite them over to her home for a meal and drinks. My White colleagues would unintentionally share stories of being at Madeline's house or having drinks with her at particular restaurants. Me? I got to meet whatever performer or speaker of Color happened to

be invited to the campus. I became what Pat Mora (1985) calls "a handy token sliding back and forth." I was respected as a colleague, but our interactions were confined to the walls of the university.

While these examples may put Collectors in a bad light, they were usually always the ones who maintained access to valuable resources in the form of economic and social capital. In gender studies in corporations, they are called "sponsors." "Sponsors," according to Ibarra, Carter, and Silva (2010), "go beyond giving feedback and advice and use his or her influence with senior executives to advocate for their mentee" (p. 82). Similarly, Collectors were usually the ones who, when a student or I needed financial assistance or an introduction to a person of influence, would almost always come through. I have had Collectors find students internships, provide scholarships for summer study abroad, and even replace lost or stolen technology. I never knew how they accomplished these tasks, just that they did. For me, if this Collector would help me achieve an important goal, I had no problem having dinner with a Latinx candidate for this or that job on campus or a donor who was considering giving money to funds that would benefit students of Color.

The biggest challenge is when I encounter a Collector who believes, in all sincerity, that they are an Ally. It is not difficult to identify the difference between the two, but it is challenging to explain the difference without frustrating a Collector. The best way I have ever heard this type of misguided, but well-intentioned, belief described is as "benevolent racism" (Esposito & Romano, 2014; Miller, 2008). While Miller's use of this phrase was describing a genuinely racist interaction, he describes it as part of the "numerous

experiences of patronizing kindness" he has experienced as a Black man in the academy (Miller, 2008, p. 353). What makes this type of racism so insidious is the fact that it is couched in kindness or "acknowledges and often directly condemns a system of White privilege. However, it does so in a way that further legitimizes and reinforces racist attitudes, policies, and practices in the name of benevolent aims" (Esposito & Romano, 2014, p. 70).

I had a Collector who, after learning that I attended the University of Michigan, wanted to engage me in a conversation about what it was like to be the product of Affirmative Action. I had to decide at that moment whether or not to explain why her question was problematic. Could I explain that her question implied I was accepted based solely on my race and not my skills and intelligence? Did I feel safe enough to explain to her that those kinds of questions trigger the imposter syndrome in me that I have struggled with my entire academic career? Could I be that vulnerable, knowing I could become a story she would share with her colleagues whenever the issue of Affirmative Action was discussed? Could I engage in a scholarly critique/discussion about Sandra Day O'Connor's majority opinion versus Antonin Scalia's dissent in *Grutter v. Bollinger*? Was it worth offending her and losing the relationship to ask her, "I don't know. You tell me. Research shows that Affirmative Action programs benefitted White women more often than people of Color" (Crenshaw 2007; Wise, 1998). How do *you* feel as a product of Affirmative Action?" Instead, I answered, "It can be a challenge sometimes, but I remind myself that I am just as, if not more, qualified than White candidates." She responded exactly as I expected her to with a vigorous, "Of course you are!" She may have thought she

was encouraging, but, to me, it felt like a patronizing pat on the head.

Nightlights

The term, Nightlight, came from a very clever student I worked with at a small, private women's college in Georgia. I shared that my father was interested in buying a car, and we were going to a dealership to browse. The student said, "Don't forget your Nightlight!" The room immediately erupted in laughter. I was not in on the joke and stood there confused. My Nightlight? The student was referring to my partner, Greg, who is a 6'1" White man. This led to a discussion that Greg, as a White man, would likely receive better treatment than my short, heavily accented Mexican American father—which, unfortunately, turned out to be true. At that moment, I thought about all of the times I asked Greg to make particular phone calls when I was either (a) concerned the recipient of the call would not respond to someone with a complicated, obviously ethnic name, or (b) I didn't feel like using my "White voice" and use the name, Marcy or Marcella. I have had colleagues scold me and tell me to *make* people say my name. Most of the time, however, I just want a refund, or a service ordered with little to no complications because, on those particular occasions, I just do not have a fight left in me. If I am never going to interact with those individuals again, why exert my energy?

Nightlights, then, are White mentors who understand the challenges inherent at HWIs and can help students of Color navigate the unknown and unforeseeable curves and twists of the academy. They, figuratively, provide light in the dark, unfamiliar places within academia. Nightlights may not relate to or understand

the experiences of students of Color, but they do recognize and acknowledge the existence of systemic racism within the academy. Nightlights help you to see around corners and briefly step in when you need assistance navigating a complicated academic journey. They use their privilege, social capital, and cultural capital to reveal the often unspoken rules that you will likely encounter during your academic life or translate the statements or situations that are laden with double meaning. They make the invisible visible and explain the unspoken. In essence, they reveal the hidden curriculum that so often eludes students of Color. One would not necessarily maintain a deep relationship with a Nightlight. Instead, their purpose is almost situational, practical—similar to an actual nightlight that illuminates dark spaces.

I can go as far back as elementary school to identify one of the first Nightlights in my life. I was one of two Latinx kids in my elementary school. My mother would make tacos wrapped in aluminum foil for my father to take to work. One day I opened my Muppets lunchbox, and, to my delight, there sat my very own aluminum-foil-wrapped deliciousness. As I peeled back the foil, my classmates began asking, "What's that smell?" "What are you eating?" These were the days before the rise in popularity of Taco Bell and the little "Yo Quiero Taco Bell" Chihuahua. To this day, I can remember feeling embarrassed, alone, and, most of all, weird. From behind I hear this delighted gasp. I turn around and it is Mr. Walsh, one of the most popular teachers in the school. He asked, "Are those tacos?" I sheepishly answered, yes. He asked, "Can I have some?" I happily answered, yes. He reached down and tore one in half, took a bite, and loudly proclaimed, "Mmmm, mmmm! I love tacos! These are sooo good!" He thanked me for sharing, winked, and walked away.

Almost immediately, my classmates began asking, "Can I have some? I want some."

Looking back, I truly admire his low-key approach. He could have intervened on my behalf and tried to rescue me. He could have excoriated my classmates or turned it into a "teachable moment" about valuing difference and whatnot. He could have talked to me afterward to make sure I was okay, making me feel even more different from my classmates. Instead, he quietly approached the situation, made a connection with me, and, most importantly, used his popularity to transform my weird to cool. Maybe Mr. Walsh genuinely did like tacos and used this opportunity to steal lunch from a child. But, looking back, he carried on in such an animated fashion that I have to believe it was deliberate.

The key to this interaction was how he used his social capital as a favored teacher to help me out of an awkward situation and give me more status in my classmate's eyes. In an academic setting, this may come in many forms. I will offer four scenarios:

1. Intervening during a meeting when a person of Color becomes "the representative" for all people of Color

There have been times when I have sat in a meeting, and all eyes are on me for the "diversity" perspective, such as how to recruit more students of Color into a school or program; how to identify the needs of people of Color in the department; or to suggest what ways a department can improve the processes related to hiring, mentoring, or retention. A Nightlight could intervene and say, "We are all intelligent people here. I recommend we all conduct research on this topic and then come back and revisit the discussion. We can all stand

to learn more and not just rely on a colleague or student to do the work for us."

Sadly, I have never had anyone intervene in this way on my behalf. Could I speak up for myself? Yes, there is nothing technically stopping me. But when you consider the power dynamics of being a student, you have to weigh and balance which "hill you're willing to die on." This particular scenario happens so often you almost become immune. Once people have demonstrated to me that they are not willing to put in the work to understand the issues relevant to people of Color and leave that to those who do "race work," the effort to teach is too overwhelming. The risk is not worth the reward. There are some cups you can never fill.

2. Nominating a person of Color for a committee or task that is *not* related to race/difference

Over my educational journey, I have been asked to sit on numerous advisory boards, serve on various committees, and review books/articles where my Latinidad offers a "unique and valuable perspective." That is usually how it is framed for me, particularly when the group is dominated by White people. I never doubt the sincerity of the request, but I do often question the effort. This is not to say that I do not want to do this work. Most times, I find myself saying yes. Perhaps this is something that will change over time as I cultivate the ability to say no. I am not suggesting to never ask, I would just like to be considered for other things as well.

Once again, I cannot think of a time when I was asked by a White mentor to serve on a committee or advisory board that did not have to do with diversity work. However, I can think of many instances

when women of Color have asked me to serve in ways that did not involve diversity work. I was asked to serve on a local arrangements committee for a conference in Atlanta. I relished the experience and got to meet a new colleague whose path I may have never crossed otherwise. I was also asked to serve on another committee where my legal experience/knowledge was helpful to the process. In this particular case, I was not asked because I was Latina. I do not even know if I was asked because of my legal education. In all honesty, I do not know why I was asked. It is not to say my race, gender, or class does not shape and inform my thoughts, ideas, and recommendations. However, simply being asked to do something so important outside of "diversity work" was refreshing.

3. Take a moment to read a colleague's or student's work and talk about it with them, drop a note of appreciation, or mention it in a professional setting

This is probably an area where Nightlights can really shine. As a woman of Color, I have read Weber, Marx, Goffman (not Alice), Butler, McKinnon, Bourdieu, Hochschild, and the like. I am almost certain many of my White colleagues have not read Aldon, DuBois, Cooper, Anzaldua, Collins, Crenshaw, Takaki, or Lopez. Many of my colleagues involved in race become experts twice over. For example, in social movement literature, I not only have to know McAdam, Tilly, Tarrow, Bedford, and Snow, I am also reading Aldon, Bell, Craig, Torres, and Omatsu in order to carve out a place for my research. I truly believe this is why so many sections in the American Sociological Association struggle with recruiting people of Color. You may not know our work, but we know yours. An environmental sociologist, for example, can

spend an entire career never engaging questions of race. An environmental sociologist who uses a raced lens, on the other hand, has learned both kinds of literature.

I have had moments when I am simply talking about my research, and someone will take a genuine interest and pepper me with questions, recommend articles, etc. I have also had people tell me that they were at a conference and mentioned my research. One individual told me, "You made me look really smart the other day! We were discussing school desegregation, and I got to give them new information about cases in your research. Here was a room full of experts, and they learned something new." He was essentially bragging about me. He shared it with me, not because he was trying to show his support. He was sharing it because he enjoyed introducing something new. The best is when a colleague emails me or comes and talks to me about an article I authored. Felder, Stevenson, and Gasman (2014) who studied doctoral graduates found that "most students found support from faculty members of *all racial and ethnic backgrounds* helpful when they were supportive of their racial identity, research interests, and progress towards degree completion" (p. 38, *emphasis mine*).

The imposter syndrome is so terribly strong, particularly for a first-generation individual where every interaction feels like a new one. These brief moments of affirmation are helpful, particularly when they come from seasoned scholars or people within your own department. This is not about being affirmed by someone who is White. It is about being recognized as an equal, valuable member of the organization, group, or department. This is why I call these Nightlight moments. It's a temporary,

helpful illumination in an otherwise obscure place.

4. Take a moment to learn about a situation before making conclusions

To provide an example for this recommendation, I share another "Nightlight" moment in elementary school when I was recommended for speech therapy. Apparently, my "Y's" were sounding more like "J's" and my "Ch" sounded like "Sh." So Instead of yellow, I would say, "Jellow." Instead of cheese, I would say, "Sheese." During my first session, the speech therapist asked me to say "yellow," emphasizing the Y. "Yellow. Y— Y— Y—Yellow." I replied, "Yellow." She took me through a few other Y-words, and, sure enough, I could easily pronounce them. She did the same with the "Ch" and "Sh" sound. Once again, I could say "ships" and "chips" clearly and knew one was a boat and the other a snack. In an amazing act of simplicity, she asked what no other teacher or administrator thought to ask me, "Why do you say 'sheese' and 'jellow'?" I said, "That's how my mom pronounces it." I was simply imitating the sounds I heard at home living with parents who possessed heavy accents. We did meet a few more times as she taught me the difference between school and home language without saying one was right and the other wrong. She would simply say, "Your teachers don't know your family." I remember going home and trying to teach my mother the same thing. To this day, she still says, "jellow."

That particular interaction demonstrates how Nightlights do not take things as they seem. They "shed light" by simply asking questions, gathering more information, and recognizing that perhaps I am not the problem. In this particular case, I was not the "problematic" student with a speech

impediment. I was a very bright student with a Spanish-speaking mother who was trying to learn English. In the academy, it translates to learning more about a student's circumstances, training, background, responsibilities, etc. As sociologists, we should know that there have to be other explanations besides individual ones.

I struggled with passive voice for years and felt foolish for not being able to identify it in my writing. A Nightlight who recognized my insecurity assured me that many people struggle with passive voice. She observed that I write as though I am speaking or giving a speech and asked me why. At that moment, I realized that it was because my parents could not read and revise my papers in school. Their primary language was Spanish, and they possessed a second- and eighth-grade education, respectively. I had no clue they could not read my papers. Instead, they would ask me to read it to them. These opportunities gave me tremendous confidence because they would applaud at the end of my "presentation." Each writing became rooted in drama and colorful language to get a visible reaction from my parents. I have no doubt that that experience is why I am a confident public speaker. I was not a bad writer. I just needed to learn a few simple rules about writing that I was never taught. Ever since then, I share the same lesson on passive voice with my undergraduates just in case they were not taught as well.

Allies

There is, of course, the third category, and those are Allies. Allies are by far the most aware of the experiences of students of Color, usually, because they can make meaningful connections to their own experiences without asserting equality (e.g., first-generation status, working or blue-collar class background, childhood in communities where they were the minority, or having other marginalized identities such as gender, LGBTQI+, or living with a disability). Allies are most likely to, for example, invite their mentees to conferences and take the time to introduce them to important individuals in the field beyond simple introductions. They are also most likely to co-author with their graduate students to help them gain greater standing in the already competitive world of academia. When you examine the syllabus of an ally, it is filled with scholars that affirm the varied experiences of students of Color and demonstrates an effort to "decolonize" their syllabus (DeChavez, 2018) or engage in the recent movement of #CiteBlackWomen started by Dr. Christen Smith, an anthropologist at University of Texas at Austin. In a phrase, Allies have "done the work" it takes to develop an appreciation and admiration for the experiences of students of Color, and this work informs their mentoring relationships.

Allies, for me, were the easiest to identify during my academic career. I culled three examples from my life, each different in their approach but similar in their impact. The first was Penelope Sanchez. Penelope was a White woman who worked in a bilingual education program in my high school and was actively involved in the Latinx community of Battle Creek. I would regularly see her at baptisms, Quinciñeras, weddings, and funerals. Like Karen, the Collector, she spoke Spanish, but her use of it was so different. Karen seems to show off her bilingual skills and would sometimes even correct Latino students, whereas Penelope used it because sometimes English just cannot capture the sentiment. It was more than a language she acquired; it became the language of her soul. Members of the Latinx community would often

describe her as "not Mexicana in blood but Mexicana by heart."

I would go to Penelope's office when I was struggling with microaggressions, and she would just sit and listen and understand. She did not make a big show of her own outrage but focused on understanding me and preparing me for the microaggressions yet to come. She never coddled me, and I always felt respected because she would remind me of my strong character and that I come from a long line of strong women. As a Latina in high school, I needed affirmations and validation, not indignation and representation. She never tried to "rescue" me. She helped me rescue myself because she knew I could do it.

I was not a decoration in her life like a piece of furniture, a set of earrings, or a handbag that affirmed her connection to Latinidad. I was an integral part of her life. Her advocacy and love for justice were like breathing. She made it look easy—even though I knew it wasn't. I did not have to "perform Whiteness" for Penelope. I never felt exhausted after meeting with her because she found me so "fascinating." I never felt as though I was her own personal cultural teacher translating my beautifully complex world and experience into manageable, easy-to-swallow bites for her.

Penelope also fed my hungry educational soul that longed for any kind of reminder of me, my culture, and my history. She gave me a well-worn copy of Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzalez's epic poem called, "Yo Soy Joaquin/I am Joaquin." I devoured all 122 pages of that book—even the photographic credits. I memorized it. I even used it in public speaking competitions. It contained photographs of people who looked like my family members. It was written by someone who looked like my *tios*

and tias (uncles and aunts). Every page fed the fire of Chicana pride coursing through my soul. When she gave it to me, she simply said, "This made me think of you." I didn't know it at the time, but the book was no longer in print. That was her one treasured copy, and she gave it to me. To this day, I purchase whatever copies I can afford and share them with my own students.

I believe her ability to connect with me came from her own blue-collar background. She knew what it was like to feel strange in "wealthy" places. She battled the ignorance of people who looked down on her interracial/bicultural marriage. Because she had daughters whose skin signaled that they were biracial, she understood the challenge of raising someone with pride when the world tells you that you should be ashamed. Even though she had all this "inside" knowledge, she never treated it as an open invitation into my Chicana world. She always waited for an invitation, never assumed she would be welcomed, and was humbled when she was invited into our world.

I met another ally and dear friend in Stephen when I served as director of multicultural affairs at a southern institution. He was the director of the LGBT Center and, understandably, wary of the new member of the community. The office I inherited was not necessarily connected with the LGBT Center despite it being just down the hall. I liked him immediately because he would speak so beautifully about his students, and the Center was always buzzing with voices and laughter. He knew what it was like to have to create a space where people who are choked by ignorance could come and just breathe.

He became my ally after an argument/misunderstanding having to do

with the copy machine. His office used my "code" to make copies, and I asked if we could be reimbursed after a particularly large job. His office did not have a code because the university worked very hard to assure state representatives that public money was not being used to fund the LGBT Center. He complained to my boss and her boss about my "bill." Fortunately, my boss told me and asked me to settle the affair before it grew into a bigger problem. I learned very quickly about the politics of paper that arise among those with limited resources.

I asked him to come meet me in my office, where we had an intense but real conversation. I had explained to him that we were both on the same side but that he put me in a challenging position because instead of being able to subsume the Center's activities undermine, he now put a spotlight on it. I explained that I only asked to be reimbursed because it took a big chunk of my budget. He thought I would be billing him monthly, taking resources that he had otherwise planned for his students. He thought I was using the opportunity to establish a clear separation between my office and his, sending a message that my issues with racism took precedence over his battle with homophobia. I understood his position, and he understood mine. We were able to come up with a compromise that was mutually beneficial. After that, we were friends. He never doubted my motives, and I never questioned his.

After that misunderstanding, he became my biggest advocate whenever we were in all White spaces. He understood the privileges that came with being a White male and that those privileges weren't erased because of his identity as a gay, married man. It was nice to sit in meetings with him because I was not the one who always had to point out racially and culturally offensive suggestions. When he did so, he did not don a cape and come to my rescue. He was doing it because it was the right thing to do. The best thing about his advocacy is he never advertised it. No one except the people in those meetings knew what he had done on my behalf and on behalf of the students of Color I represented.

My interaction with Stephen represents two more aspects of an ally: (a) the ability to have and recover from disagreements and (b) understanding when and how to use their privilege in spaces where another's voice was not or would not be heard. Disagreements are part of every relationship. Collectors are devastated when confronted with their bias, implicit or otherwise. I almost hesitate to point out a Collector's problematic words or behaviors because I know they will respond as if their whole world has just collapsed. DiAngelo (2018) describes this response as "White fragility." What is worse is that they will expect me to help them feel better about themselves and affirm their imagined place in my world. An Ally, on the other hand, apologizes, uses the experience for self-reflection, and then puts in the work to self-educate. The onus for growth is on them, not me. An Ally also knows when to push back and when to support, when to question and when to validate. The most important aspect of a relationship with a mentor who is an Ally is trust. They have earned a student of Color's trust with their consistency and humility.

An Ally is different. I'm thinking of the Collector who wanted to know "what it was like to be a product of Affirmative Action." First, an Ally would have already taken the time to learn as much as possible about Affirmative Action in higher education and not relied on me to give them a fascinating story to share with other White colleagues.

Second, if they wanted to talk about Affirmative Action, they would want to engage in a scholarly discussion that drew upon my expertise. As an example, I was recently on the job market and fortunate to interview with several phenomenal institutions and in a position where I turned down three more campus invitations. I was overwhelmed and humbled by the attention. As my colleagues heard of my good news, I was told by one of them, "I heard about your luck! Good for you. Of course, you can't be surprised that you were going to get lots of invitations. I mean, you're Hispanic, right?" Though I loathe to admit it, his response did trigger the imposter syndrome in me that questioned if I was a statistic in interviewers' minds representing proof that they had "tried" to hire a faculty member of Color.

Knowing that I could not go into another interview with those doubts, I shared the experience with an Ally, and she said with all the sarcasm I had grown to love, "Oh yeah sure! It has nothing to do with the fact that you have a f**king JD and PhD, are published more than he is, have a fascinating research project that you worked you're a** off to complete, and were awarded a Mellon Fellowship to teach at one of the most prestigious colleges in the country (referring to Morehouse College). Yeah, sure, it's because you're Hispanic." Her default was not to affirm my qualifications with the patronizing kindness of, "Oh, you know that's not true, right? You're fantastic!" Instead, knowing me so well, she was able to criticize his shallow, limited ignorance while reminding me of my intelligence and accomplishments.

This interaction is affirmed in the literature. In a 2008 study of faculty-student links and college persistence, Cress (2008) "found that students who feel that faculty

treat them with respect, give them honest feedback about their ability, challenge them intellectually and give them emotional support are less likely to perceive negative campus climate or prejudice" (p. 104). Collette Taylor (2013) shares that in her experience as a Black woman in academia,

> I have found my support by looking outside of my institution with former mentors, writing colleagues, friends, and family. With them, I do not have to be *faculty while black*. In this space, there is a natural understanding and acceptance of the complexity of my identity and the expectation to be the best. The nonjudgmental and unconditional support that these individuals offer is not about what type of faculty member I am expected to be. It is framed around the faculty members that I already am, and they push me to be better than my best. (Jones, Taylor, & Coward, p. 8).

This is an example of moving away from "deficit model thinking." Taylor is describing an experience where her credentials, intelligence, and contributions are already assumed to exist. She does not have to be taught to be amazing. She just needs to learn where, when, and how to direct that energy.

If I am making it seem difficult to become an Ally, I am. It should be difficult because it involves doing "the work." It requires a White person to excavate parts of themselves that have received the wrong messages and replace them with new experiences and learning. It requires pursuing education from multiple sources

and not just waiting for a person of Color to be an easily accessible teacher. It requires acknowledging that people of Color possess a different kind of cultural capital rooted in resilience, hard work, innovation, determination, and the ability to negotiate multiple realities simultaneously. Becoming my Ally requires an individual to work as hard as I have to interpret, understand, and maneuver within an overwhelmingly and exhausting White world. As Tressie McMillan Cottom (2016) once wrote, "I know my whites." The question becomes how well you, White mentors, know us.

Conclusion

It is critical to understand that these are not static categories with clear lines and definitions. I am still refining my own understanding of these groups. The fact of the matter is, as with any category defined in the social sciences, the lines between these groups can be blurry. Furthermore, one person's Nightlight could be another's Ally and vice versa. All Allies are also Nightlights, but not all Nightlights are necessarily Allies. The easiest to identify, however, is the Collectors since they are, by far, the most common type of White mentor a student of Color will encounter throughout their academic and professional career. Also, if you are a well-meaning White mentor, please do not use this article to ask your students/colleagues of Color, whether you are a Collector, Nightlight, or Ally. As I have discussed these concepts with my fellow scholars of Color, most agree that if one has to ask which category of mentor applies to them, they are most likely a Collector.

These reflections are not meant to deride the genuine efforts of White mentors. There are some White mentors who believe that they have a professional, moral, and ethical obligation to provide mentoring. However, until mentoring becomes part of faculty role statements and employment contracts, White faculty in the academy are under no obligation to mentor marginalized or under-represented students—particularly if they cannot do it well. I hope this will spark conversation, debate, and even self-reflection. I also understand that being labeled, categorized, studied, and discussed amongst students of Color may cause offense or feel disturbing. To that, I can only share, "Welcome to my world." As evidenced in the literature review, many people of Color know what it feels like to be a problem to identify or a puzzle to solve. If colleges and universities are ostensibly interested in recruiting a diverse and representative student population, yet fail to provide meaningful mentoring, they will only replicate and reinforce an already well-established racialized hierarchy.

References

Acker, S., & Hague E. (2015). The struggle to make sense of doctoral study. *Higher Education Research and Development, 34*(2), 222–241.

Allen, T. (2007). Mentoring relationships from the perspective of the mentor. In B. R. Ragins & K. E. Kram (Eds.), *The handbook of mentoring at work: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 123–148). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Bailey, L. E., & Helvie-Mason, L. (2011). Evolving strategies and emerging selves: Two junior faculty reflect on the road to tenure. *Vitae Scholasticae, 28*(1), 41–64.

Baker, V.L., Pifer, M. J., & Griffin, K. A. (2014). Mentor-protégé fit: Identifying and developing effective mentorship across identities in doctoral education. *International Journal for Researcher Development, 5*(2), 83–98.

Bancroft, S.F., Benson, S. K., & Johnson Whitt, W. (2016). McNair scholars' science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) graduate experience: A pilot study. *Mid-Western Educational Researcher, 28*(1), 3.

Barker, M. J. (2011). Racial context, currency, and connection: Black doctoral student and white advisor perspectives on cross-race advising. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 48*(4), 387–400.

Barker, M. J. (2016). The doctorate in black and white: Exploring the engagement of black doctoral students in cross-race advising with white faculty. *The Western Journal of Black Studies, 40*(2), 126–140.

Bishop, A. (2015). *Becoming an ally: Breaking the cycle of oppression* (3rd ed.). Nova Scotia, Canada: Fernwood Publishing.

Blockett, R. A., Felder, P. P., Parrish, W., I, & Collier, J. (2016). Pathways to the professoriate: Exploring black doctoral student socialization and the pipeline to the academic profession. *The Western Journal of Black Studies, 40*(2), 95–110.

Calafell, B.M. (2007). Mentoring and Love: An Open Letter. *Critical Studies Critical Methodologies, 7*(4), 425–441.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Cohen, G. L., & Steele, C. M. (2002). A barrier of mistrust: How negative stereotypes affect cross-race mentoring. In J. Aronson (Ed.), *Improving academic achievement: Impact of psychological factors in education* (pp. 305–331). New York: Elsevier, Inc.

Crenshaw, K. (2007). Framing Affirmative Action. *Michigan Law Review First Impressions, 105*, 123–133.

Cress, C. M. (2008). Creating inclusive learning communities: The role of student-faculty relationships mitigating negative campus climate. *Learning Inquiry, 2*, 95–111. doi: 10.1007/s11519-008-0028-2

Crisp, G., & Cruz, I. (2009). Mentoring college students: A critical review of the literature between 1990 and 2007. *Research in Higher Education, 50*(6), 525–545.

Daniel, C. A. (2007). Outsiders-within: Critical race theory, graduate education and barriers to professionalization. *Journal of Sociology and Social Work, 35*(1), 25–42.

DeChavez, Y. (2018, November 6). It's time to decolonize that syllabus. *Los Angeles Times.* Retrieved from http://www.latimes.com/books/la-et-jc-decolonize-syllabus-20181008-story.html

DeFour, D.C., & Hirsch, B.J. (1990). Mentoring in the preparation of graduate students of color. *Review of Educational Research, 71*, 549–574.

Derman-Sparks, L., Brunson Phillips, C., & Hilliard, A. G., III. (1997). *Teaching and Learning Anti-Racism: A Developmental Approach* (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

DeWalt, C. S. (2004). In the midst of a maze: A need for mentoring. In D. Cleveland (Ed.), *A long way to go: Conversations about race by African American faculty and graduate students* (pp. 41–46). Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers.

DiAngelo, R. (2018). *White fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Dillow, C. (2009). Growing up: A journey toward theoretical understanding. *Qualitative Inquiry, 15*(8), 1338–1351.

Edwards, J. (2017). Narrating experiences of sexism in higher education: A critical feminist autoethnography to make meaning of the past, challenge the status quo, and consider the future. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 30*(7), 621–634.

Ellis, C. (2004). *The ethnographic I: A methodological novel about autoethnography*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P. (2011). Autoethnography: An overview. *Historical Social Research, 36*(4), 273–290.

Esposito, L., & Romano, V. (2014). Benevolent racism: Upholding racial inequality in the name of black empowerment. *Western Journal of Black Studies, 38*(2), 69–83.

Felder, P. P., Stevenson, H. C., & Gasman, M. (2014). Understanding race in doctoral student socialization. *International Journal of Doctoral Studies, 9*, 21–42.

Fletcher, S., & Mullen, C. A. (Eds.). (2012). *The SAGE Handbook of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing.

García, A. (2005). Counter stories of race and gender: Situating experiences of Latinas in the academy. *Latino Studies*, *3*(2), 261–273.

Griffin, R. A. (2012). I *am* an angry black woman: Black feminist autoethnography, voice, and resistance. *Women's Studies in Communications, 35*, 138–157.

Griffin, K.A., Muñiz, M., & Espinosa, L. (2016). Graduate diversity officers and efforts to retain students of color. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 53*(1), 26–38.

Hellsten, L.-A M., Martin, S. L., McIntyre, L. J., & Kinzel, A. (2011). Women on the academic tenure track: An autoethnographic inquiry. *International Journal for Cross-Disciplinary Subjects in Education, 2*(1), 272–275.

Hewlett, S. A. (2013). *Forget a mentor, find a sponsor: The new way to fast-track your career*. Boston: Harvard Business Review.

Hewlett, S. A., Peraino, K., Sherbin, L., & Sumberg, K. (2010). The sponsor effect: Breaking through the last glass ceiling. In *Harvard Business Review Research Report* (pp. 1–85). Boston: Center for Work Life Policy.

Hochschild, A.R. (1983). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Hughey, M. W. (2014). *The white savior film: Content, critics, and consumption*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Ibarra, H., Carter, N. M., & Silva, C. (2010, September). Why men still get more promotions than women. *Harvard Business Review*, 80–85. Retrieved from https://hbr.org/2010/09/why-men-still-get-more-promotions-than-women

Jack, A. A. (2016). (No) harm in asking: Class, acquired cultural capital, and academic engagement at an elite university. *Sociology of Education, 89*(1), 1–19.

Johnson, Brad W. (2017, April 23). How to be an ally to new minority scholars. *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved at https://www.chronicle.com/article/How-to-Be-an-Ally-to-New/239859

Johnson-Bailey, J., & Cervero, R. M. (2004). Mentoring in black and white: The intricacies of cross-cultural mentoring. *Mentoring and Tutoring: Partnership in Learning, 12*(1), 7–21.

Johnson-Baily, J., Valentine, T., Cervero, R., & Bowles, T. (2009). Rooted in the soil: The social experiences of Black graduate students at a Southern research university. *Journal of Higher Education, 80*(2), 178–203.

Jones, S. J., Taylor, C. M., & Coward, F. (2013). Through the looking glass: An autoethnographic view of the perceptions of race and institutional support in the tenure process. *The Qualitative Report, 18*(58), 1–16.

Katzew, A. (2009). 'Hello profesora': Teaching as a Chicana at a predominantly white university. *Latino Studies, 7*(2), 252–261.

Lavariega Monforti, J. L., & Michelson, M. R. (2008). Diagnosing the leaky pipeline: Continuing barriers to the retention of Latinas and Latinos in political science. *PS: Political Science and Politics, 41*(1), 161–166.

Margolis, E., & Romero, M. (1998). The department is very male, very white, very old, and very conservative: The functioning of the hidden curriculum in graduate sociology departments. *Harvard Educational Review, 68*(1), 1–33.

McGuire, G.M., & Reger, J. (2003). Feminist co-mentoring: A model for academic professional development. *NWSA Journal*, *15*(1), 54–70.

McMillan Cottom, T. (2016, December 13). The problem with Obama's faith in white America. *The Atlantic.* Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/12/obamas-faith-in-white-america/510503/

Miller, D. (2008). Shades of gray: An autoethnographic study of race in the academy. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 21*(4), 347–373.

Mora, P. (1985). *Chants*. Houston: An Arte Público Press.

Mora, R. A. (2014). Counter-narrative. *Key Concepts in Intercultural Dialogue, 36*, 1. Retrieved from https://centerforinterculturaldialogue.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/key-concept-counter-narrative.pdf

Padilla, A.M. (1994). Ethnic minority scholars, research, and mentoring: Current and future issues. *Educational Researcher*, *23*(4), 24–27.

Patton, L. D. (2009). My sister's keeper: A qualitative examination of mentoring experiences among African American women in graduate and professional schools. *The Journal of Higher Education, 80*(5), 510–537.

Patton, L., & Harper, S. (2003). Mentoring relationships among African-American women in graduate and professional schools. In M. Howard-Hamilton (Ed.), Meeting the needs of

African-American women, (pp. 67–78). *New Directors for Student Services* no. 104. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Phelps-Ward, R., & DeAngelo, L. (2016). Feeding the pipeline toward the doctorate: Examining the formal mentoring experiences of Black undergraduate students. *The Western Journal of Black Studies, 40*(2), 111–125.

Ramirez, E. (2014). "Qué estoy haciendo aquí? (What am I doing here?)": Chicanos/Latinos(as) navigating challenges and inequalities during their first year of graduate school. *Equity and Excellence, 47*(2), 167–186.

Reddick, R. J., & Ortego Pritchett, K. (2015). "'I don't want to work in a world of whiteness": White faculty and their mentoring relationships with black students. *The Journal of the Professoriate, 8*(1), 54–84.

Rockquemore, K. A. (2016, February 3). Most mentoring today is based on an outdated model (essay). *Inside Higher Ed.* Retrieved from https://www.insidehighered.com/users/kerry-ann-rockquemore?page=3

Schlemper, M.B., & Monk, J. (2011). Discourses on 'diversity': Perspectives from graduate programs in geography in the United States. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, *35*(1), 23–46.

Smith, D. T., & Crawford, K. (2007). Climbing the Ivory Tower: Recommendations for mentoring African American women in higher education. *Race, Gender, and Class, 14*(1/2), 253–265.

Smith, E. P., & Davidson, W. S., II. (1992). Mentoring and the development of African-American graduate students. *Journal of College Student Development, 33*(6), 531–539.

Solorzano, D., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. *The Journal of Negro Education, 69*(1/2), 60–73.

Sparks, A.C. (2000). Autoethnography and narratives of self: Reflections on criteria in action. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, *17*, 21–43.

Twale, D. J., Weidman, J. C., & Bethea, K. (2016). Conceptualizing socialization of graduate students of color: Revisiting the Weidman-Twale-Stein framework. *Western Journal of Black Studies, suppl. Special Issue: Exploring Doctoral Student Socialization and the African American Experience, 40*(2), 80–94.

Wise, T. (1998). Is sisterhood conditional? White women and the rollback of affirmative action. *NWSA Journal, 10*(3), 1–26.

ii I thank my colleague Dr. Selina Gallo-Cruz for suggesting this third category.