



Mentoring minority graduate students: issues and strategies for institutions, faculty, and students

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine mentoring relationships involving minority graduate students in the USA.

Design/methodology/approach – The authors take a multifaceted approach to providing strategies to improve the opportunities of minority students to acquire mentors by directing attention to institutional practices, faculty development, and the behaviors of students themselves.

Findings – Mentoring relationships provide critical personal and professional development opportunities throughout one's career. These relationships are especially important for racial minorities who often lack access to informal networks and information that is required to be successful in academic and professional environments in which they are under-represented. The lack of mentors for minority graduate students is important to consider given the potential impact of this experience for minority graduate students' retention and subsequent success, but also for the future diversity of the discipline (especially its instruction and research). This article identifies the challenges that minority graduate students confront in establishing healthy mentoring relationships, and the unfortunate outcomes of when minority graduate students lack productive mentoring relationships.

Originality/value – The paper provides a multilevel analysis of mentoring of minority graduate students.

Keywords Mentoring, Ethnic minorities, Discrimination, Graduates, Higher education, United States of America

Paper type Conceptual paper

There is almost no institution nor environment in which mentoring is not discussed as a critical tool for personal, professional, and career development. Mentoring programs within industrial organizations are commonplace and they have a growing occurrence on college campuses. Much of the attention related to mentoring on campus has been directed toward undergraduate education, rather than graduate training and development. Yet, “. . . the success of graduate education depends on a student-faculty relationship based on integrity, trust, and support . . . quality graduate programs have some sort of a faculty mentor system, in which students can obtain advice, counseling, and helpful direction in their training (Ellis, 1992, p. 575)”. Perhaps it is expected then that at the graduate level, especially for doctoral students, that effective mentoring relationships flourish between graduate students and their major professors/advisors. However minority graduate students often experience more isolation and less access to mentors and role-models than their non-minority peers (Girves *et al.*, 2005). Even when



mentoring relationships do emerge, they may not be the same as the mentoring provided to non-minority graduate students (Blake-Beard, 2001; Ellis, 2000).

This article has three main objectives. The first objective is to identify the challenges ethnic minority graduate students confront in establishing effective mentoring relationships. Second, another objective is to expose the detrimental outcomes of when these relationships are non-existent. Effective mentoring of minority graduate students is, “. . . critical for shaping and raising expectations about academic career, preparing for the job market, and managing their careers once they gain entry to a faculty position (Girves *et al.*, 2005, p. 453)”. The third and final objective is to offer suggestions to ethnic minority graduate students, their faculty, and their institutions for promoting effective mentoring and professional and career development for these students.

Definitions of mentoring

Mentoring is the act of providing guidance and support delivered from a mentor to a protégé. Most often a senior colleague provides support, feedback, information, and advocacy to a more junior or less experienced colleague. Peer mentoring and upward mentoring (when junior colleagues inform senior colleagues about their needs and experiences), are other mentoring configurations. Mentoring often involves career socialization, inspiration and belief in each other, and promoting excellence and passion for work through guidance, protection, support, and networking. It also typically involves taking an interest in each other as human beings as well as supporting professional practice (Vance, 2002). Most definitions of mentoring agree that mentoring goes beyond mere career development but includes a strong personal relationship. Most models of mentoring discuss it as having both instrumental and psychosocial functions (Thomas, 2005). The psychosocial function relates mainly to issues of helping and support whereas the instrumental functions are more likely career related and can involve advocacy, assistance with negotiating the political climate of one’s institution, feedback, and access to networks.

Torrance (1984) describes mentoring relationships as deep and caring. Mentors are close, trusted colleagues, and guides to their protégés. The mentor–protégé relationship forms over time and becomes something of great value to both the mentor and protégé. Wilde and Schau (1991) found that graduate students rate mutual support and comprehensiveness of relationship as two of the most important factors in successful mentoring. Mutuality was defined as having a reciprocal relationship where both mentor and protégé share feelings and values. Comprehensiveness was defined as being broad in scope where many interpersonal and role characteristics are shared both in and beyond the school environment.

Functional mentoring

Healthy mentoring relationships, what we call functional mentoring, has been touted as critical in preparing graduate students for careers (Murray, 1997). Mentoring research suggests that having been functionally mentored correlates strongly with both success and satisfaction in academia (Sanders and Wong, 1985), business (Burke, 1984; Fagenson, 1989), and education (Wilde and Schau, 1991). There are characteristics common to mentors that promote functional mentoring relationships regardless of the protégé’s identity. These characteristics include being knowledgeable, experienced, visible, and powerful. It is often assumed that faculty members are credible mentors. Many faculty are professionally mature and accomplished enough to

be able to offer naïve students critical information about growing one's career in their disciplines. Faculty mentors need to be visible both within their respective profession and accessible to the protégés. It is imperative for the mentor to be visible in order for the graduate student protégé to engage in role modeling. In order to be an effective advocate for their protégés, faculty need also to have some sort of formal power both over the development of the protégé and within their respective organization as well as within the profession.

In many ways, the relationship forged during mentoring process can be thought of as a complex social exchange with perceived benefits for all parties involved. Social exchange theory provides a useful context for understanding the mentoring process. Given this theory holds that actors naturally will seek to maximize rewards in any social exchange in which they enter (Homans, 1961; Blau, 1964). Simply put individuals will seek out social relations which are likely to result in favorable outcomes for them in the form of expected rewards. That reward can be as simple as a friendship or job connection. To engage in an exchange, an individual will present themselves as an attractive option to the individual they wish to "exchange". However, mutual attraction depends on how rewarding they anticipate this exchange will be. In an equitable two-party exchange, both parties understand how the other party will benefit from this exchange. Overall, given the characteristics of a typical mentor-protégé relationship social exchange theory is a valuable theoretical framework for understanding the benefits functional mentoring for both the mentor and the protégé. This perspective also aids our understanding about why either a potential mentor or student or both decide not to enter into the exchange involved in a mentoring relationship.

Mentoring benefits

Among the many benefits of functional mentoring to protégés are guidance, support, an enhanced network, and feedback. Graduate student protégés benefit from guidance by their mentors in many ways. Among these are academic guidance, career development, personal guidance, and overall aid in the socialization of the graduate student. Protégés also benefit from an enhanced access to a professional network offered by the mentor. Graduate students benefit from the exposure a mentor can provide. Through this exposure the student gains ability to develop meaningful relationships with future colleagues in their respective profession. Thirdly, graduate student's benefit from receiving honest feedback from their mentors. These benefits help protégés survive graduate school, but they also promote the professional and career development of protégés as well.

There are universal benefits of mentoring for mentors as well. However, like the mentoring benefits for protégés, mentor benefits should be expanded when cross-race mentoring is provided. Potential benefits to faculty mentors include both tangible (assistance with projects, increased power, networking as protégés advances) and personal rewards (altruism, validation, pleasure in protégé's achievements, and sense of competence) (Newby and Heide, 1992). When mentoring occurs across racial lines, mentors reap the extra benefits of gaining cross-cultural exposure and competence in addition to making a human capital investment that will promote equity and social justice in the discipline.

While, these characteristics and benefits of mentoring appear universal, the necessary qualities for and benefits of mentoring minority graduate students may indeed be unique. We therefore suggest that these characteristics and benefits should be expanded upon in order to reflect the unique challenges minority graduate students'

face. Given, minority graduate students' historical exclusion from institutions of higher education, the persistent group stereotypes that relate to their academic abilities and competencies, as well their unique cultural perspectives demand that more attention needs to be paid to the qualities needed to effectively mentor this group. For example, good mentors are knowledgeable and sensitive to the issues their students face. To mentor minority graduate student protégés, mentor knowledge could be expanded to include the day-to-day experiences of being a racial minority on their campus as well as mentors' multicultural competence (Chrobot-Mason and Ruderman, 2004). Similarly, minority students' mentors could be more effective if they have experience within diverse contexts and diverse relationships. Feedback, as another example, is an important protégé benefit of mentoring, yet it may be one outcome that many mentors are hesitant to provide. There is consistent research within Industrial/Organizational Psychology that suggests that individuals with power often avoid or give false feedback to minorities with less power (Cox, 1994). Perhaps the combination of many faculty members' lack of knowledge about the educational and non-academic experiences and realities of under-represented groups, and their lack of experience in diverse contexts, create barriers to their ability and willingness to establish mentoring relationships with minority students.

Those deficiencies listed reflect the challenges faced by minority graduate students who have mentors, yet many minority graduate students report that they lack faculty mentors. Austin's (2002) review of the higher education literature on preparing the next generation of faculty revealed that students frequently complain that they lack mentoring and often have to make their own way through their graduate programs without an advocate or support system. For example, Smith and Davidson (1992) surveyed Black graduate students and found that one third reported having no help with their development from faculty or other university staff or officials. Ellis' (2000) study of the roles of graduate student race and gender in their training experiences revealed that for the most part, Black students were more dissatisfied with their relationships with their advisors compared to White students and were less likely to have a faculty member in their own department that they considered a mentor. In fact, African American students in this study found alternative sources of support for finishing their degrees by establishing mentoring relationships with mentors outside of their home departments, and at times outside of their institutions. These outsiders helped Black students form committees, locate relevant literature, develop their writing skills, and identify opportunities for presenting their work and for funding. In short, these "outsiders" performed all of the tasks that one would expect a graduate faculty member within the students home department to perform (Ellis, 2000).

When minorities are mentored by those in their own department or institution, their experience is frequently qualitatively different as compared to the experience of their White peers (McGuire, 1999; Blake-Beard, 2001). McGuire's (1999) study of White and Black MBAs suggest that Black protégés are provided psychosocial support from their mentors, but lack access to career guidance, direction, and advocacy that good mentors should also provide.

In understanding the importance of mentoring, one must know what it means to be a good mentor. Yet for many minority graduate students, the concerns may simply be more around related to access to mentoring rather than the quality of mentoring. However even when mentoring relationships are acquired and established, they can quickly become inadequate or even dysfunctional for the minority student. Intentional efforts by any mentor to promote minority students' careers can simultaneously be

dysfunctional for minority students' personal and professional identities and subsequently their career development. It is our hope to expose the barriers to functional mentoring and the characteristics of dysfunctional mentoring for minority students as well as to expose readers to the complexities involved in supporting minority students as faculty mentors.

Common barriers to functional mentoring

There are common and unique issues that relate to a faculty member's willingness to mentor minority graduate students. These issues are common across disciplines given the dearth of minority faculty in the academy, though there are different dynamics within each discipline. For example, if a Black student wants to focus on black literature in an English department without a Black literature specialist they will suffer for a lack of content mentorship. Black students in the natural sciences while there may not be racially specific content areas, still have to overcome issues related to process mentorship due to lack of minority faculty.

In general, faculty do not always have the competencies nor training required to effectively mentor any student (Johnson and Huwe, 2002). This lack of mentoring competence may become exacerbated when considering the opportunity of mentoring across racial lines. In addition, faculty members are rarely evaluated in regards to the quality of mentoring provided to students (Ellis, 1992; Girves *et al.*, 2005). That is, graduate students do not provide evaluation data (in contrast to graduate course evaluation data) on the extent to which their major professors' provide the psychosocial and instrumental functions of mentoring. Nor are they evaluated on the extent to which mentoring is provided in a way that is culturally relevant and affirming. Instead student-faculty relationships are evaluated in regards to the potential products of those relationships such as the number of publications, presentations, and grants awarded to student protégés. These products may or may not be a result of functional mentoring. In some unfortunate cases, these professional products result even when mentors are inattentive to students' psychosocial and instrumental needs. Being productive is certainly one very important aspect of supporting graduate student development, but minority students also need to mentored in ways that reinforces their competence and legitimacy as emerging scholars. The quality of the mentoring they receive should not also be contingent upon their ability and willingness to reinforce the status quo of their discipline. In fact, the value of increasing diversity in the disciplines is that new scholars can challenge and push their disciplines forward in new and exciting ways (Thomas *et al.*, 1999). Therefore other aspects of mentor-protégé relationships between faculty and students such as aiding in students' career decisions, providing students' with access to professional networks and visibility, keeping students informed and knowledgeable about what is needed to finish their degrees and land a position of the students' choice are undervalued and remain invisible. Even less apparent is how student-faculty relationships are rewarded to the extent that they support an institution's goals and values related to diversity.

Faculty mentors must realize that forging the protégé-mentor relationship has many potential factors that may affect the development of this relationship. First faculty must strike the difficult balance between strong advocacy and personal support for protégés while safeguarding the public from incompetent professionals (Biaggio *et al.*, 1997). Faculty mentors must be able to develop their protégés in a manner that will produce a contributing member to the profession. This includes strong supervision

in the early stages so as not to expose the public to a novice, and less restraints as the protégé develops and becomes more skilled in the particular profession. Since many mentor–protégé relationships become quite personal, faculty mentors need to balance what protégés share as personal information and what is deemed professional information. Although laws in many states protect therapist–patient communication, professor–student (i.e. Mentor–protégé) communication is not. Protégés often expect such communication to be confidential. Given this predicament, a functional mentoring relationship must have some sort of discussion on confidentiality and discuss them clearly with protégés early in the relationship.

Another potential barrier to functional mentoring is the selection process for potential protégés. Many mentors do not have a formal and transparent process in which students are selected to become protégés that gives rise to ethical concerns. Specifically, the issue of equity and equal access is not discussed in regards to who faculty chose to mentor informally. Potential mentors are often motivated to choose protégés based upon their perceived potential for success and the spillover of that success onto the mentor’s career. Attraction is often related to perceived similarity between mentor and protégé (Thomas *et al.*, 2005) and this issue can create barriers to mentoring access for ethnic minority students as well as become a hurdle to mentor investment in ethnic minority students. Kanter (1977) discusses this issue in workplace organizations as homosocial reproduction. That is, we are motivated to reproduce ourselves among junior colleagues and even students. It feels good to select, support, and develop individuals who remind you of yourself, yet in the case of academia like many career paths, homosocial reproduction can also limit opportunities for diversity. Faculty mentors should therefore be mindful of these pressures and not assume that biases do not exist in the protégé selection process. Mentors and formal mentoring programs should consider these issues and create transparent protégé selection and matching processes that are resistant to homosocial reproduction.

The barriers that have been identified thus far can be experienced by any graduate student. Minority students, however, face additional barriers to a functional mentor that are rooted in the under-representation of their racial groups across the academy. Given the dearth of minority faculty most minority students will likely be mentored by someone who is racially and/or culturally different from themselves. Oftentimes, successful minorities in the corporate arena have diverse networks that can propel their careers through the glass ceiling (Thomas and Gabarro, 1999). For a minority student, having a White mentor is not negative or dysfunctional in and of itself. However, having a White mentor who experiences intergroup or diversity based anxiety, who lacks cross-cultural competence, and whose own racial identity has not yet been developed and is culturally insecure can create dysfunctional relationships and negative career outcomes for minority students (Chrobot-Mason and Thomas, 2002). We will review these issues and address the potential dangers of these mentoring relationships when both White and Minority mentors are involved.

White mentors and minority protégés

One barrier to effective mentoring relationships between White mentors and minority graduate students is the implicit belief that students of color can only be mentored by faculty of color. Students of color can be functionally mentored by White faculty and faculty who are not racially marginalized. As Epps (1989) discussed, institutional cultures must support cross racial relationships, especially between faculty and students, “the extent to which all faculty, rather than just faculty of color are committed to the task

of recruiting and nurturing talented students of color is an indication of an institution's commitment to equality for students of color" (p. 25). It should be unacceptable for White faculty to relegate the mentoring of students of color solely to faculty of color. There are simply not enough faculty of color on most college campuses for this practice to be an effective strategy for the development of minority students. The support of within racial group mentoring relationships between students and faculty likely indicates that the climate for diversity within the department (or the institution) is weak and marginalizing for ethnic minority group members. Another reason why White faculty may choose not to mentor students of color is that they see mentoring as a venue through which they can reproduce a professional that is similar to themselves. This would disadvantage any student of color from potentially benefiting from a functional mentoring relationship with a White faculty member or a faculty member of a non-marginalized group. Minority students too may resist relationships with White faculty who they perceive as promoting their assimilation (rather than integration) and for fear of being groomed or cloned in a way that would force them to give up their unique cultural identities (Girves *et al.*, 2005). Minority students, like all students, need and desire faculty with whom they can seek academic, career, and professional advice. Often students seek mentors with whom they share some type of commonality. For under-represented groups, these decisions often come down to race, gender, or culture.

White faculty members have unique barriers to mentoring minority students that are rarely discussed. The lack of diversity within many academic disciplines, especially within the sciences, may contribute to White faculty members' discomfort and intergroup anxiety (Stephan and Stephan, 1992) regarding establishing a close, developmental relationship with a minority student. Racism both subtle and overt also may interfere with one's ability to mentor minority students. Related to White professor's discomfort is also their potential discomfort with providing negative feedback to minority students. Organizational literature (Cox, 1994) suggests that White supervisors are uncomfortable delivering negative feedback to their Black subordinates out of fear that these supervisors will be perceived as racist. These same dynamics likely play out within academe as well.

White faculty members may be unwilling or ineffective mentors for minority students if they lack multicultural competence (Chrobot-Mason and Ruderman, 2004). Multicultural competence is defined as, "... proficiency in diagnosing diversity issues and resolving diversity-related conflicts and organizational problems by reaching a mutually satisfying solution for all parties involved" (Chrobot-Mason and Ruderman, 2004, p. 114). These authors suggest that building multicultural competence rests upon an increase in the knowledge of cultural differences, self-awareness, and four general skills which include, conflict management, interpersonal communication, feedback seeking, and role modeling.

White faculty members may lack the ability to communicate and support students who are different from themselves. There is increasing diversity within the student population, therefore the ability to establish effective relationships across race and other differences such as culture, religion, and socio-economic status make the development of multicultural competence critical for any professional's own performance and effectiveness.

Related to multicultural competence is the issue of the identity development of White faculty. In line with existing models of White identity development (e.g. Helms, 1990), White faculty who have not yet explored their own racial identity and who are oblivious to the privilege afforded them due to their race, are unlikely to have developed the competencies needed to functionally mentor minority students. In fact,

these faculty members may not be interested in the professional development of these students. Having a mentor with a lower level of identity development, as compared to the minority protégé, may have severe and negative consequences for the protégé and for this relationship (Chrobot-Mason and Thomas, 2002).

Helms (1990) refers to relationships in which those with power (such as a mentor) are less developed in their racial identity as compared to those lacking power in a relations (such as a protégé) as regressive. These relationships, for the protégé, may be frustrating since the mentor is not able to comfortably and confidently discuss issues involving race that may actually be hinder a protégés development or access to resources. Within therapeutic environments, protégés are likely to feel dissatisfied, disengaged, and they may subsequently end the relationship. The same is likely true in regressive mentoring relationships.

Thus far our focus has been on the barriers to mentoring for minority graduate students by their White faculty. However, mentoring barriers still exist when both the students and faculty share an ethnic minority status. Furthermore, minority mentors do not automatically engage in functional mentoring despite their similarities to their protégés. The lack of minority faculty therefore places minority students at a disadvantage in regards to gaining mentors who resemble them in regards to race and culture. Although the doors of most institutions of higher education have been open to ethnic minorities for at least 40 years, minority faculty are sorely under-represented on many of our college campuses. This is especially true at the level of graduate education. A recent report from the American Council of Education (Stockwell, 2001) suggests that like female faculty, minority faculty are often found at the lowest levels of our educational institutions. They are instructors, part time faculty, and those off of the tenure track. These are the same faculty who are overloaded with course responsibilities, which limits their ability and time to be effective mentors. Minority faculty may have to deal with their own sense of cultural isolation in their workplace, may face barriers to their own support and mentoring, and like White mentors, lack cross-cultural competence and identity development that inhibits their ability to provide functional mentoring to minority students.

Minority mentors and minority protégés

Minority faculty too have challenges related to mentoring minority graduate students. A principle challenge is time and balancing responsibilities and opportunities (Bowman *et al.*, 1999). Minority faculty, due to their rarity, often have additional formal and informal duties that take up valuable time and energy. Institutional needs to ensure minority representation on various committees and councils take minority faculty members' time away from their students and their research. Given their many responsibilities, minority faculty members must be able to manage these multiple roles on campus. Like all faculty, however, the role of graduate student mentor is minimized within academic culture and criteria for promotion and tenure.

It may also be expected among other faculty that the task of managing and mentoring minority students falls solely upon the shoulders of minority faculty. Having a department or program culture that reinforces mentoring of minority students by minority faculty may create dysfunctional relationships by placing individuals together who do not desire this mentoring partnership and who are not well matched (Johnson and Huwe, 2002).

Despite the potential similarities among minority students and faculty, other dimensions of identity, such as gender, may interfere with the establishment of an

effective mentoring relationship. Within and across racial lines, male mentors may resist supervising and mentoring female graduate students out of fear that the relationship may become unprofessional or appear to be romantic. In addition, female professors may experience difficulties in mentoring male students especially if those students lack confidence in female faculty's competence or credibility, or if male students only accept female mentors as mother figures (Proudford and Thomas, 1999). Minority female graduate students may actually be doubly disadvantaged if they choose to study in disciplines in which they are under-represented due to both race and gender, such as the sciences and engineering. Despite attempts to recruit both of these minority groups, minority females may experience greater feelings of tokenism and isolation as compared to single minority peers.

Consequences of negative mentoring experiences

With all the importance that is given to the effectiveness of a positive mentoring experience, there are many negative mentoring experiences that affect both students and mentors. Students without good mentors are frequently dissatisfied with their departments and overall their training (Ellis, 2000). Subsequently, these students may rush through their training due to the level of negative encounters they experience (Ellis, 2000). Students without effective mentors, who do choose academe, may fail to themselves develop effective mentoring skills. Lacking mentor role models may impede the ability of students to identify and enact effective behaviors to engage in the mentoring of their own future students due to the adoption of a "survivalist" mentality. Furthermore, students with negative graduate school experiences are less likely to consider an academic career themselves (Ellis, 2000). This issue may be especially important to understand in regards to how it influences the future diversity of the disciplines.

We define negative mentoring experiences as dysfunctional mentoring. Dysfunctional mentoring relationships occur when the mentor's or protégé's characteristics or their manner of interacting limit their ability to produce an effective mentoring relationship. Perhaps their characteristics and demeanors interfere with the ability of the mentor to provide effective mentoring or interfere with the protégé's ability to be mentored (Eby *et al.*, 2000). Dysfunctional mentoring relationships can manifest in many ways. One aspect of a dysfunctional mentoring experience is a lack of visibility/opportunity for the protégé. This problem may manifest with more junior faculty who may not have the ability to provide the necessary outlets for the protégé to maximize exposure in the particular field of interest. This lack of exposure can lead the protégé to a negative mentoring experience by not feeling prepared for their career endeavors. Another aspect of a dysfunctional mentoring relationship is a lack of communication between the mentor and protégé. When the lines of communication between mentor and protégé are not left open and properly defined, incidences of miscommunication become more evident and in some cases cause conflict. In some cases, the mentor and protégé do not communicate enough or the communication is not honest and therefore prevents a true mentoring relationship from developing. Protégés must feel that they can trust their mentor. Honest communication will only exist if the mentor keeps interactions confidential between the two. Protégés who have a positive relationship with their mentors will tend to provide confidential information to their mentor as the relationship develops.

Another aspect of dysfunctional mentoring experiences is lack of commitment between both the mentor and the protégé. Mentors have to accurately gauge how much time and effort they are willing to expend working with protégés. If a mentor cannot commit the appropriate time to develop a protégé, the relationship can become a

negative experience for all. With that in mind, protégés have a similar dilemma in which they must devote the appropriate amount of time to working with their mentors in order to receive the proper development over the course of their graduate program. Another way the lack of commitment notion manifests is in the protégé's area of interest in research. Some minority students choose to pursue research endeavors that come out of their unique minority experiences. Yet not all faculty, (regardless of race and ethnicity), are comfortable supporting diversity research, especially by students of color. Some faculty may not believe that issues related to prejudice, racism, oppression, etc. are scholarly or scientific or even relevant. Others may view these issues as socially important but may want to protect minority graduate students from the negative judgments of future colleagues who may not consider these issues as important. Both types of faculty mentors may strongly encourage students to avoid diversity research and instead only support students to pursue more "mainstream" research that will help to prove their credibility to their colleagues and peers resulting in colonialism in the academy. These recommendations also appear to place limits on the academic freedom that is usually afforded to White and/or male faculty who may be more free to pursue research directions of their choosing. This can cause a dysfunctional mentoring experience for the protégé who does not feel supported in the work they wish to endeavor. This mindset also stifles the development of academic fields to identify and address the unique realities and experiences of ignored populations.

In order to enhance the access to mentoring for minority students, and the quality of mentoring those students receive, multiple approaches must be pursued that address students' openness to diverse mentoring, faculty preparedness and willingness to mentor across differences, and institutions' readiness for diversity. The recommendations provided (see Figure 1) deliver guidance to institutions seeking to improve minority graduate students' mentoring experiences and subsequent professional and career development.

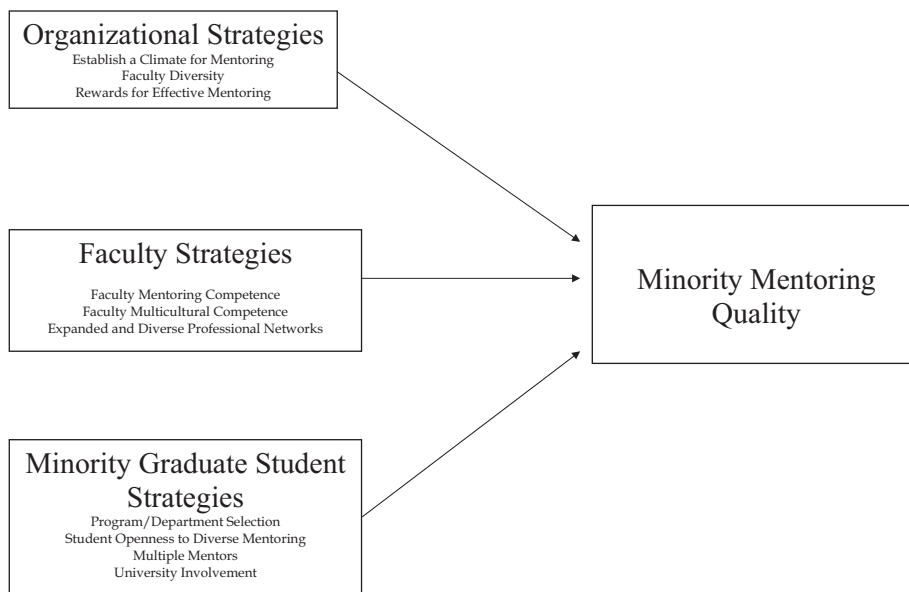


Figure 1. Student, faculty, and organizational strategies for enhancing mentoring quality

Recommendations*Organizational strategies*

Effective diverse mentoring relationships can be powerful sources of organizational change. Mutually rewarding diverse mentoring relationships provide students and faculty with the opportunity to build cross-cultural and multicultural competencies and to develop human relations skills that can be applied in other professional relationships. The subsequent success of minority graduate students can help establish the college or university as an “institution of choice” among prospective minority applicants. Likewise, successful diverse mentoring relationships can improve the image of the organization and subsequent recruiting efforts, enhance loyalty among diverse alumni, and perhaps even improve annual giving by these young professionals.

In order to build a climate for mentoring within the institutions, leadership must consider the extent to which effective mentoring, especially of minority students, is a criteria in faculty evaluations and ultimately, tenure and promotion. Leadership must consider, “How visible is the expectation of faculty to provide effective mentoring and how visible is the institutional value for mentoring?” A separate strategy involves enhancing the climate for diversity on campus, especially as it impacts minority graduate students and faculty. Certainly, an important source of institutional attraction for minority students is the possibility of working with and being mentored by minority faculty. Yet, if minority faculty retention is a problem, the opportunity to be mentored by a faculty member of color may not exist. Institutions must then likewise consider similar questions of themselves related to minority faculty and retention, “What is our value for diversity? How is it conveyed to all members of the institution?”

Although mentoring typically reflects a one-on-one relationship, organizations can create environments in which healthy mentoring relationships can be pursued. In order to reinforce the institutional value for mentoring, colleges and universities should consider creating support and reward mechanisms for mentoring throughout the institution. For example, colleges and departments should consider evaluating faculty based upon their mentoring activity. How many students are mentored? Who are they? What recognitions and rewards have these students received and where are they placed upon graduation? At the department or graduate program level, evaluations should be done to recognize activities related to effectively recruiting, mentoring and developing, as well as graduating minority students.

Another option in communicating the institutional value for mentoring is to establish university, college, and department level awards for mentoring. The awards should be visible and competitive and provide recipients with the opportunities and resources to share their strategies for effective mentoring. It is important that the level of awards (i.e. monetary amount) be competitive with the level of awards given for excellence in teaching and research in order to communicate the institutional value for mentoring.

Stepping outside of a single institutional environment may help a college or university to create more opportunities for minority graduate students to be effectively mentored. Girves *et al.* (2005) suggest establishing institutional consortia (such as the Big Ten’s Committee on Institutional Cooperation) or faculty development initiatives like the Preparing Future Faculty program, in order to provide minority graduate students the opportunities to meet other (sometimes minority) faculty outside of their institutions who are committed to student development and diversity. These programs are also useful in exposing minority graduate student to the diversity of career paths available in academe and the variety of roles that faculty members can play at the institution as well in the community. Helping minority graduate students see the ways

in which faculty can serve their racial or ethnic community may be a useful strategy for attracting them to the academic career path.

Faculty strategies

In order to effectively mentor minority graduate students, faculty must be willing to reflect upon their own experiences as graduate students and be open to ways in which the experiences of minority graduate students today may differ. Strategies we suggest for faculty interested in enhancing their capacity to mentor this particular population include seeking professional development opportunities related to mentoring and to diversity, as well as to seek additional faculty role models and mentors for their minority students by expanding their own professional network.

Seek development. Faculty must learn that effective mentoring of all students includes providing instrumental support and advocacy (Enomoto *et al.*, 2000). Too frequently mentors of ethnic minorities focus on providing emotional support that ultimately has the potential to negatively patronize the protégé and overprotect these individuals (Enomoto *et al.*, 2000). Johnson and Huwe (2002) argue instead for intentional faculty development. New faculty orientation programs, for example, may include training on the stages of mentoring relationships, developing mentoring contracts, the ethical responsibilities involved in mentoring, and the benefits and costs of mentoring for both protégés and mentors themselves (Johnson and Huwe, 2002).

Diversity training and multicultural competence. Likewise, faculty must also develop multicultural competence and receive training specifically related to conflict management, interpersonal communication, feedback seeking, and delivery and role modeling (Chrobot-Mason and Ruderman, 2004). Multicultural competence can also be increased through providing faculty with opportunities to develop cross-cultural knowledge as well as opportunities for self-reflection and awareness.

Developmental networks (Higgins and Kram, 2001). Mentoring relationships are often discussed as interpersonal relationships between a single mentor and their protégé. However, Kram as early as 1985 (Kram, 1985) recommended that individuals not depend solely on a single mentor but rather gain developmental support through relationship constellations that include peers and family as well as supervisors and managers. Perhaps most useful is to consider formal mentoring networks that organizations like colleges can provide to student protégés. By offering access to these structured networks, protégés receive the message early in their graduate student development that gaining support and information from multiple individuals is acceptable and even expected.

Student protégé strategies

Graduate students must be active participants in their education. Similar to faculty strategies to effective mentoring, in this section, we provide strategies that students can employ to receiving effective mentoring throughout their graduate training. In this article, we make six main recommendations of strategies that minority graduate students should employ in the graduate education. Our first recommendation for graduate students of color is to be proactive is getting the mentoring they desire, need, and deserve. Robinson (1999) provides a personal account of doing just this when she developed an institutional mentoring program for minority graduate students in order support herself and other minority students during their graduate training.

Secondly, minority graduate students must first do the research on the prospective departments to which they wish to apply. Not only should they seek out other minority students within the respective program, they should also branch out to the department

and other similar departments at the university. It may be in other departments where minority graduate students get their greatest support.

Graduate students must be open to diverse mentoring. Similar to issues of culture and number of minority mentors discussed earlier, minority graduate students must be open to having a mentor of a different ethnic background or gender that will provide the training necessary to excel in their career goals. Minority graduate students must be open to the idea that someone who is not their same race, gender or ethnicity can and is willing to provide the training they need.

Graduate students frequently rely upon peers as an important piece of the professional socialization (Austin, 2002). We support the notion of finding peer mentors within graduate programs. In the cases where there may be more than one minority graduate student in the program, it would be beneficial for the students to pair with each other and discuss issues they face or receive advice from each other on methods to receiving effective mentoring. More advanced students in a graduate program can provide key insights from their experience to junior students who are first embarking on their graduate experience.

Beyond seeking out information on their program and department and networking, minority graduate students must become involved at their universities. Research has shown that minority graduate student associations, civic groups and community involvement have positively effected minority graduates students and assisted in their matriculation during graduate school. (Brown *et al.*, 1999). The fourth recommendation for minority graduate students is to seek out multiple mentors. Black graduate students often use “outsiders” to fill the gaps in the advising and mentoring they receive from faculty and often develop alternative support systems (Ellis, 2000). Many of the African American administrators interviewed in Enomoto *et al.*'s (2000) study of mentoring relationships argued for multiple mentors; some mentors who share demographic characteristics and others who may share professional identities and background. Bell (1990) demonstrated in her qualitative study of career oriented Black women that these professionals often became “bi-cultural boundary spanners” who negotiate relationships between their White professional communities and their support systems (e.g. church, fraternal organizations, and family and friends) in the Black community. Although having multiple mentors provides one with additional opportunities for support, advice, advocacy, and an expanded network, moving back and forth between these two groups can also promote bi-cultural stress (Thomas and Gabarro, 1999) that depletes protégés of the energy, time, and focus needed to follow-up on the opportunities that mentoring may provide. We feel that if students can employ these strategies, they can make their graduate experience more meaningful and get the training sought to develop their careers.

Conclusion

A common myth in academe is that any faculty member will be a good mentor, and that any senior person can mentor a junior person (Brown *et al.*, 1999). Many faculty members feel that mentoring minority graduate students is the “moral” thing to do, yet good intentions do not always lead to the ability to effectively mentor a minority graduate student. Given the social context in which many minority graduates study and work, these students unique and misunderstood needs and concerns that their majority group counterparts do not experience. Minority graduate students have to deal with societal pressures and frequent negative stereotypes as well as usually being a racial token in their department, program, or even college. Although many barriers exist for the access and effective mentoring of these students, there are many

opportunities as well for faculty and institutions as for the students themselves to create these important developmental relationships. Although being a fully competent mentor may be more of a challenge when mentoring minority graduate students, there may also be many more and unique benefits when mentoring these students as well.

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