Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning

ISSN: 1361-1267 (Print) 1469-9745 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cmet20

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To cite this article: Juanita Johnson-Bailey Associate Professor & Ronald M. Cervero (2004) Mentoring in black and white: the intricacies of cross-cultural mentoring, Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning, 12:1, 7-21, DOI: 10.1080/1361126042000183075

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/1361126042000183075

Published online: 23 Jan 2007.

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Mentoring and Tutoring
Vol. 12, No. 1, April 2004

Carfax Publishing
Taylor & Francis Group

Mentoring in black and white: the intricacies of cross-cultural mentoring

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Cross-cultural mentoring relationships can be sites of struggle around the issues of race, class and gender. In addition, the mentor/protégé relationship offers micro-cosmic insight into power relations within western society. The authors of this paper, a black woman associate professor and a white male professor, use the example of their mentoring relationship to illustrate six common issues facing academicians involved in these relationships: (1) trust between mentor and protégé; (2) acknowledged and unacknowledged racism; (3) visibility and risks pertinent to minority faculty; (4) power and paternalism; (5) benefits to mentor and protégé; and (6) the double-edged sword of 'otherness' in the academy. Literature is used for review and critique of mentoring in the academy while offering personal examples to illustrate the complexity and success of a 13-year mentoring relationship between a duo who began their association as teacher/student.

Introduction

Mentoring across cultural boundaries is an especially delicate dance that juxtaposes group norms and societal pressures and expectations with individual personality characteristics. Why would you choose to traverse such tumultuous territory and how do you survive the journey? The story concerning our own successful mentoring relationship is simple. We approached our sojourn without a consciousness burdened by societal dictates. Of course, there were those invisible knapsacks of privilege and disenfranchisements that we carried (McIntosh, 1995), but more importantly there were sincere and somewhat naive beliefs that people are free to act beyond the cultural confines imposed by their fears. The common ground of our working-class families, Catholic school histories, leftist political leanings and love of rhythm and blues lay undiscovered, but our generational understandings of the world as children marked and forever changed by the Civil Rights struggle and the Kennedy and King assassinations provided a shared basis on which to build a relationship.

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ISSN 1361–1267 (print)/ISSN 1469–9745 (online)/04/010007–15 © 2004 Taylor & Francis Ltd
DOI: 10.1080/1361126042000183075

For over a decade, the authors of this article, Ron, a white male full professor, and Juanita, a black woman associate professor, have had a mentoring relationship that has continued on both a formal and informal basis. We are writing this account of our experiences based on Juanita's journals, notes from formal mentoring committee meetings, our incessant dialogues, feedback from joint presentations and hours spent writing and researching seven publications on race, gender and power in the academy. We start off the article with individual accounts of the mentoring relationship so that the reader will better understand the two people involved and the intricate nature of our relationship. In the next section, we use our relationship and the literature to illuminate issues and strategies common to cross-cultural mentoring relationships. Finally, we discuss implications for assembling the infrastructure of successful cross-cultural mentoring relationships and the importance of mentoring in building a diverse and strong academy.

Personal stories of our mentoring journey

These individual accounts of our mentoring relationship were written independently of each other to allow the reader to gain a sense of what each of us as individuals brings to the relationship.

Ron's mentoring narrative

Our story is one of transitions and constants, similarities and differences. At the level of formal roles, we have transitioned through four status changes: (1) student–teacher; (2) student–major professor; (3) assistant professor–professor; and (4) faculty member–department head. The constant in our lives has been the mentoring and friendship roles that have sustained our fluctuating existences. Over time we have developed a close personal relationship as colleagues and friends and we have traveled together in our family units, enjoying relationships with each other's families. We were both raised in working-class, Catholic families and have birthdays two years and four days apart; at the same time, I am a white man raised in the North and Juanita is a black woman raised in the South.

I have very vivid memories of each phase of our relationship. I met Juanita in a course I was teaching in 1990 on curriculum development. She was one of two black students in my class and in the Adult Education Program at the University of Georgia. I noticed that she and the other black woman always sat together, but I don't remember thinking about why they did so. I certainly did not think about the seating arrangements in the political terms that I do now. I just thought they were friends. My second memory is of Juanita approaching me as I was about to board an elevator at work. She was very excited. She told me that she had decided on her dissertation topic, the narratives of black women returning to college. I thought that was a wonderful idea and was really pleased that she wanted me to serve as her dissertation supervisor. I didn't know how much I could contribute to her study, but I felt certain to learn a great deal in the process.

A third memory is of meeting with Juanita at Spelman College in the final stages of the dissertation. Her co-major professor, Patricia Bell-Scott, a renowned black American feminist, was teaching at this black women's college that semester and Juanita was assisting her. So I drove the hour from Athens to Atlanta to meet with them. We toured the campus and then spent the better part of the afternoon working through Juanita's proposed dissertation results. I felt like I was going to their home. I remember feeling very comfortable and safe on this college campus even though I was a distinct minority in contrast with how Juanita felt as a minority on our predominantly white campus.

Finally, I remember the paper session we did at the Adult Education Research Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia in 1999. The topic was the 'Invisible Politics of Race in Adult Education.' It felt as though we were metaphorically in battle together because we had to struggle with a fairly hostile audience who disagreed with the idea that race and racism were present in our world and work as adult educators. As a white man I had experienced this feeling of being outside the white power structure when I stood against my white neighbors who wanted the district schools zoned to conform to segregated housing patterns. This was a moment of clarity for me as I realized that, as a white person, I have the privilege of choosing whose side I will be on in the struggle against racism. Juanita does not have that privilege. Perhaps that is the most important lesson I have learned from working with her.

Based on my earlier life, I had a lot of help in learning how to be in this relationship. My parents showed me that every person was a human being and thus deserved to be treated with dignity and respect. My own mentor, Phyllis Cunningham, a famous American adult educator, and I worked together for over 10 years in Chicago in exciting, though sometimes very difficult, multiracial work environments. I learned a lot about power and relationships from Phyllis. She continues to be a beacon for me in my own work as an adult educator.

For any relationship to be successful, both people must benefit. However I tend to only fully realize the benefits that I accrue myself. Of course, at the most basic level, I enjoy Juanita's intelligence, honesty and friendship. There is no way I could quantify the significance of my insights and learning that have resulted from our work together, from her dissertation through the many papers and presentations we have done together. There is also a larger dimension to our relationship as our department has also benefited tremendously from her presence as a faculty member. Indeed, I often wonder who is mentoring whom in this relationship?

Juanita's mentoring narrative

My first significant experience with Ron occurred in the summer of 1990 when I was in my second quarter of classes at the University of Georgia. I sat in his Curriculum Development course in an atmosphere that I imagine is similar to that of most Research One universities—white, competitive and surface-friendly. Add to this setting the desegregation legacy of a southern university, and you have an uneasy armistice—a ceasefire classroom environment where the blacks sit with the blacks and the whites sit with the whites. Rarely does anyone reach across the racial divide and even more unique is someone who reaches across the chasm with a high degree of comfort and sincerity. Ron was that someone who seemed able to easily extend himself across that chasm.

Our mentoring relationship did not begin that summer, but my observations and assessment of him did begin in those weekend classes. Despite his kindness, I was cautious. I remember that my confidant, another black woman student, and I would wonder why he seemed so different. We wondered why he cared. It was not a malicious appraisal, but the musings of blacks about whites who present themselves as different. I finally concluded that he acted the way he did because he remembered 'when'. You see there are many of us in academia who wear the banners of our previous humble beginnings or of our working-class backgrounds as badges and proof of our understandings of the disenfranchised. Yet oftentimes our actions show such claims to be hollow and utilitarian. But Ron lived with an ever-present cognizance of what exclusion looked, smelled and felt like. Over a period of time, I stopped second-guessing Ron and began to take reluctant small steps towards trusting him.

A first meaningful marker in our mentoring relationship occurred when Ron strongly encouraged me to submit an abstract to the first African-American Pre-Conference of the Adult Education Research Conference to be held at Penn State. Of course I promised him that I would do so. Of course I had no intention of doing anything of the kind. My twin demons of self-doubt and imposterism were in full swing. I felt that I was not smart enough to stand before academic types and present my research. As is characteristic of Ron, he followed up. When he called several days before the abstract was due and asked to see my submission, I was too ashamed not to produce the work. Going to that conference, meeting black scholars and black professors and seeming to belong, was a turning point in how I saw myself as a scholar in the field of adult education.

Another critical phase of our mentoring relationship occurred when Ron extended a publication opportunity. He invited me and another student, Elizabeth Tisdell, a white feminist scholar, to co-author a book chapter for a New Directions book series entitled *Confronting racism and sexism* (Johnson-Bailey *et al.*, 1994). The chapter would examine the impact of gender and race on the professionalization of adult education. The writing experience turned out to be electrifying and validating. I was working with two friends who did not tokenize me by regarding me as the representative for my race, who would only write or contribute to issues concerning race. The writing trio was a team willing to exchange ideas and struggle over difficult gendered and racialized terrain.

At this point, I began to think that if I could write, produce knowledge and present research, then maybe, just maybe, I could be a professor. And from my perspective, the litmus test for our mentoring relationship was his response when I finally confided in him that I wanted to be a professor: he did not laugh. Others had laughed. Ron seemed to believe that I could become a professor and most probably his belief in me achieving this goal predated my acknowledgment and reclamation of this deferred dream. After graduation, I worked at another state university for two years and Ron and I stayed in touch and continued to write together. Two years later and thanks to the paucity of African-American women in Women's Studies and the academic phenomena of joint appointments, I was back at my alma mater as Ron's colleague.

We have come a long way since then, surviving every status change of a natural maturation process that most mentoring relationships do not survive: the occasional shifts in roles, and the inevitable blunders and mis-steps. Often the student/teacher or the junior faculty/senior faculty will achieve their intended goals and outgrow, cast off or move on in life. Our mentoring relationship has thrived in the most difficult of times for a variety of reasons. I think that the very important reasons for the durability lie in the fact that our mentoring relationship is multifaceted—a site of struggle, reciprocity, learning and scholarship.

Cross-cultural mentoring relationships: issues and experiences

We now tell our shared story in unison to illuminate the ways in which social and cultural positionalities and power dynamics are inherent in mentoring relationships. We address the struggles, contradictions and opportunities that arise as a result of differences in race, gender, culture and location in our respective academic careers. In the next six subsections we also discuss how we resolve these tensions and contradictions and how each of us benefits from the relationship. Juanita discusses the aspects of mentoring that she considers the most basic and crucial as building blocks for a successful cross-cultural mentoring relationship: trust, an understanding of the impact race has on the careers of minority academicians and the oppositional perspective of many marginalized faculty. Then Ron discusses the learning and power dimensions of mentoring, the ways that mentors benefit from this relationship and the quandary faced by the mentor, who must always be cognizant of how race frames the mentoring relationship while consistently looking past the issue of race.

Trust, an essential element of the cross-cultural relationship

Certainly, the foundation of any successful mentoring relationship is trust. However, establishing trust in a cross-cultural mentoring relationship is a major issue in the development of such relationships, more so than in same-race mentoring relationships (Brinson & Kottler, 1993; Bowman *et al.*, 1999; Thomas, 2001). On the surface the concept of trust as it applies to mentoring appears simplistic: it needs to be reciprocal in nature and it is a matter between the mentor and protégé (Brinson & Kottler, 1993; Bowman *et al.*, 1999; Thomas, 2001). However, in cross-cultural mentoring, what should be a simple matter of negotiations between two persons becomes arbitration between historical legacies, contemporary racial tensions and societal protocols. Cross-cultural mentoring relationships are affiliations that exist between unequals who are conducting their relationship on a hostile American stage with a societal script contrived to undermine the success of the partnership.

The historical legacy of relationships between black and white Americans is a two-sided scenario of mistrust. Black Americans have endured hundreds of years of sufferings and abuse at the hands of white Americans who consistently espoused a mythical rhetoric of democracy and equality. Through hundreds of years of oppression blacks remained loyal citizens, fighting in every war, working peacefully in often menial jobs and waiting for the demise of Jim Crow so that they too could enjoy the American dream. If on any level blacks were frustrated, angry or unhappy about their station in America, they were most likely powerless to act because of the de facto sanctions that translated into socioeconomic disadvantages and legal impotence.

Despite the myth of the violent angry black, it is white American citizens who have acted against blacks through legislated segregation, discriminatory customs and mob violence (Franklin, 1963; Sitkoff, 1978). There are historical facts that should persuade whites to be comfortable with and to trust blacks, and yet they do not. There are historical facts that have convinced blacks to mistrust whites and the mores within black culture support this perspective. It is across this backdrop of American history that cross-cultural mentoring must be constructed.

Initially, we had to accept the circumstances of our own historical truths so that we would not be entrapped by our inheritance. It was Juanita who had to trust Ron because, as a black woman entering into a mentoring relationship with a white male, she carried the factual cultural memory and assigned burden of mistrust. Also, it was Juanita who was more at risk since she had less power and was therefore more vulnerable in the mentor/protégé ratio (Murrell & Tangri, 1999).

Besides the cultural burdens of mistrust that could have been present between Ron and Juanita, there was another dilemma: the power dynamics inherent in black/white relations. There is a component of western society that supports the congruency of whites being in the more powerful position and encompasses set rules and expectations of mixed-race relationships in which deference and authority are essential ingredients. Therefore, a cross-cultural mentoring relationship between a white mentor and a black protégée can be negatively impacted because of unrecognized patterns of stereotypical behaviors that are encoded in the American psyche, paradigms which set forth dictates of ‘staying in one's place,’ refraining from being aggressive or threatening, and avoiding the perception of intimacy (Thomas, 2001). Trust was also a factor for Ron to consider. However, he was doubly protected from any possible risk by his status as a tenured full professor and by his position as a white male.

While working through trust on the individual level is routinely discussed in the mentoring literature, it must be recognized that the mentoring relationship is much broader than an association between two persons. Mentoring occurs on two dimensions: the internal aspect which transpires between the mentor and the protégée, and a second external aspect which takes place between the mentoring pair and their institution (Knight & Trowler, 1999; O'Neill *et al.*, 1999). The connection to the institution and its members is a weighty part of the mentoring union, given that Ron and Juanita's working environment is a predominately white institution with a current record of court battles over affirmative action and racial quotas.

Juanita's mentoring needs seem to echo those of most minority faculty (Moses, 1989; James & Farmer, 1993). Her concerns have mostly involved negotiating the structural barriers at the university, and do not center on any deficits in ability, energy or determination. In the tenuous atmosphere of our predominately white institution, Juanita has struggled with a hostile environment and contentious colleagues and witnessed in confusion, subdued anger and resentment Ron experiencing that same setting with relative ease and a seeming degree of cheer. Juanita has openly expressed her anger at the system and to some degree with Ron for his unwanted but undeniable position as part of this system. Her justified and appropriate anger was an important issue that had to be addressed. The duo were willing to confront and discuss the treacherous terrain of the almost futile debate concerning the interlocking nature of personal freedoms and societal responsibilities by asking: why does this happen, what part do we play in it and what can we do about it?

The reality that the mentor and the protégé have varying experiences and reactions in their shared work environment provides an uneasy and uncommon ground. Such differing circumstances can problematize a mentoring situation, weaken the bonds of trust and set up an impasse of cyclical anger and guilt. Bowman *et al.* (1999) cite 'White guilt' as a major impediment for black/white mentoring teams when they have to confront or discuss racism. Despite the acknowledgment of this important issue, the literature neglects to suggest the reasons why white guilt intrudes into cross-cultural mentoring situations. White guilt on the part of the mentor could be a reaction to the awareness of unearned white privilege or might be a natural defensive reaction to black anger.

Unfortunately, much of the research on mentoring does not examine the crisis of trust and the inevitable instances of anger and guilt that happen in mentoring relationships. Therefore, the literature fails to propose any solution to these dilemmas. However, it seems practical to refer to two frequently touted recommendations for the answer. One suggestion stresses the importance of ongoing and honest discussions about race and racism in cross-cultural mentoring situations. A second recommendation advises that protégés be paired with mentors with whom they share similar worldviews in order to increase the chances of success (Padilla, 1994; Ragins, 1997; Margolis & Romero, 2001). Indeed, the continual foregrounding of candid conversations about race, and the important stipulation of matching mentor to protégé based on their life philosophies, are plausible ways of creating an environment where trust is likely to grow between like-minded individuals, as well as creating an open atmosphere where discussions around difficult issues are feasible.

Racism, a hidden destructive force in cross-cultural mentoring

Race and racial group membership are defining markers in our world. Consequently, these signs of membership and exclusion are powerful forces in the academy. However, the benefits derived from their white race often remain invisible to the privileged white majority in academia, and racism in this setting is characteristically shrouded in rational discourse. When assessing the experiences of blacks in the academy, the literature overwhelming asserts that black faculty are routinely viewed as interlopers and are rejected as rightful participants (Epps, 1989; James & Farmer, 1993; Bowman *et al.*, 1999) and the circumstances of the academic lives of black faculty are marred with racist incidents, isolation or benign indifference (Brinson & Kottler, 1993; Ragins, 1997). A result of such conditions is that racial group membership becomes a consequential and negative force in the lives of minority faculty. In order to offset this uneasy state of black existence within the academy, Blake (1999) believes that it is important for cross-cultural mentoring teams to spend considerable time and emotion acknowledging the burden of racism encountered by black academicians.

Certainly, an important factor that contributed to the early success of Ron and Juanita's mentoring relationship was his acceptance of her racist experiences as real and not the imaginings of an over-sensitive or paranoid black woman. He would listen to her tales of being harassed by the campus police as she left her classroom, and of being rescued by a white student who vouched for her credibility with the appropriate incredulity and without offering any rationalizations about the behavior of the campus police. This psychosocial aspect of our relationship, where Juanita bravely revealed her painful and sometimes embarrassing stories and where Ron listened, helped to build a strong mentoring foundation that demonstrated Juanita's refusal to bend under the weight of a racist system and Ron's growing understanding of Juanita's narrative (Kram, 1985; Smith *et al.*, 2000).

Fortuitously, a research agenda grew out of Ron and Juanita's conversations about race in the academy and our inquiries facilitated discussions about racism. Subsequent examinations and readings on race and racism in academia illuminated our path around areas of difference and helped us through many difficult personal struggles. For example, mentoring articles address as a problem the varying cultural communication patterns, interpersonal styles and cultural-racial-ethnic heritages that abound in cross-cultural mentoring relationships (Brinson & Kottler, 1993; Bowman *et al.*, 1999). When these issues arose for Ron and Juanita, they were more easily mediated because the twosome had previously read and come to understand how culture affects interpersonal dialogue. Ron understood Juanita's culture-bound style of communicating through stories, which often took the scenic route in making a point. And Juanita came to understand that Ron's brief answers, silences and probing questions were not signs of detachment but were part of his problem-solving techniques and his rational approach to life.

Visibility, risk and opposition in the minority academic's life

Academia is a hostile and unaccepting environment for many minority faculty. Only 3% of all college and university faculty are black. The majority of the meager 3% are, concentrated in the junior ranks and at historically black colleges and universities. Furthermore, black women represent less than 1% of college faculty (Menges & Exum, 1983; Bowman *et al.*, 1999). In addition, while the numbers of minority students have steadily increased over the past four decades, there has been no corresponding increase in the numbers of minority faculty. The literature notes that black women are more disadvantaged than their white female counterparts and their black male brethren because they experience the double impact of sexism and racism (Menges & Exum, 1983; Moses, 1989; James & Farmer, 1993; Smith, 1999; Vargas, 1999; Bova, 2000). Black women in the academy have been generally characterized as being ‘isolated, underutilized, and often demoralized’ (Carroll, 1973, p. 173). The low percentage of black women faculty makes Juanita especially visible and susceptible to being solicited to serve on diversity committees, to work on minority initiatives and to nurture minority students. Advising Juanita on what invitations to accept or refuse, and how to weigh these decisions on the tenure scale, has been part of Ron's constant vigilance as a mentor.

Another jeopardy for Juanita is that her race-based research agenda is perceived as provocative in many conservative academic circles. This is particularly problematic for the old guard in the academy, according to Menges and Exum (1983). Menges and Exum explain: ‘Unfortunately, but understandably, much of that provocation is experienced by senior academics as a threat. Junior professors seeking promotion and tenure are caught between obeying the maxim, “Thou shalt not threaten senior colleagues”, and maintaining their integrity as scholars and teachers’ (p. 135). For Juanita, part of that risk has been mitigated by the fact that she and Ron co-research many of these issues of how positionality affects teaching and scholarship (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 1998, 2000, 2001). In addition, an integral part of the acceptance of Juanita's work occurred as a result of Ron's sponsorship of her research and Juanita's position as an emerging scholar in the field of adult education. Brinson and Kottler (1993) regard this public endorsement of the protégé as an important part of the mentor's responsibilities.

Two other serious obstacles that have to be faced by minority protégés and white mentors are the paternalistic and political nature inherent in the mentoring process. The hierarchically prescribed mentor/protégé relationship resembles the paternalistic model of the authoritative superior and deferential subordinate that is a painful part of a racist American legacy. Many black faculty react negatively and almost subconsciously to this objectionable inequality (Brinson & Kottler, 1993; Margolis & Romero, 2001). Again, for Ron and Juanita an understanding of this societal pattern and a shared social justice worldview meant that there was no place for paternalism in our pattern of relating to each other. The trust in our relationship made the occasional hierarchical situation palatable, flexible, and at times unnoticeable. It is conceivable that the absence of paternalism in our relationship was also dictated by our closeness in age and by Juanita's maturity gleaned from 20 years in the workforce prior to entering the academy.

The politics of mentoring are not addressed in the literature but are part of any process where a system of power is manifest. From a sociopolitical perspective, a black woman like Juanita at a predominately white institution ‘is incongruent with the racial distribution of power both in the institution and in the larger society within which the institution is embedded’ (Murrell & Tangri, 1999, p. 215). Ron's position in the academy and institutional place as ‘the superior’ in the mentoring pair fits with the hegemonic patterns of the university and does not create any great risk for him. However, his successful sponsorship of Juanita marks him simultaneously as a champion for the downtrodden and as a possible traitor who has broken with the ranks.

Juanita's lifelong position of being on the margins of society has led many women of color and minority faculty to situate their lives in opposition to a society that devalues them (Johnson-Bailey, 1999). This resistance for survival's sake is frequently reflected in the research of scholars who are members of disenfranchised groups (Menges & Exum, 1983; Margolis & Romero, 2001). In addition, this oppositional lens of the faculty at the margins perceives mentoring as an instrument of socialization wherein mentors 'control the gates of social reproduction' (Margolis & Romero, 2001, p. 82).

Often mentors seek to re-create their protégés in their own image, relying on a plan that proved successful in their academic careers. But the attempted replication is an ill-fitting likeness for minority protégés for a myriad of reasons. To his credit, Ron has always recognized and celebrated Juanita's difference and sought to find a way to optimize a fit between her talents and the academy. For example, he has encouraged and advocated her cultural and gender-based work on life stories years before narrative analysis was accepted as a valid methodological research approach. In part, it has been Juanita's willingness to consistently operationalize and believe in her social justice framework, and Ron's ability to support his protégé and to model creativity and scholarship, that has helped our mentoring relationship evolve through the many phases and challenges of mentoring.

Mentoring relationships as sites of struggle for learning and power

Most definitions frame the relationship between mentor and protégé as one of 'intense caring', where a person with more experience works with a person with less experience to promote both personal and professional development (Boice, 1992; Murrell & Tangri, 1999; Mullen, 2000b; Hansman, 2001). However, this framing of the relationship in purely psychological terms, while partly true, ignores the central dynamic of any mentoring relationship, which is hierarchical in nature (Bowman *et al.*, 1999). This power relationship is further magnified in cross-cultural mentoring, where both people are in different locations in societal hierarchies of race and gender. As Ragins (1997) explains: 'Diversified mentoring relationships are composed of mentors and protégés who differ in group membership associated with power differences' (p. 482). In previous writings that we have argued (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 1998, 2000), the power relations that structure our social lives cannot possibly be checked at the classroom door. Likewise, the learning dimensions of the cross-cultural mentoring relationship are enacted within the political and social hierarchies in which both people live. This has implications for both the instrumental learning and the psychosocial counseling that are part of effective mentoring relationships (Thomas, 2001).

At the structural level, our mentoring relationship is hierarchical in terms of both race and gender, which is typical for how many black women are mentored (Blake, 1999). These types of relationships may be common simply because there are more white men in positions of power in the academy who can fulfill the role of mentors. Another explanation may be that white men can afford to be more generous with their time and power than white women and others who are still negotiating access and opportunities. Although recognizing the interlocking nature of these societal hierarchies, our experience has been that gender plays a less significant role than does race as a site of struggle for learning and power. Our relationship is primarily framed by the backdrop of 300 years of domination of blacks by whites in the United States. One way that the importance of race plays out is in the content of Juanita's need for mentoring. For example, almost all of Juanita's mentoring dilemmas have been about her experiences as a black person teaching openly resistant white students. This mentoring takes the form of coaching about strategies for dealing with incidents that arise in her teaching as well as psychosocial counseling to process the negative ramifications of being verbally attacked in class or maligned by white students.

Who benefits? Mentors as learners

Virtually all of the literature about mentoring assumes a 'teacher centered view of learning' (Margolis & Romero, 2001, p. 85). In fact, the very definitions of mentoring speak about the 'coaching and counseling' functions, which effectively define the learning as only going in one direction (Murrell & Tangri, 1999; Hansman, 2001). One problem with this understanding is that it is highly paternalistic in that the mentor is seen as above the fray, bestowing gifts on the protégé in a highly altruistic way. However, to be real and truly human, we need to understand that relationships affect both people. Some literature is now beginning to talk about the benefits that mentors gain from the relationship, including career enhancement, information exchange, recognition and personal satisfaction (Smith *et al.*, 2000).

As Ron explained in his personal narrative that introduced this article, there were numerous ways in which Juanita promoted his individual growth and development as an educator and a scholar. Margolis and Romero (2001) point out that it is rarely acknowledged that 'mentoring is an agent of socialization and that part of the game of mirrors is that the mentor shines by reflection' (p. 84). The literature supports this perspective and Ron is routinely recognized by colleagues for his mentoring skills and efforts.

Ragins (1997) has discussed three ways in which mentors benefit, including diversity outcomes, intrinsic outcomes and organizational outcomes. While all mentors obtain intrinsic and organizational outcomes, diversity outcomes are achieved only in cross-cultural relationships. These outcomes are primarily related to learning and include more knowledge, empathy and skills related to interacting with individuals from different social groups. In particular, Brinson and Kottler (1993) argue that the mentor needs to develop a working knowledge of the protégé's culture and worldview. These diversity-related outcomes were particularly important in our relationship.

As we discussed in the previous section, the major learning has related to the racial differences between us. Ron had to learn what it means to be a black faculty member at a university since his knowledge and experience were limited by his social condition of being white. If Ron, the senior member, had been black and Juanita, the junior faculty, white, this would not have been the case because most black people in the United States develop a double consciousness (DuBois, 1961) which allows them to see the world from the white and the black perspective. Without this acquired knowledge, Ron could have engaged in 'color-blind' mentoring, which would have been detrimental to Juanita's development. For instance, the question of whether to pursue a research agenda based on issues of race plays out very differently for white and black faculty members. Black faculty members are often seen as having an agenda when they pursue this line of research, whereas white scholars tend to be seen as progressive. Thus, there is a ‘cultural taxation’ (Padilla, 1994) for any ethnic or racial minority scholar, which mentors must understand.

Seeing race, forgetting race in mentoring relationships

One of the key sites of struggle for learning in cross-cultural mentoring relationships ‘is the nature of the mentor's and the protégé's attitudes towards diversity’ (Ragins, 1997, p. 506). In fact, studies have shown (Bowman *et al.*, 1999; Thomas, 2001) that mentors in cross-race relationships provide both career development and psychosocial functions when both members share similar understandings and strategies for dealing with racial differences in the relationship. However, when mentors and protégés engage in ‘protective hesitation’ (Thomas, 2001), where they refrain from raising touchy racial issues, then the relationship lacks psychosocial support. Bowman *et al.* (1999) say that an effective strategy when mentoring black Americans is to see the protégé as an individual and not as a category: ‘remember that they are Black Americans and forget that they are Black Americans’ (p. 38). As we discussed in the section about the issue of trust, the protégé also needs to see the white mentor as an individual and not as a category or representative of the larger white society. This is essential if trust is to develop in the relationship.

We are congruent in our understanding of the role that race and racism play in American society, having reflected and published extensively together in this area (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2000). We have argued that although race is clearly a social construct, its effects are real in our daily lives. In one study we used our own classrooms to examine how the invisible construct of whiteness drives the dynamics of teaching and learning in adult education (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 1998). Our theoretical understanding of race is one factor that shows us how to both see race and forget race in our mentoring relationship. We recognize that although our racial differences are a necessary part of our daily interactions, we also can connect as people who have the opportunity to reshape racially defined relations of power. We have learned that the first step in getting beyond the barriers and boundaries of race is not to pretend that they do not exist. In fact, by regularly discussing the barriers, we can act as if they are not there.

Implications for mentoring and learning in cross-cultural contexts

What are the implications that can be drawn from our examination of cross-cultural mentoring? There are two major areas that encapsulate our discussion: the impact and significance of mentoring at the organizational and individual levels.

Most of the literature examines the individual dynamics of mentoring—issues concerning trust, risk and matters of interpersonal styles. Overall, the literature effectively analyzes the various factors that influence the psychosocial and developmental components of mentoring. In summation, it is clear that mentoring benefits both parties. The protégé gains access to an experienced and expert guide. Studies report that faculty who are mentored achieve more job success, report higher salaries and have greater career mobility (Murrell & Tangri, 1999; Smith *et al.*, 2000).

In exchange for their services, which significantly benefit the protégé, the mentor receives career enhancement, recognition and personal satisfaction (Smith *et al.*, 2000; Dedrick & Watson, 2002). Indeed, both persons involved in the mentoring equation grow from being exposed to another culture and the challenge of stepping outside of their comfort zone.

In terms of the rudimentary facets of mentoring, it is generally reported that protégés are responsible for seeking mentors and that faculty of color have difficulty obtaining mentors (Bowman *et al.*, 1999; Margolis & Romero, 2001) because of the theory of homogeneity (Bowman *et al.*, 1999). People generally prefer to be mentored by and to mentor those from their own racial or ethnic group. Given the direct benefits imparted by cross-cultural mentoring, it is essential that new faculty be mentored through the labyrinth of the academy around such issues as publication, promotion and tenure. The predicament of selecting a mentor and serving as a mentor is further underscored when the difficulty in establishing cross-cultural matches is considered. Therefore we recommend a proactive stance from senior faculty who are willing to mentor their younger colleagues.

We also suggest that new faculty be assertive in creating a mentoring consortium to fulfill their range of needs and that they consider the idea of entering into co-mentoring or synergistic mentoring relationships (Mullen, 2000a). Minority scholars can form a self-mentoring group with other scholars (Margolis & Romero, 2001) or they can acquire different mentors to satisfy specific needs (Bowman *et al.*, 1999). For example, there might be a senior coworker who is good at understanding the organization's political landscape and another associate who is a dynamic teacher and classroom manager. Both colleagues would be indispensable in a collective of mentors.

Mentors in cross-cultural relationships must also understand that their job does not end with the individual protégé. As Thomas (2001) argues, mentors must do more by actively supporting broader learning initiatives at their organizations to help create the conditions that foster the upward mobility of people of color. For example, they can promote workshops that address racial issues and support networking groups among racial minority faculty. Ron has offered workshops for the Colleges of Social Work and Education about what he has learned about teaching and learning around issues of power in the classroom. He also helped to set up an office in the College of Education to address the mentoring of all new faculty members. Some of the issues addressed in these workshops designed specifically for faculty members of color and their department heads included: (1) the special conditions that are often present if their scholarship was threatening to or devalued by others; (2) the need to protect these faculty members from having to serve as the 'minority' on all university committees; and (3) the need to factor in the racial dynamics that can influence their teaching evaluations. Given the current demographics of the academy, these organizational efforts are critical to retaining minority faculty and supporting their development. Cross-cultural mentoring, both at the individual and organizational level, is a key strategy in changing the face of higher education so that it looks more like the society it serves.

While our mentoring experiences occurred at a research university, the environment is nevertheless a workplace. Speaking both anecdotally and through the literature, the issues that transpire in our academy are ever present in all work settings

(Hacker, 1992). Indeed, one of Juanita's favorite sayings of consolation after discussing a difficult work-related issue with Ron is: 'I know that I'd have a version of these same problems and concerns if I worked at Burger King. At least here, I get free books and a travel budget.' Succinctly expressed, as many of us realize, higher education is a microcosm of the larger work environment and of society in general. We believe that our experiences and recommendations are applicable to any workplace since issues of power struggles, guarding one's turf, managing diversity, on-the job adjustments, learning and change are not exclusive to the university setting.

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