"I Don't Want to Work in a World of Whiteness:" White Faculty and Their Mentoring Relationships with Black Students

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Abstract: Cross-racial mentoring experiences of White faculty with Black students are scarce in the literature. Merging cross-racial mentoring theories and ally development models, the authors analyzed interviews of six White faculty who served as mentors of Black students at a highly selective predominantly White institution. Our findings detail how White faculty initiate and nurture mentoring relationships and suggest that White faculty recall their own formative experiences to help mentees overcome challenges. In this study, we conclude by advancing a conceptual cross-racial ally mentorship model to inform practice and abrogate cultural taxation among faculty of color.

Since the 1960s, Black student enrollment has steadily increased at predominantly White institutions (PWIs), both in raw numbers and in representation (American Council on Education [ACE], 2005; Harris, 2012; Strayhorn & Terrell, 2010; Tuitt, Hanna, Martinez, del Carmen

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Salazar, & Griffin, 2009). However, a number of challenges have emerged with this increase: Black completion rates at PWIs lag in comparison to those of Whites and Asians (Astin & Oseguera, 2005; Lynch & Engle, 2010). The literature on Black student and faculty experiences at PWIs illustrates this point by identifying prejudice, racism, and isolation from the campus and community as reasons for the disparity in retention and completion rates (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Strayhorn & Terrell, 2010; Thompson & Louque, 2005). The question, then, is how do Black students and faculty find ways to cope, even thrive in the aforementioned settings? There are examples of how Black students and faculty derive strength and guidance from mentoring relationships (DeWalt, 2004; Griffin & Reddick, 2011; Milner, Husband, & Jackson, 2002). However, the first difficulty for Black students seeking Black faculty mentors at PWIs is *finding* them. Despite increasing student diversity, the percentage of Black faculty has remained virtually stagnant—4.4 percent in 1975, to 5 percent in 1997, to 5.2 percent in 2005 (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2007; Palmer & Holmes, 2010; Trower & Chait, 2002). The growth in Black students attending PWIs—a 56 percent increase since the 1980s (Harvey, 2002)—outpaces the growth in Black faculty, creating a deficit in the potential pool of Black mentors.

Additionally, the small number of Black faculty who *could* serve as mentors are often overburdened with manifest roles at PWIs, including serving as mentors to students of color. This dilemma has been termed "cultural taxation" (Padilla, 1994) or the "black tax" (Cohen, 1998). Cultural taxation obligates Black faculty to take responsibility for the welfare of students of color, to serve on various multicultural committees—something that allows senior administrators to create an illusion of diversity, especially at PWIs lacking minority faculty representation (Reddick, Bukoski, Smith, & Wasielewski, 2014). The "hidden service agenda," as Brayboy (2003) terms it, places the burden of representation on the shoulders of faculty of color, far more than on White faculty.

Cultural taxation contributes to stress for faculty of color (Turner & Myers, 2000). While some suggest that promotion and tenure concerns should be re-imagined for faculty with significant service obligations (Griffin & Reddick, 2011; Reddick, Rochlen, Grasso, Reilly, & Spikes, 2012), another approach is to ensure that White faculty are also sharing

the responsibility of mentoring Black students (Gasman & Abiola, 2012). Some White faculty believe that they will not be able to relate as easily to Black students compared to a Black professor; however, this mindset is ultimately problematic and does little to address concerns about the taxation of Black faculty (Reddick & Young, 2012). As Gasman and Abiola (2012) wrote an op-ed for *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, "[T]he onus for mentoring Black students should not rest solely on the shoulders of Black faculty members; White faculty members need to step up." Like all faculty, majority (White) faculty have a role to play by serving as mentors to Black students – in doing so, they can lessen the cultural taxation experienced by Black faculty and provide much-needed support to Black students. To facilitate greater mentoring opportunities, there is a need to understand how White faculty members make meaningful, enduring connections to Black students.

Mentoring has captured the attention of policymakers and practitioners in a significant way: President Barack Obama has declared the past two Januarys as National Mentoring Month (Center for Health Communication, 2014). Organizations such as Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, the United Way of America, and the Corporation for National and Community Service have invested sizable resources in campaigns to interest Americans in serving as mentors *(ibid)*. Unsurprisingly, mentoring mania has also engulfed the professoriate, with an abundance of programs, perspectives, and punditry. Of particular interest is the role that faculty play as mentors to students; mentoring is generally associated with many positive outcomes for students, including higher GPAs, more units of credit per semester, and greater satisfaction with the university environment (Campbell & Campbell, 1997; Cosgrove, 1986). Given the breakdown of faculty by race in the U.S., it is likely that many of professors that Black students seek out as mentors will be White. Therefore, the question of how White faculty approach their mentoring relationships with Black students across race is one of considerable educational importance.

A more robust understanding of how White faculty approach their mentorship of Black undergraduate students has the potential of advancing both a conceptual and a new structural model of mentoring across racial and ethnic lines. As scholars have noted, college success rates for Black students have declined to critical levels or stagnated (Harper & Davis, 2012; Nguyen, Bibo, & Engle, 2012). Therefore, it is

essential that faculty of all races, particularly White faculty, bring to bear their considerable talents to help cultivate the next generation of Black collegians. In doing so, this study concludes that White faculty in the sample serve as allies on campus. By linking, but not privileging, their own experiences over those of their student mentees, they create trust and build relationships. In addition to the critical service they provide for their mentees, White faculty serve as an ally to faculty of color, especially Black faculty, as they share the mentoring workload of Black students. Our research study of White faculty mentors and their interaction with Black students substantiates the diverse knowledge shared by White faculty that helps them to serve as mentors who understand more fully how to overcome oppression and how to promote learning and success.

Mentoring Defined

In examining the phenomenon of mentoring, it is first essential to clarify meaning of a term that is routinely applied to any configuration of a developmental relationship. One of the most enduring definitions comes from Kram's (1988) labeling of mentoring as a developmental relationship between a senior and junior partner, where the senior partner imparts knowledge while simultaneously providing psychosocial support to the junior partner. Since Kram's groundbreaking work, researchers and theorists have engaged in a robust discussion of what mentoring means in certain contexts and fields of study. For example, Jacobi (1991) famously catalogued 15 definitions from the fields of higher education, organizational management, and psychology. After reviewing the voluminous literature in the area, we define mentoring as Johnson (2002) does:

> Mentoring is a personal relationship in which a more experienced (usually older) faculty member or professional acts as a guide, role model, teacher, and sponsor of a less experienced (usually younger) graduate student or junior professional. (p. 88).

We further augment Johnson's (2002) definition by the inclusion of undergraduate students as well, hearkening back to Jacobi's (1991) emphasis on mentorship as "a critical component of effective undergraduate education" (p. 505).

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to illustrate how cross-racial mentoring can provide opportunities in higher education as a step in the right direction of creating a society based on racial democracy that respects all identities. This research is timely and critical given the current status of Black student enrollment in today's higher education setting.

This study focuses on the experiences of White faculty mentors of Black students at a highly selective PWI in the northeast United States. White faculty are the focus of this study because they represent the majority of faculty at four-year institutions of higher education and are more likely to hold higher ranks and have tenure compared to Black faculty (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, Whitmore, & Miller, 2007). This study advances the conversation regarding how White faculty approach the important role of mentorship for Black undergraduate students—a critical issue in understanding and addressing issues of student retention. To address these critical concerns, the researchers posed the following questions in the study:

1. How do White faculty mentors of Black students at a highly-selective predominantly White institution discuss their mentoring of Black students?

2. What role, if any, do formative experiences of White faculty mentors play in their mentoring of Black students at a highly-selective predominantly White institution?

Theoretical Foundation

This study analyzes the mentoring work of six White faculty in their relationships with Black undergraduates; therefore, theories that discuss race and gender in mentoring were essential to understanding these experiences: those articulated by Blake-Beard, Murrell, and Thomas (2007), and others provide a framework for interpreting these relationships. Additionally, research on the development of social justice allies, articulated by Washington and Evans (1991) undergirds our conceptualization of how White faculty who effectively mentor Black students seek to challenge structures that oppress their mentees. These allies hold themselves accountable to members of the Black community, without assigning additional burdens to the Black academic community.

Cross-Race Mentoring

While previous research suggested that homophilous (matching) racial characteristics were most desirable in mentoring dyads (Erkut & Mokros, 1984; Moore & Amey, 1988; Ugbah & Williams, 1989), organizational theorist David Thomas (1990, 1993) pioneered research on cross-race mentoring through an examination of the experiences of Black executives who were predominantly mentored by White men in business environments. A key aspect of Thomas' work is the bifurcated approach to mentoring adopted by many Black professionals in predominantly White organizations. Thomas (1990) explains Black professionals often seek out same-race mentors to assist their ascent into organizational culture, but the frequency and location of Black mentors also means that these individuals also actively seek out mentors across racial lines. Whereas the mentoring relationships with Black mentors often transcend organizational and departmental structures, Black protégés look within traditional hierarchies for support as well (Thomas, 1990).

Corroborating findings related to cross-race mentoring discuss the importance of extra sensitivity considering different worldviews, becoming familiar with research embraced by scholars of color, investing in relationships, reflecting on White privilege, and sharing opportunities for professional development (Stanley & Lincoln, 2005). Through these conceptualizations, one can easily understand why Black undergraduates at a PWI would seek out White mentors as well as Black mentors.

However, cross-race mentoring can present challenges for White mentors in relationships with Black mentees (Reddick & Young, 2012). Individual perspectives on the (in)significance of race and racism, for example, can create barriers that inhibit trust and intimacy in the mentor-protégé relationship (Blake-Beard, Murrell, & Thomas, 2007); similar concerns about trust overall can impede cross-race mentoring as well (Cohen & Steele, 2002). The racial climate in an organizational setting weighs heavily on how White-Black mentor-protégé dyads develop; in contexts where racial tensions are high, such concerns are forced to the forefront of relationships, where a White mentor and Black protégé can array themselves in any permutation of engagement or ignorance. Thomas (1993) argues that when the mentor-protégé dyad are in agreement about the (in)significance of racial issues in the organizational and relationship context, trust can be established and fruitful exchanges can occur. However, where there is disharmony in the pair's vision of

racial issues, trust is inhibited. At any rate, Blake-Beard and colleagues (2007) endorse additional research on cross-racial mentoring in various institutional contexts, specifically in-depth ethnographic studies such as that described in this article: "[F]uture research on mentoring must move beyond the faulty assumption that the experience of race within organizations does not shape, alter, and drive the mentoring relationship" (p. 225).

Ally Development Models

Demonstration of social justice is founded on principles of equity and solidarity, as well as an understanding and valuing of human rights, and recognition of the dignity of all people (Zajda, Majhanovich, & Rust, 2006). Closely aligned with social justice is mentorship. In actuality, examination of personal and professional experiences can contribute to a faculty member's social justice framework by having the ability to relate to sub-populations of students from various backgrounds through understanding, empathy, and advocacy. As such, White faculty mentors "need not have the same cultural or social background as their mentees, but they must pay close attention to the implications of differences" (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2004). Being aware and respectful of differences while creating common ground allows White faculty mentors the opportunity to align as an ally for Black students at a PWI.

Washington and Evans (1991) discussed many benefits of being an ally, including: opening oneself up to relationships; challenging stereotypes; and, making the difference in the lives of adolescents (as cited in Owney, 2010). Washington and Evans (1991) further developed a stage model of ally development focused on the inculcation of allies for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) persons. They proposed four levels in ally development: 1) awareness, 2) knowledge/education, 3) skills, and, 4) action. While this framing is historically calibrated for LGBT allies, we find significant fidelity between challenges that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered persons encounter in a heteronormative and/or homophobic climate and those that Black people encounter in a predominantly White and/or racially biased environment, such as those endemic to many PWI campus climates. We intend, therefore, to apply this conceptual framing to the work of White faculty who were identified by Black students as mentors to themselves and their peers in that community. Through this work, these faculty members meet the standard of the appellation "ally."

Researchers have detailed various intrinsic and extrinsic benefits of mentorship (Reddick, Griffin, & Cherwitz, 2011). While serving as an ally may also include these rewards, an ally is called to a deeper level of responsibility and visibility. Allies for social justice "seek to develop systems and structures to hold themselves accountable and to be held accountable by members of the oppressed groups, without placing the burden for accountability on the oppressed" (Edwards, 2006, p. 51). Bishop (2002) further discussed the responsibility placed upon allies to listen and reflect, acknowledge privilege, and take initiative to learn about oppression:

> …the essence of the path to becoming an ally is balance and clarity. One must balance patience with confrontation, flexibility and limits, boundaries and allowances, learning and opinion, humility and self-confidence, your own oppression and others' struggles. Clarity comes from observation, reflection, and analysis in a specific situation. (p. 121)

Serving as an ally can be a complex and unique process for each person, requiring attention and reflection each step of the way (Owney, 2010). It is important for White faculty to recognize the myth of race-matching in academic mentoring and to devote considerable attention to the notion of leveraging proximate experiences to identify with and connect to Black mentees as an ally.

Methodology

Our study focused on the motivations and mentoring methods of White faculty who were identified as mentors to Black undergraduate students at a PWI. Data were collected via in-depth phenomenological interviews, which covered a range of topics, including the participants' pathway to the professoriate, their time management strategies regarding their service obligations, and how they assisted Black students in their psychosocial and instrumental challenges on campus.

This study took place at a highly selective private PWI in the northeastern United States (Noble College, a pseudonym) and enrolled approximately 6,700 students in 40 majors. Demographically, the student body was equally male and female, and 45% White, 15% Asian/Pacific Islander, 9% International, 7% Black, 8% Latino, 1% Native American, and 16% unknown or other. The campus employed 1,252 faculty

members who are racially/ethnically categorized as 79.2% White, 5.7% Black, 4.3% Latino, 10.6% Asian, and 0.3% Native American. Over half (52.9%) of the faculty were female.

The lead researcher surveyed Black undergraduate students involved in a Black student support group at the university. In the survey, students were asked to identify White faculty members who had served as mentors to them or their friends (see aforementioned definition of mentoring per Kram, 1988 and Johnson, 2002), and the survey results were used to rank faculty by frequency in which she/he was identified. From this ranking, nominated faculty were invited to participate in the two-part interview study. Six faculty (three male, three female) agreed to participate in the study. Of the sample, two were lecturers, two were assistant professors, and two were full professors at the time of the interview. This sample came from a broad array of disciplines and departments, including the arts and humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. All participating faculty were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identities.

Faculty in the sample participated in a two-stage phenomenological interview process (Seidman, 1998) with the lead researcher. The first interview explored their life histories (formative experiences, pathway to the professoriate) and the second explored their mentoring experiences in depth (motivations for serving as a mentor, successes and challenges in the mentoring role, and relationships with undergraduate students). Each 60-90 minute interview was tape-recorded and professionally transcribed.

The secondary analysis of this data was informed by the aforementioned theories on cross-racial mentoring, but also integrated etic coding (those that come from theoretical constructs) to understand how these White faculty mentors connected to Black students. In this analysis, researchers reviewed transcripts from interviews using an open coding process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), capturing unique aspects of the mentoring relationship as seen from the perspective of White faculty mentors of Black students. In subsequent coding, differences and similarities were noted in how White faculty are motivated to mentor along gender and rank lines. As analysis progressed, a cross-sectional code and retrieve method was utilized (Mason, 2002; Spencer, Ritchie, & O'Connor,

2007), creating codes from a first reading of the data, and applying them across all interview data.

We endeavored to ensure trustworthiness in data collection and analysis by employing many strategies in the qualitative tradition (Johnson, 1997; Kvale, 1996; Seidman, 1998). We triangulated data by utilizing several sources (interviewing multiple participants, reading faculty bios online, conducting multiple interviews, asking clarifying questions via e-mail) to address interpretive validity (Maxwell, 2005). Additionally, we shared findings with a study group comprised of fellow scholars: the process of sharing transcripts, matrices, codebooks, and memos with this community presented alternate interpretations and challenged assumptions. Even with these validity measures, there were limitations of our methodological approach. First, mentors who experienced positive experiences in their relationships were likely more willing to participate in this research. Additionally, the selection of a single site for the research, while intentional, does suggest that mentoring relationships could be considerably different in other institutional contexts.

Findings

This section presents emergent themes around factors that influence White faculty to serve as mentors to Black undergraduate and graduate students. Aligned with our research questions, analysis of the findings reveal first how faculty initiated cross-racial mentorship; second, how faculty developed and nurtured the mentor-mentee relationship; and finally, how faculty drew upon formative life experiences to identify, relate and support students. A table is included (see Appendix A) to assist the reader in identifying study participants; in brief, they are:

- Rachel Jones, female teaching fellow and academic adviser, applied sciences, 36, from the Northeast

- Caitlin Page, female assistant professor in social sciences, 38, from the West Coast

- Victoria Gold, female full professor in social sciences, 61, from the East Coast

- Stephen Bell, male full professor in applied sciences, 60, from the Northeast

- Andy Russo, male lecturer in natural sciences, 40, from the East Coast

- David König, male assistant professor in the humanities, 37, from Western Europe

Research Question 1

Data gathered from multiple semi-structured interviews informed our analysis of the first research question, "How do White faculty mentors of Black students at a highly-selective predominantly White institution discuss their mentoring of Black students?" by suggesting that faculty members discuss mentoring in terms of two distinct phases – 1) a beginning stage and an 2) on-going development stage. Faculty members in the sample shared a strong sentiment that mentoring students was as much a part of their job as the components of teaching and service. Every mentoring relationship has a unique beginning, yet our analysis of the data suggests that faculty members hone in on two specific practices to initiate cross-racial mentoring. First, they ensure their accessibility to all students, but in particular students of color. Further, they reach out to students once they have identified behaviors suggesting a student may need additional support.

Faculty in the sample recognized mentoring to be a purposeful, iterative process rather than a singular meeting or disjointed set of advising sessions (Reddick & Young, 2012). As such, they discussed mentorship development under the auspice of a strong sense of awareness. Specifically, their heightened awareness ensured they were aware of the sociocultural context around Black students in a PWI, aware of the need to address the whole student, and finally aware of the mutually beneficial opportunity to learn and grow with their mentee.

How Cross-Racial Mentorship Begins. Participants in the study described the first phase of cross-racial mentoring by suggesting two distinct tactics – being *accessible* and by *reaching out*. In general, faculty shared their strategy to engage in purposeful behaviors and activities to illustrate accessibility to students. One way of promoting accessibility was demonstrated simply through physical proximity. In addition to maintaining office hours on campus, faculty kept an active profile and stayed engaged with issues on campus so they appeared to be more approachable. David, an assistant professor in humanities,

discussed the additional level of accessibility beyond supporting their intellectual growth. "I am there for [students] with regards to anything that relates to [their] college experience…or to [their] learning experience." David emphasized true accessibility as being open to conversation with a student on any topic outside the classroom.

In many ways, faculty understood physical space as an essential element; yet, participants in the study were also aware of their attitude and personality traits as a way to create an additional layer of accessibility. Andy, a lecturer in the sciences and undergraduate program advisor stated, "I think that I don't seek out African American students, but I make myself very accessible." In addition to committing himself to being visible on campus, he recognized his disposition to be a way he connects with all students, including African Americans.

> [Noble College] is an inaccessible place, with people who are not willing to talk, or give you time to talk . . . I don't think that I segregate my approach between African and non-African-American mentees. I would say what I do for everybody might be something that maybe works especially well with African-American mentees. What I try to do is I try to get to know a student, in some detail, and then I try to help them find the best path through [Noble College].

Similarly, Caitlin, an assistant professor in the social sciences, said she consciously demonstrates a sense of humor and humility over a sense of arrogance or superiority. "So, I think maybe because – I'm just not an elitist. [I]n very colloquial terms…I do think that's part of it. Maybe I'm just viewed as more approachable."

As indicated, faculty members invited mentorship relationships through the intentional, but *passive*, approach of being physically, intellectually, and emotional accessible to students. However, the majority of participants in the study described taking an additional *proactive* step to reach out and initiate a connection. Rachel, a teaching fellow and academic advisor in the applied sciences, said she makes "an extra effort" to invite Black students to be a part of her research and to talk about their studies and goals. Like Andy, Rachel recognized the unfortunate inaccessibility and unwelcoming nature of the campus climate to some student populations and she "want[ed] to make it clear

that [the university] is a place where students of all sets of skill are still going to be encouraged to go as far as they want to go."

Participant faculty reaching out to Black students became a dominant theme throughout the interviews. Stephen, a full professor in the applied sciences, suggested the reason for his reaching out was "partly because of this sort of sense that [Black students] don't quite belong, or they don't want to bother you. . . . So you've got to reassure people that it's okay to talk about these things with your professors." He shared a story about how he reached out to a Black student who was struggling in his class and his invitation to discuss the student's academics turned into an on-going relationship. "The guy needed help, you know? He was in trouble. And my heart sank [because he was] one of the two Black students in the course." By inviting the student in to discuss his academic performance, Stephen became accessible to the student in a more holistic approach by learning more about the student's personal struggles, eventually leading to the opportunity to recommend him for a job.

In at least one participant's view, her own gender identity informed how she approached mentoring in a significant way. Victoria, a full professor in the social sciences, discussed how her own self-concept as a woman likely signaled to students that she could serve as an empathetic mentor:

> I think I'm probably more compassionate than many of my colleagues, but I think that that's often because I'm a woman. And it may be that students know that they can tell me things. So that's true for my African American students, as it is for my [other] students.

In Victoria's understanding, students viewed her gender as a signal that she would be receptive to their needs and concerns – this, in fact, seemed to be an automatic part of her outreach effort.

How Cross-Racial Mentorship Develops. Participants in the study understood the difference between a one-time advising session versus a sustained mentoring relationship, in the vein of the aforementioned definitions posited by Kram (1988) Johnson (2002). Subsequently, participants described the development and maturation of a mentor-mentee relationship. We found three themes emergent from the data illustrating consistency in how faculty described ways they

successfully engaged in cross-racial mentorship, including: 1) the capacity to have *a heightened sense of awareness regarding the unique challenges facing Black students* in a PWI environment, 2) an understanding of *holistic student engagement*, and 3) the recognition of *reciprocal relationship-building*.

The first distinguishing characteristic in cross-racial mentoring was the participants' ability to have a heightened sense of awareness of the context surrounding Black students studying at a PWI. Research shows that Black students often deal with barriers to retention and completion rates at PWIs (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Strayhorn & Terrell, 2010; Thompson & Louque, 2005). Recognizing this, study participants worked to be understanding, empathized, and made themselves available to Black students. David shared that while he felt his behavior did not change in class, he "had in the back of my mind that there is perhaps something that they are having a hard time with, which I should just be aware of." He attributed his awareness to understanding what it is like to be in an unfamiliar setting.

> Well, that's perhaps one of the *advantages* over any of my colleagues, is that I've lived in five different countries, and I know very well how difficult and how challenging it actually is. All the organization, the preparation, and then just *being* there.

David, like all participants, drew upon past experiences to build a frame of reference—in this case, being a foreigner in a new country—allowing him to relate to possible challenges facing some Black students on campus. The details of these personal and professional experiences are further explored in the second research question.

Though faculty were aware of possible challenges presented to students, they did not assume that Black students necessarily had more problems due to their race and ethnicity, as Rachel stated:

> I don't always suppose that [race] is the identity that one is having trouble working with here. It may be more about class. It may be about being a woman. It may be about being gay, being a freshman. I don't assume that that's something that they are coming to me with any kind of problem about.

Instead, faculty felt that their sense of awareness allowed them to hone in on a variation in class attendance or participation that might signal an opportunity to serve as a support system.

A second theme emerging from the data included "getting to know the whole student," garnering a holistic impression of their Black protégés from many perspectives. All participants in the study identified cross-racial mentoring as a way in which to help students succeed beyond academics. In order to go beyond the classroom or a one-time advising session, Caitlin said she took the time to connect with students, noting that "to have somebody sit across from you, and listen and tell you have good ideas" is "an invaluable experience." Similarly, Victoria stated that students could "lean on her," and she would listen or offer advice "for whatever reason – it could be personal, it could have to do with flunking exams. It could have to do with a range of things." Many pointed out the importance of asking questions to identify where students came from, and their aspirations for future success. In doing so, faculty hoped to bring forward the students' interests, insecurities, and passions. Participants shared this common approach, but were adamant in noting that this was a general philosophy that seemed to work with mentees of all backgrounds, as Andy stated:

> I would say what I do for everybody might be something that maybe works *especially well* with African American mentees. [W]hat I try to do is I try to find – get to *know* a student, in some detail, and then I try to help them find the best path through Noble, and let them know that there are thousands of paths through Noble, and for them to find their *own* path, and to get them…the confidence to *find* their own path.

The third theme emerged around the reciprocal nature of cross-racial mentoring and relationship-building. Participants willingly shared the intrinsic benefits they received by working with Black students: Victoria, for instance, described it as "a gift" when she had an opportunity to work with students who did not previously have a mentor. Victoria connected her mentoring to themes of responsibility and student engagement, stating that she appreciated knowing that her mentorship is "special to them" in the level of trust and reciprocity in the relationship. Andy echoed this sentiment, saying he "derive[d] a lot of satisfaction" from seeing students succeed. Andy additionally noted that there was an extra sense of fulfillment in helping a student who, if not for intervention, may

not have achieved the same goal – giving him the ability to feel "like I helped to change their world." Caitlin concurred, stating, "It's really nice to know that [mentoring] made some difference for somebody."

In summarizing the findings for the first research question, we note that participants discussed their mentorship in the two stages of initiation of the relationship and the development of the relationship. We found *passive* approaches coupled with *proactive* approaches were effective in initiating a mentoring relationship. Furthermore, faculty shared three specific qualities in the way they nurtured and developed their mentorship by 1) being aware of the PWI context for their Black student mentees, 2) engaging in discussion to develop the student in more than an academic setting, and 3) understanding the intrinsic and extrinsic benefits of being a mentor. The next aspect of our findings analyzes factors that help White faculty make meaningful connections to Black students. Specifically, we examine interview data to determine the formative experiences, both academic and personal, which situate faculty in a position where they are willing and able to serve as cross-racial mentors.

Research Question 2

In response to research question two ("What role, if any, do formative experiences of White faculty mentors play in their mentoring of Black students at a highly-selective predominantly White institution?"), our analysis of the data leads us to state that formative experiences significantly influence White faculty's cross-racial mentoring approaches. Rather than approaching the mentoring dyad as a novel occurrence, the faculty in the sample called upon previous life experiences to contextualize and hone their attempts to develop and influence Black undergraduate mentees. In particular, we found that formative experiences shaped faculty's social justice orientation, which significantly influenced their worldview and perspective that all students, including (and perhaps especially) Black undergraduates, deserve supportive, equitable treatment, which was often absent in the PWI environment. Additionally, faculty participants' early experiences as mentees themselves provided reliable models for the participants to emulate in their own mentoring of young people years later. Specifically, attention to both instrumental and psychosocial factors helped to shape the mentors' careers and personal growth – they, in turn, attempted to do the same for their protégés.

Social Justice Orientation. The interviewed faculty all reported experiences in their youth and early careers that can be described in the panoply of social justice orientation. That is, these participants participated in activities that demonstrated a belief in the principles of equity and solidarity, an understanding and valuing of human rights, and recognizing the dignity of all people (Zajda, Majhanovich, & Rust, 2006). In some circumstances, this orientation was an aspect of their research, while in others, friendships and peer networks brought these issues to the fore.

Caitlin described how her research agenda focused in Central America naturally bridged areas of social justice. "I work on questions of human rights, social justice, things of that sort… I also get students who have an affinity for those kinds of topics." Interestingly, Caitlin's experience was unique in the sample – given the diversity of disciplines represented in the sample; she was the only faculty member actively working on research adjacent to issues of social justice. For the remainder of the sample, social justice concerns evolved through interpersonal networks, such those described by Victoria, a full professor in her early sixties. As an undergraduate student at an Ivy League institution, she found herself immersed in a social network that she labeled as "activist":

> We had our own social life and group, and it concerned the student newspaper, it concerned journalism. My roommate was the vice president of student government. She was a very political person. She was an activist. And it was the beginning of the anti-war movement. It was at the tail end of some of the important civil rights activism. This roommate's husband, who was several years older than us, was with the group that went to the South, and two of those were the two students who were murdered in Mississippi.

Though she stated that she was "not a real activist," Victoria noted that there was "no question" that she was sympathetic to the plight of Black students at a predominantly White institution, noting incidents where students self-segregated in the eating commons among Jewish and White: "Where are they [African-Americans] gonna sit? Most of them aren't Jewish, and they're certainly not White. That was the tension in the place," Victoria recalled.

College was also the awakening of social activism for Andy. "Central America was big" during his college years, and he particularly identified two faculty members who helped shape his world view "non-science-wise." "One directed the Women Studies Program, and the other one who I did a lot of work with, with the Central American Committee that I was on," Andy recalled. He further found that "those people… mentored me in a moral and ethical way that was really formative." Andy pointed to his interest in Latin America, which led to developmental relationships with faculty mentors, as pivotal in his orientation towards social justice.

Relationships similarly affected Stephen's understanding of issues of inequity, but rather than a mentor, it was his partner and spouse, Jane, that helped to provide this insight. He described his relationship with Jane thusly: "I kind of merged into her, I would say." Mediating that closeness were a number of situations he had observed Jane experience which made clear that gender identity greatly influenced her opportunities in her scientific field of study. "There's so many experiences that my wife has dealt with, because she was working—it was before the expectation of women's academic equality really set in. She's had lots of experiences—which I've learned a lot from observing."

Tangible experiences which exposed the participants to inequities in life opportunities – by a research topic, by experiences concerning race, or occurrences in the campus environment as undergraduates – gave the faculty members an understanding that not all students experience the campus environment in the same way. This social justice orientation led participants such as Caitlin to commit to working with all students, but especially those who confronted isolation due to race, thus creating a safe space with often underrepresented voices brought to the fore: "I don't want to sound like a do-gooder, but I don't want to work in a land of Whiteness... that's not the world I aspire to."

Involvement in Nurturing Mentoring Relationships. An additional theme from our analysis demonstrated how White faculty who identified as mentors to Black undergraduate students were themselves involved in nurturing developmental relationships. This intentional mentorship provided essential instrumental guidance insofar as presenting opportunities to excel in the academic sense, but also featured psychosocial support, which helped the participants, get through difficult times in life and in their professional careers. These relationships were

"paid forward" in the participants' own mentoring of their student mentees.

Stephen attended an elite private university, but soon found himself in academic trouble. Fortunately, he encountered a "great," "fairly young" professor that he described as "[having] a great skill at getting one to do wonderful work for him." With the mentor's guidance, Stephen blossomed and did very well, up until his final year of college, when he encountered personal challenges. Again, his mentor stood by him, assisting Stephen in advancing and helping him maintain a healthy mental state: "As my personal life started to get rocky, [he] provided a lot of personal support to me during that last year." Stephen attributed his successful completion of his degree, and efforts toward graduate study as a consequence of his mentor's intervention. Likewise, Caitlin encountered mentors as an undergraduate who "[told] me I was capable of doing things that I hadn't thought I was capable of…and pointing out [that I] should go to graduate school." Another mentor in graduate school led Caitlin to her specific focus on medical issues in Central America. For both Stephen and Caitlin, their academic trajectory was greatly shaped by their mentors who provided not only direction for their nascent academic careers, but also critical support – for Stephen, when he encountered an intensely stressful period of his life, and for Caitlin, when she needed prodding to advance to graduate school.

As a counterexample, Rachel was buoyed by her mentor's involvement, but suffered a setback when that mentor opted to leave her faculty role. Similar to Stephen, Rachel found herself adrift in the academic setting until a mentor got involved. Rachel struggled to understand the unwritten rules of the academy, noting that she "thought that everyone else kind of knew these things, and I was the only one who didn't," further stating, "I didn't understand that you have to win grants to get money to do research." A course introduced her to a female professor, and Rachel formed a "close relationship" with her. "I started taking all of her classes," Rachel noted, "and I ended up really being interested in what she did." Unfortunately, the mentor opted to leave academia, which had the unintended consequence of additionally dissuading Rachel from considering further study at the time. Reflecting on her current status as a mentor, Rachel said that her early days with her mentor led her "to be a little more proactive about reaching out to, not just students of color, but any student that seems like they are maybe a little shy, a little hesitant."

It might seem obvious to state that strong mentoring begets strong mentoring, but our analysis makes it clear that many of the faculty's mentoring relationships imprinted essential skills in their approaches to their current mentees. Revealing the subtle and unwritten rules of academic life, providing psychosocial support, and viewing the student as a whole rather than simply an academic entity, the aforementioned mentors set in place a legacy which the participants in this study continue in their present work with Black undergraduate students. Their mentoring role models inspire their work with an often-isolated population; this awareness fuels and directs their efforts, as Stephen explained:

> The people who need [mentoring] the most are the people, very often, who aren't getting it. Partly because of this sort of sense that they don't quite belong, or they don't want to bother you…. So you've got to reassure people that it's okay to talk about these things with your professors.

Exemplary experiences being mentored made participant faculty keenly aware of the importance of caring for the whole student – they are more than just, in the words of the late Reverend Peter Gomes, "brains on a stick" (as quoted in Lewis, 2006, p. 100). Their own experience of being supported demonstrated the significance of having a guide invested in their progress and making the veiled pathways in academic settings more clear. Furthermore, these professors brought an awareness that the novelty of being a Black student in a hypercompetitive, predominantly White institutional setting might be particularly isolating for these students. This led to the participants taking a proactive approach in working with their young charges.

Discussion

Our analyses suggest that White faculty find common ground with Black students by mining their own histories for experiences of discrimination and/or moments of "otherness." While these experiences are not equivalent to exposure to racism and prejudice, they do in fact provide the faculty with an empathetic frame of reference to better understand microaggressions and marginalization. Most of the research on mentoring focuses on the experience and outcomes for protégés/mentees; however, it is equally important that the experiences of mentors are analyzed and understood (Johnson, Rose, & Schlosser, 2007). Neglecting these perspectives "leaves a critical gap in our understanding of the

overall mentorship process and hampers theoretical development in the field" (Allen, 2007, p. 123). Therefore, a more robust understanding of how White faculty approach their mentorship of Black students has the potential of advancing a conceptual model of how mentoring dyads evolve across racial and ethnic lines. Given the dire state of Black college student completion and satisfaction (Reddick & Vasquez Heilig, 2012), "all hands on deck" are needed to inspire, nurture, and develop this population in which so much is invested.

Ultimately, our findings from this study can inform how White faculty approach the service aspect of their professional responsibilities. We are cognizant of the pressures on all tenure-track faculty in their effort to earn tenure and the robust landscape of advice that encourages non-tenured academics to venture into mentoring with caution. We also recognize that underrepresented faculty – including, but not limited to, sexual minorities, people with disabilities, women, and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds – are challenged in their incorporation into the academic milieu, and may experience something akin to the "cultural taxation" (Padilla, 1994) that is familiar to so many faculty of color.

However, the faculty sampled seem to follow the stages proffered by Washington and Evans (1991) regarding their development as allies. All faculty participants in the study shared observations indicating that they had an *awareness* of climate and adaptation issues that might exist for Black students. Through their formative experiences – as students, partners, and friends of people from underrepresented populations – the faculty formed identities that involved *knowledge and education* of issues pertaining to social justice. Further, as participants in mentoring relationships, the participants observed and adopted *skills* that they employed in their present roles as mentors to Black students. This background empowered Rachel, Caitlin, Victoria, Stephen, Andy, and David to *act* in powerful ways to both initiate and develop mentoring relationships with Black students. In many ways, their purposive attention to seemingly minor issues, such as participation in class discussions, were diagnostic efforts to bring issues to the fore, well before these concerns led to severely deleterious outcomes for their protégés. While none of the faculty used the term, their actions are well within the parameters of ally work. This realization suggests that there is a typology or path that White faculty can embark upon to become

bulwarks against microaggressions and at times hostile or chilling campus climes that often define PWI campuses.

Further, the centrality of trust and intimacy in the mentoring relationships described by the faculty sampled in the study underlines previous work by Thomas (1990) and Blake-Beard, Murrell, and Thomas (2007). The participants took positions against discrimination in their lives, some of which were public, and extended themselves as resources to students on these issues. This translated into strong mentoring orientations that worked not only for all students they engaged with in developmental relationships, but also particularly well with Black students. The fact that multiple Black students at the institution had identified these instructors as personal mentors, or those to their peers, suggests that the participants have earned a "rep" (reputation) as a supportive guide particularly aware of issues confronting students in this community.

Aside from the critical service that these mentors provide for their mentees, there is an additional dimension to their mentoring work that must be highlighted. A less direct, but equally important effect of this work is the fact that by their investment and support of Black students, the burden of mentoring on faculty of color, especially Black faculty, may be lessened. During our interview with Caitlin, she disclosed an experience she had while serving on a search committee to hire a new tenure-track faculty member when one of her fellow White committee members approached the topic of mentorship for Black students:

> Because [he] framed it as though "Well, we've got the African American professor who is going to be working with the African American students, and if he doesn't want to mentor then, [who will]?" It was really fascinating. I hadn't had an experience like that before, on any kind of committee where you are coming up against someone saying something that you assume most folks [won't engage in cross-racial mentoring]. So it was pretty interesting to me.

Caitlin provided a vivid example of how White faculty invested in creating more inclusive and welcoming environments for colleagues and new hires – especially junior faculty of color – can be aware of the cultural taxation (Padilla, 1994) experienced by their colleagues. Further, it should not be exacerbated by an assumption that race overrides

common interest, social background, and simple mutual attraction in the establishment of a mentoring relationship. White faculty need not assume that their own lives and experiences fail to provide a strong foundation of mentoring wisdom across race.

Though these professors were clear that their experiences were not equal or the same as the challenges confronting their Black students, these findings imply there are individual and structural interventions that should be considered by White faculty and institutional leaders. On the personal level, White faculty can explore their own pathways to the professoriate, including their formative experiences as undergraduates, for memories of isolation or being stereotyped. Additionally, close friendships can provide opportunities for reflection on the impact of being a good listener and being otherwise informed of resources and approaches that can ameliorate challenges that students might encounter. On a structural level, it seems logical that department heads and deans should maintain an awareness of mentoring patterns among their faculty. Are particular faculty members particularly effective in their mentoring? If so, what insights can they share with colleagues about their approach? Conversely, are there some faculty who are absent from the responsibility of mentoring, and do faculty of color and women have disproportionate mentoring loads? Workshops and roundtables that inform White faculty on how they might leverage their own formative experiences in mentoring work are essential opportunities to better serve students, fairly distribute mentorship (which has its own rewards), and improve morale, especially among underrepresented faculty populations. Faculty experiences should operate as markers of a sort, suggesting how a mentor might approach and advise a situation. Obviously, a trusting reciprocal relationship might progress to a stage where sharing similar experiences can be viewed in a more positive way, but such intimacy comes with time and effort. Such caution is required if members of the academy "don't want to work in a world of Whiteness."

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Appendix A

Table 1

Participant Sample, Areas of Study, and Rank

Name	Ethnicity and Gender	Area of Study	Region of Origin	Rank	Years at Noble	Age
Rachel Jones	White female	Applied Sciences	Northeastern U.S.	Teaching Fellow & Academic Advisor	3	36
Caitlin Page	White female	Social Sciences	West Coast, U.S.	Assistant Professor	4	38
Victoria Gold	White female	Social Sciences	East Coast, U.S.	Professor	9	61
Stephen Bell	White male	Applied Sciences	Northeastern U.S.	Professor	20+	60
Andy Russo	White male	Natural Sciences	East Coast, U.S.	Lecturer	7	40
David König	White male	Humanities	Western Europe	Assistant Professor	5	37