

## “Don’t Leave Us Behind”: The Importance of Mentoring for Underrepresented Minority Faculty

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*This article examines the mentoring experiences of 58 underrepresented minority (URM) faculty at 22 research-extensive institutions. Drawing on in-depth interviews and focus group data, participants discussed the importance of mentoring across the life course, the ideal attributes of mentoring relationships, the challenges to effective mentoring, and the role of political guidance. These data elicited three main themes regarding mentoring: (a) Life course practices geared toward accumulating social capital are critical, (b) major barriers are linked to the undervaluing of faculty research areas and community-engaged scholarly commitments, and (c) connections with mentors who understand the struggles specific to URMs at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) can assist with retention and success. This study provides a roadmap for shifting how we engage with URM faculty and strategies and knowledge to assess the effectiveness of mentoring to increase the retention of URM faculty.*

**KEYWORDS:** diversity, faculty careers, higher education, mentoring, underrepresented minorities

While greater numbers of underrepresented minority (URM) students are filling college and university classrooms, URM faculty representation lags far behind (American Federation of Teachers, 2010). African Americans/Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans continue to be underrepresented in the academy relative to their proportion in the U.S. population. These groups also experience the largest proportional educational

achievement gaps in the United States (Bensimon, 2005). Although the percentage of Black faculty increased from 3.2% in 1988 to 5.5% in 2004, and the percentage of Hispanic faculty increased from 2.4% to 3.5% during the same period, the percentage of Black and Hispanic faculty obtaining tenure and earning promotion to full professor has stayed relatively stagnant (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). In fall 2011, among full-time instructional faculty whose race/ethnicity was known, 79% were White, 6% were Black, and 4% were Hispanic (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). This study explores how U.S.-born and -raised URM faculty who have a particular sociohistorical experience are nurtured and promoted within the academy.

Diverse college faculty play an integral role in advancing new knowledge and fostering pluralistic perspectives among students who will advance equity in a diverse and global society. Yet, high turnover and attrition among URM faculty undercut the proactive work that universities are doing to diversify faculty ranks (Moreno, Smith, Clayton-Pedersen, Parker, & Teraguchi, 2006). It is in the best interest of the academy to explore the factors that contribute to faculty attrition among URMs and to remediate barriers so that

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higher education can live up to its calling of providing equal opportunities to all. URM faculty experience unique identity-related constraints within the academy. Since most research-extensive universities are predominantly White institutions (PWIs), URM faculty report that they experience a sense of isolation (being the “only one”), overt and covert racism and discrimination, and a devaluing of their research (Aguirre, 2000; Alex-Assensoh, 2003; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2008). These stressors can be diminished and faculty success enhanced by effective mentoring (antonio, 2003; Daley, Wingard, & Reznik, 2006; Sims-Boykin et al., 2003; Stanley, 2006). However, a lack of access to effective mentorship is another hallmark of the URM faculty experience, and the absence of effective mentoring often serves as a barrier to retention (Boyd, Cintrón, & Alexander-Snow, 2010; Robinson & Clardy, 2010).

A small but consistent body of research reveals the pervasive challenges that URM faculty confront in higher education institutions and focuses on the crucial role that mentoring plays in retention (Few, Stephens, & Rouse-Arnett, 2003; Turner & Myers, 2000). This article builds on this line of inquiry with its examination of mentoring experiences of URM early career tenured or tenure-track faculty. The central question guiding this study is: How do mentoring experiences influence the academic career paths of URM faculty in research-extensive universities? Accordingly, this article has four key aims: to (a) examine mentoring across the academic life course, (b) examine the consequences when mentoring relationships are absent, (c) explore the participants’ perceptions of the ideal characteristics of a mentor, and (d) analyze the primary role of political guidance in helping URM faculty successfully navigate the academy.

## Academic Mentorship

Mentors are critical throughout the academic life course to enhance URM educational access, persistence, advancement, and career success (Nakamura & Shernoff, 2009; Noy & Ray, 2011). For example, graduate students rely on their advisors to provide professional mentorship and academic socialization, which impacts the development of career choices (Lechuga, 2011). Effective mentorship involves knowledge transfer of norms and behaviors and contributes to the accumulation of the social and institutional capital that allows URM faculty to successfully navigate the academy and specific institutional structures (Few et al., 2003).

Csikszentmihalyi (2009) discusses how mentoring faculty is a reflection of the sociological concept of *pattern maintenance*, or how people “preserve and pass on” (p. xi) cultural, political, institutional, and social knowledge—an especially relevant concern to URMs. While there is no single comprehensive definition of mentorship, most scholars agree that it is a form of professional socialization whereby persons of superior rank and/or

experience instruct, counsel, guide, and facilitate the intellectual and/or career development of those identified as protégés (Blackwell, 1989). In this socialization process, the mentor acts as a guide, role model, teacher, and patron and brings the accomplishments of the protégé to the attention of others in power (Noy & Ray, 2011).

The scholarship on contemporary mentoring programs and policies often distinguishes between formal and informal mentoring, between the use of a mentorship committee and a dyadic relationship, and between mentor and advisor. These distinctions have created some misalignments in how faculty mentors and protégés view and enact their roles. For example, some scholars view mentorship as a close, noncompetitive, deeply personal relationship between two people that evolves over time (Osborn, Waeckerle, & Perina, 1999), while others focus more on the exchange of information that grants protégés access to the social and institutional capital that is not self-evident or available in procedural manuals (Jacobi, 1991). Group mentorship and peer mentorship are also rising in popularity as mechanisms to provide faculty with the support and resources needed for career advancement (Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001).

Many current constructions of mentoring fail to differentiate between mentorship and training. According to Bozeman and Feeney (2007), “formal mentoring [is] an oxymoron” (p. 732), suggesting that formal mandated mentorship programs are often relegated to supervisory interactions. Rather, the authors argue, the mentor and protégé should agree to participate in an informal mentoring process to increase the likelihood of a stronger mentoring relationship. Further, these scholars observe that a dyadic relationship is a better strategy of mentorship than group mentoring. While the definition of mentoring may be contested, most scholars agree that a strong mentoring relationship provides both affective support and instrumental support. There is also a consensus that crucial components include helping early career faculty negotiate barriers, manage time and commitments, learn and understand the unwritten rules of the academy, and develop a research agenda and tenure portfolio (Sims-Boykin et al., 2003).

In their analysis of the reasons universities are successful in recruiting highly qualified Black faculty, Barrett and Smith (2008) found that many of their participants mentioned the importance of mentoring relationships with senior faculty. However, studies show that access to mentoring relationships and professional networks designed to support and enhance faculty success is more limited for URM faculty (Aguirre, Martinez, & Hernandez, 1993; Diggs, Garrison-Wade, Estrada, & Galindo, 2009). Compared to White faculty, non-White faculty report significantly lower levels of satisfaction in personal interactions with tenured professors and fewer opportunities to collaborate with tenured faculty. Additionally, non-White faculty perceive that they receive less fair and equitable treatment, especially during the tenure review process (Collaborative on Academic Careers in Higher

Education [COACHE], 2007). The small number of URMs in the academy makes it less likely that URM faculty will have access to mentors of the same racial/ethnic background. However, Alexander-Snow and Johnson (1999) contend that beyond racial and gender similarities, shared research interests or a shared appreciation for each other's intellectual focus facilitate a supportive environment in the mentoring relationship.

We draw on a dual conceptual framework as a theorizing anchor for this study: intersectionality and social capital. It is vital to understand how the intersection of race/ethnicity and gender influence mentoring experiences. Intersectionality focuses on the ways in which multiple social categories (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status [SES]) intersect at both the micro and macro levels of individual and social structural experiences (Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Weber, 1998). These intersections of identity reflect multiple interlocking systems of privilege, power, and oppression (e.g., racism, sexism, and classism) (Collins, 2005; Cuádriz & Uttal, 1999). By recognizing that identities are socially constructed within a power dominance relationship system, and therefore fluid, an intersectionality lens challenges the view that identities are permanent, fixed, singular polarizing constructs where one "most" salient aspect of someone's identity shapes their experience (Collins, 2000). Rather, members of both majority and minority groups are situated along a continuum that shapes their identities and social interactions and grants an individual "power and options in some arenas while restricting . . . opportunities in another" (Weber, 1998, p. 24). An intersectional analysis is essential for understanding how the mentoring of URM faculty differs from other groups—both in terms of how URM faculty are mentored and how they experience mentoring. The intersections that shape URM faculty's multiple identities, the social perceptions of them by others (i.e., stereotypes), and dominant power relations influence their experiences along the academic life course (Brayboy, 2003; Espino, 2012; Gutiérrez y Muhs, Niemann, Gonzalez, & Harris, 2012; Harlow, 2003).

Using an intersectional lens, three basic premises guide our research: (a) Sociohistorical experiences of how URM groups were incorporated into the United States (due to slavery or colonization) may shape their research agendas and value to the academy; (b) societal perceptions of intersectional racial, ethnic, and gender identities often influence the expectations and patterns of access to social and institutional capital throughout the academic pipeline; and (c) patterns of interaction and the potential success of URM scholars in the academic pipeline are hindered by limited access to material resources, social capital, and prior experiences in segregated or underserved neighborhoods and schools. Our intersectional analysis illuminates how the multiple dimensions of identity and inequality uniquely shape these mentoring experiences.

Particularly salient in understanding the lived experiences of URM faculty, we also draw on Putnam's (2000) conceptualization of social capital

as “the collective value of all social networks and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other” (p. 24). More individualistic conceptualizations of social capital are defined as the “investment and use of embedded resources in social relations for expected returns” (Lin, 2001, p. 19). Thus, we argue that effective mentoring practices may proffer important resources and social networks for URM faculty to build social capital. Despite the crucial role of URMs in the academic workforce, most efforts to explore the academic lives of URM faculty are captured mostly in anthologies of small case studies and autoethnographic narratives. Prior research provides an essential but limited view of the challenges and successes faced by URM faculty (e.g., Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012; Robinson & Clardy, 2010; Stanley, 2006; Turner & Myers, 2000). The present study extends existing research by providing rich and insightful data that identify effective mentoring characteristics across the life course.

## Methodology

Qualitative data are drawn from a comprehensive study that used in-depth interviews and focus groups to obtain information on the occupational stress, academic organizational factors, coping strategies, and physical and mental health of 58 URM faculty from 22 research-extensive universities. For this article, we use data from responses to questions on mentoring experiences and from a brief descriptive survey on demographic characteristics and self-reported mentoring activities.

## Sample

Eligibility criteria for study participants included U.S.-born and -raised women and men of African American, Mexican American/Chicano/a, and Puerto Rican descent who were early career faculty defined as tenure-track assistant or tenured associate professors at a Carnegie-defined research-extensive university (McCormick & Zhao, 2005). These groups were selected because they share involuntary historical incorporation into the United States (via slavery, colonization, or land takeover) that have shaped avenues of economic and social opportunity, and this mode of incorporation has created a legacy of exclusion, marginalization, and social interactions and experiences in higher education that are associated with marked, co-constitutive identities and stereotypic attributions of inferior intellect. Respondents who self-identified as Native Americans are regrettably not included due to insufficient sample size. We selected early career faculty since the focus of the study is on URM career paths. Focusing on early career faculty is important in uncovering potential reasons for underrepresentation and low retention of URM faculty in higher education institutions. Study participants were identified through network sampling techniques using existing academic listservs, personal contacts, peer networks, Faculty Advisory Board (FAB)

referrals, word of mouth, and respondent recommendations. Adjuncts, lecturers, and full professors were excluded. All faculty provided written consent and were compensated for their time via small gift remunerations. The study was approved according to IRB procedures at the University of Maryland for research involving human subjects.

Of the 58 participants, 23 (39.7%) self-identified as African American, 21 (36.2%) as Mexican American or Chicana/o, and 14 (24.1%) as Puerto Rican. The sample included 33 (56.9%) women and 25 (43.1%) men. The mean age was 41.2, with a range of 30 to 64. The majority were assistant professors ( $n = 39$ , 67.2%), and about one-third were associate professors ( $n = 19$ , 32.8%). Disciplines reported by participants were recoded into broad disciplinary areas to protect respondent anonymity: arts and humanities (20.8%), social sciences (37.7%), STEM/health/medicine (32.1%), and education (9.4%).

### Data Collection

We used in-depth, semi-structured interviews and focus groups to obtain experiential or “lived experience” information on the role of mentoring and its perceived impact on the respondents’ academic career path. Semi-structured interviews “provide greater breadth and depth of information [and] the opportunity to discover the respondent’s experiences and interpretations of reality” (Blee & Taylor, 2002, p. 92). The interview and focus group protocols each consisted of a total of 20 open-ended questions. Six questions focused on mentoring experiences, descriptions of ideal mentoring relationships, and the role of the mentor in each respondent’s academic career path. The mentoring questions are included in Table 1. In addition, a descriptive survey with a linked ID number was administered upon completion of interviews or focus group (100% response rate). Survey items included: (a) demographic indicators, (b) employment and educational background, and (c) mentorship items and a scale. We assessed mentorship and mentoring activities by adapting questions from the National Faculty Survey (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation [RWJF], 1995). Mentorship items included: whether participants had a mentor in the past three years and identification of a current mentor. Current mentorship-facilitated activities were assessed with respondents reporting if a mentor had facilitated (yes/no) any of 6 activities: opportunities for collaboration, coauthoring articles and book chapters, invitations to conferences, reviewing your career annually, journal editorial boards, and chairing for conferences. Another item asked respondents to assess the impact of mentoring on career growth using a Likert-type scale with five response options.

Interview and focus group protocols were piloted with five URM early career faculty who were not part of the final sample. Respondents suggested the following changes: (a) Ask about mentors throughout educational trajectory, (b) explore mentors who are external to participants’ institutions, and

Table 1

Qualitative Questions and Descriptive Survey Items

Interview/Focus Group Questions	Descriptive Survey Items
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe your ideal mentoring relationship.</li> <li>• Describe relationships with mentors (if you have one).</li> <li>• What do you see as the major role of your mentor in helping you advance your career path?</li> <li>• Do you have a mentoring relationship outside your work institution? Please describe (How does it come about? What does it offer?).</li> <li>• How do your actual experiences with mentoring within your current institution compare to this ideal?</li> <li>• Has mentoring made a difference in your career path? In what ways?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Characteristics of participants</b></p> <p>Gender (one item)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male</li> <li>• Female</li> </ul> <p>Race/ethnicity (two items)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hispanic/Latino origin?</li> <li>• What is your race?</li> </ul> <p>Age (one item)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Year born</li> </ul> <p>Professional rank (two items)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rank</li> <li>• Tenure</li> </ul> <p>Discipline employed (one item)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open-ended (write in)</li> </ul> <p><b>Two (2) Mentoring items (yes/no)</b></p> <p>Characteristics of mentor (two items)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentored in last three years</li> <li>• Currently mentored</li> </ul> <p>Six (6) Mentor-facilitated activities (yes/no)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities for collaboration, coauthoring articles and book chapters, invitations to conferences, reviewing your career annually, journal editorial boards, and chairing for conferences.</li> </ul> <p>Inadequate mentoring impeded career growth?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Five response options: <i>very significantly, a great deal, somewhat, hardly at all, not at all</i></li> </ul>

(c) obtain information on participation in mentoring programs. Revisions were made to the protocol, and data were collected from October 2010 through June 2012. All of the interviews and focus groups were recorded digitally and professionally transcribed. Interviews ranged from 48 minutes to 2 hours 42 minutes, and focus group time ranged from 2 hours 30 minutes to 3 hours 55 minutes. Interviews were scheduled to last about 2 hours but often lasted much longer because of the participants' emotionally laden recollection of their experiences and their decision to speak for the first time about difficult or traumatic experiences that they perceived as prior microaggressions (Solórzano, 1998).

Due to the sensitivity of the content, the first author conducted the majority of interviews and focus groups. Interviewers had well-honed interview skills, were sensitive to the potential concerns of the participants, and were mindful of the importance of establishing rapport and reinforcing trust.



While a shared racial/ethnic identity can be an asset in data collection, common experience or shared thinking was not assumed, and the interviewers always asked for full explanations of any experience.

## **Analysis**

All coding was completed in Atlas.ti 6.2 to allow for more efficient coding, analysis, and interpretation of the interviews and focus groups. Thematic content analyses of the initial 10 interviews were conducted by the research team in conjunction with the major theorizing themes drawn from an extensive literature review on academic environments and work life among underrepresented faculty. These content analyses yielded a codebook containing 13 main codes, including subcodes and negative cases.

All four main coders (two doctoral candidates and two postdoctoral researchers) were experienced qualitative researchers. Coders received six hours of training regarding the purposes of study and interpretations of main codes in the codebook. In addition, three weekly 3-hour sessions were held during the team coding of initial interviews to discuss any inconsistencies or potential new codes, and then research team meetings were held monthly thereafter. Each transcribed interview and focus group was read multiple times by the assigned coders and then coded, line-by-line, to develop case-ordered, then theme-ordered descriptive matrices (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In addition, a third coder reviewed all transcripts to reconcile any inconsistencies in the main thematic codes. Noteworthy thematic saturation was reached early on in the analysis process (Clarke, 2007), and agreement was highly consistent among coders. In addition, participants' discipline and department were recoded and collapsed into larger National Science Foundation disciplinary codes to avoid any potential violation of confidentiality and anonymity. All univariate procedures were conducted with SPSS 17.0.

## **Reliability and Credibility**

Multiple verification steps were built into the study's design in order to validate the findings and establish reliability and credibility. Beyond methodological consistency, as a major aspect of reliability in qualitative methods (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), the primary verification techniques included: (a) triangulation (the use of multiple sources of data) and (b) peer review/debriefing. Since data were derived from multiple sources, including individual interviews, six focus groups, and linked surveys, triangulation confirmed that these data reflect patterns of experience and are not due to research protocols, measures, or specific wording of questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). In addition, the research team conducted "analytic triangulation" (Patton, 2002, p. 555) through the use of multiple coders who were not present during data collection. These coders analyzed the data, and their conclusions

were compared with those of the two original coders and also with the first author, who was the primary interviewer in the study.

### **Study Limitations**

These data are limited by the voluntary nature of the participants. Selection bias represents a potential study limitation as many participants were identified by a network of senior professors known to the first author. It is possible that those who either felt well suited to the academy or totally dissatisfied elected not to participate. Participants may also have provided socially desirable responses because they feared the consequences of disclosure to the interviewers who were senior faculty members. The cross-sectional study design, use of nonrandom sampling procedures, and the sample size do not permit causal inference and may not be representative of all URMs in higher education institutions or even in research-extensive universities. As noted above, Native Americans, who are severely underrepresented in higher education, are not included in this article due to insufficient sample size. Nonetheless, we are confident that our data provide insight into the mentoring experiences of a diverse cross-sectional sample of URM faculty at research-extensive universities in the United States.

### **Findings**

Descriptive data are presented on four self-reported items: (a) whether the participant was mentored in the past three years, (b) whether the participant had a current mentor at the time of the study, (c) activities facilitated by mentors, and (d) perception of mentors' reported impact on the participants' academic careers. We then follow these descriptive data with qualitative thematic analyses. As displayed in Table 2, approximately 90% of respondents could identify someone as a mentor in the past three years as well as a current mentor (93.1%). Almost two-thirds (63.8%) reported three or more mentors. The most frequent mentor-facilitated activities reported were opportunities for collaboration (74.5%), coauthoring papers and books (58.2%), invitations to attend conferences (58.2%), and an annual career review (53.4%). One notable finding was that about half the participants reported that inadequate mentoring had impeded their career growth, with about 25% of them feeling inadequate mentoring had impeded career growth a great deal or very significantly. The results on mentoring experiences were found to be similar by race, ethnicity, gender, and discipline. Data did not show any observable differences in the mentoring experiences of faculty by discipline or STEM versus non-STEM disciplinary fields. This finding is not surprising given that across all fields URM faculty tend to be underrepresented regardless of discipline.

The qualitative data on the availability of mentors and barriers in mentoring relationships provide rich insights on mentoring and its impact.

Table 2

Demographic and Mentoring Characteristics by Race/Ethnicity and Gender

	African American		Mexican American		Puerto Rican		
	Total n = 58 (%)	Male n = 9 (%)	Female n = 14 (%)	Male n = 9 (%)	Female n = 12 (%)	Male n = 7 (%)	Female n = 7 (%)
Mean (SD) age	41.2 (8.14)	37.7 (3.08)	41.7 (6.32)	42.4 (10.58)	39.8 (9.54)	42.3 (6.42)	44.1 (11.63)
Professional rank							
Tenure-track assistant professor	39 (67.2)	6 (66.7)	8 (57.2)	6 (66.7)	9 (75.0)	6 (85.7)	4 (57.2)
Tenured associate professor	19 (32.8)	3 (33.3)	6 (42.9)	3 (33.3)	3 (25.0)	1 (14.3)	3 (42.9)
Discipline							
Arts and humanities	11 (20.8)	1 (11.1)	4 (28.6)	3 (33.3)	2 (16.7)	—	1 (14.3)
Social sciences	20 (37.7)	4 (44.4)	5 (35.7)	2 (22.2)	3 (25.0)	3 (42.9)	3 (42.9)
STEM and health/medicine	17 (32.1)	4 (44.4)	1 (7.1)	3 (33.3)	3 (25.0)	3 (42.9)	3 (42.9)
Education	5 (9.4)	—	—	1 (11.1)	3 (25.0)	1 (14.3)	—
Mentored in last 3 years							
Yes	52 (89.7)	9 (100.0)	12 (85.7)	9 (100.0)	11 (91.7)	7 (100.0)	4 (57.1)
No	6 (10.3)	—	2 (14.3)	—	1 (8.3)	—	3 (42.9)
Currently mentored							
Yes	54 (93.1)	9 (100.0)	13 (92.9)	9 (100.0)	11 (91.7)	6 (85.7)	6 (85.7)
No	4 (6.9)	—	1 (7.1)	—	1 (8.3)	1 (14.3)	1 (14.3)
Rank-ordered mentor-facilitated activities (yes)							
Opportunities for collaboration	41 (74.5)	6 (66.7)	8 (57.1)	8 (88.9)	9 (75.0)	6 (85.7)	4 (57.1)
Coauthoring articles, book chapters	32 (58.2)	4 (44.4)	8 (57.1)	7 (77.8)	7 (58.3)	5 (71.4)	1 (14.3)
Invitations to conferences	32 (58.2)	5 (55.6)	7 (50.0)	4 (44.4)	7 (58.3)	5 (71.4)	4 (57.1)
Reviewing your career annually	31 (53.4)	5 (55.6)	7 (50.0)	4 (44.4)	8 (66.7)	4 (57.1)	3 (42.9)
Journal editorial boards	11 (20.0)	1 (11.1)	4 (28.6)	1 (11.1)	1 (8.3)	3 (42.9)	1 (14.3)
Chairing for conferences	10 (18.2)	1 (11.1)	4 (28.6)	1 (11.1)	1 (8.3)	2 (28.6)	1 (14.3)
Inadequate mentoring impacted career							
Very significantly/A great deal	15 (25.9)	3 (33.3)	5 (35.7)	1 (11.1)	3 (25.0)	1 (14.3)	2 (28.6)
Somewhat	18 (31.0)	3 (33.3)	1 (7.1)	5 (55.6)	2 (16.7)	3 (42.9)	4 (57.1)
Hardly at all/not at all	24 (41.4)	3 (33.3)	8 (57.2)	3 (33.3)	6 (50.0)	3 (42.9)	1 (14.3)

Powerful insights in four areas emerged from the participants' experiences and observations: (a) the role of mentoring experiences across the academic life course, (b) barriers in mentorship relationships, (c) ideal mentoring characteristics, and (d) political guidance that transmits knowledge about institutional norms and the role of race and power in higher education.

### **Mentors Across the Life Course**

The data illuminated how mentoring “is structured by institutions, roles, and norms” (Gee, Pavalko, & Long, 2007, p. 266) and by historical perceptions, family background, neighborhood segregation patterns, and access to role models and mentors in the formative years of URM faculty. Many of the participants described the importance of mentors from childhood through graduate school, while others lamented not having mentors throughout their life course. Respondents who had access to early positive mentoring experiences in the K–20 educational years were more likely to maintain those relationships, take advantage of mentoring resources, and express more confidence in pursuing their research agendas. In contrast, negative K–20 mentoring experiences often led to the accumulation of mistrust and feelings of alienation that increased the stress of URM faculty navigating their academic career paths. Mentors served as role models across many settings and set an aspirational bar for respondents in their lives and scholarly work. Mentors also transmitted multiple forms of social capital in the form of knowledge on how to negotiate institutions, cultural and political norms at PWIs with a focus on unwritten rules, how to identify mentors and access support, how to access opportunity structures (e.g., financial support), and how to interact with others, especially potential mentors.

Many participants said that witnessing the careers of senior URM scholars provided inspiration and hope in the midst of struggle. One Puerto Rican female participant stated that it had “been really helpful to see other scholars of color up there on the ladder, in the food chain.” Educators across the life course helped participants see themselves as academics because they invested in their intellectual development. A number of participants spoke about how educators in their formative years invested in their intellectual development and made it possible to navigate the academic pipeline:

I grew up on . . . this little cul-de-sac in a Black neighborhood in [Midwestern city]; actually one where there were riots after King's assassination, so you know what happens to those communities, they never get rebuilt. But, on my little cul-de-sac were all these retired public school teachers . . . so I definitely had Black [educators] . . . who were totally behind my intellectual growth and development, even before it was clear that I was going to be a professor. (African American, male)

Participants also discussed how a lack of early mentors in their earliest schooling made their path more difficult as well as the difficulty of transitioning from ethnic majority schools and neighborhoods to PWIs. Many participants echoed the sense of shock that one Mexican American male respondent experienced:

It makes me kind of sad . . . realizing how little mentoring I had [from childhood], how little direction, and of course I'm talking about this as someone [who] already had four years in the Ivy League. And to get through *that* [undergraduate] experience, *that* was quite an experience. [F]or me it was a moment of true cultural, education, language, socioeconomic, religious, shock of my life. Those first two years in college . . . were the most difficult part of my entire educational training of the 18 years [post high school]. I found [graduate school] not difficult at all [compared to those first few years of college].

Many participants felt that it was “chance” or “luck” that mentors had taken an interest in them at some point during their lives and that these relationships made it possible for them to not only attend college but also graduate school. They believed that access to strong mentoring had moderated the fragility associated with their socioeconomic status and that without this mentoring they could easily have ended up in working-class positions:

The last inspiration . . . has been . . . certain teachers. . . . At every point along my trajectory, if that person hadn't been there, I could have ended up working in the fields, going [into the military], whatever. It wasn't intentional, it was just haphazard, but luckily they were there. All the way from my 8th grade teacher, who took this notebook and said, “Write your titles.” (Mexican American, male)

The previous narrative emphasizes that his experiences with early mentoring were essential in providing him with the foundational skills and strategies, emotional support, and accountability that he translated into success throughout the academic pipeline. Similarly, many of the participants discussed how mentors earlier in their lives provided a lens for understanding their life experiences and systems of inequality based on race and class:

When I was an undergraduate student . . . I met a [White] faculty member . . . who was extremely inspirational as a teacher and as a mentor. He taught me about social inequality. . . . And it was literature that was extremely difficult for me to understand, but it was the first time that I had read literature that helped me to understand poverty and my own experience. (Puerto Rican, female)

The ability to identify inequality, understand systems of oppression, and recognize how inequality influenced their lives and communities protected

participants from internalizing discrimination and helped them develop a resiliency that bolstered them in the academy.

The capacity to connect with mentors who understood the struggles specific to URM populations at PWIs offered protection and helped to promote retention and success. For example, one respondent discussed an administrator who served as a mentor when he was an undergraduate:

[T]here was a woman . . . a faculty advisor in the . . . college office. She was African American. And I would come in that first semester with all these horror stories, and I would be a mess in her office, crying and trying to figure out what to do. And she oriented me to her tutoring service. She got me to talk to my professors [and taught me how to talk to them] to discuss what was going on and how this was so new. . . . This was a trial by fire, and I was getting burned. And so she was my advocate that first year. (Mexican American, male)

This administrator offered strategies on how to negotiate institutional bureaucracies and ask for help. In addition, she provided a safe haven and a tacit acknowledgement that being a URM undergraduate at a PWI involved a steep learning curve. Another respondent described a URM mentor as personally, intellectually, and professionally validating:

And [a top administrator at the university during graduate school who was an African American man] kept me focused on the larger issues of completing the dissertation during every meeting. He had an open-door policy with me. [H]e would encourage me. . . . One thing about [him is that] when you meet him, he will make you feel as if you're the brightest, most capable person in the country. (African American, male)

Reminding participants that they were “the brightest” and “most capable” helped URM faculty overcome the “imposter syndrome,” a shared fear in academia that is exacerbated by the intersectional experiences of URM faculty (Brems, Baldwin, Davis, & Namyniu, 1994; Dancy & Brown, 2011). Participants often spoke about the fear of being perceived as “Affirmative Action hires” who were not recognized for the merit of their work. This fear reflects how policies employed to redress historical and current forms of racial discrimination and inequality can penalize the targeted group. Many participants also described experiences in which they were assumed to be outsiders or part of the service or support staff (even within their own departments). Strong mentoring relationships with URM administrators mitigated pervasive feelings of being perceived as interlopers and offered a sense of belonging.

In addition to affective support, some mentors offered invaluable instrumental support for URM faculty, such as writing strong letters of recommendation and connecting URM faculty to well-established senior faculty in their field. Overall, the mentors with the greatest impact were those who inspired,

encouraged, and helped the participants during their undergraduate and graduate training to build the skills and strategies to unlock the doors to an academic career, a trajectory many had not thought was theirs to claim. Across the life course, mentoring provided a roadmap for respondents on what to expect in caring and effective mentoring relationships. Early life mentorship provided the necessary instrumental and affective support to develop the social and institutional capital necessary to successfully negotiate their career paths.

### Barriers to Effective Mentoring

The absence of mentoring for participants limited access to the social and institutional capital necessary to pursue a doctorate degree and advance in academia. Without these stepwise supports, participants were unable to establish research agendas as graduate students, publish with senior faculty, or seek grants and fellowships. Many respondents were unaware that these activities were important gateways that would strengthen their tenure portfolios and understood only later in their careers what a mentor could have offered. Others were well aware of the type of mentoring relationship they desired and the consequences of not having that type of guidance. These participants reported feeling unanchored, as though they had been left to navigate uncertain waters alone. As one African American, male participant stated, “You could have just cut across the field, but you went all the way around.”

Four barriers to effective mentorship emerged from the data: benign neglect, feeling uninformed and unsupported, experiencing a patchwork of mentors, and perceptions of limited understanding and limited acceptance of their research agenda. Respondents described formal mentors who never met with them, left the university after a brief time, did not provide comments on their research, or provided supervisory rather than advisory interactions. This benign neglect was more likely to occur when URM faculty were assigned mentors as part of routine university policy. Others had mentors with little familiarity or interest in their areas of research or who did not respect or understand their research agenda and could not provide suitable guidance or support:

We were assigned mentors as new hires . . . in my department. . . . The woman I was assigned is the senior who has established her reputation . . . and she started one semester after I did. . . . She calls herself my mentor but I couldn't possibly tell you what she ever did to guide me. . . . I don't know if she got a few extra dollars for doing it. (Mexican American, female)

Participants could discern the difference between effective mentoring relationships and those that were more advisory in nature. As a Puerto Rican female respondent noted:

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I make a distinction between advising and mentoring. An advisor is someone who helps you deal with the rules of the game . . . and you don't necessarily have to have a very close relationship with them. . . . A mentor is someone who takes you under their wing and who doesn't just provide you information, but teaches you how to navigate a system and deals with the unwritten rules and socializes you in the institutional context you're in.

Though much of the earlier literature promotes close, dyadic mentoring relationships, many in our sample engaged in what we have identified as the *network shuffle*, which is identifying multiple individuals with different skills to serve different mentoring functions. This patchwork approach requires more time and energy than having a primary mentor, but it is born out of necessity, reflecting the lack of senior URM faculty mentors. Respondents who could not find mentors within their institutions drew on their social network to find alternatives. One respondent describes his experience in the following ways:

It's not like you're held down . . . it's just that, wow, it would be a whole lot easier if I could just pick up the phone and call [someone]. [T]here's no senior Black male in my department. So there's literally not any person that could tell me what the experience is going to be like to try to get tenure in [this department]. There's nobody. [I]f I had a million dollars, there's nobody that could tell me how to do that, whereas everybody else has someone that they could ask. (African American, male)

Many participants reiterated this sense of isolation and spoke of the need for senior scholars who understood what it meant to be a URM in the academy and the unique struggles that came with the intersections of those identities. They repeatedly pointed out a need for mentors who understood their commitment to community-engaged scholarship. A Puerto Rican male respondent said, "I'm an academic, but I see myself as somebody who has one foot on the ground, and has to do something for the community . . . so I need a mentor who's sensitive to that possibility." Likewise, many of the participants spoke about "having to fight to establish the validity of the knowledge that [they were] bringing" (African American, male). One participant directly addressed the fight for legitimacy as a racialized Latina that began in graduate school:

I remember my entire [dissertation] committee telling me that Affirmative Action was a dead issue, that I should be steering away from that issue . . . and they told me to be careful—to research "controversial" issues would signal that I'm a Latina and I'm a person of color, and I only care about person of color issues. . . . I'm wearing a red suit and I said, "So do you think, in my red suit with my long hair and my red lipstick, they'd think I was anything other than



Latina? This is who I am. . . . This is what I want to research.”  
(Mexican American, female)

As she saw it, these graduate school academic mentors were attempting to make her research more “palatable” to White audiences. They were asking her to de-racialize her research, assimilate to what would be traditionally valued in the academy, and not “signal” that she is Mexican American. For her, this was an intellectual form of coercion that devalued her professional identity and undercut her purpose for entering the academy. While the committee believed they were helping her to succeed, she felt they were requiring her to culturally assimilate, even pass her research agenda and her identity as White. The majority of the participants reported that they became academics to address issues in marginalized communities like their own and found such suggestions profoundly alienating and dismissive of research interests that aim to address social inequality.

Participants also described experiences with mentors where paternalism was paramount during social interactions. These experiences exacerbated feelings of intellectual isolation, self-doubt, and distrust of the academy. For some, the paternalism manifested as racism, with mentors projecting unconscious perceptions of URM faculty as inherently inferior or unable to fit within the values and ideals of the academy. As one Mexican American male respondent explains, even when a mentor “means well,” unintentional racist thinking can influence the types of mentoring faculty receive:

When I was putting this [presentation] together, my current main mentor . . . I like her very much . . . although she’s very enlightened and tries to be very appropriate . . . first of all, never mentored anyone probably of color, and I do know of [students] of color who she has mentored but not faculty. *And she didn’t really know what to do with me and these topics that I wanted to study* [italics added]. I proceeded to get, for an hour, a well-meaning talk-down. . . . And I [had to go to] therapy [after it] because this woman sat there and proceeded to tell me that, “When you go for this [presentation], you need to make sure that you sit straight at the meeting. You don’t want to lean. You don’t want to look too eager. You need to make sure that that day you wear a suit.” She proceeded to walk me through proper eating etiquette. And I remember I looked down a few times, and I said to myself I can’t believe it. I’m so trained. I would have never been here if I didn’t know any of that stupid nonsense that you’re telling me. And instead of helping me with the grant-writing process or anything of value, you are mentoring me because you don’t know what it is I need. You assume that what I need is professionalism, basic professionalism that you learn at home in the first few years of your life.

With her focus on behavior, this mentor essentially delegitimized this participant’s intellectual contributions. The misalignment of perceived needs also

deprived the mentee of a senior mentor's valuable wisdom and guidance in grant writing and other instrumental support. For a significant number of participants, alienating experiences were often connected to mentors who did not respect or understand their research agendas. This is by no means unique to URMs, but these rules are particularly opaque for URMs given their lack of experience in predominately White settings and historical exclusion from the academy.

### **Ideal Mentoring**

Characteristics of ideal mentoring relationships that were mentioned repeatedly included the importance of valuing URM faculty members' ideas, intellect, and commitment to uplift both students and their communities from systematic oppression. One respondent succinctly captures ideal mentor attributes:

The major thing was that they listened and they were respectful at all times of my vision. And they worked with me, honed that vision, [helped me to] acquire the tools that I needed to have—the intellectual tools, the contacts, the writing skills, the funds—to make it happen. (Puerto Rican, female)

When describing what good mentors did and how they influenced their careers, the participants reported a sense that the mentor was a “champion.” Mentors who were “staunch supporters,” “shepherded” faculty initiatives into fruition, and genuinely invested their time and themselves in the success of the faculty member had a strong impact. As this African American female states, “He was vested in me, in my success, in my completion, and it made a difference.” Through their words and expectations, mentors pushed faculty members, either as graduate students or as early career scholars, believed in them, and removed fears that the next step was impossible.

Ideal mentors promoted the careers of their mentees with strategies that included: (a) forging connections to faculty who had power and prestige, (b) providing concrete scholarly opportunities along with offering moral support and encouragement in ways that promoted their autonomy and independent scholarship, and (c) using a hands-on approach.

### *Forging Connections*

Gaining access and entrée into a community of scholars is a necessary component of career progress. Early career scholars often need to rely on senior faculty to forge connections that help them expand their network of collaborators and recommend their merit as collaborators to other senior faculty in the field. One Mexican American female said that her mentor:

has the contacts and the networks that'll help me be successful and gain the recognition and have people who are exposed to the work that I do. So in that respect . . . I am becoming part of a community of scholars . . . that focus on the kind of research that I do. And I feel like I'm now part of that conversation circle.

While connections are critical for all faculty, they have special importance for URM faculty, who engage in less conventional scholarship, by preventing intellectual isolation.

### *Providing Scholarly Opportunities*

Participants noted the importance of mentors in creating opportunities to promote their research agenda and helping them launch, solidify, and strengthen their careers. Examples included writing them into grants, coauthoring articles or books, and inviting them into collaborative research teams. While some faculty were comfortable in approaching mentors and requesting opportunities, more faculty noted that an ideal mentor invites them in:

I don't have to seek [my mentor] for opportunities. She actively seeks me . . . she knows what I'm going through, so she knows that if she waits for me to say, "what are you working on?" that probably will never come. So she corresponds with me and says, "I'm working on this. I would like you to be involved." She doesn't ask me do I want to be involved. She says, "I would like you to be involved."  
(African American, male)

When done respectfully, offers of scholarly opportunities from mentors to URM faculty were intellectually affirming and sent a clear message that the mentors believed in their ability to thrive in the academy. Many participants spoke to the importance of being offered support that had the ultimate objective of promoting and nurturing their scholarly autonomy rather than putting them into the box of doing their mentor's work. For example, a Mexican American female respondent stated,

They were great sponsors for me pursuing questions that I was interested in looking at . . . they were really instrumental in saying, "Yeah, you can have interests . . . and our job is to help you figure out how to answer them but not to define what those questions should be."

An African American female participant spoke about the encouragement she received during her master's degree to engage in original work: "[My faculty mentors in graduate school] really helped me produce my own empirical research project as a master's student. [I]t really catapulted me into wanting to do more research and really get involved with a research agenda."

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The sense that the ideal role of mentors is to foster the intellectual growth of early career scholars without paternalism or hampering their freedom was captured by this Puerto Rican female:

The best mentor is the person who ends up developing a relationship . . . that really allows that person to shine. Whether you agree with how they do it or not is not the issue; whether they took your scholarship and critiqued it and took it in another direction is not the issue. The issue is you let them shine and they, hopefully, have built a better product than the one you created.

### *Using a “Hands-On” Approach*

Faculty participants noted how important it was for mentors to “dig” into their work, reading, critiquing, and revising it, and to model scholarly writing, grant writing, and critical thinking. This hands-on approach pushed participants in their thinking, in formulating arguments, and in articulating themselves through the written word.

[My mentor] has been really integral in taking my papers and editing them and going over them not once but several times, and getting them back very quickly. . . . And I can just see the difference in the level of productivity, where I’m able to give him the rough draft and in a matter of a turnaround time of two months maybe, the paper is out. (African American, male)

Strategic guidance also helped faculty members decide how to organize their time and priorities, think about publication placement, and negotiate policy and administrative issues:

I do a little too much in terms of service and [in] my yearly evaluation he would say, “Let’s cut back on the service” and tell me where my time should be going. . . . He’s vigilant about making sure I’m on the right track. (Mexican American, female)

In sum, the characteristics of ideal mentoring reflect a deep respect for the protégé’s potential and scholarly contributions and include the valuing of URM’s ideas and intellect, forging connections, and the ability to provide feedback and push faculty to hone their skills without furthering paternalistic dynamics. Effective mentoring is about developmentally supporting the growth and autonomy of early career scholars, harnessing the privilege that comes from being a senior faculty member to benefit them, and deeply caring and respecting the intellectual contributions of the URM faculty member.

### **Political Guidance**

We also uncovered another domain of mentoring that is relevant to all faculty but particularly salient for URM academic career success—political

guidance. Political guidance privileges the transmission of social capital in the form of knowledge about institutional norms and the role of race and power relations in higher education institutions without demanding assimilation. The goal is to explicitly offer URM faculty access to the strategies and skills that can lead to greater influence and power in the structure of the academy while protecting their autonomous pursuit of research ideas, scholarship, professional values/priorities, and goals for broader social change.

In addition to the role of race and power relations, political guidance explicates the unique social location of URMs and helps URM faculty understand the informal rules, norms, and values that are part of the power exchange among actors in the academy. Knowledge of these rules—how they are created, maintained, interpreted, and enforced—reflect a consciousness on the part of a mentor that intersecting racialized identities and the accumulation of disadvantage over the life course influence their experiences in the academy. The reality that the culture of academic institutions is opaque and has unwritten rules is apparent to URM faculty, as the following respondents explain:

I think a lot of mentoring relationships don't do enough to explain all of those invisible things that make success possible, especially for people of color. . . . In my family no one had gone to graduate school before me. I think that's true for a lot of people of color in the academy, that you don't come from a place of prior knowledge. (Mexican American, female)

At each of our institutions there's clearly a culture that exists there that is very informal and you don't know about it unless you have these very informal personal conversations with people that are senior to tell you this is what you should do in this situation. . . . These aren't the written rules but these are the understood norms of what's going on. . . . But, I'm a little bit jaded about . . . what African American faculty, junior faculty particularly, miss out on because they don't have those kinds of relationships with senior faculty because the senior faculty of color just aren't there. (African American, male)

Along with lack of prior knowledge of the informal norms of the academy, many URM also expressed fear of asking for clarity. The type of mentoring provided by senior URM faculty was often described as unique and involved explicit discussions of race and the unwritten rules:

What [my graduate school mentor] gave us more than anything was he gave the kind of parental advice and wisdom on how academia works. [O]f course we would talk about how race impacted his experience, but he would talk to us about strategies, about how you manage things. Not so explicit, but he would tell us through his own experience. . . . And he'd tell us about other people's experiences that could light a fire in every mountain. (African American, male)

### *Mentoring for Underrepresented Minority Faculty*

While URM faculty offer many positive examples of political guidance from mentors who were not of the same race or ethnicity, participants not surprisingly repeatedly noted the advantage of an implicit understanding about the role of race when they had a URM mentor. These participants mentioned that this unique understanding was often unavailable to their URM peers with White mentors:

I would also say the mentoring relationship I had with [my mentor] I recognize as being unique and rare because . . . I did ask [my peers] who they had as mentors, and none of them pointed towards having an ethnic faculty mentor. Some of them didn't even have a mentor much less a faculty mentor, much less a faculty mentor of color. And so, for me, my realization that I had someone who was Latina like me and a mentor and a good scholar was just something that was just very unique and rare. And I think that has made a world of difference, the farther I get along, the more and more I'm realizing how important that was. (Mexican American, female)

Political guidance increases in importance as faculty navigate the tenure process and deal with unwritten rules and invisible hurdles and barriers.

At this point in my career, I don't need people to show me how to publish research . . . but what I do need is when things come up that you're not prepared for, like going through tenure. . . . Who should I put down as my tenure review writers? What are some things I should be aware of? People that know the game, that can school you to that and provide feedback. That, to me, is the most valuable role a mentor can play at this point in my career. (Mexican American, male)

As this participant elaborated, "The process of promotion should be made transparent by your mentor. There's no way to advance the career if you don't know what the hoops really are, not what's on the website." Another respondent described the hurdles and how his mentor decoded unwritten interpersonal and racial dynamics related to tenure:

And he would tell me . . . about dynamics. "Here's what going on. Here's how these [folks] are going to judge you. They are going to give you a hard time when it comes to tenure. Just accept it. It's going to happen. Our job is to try to prepare you, get you where you need to be." (African American, male)

In effect, political guidance can be best described as a unique mentoring toolkit offering early career URM faculty information and strategies so that they can: (a) decode power relations, race, and inequities in the academy and (b) identify strategies to navigate what often are complicated dynamics to "get you where you need to be."

In sum, the most notable study finding is that life course mentoring is crucial in the academic career path of many URM faculty. Many of the respondents described mentors inside and outside educational systems from early ages. These mentors believed in respondents' intellectual abilities and encouraged their pursuit of education that was critical in promoting their aspirational capital (Yosso, 2005). These data confirm that social capital in the form of material, social, and emotional investments to direct, guide, and teach skills as well as language to access the opportunity structure and navigate the dominant culture networks shapes the academic life course of URM faculty. Closely related to these experiences are the commitments of URM faculty to mentor others or "pay it forward," engage in a research agenda that aims to solve community issues, and participate in community engagement. These findings also suggest that URM faculty welcome mentoring and benefit from continued guidance in how to learn about and negotiate academic institutional norms. However, prior experiences, particularly in graduate school, influence the ability to connect with mentors in the academic workplace. For example, Noy and Ray (2011) found that minority graduate students, and minority women in particular, report that their advisors respect their research ideas significantly less and they receive significantly less instrumental support from their faculty advisors compared to their White peers.

Table 3 illustrates the unique set of mentoring practices in three specific areas that informed the experiences of URM faculty: valuing the intellect and potential of URM faculty, affective support in both acknowledgements of struggle and alignment with values of community-engaged scholarship, and political guidance that contributed to the accumulation of social capital to navigate institutional norms in majority White spaces. In the first three panels, the chart showcases the types of mentor practices throughout the life course that were reported as helpful to respondents in navigating the educational pipeline. The last panel highlights the types of mentoring practices that can facilitate the retention and promotion and tenure of URM early career faculty in higher education institutions, especially research-extensive universities. These data enrich the mentoring literature and confirm that effective mentoring relationships require mutual engagement, must be proactive, affirm URM faculty's legitimate place in the academy, support his or her research agenda, and provide political guidance. Together, these mentoring roles support URM faculty in learning how to decode institutional power dynamics and are vital to career success.

## Discussion

A life course, intersectional perspective highlights the importance of social capital in developing the strengths and professional growth of early career scholars and proffers deep insight into what strategies may be most responsive to the academic needs of early career faculty. Our findings

*Table 3*  
**Life Course Mentoring Pathways for Underrepresented Minority (URM) Populations**

K–12 Schooling	College	Graduate School	Early Career Faculty
<b>Valuing the intellect and potential of the URM</b>			
Opportunities to access intellectual debates specific to URM communities	Providing opportunities for critical engagement and access to both dominant culture knowledge and marginalized knowledge	Reciprocity in intellectual exchange Supporting research focus on marginalized populations	Supporting research focus on marginalized populations Understanding the connection between service/commitment to community and scholarly work
<b>Affective support</b>			
Serving as URM role models and sources of inspiration in the community Understandings of the historical experiences of URM populations and sites of resistance and strength	Acknowledging the struggle for URM populations Language/skills to be able to name/identify oppression Encouraging URM students to apply to graduate school	Supporting commitment to issues of justice and community Building connections with other URM scholars across campus and the discipline Language/skills to be able to name/identify oppression and strategies for dealing with microaggressions	Encouraging further development of research pertaining to issues of justice and community Developing a campus-specific URM faculty community that includes senior URM faculty and/or administrators Strategies for dealing with microaggressions
<b>Political guidance: Learning the norms, skills, strategies of the academy</b>			
Providing instrumental support in accessing opportunity structures such as college-readiness courses and college entrance exam preparation	Support in developing a competitive application for graduate school	Advocating for external and departmental funding for URM graduate students	Including early career URM faculty in major grant proposals

*(continued)*



**Table 3 (continued)**

K-12 Schooling	College	Graduate School	Early Career Faculty
Teaching to harness assets found in the home and community while navigating dominant culture etiquette and protocols without demanding assimilation	Research opportunities that shepherd URM students through the elements of research design, implementation, and analysis  Dominant culture etiquette and protocols without demanding assimilation	Support in accessing opportunity structures  Dominant culture etiquette and protocols without demanding assimilation	Support in accessing opportunity structures  Offering strategies for framing commitment to issues of justice and community in tenure and promotion portfolios and evaluations  Dominant culture etiquette and protocols without demanding assimilation

strengthen the importance of the unique social location of racially identified historical groups whose lived experiences often define their research agendas and whose identities influence how other scholars view their value (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012; Turner & Myers, 2000). These data extend current intersectional thinking by demonstrating how co-constitutive identities are marked or stereotyped in higher education settings and in turn hinder the ability of URM faculty to connect with mentors who understand their specific commitments and concerns.

Our findings are consistent with other studies (Aguirre, 2000; Diggs et al., 2009; Gutiérrez y Muhs, 2012) that show the role of race and power relations in accessing essential information and social networks in support of the advancement of early career scholars. Further, the ways in which intersecting identities affect mentoring relationships between early career and senior faculty are depicted, especially when considering barriers and forms of benign neglect. Barriers to ideal mentoring relationships included a mentor's preference for traditional study topics, lack of knowledge about nonconventional research topics or failure to value them, mistrust or apathy toward community engagement, and unwillingness or inability to discuss the unwritten rules of navigating through predominately White structures and spaces. In contrast, effective mentors seek to challenge the politics or power relations of the academy and assure that URM faculty can successfully navigate through the academic life course and construct meaningful and socially informed research agendas (see Turner & Myers, 2000; Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008).

Effective mentoring practices that were reported to be "ideal" further contribute to our understanding of the unique dimensions of mentoring URM faculty. Mentors who help URM faculty navigate institutional barriers facilitate a supportive environment that can increase work satisfaction and decrease work-related stress (Laden & Hagedorn, 2000). Important characteristics of ideal mentorship include mutual respect, awareness of historical marginalization and barriers experienced by URM faculty, appreciation for critical scholarship that focuses on the most marginalized and vulnerable populations, transmission of social capital by providing access to key scholarly networks or opportunity structures, and investment in deciphering the unwritten rules of the institutional culture and the larger discipline. Equally important, mentors can acknowledge the extent to which URM faculty enact agency to survive in the academy despite structural inequality and instability along the educational pipeline. Positive prior mentoring experiences lay a critical foundation for future mentoring experiences that can facilitate opportunities for engagement in scholarly activities. For early career scholars, gaining respect for their research ideas may be their only form of collateral before they firmly establish a publishing portfolio (Noy & Ray 2012).

Senior faculty have the knowledge and skills to advise URM faculty on strategies for how to spend their time, protect them from over burdensome service commitments, and offer advice on which papers or projects may

have the most payoff for tenure. Senior mentors need to guard against allowing institutional norms and peer pressure to “water down” or push URM faculty to assimilate their intellectual contributions. Some senior faculty deeply value the existing status structure, and they may serve as gatekeepers, protecting what they have established in a way that provides less access to the transmission of social and institutional capital for URM faculty (Lamont, 2010). If crafted in a way that acknowledges participants’ lived experiences along their educational journeys, effective mentors can build meaningful, inspirational, and reciprocal relationships that offer instrumental and affective support. Conscientious mentors at PWIs can offer early career faculty protection through emotional support, the transmission of social capital in the form of tangible information, and social networks that may lead to increased rates of retention and tenure and promotion success.

Another innovative finding was the added benefits of political guidance in the mentoring relationship that addresses the intersectional identities of URM faculty. Political guidance speaks to the importance of strategies to strengthen social and institutional capital without demanding assimilation. For those few respondents who had URM mentors, the opportunity to engage in a discussion on race, ethnicity, or gender in the academy often validated their perceptions and observations and provided tools for navigating often invisible yet toxic terrain. Political guidance is important for both URM men and women because it provided the roadmap for framing commitments to issues of justice and community without jeopardizing their intellectual contributions. This research supports the premise that racial, ethnic, and gender diversity in the faculty is an asset not only to institutional diversity goals but also to knowledge production and increased partnership with communities that face severe social and economic inequality.

Surprisingly, these data show no observable gender or disciplinary differences. However, these findings lend support to other studies on URM, which show that marked intersectional identities (URM male and female statuses) report more isolation, less mentoring interactions, less access to institutional capital, higher community service, more diversity teaching burdens, and higher number of experiences with daily microaggressions than non-URM faculty (Brayboy, 2003; Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012). Extant knowledge also shows that individuals are more likely to form relationships with those of the same race and gender, with whom they feel “interpersonally comfortable and perceive as competent” (Turban, Dougherty, & Lee, 2002, p. 257), suggesting that URM faculty may encounter more social and institutional isolation (Smith & Calasanti, 2005) in higher education institutions due to low representation. Collectively, our data provide additional evidence that URM male and female faculty as a group confront similar patterns of institutional marginalization and inadequate mentoring experiences in higher education. Although these data are not generalizable due to study limitations, a strong body of scholarship on URM faculty experiences in higher

education supports these findings (Alex-Assensoh, 2003; Harlow, 2003; Moreno et al., 2006; Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2008).

## **Recommendations**

These data support other research that signals the urgent need to change the ways that higher education institutions are pursuing diversity (Nakamura & Shernoff, 2009; Ross, 2011). Our work captures a segment of the U.S. workforce that is vital to strengthening higher education's role in decreasing the social and economic inequality of communities and educating future cohorts of diverse students as citizens of a global society. URM faculty who focus on community-engaged or social problem-oriented research agendas are committed to marginalized students, contribute to solving community concerns, serve as good stewards of the academy, and can make significant contributions to research, service engagement, and mentoring the next generation (Stanley, 2006). To increase the pool of URM faculty and increase retention in higher education institutions, effective mentoring needs to be viewed from a life course perspective throughout the K–20 educational pathway.

Mentoring for first-generation, underrepresented students should emphasize one-on-one skill development, affective support, information and skills to navigate (rather than internalize) bias and prejudice, and political guidance focused on the skills and strategies to succeed in PWIs. In addition, mentoring interventions are urgently needed for early career faculty. Practices that address the mentoring needs of URM faculty will benefit all faculty as well as the climate of the institution. Three areas of activities are discussed: (a) training mentors about URM-specific needs, (b) URM-specific mentoring networks outside of institutions, and (c) policies and practices that institutionalize strong mentoring of URM faculty.

### **Training Mentors About URM-Specific Experiences**

Mentoring takes practice and skills—not all faculty should be mentors, not all early career faculty can be mentees, and even the most seasoned mentors often need additional training. There are some effective curricula for faculty mentors, including mentoring training developed by the University of Wisconsin's Institute for Clinical and Translational Research (see [mentoring-resources.ictr.wisc.edu](http://mentoring-resources.ictr.wisc.edu)), which focuses on some of the elements highlighted by our URM participants (e.g., “fostering independence”). In addition to strong mentoring training targeted at all faculty, we also recommend URM-specific aspects of mentor training, including making sure that mentors are given access to data and literature that explains the experiences of URMs in the academy.

Mentors should also understand and be able to discuss the historical, structural, and institutional biases that have led to the underrepresentation of these populations in the academy (e.g., see Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012; Robinson & Clardy, 2010; Stanley, 2006; Turner & Myers, 2000). The

University of Michigan's successful ADVANCE program for recruiting more women in STEM fields found that the ability of senior faculty to "draw on social science knowledge [about women in STEM] and convey it to colleagues has turned out to be key" to the success of their program (LaVaque-Manty & Stewart, 2008, p. 169). We believe this translates to URM faculty mentoring—grounding contemporary underrepresentation as part of larger systemic dimensions of inequality that will lead mentors to better understand how generational and academic life course accumulations of disadvantage occur among URM faculty. Discussions of instrumental and affective support needed by URM populations, such as valuing research at the margins or commitments to communities of origin, are also essential.

### **URM-Specific Mentoring Networks Outside Institutions**

Many of our participants discussed how mentoring programs outside their home institutions were sanctuaries in the midst of hostile or indifferent academic environments. These programs allowed them to understand the unwritten rules of the academy and find URM scholarly communities in which to thrive. Programs that deeply respect intellectual diversity in the academy for both scholarly and pedagogical reasons, including New Connections at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Ford Foundation Fellowship Program, offered the research and community support to help URM faculty thrive. However, these programs cannot replace the institutional "home" guidance that URM faculty need, nor can they mentor all URM faculty.

### **Forming Policies and Practices That Institutionalize Strong Mentoring of URM Faculty**

In conclusion, non-URM faculty, who are rarely in the numerical minority, have not generally had to "tenure alone" and have not been assumed by others to be incompetent or interlopers. Rather, they have an obligation to learn about and acknowledge the role that race/ethnicity plays in U.S. society if they are to effectively mentor URM faculty, many of whom are likely to have experienced racism and discrimination and witnessed it in their communities (Hogg, 2003).

Mentoring is often a racialized and gendered practice that needs to be thoughtfully configured to meet the needs of diverse faculty. Mentoring for URM populations is an issue of equity—in order to level the playing field, URM faculty need to be given access to the same guidance and strategies as their colleagues. To address the issues in mentoring and increase recruitment and retention of URM faculty, universities need to institutionalize programs and policies that address challenges to effective mentoring. The tremendous strides in recruiting women into STEM fields were stimulated and sustained by changes in institutional commitments. Such commitments are needed just as urgently for URM populations. For example, recruitment and retention

programs focused on women, such as ADVANCE, have found that it is essential to have well-respected male faculty as part of the initial institutional leadership (LaVaque-Manty & Stewart, 2008). Similarly, the participation of White and other non-URM minority (e.g., Asian, international) senior faculty who are well respected and who understand the specific needs of URM faculty (or are open to learning about them) builds momentum for URM-specific mentoring programs, supports the development of a cadre of committed and thoughtful mentors, and furthers the all-important institutional buy-in.

Effective mentorship of URM faculty is everyone's responsibility if we are to transform the academy into a space where all faculty can thrive and not be left behind.

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