

Clone, Critic, or Peer: Mentoring, Developmental Positioning and Potential

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Abstract: This manuscript includes an investigation of graduate student mentoring for the purpose of facilitating successful mentoring relationships. The authors review the literature, and use student development theory to operationalize terms. Alternative mentoring models are suggested in meeting student needs at different developmental stages and considering the intersections of their identity.

Keywords: Graduate Students, Mentoring, Cultural Context

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research is to improve graduate student engagement by addressing problematic mentoring, successful mentoring, and culturally attuned mentoring models. By defining multiple forms of mentoring in graduate education, the authors describe various mentoring dynamics and operationalize useful terms to juxtaposition successful and unsuccessful mentoring relationships. In an effort to expand practitioners' knowledge and equity in graduate education, the authors discuss specific tenets of critical race theory (CRT) to offer culturally attuned models of mentoring.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The word *mentor* originated from Homer's *Odyssey* (trans., 2005). Odysseus entrusted his friend, Mentor, with the care and guidance of his son during the Trojan War. The contemporary meaning is trusted counselor or guide (Mentor, 2014). Roberts describes mentoring as "a supportive relationship; a helping process; a teaching-learning process; a reflective process; a career development process...coaching, sponsoring, role modeling, assessing..." (2000, p.162). Mentoring can be discernable in various ways. It is considered by Hall as "a range of possibilities" (2003, p. 9) Problems can occur within the mentoring relationship, such as academic "cloning" (Blackburn, Chapman, & Cameron, 1981) a poor match between mentors and students, and students who learn too late that their mentors' advice failed to prepare them for employment (Waldeck, Orrego, Plax, & Kearney, 1997).

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METHOD

To develop a graduate student mentoring model, the authors reviewed Perry's intellectual forms as they relate to the phenomenon of mentorship as well as literature on graduate student and professional mentoring. The authors apply critical race theory (CRT) to address race and gender disparity through the tenet of counter-storytelling (Solórzano, & Yosso, 2002), which is a qualitative research methodology that highlights the experiences of "out-groups" (Delgado, 1989). This method (CRT) focuses on experiential knowledge to showcase the stories of individuals who are normally silenced and oppressed (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004). Subsequently, based on our own mentoring experiences, the authors define terminology and develop a new model. Finally, three systems outside the auspices of education are evaluated to provide alternative models of mentoring that provide examples of culturally attuned mentorship.

The authors assert that the terms *Disciple*, *Critic*, and *Clone* describe various problematic mentoring relationships; conversely, the terms *Mentee*, *Protégé*, and *Peer* identify successful mentoring relationships. These terms describe stages through which graduate students may move while in graduate school and are defined. *Figure 1* below shows the various relationship stages students may move through.

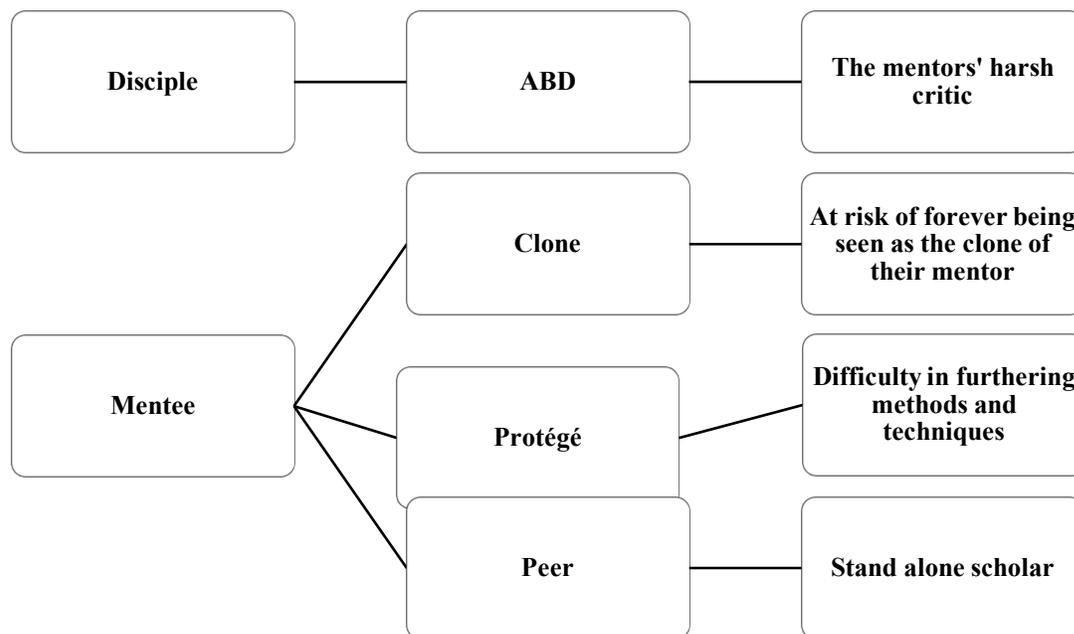


Figure 1. Model of Mentoring Stages

A mentee is an inexperienced person guided by someone with more knowledge and experience. For the purposes of this study, the mentee becomes either a protégé or peer.

While protégés are included in successful mentoring relationships, these individuals may struggle to distinguish themselves. "Protégés are living transmitters of

their mentor's artistry" (Healy & Welchert, 1990, p. 18, Protégé, n.d.). "It is argued that mentors teach and help individuals secure [professional] opportunities by conferring individuals with approval, prestige, and backing" (Kram, 1985 as cited in Fagenson, 1988 p.182). Our supposition is that protégés focus on work analogous to that of their mentors and may struggle to become professional peers.

"A colleague of similar level and rank..." is a peer (Gottesman, p. 4, as quoted in Johnson, 2012, p. 974, Peer, n.d.). A former mentee who becomes a peer is a stand-alone scholar and he/she can disagree or agree with his/her mentor and make the decision to do so based on his/her own knowledge, understanding and resources

A disciple is unable to separate his/her work from that of his/her mentor. He/She is unable to disagree with the mentor or see himself/herself as a separate scholar and is at risk of remaining ABD (All But Dissertation) and may turn into a *Clone* or *Critic*. A critic is "one who expresses a reasoned opinion on any matter especially involving a judgment of its value, truth, righteousness, beauty, or technique" (Critic, n.d.). Eventually he/she becomes the mentor's harshest critic, at risk of never developing his/her independent scholarly work and may remain in ABD status. Another type of disciple is a clone. Clones are unable to see themselves as separate from their mentor; "...those whose careers were essentially identical to their own" (Blackburn, Chapman & Cameron, 1981, p.315, Clone, n.d.). With his/her inability to step out on his/her own, they fail to develop individual scholarship.

RESULTS

The application of Perry's *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years: A Scheme* is intended to chart college student development and sense making of their own experience as they develop ethically and intellectually. Perry's stages are delineated into four categories: Dualism, Multiplicity, Relativism and Commitment (Perry, 1999). Working from the student's perspective, the categories move from a "mentor knows all" reality through to arrive at a reality of seeing oneself as a peer. Understanding how graduate students make sense of the nature of knowledge illuminates how they engage in relationships with mentors. This understanding provides a developmentally appropriate means of engaging with mentees. Figure 2 below shows the student and mentor perspective of the Perry scheme.

The mentoring phenomenon is potentially complicated given race and gender differences between mentors and students; thus, the authors apply critical race theory (CRT). CRT is a theoretical framework that examines the social construction of race and the relationships between race, groups of people, law and power (Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT prompts the authors to consider their own experiences in education to address raced and gendered (Bernal, 2002) perspectives of mentoring. Resultantly, the authors assert that one mentoring system will not serve all students equally given the multiplicity of identities. Intersectionality (how elements of an individual's identity impact their day-to-day experiences Solorzano & Yosso, (2002), shows how multiple layers of oppression or privilege are experienced depending on an individual's race,

gender, sexual orientation, etc. (Ortiz & Jani, 2010). The intersection of these elements will determine the mentoring experience of mentors and mentees alike.

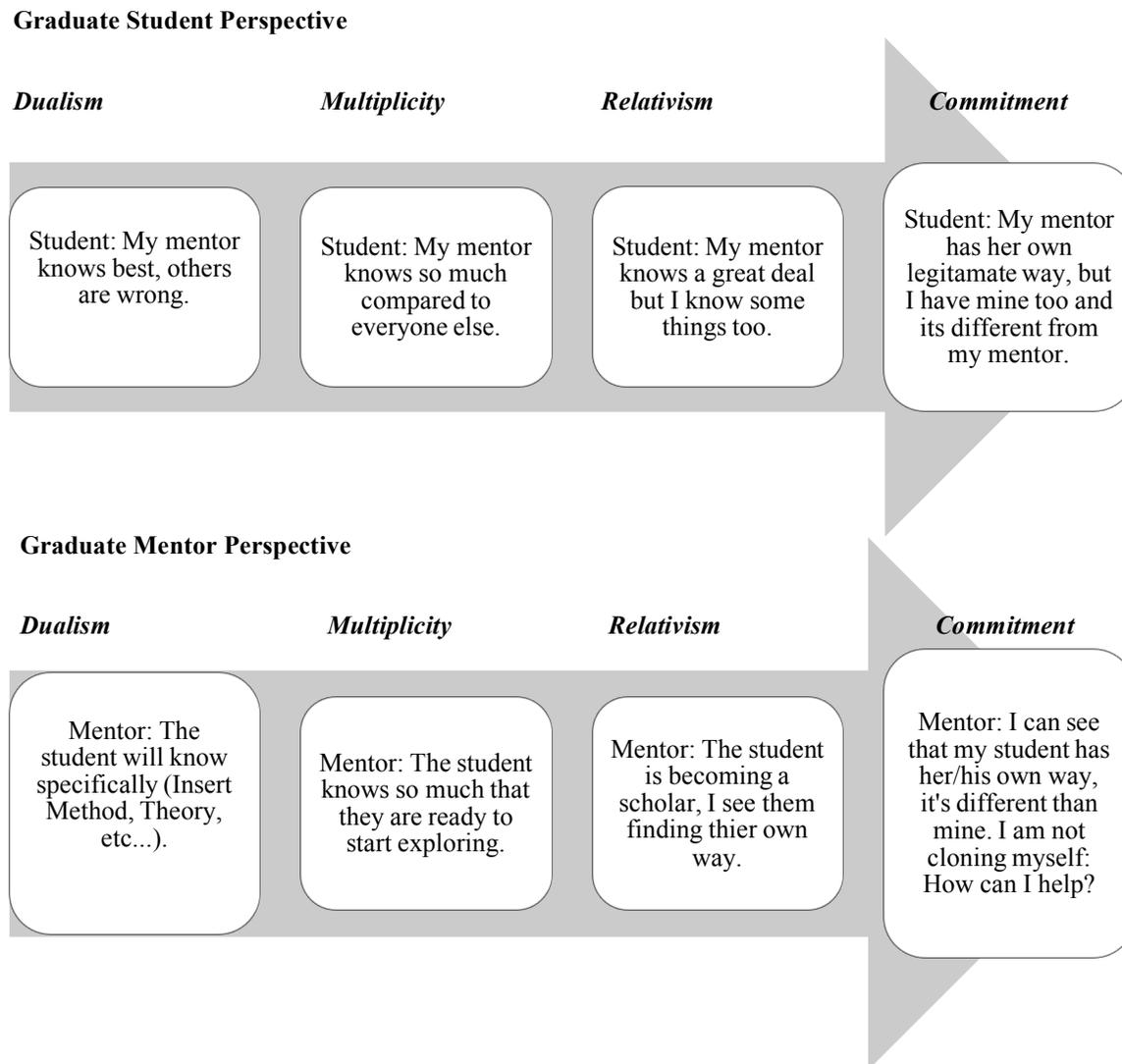


Figure 2. Mentee and Mentor perspectives of student development scheme.

Discussion

Culturally attuned mentoring models will more effectively meet the needs of students impacted daily by different layers of oppression. Though there are mentoring processes and practices that are unique to every cultural and linguistic group, following are three examples that work within selected Indigenous communities.

A HAWAIIAN EXAMPLE

The key component in this example is couched in intergenerational contribution. In this model there are three individuals working for community wellbeing. The first is

the *Doer*, or the person who serves in the capacity of organizing a performing some initiative. The second is the *Elder*. Elders serve as counsel and mentor for the doer and may serve as a spokesperson when necessary, as they often have voice where the *Doer* does not. They have unique knowledge pertaining to traditional ontologies that help maintain cultural integrity. The third person in this model is the *Youth*, who helps the *Doer* complete tasks that need to be done in bringing the initiative to fruition and may run errands, prepare for gatherings or stand in place of the *Doer* if needed. This model is pragmatically useful, as it serves the larger purpose of providing the structure for the continuity of knowledge from one generation to the next. The *Elder* is engaged and involved in community affairs; the *Youth* is provided with mentorship, opportunities for responsibility, and developing real-world proficiencies.

AN INDIGENOUS ART STUDIO MODEL

This model moves beyond mere apprenticeship into an environment that is grounded in fictive familial connection. In this example the aspiring artists are brought into a family structure with one established expert who oversees multiple artists. Before these artists are accepted into this structure, the rest of the studio must consider the person from a holistic perspective, because they will be living together, sharing house and studio responsibilities and offering peer support. This community construction serves the expert in a way that continues their legacy across generations, serves the community and provides the learners with a support system.

A RESERVATION COMMUNITY MODEL

This final model is enacted by members of a specific reservation community and focuses on the intentional transmission of knowledge. Young people are offered a degree of socialization that is dependent upon their proven ability regarding community responsibility. In other words, certain young people are offered community specific knowledge based on the fact that they have earned the trust of the current knowledge carriers. Young people are monitored over a number of years and those who exhibit a specific set of virtues are simultaneously cared for and celebrated.

CONCLUSIONS

If performed well, mentoring, though very complex, is beneficial for both the student and the mentor. A mentoring model grounded within specific cultural context may help students reach the best-case scenarios of scholars and *peers*, instead of *clones* or *critics*. The application of Perry's developmental scheme (1999) and CRT to the mentoring relationship has the potential to support graduate students, specifically students of color by highlighting inequality and identifying power discrepancies and racial microaggressions in these relationships. The best-case scenario is that students who are co-constructors of a beneficial mentoring position will become stand-alone scholars and professional peers while maintaining cultural integrity.

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