

In press: I am one of three contributing writers/researchers to a book chapter in an edited book on supporting racially diverse counselors-in-training through the use of mentoring. Below is the piece I researched and wrote.

Introduction

Graduate students in counselor training programs are tasked to surmount a multiplicity of complex hurdles which necessitate the development of sophisticated skills, including the clinical hardscape of knowledge proficiency, skill acquisition, as well as personal growth and self-awareness. Moreover, factor in the strata of establishing relationships with faculty and peers, participating in professional development experiences, completing academic assignments, and the management of time, money, and other demands, and it becomes difficult to manage the stressors that are inherent in graduate education (Benshoff, Cashwell, & Rowell, 2015; Foss-Kelly & Protivnak, 2017). While these stressors are challenging, a counseling program is even more difficult to navigate for minority students because they encounter additional institutionalized and systemic barriers and face such experiences as underrepresentation, isolation, tokenization, and hegemonic curriculums (Green, Ammah, Butler-Byrd, Brandon, & McIntosh, 2017; Haskins, Whitfield-Williams, Shillingford, Singh, Moxley, & Ofauni, 2013). It becomes critical, therefore, to evaluate and address the unique needs of minority students for greater persistence, retention, matriculation, and career engagement (Foss-Kelly et al., 2017; Luedke, 2017). Using a multicultural lens, this chapter will deconstruct the inroads and pathways to supporting minority students in their journey from counselor-in-training to professional practitioner.

Supporting our minority students requires intentionality and a restorative process that elevates the ideals of equity, access, and connection to a place of prominence (Chan, Yeh, & Krumboltz, 2015; Green et al., 2017). One of the primary vehicles to put this call into action is through mentoring (Alexander & Bodenhorn, 2015; Butler, Evans, Brooks, Williams, & Baily, 2013; Chan, et al., 2015; Green et al., 2017; Haskins et al., 2013; Luedke, 2017; Stark, Boswell, Cartwright, & Onwuegbuzie, 2019). There are many definitions of mentoring available, but specific to the counseling profession, a mentor is defined as “someone with experience and expertise in the counseling field who is willing to share knowledge and offer advice to foster professional development” (American Counseling Association, 2012, p. 68). Extending this definition further, Chan et al. (2015) identified five themes of multicultural sensitive mentoring that “provide a more nuanced and holistic understanding of mentoring as an ecological, multicultural, and relational process that provides comprehensive professional, personal, institutional, and sociocultural support” (p. 600). These five themes include a.) career support and guidance tailored for ethnic minorities, b.) relationality between mentors and protégés, c.) significance of contexts, d.) interconnections across contexts, and 5.) multidirectionality of interactions between contexts. Accordingly, a mentor’s role is dynamic and multidimensional (i.e., guide, role model, advisor, coach, supporter) and is often determined by the fundamental needs of the mentee in the attainment of specific skills, knowledge, and professional identity needed to be successful (Butler et al., 2013; Stark et al., 2019).

Within the academy and sociopolitical institutions, there are spoken and unspoken hierarchies, and students with diverse backgrounds are subject to these systemic power differentials (Chan et al., 2015). For example, students may not feel comfortable enough with university resources (i.e., counseling center) to seek and access appropriate support (Alexander

et al., 2015). Therefore, energy should be directed towards deconstruction of the power structure in the unique faculty/student and mentor/mentee dyads (Stark et al., 2019). Racially diverse students rely on social capital to negotiate unfamiliar and unpleasant landscapes (Alexander et al., 2015; Chan et al., 2015). Therefore, relationality and trust building are essential ingredients to the safety and success of the mentorship (Boswell, Wilson, Stark, & Onwuegbuzie, 2015; Chan et al., 2015). This starts by establishing a genuine personal connection in informal and organic ways by doing such things as being approachable, demonstrating personalized interest, providing unsolicited information, and providing opportunities for growth and resources that extend beyond what the student receives in class (Boswell et al., 2015, Green et al., 2017). Once a connection develops, growth of the supportive mentoring relationship can occur.

Traditional conceptions of mentoring tend to restrict its jurisdiction to academics and career development, but the mentoring of minority students calls for an expansion toward understanding the mentee in a holistic, contextual way within systems and sociopolitical institutions (Butler et al., 2013; Chan et al., 2015; Luedke, 2017). Depth of connection is nurtured when the mentor fosters authenticity through self-disclosure, provides encouragement and affirmation, and believes in the mentee (Green et al., 2017). Ties strengthen further when the mentor willingly makes space for race-based dialogues and broaches the topic proactively, rather than reactively, which inadvertently creates community and lifts the burden of isolation and tokenization (Butler et al., 2013; Haskins et al., 2015; Luedke, 2017). Similarly, it is critical to recognize one's negative attitudes and biases (Green et al., 2017) and not engage minority students from a deficit-based perspective as "victims," rather provide a strength-based approach that reflects their self-efficacy, cultural values, resiliency, and empowerment in a system that continues to oppress and marginalize people of color (Haskins et al., 2015). Rather than placing

the onus of navigating the academy on minority mentees, mentors must help bridge the gap between the student's culture and the culture of the institution and profession (Green et al., 2017). Mentoring is a complex, ecological phenomenon that has great utility for supporting and encouraging minority students in counseling programs. It is often through supportive faculty relationships that students can develop a deeper connection to and appreciation for the work of counseling and therefore increasingly identify as a professional counselor.

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