



Mentoring as Transformative Practice Supporting Student and Faculty Diversity (New Directions for Higher Education, Number 171)

Turner, Caroline S., ed.
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Book Review

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Research literature reveals that effective mentoring has significant and positive impact on student success and persistence for women and people of color. Mentoring as Transformative Practice consists of ten essays concerning effective traditional and nontraditional mentoring strategies for women and underrepresented minorities (URM). The essays presuppose the value of mentoring and also explore its impact on student outcomes and agency.

The majority of essays in this volume are written by women and persons of color who have successfully mentored others or have been the beneficiaries of effective mentoring relationships. Many of the essays employ a nontraditional methodology for analyzing mentoring relationships and effective mentoring methods. For example, a critical reflective and subjective instrument called scholarly personal narrative is used both to analyze mentoring relationships and as a tool to mentor students. Scholarly personal narratives highlight the author's voice and communicate their perceptions and interpretations of their lived experiences. Such narratives reveal insights and depth of experience in compelling ways. These are not normally found in research works. They also offer a unique method for constructing new knowledge.

Chapter One uses personal narratives to examine significant aspects of mentoring that impact women and URMs in higher education arguing that they often need psychosocial versus academic mentoring. The authors - one with a national mentoring award - reflect on mentoring practices in their personal narratives. They conclude that students need mentors who offer authentic relationships, understand their experiences as minorities, listen without reprisal, and

encourage and model vulnerability at all levels. In Chapter Two, an African American female and associate professor at a research university and six of her students analyze data from their scholarly personal narratives, revealing three consistent behaviors that contribute to the development of student agency: (1) perceived and actual approachability allowing for mutual trust and comfort leading to cultivation of student agency; (2) the balance of challenge and support; and (3) assistance and encouragement to develop a scholarly voice, passions, and vocation. In Chapter Four personal narratives are used as a critical pedagogical tool through which students trace and critically analyze their educational development, comparing their experiences with patterns highlighted by social science theories, quantitative data, and relevant social policies.

The book offers several mentoring takeaways in the remaining chapters. One takeaway is that mentoring can become a racialized experience when it takes the form of protecting a traditional canon from nontraditional perspectives brought to the learning experience by women and minority students. Viewed within the context of social justice, mentoring involves conscientization, the valuing of lived experience, and advocating for students. Nontraditional alternatives to proximate mentoring relationships include “mentoring-at-a-distance” through emails, conferences calls, and so forth, and various unexpected “cheerleaders” who become sources of psychosocial encouragement. Online mentoring solutions provide psychosocial support for students in specific disciplines, like STEM. “Pedagogy for Equity” peer mentoring can focus on three levels – personal biography, collaborative sociocultural group context, and broader institution. Intergenerational and near-peer approaches positively impact retention and achievement from junior high through doctoral programs.

I highly recommend this book as a resource for individual or institutional self-reflection about participation (or lack thereof) in mentoring relationships as mentor/mentee and for thinking about and developing effective mentoring strategies for women and URMs.

https://wabash.center/resources/book_reviews/mentoring-as-transformative-practice-supporting-student-and-faculty-diversity-new-directions-for-higher-education-number-171/