



## Mentoring for a Multicultural Psychology Future

Marina Louisa Tomazinis, MA

Does mentoring in the context of multicultural psychology look different? That is, do students who are now training as multicultural psychologists – something perhaps not possible even 20 years ago – require a different type of mentoring that is essentially distinct from traditional mentoring? Providing appropriate mentoring and enhancing the practice of multicultural psychology is essential for the profession and is considered to be a core CLASP issue.

It is generally acknowledged that there is a need for mentoring during graduate school and throughout early career. Bigelow and Johnson (2001) label mentoring “a critical ingredient in professional development and identity formation” (p.19). A useful definition of mentoring might be Kram’s (1985) definition which names two primary functions: the career – focusing on the mentee’s career development; and the psychosocial – a more personal element focusing on the mentee’s identity development. Through careful facilitation, mentoring enhances the development of both the professional and personal skill set necessary to be an effective psychologist and may ease the transition into the professional world by providing modeling and socialization. This framework is in line with CPA CLASP, which emphasizes the importance of taking a wellness and developmental perspective.

If our interest is in producing competent multicultural psychologists, then it is essential to provide supportive and involved mentors to facilitate the growth of multiculturally-focused practitioners. Efforts to meet this need may be complicated by the fact that multicultural psychology has only relatively recently emerged as a distinct locus of concern in psychology practice and education. It is an area that is young within psychology – the first recommendation of cul-

tural diversity as warranting attention in clinical practice and training was heard profession-wide only in 1973, followed in 1986 by the admission of diversity training into APA accreditation standards, and finally by the adoption of the APA Guidelines in 2002 (APA, 2003). Helping guide someone into a rapidly evolving area of professional expertise may pose some difficulties in terms of socializing a student.

An analogous model, feminist mentoring, seeks to socialize a student into a culture that is seeking social change (Humble, Solomon, Allen, Blaisure, & Johnson, 2006). If feminism is based on the idea that power is, but should not be, gendered, multicultural psychology is based on the idea that the profession historically did not view people as their full, cultural selves, but must to provide services that consider all aspects of a client’s identity. As multicultural psychology seeks to alter the landscape of psychology to fully admit the whole, cultured person, multicultural mentoring includes training in cultural competency skills that is equally supported by culturally-aware interactions between mentors and students.

When I asked fellow graduate students who also identify as multicultural psychologists-in-training about their mentoring needs and experiences, I heard frustration. One colleague described her frustrations in dealing with a supervisor and potential mentor who does not seem to be fully aware of cultural issues: “she continually misses a part of my client and a part of me too as I experience my explanations of the cultural component of the case falling on deaf ears. So whenever I go into session with this supervisor, I feel that she sees only part of me and my clients and I feel I can only bring in certain parts of my sessions with my clients that I know she will see and understand...but that’s not being fair to the client, or to me.” This

supervisor's failure in both skill development and personal development isolates the trainee and devalues what she rightly sees as an essential aspect of practice. CPA CLASP encourages all psychologists, student to retired psychologist, to actively pursue learning, remaining open to their own personal development.

If multicultural psychology is to effect fundamental change in the field, then the particular needs of the emerging multicultural psychologist must be met and such mentoring needs to take a distinct shape. This shape acknowledges and builds on its multicultural base and skill set in providing its psychosocial and career functions, facilitating and enhancing the relationship of two culturally-shaped people. Mentees need to be seen and heard, just as they are struggling to see and hear their clients. Such relationships will, in turn, enhance the field as a whole through the building of a multicultural psychologist. (U)

### References

American Psychological Association. (2003). Guidelines on multicultural education, training, research, practice, and organizational change for psychologists. *American Psychologist*, 58, 377-402.

Bigelow, J.R. & Johnson, W. B. (2001). Promoting mentor-protégé relationship formation in graduate school. *The Clinical Supervisor*, 20, 1.

Humble, A.M., Solomon, C.R., Allen, K.R., Blaisure, K.R., & Johnson, M.P. (2006). Feminism and mentoring of graduate students. *Family Relations*, 55, 2-15.

Kram, K. E. (1985). *Mentoring at work: Developmental relationships in organizational life*. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, and Company.

*Marina Louisa Tomazinis, MA sits on the CLASP Executive Committee and is the Immediate Past Chair of CPAGS.*

## Find Out More

- **Call CPA's CLASP confidential I & R Line (888-262-8293) for materials on self care and resiliency, educational programs, and information. Referral to a psychologist or community resource available upon request. This service is available to all California psychologists.**
- **Check out our website for additional resources ~ <http://www.cpaclasp.org>**
- **Join our I & R (no fee) and become a provider to work with other psychologists.**