

# Chapter 6

## Mentoring in Graduate Education: Curriculum for Transformative Learning

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this chapter is to examine and analyze the concepts of power, critical reflection, and potential for transformative learning in graduate mentoring models and programs, exploring research and models that reflect these concepts in their program design and “curriculum” for mentoring. The chapter concludes with an analysis of two mentoring models/programs and suggestions for future research and practice in mentoring in higher educational institutions that may lead to transformative learning among mentors and participants in these programs.*

### INTRODUCTION

As a senior faculty member at an urban doctoral institution, I spend much of my time mentoring and advising masters and doctoral students in their programs of study and throughout their thesis or dissertation research. This work is very challenging yet fulfilling. At my institution, we have no formal or peer mentoring programs in which students and faculty members can engage; instead faculty members who mentor students or other faculty members informally engage in one-to-one mentor/protégés relationships and create their own mentoring plans or curriculum in which they can encourage critical self-reflection and activities to further learning. However, because I am responsible for mentoring 30 or more doctoral students

through their dissertations, my time spent with individual students becomes limited, causing me to question how my sometimes inadequate time with each individual student as a mentor affects my students’ learning, their career development as future faculty members, and their understandings of the requirements to be successful in academe. In discussions with colleagues from other institutions of higher education at conferences and professional meetings, I realize that my questions concerning mentoring graduate students are common across programs and universities as decreased funding for higher education diminishes the number of full-time tenure track faculty members available to mentor graduate students in one-to-one mentoring relationships.

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Adult learners in graduate or doctoral degree programs usually engage in a curriculum of prescribed courses throughout their programs of study. Frequently these programs of study help learners construct new understandings and knowledge of concepts and theories, encourage self-directed and andragogical learning principles (Knowles, 1980), and perhaps provide conditions for learners to critically reflect upon their assumptions as they progress through the phases of transformative learning (Mezirow, 2009; Taylor & Cranton, 2012). Although academic courses in the curriculum of graduate and doctoral programs may foster conditions for learning, similar to any program that serves adult learners, students may also learn outside of the classroom through mentoring relationships between faculty and students, as well as peer-to-peer mentoring among students. This may be particularly true in graduate and doctoral education where students may hope to begin or further their careers as faculty members or administrators in academic institutions and to acquire this knowledge from experienced faculty members. Opportunities for students to participate in good mentoring relationships may be essential to doctoral students and junior faculty members learning the culture of academe (Hansman, 2002, 2012, 2013) so they can build their own successful careers, and formal mentoring programs may provide essential support to those who wish to have successful careers in higher education. Although one-to-one mentoring relationships have historically provided support to graduate and doctoral students, because of the diminishing number of full-time faculty members, formal mentoring programs may better provide needed guidance to graduate students. However, there are many issues that planners of formal mentoring programs must consider as they plan the mentoring program curriculum. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to examine and analyze the concepts of power, critical reflection, and potential for transformative

learning in graduate education mentoring models and programs, exploring research and models that reflect these concepts in their program design and “curriculum” for mentoring.

## **Types of Mentors and Formal Mentoring Programs**

The terms “mentor” and “advisor” are sometimes used to discuss helping relationships in institutions of higher education; however, in this chapter, advisor and mentor are not interchangeable and each describes distinct roles in relationship to work with students. An *Advisor* is “a person (not necessarily a faculty member) who is typically assigned to the department or program to meet with the student, to provide advice on degree plans and what courses to take, and address other academic issues or concerns” (Mullen, 2008, p. 270). *Mentors* may also fulfill some of the duties of advisors described above, but on the other hand and at least for the purposes of this chapter, mentors are those faculty members or peer students who can help prepare students for their future careers and work in academe. The work of mentors or peer mentors may include activities such as chairing or serving on dissertation committees, co-writing research articles or refereed conference presentations, giving feedback on curriculum vitae or other projects, and engaging in discussions or other activities that might help students understand and engage in the work needed to prepare for their future careers.

Many other definitions of mentoring exist in the literature and vary depending on the type of mentoring attributes that are being described, for example psychosocial support and/or career growth. Kram’s (1985) definition reflects a career focus as she discusses mentoring as an intense relationship between experienced colleagues working with less experienced persons to promote professional and/or psychosocial support and growth. Daloz (1999) describes the role of mentors as more

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