

Riding the Academic Freedom Train: A Culturally Responsive, Multigenerational Mentoring Model

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Among the frequently cited reasons that the professoriate does not reflect the demographics of the United States is a lack of an effective pipeline from undergraduate institutions to tenure-line positions. In response to this, Dr. Joseph White developed a mentoring model based on a practice of creating a network of supporters. To honor the Underground Railroad that led enslaved people to freedom, he called this network the Freedom Train, and the word *academic* has been appended to this volume. At first glance, the title could cause some confusion. In today's academic press, the term *academic freedom* is far more common, and fraught, than Freedom Train. Be assured, however, that this book does not delve into the increasingly contentious debate about academic freedom, its boundaries, or its promises. Rather, in three sections, the book leads interested readers through the contexts that present BIPOC scholars with innumerable obstacles, the theories that inform effective mentoring practices, and Dr. White's Multiracial Multiethnic Multicultural (M3) mentoring model.

Although the first section of the book appears to provide information about the legacy of segregation and the impact of mentoring that could be found elsewhere, these sections should not be skimmed over lightly. The authors integrate the literatures to focus on how mentoring of BIPOC students may provide a remedy and create a compelling argument for mentoring and support as a philosophy of education. In particular, chapter 3 lays out ten principles for BIPOC mentoring. Brief commentaries on feminist models of mentoring and the impact of mentoring on women, in chapters 2 and 3, provide much-needed reminders that beyond race and ethnicity, mentoring programs must also consider the needs associated with other identities.

Although part 2 is titled "Mentoring: Cultural Competency Theories, Needs, Practices, and Application," the chapters could more aptly be described as shifting gears to describe mentoring experiences from the point of view of BIPOC students and faculty. Although chapter 4 is perhaps the weakest of the chapters in this section, as its review of mentoring models runs the risk of being redundant with chapter 3, the other chapters are compelling. Chapter 5 presents a qualitative study of thirty mentees in a culturally responsive mentoring program. In particular, readers will find Table 5.1 especially useful. It presents the themes that emerged from the interviews, student perspectives, specific examples, and applications. Then chapter 6 takes a unique perspective by describing faculty experiences. As noted at the outset of the chapter, while the mentoring literature is often proscriptive in describing faculty behavior, it is less often descriptive. Based on interviews

with extremely senior faculty members and successful mentors of BIPOC students, the authors present another table of themes, perspectives, and applications that readers will want to mark and return to again and again.

Finally, part 3 gets to the nuts and bolts of the M3 model. Beginning in chapter 8 with an extensive and detailed mapping of the M3 model and followed by an example of an implementation of the M3 model in a research lab in chapter 9, part 3 provides a satisfying culmination of the philosophies and call to action from part 1 and part 2.

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This book is comprehensive, and casual readers seeking a quick blueprint for creating a mentoring program should look elsewhere. However, for a dedicated audience looking to create meaningful institutional change, this book would make an apt accompaniment for a learning group or task force of faculty, student and academic affairs staff, and administrators. For audiences that first must be convinced that BIPOC students need and deserve nuanced mentoring and support, each of the chapters in this book provides ample quantitative and qualitative evidence. In addition, each chapter concludes with both reflective discussion questions and suggestions for administration. Although not all suggestions may be easily implemented in a time of budget cuts, enrollment concerns, and the usual challenges of higher education, they provide important reminders of the principles that should guide our decisions. Because of the reverence of the co-authors toward Dr. White, and the expressed goal of promoting the M3 mentoring model, the book is not without blind spots. While the book focuses on BIPOC students, the sections highlighting Asian American and Latinx/Hispanic are lacking. For example, in the qualitative study highlighting student mentee experiences, while the gender of interviewees is reported, no other information about mentee identities is provided. The Freedom Train and Underground Railroad serve as cultural touchstones for the Black/African American experience and therefore drive the mentoring model but may not fully apply to the experience of other minoritized groups and identities. Thus, while institutions should embrace the principles of the M3 model, how mentoring programs are implemented should differ based on the institutional context. ▲

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