The Gift That Keeps Giving:
Historically Black College and University-Educated Scholars and Their Mentoring at Predominately White Institutions

By Richard J. Reddick

Introduction

Recent studies suggest that the learning environments at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) are more conducive to the academic success and satisfaction of African-American students attending these institutions, compared to their peers at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) (Allen, 1992; Allen & Haniff, 1991; Cokley, 2003; Gallien, 2005). We can also look to incremental increases in the participation of African Americans in higher education over the years (Allen, 1992; U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). In real numbers, enrollments at HBCUs have increased since 1976ófrom less than 230,000 to 290,000 (Provasnik & Shafer, 2004). While these findings speak volumes about the value of an HBCU

Richard J. Reddick is a doctoral candidate in higher education at the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

education, a closer analysis of the data reveals other trends. Despite a 40% increase in African-American college enrollment, HBCU attendance has lagged behind this rate (LeBlanc, 2001). Furthermore, in 2001, the Department of Education reported that HBCUs enrolled 13% of African-American studentsóa five percentage-point decrease from the percentage reported in 1976 (Hoffman, Snyder, & Sonnenberg, 1996; Provasnik & Shafer, 2004). With over 85% of African-American students attending PWIs, the vast majority of African-American students will not have the historically Black collegiate experience. One must wonder, then: has the impact and relevance of HBCUs diminished over the past thirty years?

In this paper, I will pursue the answer to this query by examining two research questions: First, how do four African-American professors who self-identify as mentors at a highly-selective PWI describe and understand their formative experiences as they relate to their mentoring relationships with African-American undergraduate students? Second, how do four African-American professors who self-identify as mentors teaching at a highly selective PWI explain why they are committed to mentoring African-American undergraduate students? Through my findings and analysis, I will argue that the influence of HBCUs continues into the emerging new century in a novel way: these venerable institutions may contribute to the landscape of American higher education by producing scholars who have a commitment to supporting the scholarship and development of African-American students. Unlike a generation ago, some of these scholars can be found beyond the HBCU campus at PWIs, where they can aid and assist African-American undergraduate students as they navigate a campus environment fraught with challenges (Allen, 1992; Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996).

Personal Experiences and Context

I am part of a generation of students I will label as the ìgrandchildrenî of HBCUs: while I did not attend an HBCU, key mentors in my life did. I was educated in integrated primary and secondary schools, and attended a PWI. As a first generation college student, I knew little about Black colleges, and even maintained stereotypes and misconceptions about the institutions. As an undergraduate student, student affairs administrator, and graduate student, I have had the benefit of establishing many mentoring relationships over the years with faculty and administrators from many different experiences and social locations. However, at my undergraduate institution, a caring administrator who was a graduate of an HBCU served as my primary mentor. Her intentional interventions in my development as a student leader strongly influenced me to pursue a career in education. She also served as a keeper of institutional memory and a campus mother to many students, especially students of color and African-American students. When reminiscing on my collegiate years with my fellow alumni, we often speak of her as essential to our success as students and our development as men and women.

Similarly, as a graduate student, I have experienced exceptional mentoring from a faculty member at my institution; my mentor has been generous with his time and with opportunities to further my progress as a scholar. He, like my undergraduate mentor, is an HBCU graduate. Both my undergraduate and graduate school mentors imparted lessons about the importance of teaching and supporting younger students. They were also resolute in deflecting praise for their work supporting students, instead remarking that the work of mentoring others and me was a manifestation of lessons learned in their home lives and experiences at an HBCU. Having engaged in courses and research on Black colleges, I strongly believe that many of the challenges for African Americans and other communities of color at PWIs have solutions in the best practices found at Black colleges.

My personal experience, in many ways, counters many narratives of African-American scholars reflecting upon their experiences as graduate students at PWIs. These scholars have voiced concern about the lack of mentorship and support from faculty (Cleveland, 2004; King & Watts, 2004; Milner, 2004). I sense that my mentors have absorbed the importance of community uplift and serving the needs of African Americans through their actions as psychosocial supports and career advisorsóreflecting the missions of several of these institutions. Given the harsh and at times hostile environments that PWIs can present to African-American students, my experiences suggest that educators who have internalized the lessons of the HBCU experience may serve as figurative shelters for emerging African-American scholars.

As an emerging researcher, I have chosen to investigate the motivations and practices of African-American professors who engage in the work of mentoring African-American undergraduate students. For my work, understanding the meaning of the mentoring process for these professors was of paramount importance, a particular question that Maxwell (1992, 1996) proffers as particularly suited to qualitative inquiry. The perspectives of professors in the field, reflecting on their own work as mentors to African-American undergraduates, have experiential credibility to other professors and engaged observers.

I came to learn during my research that of the four faculty members in my study, three were graduates of historically Black colleges and universities. Furthermore, each of these professors had experiences in predominantly White institutions (typically graduate school). The three HBCU graduates spoke of difficulties negotiating the social and academic environments in predominantly White graduate schools, but derived a strong sense of efficacy from their experiences as HBCU students. The analytic themes that emerged from this study suggest that the HBCU-educated faculty mentors experienced a high level of mentoring as undergraduate students, that they found the HBCU environment nurturing, and that they viewed their work as mentors for African-American undergraduate students as a social responsibility to the African-American community.

Theoretical Frameworks

In this section, I outline the theoretical underpinnings that inspired my research questions and analytic strategy: Critical Race Pedagogy (CRP) and Bainís conceptualization of outstanding college teachers and their treatment of their students. Here, I describe these constructs and relate them to this study. Next, I explain how this study expands upon each of these theoretical frameworks and how I apply these theories to my work.

Critical Race Pedagogy (CRP)

CRP (Lynn, 1999) is a hybrid of epistemological models and previous research on the practices of African-American teachers. In essence, CRP is an ideology that critiques the dominant paradigms found in education and assists student and teacher alike in the processes of learning and in practice (Jennings, 2000). The ultimate goal of CRP is to drive for social change via the educational process (Jennings & Lynn, in press). To further expand upon CRP, I will use the following sections to describe its components (Black feminist thought, Critical Race Theory, and previous research on African-American educators) and in each, explain how the tenets of CRP can be applied to this study.

Black Feminist Thought: A CRP Component in which to Analyze Faculty-Student Relationships. Black feminist thought informs CRP by expressing the importance of connecting to values emphasized in African-American communities (and also found in others), such as collective responsibility and sharing power. Black feminist thought allows others to contribute to its development in collaboration and with allegiance to the political and social empowerment of Black womenótherefore, anyone actively committed to these principles can work within this framework (hooks, 1984). The Black feminist concept of intimate caring for students is present in CRP, composed of the attributes of placing a value on expressiveness, the appropriateness of emotions in the intellectual community rather than the veneer of impassivity, and the capacity for empathy (Collins, 1989). In this study, I employ the Black feminist thought aspect of CRP to attend to the nature of relationships between faculty mentors and students.

Critical Race Theory: A Component of CRP in which to Analyze Institutional Racism. The next aspect of CRP I intend to discuss is Critical Race Theory (CRT), a legal discourse employed by scholars emphasizing that racial oppression is endemic in American society; experiences of racial oppression are not episodic nor isolated, but ever-present in American life (Matsuda, Lawrence III, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993). CRT stands in opposition to modernist conceptualizations of neutrality and objectivity, promoting a postmodern perspective valuing the importance of standpoint in the development of thoughts and action. This is necessary as dominant racial discourse limits the perspectives of African-Ameri-

cans, and CRT is a needed strategy to analyze the educational system (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Lynn, 1999; Solorzano & Yosso, 2000; Tate & Ladson-Billings, 1995). CRT acknowledges the experiences of people of color who have personally experienced oppression in social and political spheres, yet further states that the consequences of racial oppression are inexorably linked to gender- and class-based bias. The CRT aspect of CRP is used in this study to analyze the reported experiences of African-American faculty rooted in their navigation of a social and political environment that presents challenges due to their race.

Previous Research on the Experiences of African-American Educators: The Final Foundation of CRP. The concluding building block of CRP is found in the previous research on the experiences of African-American teachers (i.e., Delpit, 1988; Foster, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lynn, 1999). These studies have highlighted the importance of cultural connectedness to students, linkages to Afrocentric notions of unity and self-determination, and empowering students so that they can perform in a society that elevates Eurocentric, individualistic values over those that may be more familiar to African-Americans. I connect this aspect of CRP to my research through the strong parallels between Lynnís analysis of the experiences and pedagogical practices of African-American teachers and my focus on the experiences and mentoring practices of African-American professors.

Together, the merging of these three strands of intellectual inquiryóBlack feminist thought, Critical Race Theory, and previous research on African-American educatorsópresent a robust theoretical framework in CRP for analyzing how these self-identified African-American mentors understand and explain their commit-ment to mentoring relationships with African-American undergraduate students. By merging the lens of CRP and a framework that explicitly discusses the work of exceptional educators in higher education, I will be able to provide a theoretical grounding to explain the work of these mentors. The following section will introduce the aforementioned framework of how outstanding college teachers interact with their students.

Outstanding Professors and Their Treatment of Students

In *What The Best Teachers Do* (2004), Ken Bain studied 60 professors at 24 universities in an effort to understand the actions and activities of outstanding professorsóthose helping students learn in sustained and substantial ways that influence how students think. Bain (2004) sought to find behaviors that might explain these professorsí success in impacting the learning and career trajectory for their students. He found that exemplary professors did not exert power over students, but demonstrated concern on an interpersonal level. This investment in the student as a person is exemplified in the establishing of trust between professor and student. Exemplary professors displayed openness in sharing their intellectual successes and setbacks, encouraging students to reflect on their own development in the same

way. By demonstrating trust, professors successfully drew students in, aligning themselves as partners in an intellectual journey. Bain (2004) refers to a sense of humility, demonstrated in a sense of personal responsibility to students manifested in these professorsí efforts to understand their studentsí lives, cultures, and goals beyond the classroom.

Bainís (2004) findings of outstanding professors and their treatment of students assisted in interpreting the motivation and methods of African-American professors who developed relationships with African-American students, through his focus on concern for students, humility in their interactions, and their efforts to connect to their studentsí lives and culture beyond classroom interactions.

Methods

Site Description

Data presented in this paper emerges from an interview study of four African-American professors at Worth University.[1] Worth is a private, prestigious, highly selective research-extensive[2] institution in the Northeast. In 2003, Worth reported that 2,842 faculty were employed at the institution. Among undergraduate teachers there were 1,625 professors, 21.9% of whom were people of color (Worth University, 2004).

Sample Selection

The criteria for this study were African-American professors who self-identified as mentors to African-American undergraduates; furthermore, I wanted to compose a diverse group in terms of gender and professorial rank. These two criteria eliminated faculty who did not currently mentor students and moderated the experience range and gender balance in the sample. Previous research suggests that African-American women express the most dissatisfaction among professors at PWIs (Allen, Epps, Guillory, Suh, & Bonous-Hammarth, 2000); for this reason, I wanted to understand if the mentoring experience differed among men and women. In addition, previous research suggests that job satisfaction among African-American faculty is affected by tenure status, and the obligations of junior faculty are a cause of fatigue and dissatisfaction (Alex-Assenoh, 2003; Brayboy, 2003; DeWalt, 2004; Gaston, 2004; Padilla, 1994).

I obtained a listing of 59 African-American faculty of all ranks at Worth ñ 3.1% of the faculty at Worth, below the national average of 5% (Trower & Chait, 2002). I was interested in interviewing faculty with undergraduate teaching responsibilities and narrowed the pool of eligible participants to 24, employing a purposeful method[3] to obtain a sample (Patton, 1990; Ritchie *et al.*, 2003). Through the process of eliminating professors who were on leave and those who did not respond to the invitation to join the study, I narrowed the pool of potential participants to six. Of

the six, two professors indicated that they did not mentor an African-American student at the current time. This left a total of four professors who met the criteria and were willing to participate. These four met all of the selectivity standards and became the participants in this study (see Table 1 for the demographic information about the participants).

Data Collection

Data for this study consists of field notes and face-to-face semistructured interviews[4] conducted in late 2004 and early 2005. I first read the professorsí profiles and CVs posted at the Worth website to collect demographic data (experience, education, and employment). I then interviewed each participant twice for 45 minutes in each setting.[5] The interview protocol for this study was constructed to allow participants to respond in an open-ended manner, thus providing opportunity for the professorsí perspectives to be shared as they saw fit.

Interview #1. The focus of the first interview was twofold: first, to establish a rapport with the participant, and second, to understand how their formative experiences affected, if at all, their mentoring relationships with African-American undergraduates ñ linking to my first research question. For instance, in the first interview, I asked questions to build a focused life history of each participant, centering on questions about their trajectory to the professorate; their formative experiences in high school, college, and graduate school; their experiences as protÈgÈs, including descriptions of mentors that they may have had; and their personal philosophy around mentoring.

Interview #2. The second interview provided an opportunity to follow up on unresolved themes from the first interview, and then shifted to a focus on the participantsí experience mentoring African-American undergraduates, inquiring about the rewards and challenges of this mentoring relationship in order to answer the second research question. For instance, I asked the participants to recall experiences with mentees in order to understand why they endeavored to mentor these students, as well as the specific impediments they encountered balancing mentoring relationships with their roles as researchers and teachers.

Table 1: Description of Study Participants

Name	Age	Rank	Years Total	Teaching At Worth	Field
Bernard Carter	37	Associate	7	5	Philosophy/Africana Studies
Kwame Farriss*	38	Assistant	2	2	History
Geneva Morris	51	Full	11	3	History of Science/Africana Studies
Vonda Williams	33	Assistant	4	2	Religion/Africana Studies

* Did not attend a historically Black college or university as an undergraduate student.

Data Analysis

Before and after each interview, I composed fieldnotes detailing the setting of the interview, noting themes in the participantsí responses. To assist my efforts to organize the data, I created a list of theoretical codes based on Critical Race Pedagogy and Bainís conceptualization of outstanding college professors and their treatment of students (see Tables 2 and 3). I next moved to an emic coding[6] strategy

Table 2: Theoretical Codes Based on Critical Race Pedagogy (Lynn, 1999)

Theme	Code	Example of Supporting Data
Caring connection to students	Empathy	Recalling undergraduate experiences Flexibility in approach to students Support during times of challenge to students
	Valuing expressiveness	Encouraging students to share experiences Acknowledging appropriateness of emotion
Endemic nature of bias	Racial oppression	Racial barriers in society Racial barriers at university Racial barriers in academia
	Gender oppression	Gender barriers in society Gender barriers at university Gender barriers in academia
	Class oppression	Class barriers in society Class barriers at university Class barriers in academia
Cultural connectedness to African American students	Afrocentric notions of unity/ self-determination	Encouragement of endeavors Encouragement of collective/collaborative student endeavors Connection to students through cultural ties and lived experiences
	Empowering students due to cultural commonalties	Openness in communicating Assisting students to navigate culturally different institution Attentiveness to steps beyond semester or year goals
Liberatory Pedagogy	Afrocentric teaching	Supporting collective success Scholarship on African Americans ìLifting as we climbî
	Self-affirming behaviors with students	Reassurance of studentsí skill Assisting students in obtaining internships, etc.
	Learning experiences outside of the classroom	Meeting with students outside of the semester context Advising students

grounded in the data. Merging these two approachesócoding using existing theory as a scaffold and an approach grounded in the data collected in interviews (grounded theory) (Strauss & Corbin, 1990)óprovided a robust analytic strategy for this work. Such an approach is termed as the *modified grounded theory* approach (Perry & Jensen, 2001). I open-coded the interview transcripts using Atlas.ti qualitative research software, utilizing an iterative coding process described as follows: for the first interview, I created codes for each theme in the data, and in each subsequent interview, coded the data using themes from the first interview. If no such code existed, I created a code for the new theme. I then created within-case matrices[7] for each participant using the codes from the interview data and fieldnotes. Next, I initiated a round of axial coding,[8] sorting my codebook into major themes prompted by my research questions (Borgatti, 2005). This enabled me to modify the within-case matrices and create cross-case matrices, comparing common themes found across all participants.

After coding of each participantís interviews, I wrote thematic summaries of

Table 3: Theoretical Codes Based on Outstanding College Teachers' Treatment of Students (Bain, 2004).

Theme	Code	Example of Supporting Data
Concern for students	Trust	Honesty with students (positive and negative) Willingness to approach/be approached by students Sharing oneís experiences as a student
	Encouraging reflectiveness	Modeling self-reflection to students The ability to see shortcomings in approach to students
	Demonstrating humility	Admitting mistakes Reflecting on oneís own trajectory Sharing challenges of teaching with students
	Treating students with fairness, compassion, concern	Being a listener Intervening to assist students in academic matters Intervening to assist students in personal matters
Efforts to understand student lives	Connecting to cultural values of students	Acknowledging cultural issues which students face Respecting studentsí cultural values
	Connecting to life/career goals of students	Concern and interest in student experiences beyond courses Maintaining relationships beyond courses Serving as a adviser/mentor/ letter-writer for students

each, creating a thick description[9] of their motives and circumstances that led them to become mentors to African-American undergraduates (Denzin, 1988; Geertz, 1973; Glesne, 1999). Through this strategy, themes emerged from the data, presented in the Findings section.

Validity

In this study, I identify three potential threats to the validity of this research: (1) the veracity of description; (2) the interpretation of events as seen through my lens as a researcher (bias); and (3) examining alternate explanations for the phenomena observed during the study. The following section will address the steps I employed to make the conclusions from my analysis as reliable as possible.

Addressing the Validity Threat of Description. In addressing concerns about the validity of my descriptions, I tape recorded each interview and hired a professional transcriptionist to type the interviews, and listened to the tapes while reading the transcripts to check their accuracy. I further triangulated data by using different sources (web profiles, CVs, and interviews), though the majority of data collected for this study emerged from interviews. My fieldnotes were written immediately following each interview when the setting and conversation were fresh in my mind. Following my receipt of the transcripts, I conducted member checks by sharing the record of each interview with each participant. Throughout my analysis, I presented my analysis to an interpretive community, colleagues in a qualitative research proseminar at my institution, and my ad hoc committee. Sharing transcripts, matrices, codebooks, and memos with these scholars presented alternate interpretations and challenged my assumptions. Within the traditions of qualitative research, these strategies help to ensure that the descriptions within the study are as accurate as possible.

Addressing the Validity Threat of Researcher Bias. I attended to concerns about my bias as a researcher by piloting the interview protocol with a member of my ad hoc committee to identify and correct questions that could be construed as leading. I was careful not to disclose my prior research experiences concerning African-American faculty and HBCUs to the participants until after I completed the study. Additionally, I have taken great care to share this data with an interpretive community comprised of individuals of different social locations and research paradigms to ensure my interpretation of the data is logical. I also present data with direct quotes whenever possible, which assists in testing my claims and assertions (Maxwell, 1996).

Addressing the Validity Threat of Alternate Explanations of Observed Phenomena. I addressed the final major validity threat of this study—alternate explanations for the phenomena observed—through the process of familiarizing myself with studies of a similar nature, both in the sample population and those concerning

the experience of mentoring. My use of codes derived from the theoretical foundations of my work also helped me identify explanations for previously observed behavior. I also relied on my prior knowledge derived from my experiences interviewing faculty of color for a research project (Whitla, Howard, Tuitt, Reddick, & Flanagan, 2005) and an extensive literature review and publication on HBCUs (Willie, Reddick, & Brown, 2005).

Ethical Considerations

One aspect of this study that I undertook with great care was ensuring that the participants were not harmed in the process of the study. Most notably, I have used pseudonyms throughout the study, both in referring to institutions and the names of the participants, their mentors, and other individuals mentioned by name in the transcripts. Geographic locations were disguised, reassigned as nearby communities, or made purposely vague for this reason. Additionally, when not essential to the narrative, I altered the participantsí field of study (for instance, a chemical engineer might appear as an electrical engineer). These fields were carefully chosen for their similarities to the participantsí actual work.

The words of the faculty mentors are most essential to this study, so I purposely avoided any sort of phenotypical description beyond age, gender, and race. As the participants in the study were discussing the assistance they provided to students beyond classroom interactions, the risks assumed were slight. Finally, I presented these techniques and strategies to my universityís Institutional Review Board, which approved their use.

Findings

Origins of Mentorship:
The Role of the HBCU Experience in Developing
and Encouraging Interests in Academic Life

In addressing the question of how these faculty mentors describe and understand their mentoring relationships with undergraduate students, it was essential to learn of earlier events that molded their mentoring philosophies. The three participants that attended HBCUs discussed how their formative experiences at those campuses and the mentorship of HBCU faculty and graduates helped them academically and ultimately, led them to collegiate success, graduate school and careers in academe. For these professors, several key relationships led them to this goal.

Bernard: Discovering "The Life of the Mind." Bernard Carter is a 37 year-old associate professor in philosophy and Africana Studies. Bernard entered college as a self-described ìjockî who was the first person in his immediate family to attend college, and certainly did not fit the stereotypical profile of the college professor.

After considering options such as ìthe military, UPS, and so on,î he chose to attend Southern Valley A&M (SVAM), an HBCU close to his home. He felt that SVAM was ìthe natural next step, the way that sort of enabled me to be more competitive in the labor market, that kind of thing.î Bernard initially did not apply himself in college:

> I would say that I started putting very little effort into it . . . I realized that part of the reason for my lack of interest in it, was area of study. I was studying accounting at the time. It seemed like the natural thing to do, you know, to get some practical [experience], and I realized I didnít want to do that.

He spent the next year experimenting with classes in religion, where he encountered two SVAM professors who ìsuggested I consider taking classes in philosophy.î Their advice turned out to be pivotal for Bernardís decision to pursue graduate study:

> They thought my mind worked more in that direction, andóI did so, and they were right. I immediately sort of fell in love with the subject of philosophy. And one of these professors suggested that I consider doing *graduate* work in the area, something that would have never occurred to me, that wasóyou know, ëcause you think of it as like, ìitís more school, itís more money . . .î I basically decided I was going to do it at the beginning of my junior year in college, that Ióthat I wanted to be a professor, and of philosophy, specifically.

In addition to the support of the two professors at SVAM, Bernard recalled a culture of openness at SVAM that allowed him to envision himself in the academic environment. While taking classes in the philosophy department at SVAM, Bernard recounted, ìIíd be hanging out *all the time*.î His curiosity was supported by faculty and staff beyond his two champions: ìI went to talks, I would just sort of come ñ just walk into their office and just sit in there, working.î Open doors were an invitation for Bernard to have a conversation with professors in the department. ìI would stop by, ëDo you have a second?í and we would just talk. *All* the time. . . . I look back on it and itís like, ëI was taking these peopleís time!í But I did it all the time.î

Bernard was fortunate to encounter two professors who observed the potential he had for academic success and were willing to invest time and energy to help him focus. Perhaps as importantly, however, the open environment at SVAM made it possible for him to talk to many professors about their work and their lives, thus providing him with an opportunity to preview the ìlife of the mindî that he would pursue in graduate school.

Vonda: A "Phenomenal Mentor" Opens Doors. For Vonda Williams, a 33 year-old assistant professor in religion and Africana Studies, the HBCU influence started early. The daughter of an administrator and a part-time instructor of a Black college, she spoke of the certainty her parents had of her postsecondary school plans:

> Well, you know, my dad has this saying: ìWe never asked our kids *if* they were going to attend college, we asked them *where* they were going to attend college.î And so,

> I guess, ingrained in me from childhood was this idea that after I finished, I was going
> to go on to a [college].

Along with this certainty of college attendance, Vonda faced a dilemma: ìI guess the main decision that I had to make . . . was whether I was going to go to a historically Black college, or predominantly White college.î Her mother strongly urged her to consider a Black college, and ultimately Vonda followed her advice. ìI decided to go to Granger [a historically Black womenís college] along with some friends from high school. . . . I just knew I wanted to go to an HBCU.î

Once on campus, Vonda found ìa phenomenal mentor from my freshman year to my senior year,î an English professor named Dr. Grogan. Her class opened Vondaís mind to literature in a significant manner. ìIt was a Womenís Narratives from Different Cultures [class], so we read . . . *The Joy Luck Club, The Color Purple*. . . . It illuminated what it means to study broadly.î Vonda found the class so engaging that ìthrough-out the year, I took other classes with [Dr. Grogan].î A junior year invitation to a Ph.D. pipeline program piqued Vondaís interest in anthropology. Another men-toróthe president of Grangerósupported her work and provided a recommenda-tion along with the venerable Dr. Groganóand in Vondaís words, ìthatís how I ended up in a Ph.D. program.î

Dr. Groganís influence in Vondaís life did not end after her graduation from Granger. While pursuing her Ph.D., Vonda ìwas having a really difficult time at Mountbatten [a highly-selective PWI]. I just felt like the environment was so elitist . . . so irrelevant to this commitment thatís been built in me about giving back.î After a call to Dr. Grogan expressing her frustration, Vondaís mentor went into action:

> . . . [S]he was on the phone the next day to one of the [state] university systems,
> somebody, a dean in one of the systems. She said, ìYou donít know me, but I know
> of you, and I know weíre both committed to the same goal, educating young Black
> Ph.D.s. And thereís a student that needs to be admitted to *your* university. . . . And
> like, the next day after that, I got this call from this dean that was really interested in
> me coming up there. . . . I was just like, ìDr. Grogan is so committed to making sure
> that this thing happens, that if not at Mountbatten, it will be somewhere. And just going
> the extra mile to see that through that just spoke volumes to me.

For Vonda, the strong mentoring from one faculty member, and a close relationship with another led her to pursue a doctorate. Perhaps as importantly, when she felt her graduate school experience failed to meet her expectations regarding ìgiving back to the communityî as she had learned at Granger, Dr. Grogan was ready to shelter her by seeking out an opportunity for Vonda with a fellow academic who had a similar commitment to seeing African Americans earn doctoratesómentorship beyond a singular context.

Geneva: Overcoming "Cruelty and Humiliation" through Mentorship. Geneva Morris, a 51 year-old full professor in the history of science and Africana Studies

was the sole senior faculty member in this study. Geneva also experienced mentorship from an HBCU graduateóin high school. Bused to a predominantly White high school from her predominantly Black neighborhood in a Southern city, Geneva experienced ìcrueltyî and ìhumiliationî:

> I was a ninth-grader in an eleventh-grade math class. . . . My teacher was White. If I raised my hand, she would stop what she was doing, she would call the roll, skip me, and then ask if I had a question. And she did that to me *every* day. And I had never felt so violated in a classroom as I felt in that classroom.

Despite this experience of academic violence, Geneva reported a positive experience in her high school. Given that she was subjected to this humiliation in a math course, one might expect that she would reject math as a field of interest. However, another teacher decided to help Geneva rekindle her interest:

> . . . [M]y math teacher, who was African American, and who was a Granger graduate, she was the kind of teacher who, because I was advanced in math by the time I was a senioróI had taken all the math that was available in my school. And there was nothing for me to do, and she knew I couldnít waste that year. So she found ways to give me a different set of work to do. In fact, basically, gave me an individual pre-calculus course. And that was *great.*

As a well-prepared high school student, Geneva applied to, and was accepted to ì a five-year program called the Dual Degree Program, where I spent two-and-a-half years at Granger, and two-and-a-half years at Southeastern Tech [a highly-selective science and engineering PWI].î Geneva finished the program with ìtwo bachelors degreesóone in physics and one in electrical engineering.î The two collegiate experiences were drastically different, however:

> So my undergraduate work in the liberal arts was basically, primarily the general education requirements in liberal artsówhich I did very well in. My other work, my first two-and-a-half years in science and mathematics, were a little rockier. . . . I only did sort of average until I was able to sort of figure out what that was about. And then I did very, very well in physicsÖ. Going to Southeastern Tech, being in aówhat I would characterize only as a racially hostile environment, it took a while before I did as well . . . as I had done in my physics at Granger.

When I asked Geneva if her challenges at Southeastern Tech were primarily content or context specific, she replied, ìI think itís both. I mean, Granger was a far more nurturing educational environment for me. Southeastern Tech, as I said, was hostile, and then . . . I had a gap in mathematics that I had to deal with.î

As our conversation shifted to mentors, Geneva recalled two professors at Granger, but none at Southeastern Tech:

> One was my history teacher, Charles Burrell, and he was just a phenomenal teacher, engaging. . . . My physics teacher, Calvin Smith, was the most important person in my undergraduate years. . . . He also really engaged us to think about ourselves as

scientists. He brought other African-American physicists to campus. I met the . . . second African-American woman to get a Ph.D. in physics in the country. . . . In terms of other science teachers, it was, you know, ìDo well in science so you can, you know, get in and be like those other óbe like White scientists.î And he was very much like, ìNo! You donít do this because you want to be like *White* scientists. You want to do this because you want to have mastery over this knowledge, and then use that mastery toóto do something in the service of Black people.î

For Geneva, the presence of strong mentors who were also HBCU graduates assisted her in a hostile racial environment in high school and college. She also learned valuable lessons about a social responsibility to use her education to uplift other African Americansóa lesson she took to heart and lives out not only as a mentor to many African-American students at Worth, but also a cadre of science majors at Granger.

Kwame: "Trending to Academia." Kwame Farriss, a 38 year-old assistant professor in history, was the only participant educated solely at PWIs. Kwame came from an academic family and stated, ìI was probably trending to academia.î He discussed a pivotal mentoring experience as an undergraduate:

Most consequential for my later trajectory was a course with a guy named Michael Nunn. It was called ìPower in American Society,î and it was a social history course, looking at the politics of people we donít necessarily consider powerful. . . . He became, in some ways, a mentor of mine.

While Kwame discussed his relationship with Dr. Nunn at length, it was notable that Nunn was the only mentor Kwame mentioned in his experience as an undergraduate. Furthermore, the influence and motivation to pursue an academic career seemed to be located in Dr. Nunn, but not in the institutional ethos, as the other participants described. In Kwameís example, one might wonder what might have happened if he had not taken the course with Dr. Nunn, or bonded with him. Kwameís family experience in academia may have ultimately influenced him to pursue graduate school, but one strong mentoring experience solidified his decision.

The experiences of these African-American professors as students point to the key role of mentorship in advancing their academic careers. For each participant, key educators intervened in their lives and gave them essential support to encourage each successive step in their education. These formative experiences give insight into how they envision their own mentoring relationships.

A Motivation for Mentoring: Responsibility to a Community

The HBCU-educated professors in this study expressed a clear sense of responsibility to African-American students because of the importance of African-American college graduates in that specific community, and beyond. They sought out African-American students for this purpose, and ultimately felt that they were

fulfilling their obligation to the community that had supported them as young academics.

Vonda: Affirming Black Women at Worth. Vonda felt that the experience of attending an HBCU, and her mentor, Dr. Grogan, gave her a heightened level of confidence: ìJust a strong sense of self, as a Black woman.î As a result, Vonda found herself recreating a similar experience for a class of 15 African-American women students at Worth University when she taught a class on women and religion in African-American history:

> That class gelled, like no other class Iíve ever taught, and it was quite amazing. . . . There were several graduate students in the class, and the rest were undergraduates. At the end of the class, we would just stand in the hall, talking. They knew that I was planning my wedding for June, and the last session, they said, ìItís so awful that this is our last class.î I thought, ìWow, Iíve never felt that way!î [One student asked,] ìCan we meet during reading period, to finish up and talk?î I was like, ìSure.î I walked into the classroom, and they yell ìSurprise!î And itís a *shower*. It was their way of celebrating the class, and how it gelled. . . . But the class was all African-American women. Iím thinking, ìWhat would have made this class different, if it was a different kind of dynamic?î

While Vonda was adamant in emphasizing, ìThis was a rigorous course,î she also communicated the importance of the intellectual and social support she conveyed to the students. Indeed, the conversations in the course sometimes linked to very real challenges for the students in her class:

> Somebody commented how rare it is for Black couples to get together at Worth, talking about the numbers of Black women who are single on campus. We got into this discussion and I thought, ìThis is surreal. This might happen on Grangerís campusó this doesnít happen at Worth.î

As Vonda noted, the course was an intellectual space for African-American women, but also ìa space they needed.î Vonda even compared the event to those she experienced at Granger. Her willingness to spend extra time in the hallway and to create an environment where the women could share conversations is not rewarded by the tenure review process, but one imagines the impact of this experience on the African-American women in the course was significant.

Vonda also spoke of the importance of reaffirming African-American students as she was at Granger by her professors. She shared a particularly touching example of this in an interview, discussing an encounter with a young African-American woman in her class:

> I said to her, ìYour paper was phenomenal. You should really consider going to graduate school.î And she about knocked me down hugging me on the stairs! She was so overwhelmed by my acknowledgement of her hard work that she felt the need to hug meóshe had tears in her eyes. And she said, ìNobody ever said that before.î That was an important lesson for me, because it made me think I need to affirm other students.

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Vonda recognized that talented African-American students, even those in attendance at a highly selective institution, still need inspiration and affirmation. Tellingly, this student had never been supported in such a way, and responded in a way that neither she nor Vonda will likely ever forget. Such an emotional exchange may be the catalyst for the student to consider continuing her education.

For Vonda, an internalization of messages learned in her family and at her alma mater, Granger, instilled a sense of ìresponsibility to give back to the community.î Recognizing the challenges inherent for African-American women at a PWI, she recounted, ìA lot of development at Granger is about giving back, lifting as we climb.î

Geneva: A "Special Responsibility" To Assist African-American Students. Genevaís experiences at the ìracially hostileî Southeastern Tech and the ìnurturingî Granger inspired her to be particularly mindful of the power that faculty members hold over students. In fact, she likened her relationships with students to the relationship she has to her young son, recognizing the impact of her words:

> Whatís hard for [African-American students] is not hard for [African-American faculty]. We canít forget that. My two-year-old reminds me of it. Just saying something sharply can crush his little spirit. And you canít do that kind of stuff, because youíre the adult, and you canít forget.

Even with a reputation as a ìstraight shooterî at Worth, Geneva still took special care to recall the experience of being a student and chose her words to students carefully. Indeed, she recalled her experience as a graduate student at Worthóìthe place *reeks* of privilegeÖ and itís not an open place to talk about differences in class.î Ruing that the environment had not changed significantly since her time as a student, Geneva envisioned herself actively building capital among African-American students:

> Thatís actually a special responsibility for African-American academics; because of the intellectual tradition thatís represented by someone being in the academy is not as broad in our communities. Most people donít grow up in families where they have academics in their families. Not just sharing thought, but really an engaged, intellectual practice, is something that is unfamiliar to many African-American students.

Genevaís recognition of what Margolis and Romero (1998) term ìthe hidden curriculumî in academe inspired her to develop close relationships with African-American undergraduate students, both at her current institution and at her alma mater, Granger. As she stated, ìI feel a special responsibility to African-American students, in part, because I believe in social reproduction, too.î Genevaís goal to encourage and support African-American students has significant weight in her life, and in the field: ìIf we donít [mentor African-American students]óif weíre not very careful, given the other structural forces happening in our society, weíre not going to replicate *ourselves* in the academy, much less expand the ranks.î

Geneva saw herself as a professor with a responsibility beyond imparting

knowledge of science among her students. Like her mentor at Granger, she actively thought of how she could utilize her relationships and capital to advance the careers of African-American studentsóa ìspecial relationshipî that motivated her to remain connected to her roots while supporting a new generation of students.

Bernard: Providing "Black Care" for African-American Students. Bernard discussed the relevance of engaging in mentoring relationships with African-American students in their need for specific assistance from one who shares the same racial or ethnic identity. ìIím by no means a sort of hard-core nationalist,î he stated, ìbut I guess I do think that the Black students are more in need of Black care.î Remarking on his experience as an African-American male at a PWI for some undergraduate courses and his graduate education, Bernard noted, ìThere are few of us,î and empathized with the experiences of his current African-American students. He felt ìa kind of solidarity, in general, when I see Blacks progress and be successful.î Similar to his mentor professors at SVAM, he felt the need to engage in relationships with those with shared experiences:

> Not that other people wouldnít mentor [African-American undergraduate students] as well, but to have someone who understands them and the peculiar features of their situation, and who has been there, I see that Iím well positioned to help, so I should.

Bernard, like Vonda and Geneva, saw the link between his successes as an academic being inexorably linked to assisting African-American collegians in achieving their goals. The ìsolidarityî he spoke of is linked closely to the mission of many Black colleges to advance the status of the African-American community. While he was open to, and maintained relationships with students of other racial groups, he recognized the paucity of African-American students in higher education and looked specifically for ways to help those students.

Kwame: Undertaking a "Huge Responsibility" as a Mentor. Kwame also subscribed to the belief that mentoring students was a significant responsibility and a long-term commitment, similar to the relationship he had with his undergraduate mentor, Dr. Nunn:

> That is humbling, to think that some of these students who are in my office now, I may be continuing to recommend twenty years from now. And I donít know yet what that means, but I know it means Iíve incurred a huge responsibility by taking on these students.

Kwame, while every part as committed to the mentoring process as the HBCU graduates in the study, did not speak about mentoring as an aspect for social change in the community. When I asked him what mentoring African-American students meant to him, Kwame stated, ìI havenít narrated it to myself . . . I havenít thought about it yet.î However, he did feel that the relationship between African-American faculty and students was special, given that ìAfrican Americans can talk about

things with each other, you know, we donít necessarily feel as comfortable talking about with other people.î

All of the professors in the study expressed great desire to assist African-American students. The three HBCU-educated professors, however, linked their mentoring to a larger social mission. They discussed the paucity of African-American participation in higher education and saw the importance of providing mentorship support to African-American undergraduate students to increase these studentsí participationó and successóin the academic environment at Worth, and beyond.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article has been to present the findings of a qualitative interview study investigating the motivation for and descriptions of mentoring practices among four African-American faculty membersóthree-fourths of whom graduated from historically Black institutionsówho self-identified as mentors to African-American undergraduate students. This analysis suggests that historically Black colleges and universities contribute to American higher education in a novel wayóby producing graduates who teach at predominantly White institutions, imparting lessons and delivering mentoring services to African-American undergraduate students who may encounter significant challenges to their academic and social well-being due to racism and a lack of support for students of color at those institutions.

This suggests that historically Black colleges and universities have an impact on African-American students who may have never set foot on one of the nationís 104 designated institutions. A generation ago, the graduates of HBCUs may have returned to their home institutions or another like it. Increased opportunities for these scholars have led to a diaspora of African-American intellectuals who have a direct connection to emerging African-American scholars.

In addressing how the participants in the study describe and understand their formative experiences as mentees as they relate to their mentorship of African-American undergraduate students, I saw strong connections between my findings and the research literature. The data from the HBCU-educated professors point to the pivotal role of multiple mentors guiding faculty as young students to consider academic careersóin many ways resembling the extraordinary mentoring experiences by HBCU graduates such as author Nathan McCall and historian John Hope Franklin (Willie *et al.*, 2005). Furthermore, an institutional culture encouraging students to engage with faculty in meaningful ways, such as those described as beneficial for students by Kuh and Hu (2001) as Bernard recounted; and a philosophy emphasizing the importance of serving the community with oneís education, as Vonda and Geneva stated, appears to have motivated these professors to find a way to apply their academic talent and interests to serve others as faculty members, researchers, and mentors to African-American undergraduate students. It

is also important to note that mentorship begets mentorsóin experiencing instrumental and psychosocial support from their teachers, these academics learned the skills that would enable them to serve in a similar role for a new generation of African-American students. For the professors educated at HBCUs, their individual learning was buttressed by an institutional ethos supporting the concept of assisting others in achieving their educational goals.

The professors were clear in explaining their motivations and commitment for mentoring African-American undergraduate students. In the study, the HBCU-educated professors at Worth were committed to mentoring students for a greater purpose. They saw the mentoring process as a key step in the production of African-American college graduatesóa responsibility that was imparted to them at least in part by their experiences at their undergraduate HBCU institutions. As faculty members, they embraced the responsibility of preparing their student mentees as a service to the African-American community. This focus on increasing the number of successful African-American students guided their activities and engagement with this population. Kwame, the professor who was a graduate of PWIs, shared the same passion for serving students, but did not articulate a social mission in his mentorshipóthough he was clear that as an African American, he could provide special support to African-American students who felt comfort in sharing their concerns with a professor who shared their racial identity.

While maintaining enrollments, continuing to recruit a diverse faculty and student body, and ensuring that boards and presidents provide stewardship to these venerable institutions are challenges at the vanguard of HBCU leaders (Willie *et al.*, 2005), I also believe that we must look at the contributions of historically Black colleges and universities in a new way. Predominantly White institutions might need to seek the assistance of historically Black colleges and universities if these organizations truly desire to support African-American students. Partnerships and pipeline programs between HBCUs and PWIs may help to reverse the corrosive effects of a racially hostile campus culture. However, such undertakings must take into account the fact that Black colleges are at the forefront of building supportive campus environments, with organizations such as Fisk Universityís Race Relations Institute, entering its sixty-fourth year (Fisk University, 2006), while racial tensions continue to escalate at the nationís most prestigious PWIs such as the University of Virginia and Duke University (Kinzie, 2005; Lyman, 2006). The experiences and practices of the pedagogues in this study reinforce the words of Charles Willie, who states that there are ìeffective educational methods and techniques developed by HBCUs that should be examined and used by TWIs [traditionally White institutions] and other institutions of higher education for the benefit of all studentsî (Willie *et al.*, 2005, p. 115). In the twenty-first century, the influence of the supportive culture of the HBCU can be found in individuals who have internalized these lessons and generously shared them with students at PWIs.

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Limitations and Implications

The purposive nature of the sampling in this study precludes me from applying the findings to all African-American professors, or even those who self-identify as mentors to African-American students. The limited number of participants in this study also prevents generalizations to the population beyond the sample. In addition, years of experience and area of study may have also influenced the decisions and attitudes of the participants.

However, the findings provide insight into the experiences of these participants and can assist university stakeholders in understanding the experiences these professors and others like them encounter as mentors. The participantsí responses can guide future research on African-American faculty and relationships between faculty and students. Indeed, further research may help us to understand the motivations for mentoring among HBCU graduates teaching at PWIs.

Notes

[1] All names of institutions and participants in the study are pseudonyms (see page 68, ìEthical Considerationsî).

[2] The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching terms *research-extensive* institutions as those which offer a wide range of baccalaureate and doctoral programs, awarding at least 50 doctorates per year across 15 or more disciplines (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2005).

[3] *Purposive sampling* (also known as criterion-based sampling) is an approach in which participants are selected based on particular characteristics that will allow a deeper understanding of the phenomena under investigation (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003).

[4] The *semistructured interviewing* method has a sequence of themes to be covered and suggested questions, but also features a willingness to change the sequence and order of questions to allow the participant to tell their stories, and also to allow the interviewer to follow up on themes and responses of particular interest (Kvale, 1996).

[5] One participant requested that I conduct the entire 90-minute interview in one setting.

[6] *Emic codes* are those which are found and taken from the data transcripts (Maxwell, 1996).

[7] *Matrices* are analytic diagrams that cross at least two major themes in the data to detect interactions among the concepts (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

[8] *Axial coding* is the process of using inductive and deductive thought to combine and connect codes (Borgatti, 2005).

[9] *Thick description* is ìdescription that incorporates the intentions of the actors and the codes of signification that give the actions meaning for them. . . . It has nothing to do with the amount of detail providedî (Maxwell, 1996, p. 98).

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