

Mentoring the Mentors of Students from Diverse Backgrounds for Research

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Acknowledgements

Gail E. Wyatt, Norweeta Milburn, Alison Hamilton and Dorothy Chin, Susana Lopez, and Alex Kim are at the Semel Institute of Neuroscience and Human Behavior, University of California, Los Angeles, California; Harolyn M.E. Belcher and Jacqueline D. Stone, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics, Center for Diversity in Public Health Leadership Training, Kennedy Krieger Institute, Baltimore, Maryland. Dr. Wyatt, Milburn, and Hamilton appreciate the support of the National Institute of Drug Abuse (2R25DA035692-06) to Drs. Wyatt, Milburn and Hamilton, Robert Woods Johnson Foundation (17-M89 & 73222) support to Drs. Belcher, Stone and Wyatt, UCLA AIDS Institute (RP15-LA-007 & AI28697) funding to Drs. Wyatt and Milburn and the UCLA Center of Excellence (P50 MH73453 & R34 MH077550) support to Drs. Wyatt and Chin. Special acknowledgements to Jenna Alarcon, MPH for assisting with locating resources.

Abstract

This article defines and discusses six beliefs, attitudes and practices that can erode or undermine self-esteem and self confidence in student-scholars from underrepresented and marginalized groups in academic settings. Specifically, the beliefs and practices are reactions to implicit bias, color blindness, imposter syndrome, internalized racism, stereotype threat and code-switching. Mentors need to know how to discuss these reactions because they can also influence the mentoring process and academic performance. To minimize incidents or interactions that might result in scholars not being able to find their place in these settings, recommendations for basic mentoring strategies and individual- and systemic-level approaches to address institutional racism are discussed.

Key Words: Mentoring mentors; underrepresented populations; institutional racism

Public Relevancy Statement

Scholars of color are underrepresented in academia, as their career trajectories are often derailed before they reach success. Training mentors of marginalized scholars can help ensure that the academic workforce will grow toward greater equity and will be more representative of the students it serves.

These are exciting but challenging times for institutions of higher education. Student enrollment of diverse populations and backgrounds into environments that can inspire and facilitate their learning experiences and ensure future employment are increasing. Between 2004-2005 and 2014-2015, the number of degrees ranging from one-year certificates to doctoral degrees conferred by postsecondary institutions to all racial and ethnic groups including African Americans, Latinos, Asian/Pacific Islanders has significantly increased (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Linear increases were not, however, seen across all populations: They fluctuated for students from American Indian/Alaska Native backgrounds obtaining Bachelor's through Doctoral degrees during that time. Additionally, the number of graduate students with learning disabilities; vision, hearing and motor impairments; and mental illnesses saw increases but not as significantly as for other group (National Science Board, 2018).

While student enrollment has become more diverse, factors that create barriers and discourage the pursuit and achievement of higher education are still not fully understood. With this inclusion often comes heightened reminders of long-established structural barriers created by institutionally racist assumptions, policies and procedures that were based on attitudes of racial and intellectual inferiority among people of color (Herrnstein & Murray, 1996). These assumptions about race and low intellect have been major contributors to inequities in graduate school enrollment, attainment and completion for over a century (Hodgkinson, 1984). These structural barriers are not inconsequential. They take a toll on the success and mental health of student scholars who want to pursue graduate education and be included in experiences that promote an academic career.

Attention is increasingly focused on the process of inclusion—enhancing the student scholars' initial entry and adjustment into the graduate learning environment. Beyond inclusion, mentors who are expert in the graduate school curricula content are needed. However, there is little information to guide mentors about factors related to race, ethnicity and being a member of a marginalized group that might serve as barriers to academic, professional, and social adjustment for students from these populations. Most importantly, it is often mentors who can facilitate or confirm negative or affirming assumptions that scholars may have as they negotiate the academic system.

Students often come to graduate school with a variety of reactions and behaviors that have contributed to their academic success and social survival. To their chagrin, they find that some of those behaviors may be detrimental to their inclusion as a candidate for classroom success and academic excellence in the graduate school and research setting. Their behaviors may be adaptive but not healthy and often continue to exclude the students from the groups and experiences that they seek. How do we convey this information to mentors? Mentors themselves must be mentored to identify unproductive student reactions and respond appropriately to support students of diverse backgrounds. Mentors must gain an awareness of and address maladaptive coping strategies used by students who have been historically marginalized in the academic and social environments, such as male students wearing sagging pants to an orientation reception, or caps and hats to a church convocation or formal dinners. The students may not fully understand the range of reactions that their behavior can elicit from faculty and students. Mentors may be in the best position to minimize these negative reactions as their student's progress through graduate school, but they may not be aware of why student scholars who are

from marginalized environments behave in ways that invite exclusion and awkward and racist questions from authorities.

This article describes six of the most commonly identified beliefs, attitudes, and practices that occur in academic settings and negatively affect the performance and well-being of students from diverse backgrounds: implicit bias, color blindness, imposter syndrome, internalized racism, stereotype threat, and code-switching. The article discusses each of these beliefs and behaviors and how to minimize their effects and the isolation that is often encountered by students from marginalized populations. While all marginalized populations – including those who are LGBTQ, differently abled and of lower socioeconomic status – may experience some or all of these phenomena, in this article our examples focus on people of color and women in higher education. While it is beyond the scope of this article to provide examples for each group, we acknowledge the important distinctions and nuances that define and affect each individual or group.

We adapted and modified Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (see Figure 1) to guide our discussion, focusing on the macro- and meso- level influences on student's self-esteem, confidence and well-being (Brofenbrenner, 1977). This framework will guide the discussion of these influences and the strategies to minimize adverse effects, ranging from societal attitudes and beliefs about race/ethnicity and ability status that can influence self-esteem to individual effects that a scholar may internalize that affect adjustment and academic performance.

Implicit Bias

Implicit attitudes and beliefs are unconscious or automatic associations that *pop* into mind in a split second, such that the person may be unaware or only semi-aware of them (Dasgupta,

2013). The bias is present when implicit attitudes and beliefs are negative or derogatory toward a group of people. Because implicit bias is often unconscious and not always intended, it is assessed by the reaction time which reflects associations triggered by various stimuli. For example, in a study by Eberhardt, Purdie, Goff, and Davies (2004), a sample of White college students were better able to identify a crime-relevant object, such as a gun or a knife, faster when subliminally primed by a Black face than by a White face. The findings suggested the existence of an implicit association between Black people and crime. Conversely, after subliminal exposure to an image of a gun, participants automatically oriented towards a Black face as opposed to a White face.

Within-Group Bias

Research shows implicit bias also exists in the minds of in-groups, e.g., those who share the same race/ethnicity (Dasgupta, 2013). Individuals from disadvantaged groups also have negative implicit associations of their own group that are internalized from the stereotyped portrayals of such groups in the social environments around them. These in-group implicit biases can undermine self-concept (Dasgupta, 2013), and can limit academic and professional achievement and success. They can also create anxiety about where or if a person of color or a marginalized group “fits in.”

Implicit associations, though unconscious, may be influenced by exposure to counter-stereotype information in local settings such as media for both out-groups (those outside of the reference group) and in-groups (Dasgupta, 2013). Studies have shown that contact with successful in-group experts and peers increases a disadvantaged student’s self-confidence and identification with the field. Specifically, in a longitudinal study of female math students, having a female calculus professor increased female students’ math self-concept compared to having a

male professor (Stout, Dasgupta, Hunsinger, & McManus, 2011). It is worth noting, however, that this effect was shown only in female students, the group for whom an implicit bias existed in this area, but not for male students with male professors. Women's explicit attitudes and beliefs remained unchanged, while implicit associations changed, and women attributed their academic interests to intrinsic interests and motivation.

Collectively, the research on changing implicit bias implies a great deal of promise for mentoring programs that match students from marginalized groups with in-group mentors. Exposure to admired in-group experts can cause significant shifts in self-concept, even in the absence of explicit change in beliefs and attitudes. This idea is illustrated in this graduate student's story:

When a noted professor told me that I would never complete my PhD because I could not write, I sought refuge in the office of a vice dean who was also Black. When I heard him say that was not true and that he would help to strengthen my skills and regain my confidence, I believed him. He looked like me, and recounted his own challenges and how he overcame them. I finished that class with a B+, received my PhD and never looked back. (G.E. Wyatt, Personal Communication, April 1972)

Color Blindness

If implicit bias consciously and unconsciously influences gut-level reactions to individuals based on race and racial stereotypes, color blindness may have the opposite effect. The ideology posits that the best way to end discrimination is by ignoring race and treating all individuals equally. In academic settings, some faculty may become color blind in an attempt to treat all students and faculty alike. They may also "forget" ethnic, ability, and cultural differences when associating and perhaps socializing with faculties from diverse backgrounds, as if they are not important. A young assistant professor at a large, mostly White, top 10 university recounted this experience:

An African American student requested that I be on his dissertation committee. I was honored because the chair of the committee was one of my mentors and a highly esteemed expert who had published a book that almost everyone used in research. Including me on his committee meant that the candidate would not be the only African American in the room. The chairman excused the student for the first minutes of the meeting to allow faculty to discuss whether he was ready to defend his work.... Inside of the student's files was a picture taken years ago when he first entered graduate school. The Chair was startled by the big, natural hairstyle that the student once wore and remarked: "He looks like he could jump out of a bush and kill you." The committee all laughed -- except me. Somewhat conflicted about having to defuse the light-hearted mood and address the clearly racist statement just made by someone that I respected, I said, "No he doesn't. Why did you say that?" The laughing stopped and the Chairman sheepishly stated, "Oh, I forgot that you were there." To my mind, that statement meant that he was not sorry that he said it, he just forgot that I was also African American and might take offense. There was little that he could have said that would reestablish him in my eyes as a highly-esteemed mentor.... His color blindness for that moment allowed him to forget me and to repeat an insensitive and racist statement that might have influenced the member's perceptions of the student's 'readiness' to defend his research-had I not been there. (G.E. Wyatt, Personal Communication, November 1980)

Color blindness can be an overly simplistic and *do-gooder* attitude-based attempt to overlook essential features like history, ethnicity, language, ability, and culture: These features have to be acknowledged (López, 2006). This experience was a better example of the Chairman's implicit biases to cover up his beliefs that race is truly a factor tied to academic success.

Imposter Syndrome

Imposter Syndrome (IS) is a long-established set of attitudes and beliefs that appeared in the literature in 1978 and described the behaviors and traits of high achieving women who were struggling to accept their success (Clance & Imes, 1978). This belief can cause lifelong questions about whether one, or one's behavior, is ever "good enough". Despite achievements and success, IS is often characterized by feelings of doubt, marginal confidence and basic feelings of inadequacy. The person complimented may perceive the positive attributes and success as belonging to someone or something else. A person suffering from this syndrome may appear to lack the ability to assess their strengths and accomplishments and rightly credit themselves (De

Vries, 2005; Want & Kleitman, 2006), and instead engage in chronic self-doubt. These individuals may perceive that the real truth about their performance and achievements will be detected and that their success will be discovered as fraudulent. Needless to say, their performance may be compromised by these negative expectations (Dahlvig, 2013). As one person stated, “I feel like a fake” (Chrisman, Pieper, Clance, Holland, & Glickauf-Hughes, 1995, p. 462). Feelings of self-doubt are often held by highly successful undergraduate- and graduate-level students and by accomplished faculty in academia (Dahlvig, 2013; Parkman, 2016) as well, and more often by women and by people of color in those settings (Cokley, McClain, Enciso, & Martinez, 2013; Parkman, 2016).

IS in graduate students most likely begins early in life and is expressed in ongoing messages from people ranging from authorities to peers (Parkman, 2016). These messages undercut and diminish the self-confidence of the person with IS-so much so that years later, the self-doubt continues even when critics cease. They internalize negative experiences and become their own worst enemy. Achievements are often not valued, and failure is expected. While a substandard performance might be secretly anticipated, it can reinforce feelings that the person does not deserve or is not worthy of the success that they may earn. As it can be apparent across the life course, IS is associated with one of the more chronic insidious practices related to institutionalized racism and causes lower self-esteem and higher evaluation anxiety (Cusack, Hughes, & Nuhu, 2013).

It is understandable that non-dominant groups are more likely to experience IS, as marginalized groups often do not feel a sense of belonging (Cokley et al., 2013). IS therefore fosters a sense that one has a facade or is role-playing rather than displaying their authentic self. Thus, no matter how high their achievements, given their assumptions, individuals may never

feel a sense of belonging and, in fact, feel more like an imposter over time as their lack of belonging and their achievements become increasingly discrepant. Mentors can assist their students in overcoming IS by encouraging them to keep a journal of their successes. Student scholars should be advised to remember their *other* identities, e.g., son/daughter, dancer, yogi, gardener, chef, artist, and use positive and affirming self-talk to counter negative expectations that can often become self-fulfilling.

Internalized Racism

Internalized racism can affect self-perceptions, attitudes and subsequent behaviors. Institutional racism, such as policies and practices that subjugate African Americans to limited achievement and opportunities to excel academically, may lead to internalized racism. Limited opportunities have led to assumptions of Black inferiority (Phillips, 2010) and have perpetuated a cycle of low achievement. The outcomes of institutional racism are based on “anti-black or anti-minority attitudes of inferiority” (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967, p. 5) and evidenced by inadequate housing, lower wages, unemployment, poor health, and insufficient nutrition. Research has also supported the notion of *learned helplessness* because of social discrimination and low expectations from teachers. A professor shared this experience:

If I had closed my eyes, I could have assumed that a White conservative was lamenting that “All Black women who were ‘welfare queens’ needed to be forced to work,” but instead I stared in amazement at a Black woman talking. (Personal Communication, March 2017)

Like the example, internalized racism occurs when people of color or marginalized groups consciously or unconsciously accept a racial hierarchy that exists in society (Huber, Johnson, & Kohli, 2006). Some people call internalized racism self-hatred. In the context of mentoring, a mentor needs to examine the degree to which their student scholars have

internalized racist attitudes against people like themselves. However, the first step that a mentor should take is to examine their own internalized racist attitudes and then negative attitudes and beliefs about people like themselves. Mentors who have been successful in institutions and represent marginalized groups may therefore be at risk for communicating these negative attitudes to their students or scholars or judging them by those attitudes. Challenging internalized racism is essential in a system in which there is racial inequality; otherwise, the inequalities are replicated and reinforced. For example, a training program for teachers used critical dialogues for challenging the trainees' internalized racism. One Black trainee noted, "When I would hear things from White people that were racist and nasty, like, 'You talk proper, or you're not 'ghetto', or you're clean, or your hair is so different' I would take [those comments] as a positive" (Kohli, 2014, p. 368). By holding these beliefs in this training program, the trainee was able to see that these were racist attitudes from her surroundings that she had adopted to distance herself from her own group and align her with attitudes expressed by the dominant group.

Internalized racism is often reinforced by those in authority who believe that racial inferiority has merit. Scholars who internalize racist thinking may excel academically and obtain good positions, only to be ostracized socially by others who assign their self-hatred as the source of their success.

Stereotype Threat

Knowledge of racial stereotypes is as central to racial socialization as understanding how these stereotypes have been used as reasons for racial segregation in America. Research has demonstrated that *stereotype threat*, defined as anxiety caused by the expectation of being judged based on a negative group stereotype, can affect the academic performance of anyone for whom the situation invokes stereotype-based expectations of poor performance (Steele, 1997). Both

laboratory experiments (Steele & Aronson, 1995) and correlational studies (Beasley & Fischer, 2012) have found that stereotype threat leads not only to lower performance when a negative performance stereotype is invoked compared to when the stereotype is not invoked. Stereotype threat also has health and psychological ramifications: high blood pressure (Blascovich, Spencer, Quinn, & Steele, 2001), interference with working memory (Schmader & Johns, 2003) and psychological disengagement (Major, Spencer, Schmader, Wolfe & Crocker, 1998). Moreover, the more hostile the environment, the more likely its activation (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Stereotype threat is well-researched and has been described as a critical part of a process from which racial/ethnic minority students disengage, in the short-term, and then de-identify, over the long-term. However, academic environments and fields can consistently invoke the threat (Beasley & Fischer, 2012).

Even though stereotype threat shows such robust effects, few mentoring programs and interventions have explicitly focused on their influence. It stands to reason that the mentoring of marginalized scholars must address its real-life and pernicious effects for mentoring to be successful. By the time a scholar from a diverse background reaches the post-graduate level, it is likely that constant exposure to this threat has challenged his or her confidence and self-esteem. Like other forms of trauma, discrimination can be experienced vicariously (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005).

The burden of stereotype threat needs to be acknowledged and discussed in mentoring programs for health effects of anxiety and stress on academic performance (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Steele (1997) demonstrated that the impact of stereotype threat could be significantly reduced by acknowledging to the student that they may have heard that certain populations do

better on a particular exam, and going on to refute it. As a consequence, students in the stereotyped group did as well as students in the non-stereotyped group (Steele, 1997).

It is worth noting the opposite of stereotype threat, termed *stereotype promise* (Lee & Zhou, 2014), has been observed for Asian American students, in which educators, acting upon the stereotypical image of Asians as high-achieving, track them into advanced courses, and the students then live up to these expectations. However, success even among this group comes at a cost, as Asian American students report higher levels of stress-related symptoms such as anxiety and depression (Okazaki, 1997). Both ends of stereotype threat and promise, underscore the importance of the ways in which stereotypes and what others assume is true may set a student on a particular course.

Code-Switching

Code-switching has been written about for decades and it has a well-established history. Code-switching became an apparent tool of survival for slaves and other marginalized groups who spoke their own languages and had differing religious and spiritual beliefs and social manners than their captors (Wyatt, 2009). During slavery, exhibiting behaviors such as speaking, looking into the eyes of the person who owned you, reading, writing or marrying without permission and instead emulating behaviors remembered as *African* or those that would suggest that you were equal to those of Whites (e.g., protecting your own body from unwanted sexual advances or the right to be free), would ensure severe punishment or death. Individuals most successful at code-switching were more likely to survive (Wyatt, 1988).

The concept of code-switching was described as a necessary skill, particularly for women in the workplace, where the range of past experiences in women of similar ethnicities but diverse

backgrounds required an effective leader to meet everyone where they were (Shorter-Gooden, 2004). Code-switching also has strong linguistic roots, described as the shifting of language practices as minorities move between in-group and out-group identities in complex, stratified societies (Hall & Nilep, 2015). A simple example is the use of slang or Black dialect in an informal setting to professional language in another for most people in society. African American students are observed to switch from the linguistic patterns of their ethnic communities—termed *Ebonics* (Baugh, 2000)—to more standard English when in the classroom or professional contexts. Since its inception, code-switching has evolved to signify the shifting of not only language practices but codes of behavior as well, from how one might dress in different settings to non-verbal behaviors. Individuals of color and marginalized groups have noted the necessity and importance of code-switching, that unless they switch between two codes of behavior, they would be judged unfairly and harshly due to the implicit biases that their “own” code would elicit. For example, the Native American writer Sherman Alexie (Alexie, Forney, & Woodson, 2017) noted that he automatically code-switched when he went from the reservation where he grew up to the university where he now taught. He had become so accustomed to the vastly different norms, expectations, and judgments of both, he made changes effortlessly.

While code-switching is a means of adapting to vastly different social environments, its use may result in negative judgments, regardless. Doss and Gross (1994) found that African American raters judged African American speakers using standard English to be more likable than those using *Black English* or switching back and forth (code-switching). However, these ratings may have been the result of code-switching occurring in a single conversation rather than as adaptations to different circumstances.

Recommendations for Mentoring

Given that the adverse influences on students of diverse backgrounds and marginal backgrounds can stem from macro- and micro-level contexts, mentoring efforts should also target both societal and individual beliefs and practices. Indeed, one-to-one interactions between mentors and mentees/scholars should address these influences while changes in the social and academic environments should also be addressed. These attitudes, beliefs, and practices are counters to messages that scholars from diverse and marginalized backgrounds really need to hear and exhibit in their behavior. However, they are often well embedded in students and not understood as contradictions to less-than-expected performances.

The limitations of the field and the lack of a long history of research do not diminish its importance. We offer these general strategies. The following are basic mentoring values that should be established and discussed before regular mentor-mentee meetings begin. Both mentor and mentee must have:

Six Basic Steps to Mentoring

1. Mutual respect. It is important that respect for each other's culture, language, values, life experiences, and opinions is established. You do not have to agree on everything, but this should be an opportunity to learn about each other and to gain insight into the reasons behind each other's beliefs and opinions.
2. Honesty. One way to establish a safe space that encourages honesty is to ensure confidentiality. It may be difficult to tell a scholar that their behavior is too confrontational or too timid. It may help to discuss other options on how interactions might have resolved more peacefully or by roleplaying to practice and learn other styles and strategies.

3. Conflict management. Rules of engagement should be established early on so that mentors and mentees agree on how to manage conflict between them.
4. Transparency. Similar to promoting honesty, ensuring transparency means being clear about behaviors or acts that warrant being reported.
5. Confidentiality- discuss the importance of being able to disclose information between the two of you and what has to be reported.
6. Recognition. Acceptance that the student scholar is the expert of their experience. There are many reasons why a scholar mentee might have some attitudes, beliefs or exhibit behaviors described here. The behavior observed by a mentor may not be fully explained by the mentee nor accepted as something that they might consider changing. The scholar's defensiveness may come from being told or feeling like everything about them does not fit into the academic setting. Feedback from a mentor may not be well received or welcomed. When resistance is suspected, remember that the mentor's observations of behavior may not be what the student intend to convey and they may not be ready to discuss it. It is not uncommon that a student may contact you later—even years later—to discuss what they could not articulate well in that moment.

One method of having a discussion with the mentee about the six behaviors is to give them this article or others in this issue and to discuss their awareness and experience related to each of them. The conversations that emanate are usually rich and informational: They generate the text of a long term relationship.

Systems-Level Recommendations

Creating informed change. Making the world a smaller and more manageable place is a critical solution for attitudes, beliefs and practices within your environment that continue to challenge scholar-students may be addressed by:

- Mentors who organize gatherings of communities of in-group experts to challenge and change implicit biases. Often times as a student scholar may need to meet with another faculty member who has had similar experiences and who is more comfortable in discussing the effects of institutional racism on self-esteem and academic performances. Mentors need a network of colleagues with others to whom can refer a mentee for conversations and advice. There are also mentoring programs mentioned in this e.g., special issue that might be considered when faculty mentors agree that more information about mentoring underrepresented populations.
- Messages about social environments should assess any micro-aggressions that can undermine well-being and *fitting in*, like the surgeon who called the resident, “Dr. Black” for an entire semester, no matter how many times she was corrected. In her evaluation, she described the resident as “unfriendly”.

Forming a village. It is often the case that students across the campus or institution need to meet other students and form a support group, or a village. Discussions could center around experiences that trigger reactions like the ones described in this article and how to handle them. The conversations should be private, and students should bring articles and literature to inform each other of strategies to manage their reactions as well as policies that other universities develop with regard to diversity and inclusion. There are times where experiences of scholars are

so well entrenched into the academic system that confidential discussions with other scholars may be the best method of managing feelings of frustrations and concerns.

It is essential that mentors share different strategies to address some of the examples of institutionalized racism that were cited in this article. While students may be too vulnerable to take on the system, they may be able to benefit from discussions about how to manage incidents of racism when they have left the system or increased their academic status. Mentoring may be needed to teach advise to “pick their battles” regarding institutionalized barriers to success. Attempting to address situations that create the impression that they are not wanted, valued, or appreciated can be successful and not result in disrupting or compromising their academic careers. These efforts can require skill that other faculty of color may have developed. Other faculty should be invited to visit the groups and to share their own journey and what helped them to survive.

Individual-Level Recommendations

Because marginalized scholars are likely to engage in code-switching and/or suffering from IS and may be less likely to discuss their comfort, mentors should explicitly assign and discuss the reactions cited in this article and the long-term, chronic stress they may cause.

- With each scholar, mentors should evaluate their own willingness and readiness to provide holistic mentoring-not just their academic pursuits but their personal adjustment in a potentially unwelcoming environment, as well. In this process, it is important to recognize limitations and ask for assistance from other colleagues or deans so that their careers are not compromised by the time and effort needed to mentor a student from a diverse or marginalized background.

- Mentors should share their own experiences when relevant. When scholars realize that their mentors may have experienced some of the same feelings, beliefs and attitudes it can dissolve feelings of isolation and foster a greater sense of belonging and community and strengthen the bond between mentor and scholar.
- Mentors should be especially aware of statements that appear to reflect IS or internalized racism, two of the more damaging beliefs. Indeed, it would be unlikely if not impossible to mentor effectively unless mentors understand how these same processes can affect their development and whether they have resolved them.
- Mentors should assign buddy mentees to their student scholars. Those mentees with an abundance of anxiety and doubt about their ability to succeed should be assigned to those who have gained more confidence over time. The possibility of extended counseling should also be discussed, even if the scholar is reluctant to reveal how much therapy they have had in the past. Obtaining psychotherapy or being on medication is still considered by some as a sign of physical or mental weakness that is only disclosed when the student encounters problems that they cannot overcome.
- Scholars should be encouraged to develop and nurture their own *network* of supportive family/friends and colleagues throughout their careers. While current policies for graduate school success often requires someone who is an academic mentor it is equally as important to establish and maintain a mentoring relationship with more than one person throughout their academic careers. However, the strategies used at the time can mediate success or heighten stress and isolation. Mentors can support their

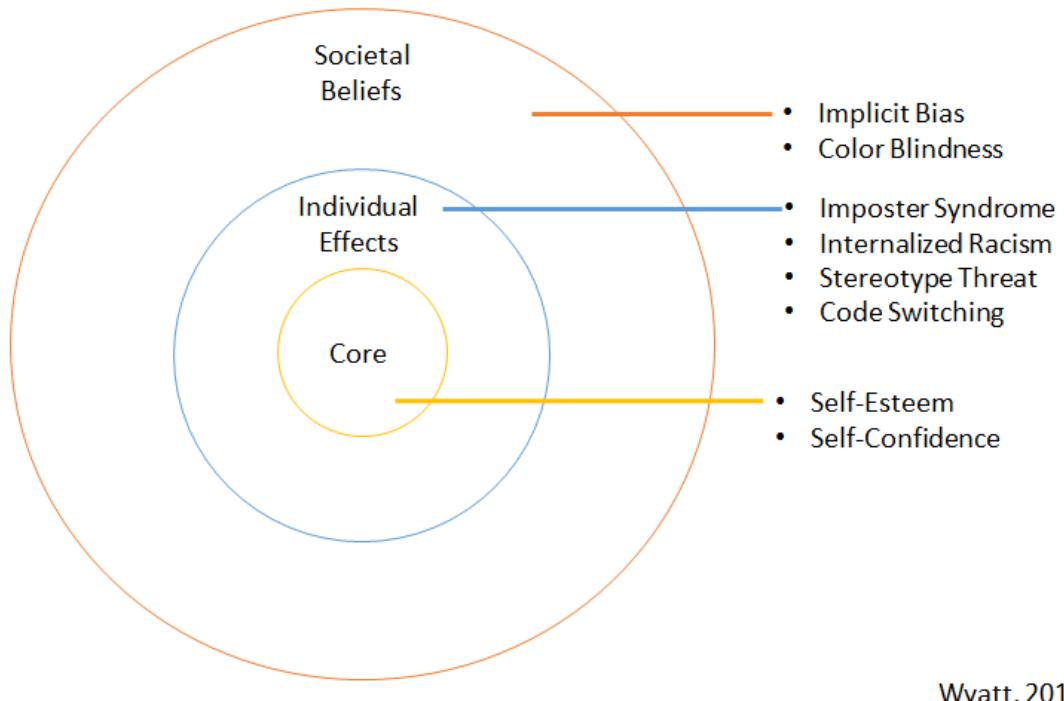
scholars in discussing and adapting the most feasible strategies to manage them and the possible outcomes they may elicit.

Finally, findings from a National Institutes of Health (NIH) study suggest that all qualified investigators do not have the same opportunities to receive R level grant support (Ginther et al., 2011), with African Americans 14% less likely to receive funding, all qualifications and proposal ratings being equal. Thus, academic institutions are sharpening their focus on addressing diversity among their faculty and in the curricula to examine the effects of disparities in areas of research, training and clinical care (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). These areas are gaining the attention of universities because private foundations and NIH are generating funding to identify strategies and interventions to reduce disparities in education and training. There are also university offices of diversity and inclusion with diversity officers who serve as resources of support for students whose academic and social experiences may be harmful to their well-being and may create barriers to completion of their graduate education. Increasingly, mentors do not have to shoulder the responsibility to advocate for changes in the institution alone.

Conclusion

It is not enough to accept students from diverse and marginalized backgrounds into graduate schools. The learning environment in which they are accepted, what they learn, from whom and how they are mentored from that point on are equally critical to their performance and lasting success. That is what mentoring mentors can more readily ensure.

Figure 1. Reactions of Racial and Ethnically Underrepresented Groups to Racism



Wyatt, 2018

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