# Diversity and Mentoring in the Workplace: A Conversation with Belle Rose Ragins

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# Diversity and Mentoring in the Workplace: A Conversation with Belle Rose Ragins

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Given projected increases in workplace diversity, an understanding of diversity's intersection with mentoring is a critical topic in the literature. This article involved an interview with Belle Rose Ragins, one of the world's leading thinkers on diversity and mentoring in the workplace. After providing an overview of Ragins' key achievements and contributions to the mentoring literature, the article delved into the interview, which involves four parts: (a) Ragins' education and early influences; (b) her views on the extant literature as well as insights around future areas for inquiry; (c) her current research interests; and (d) her views on consulting and teaching.

*Keywords:* mentoring, diversity, interview, Belle Ragins

Since the workplace mentoring field's inception in the late 1970s (Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1978; Hunt & Michael, 1983) and early 1980s (Kram, 1983, 1985), diversity has been and remains a key theme in the literature. Attesting to diversity's importance to mentoring, Kram's seminal book *Developmental Relationships in Organizational Life* introduced the influence of diversity in a chapter dedicated to the challenges of cross-gender relationships (Kram, 1985). Inspired by Kram and her observation of the trials and tribulations of Chicago's first female mayor, Belle Rose Ragins burst onto the mentoring scene in the 1980s with her groundbreaking research on gender, power, and mentoring relationships (Ragins, 1989; Ragins & Cotton, 1991; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990).

For over 20 years, Ragins has been prolific in her rigorous examination of workplace mentoring, diversity in organizations and the intersection of these domains. Her work appears in the top journals in our field (*Academy of Management Review, Academy of Management Journal, Journal of Applied Psychology, Psychological Bulletin*) and has been cited over 3,000

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times. She has received ten national research awards, including two lifetime achievement awards from the Academy of Management: The Sage Award for Scholarly Contributions to Management and the Academy of Management Mentoring Legacy Award.

She has co-authored/co-edited a number of books that examine mentoring and positive relationships at work, including *Mentoring and Diversity: An International Perspective* (with David Clutterbuck, 2002), *Exploring Positive Relationships at Work* (with Jane Dutton, 2007), and most recently, the acclaimed volume *Handbook of Mentoring at Work* (with Kathy Kram, 2007). In recognition of her impact on the field, she is an elected fellow of the Society for Industrial-Organizational Psychology, the Society for the Psychology of Women, the American Psychological Association and the American Psychological Society. She is also an invited member of the Society for Organizational Behavior and a Fulbright Scholar. Ragins' dedication to the field of mentoring is also illustrated in her service to the profession. She and colleagues Robin Ely and Raymond Trau received the Mentoring Best Practices Award from the Academy of Management in 2007 for their professional development workshops that team junior diversity scholars with senior scholars in the field. She has served on the review boards of the leading journals in the management field (AMR, AMJ, JVB, Personnel Psychology), and is the incoming Associate Editor of the *Academy of Management Review*. She is currently a Professor of Management at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, where she teaches courses on training and development, organizational behavior and diversity in organizations. She is the recipient of both the college and the university-wide teaching awards.

Given the projected increases in workforce diversity (Toosi, 2006; US Census Bureau, 2008), it is critical to understand the role of diversity in mentoring and work relationships. Ragins has offered a unique insight into these relationships, as her work not only examines diversity and mentoring, but also diversity as an independent field of inquiry. Mentoring scholars can learn much from her insights about where the field has been, and more importantly, where it needs to go. We begin the paper with a short chronology of Ragins' foci during the past 20 years; then we explore her perceptions of the state of the field and her recommendations for future research and high growth areas in the field of mentoring in organizations.

## Ragins' Mentoring Contributions since the Late 1980s

As the glass ceiling for women and minorities was receiving increasing attention by scholars and practitioners, Ragins, having just emerged from her doctoral studies in 1987, began to publish on gender and mentoring (Ragins, 1989; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990). Building on prior research on mentoring challenges faced by women (e.g., Clawson & Kram, 1984; Fitt & Newton, 1981) and recognizing that mentors could have a powerful impact

on women's careers, including buffering them from discrimination (Ragins, 1989), Ragins explored women's barriers to gaining and becoming a mentor (Ragins & Cotton, 1991; Ragins & Cotton, 1993). Her work in this area continued through the 1990s, where she made substantive contributions to our understanding of the effects of gender and the gender composition of the relationship on mentoring functions, outcomes and the termination of the relationship (Ragins & McFarlin, 1990; Ragins & Scandura, 1994, 1997). Her theoretical work on diversity and mentoring relationships, published in the *Academy of Management Review* and the *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, are classic articles that lay the theoretical foundation for empirical work on mentoring and diversity in the workplace (Ragins, 1997a, 1997b).

While diversity and mentoring have been central themes of Ragins' work, she has also contributed to our broader understanding of the mentoring relationship. She was one of the first scholars to empirically examine and compare outcomes associated with formal and informal mentoring relationships in a landmark study that received the American Society for Training and Development Award for best published paper in 1999 (Ragins & Cotton, 1999). She was also one of the first mentoring researchers to empirically examine mentoring from the mentor's side of the relationship; her early work on willingness to mentor remains a foundational classic in the literature (Ragins & Cotton, 1993). More recently, she and her colleagues have examined the *rising star effect* (Ragins & Cotton, 1993; Singh, Ragins, & Tharenou, 2009a) and have situated mentoring within the broader domain of career capital (Singh, Ragins, & Tharenou, 2009b). Ragins and colleague, Joyce Fletcher, coined the concept of *mentoring episodes*, and distinguished such short-term developmental interactions from long-term mentoring relationships (Fletcher & Ragins, 2007).

Ragins has taken a leadership role in bridging the field of mentoring with the emerging field of positive relationships at work (Dutton & Ragins, 2007; Ragins & Dutton, 2007). Her theoretical and empirical research has highlighted the importance of examining the continuum of quality in mentoring relationships. She observed that mentoring relationships fall on a continuum of quality ranging from high quality, or relational mentoring, at one end, to dysfunctional mentoring at the other (Ragins, 2011; Ragins & Verbos, 2007). Her empirical research has found support for the influence of quality on mentoring outcomes and work attitudes, and has found that the quality of the relationship is even more important than whether the relationship is formally assigned or informally developed (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000). Continuing in this stream of research, Ragins developed the theory of relational mentoring (Ragins, 2011; Ragins & Verbos, 2007) which examines the antecedents, processes and outcomes associated with high quality mentoring relationships. Her work on relational mentoring situates the field of mentoring within the broader arena of positive relationships at work, and further defines the connection between mentoring and the emerging area of

positive organizational scholarship (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003). Ragins recently developed a preliminary measure of relational mentoring functions that will further promote the development of this new and important area of inquiry (Ragins, 2011).

In addition to her groundbreaking work in mentoring, Ragins has been a pioneer in examining sexual orientation in the workplace. She has published influential theoretical and empirical pieces on discrimination against gays and lesbians in the workforce, as well as the antecedents and consequences of fear of disclosure in the workplace (Ragins, 2004, 2008; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007). She has also examined the impact of life spillovers, such as community diversity climate and the fear of home foreclosure, to the workplace, and has examined mentoring as a buffer to negative experiences within and outside the workplace (Ragins, Lyness, & Winkel, 2010). This work informs and broadens a perspective on the long reach of mentoring as it makes the key point that high quality mentoring influences quality of life within and outside the workplace (Ragins, Gonzalez, & Singh, 2010). It is clear that the methodological rigor and thoughtfulness of her scientific approach have led her to be one of the most influential scholars in our field today.

## The Interview

The interview with Belle Rose Ragins addressed four topical areas: (a) Ragins' education and early career interests; (b) her assessment of diversity and mentoring as scholarly areas of inquiry; (c) her current research interests and pursuits; and (d) her views on consulting and teaching.

### Education and Early Career Interests

*What first captured your interest about both mentoring, and diversity, and their interaction?*

My interest in the topic of gender and mentoring really emerged back in 1981. I was working on my MSW at the University of Illinois at Chicago and Jane Byrne had just become the first female mayor in the city of Chicago. The election was a bit of a fluke. We had this major snowstorm and the city was paralyzed, and she was voted in as a reaction to the city's inability to clear the streets. I was thrilled that we had our very first female mayor. I grew up in the city, and for me, and my family, this was just a landmark event. But then, you know, things changed pretty quickly. I couldn't believe the types of hoops she had to jump through to gain credibility and power. In fact, she never really achieved the power associated with her position. She was held to higher standards than her male counterparts and they pretty much crucified her. Remember the movie *The Blues Brothers*? It was filmed in Chicago. Well someone snapped a picture of Jane Byrne hamming it up with Belushi and Aykroyd. She was wearing

the black hat and the Blues Brothers sunglasses. So this picture ended up on the front page of the *Chicago Sun Times*. And she was absolutely crucified for being unprofessional. I couldn't believe it. Here Chicago politicians were being thrown in jail for bribery, coercion, and well, Chicago politics. But Jane hams it up with Belushi and Aykroyd, and it makes the front page. They couldn't get her for anything else—so they got her for that. And when all was said and done, she brought the movie to Chicago. It was great PR for the city—but she ends up being hung out to dry.

No one was in her corner; not the media, not the political machine, not even the people of Chicago. It was tragic to watch. But then I began to wonder about why this happened. What does it take for a woman to get power? What do they have to do to get the basic respect associated with their position? What is this thing about gender and power? So I wrote a term paper on the topic, and in my research I came across the topic of "godfathers." A light went off in my head. The godfather concept is pretty central to Chicago politics; you need a godfather to get elected. You come into the room; you kiss the ring type of thing. So I began to wonder if Jane had a godfather. What would have happened if she had one? Would she have been crucified if she had a godfather?

So that really got me thinking about gender and mentoring. That public event: Watching her rise and fall. Then I started my doctoral program, in Industrial Organizational Psychology at the University of Tennessee, and was interested in issues of gender and power in organizations. I kept thinking about this godfather thing. Then, Kathy Kram's 1985 book came out, I read it and it rocked my world. Suddenly, all of the pieces fell into place. It was, and still is, a transformational book that set me on my way. I read it and re-read it and then read it again. I still have the book; the pages are yellow and crumbly and dog-eared, but I still reach for it. It's a classic. My dissertation was on gender, leadership and power, but I just had to include a section on mentoring. So I added a section on barriers to mentoring based on her chapter. When I read about "functions of mentoring", the first thing I thought of, as an I-O psychologist was, "well we have to measure this!" So I developed the Mentoring Role instrument and included that in the dissertation survey as well. It was a huge survey. My research interest in gender and mentoring really all came about from watching this woman trying to get the power associated with her position, and watching as they just cut her legs out from under her. And realizing that if she had a mentor in her corner, it could have been a different story.

*Whose work has influenced you over the years?*

For mentoring, first and foremost it would be Kathy Kram—who I call the "mother of mentoring". If we go with a garden metaphor, Kathy's work not only established the field—she really laid out this whole landscape of men-

toring. And then Lillian Eby and Tammy Allen came along, and they planted amazing seeds all over the place. These women are incredibly prolific and they just landscaped the garden—made it gorgeous. So Kathy established the theoretical foundation, and Tammy and Lillian put the field on the map with their high quality and rigorous empirical investigations. They are tremendously prolific and they really established mentoring as an independent field of scholarly research. For diversity, lots of folks. Thinking about gender, Madeline Heilman asked and answered the key questions on gender. So I think her work has influenced me over the years. In terms of pioneers, Barbara Gutek, Gary Powell, Alice Eagly—these scholars really established the field of gender in the workplace, which was the precursor to the field of diversity in the workplace. For diversity, the people who I have always admired, whose work has really influenced me, would include Robin Ely, David Thomas, and Stella Nkomo. Their work is amazing.

*Who have your mentors been over the years? How have they helped your career and shaped your mentoring schema?*

I've had some wonderful mentors over the years who were there at key moments in my life. In my doctoral program, Eric Sundstrom really helped me get my academic sea legs. But even before then, I had mentors who helped me make key career decisions. I remember getting my MSW, and I just wasn't happy. I always wanted to be a psychologist and I went for the MSW because I was in this relationship and didn't want to leave Chicago—you know how it goes. And my boss, who was a social worker, told me " Well Belle, if you really want to get a PhD, you should go back to school and get a PhD" I was settled in Chicago, had a boyfriend, a life, but wanted more. So she helped me—she told me to go for it—and I did. I just picked up and moved. Packed everything into my little blue Honda Civic and drove down to Tennessee to follow my dream. Best thing I ever did.

*Are you active in mentoring others?*

Absolutely. Not just doctoral students, I also enjoy mentoring the undergraduates. There are a fair number of first generation students at my university, and I really enjoy being there for them—getting them to think beyond the box—masters, PhD. They just need the support and affirmation. It's wonderful and rewarding to watch them blossom.

## Assessment of Diversity and Mentoring as Scholarly Areas of Inquiry

*What are some of the most pressing unanswered questions facing mentoring and diversity scholars today?*

One of the key questions is what is the impact of multiple dimensions of diversity on the mentoring relationship? We started out by looking at the role of gender in the workplace, and then we realized we needed to look at

race. Okay, that worked. But let's keep going. We need to look at sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic class, disability, language, appearance, obesity, size—the list goes on. There is a whole range of dimensions that we need to investigate. These differences combine in complex and synergistic ways—and they create unique experiences in the mentoring space. For example, we know that the experiences of men and women differ in the mentoring relationship, and within gender we have learned that the experiences of women of color differ from those of white women. So now we need to add more layers to the mix—we need to look at sexual orientation, religion, appearance, age, and socioeconomic class, disability. If we don't look at these dimensions, and the way they interact, then we assume they don't matter. Diversity becomes part of the error variance in our research, but it's not error variance at all; it's a critical piece that we need to understand. So that's the first thing, we really need to look at multiple identities and the interactions among these identities, and it's challenging to get samples that allow us to investigate these relationships.

A second area that we know little about is high quality mentoring relationships. As in other areas of organizational scholarship, we tend to study the most common experiences, the average experiences. So we know quite a bit about average mentoring relationships, but very little about the high quality end of the mentoring continuum. Like other relationships, mentoring relationships fall along a continuum of quality from very dysfunctional on one end to highly successful relational mentoring on the other. If you look at that continuum as a bell-shaped curve, yes, the most common experiences fall in the middle of the mentoring quality continuum. But by focusing just on the average, we neglect the extraordinary. I also think that there are relational states in mentoring—a given relationship can move from average to high quality, or from high quality to average, or from average to dysfunctional. So unless we understand the high quality end of the continuum, how can we ever hope to move relationships from average to high quality? By focusing on the average, we lose sight of the extraordinary. And the other problem is that our very definition and measurement of mentoring becomes anchored in the average. The criteria we use to evaluate the relationship's effectiveness reflect outcomes associated with average relationships. So we look at compensation and promotions and advancement, and other instrumental outcomes, but we lose sight of outcomes that can be associated with extraordinary relationships, like inspiration, true and best selves, personal learning, growth and creativity. There is a whole constellation of outcomes that we're neglecting because we focus on the average.

I think we need to expand the horizon of mentoring to include high quality relationships. We need to understand that the processes and functions in these relationships may differ from those of average quality and the outcomes may differ as well. So here are some key questions: How do relationships transform from average to high quality? You know we have

postulated that relationships can transition across different states of quality, ranging from dysfunctional on the one hand to high quality on the other, but what determines this range of movement? And why do relationships transition from average to high quality? What are the processes that are involved in transitions to the dark side? Lillian Eby has done some tremendous work in this area by illuminating the dark side of mentoring. We need to do comparable work on the positive end of the continuum.

### How can we move from an average to high quality mentoring in a practical way?

To answer this question, we need to move into the black box of mentoring—the cognitive aspects. Here we could talk about the expectations of mentoring, mentoring schemas, mentoring identities, and mentoring as possible selves. This really draws on the social cognition literature. So, the best mentors probably incorporate mentoring into their identity. When we ask them "who are you", mentoring becomes part of that answer. And some people incorporate mentoring into their possible selves of who they could be.

The other thing is that people have mental schemas of mentoring that can range from positive to negative. Mentoring schemas are the road maps of mentoring—they guide our expectations and influence our motivational states. People have expectations of the mentor's and the protégé's role, what it is it that a mentor does, what it is that a protégé does. They may have schemas that are aligned with effective relationships, or they may have schemas that are dysfunctional. So if they have the schema that a mentor should be the Godfather who stands at the pulpit and dispenses knowledge to the protégé sitting at his feet, well, that may not be an effective schema. So then we can try to replace that schema with one that is more effective. For example, a schema that involves mutual mentoring, where both members get something from the relationship. In this model, both members are transformed in some way, that they become the source of mutual inspiration for one another. This gets people thinking about mentoring in new ways, and opens up the possibilities in their relationship.

### Can you explicate the main points of intersection you see as tying these two fields together?

You can't talk about mentoring relationships without talking about diversity. Diversity is embedded in mentoring relationships. It's part and parcel; you can't separate them out. One of my pet peeves is that too often we see mentoring relationships as one-way. So we talk about how important it is for white male mentors to mentor protégés of color, without ever recognizing what the mentor gets out of the relationship. I am convinced that in diverse

mentoring relationships, when people are open to learning, there is a tremendous potential for them to learn about diversity. And I think this learning can be more effective than diversity training—because it happens in a relationship where people can have dialogue, ask questions and really learn about diversity first hand. So when people ask me about the use of formal mentoring in diversity initiatives, I say yes, they can be effective, but for more reasons than we acknowledge. Of course mentoring can help members of non-dominant groups get access to resources, and that's critical. But there's lots of learning that can happen when you partner up people from different groups. And if you are really talking about changing an organization's culture, in terms of making it more accepting of differences, and raising consciousness and awareness, then I think that diverse mentoring relationships offer an excellent conduit for that task. Some programs recognize this and do reverse mentoring, where the protégé tells the mentor, "Okay, let me tell you a little bit about what it means to be X, Y or Z in this organization." It's amazing when the mentor "get's it."

*Are there any heterogeneous mentoring dyads that are most helpful to the parties, or ones where it is especially difficult to attain high quality matches?*

I think the most critical pairings for a given organization depend on the context. In some countries or context it could be religion, in others, race. You need to look at which group is "the other"—which group is marginalized or discriminated against in the context. So you want to pair up someone from the dominant group with someone who is considered the "other" in that context. That's when you have the most potential for changing attitudes.

As for the other part of your question, what relationships are particularly difficult, I think an example would be if you paired a gay protégé with a born-again Christian in the US. This one would be a challenge, but imagine if it worked. Imagine if they connected before finding out about their religious beliefs or orientations—it would challenge and change them. Where else could they experience this type of change? Both would have to question their assumptions about the other.

*How well does the body of research on diversity address practitioners' ability to develop diversity programs in practice, as well as foster a diversity climate? How well does the mentoring literature help to develop formal programs and foster a mentoring climate?*

Practitioners who work in the field of diversity have an amazing challenge. How do they help people overcome their stereotypes, their fears and attributions and their prejudices? I think management scholars need

to partner with social psychologists who study the social psychology of prejudice. Social psychologists made more inroads into understanding aspects of prejudice and stereotyping, but we need to translate this to the workplace.

Practitioners can't change attitudes unless they understand how they are developed and shaped, and what makes them resistant to change. Diversity or management scholars aren't really getting at this, but psychologists are. So I think we need to build more bridges between management and psychology to better inform the workplace. I think we could do a better job if we became informed by and reached out to the emerging and even classic research on the psychology of prejudice.

There's one more thing I'd like to say. I think when we first started studying workplace diversity, we talked about race and racism. But then we ended up studying the safe aspects—like cognitive diversity, tenure diversity, personality. It wasn't until McKay and Avery came along that we really started looking directly at how race matters in the workplace. So you'd start reading a study on diversity, and then you'd get to the method section and find out that the study is really about cognitive diversity or values and you say, okay, well that's important. But don't we need to figure out race first? That's what practitioners are dealing with on the front lines—race and racism. We see this with sexual orientation too. I think it's pretty telling that some of our top management journals have not published research on sexual orientation in the workplace. You see this work published in the top psychology journals but not in management. So that discourages the research—and this is a problem because this is the research that can inform practice.

I don't think the field of mentoring has faced this challenge. The field comes from an applied perspective. After all, mentoring is a tangible work relationship. Other topics of research can be hard to ground in the workplace, like cognition, values, trust. But the field of mentoring has always had both feet on the ground with respect to the workplace. And we have been walking along pretty solidly. Yes we need to look at new aspects of mentoring like team and electronic mentoring, but the field has always been pretty responsive to applied needs. The biggest challenge facing mentoring scholars is that our theory has not kept up with our research. We have Kathy Kram's landmark book that presented the foundational theory of mentoring back in 1985. We have Monica Higgins and Kathy Kram's 2001 *Academy of Management Review* article that applies a network perspective to mentoring. I published the paper on diversified mentoring in *AMR* in 1997, but we still need more theoretical work. That is why Kathy Kram and I devoted an entire section to theory in the *Handbook of Mentoring*. We asked leading scholars in related fields to build theoretical bridges between their area of research and the mentoring arena. So they offered new theoretical models of mentoring building on established related

theories. It was pretty cool. We're also drawing on the relationships literature; mentoring is a relationship that happens within a career learning and growth context and I think we really need to understand and contextualize mentoring within the realm of relationships.

## Current Research Interests and Pursuits

*More recently, you have written about and become interested in Positive Organizational Scholarship. How did this interest come about? How can this perspective enhance our understanding of mentoring and diversity?*

I became interested in studying high quality relationships as a consequence of a mentoring study that found that high-quality formal relationships were more effective than low-quality informal relationships. Then I started working with Jane Dutton—I've admired her work for years—applying a positive organizational scholarship lens to the field of workplace relationships. We published an edited book on positive relationships at work (Dutton & Ragins, 2007). We brought in a variety of scholars from different fields and disciplines and asked them to apply their lens to positive relationships at work. We approached the topic from individual, group, organizational, and community levels of analyses. This really started me thinking about mentoring as a positive relationship. When you think about the most positive relationship at work, mentoring really comes to mind. So then I started down this path and it led to a bunch of questions. Like, what creates these relationships? What do these relationships look like? How are they different from relationships of average quality? Does it mean that they offer more functions or different functions than the ones we usually study in average relationships, like the career and psychosocial functions? And what are the antecedents and outcomes of these relationships? I was really struck by the idea that your high-quality relationships could have outcomes that we simply do not measure and then we assume that the relationship is not high quality. So, for example, say you have a protégé of color who is really struggling with racism at work, and the protégé hooks up with a mentor who really affirms that person's identity and helps that protégé develop survival skills, how to deal with being an "o" in an all "x" environment. Now if a mentoring scholar came along and looked at traditional outcomes associated with mentoring relationships, like compensation, promotion or even job satisfaction, he or she may conclude that the relationship was not effective, when in fact, the relationship may be very effective in creating change in a very different set of outcomes. Not only does our focus on average relationships prevent us from viewing the extraordinary, but we often overlook extraordinary relationships because the criteria we use to evaluate them are constrained.

*What questions most intrigue you now?*

The first question is what is the true reach or the "long arm" of mentoring? We recently did a study that found that the presence of informal mentors helps people deal with the stress of fear of home foreclosure. It seems that mentors can help protégés deal with life challenges that occur inside and outside the workplace. Second, I am interested in the processes, qualities, antecedents, and outcomes of relational mentoring. I'm also interested in examining the self-structures of mentoring. I've been working on a theory of mentoring schemas and developed the self-structures of mentoring framework (Ragins, 2009). This looks at how mentoring schemas, mentoring identities and the possible selves of mentoring combine to influence both mentors and protégés, and their relationship. The self-structures speak to the functions, processes, and outcomes of mentoring, and illuminates the "black box" of mentoring—what happens in their heads, in the relationship, in the relational processes. The third area that really intrigues me is life spillovers. I am looking at how community diversity spills over to the workplace. A bigger piece is taking a wider lens on the idea of life. Too often, when we talk about "work-life" we end up talking about work-family. Family is a critical part of life, but there is more to life than just family. Life involves a constellation of experiences, events, identities, roles and relationships that go way beyond just family. But yet we use such a narrow lens for viewing work-life. So I am really interested in expanding the lens of life, both theoretically and empirically. I started working on the idea of life spillover in a paper I wrote on disclosure disconnects, which talked about how people manage stigmatized identities across life domains. This incorporates a holistic view—which holds that your life experiences change you, and these changes are brought with you across life domains. It is a basic idea but it has major implications for the mentoring and diversity literature. So, for example, your mentoring relationship in the workplace changes you—it changes the way you think, feel and act. You may develop different relational competencies that are carried with you into your other relationships, which may occur outside the workplace. You don't leave these changes at the workplace door; they are carried over across life domains. Similarly, a developmental relationship that occurs outside of work can have a profound influence on you and be carried into the workplace.

The basic premise is that changes that happen are not just left in the threshold of one domain when you are entering another. There are life spillovers that are carried over across life domains, and these involve life events, relationships and identities. In one of our studies, we found that people who were afraid of losing their home to foreclosure carried that stress into the workplace. In another study, we found that people who live in communities with poor diversity climates want to leave their communi-

ties, and that relocation intention in turn predicts intentions to leave the workplace. It's really an interesting area that has tremendous potential for growth.

*Is there a paper or group of papers that has had particular significance for you as a scholar?*

For me, the work I have done on sexual orientation has had the greatest personal significance. I've published about four or five articles and chapters on the topic, and three were in top-tier outlets so they received quite a bit of notice. I felt these papers made a difference because at the time, no one was really doing work in this area and this was research that really needed to be done. Since then, a number of young scholars have come up to me at conferences or meetings and told me that this work encouraged their own research. It's risky work—and it was not easy to collect the data. I received a Placek Award from APA, but that was the easy part. The hard part was convincing gay rights organizations to give me the names and addresses of their members. This was back in the 1990s and I was working at a Jesuit Catholic University. There were lots of phone calls and meetings. Even after getting the data, I remember the challenges in getting people to accept or even understand the topic. I remember submitting a paper on "being out at work" to a SIOP conference, and getting a review back that stated "what does this paper have to do with absenteeism?" Things are better now, but you still get knee jerk reactions to the topic. People get uncomfortable and then they question whether we should be studying sexual orientation in the workplace as there are so few gays and lesbians at work. Like they know.

## Consulting, Teaching, and Advice to Junior Scholars

*You have consulted a number of companies on their mentoring programs and diversity programs over the years. How did those experiences shape your scholarly pursuits and how did your knowledge of the mentoring and diversity literatures aid your consultative approach?*

Whenever I do mentoring training, I always ask people to reflect on their mentoring experiences, and what they received from their relationships. One insight from this exercise is that mentoring relationships are like other types of relationships in that no two relationships are the same. We somehow assume that mentoring relationships are not really relationships. We would never think that two friendships are alike—so why do we think that there is one "type" of mentoring relationship? Relationships vary—it all depends on the individuals in the relationship, the needs each person has, what they bring to the relationship,

the context; there is a constellation of factors that makes every rela-
tionship unique. Why would we expect mentoring relationships to be
any different? As to the research, I always bring my research into my
consulting.

*How do you bring diversity and mentoring into your classroom in a*
*meaningful way? Are there specific exercises or activities that are*
*particularly valuable in giving students an "ah ha" moment?*

I have been teaching a class on diversity since the late 1990s, and one
exercise that is pivotal is the "Becoming a Minority" exercise. I have stu-
dents put themselves in a situation in which they are the minority; they
can go into a grocery store, a gay coffeehouse or an African-American
church. The key is that they have to be in a position in which they are
the minority and they have to write about it and share it in class. Many
of the students have either never been in a situation in which they are the
minority, or when they have, they felt uncomfortable but never really
reflected about the experience. So the exercise gets them to think about
diversity and what it is like to be in the minority. And then, by sharing
their experiences in class, they get to see the variety of experiences, how
two people can go to the same store and have very different experiences.
They also take it one step further, and may say, okay, I was the only
white person in a grocery store and I may have gotten some chilly stares,
but how would it feel to be an African American in a "white grocery
store." How would it be similar or different? Would I be followed? Or,
say you are white and you are driving through an African American
neighborhood and you see a police car. Being white, you would probably
see that car as a source of refuge, of hope, of comfort. But if you were
black and driving in a white neighborhood—your response would be very
different; you would be afraid that the cop would pull you over, and that
may in fact be the case. So the Becoming a Minority exercise is a great
tool to help students understand diversity. I also have them do the White
Privilege exercise, where I write down Peggy Macintosh's (1988) white
privileges on slips of paper and I have all of the white students come to
the front of the class and read their privileges out loud. An example of a
privilege is "I can be sure that when I ask to speak to someone in charge,
it is a person of my race." So after the white students read their privileges
we talk about whether they disagree with any of them and then the stu-
dents of color give their reaction and talk about their experience—it's an
affirmation for them. Then we talk about the privileges associated with
sexual orientation, religion, and disability, among others. I have students
keep journals in the class and those two exercises definitely arouse "ah
ha" moments.

*Over the years, you've published a number of influential studies. What
advice do you have for early-career scholars who want to make an impact?*

Do not be afraid to take risks, but when you are charting new terrain, you
are working without a net. You have to follow your passion. Do research
that you are passionate about and you think really makes a difference. Do
not always do incremental studies; do the big, bold work, too. What makes
work bold is that you are working without a net. Charting a new terrain can
be difficult. For example, with my research on sexual orientation and disclo-
sure in the workplace, my papers were getting rejected because of lack of
theory in the literature, so I had to go out and write a theory piece. That is
one of the issues: When you are breaking new ground in terms of empirical
work, you are stretching the theoretical foundation. And to build theory, you
have to have an empirical base. That is one of the reasons we do not make
a lot of progress in our field.

When you are starting a project, it is often difficult to know whether your
contribution will lead to a top-tier versus a "B-level" journal. When all is said
and done, look back at your citations. You can have papers in top-tier publica-
tions that are never cited, and you can have papers in "B-level" journals that
are cited all the time. I think that time will tell with these things. One thing
about publishing in top-tier journals is that sometimes the real cutting edge,
edgy stuff does not "fly." A second-tier journal is more likely to accept it, and
then people cite it. For me, the fact that a paper is read and cited is what is
important; the tier of the journal is not. It is all about the quality of the work. I
never want to put my name on a paper that I am not proud of.

Tenure is a reality, and junior scholars may need to wait until after tenure
to do the really edgy work. I received tenure and then the next day I started
working on research on sexual orientation, but I waited until after I was ten-
ured. Doing research on gender was "edgy" enough back then. When I was
a doctoral student, I wanted to do my dissertation on gender, power, and
leadership and my advisor mentioned that I may want to leave out the piece
on gender because he felt it might hurt my chances of getting a job. He was
trying to protect me and he was right that for some schools—this is back in
1986—work on gender would have undermined my candidacy. Things were
different back then—when I started my first job, I was one of two women
in the entire school of business. Yet I decided that I wanted to do work that
I was really passionate about—part of it was that I was a feminist. I was the
president of the Feminist Student Action Coalition in college and led
marches down the streets. I had really short hair and had a jean jacket that
read, "Women are Not Chicks." My mom was a feminist and we came from
a long line of socialists, so I did not think I was doing anything that radical
doing gender research. It didn't seem revolutionary to me—but it was what
I wanted to do. You just have to know yourself well enough and know what
you are willing to compromise and what you are not. You might think, well

what is it that I want? Do I want to be at a top-tier institution and what are the tradeoffs involved? Instead, I could be at an institution that is not as prestigious, but I may have more flexibility in terms of the work that I do. For me, that has been my choice. I have made the career choice that I would rather be at a school that accepts the kind of research I do than one that would not allow me to follow my calling.

*You have talked quite a bit about how early career decisions helped get to where you are today. Is there anything else that you would like to add?*

Find a place that accepts you and research that you do. Sometimes that may mean being at a school that is at a somewhat lower tier but embraces your publications, as opposed to one that dictates a particular type of research and journal. There are tradeoffs. No matter what the school, the quality of your research is what matters. Be proud to put your name on your work. Once you publish, your name is associated with that piece forever. People will read your work twenty years from now. If you are proud of the work you do and it makes you happy, then your work is done.

## Notes on Contributors

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