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Mentoring, boundaries, and multiple relationships: opportunities and challenges

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Most students and early career professionals desire mentoring relationships. Mentors can provide numerous added benefits to their protégés beyond what they typically obtain from classroom and other formal training experiences. Yet, despite the many potential benefits of mentoring relationships, the very nature of successful mentoring relationships brings with it certain risks for participants. Issues of boundaries and multiple relationships must be understood and successfully navigated to help ensure that mentors' objectivity and judgment are not impaired and that protégés are not exploited or harmed. The concepts of boundaries, boundary crossings, boundary violations, and multiple relationships are explored in this article and applied in the context of mentoring relationships. Recommendations for successfully navigating the challenges they bring are made in the hope of helping to ensure productive and healthy mentoring relationships.

The professional development of psychologists, as with those in many other professions, is a long-term and multifaceted process. It begins in college, continues during graduate school, and then proceeds throughout the internship year, post-doctoral training experiences, and then hopefully on an ongoing basis throughout the remainder of one's career. Psychologists endeavor to develop and enhance their professional competence throughout each aspect of their career, and more senior colleagues play a valuable role in this regard. This may occur during formal course work, practicum experiences, research collaboration, clinical supervision, advising, and informal interactions with faculty. More senior colleagues may be faculty members, advisors, supervisors, co-workers, or other more senior colleagues who serve in a mentoring role.

It is well known that the role of the mentor is of vital importance in psychologists' professional development (Johnson & Huwe, 2002; Russell & Adams, 1997). It can add a great richness to the training one receives and adds a valuable dimension of informal guidance, role modeling, support, and encouragement that enriches the nascent professional's ongoing development. Additionally, mentoring relationships may result in a wide range of benefits to protégés, their mentors, and the institutions in which they work. Possible benefits for protégés include increased satisfaction with their overall education and training experience, higher grades and increased scholarly activity, professional acculturation and skill development, networking opportunities, employment and early career assistance, professional identity development, and even psychological health benefits (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004; Atkinson, Neville, & Casas, 1991; Johnson, 2002; Schlosser & Gelso, 2001; Wilson & Johnson, 2001).

Potential benefits to mentors include professional stimulation and collaboration, personal fulfillment, friendship and support, motivation to remain current in one's field, and networking opportunities (Johnson, 2003; Johnson, Koch, Fallow, & Hume, 2000; Russell & Adams, 1997). Benefits to institutions potentially include more satisfied faculty and students with lower rates of

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attrition for both groups, greater scholarly productivity and enhanced prestige for the institution, more committed alumni, and the likelihood of having more mentors in the future (Clark, Harden, & Johnson, 2000; Johnson, 2007; Johnson & Nelson, 1999). But, despite all the potential benefits to all involved, mentoring relationships also bring with them challenges that must be addressed for positive outcomes to be achieved.

This article addresses the complex issues of boundaries and multiple relationships between mentors and their protégés. Rather than take a dogmatic approach that sets strict arbitrary limits or a laissez faire approach that inadequately protects protégés, the author will attempt to realistically explore the challenges regularly faced by mentors and protégés in academe. Attention is focused on ethical decision-making and judgment, balancing competing demands, and how to optimally resolve the ethical dilemmas and challenges encountered in these relationships. The concepts of boundaries and multiple relationships are addressed herein with a focus on negotiating healthy and appropriate multiple relationships. Recommendations for mentors, protégés, and the institutions in which they work are made. The primary focus is on psychologists and other educators who serve as mentors; however, the material presented and recommendations made should have relevance to mentors of a wide range of professional backgrounds.

Why mentoring?

The development of competence is one of the major goals of all aspiring professionals. It enables them to provide services in a manner consistent with the highest ideals of their profession. As role models, guides, and teachers, mentors may play a vital role in helping their protégés become competent professionals. Competence involves the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and the ability to effectively and appropriately implement them (Stoltenberg, 2005). Knowledge is typically gained from formal instruction provided in academic coursework, symposia, and didactic experiences as well as from reading the professional literature, attending conferences and presentations, and from related educational experiences. Skills are typically derived from supervised clinical experiences to include practica, externships, internships, and post-doctoral clinical training. The attitudes held by compassionate, ethical, and well-functioning professionals and the ability to effectively and appropriately implement one's knowledge, skills, and judgment may be the aspects of competence most directly impacted by mentoring relationships. A core role and function of mentors may be to model and promote these values for developing professionals at various stages of their careers.

Faculty members, academic advisors, research supervisors, and clinical supervisors are typically assigned to their positions. Their commitment to these roles and their effectiveness in fulfilling them may be highly variable. Numerous reports in the professional literature highlight the wide range of experiences had by students, advisees, research assistants, and supervisees and the frequent dissatisfaction they experience (e.g., Clark et al., 2000; Schlosser, Knox, & Moscovitz, 2003). While these faculty roles are typically assigned, at times some of them may be in addition to the professional's primary role, the one to which they are most dedicated and that they most enjoy. The busy faculty member who is teaching several classes, running a productive lab, working on several manuscripts, and serving on several departmental and university-wide committees may have little extra time, energy, and/or interest in meeting with and assisting numerous assigned advisees. This faculty member may also lack the scheduling flexibility and free time to meet with students outside of class to more informally discuss their education and career goals, ideas, and interests. But, unfortunately for all involved, such professors are missing out on potentially highly rewarding and enriching opportunities, and students are clearly missing out on valuable untapped dimensions of what expert faculty have to offer.

In addition to the assigned positions in which professionals may serve, such as the role of advisor (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001), many additionally seek out the opportunity to serve in mentoring roles. For some, advising, supervision, and teaching relationships may develop into mentoring relationships. But, as Schlosser and Gelso (2001) point out, 'Advisors and mentors are not synonymous. One can be an advisor without being a mentor and certainly one can be a mentor to someone without being that person's advisor. It appears that far more students have advisors than mentors' (p. 158).

The evolution of mentoring relationships may be intentional and deliberate or gradual and informal; most mentorships develop over time and by mutual consent of both mentor and protégé (Johnson, 2002). Participation in the mentoring relationship is often in addition to the primary and assigned relationship such as that of teacher, advisor, or supervisor. A mentor relationship may form as a result of the potential mentor seeking out a student, supervisee, or more junior colleague who one likes, respects, or otherwise sees great potential in; alternatively, it may result from the student, supervisee, or more junior colleague explicitly seeking out a mentoring relationship with a respected, more senior professional, or it may develop naturally out of an ongoing professional relationship or collaboration where both parties are drawn to the potential benefits of adding a mentoring dimension to the relationship.

Mentoring relationships are of great importance and value for many developing professionals and are also often gratifying and rewarding for mentors. Yet, despite all their potential benefits, mentoring relationships bring with them potential challenges as well. Issues of boundaries, roles, and multiple relationships exist and if they are not addressed and handled appropriately they may lead to conflicts of interest, exploitation, and harm (Smith & Fitzpatrick, 1995). But, with appropriate forethought, sensitivity, and attention, potential pitfalls may be avoided and the benefits of the mentoring relationship may be achieved.

Boundaries

Boundaries are the basic ground rules for the professional relationship. They add a structure to mentorships that provides guidance regarding appropriate actions and interactions for mentors and protégés. While the original concept of boundaries for mental health professionals spoke primarily to the psychotherapy relationship (Gutheil & Gabbard, 1993; Simon, 1992) the boundaries construct is relevant to all professional relationships that involve a power differential. Thus, boundaries are relevant to the roles of psychotherapist, clinical and research supervisor, faculty advisor, mentor, and all other professional roles in which psychologists serve.

Smith and Fitzpatrick (1995) described boundaries as 'a therapeutic frame which defines a set of roles for the participants in the therapeutic process' (p. 499) and further state that 'proper boundaries provide a foundation for this relationship by fostering a sense of safety and the belief that the clinician will always act in the client's best interest' (p. 500). Further, psychologists have a fiduciary responsibility to those they serve professionally. Jorgenson, Hirsch, and Wahl (1997) noted that:

Generally, a fiduciary relationship exists when one party, the fiduciary, accepts the trust and confidence of another party, the entrustor, and agrees to act only in the entrustor's best interest. The professional, by virtue of his or her status as a fiduciary, has both the power and opportunity to exert undue influence over the client. Fiduciary theory recognizes this ability on the part of the fiduciary to exert undue influence. It is because of this potential for undue influence that the professional is charged with acting only in the best interest of the client. Additionally, it is always the responsibility of the professional to set appropriate boundaries and to ensure that, once set, these boundaries are not... violated. (p. 51)

Several obligations are included as essential philosophical underpinnings of most professions' ethics code (c.f., American Psychological Association, 2002); these common obligations form the foundation of all ethical behavior (Kitchener, 1988):

- Beneficence: the duty to help others and endeavor to achieve maximum benefit for them in all our professional interactions
- Nonmaleficence: the duty to prevent or avoid harm and to take actions to minimize any negative outcomes in our professional roles
- Fidelity: faithfulness, or our professional obligations to others, to include both explicit and implicit duties
- Autonomy: the duty to promote the independent functioning of others and not to take actions that will promote their dependence on us
- Justice: the notion that each individual has an equal right to access high quality professional services

Boundaries in professional relationships include dimensions such as touch, location, self-disclosure, time, gifts, fees, and personal space. Boundaries may be rigidly enforced, crossed, or violated. Rigid enforcement of boundaries may mean never touching clients, students, supervisees, or protégés, never meeting outside of one's office or lab, never sharing any personal information, and never allowing a meeting to run over the previously agreed upon time. It can easily be seen that rigid enforcement of all boundaries may be impractical and likely to interfere with the development of functional and appropriate professional relationships.

Boundary crossings and violations

Boundaries may be crossed or violated. Thus, the use of touch may occur in the context of a professional relationship, meetings may occur in non-traditional settings, mentors may share personal information with their protégés, and meetings may run over the agreed upon time. But, whether these boundary crossings will result in boundary violations depends on several factors, each of which is relevant to the mentor's fiduciary responsibilities. The first of these is intent. The goal in crossing any professional boundary should be the protégé's best interests and the boundary crossing should be consistent with previously agreed upon goals, roles, and responsibilities in the mentoring relationship (Anderson & Kitchener, 1996; Holub & Lee, 1990). Second, the boundary crossing should be perceived by the protégé positively and not as unwelcome, harmful, or exploitative (Gottlieb, 1993; Gutheil & Gabbard, 1993). Third, the boundary crossing should not occur to gratify the mentor's needs but be in the service of the protégé's professional growth and development (Borys, 1994; Pope, 1990). Finally, all boundary crossings must be consistent with prevailing professional standards and should withstand scrutiny (Doverspike, 1999).

Therefore, in order to determine whether the use of touch or self-disclosure constitutes an appropriate boundary crossing or a serious violation, one must consider the setting where mentoring interactions occur, the mentor's intent, and other relationship variables. Clearly there is a difference between hugging a protégé at her or his graduation ceremony after having worked together for several years, and engaging in sexual intimacies with a protégé during the course of the mentoring relationship. A significant difference can also be seen between disclosing to a protégé the struggles one still has in striking a balance between professional and personal demands and disclosing to a protégé intimate details of one's marital difficulties. Finally, most professionals would view traveling to a professional conference with a protégé and introducing her or him to colleagues very differently from taking a vacation with a protégée or spending evenings out together drinking alcohol.

While avoiding the violation of boundaries is an important aspect of each mentor's fiduciary responsibilities, the crossing of boundaries is viewed by many as essential to establishing and carrying out an effective mentoring relationship (Barnett & Yutzenka, 1994; Zur & Lazarus, 2002). However, some professionals tend to eschew boundary crossings out of a fear of them

leading to boundary violations. This fear is typically rooted in earlier professional writing on boundaries. Some previous authors (e.g., Gutheil & Gabbard, 1993; Simon, 1989) presented relational boundary models based in the psychoanalytic and psychodynamic literature that focused on psychotherapy as a transference-based relationship, one in which the patient or client 'transfers' needs, feelings, reactions, etc. onto the professional. The origin of these needs, feelings, and reactions is in other significant relationships in the patient's or client's life. Additionally, the psychotherapy relationship is one where a power differential exists, emotional sharing and intensity may be present, the patient or client may be emotionally vulnerable, and the relationship occurs in relative isolation, further increasing the risk of exploitation and harm (Edelwich & Brodsky, 1991; Holroyd & Brodsky, 1977). These authors also observed that all exploitative and clearly harmful boundary violations were preceded by a series of increasingly intrusive boundary crossings and boundary violations, with the professional traversing a 'slippery slope' from respecting boundaries, to boundary crossings, to increasingly harmful and exploitative boundary violations. It was then postulated that by avoiding all boundary crossings, professionals could prevent any harmful and exploitative behaviors from occurring (Lazarus, 1994).

Most frequently, the harmful and exploitative boundary violations at the end of the slippery slope described in the professional literature involve sexual intimacies with clients (Gutheil & Gabbard, 1993). Engaging in such inappropriate sexual behaviors with clients is viewed as a mishandling of transference and is always viewed as harmful (Gottlieb, 1993; Pope, 1990). While non-sexual multiple relationships may occur as well, it is sexual intimacies with clients that are seen as the ultimate risk for those stepping onto the slippery slope. Thus, some authors recommend avoiding all boundary crossings since they are seen as *de facto* evidence of stepping onto the slippery slope and thus increasing the risk of boundary violations and harm (e.g., Gutheil & Gabbard, 1993; Simon, 1992).

In contrast to this slippery slope perspective, other authors have recently argued that while avoiding boundary crossings may in fact prevent boundary violations from occurring, avoiding all boundary crossings (and all multiple relationships as a result) also has the effect of withholding from others much of what makes the professional relationship the rich, rewarding, and valuable relationship that all hope it to be (e.g., Barnett & Yutzenka, 1994; Lazarus, 1994; Williams, 1997; Zur, 2001). Additionally, there is no empirical evidence suggesting that the crossing of boundaries always heightens the risk of boundary violations (Lazarus, 1998). While that possibility exists, with appropriate attention, forethought, and open discussion by both parties, boundary violations may be prevented and avoided while engaging in boundary crossings that enhance and enrich the mentoring relationship (Barnett, 1999; Williams, 1997).

Multiple relationships

Multiple relationships are defined as the practice of engaging in additional relationships with another individual in addition to the primary professional relationship. Lamb, Catanzaro, and Moorman (2004) specify that this includes any nonsexual or sexual relationship in addition to the agreed upon professional relationship. In the academic environment one may frequently serve in multiple roles within one general relationship. An example would be to serve as a graduate student's professor, research supervisor, advisor, and mentor. Each of these roles may be seen as an aspect of the faculty-student relationship and each is likely to be seen as consistent with it. Serving in multiple roles that are consistent with a professional relationship would not necessarily indicate a multiple relationship. Multiple relationships are often inconsistent with the objectives of one's primary professional role and its associated responsibilities.

As described by Oberlander and Barnett (2005), 'nonsexual multiple relationships include academic, supervisory, social, and financial or business relationships' (p. 50). Multiple

relationships involve going outside of the widely accepted roles associated with a specific professional relationship. Examples include serving as a graduate student's professor and also serving as the student's psychotherapist or serving as the student's dissertation advisor as well as entering into a business venture with the student. These multiple relationships are seen as inconsistent with the primary professional role and the obligations and responsibilities it brings. While some multiple relationships may be appropriate and not harmful, it is the psychologist's responsibility to avoid multiple relationships that hold a significant potential for exploitation or harm.

Standard 3.05, Multiple Relationships, in the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (Ethics Code) (American Psychological Association, 2002) states,

A psychologist refrains from entering into a multiple relationship if the multiple relationship could reasonably be expected to impair the psychologist's objectivity, competence, or effectiveness in performing his or her functions as a psychologist, or otherwise risks exploitation or harm to the person with whom the professional relationship exists. Multiple relationships that would not reasonably be expected to cause impairment or risk exploitation or harm are not unethical. (p. 1065)

Additional standards in the APA Ethics Code that provide guidance on multiple relationships include Standard 3.04, Avoiding Harm, which states 'Psychologists take reasonable steps to avoid harming their clients/patients, students, supervisees, research participants, organizational clients, and others with whom they work, and to minimize harm where it is foreseeable and unavoidable' (American Psychological Association, 2002, p. 1065); Standard 3.06, Conflict of Interest, which states, 'Psychologists refrain from taking on a professional role when personal, scientific, professional, legal, financial, or other interests or relationships could reasonably be expected to (a) impair their objectivity, competence, or effectiveness in performing their functions as psychologists or (b) expose the person or organization with whom the professional relationship exists to harm or exploitation' (p. 1065); and Standard 3.08, Exploitative Relationships, which states, 'Psychologists do not exploit persons over whom they have supervisory, evaluative, or other authority such as clients/patients, students, supervisees, research participants, and employees' (p. 1065).

Sexual multiple relationships with clients, students, supervisees, and others with whom psychologists engage in professional roles (e.g., protégés) are always considered exploitative and harmful, an abuse of power, and a violation of the trust and faith accorded the professional (Gottlieb, 1993; Pope, 1990). As such, they should never occur when a psychologist is already engaged in a professional relationship with any individual. The professional literature makes clear the harm that nearly always results from sexual multiple relationships with clients (Borys & Pope, 1989; Pope & Bouhousos, 1986) and with students and supervisees (Glaser & Thorpe, 1986; Hammel, Olkin, & Taube, 1996). Further, the APA Ethics Code (American Psychological Association, 2002) explicitly prohibits psychologists from entering into or engaging in sexual relationships with clients/patients (Standard 10.05, Sexual Intimacies With Current Therapy Clients/Patients), with those who have close relationships to one's clients (Standard 10.06, Sexual Intimacies With Relatives or Significant Others of Current Therapy Clients/Patients), and with students and supervisees (Standard 7.07, Sexual Relationships With Students and Supervisees). Each of these relationships is prohibited because of the clear potential for a conflict of interest and the significant likelihood of exploitation and harm. Blending sexual and professional roles may cause impairment in the psychologist's objectivity and judgment, potentially coloring decisions made and actions taken. Such sexual multiple relationships are seen as inconsistent with the psychologist's fiduciary responsibilities in the professional relationship in that they are likely motivated by gratification of the psychologist's own needs and not the protégé's best interests and professional development. Accordingly, while not explicitly stated in the APA Ethics Code, this prohibition should always be applied to mentoring relationships in academic settings. By their

very nature, sexual multiple relationships are usually inimical to the goals and objectives of the mentoring relationship and process.

Boundaries and multiple relationships in the academic setting

The issues of boundaries and multiple relationships are relevant to the very nature of mentoring relationships as well as all faculty–student and supervisor–supervisee relationships in academic settings (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001, 2005). Many of the components that help make mentorships so valuable are associated with the crossing of certain boundaries and participation in some types of multiple relationships. Although mentorships share similarities with psychotherapist–client relationships, they are in fact often quite different. As Plaut (1993) states, ‘Teacher–student relationships differ from those between therapist and patient because of the relative collegiality and social interaction that is important for the student’s professional development’ (p. 211). Since most mentoring occurs in the academic setting, mentors will typically be educators who have established a mentorship in the context of an existing teacher–student relationship.

Faculty–student relationships by their very nature involve a power differential. Faculty members have evaluative authority over their students; students rely on faculty for fair and objective teaching and grading of students’ work, for advising, and for letters of recommendation. Additionally, faculty serve as gatekeepers for their professions, monitoring each student’s progress, academically and interpersonally. Faculty who have concerns about a student’s behaviors, emotional functioning, or academic progress have an obligation to share this information with their department’s hierarchy. To best carry out these important functions fairly, faculty must remain objective and unencumbered by multiple relationships that impair their objectivity and judgment.

At the same time, avoiding all multiple relationships in the academic setting may limit the quality of faculty–student relationships. While some care must be taken to prevent exploitation of, and harm to, students there are two fundamental differences between being a student and a client that make multiple relationships with students more appropriate, and possibly more necessary than in clinical contexts. First, while a power differential exists in both sets of relationships, academic settings offer greater structure, more oversight, less isolation, and a less intimate focus for professional interactions.

Second, in the academic setting it is understood that upon successful completion of their training, students will become peers of their professors. In fact, as the years pass in a student’s training the power differential generally decreases. Students gradually become colleagues and peers to faculty. After graduation and licensure the power differential dissipates and many former students truly are peers and colleagues of their former faculty. Many lasting friendships result from the relationships that developed during the academic years. While clients may always be clients and may return for additional treatment in the future, the same is not true for many students. Nonetheless, faculty must carefully navigate this developmental process.

It is important to note that in spite of all the classroom lectures and presentations, all the readings assigned, and all the formal supervision provided, informal interactions between faculty and students may be some of the experiences that have the greatest impact on the student’s professional development (Schlosser & Gelso, 2001, 2005; Schlosser et al., 2003). Above all, faculty members are role models to their students. As Kitchener (1992) stated, ‘Implicit attitudes and explicit behavior of faculty communicate as much as course content about being ethical’ (p. 190), and ‘if faculty model unethical behavior it is very possible that the most influential ethical attitudes that students learn will not come from explicit ethics education but from the experiences that they have in other areas of the curriculum’ (p. 190). Further, Plaut (1993) reinforced this point: ‘The behavior of a teacher toward a student by *definition* models what the student may be

expected to exhibit as an independent professional' (p. 212). Thus, the manner in which each faculty member interacts with students may have a profound impact on the students' professional development, on the values they internalize regarding boundaries and multiple relationships, and thus on how they function in the future as faculty and as mentors.

Faculty-student relationships tend to be characterized by multiple and often overlapping roles. Examples include faculty serving as advisor, research supervisor, clinical supervisor, co-author, and mentor (Biaggio, Paget, & Chenoweth, 1997). Blending these roles need not be inappropriate or inconsistent with the goals of assisting students with their professional development. But, some types of multiple relationships in the academic setting may easily be seen as exploitative. Studies have found that between 10 and 15% of psychology faculty acknowledged sexually intimate relationships with at least one student (e.g., Pope, Levenson, & Schover, 1979; Tabachnick, Keith-Spiegel, & Pope, 1991). Yet, 71% of faculty acknowledge that engaging in these relationships is unquestionably unethical (Tabachnick et al., 1991). Further, in another survey of faculty who acknowledged having engaged in intimate relationships with students, fully 84% reported viewing them retrospectively as 'coercive, ethically problematic, and a hindrance to the working relationship' (Hammel et al., 1996, p. 96) despite often viewing them positively at the time when they were occurring.

Faculty members and students who participate in mentoring relationships may spend many hours together working. These hours may be intellectually stimulating and emotionally very gratifying. Working together outside the classroom, having discussions about the student's career plans, about issues and trends in the profession, and related issues all promote a sense of sharing and closeness. Effective mentors will have an emotional investment in their protégés' personal and professional development; a true caring. Yet, at the same time, this closeness and emotional investment must not lead the mentor to boundary violations and inappropriate multiple relationships. Similarly, protégés may easily come to idealize the mentor, feel special as a result of the commitment and caring evident in the mentor's behavior and the extra time spent together, and be vulnerable to boundary transgressions by the mentor which would violate students' dependency and trust.

Faculty members must also maintain self-awareness of their own needs and emotional functioning. Mentors who are under stress or experiencing alienation, loneliness, or relationship difficulties in their personal lives may be at greater risk of misinterpreting a protégé's statements and actions, and they may be at greater risk of seeking self-gratification through their protégés. Faculty members will also at times find themselves attracted to their students and protégés (Pope, Sonne, & Greene, 2006; Pope, Sonne, & Holroyd, 1993). While sexual attraction is not unethical or problematic in itself, thoughts of acting on such feelings should be seen as a warning sign to alert mentors. Such thoughts and feelings warrant great caution and mentors should seek consultation with a colleague (and possibly supervision and/or personal psychotherapy) to prevent acting on such impulses.

Mentors should also be familiar with their institutional policies and seek appropriate guidance from them. For example, the faculty handbook at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County forbids all faculty from amorous and sexual relationships with all individuals over whom they have evaluative authority, stating that the evaluative authority faculty have 'diminishes the student's freedom of choice in amorous and sexual relationships, even when no coercion is intended by the faculty member' (University of Maryland, Baltimore County Board of Regents, 2002, pp. 13-41). This directive is representative of those found in the faculty handbooks of many institutions. While the directive does not mention mentoring specifically, this directive applies to faculty members and their interactions with students in all capacities.

The overall objective of such guidelines is the protection of the student/protégé. Protégés function at the lower end of a power differential and are trusting of, and dependent on, faculty

mentors. While it is clear that sexually intimate relationships between mentors and protégés are invariably harmful and are to be avoided, some other types of boundary crossings and multiple roles may be quite appropriate, as long as they do not exploit the power imbalance in the relationship or take advantage of the student's dependence and trust. It is hoped that being a professor, research supervisor, and mentor would be seen very differently than being a professor and a student's psychotherapist or a professor and a student's business partner. The potential for impaired objectivity and judgment on the part of the faculty member and the potential for harm to the student/protégé should seem very different in these situations. In addition to sexualized relationships, actions such as having students pick up faculty members' laundry or dry cleaning or assigning other personal tasks or demeaning activities to students would easily be seen as boundary violations; behaviors that are both inconsistent with the parameters of the professional relationship and that clearly abuse power or are exploitative in nature. But, what about traveling together to a conference and spending the weekend together at meetings, meals, and socializing with colleagues? What about having a protégé to the faculty member's home to work on a project throughout the day, sharing meals and chatting informally during breaks? What about going out in the evening with a protégé, either for dinner or drinks, to interact socially and to discuss work? Such scenarios may leave mentors unsure of the appropriate course of action. It is here that the use of decision-making models may be of help.

Boundaries, multiple relationships and ethical decision making

Academics should avoid an all-or-nothing approach to boundary crossing and multiple relationships. Boundary violations and some types of multiple relationships are clearly harmful. Avoiding all boundary crossings and all multiple relationships may prevent harm but it may also prevent the formation of functional, nurturing, and rewarding mentoring relationships. But, just which boundaries may be appropriately crossed? How can one ensure that boundaries are not violated? Determining which multiple relationships may enhance the mentoring relationship and which are likely to lead to exploitation and harm is a greater challenge. While professionals will typically not find it challenging when confronted with clearly innocuous or clearly harmful situations, those situations that fall between these extremes—in an ethical decision-making gray area—are much more challenging. Unfortunately, no list of rules or standards can adequately address every situation, dilemma, and challenge that may arise in the course of a mentoring relationship. In fact, ethics codes such as the APA Ethics Code (American Psychological Association, 2002) specifically state that they cannot provide specific guidance for every situation or dilemma faced by professionals. Further, the APA Ethics Code states that in addition to consulting the Ethics Code when making ethics decisions, psychologists should consult laws, regulations, and guidelines, use their own professional judgment, and consider 'the dictates of their own conscience' (p. 1062). As a result of the lack of a single source of guidance that provides the answers for all dilemmas faced, and the need for assistance when applying one's judgment, professionals must rely on a process of ethical decision-making for further assistance.

As a first step, professionals are guided to use the underlying ethics virtues for assistance when contemplating boundary crossing and multiple relationships. Each virtue may be used to create a series of questions that mentors can ask themselves to help clarify an appropriate course of action. Representative questions include:

- If I take this action will it be helpful to my protégé? (*beneficence*)
- Will taking this action likely result in any harm to my protégé? (*non-maleficence*)
- Is the proposed action consistent with my professional obligations as a psychologist, in general, and as a mentor, in particular? (*fidelity*)

- Is the proposed action consistent with the previously agreed to parameters of the mentoring relationship? (*fidelity*)
- Will acting in this way promote my protégé's independence or be more likely to promote his or her dependence on me over time? (*autonomy*)
- Am I treating my protégé similarly with how I treat others or am I treating him or her better or less well (and if so, why?)? (*justice*)

Mentors will also want to consult their profession's ethics code, relevant professional guidelines, and any available institutional policies relevant to faculty–student and mentor–protégé relationships. Additionally, consultation with colleagues is always important when unsure of the appropriate course of action. In isolation, one may easily rationalize many behaviors and it is difficult to have enough self-awareness to be able to truthfully and non-defensively address factors that adversely impact one's objectivity and judgment. Open and honest consultation with a colleague should be seen as a part of each professional's fiduciary responsibility when confronting ethical dilemmas (Gottlieb, 1993; Younggren, 2002; Younggren & Gottlieb, 2004).

Numerous models of ethical decision-making are available for professionals when confronting dilemmas (for a comprehensive review of these models see Cottone & Claus, 2000). One representative model is provided by Tarvydas (1998) who recommends the following steps when faced with a situation with no clearly evident correct course of action:

- Interpreting the situation
- Reviewing the problem or dilemma
- Determining the standards that apply to the dilemma
- Generating possible and probable courses of action
- Considering the consequences for each course of action
- Consulting with a supervisor and peers
- Selecting an action by weighing competing values, given the context
- Planning and executing the selected action
- Evaluating the course of action after it has been implemented

Use of such a decision-making model may provide a more systematic method for weighing the various options presented to the professional and will hopefully be of assistance in selecting the course of action most likely to fulfill one's obligations in keeping with the ethics virtues. It should be emphasized that in most such situations there is no one clearly correct course of action. The context of the situation, one's values, competing demands, and the preferences of the individuals involved will each impact on the decision reached.

Should a faculty mentor ever enter into a different kind of relationship with a protégé after the active phase of a mentorship has ended? Gottlieb (1993) developed a decision-making model for just such a quandary. Gottlieb's model proposes three factors to consider in these situations: power, duration of the relationship, and clarity of termination. The greater the imbalance of power in a relationship, the more caution one should exercise when entering multiple relationships. In fact, the more evaluative the nature of the relationship the mentor has with the protégé, the greater the imbalance of power. Duration of the relationship may vary as well and also impacts on the power differential. An externship supervisor from one semester will likely have less power over a student than one's dissertation advisor. Clarity of termination also impacts on the power differential. If a former student will likely be requesting letters of recommendation in the near future, is the faculty–student relationship really over? The formal ending of the evaluative relationship dramatically reduces the power differential. Gottlieb suggests that mentors exercise maximum caution when the power differential is great, when the mentorship endures over a long period of time, and when the relationship is ambiguous with regard to clarity of termination. He also

suggests consultation with colleagues, avoiding role incompatibility, open discussion of the contemplated multiple relationship with the other individual, and consideration of available alternatives to entering the multiple relationship.

An alternative model of ethical decision-making is provided by Younggren and Gottlieb (2004) who offer a series of questions for consideration when contemplating entering a multiple relationship. While designed for psychotherapist–client relationships, the author has modified this model for application to mentor–protégé relationships. Relevant questions include:

- Is entering into a relationship in addition to the academic one necessary, or should I avoid it?
- Can the dual relationship potentially cause harm to the student?
- If harm seems unlikely or avoidable, would the additional relationship prove beneficial?
- Is there a risk that the dual relationship could disrupt the academic relationship?
- Can I evaluate this matter objectively?

Additionally, Sonne (2005) highlights factors relevant to the professional, to the subordinate, and to both the primary and secondary relationships that should be considered before entering multiple relationships. Factors to consider include:

- Professional: willingness to expend cognitive effort in grappling with the dilemma, application of ethics and moral principles, gender, culture, theoretical orientation, and character traits
- Subordinate: gender, culture, psychosocial strengths and vulnerabilities, and history of prior boundary violations, trauma, and abuse
- Primary professional relationship: nature of the primary relationship to include multiple roles and factors such as power differential and duration
- Secondary relationship factors: clarity of change in nature and function of the relationship, motivation for engaging in the secondary relationship, the professional's affective response to the potential secondary relationship, potential for role conflict, potential benefit for the client of secondary relationship, and setting of the secondary relationship.

Each of these decision-making models provides mentors with relevant issues to consider when contemplating multiple relationships with protégés. Although these models may assist mentors in reaching the best possible decision, they do not provide ultimate answers. In fact, mentors may appropriately decide to enter a particular type of multiple relationship with one protégé and not with another. Mentors and protégés alike may have different vulnerabilities and needs that should be considered. Regardless of the model used and the exact outcome reached, the most important point is the need to engage in a proactive, thoughtful process that considers the protégé's needs and best interests prior to entering into multiple relationships.

Recommendations for effective boundaries in mentoring relationships

Mentoring relationships are important for protégés, for mentors, for their institutions, for the profession, and ultimately for those served by psychologists (Johnson, 2002; Johnson & Nelson, 1999; Russell & Adams, 1997). By their very nature, mentoring relationships will involve the crossing of boundaries and the presence of multiple roles and possibly multiple relationships. Caring and effective mentors will spend extra time with protégés outside the classroom and office setting; they will discuss personal issues, career plans, goals, and aspirations for both themselves and their protégés; they will provide protégés with emotional support, nurturance, and guidance; they will show caring and a personal interest in struggles and challenges faced by the protégé; they may travel to conferences together, share meals together,

possibly work on multiple projects together outside the classroom; and mentors may include protégés in their social life with colleagues to assist in the protégé's socialization into the profession.

At times, the line between effective mentoring and actions that put the protégé's wellbeing at risk may be blurred or unclear. Therefore, a thoughtful approach to crossing boundaries, engaging in multiple roles, and entering multiple relationships is recommended in order to minimize the risk of harm to or exploitation of protégés. Specific recommendations include:

- Engage in a thoughtful process of ethical decision-making prior to crossing boundaries and entering into multiple relationships. Use decision-making models and consider the ethics virtues for guidance
- Always consider your motivations for actions bearing on protégés. Be sure that the protégé's best interests are being considered and that your own personal needs and interests are not the primary motivating forces
- Remain aware of your own emotional state, stresses, relationship history, and emotional vulnerabilities. If the possibility of impaired judgment exists seek consultation, and consider supervision and/or personal psychotherapy
- Focus on the potential for impaired objectivity and judgment; exploitation and harm
- Consider available options and alternatives to contemplated multiple relationships if risk is present
- Be a good role model and practice what you preach with regard to boundaries
- Engage in open discussion with protégés of boundary issues, multiple roles and relationships, and expectations of each other. Update this agreement as needed over time when significant changes in the mentoring relationship are being considered
- Be sensitive to the role of individual differences such as gender, culture, and age
- Ensure role consistency when considering multiple relationships. Be sure that the secondary relationship is consistent with your professional obligations to the protégé
- Consider prevailing professional standards and consult with colleagues. Open discussion of boundary and relationship issues is essential. A desire to keep decisions and actions private is a cause for alarm
- Work to empower protégés and to increase their independent functioning. Actions likely to create dependence on you or that accentuate the power differential in the relationship should be avoided
- Develop clear policies to guide faculty mentors in appropriately serving in these roles; training should be provided to mentors and protégés so they will better understand their responsibilities, obligations, and rights
- Establish formal mechanisms for complaint resolution such as ombudsmen to provide assistance and guidance.

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