



Case: Common Interest, Uncommon Experience

Key Phrases:

- Making differences discussable
- Implicit and explicit assumptions about identity

The Situation:

Consuela was eager to meet Andrew, the division chief who had agreed to become her mentor in her first faculty position at BWH. Consuela was born in Mexico, where she completed her undergraduate degree; she moved to the United States for her medical training at UC San Diego and her residency at Stanford. Her parents moved to California when Consuela began her medical training and became active in the growing Hispanic community development efforts. Consuela had prepared for a professional life in California, close to her family and friends, until her husband was recruited to the prestigious Broad Institute, an opportunity he could not pass up. Consuela applied for every available faculty position in the Boston medical community and was thrilled to receive an offer from the Brigham. Moreover, Consuela was pleased that Andrew was identified as her assigned mentor in the offer letter she received. Early in her career she attended a conference and heard one of Andrew's presentations, and Consuela was confident that they shared research interests. However, Consuela was concerned about the pace and culture in the Harvard teaching hospitals and was eager to have a mentor who could help guide her budding research career, as well as enable her transition at the hospital.

Andrew had recently been promoted to Associate Professor of Surgery and understands the department's policy to provide all new junior faculty with a senior faculty mentor. Andrew has been fortunate in the many mentors he has had throughout his career and always enjoys mentoring young faculty. He is scheduled to meet Consuela, a new recruit to the department, and quickly skimmed her CV to become acquainted with her academic interests. While he noted that they have some research in common, her personal background and life experiences are vastly different.

Andrew wonders how this will work out because he has never mentored anyone so different from himself.

Case Questions:



Faculty Development & Diversity

1. Should Andrew raise his assumptions about their differences with Consuela, and is this legal?
2. Are perceived differences relevant in a mentoring relationship?
3. How can racial difference become part of a mentoring conversation?