Effects of Race, Gender, Perceived Similarity, and Contact on Mentor Relationships

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This study examined the effects of similarity, both actual (race and gender) and perceived, and amount of contact between mentor and protégé on the quality of mentor relationships. Mentor relationship quality was measured by liking, satisfaction, intended retention, and degree of psychosocial and instrumental functions experienced by the protégé. The participants were 104 summer intern protégés and their volunteer staff mentors employed at a large West coast media organization. Protégés were randomly assigned to one of two types of mentor pairings—same and different race mentors. Results indicate that liking, satisfaction, and contact with mentor were higher when protégés’ perceived themselves to be more similar to their mentors. Actual race pairing was related to protégés’ perceptions of the amount of career support and to mentors’ liking of protégés.

Mentoring is an age-old developmental tool whose practice extends as far back as 800 B.C. Mentor, the companion of King Odysseus, was entrusted with the responsibility of guiding and teaching Odysseus’ son, Telemachus, to become a competent successor to the kingdom (Carruthers, 1992; Murdaugh, 1993). Mentoring has been defined in the literature in a variety of ways. Descriptions range from somewhat simple dyadic relationship in which an older individual coaches, guides, and helps a protégé (Hunt & Michael, 1983).

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to a relationship between two individuals whose nature changes over time (Kram, 1983). For the purposes of this study, we are interested in the mentoring that occurs within the context of a formal program and, therefore, we find the following definition useful (Bowen, 1985, p. 31):

Mentoring occurs when a senior person (the mentor) in terms of age and experience undertakes to provide information, advice, and emotional support to a junior person (the protegé) in a relationship which is set formally by the constraints of the program and lasts for a limited period of time.

Research has found that mentoring has been positively related to career success for the protegé. Researchers have found that employees who received mentoring: (a) experienced more promotions, (b) had higher incomes, and (c) were more satisfied with their pay and benefits than individuals who had experienced less extensive mentoring relationships (Dreher & Ash, 1990; Fagenson, 1989; Turban & Dougherty, 1994). In addition to the benefits received by the protegé, the mentor and the organization derive positive outcomes from the mentoring relationship (Halatin, 1981; Hunt & Michael, 1983; Zey, 1984). Zey (1984) outlined the following benefits: (a) career enhancement for the mentor, who can build a reputation of effectively developing talent; (b) access to a communication conduit since the protegé can gather information and lobby on behalf of the mentor among other departments; and (c) intrapsychic rewards from making a contribution to the protegé as an individual and to the organization as a whole. The benefits that are said to accrue to the organization include: (a) the integration or socialization of individuals into the operating norms and informal power structure; (b) increased organizational communication as mentors and protégés form alliances across levels and departments; (c) management development and succession planning information; and (d) increased productivity and decreased turnover (Wilson & Elman, 1990; Zey 1984).

Recent research on the mentoring process has shown that mentors typically provide two distinct forms of support to their protégés: instrumental and psychosocial. Instrumental support enhances the career of the protegé by providing challenging assignments and visibility as well as the mentor’s sponsorship and protection (Gibb & Megginson, 1993; Noe, 1988). In contrast, psychosocial support includes those activities in which mentors serve as role models and provide counseling, coaching, friendship, confirmation, and acceptance. Psychosocial functions are believed to enhance a protegé’s sense of competence, identity, and effectiveness in a role (Gibb & Megginson, 1993; Ragins & Cotton, 1991).

While mentoring has been shown to be very helpful for the career development of White males, upon whom most of the research has focused, only in the last few years have researchers begun to examine the importance of mentoring for women and people of color (Maniero, 1994; Thomas, 1990). Blake (1995) conducted a qualitative analysis of nine Black professional
women, many of whom were pioneers in their respective fields. It was found that these women were frustrated regarding the lack of Black role models and that they felt that their relationships with White women were characterized by mistrust. This lack of trust between females of different races extends to males as well. Kram and Hall (1996) examined a large professional services firm, finding that senior White managers had greater concerns about the competence of associates who were not White males than they did about their fellow White males. Wilson (1994) found evidence which suggested that for White males, it is riskier to mentor a minority because the token status of the protégé subjects the dyad to even greater scrutiny than a traditional, homogenous dyad. Therefore, White men may perceive that the risks of mentoring non-White personnel outweigh the potential positive benefits that might occur.

Fortunately, mistrust and reluctance to become involved with each other’s careers does not represent a complete picture of cross-race mentoring experiences. Other researchers have also found that women and minorities are more likely to have a wide network of individuals who vary in race and ethnicity as well as organizational membership and status. Maniero (1994) explored how White female executives were identified in their early careers as viable candidates for senior management positions. Most of the women in Maniero’s study had a wide network of professionals and managers at different levels of the organization, rather than one traditional mentor. Thomas (1987) studied patterns of mentoring relationships among Black and White managers and found that 62% of Blacks have White male mentors, either exclusively or in addition to other Black sponsors. Thomas and Alderfer (1989) discovered that Black men and women found it organizationally necessary to have some type of White sponsorship, yet also responded to psychosocial need to have a developmental relationship with a same-race person.

These mixed findings on spontaneous evolution of cross-race mentoring relationships provide the impetus for organizations to become involved the development of mentoring relationships. Formal mentoring programs provide organizations with the ability to maximize the opportunity for all employees, and particularly women and minorities, to have a mentor. Access to mentoring relationships can help women and minorities overcome some of the major barriers that prevent their rapid ascension into the ranks of upper management (Thomas, 1991). These barriers include the lack of access to informational networks; tokenism, stereotyping, and incorrect performance attributions; inadequate socialization processes; and norms that discourage cross-gender and cross-race mentoring (Hinch, 1993; Noe, 1988).

Barriers can be overcome by pairing a new employee with a mentor who has been in the organization long enough to know where and how to acquire necessary information. Also, pairing a new employee with a mentor may help to overcome perceptions of tokenism because the mentor can give an employee a realistic perception of that employee’s successful performance. More
specifically, research on mentoring suggests that a mentoring relationship can be especially useful to women and minorities because it can provide access to the informal power structure, which currently excludes women and minorities (Cox, 1993; Hall & Allen, 1982; Ragins, 1989; Willbur, 1987).

To ensure that minorities and women have access to benefits from mentoring, more organizations are implementing formal mentoring programs to provide developmental assistance (Burke & McKeen, 1989; Garcia, 1992; Morton & Gordon, 1992). Rather than relying on mentoring relationships to spontaneously develop, protégés are assigned to mentors. Some organizations have formal mentoring programs that are geared specifically toward students and entry-level employees (Blake & Gallon-Clarke, 1992; Garcia, 1992; Waters, 1993).

Many articles in scholarly and professional journals provide information regarding how to implement successfully formal mentoring programs for employees, particularly for youths and minorities (Freedman, 1992; Phillips-Jones, 1983; Ugbah, Lubwama, & Evuleocha, 1994; Wilson, 1994). However, little empirical research has specifically explored differences in outcomes between formal and informal mentoring relationships. Chao, Walz, and Gardner’s (1992) research is an exception. They found that protégés in informal mentoring relationships gained more career-related support from their mentors than individuals in formal relationships, yet no differences were found on psychosocial support. In addition, protégés in both informal and formal mentoring relationships had higher degrees of organizational socialization and job satisfaction than individuals without mentors. However, there were no significant differences on organizational socialization and job satisfaction between protégés in formal mentoring relationships compared to those in informal mentoring relationships. This research suggests that in some respects, formal mentoring relationships may provide benefits and outcomes that are comparable to, albeit different from, informal mentoring relationships.

One way to increase the likelihood of formal mentoring programs providing comparable benefits to informal mentoring programs is to match carefully mentors and protégés (Frierson, Hargrove, & Lewis, 1994; Morton & Gordon, 1992). Limited empirical research exists regarding the best ways to pair mentors and protégés. Many factors could determine the success of the mentoring relationship and should be considered in the pairing process. Protégés have been paired with mentors in a variety of ways according to similarity in interests, backgrounds, and geographic proximity (Furano, Roaf, Styles, & Branch, 1993; Garcia, 1992).

Researchers have suggested that similarity in race and gender are important considerations in pairing, as well (Burke, 1984; Thomas, 1990). Thus, the degree of similarity between the mentor and the protégé, either actual or perceived, could affect the quality of the mentoring relationship (Turban & Jones, 1988). This phenomenon is explained by the similarity-attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971), which suggests that the more similar
one perceives another person to be, the more that other person is liked. Although Byrne’s (1971) original research referred to similarity in attitudes, more recent research has extended these findings to include similarity in demographic characteristics (Tsui & O’Reilly, 1989; Zenger & Lawrence, 1989).

The similarity-attraction paradigm has been well supported by research among supervisor–employee dyads (Judge & Ferris, 1993; Tsui & O’Reilly, 1989; Wayne & Liden, 1995). These authors consistently found that demographic similarity between supervisors and subordinates had a positive effect on the supervisor’s liking of the subordinate. The similarity-attraction paradigm has not been tested specifically on mentor pairs. However, findings discussed earlier indicating a lack of affinity for different-race mentoring relationships (Thomas & Alderfer, 1989; Blake, 1995; Kram & Hall, in press) suggest that similarity of race may positively affect liking therefore, it is expected that:

HYPOTHESIS 1. Mentors paired with same-race protégés will like their protégés more than mentors paired with different-race protégés.

Positive affect has been shown to influence supervisors’ evaluations of their subordinates (Tsui & O’Reilly, 1989). Therefore, it is probable that the amount of liking by mentors also influences their judgments and decisions about their protégés. One type of decision that mentors make about their protégés is how much support to give them. Some recent authors have called for research on the ways in which racial similarities and differences between mentors and protégés can affect mentor relationships (Defour, 1990; Furano et al., 1993). Specifically, the degree to which these differences affect a mentor’s provision of psychosocial and instrumental functions remains to be determined.

To date, only Thomas (1990) has addressed this issue by collecting data from 88 Black and 107 White managers. This group collectively accounted for 487 developmental relationships who were employed at a large public utility company in the northeastern United States. Participants completed questionnaires designed to assess various career experiences and the degree of instrumental and psychosocial support they thought they had gained from mentors. Thomas found that same-race relationships provided significantly more psychosocial support than cross-race relationships among professional employees. No difference in the amount of instrumental support between protégés with mentors of same race versus different race was found in Thomas’ study, thus no difference is expected to be found in this study between mentors and protégés. Thomas’ research was conducted among managers who spontaneously developed mentoring relationships. This study tests his findings among formally matched entry-level employees. Therefore, the following hypothesis is suggested:
HYPOTHESIS 2. Protégés matched with same-race mentors will gain more psychosocial career support than protégés paired with different-race mentors.

Differences between genders have been found to affect psychosocial functions as well. Some researchers have found that female mentors provide and female protégés need more psychosocial support than their male counterparts. Reich (1986) found that female mentors appear to offer more psychosocial support than male mentors. Burke (1984) explored the career experiences of 80 men and women professionals and found several differences between genders on various mentoring outcomes, finding that female mentors had a greater influence on their protégé as a person and provided more psychosocial support to their protégé than male mentors. Tharenou, Latimer, and Conroy (1994) examined the influences of women’s and men’s managerial advancement. They found that women need more career encouragement, which increases their training and development, and ultimately their career advancement. Few differences, however, have been found in cross-gender pairings in the degree of instrumental support provided (Burke, 1984; Reich, 1986). These findings lead to the following hypothesis:

HYPOTHESIS 3. Female mentors will offer significantly more psychosocial support than male mentors.

Partners in a dyadic relationship who share demographic characteristics, such as gender or race, may perceive themselves to be more similar to one another than those partners with dissimilar demographic characteristics. This perceived similarity can also have an important impact on the outcomes and satisfaction from the relationship (Gallois, Callan, & Palmer, 1992; Liden, Wayne, & Stilwell, 1993). Turban and Jones (1988) investigated the effect of perceived similarity between supervisors and subordinates on job and organizational satisfaction, performance ratings, and recommended pay increases. They found that perceived similarity was the primary correlate of subordinate job satisfaction. Subordinates who perceived their supervisors as being similar to themselves also viewed their work settings more positively than did those who perceived their supervisors as dissimilar to themselves. We are interested in determining whether the relationship between perceived similarity and satisfaction between supervisors and subordinates will extend to mentors and protégés, therefore:

HYPOTHESIS 4. Protégés who perceive themselves to be similar to their mentors will indicate a greater overall degree of satisfaction with the mentoring experience.

A final variable that is likely to affect the mentoring relationship is the frequency of interactions between the protégé and the mentor. Turban and Jones (1988) found that the frequency of supervisor/subordinate interactions was an important influence on employee performance. Big Brothers/Big Sisters, which is a national formal mentoring program, also identified frequency of interactions between mentor and protégé to be a significant indicator.
of the intensity and longevity of the relationship (Furano et al., 1993). Research has shown that frequency of interactions has a significant impact on the degree of support obtained by protegés, demonstrated satisfaction with the program, and anticipated longevity of the relationship (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975; Liden & Graen, 1980). The following two hypotheses outline the predicted relationship between contact and mentoring relationship:

**Hypothesis 5.** Protegés who spend a greater amount of time with their mentors will report greater satisfaction with their mentor than protegés who have only infrequent contact with their mentor.

**Hypothesis 6.** Protegés who spend a greater amount of time with their mentor will be more willing to maintain contact with their mentor after the program ends.

Mentoring relationships are usually evaluated either by examining actual outcomes such as amount of contact between mentor and protégé, or by assessing participant perceptions of the quality of the relationship (Noe, 1988). While more objective measures, such as frequency of contact, usually produce a high level of agreement between the mentor and protégé, the subjective ratings of the quality of interaction may differ. In fact, low to moderate interrater agreement is often found in the evaluation of many types of dyads, including the dyadic relationships between supervisors and subordinates (Liden et al., 1993). Lord and Maher’s (1991) research on leadership and information processing indicates that the discrepancy occurs through perceptual distortions such as “halo effects” and the use of leadership prototypes rather than from ratings of actual behaviors. Therefore, an exploratory component of this study is to examine the extent to which perceptions vary by source (between mentor and protégé).

In summary, the present study is designed to address four limitations in the mentoring literature: (a) a dearth of empirical research on formal mentoring relationships overall; (b) insufficient data on mentoring issues related to women and people of color; (c) a lack of evidence related to how to best match protegés with mentors; and (d) the paucity of research on the degree of agreement in mentor and protégé perceptions of the mentoring relationship.

**METHOD**

**Participants**

Participants were 104 interns who participated in an 8-week summer jobs training program at a large West coast media organization. This program required its participants to be low opportunity in terms of socioeconomic status and high potential based on their active involvement with a community agency. Interns or protegés ranged in age from 16 to 22; the typical intern was a senior in high school. Interns were ethnically and racially diverse with: 39% Latinos, 25% African-Americans, 24% Asians, 4% multiracial persons, 3% Native-Americans, 1% Caucasian, 1% who were categorized as “other,” and 3% who did not indicate ethnicity.
Employees from the organization who participated as mentors in this program were predominantly Caucasian (45%). In addition, the other mentors were 28% African-Americans, 15% Latinos, 4% Asians, 3% multiracial persons, 2% Native-Americans, and 3% who categorized themselves as ‘‘other.’’ The average mentor was a college graduate and 62% were professionals or managers. All protégés were assigned a same-gender mentor resulting in 43 male and 61 female mentor and intern pairs.

Description of Program

The Summer Jobs Training Program (SJTP) was created in 1992 in response to the Los Angeles riots. The executive team of this West coast media organization felt a responsibility to ameliorate one of the causes related to the riot, minority youth joblessness. The SJTP was originally created to provide 50 innercity youths with an 8-week summer job. This program has been implemented for the last 4 years and the number of participants has increased every year, with 78 students in 1993, 96 in 1994, and 104 in 1995. Youths were recruited from a pool of approximately 16 different community service agencies to ensure maximum diversity.

Employees from a variety of departments and organizational levels volunteered to mentor the youths and committed to having contact with their intern once a week. Mentors were only required to commit for the duration of the 8-week program. Virtually any employee could be a mentor as long as they met the minimum criteria of being available for the entire 8 weeks and attending a 2-h training session. The purpose of the training session was to socialize volunteers regarding their role as a mentor and to provide them with a realistic preview of their experience. The goals of the mentoring program were to provide protégés with: (a) an adult role model who offers friendship, assistance, and guidance in an informal, relaxed, and enjoyable way; (b) an empathic person who is able to ‘‘put themselves in the shoes’’ of someone in a first or second job experience; and (c) a caring person who is willing to listen and be accessible.

Experimental Design

Protégés were randomly assigned to two types of mentor pairings: same-race mentors and different-race mentors. There were 26 same-race and 50 different-race intern–mentor pairs who responded to all surveys completely. Same-race pairs were defined as those in which both the mentor and the protégé indicated the same ethnic/racial category. Caucasian mentors with minority interns made up 66% (33) of the different-race mentoring pairs, while 10% (5) were Black mentors with different-race interns and the remaining 14% were Asian, Latino, and Multiracial/other. A series of t tests on each of the dependent variables of interest revealed no significant differences between those protégés with Caucasian mentors compared to those with non-Caucasian mentors. The racial pairing of mentors and protégés resulted in 12
male pairs and 14 female pairs of the same race and 19 male pairs and 31 female pairs of different race. One of the mandates of the mentoring program was that protégés only be assigned to same-gender mentors. This was a decision made by program administrators to increase protégés’ comfort level and avoid any potential liability through real or perceived effects of sexual harassment.

Procedure

Data were collected at the beginning and at the end of the 8-week program from both interns and mentors. The questionnaires were administered to the interns in their first and final weeks of employment during their mandatory weekly training sessions. Interns were told that the purpose of the questionnaires was to gather general information about the program to develop future recommendations. The interns were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. In addition, interns were guaranteed that their answers to these questions would not affect their employment with the organization. The final response rate for interns who had completed both sets of questionnaires was 79%.

Data were collected from the mentors in training sessions and through questionnaires sent through interoffice mail. The final response rate for mentors who had completed both sets of questionnaires was 67%.

Measures

Published scales were used for the majority of these measures, and most scale items were modified slightly by substituting the words ‘‘mentor/protégé’’ for ‘‘supervisor/subordinate.’’ Two items originally developed by Wayne and Ferris (1990) were used to measure liking between mentor and protégé. These items were: ‘‘I like my mentor/protégé very much as a person’’ and ‘‘I think my mentor/protégé would make a good friend.’’ These two items were scaled from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) and summed to form a composite ($\alpha = .86$).

A modified version of Noe’s (1988) Mentor Functions Scales was used to assess the extent to which mentors provided psychosocial and instrumental/career support. We modified Noe’s original 29-item scale by including only those items that he found loaded most strongly on the two factors of mentoring support and by rewording any items that made reference to a school environment. These items were scaled from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). A principal components factor analysis of the entire scale using varimax rotation resulted in two factors. All items loaded at least .50 on one of the two factors, supporting the two-factor structure identified by Noe (1988). The first 17 items on the modified scale pertained to psychosocial functions ($\alpha = .82$) and the last five items pertained to instrumental functions ($\alpha = .80$).

For perceived similarity of mentor/protégé, two slightly modified items developed by Turban and Jones (1988) were used. These items were: ‘‘My
AMENTOR RELATIONSHIPS

Three additional items developed by Liden, Wayne, and Stilwell (1993) to measure supervisory style were adapted. These items were, “My mentor/protégé and I are alike in a number of areas,” “My mentor/protégé and I thought alike in terms of coming up with a similar solution for a problem,” and “My mentor/protégé and I analyzed problems in a similar way.” These five items were scaled from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) and summed to form a composite ($\alpha = .95$).

To measure frequency of contact with mentor, the following question was asked of both the mentor and intern. This question was: “On average, how many hours a week have you had contact with your mentor/protégé since the first time you met your mentor/protégé?” Possible response categories were: “Less than 1 hour a week,” “1–3 hours a week,” “4–5 hours a week,” “6–8 hours a week,” and “More than 8 hours a week.”

To measure likelihood of the relationship being maintained, the following question was asked of both mentor and intern. This question was: “How likely do you think is it that you will stay in contact with your mentor after the program is over?” This item was scaled from very unlikely (1) to very likely (5). Participants were also asked to list any reasons that they felt contributed to whether they would stay in touch with their mentor/protégé.

To measure satisfaction with mentor the following three items were asked of the intern only: “I effectively utilized my mentor to help me develop,” “My mentor met my expectations,” and “I felt satisfied with my mentor.” These three items were scaled from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) and summed to form a composite ($\alpha = .90$). both the mentor and intern.

RESULTS

Overview of Analyses

Analyses of Variance (ANOVA’s) with two levels of race pairing (same race/different race) and two gender pairings (male pairs/female pairs) were used to test Hypotheses 1 through 3. The means and standard deviations for the dependent variables, liking, psychosocial support, and instrumental support are presented in Table 1 for each of the four conditions. These are presented from both the mentors’ and the protégés’ perspective along with overall scale means, standard deviations, and ranges.

Hypotheses Tests

The impact of race on mentor’s liking of protégés was significant as predicted in the first hypothesis. Mentors paired with same-race protégés liked them significantly more than mentors paired with different-race protégés, $F(1,52) = 4.25, p < .05 (\omega^2 = .06)$.

Support was also found for the second hypothesis that measured the impact of race on mentor functions as evaluated from the protégés perspective. Protégés...
### TABLE 1
Means and Standard Deviations of Dependent Variables for Mentoring Dyads

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Protégé sample: (n = 12) (n = 14) (n = 19) (n = 31)
Mentor sample: (n = 11) (n = 11) (n = 11) (n = 23)

gés matched with same-race mentors reported more instrumental support than protégés paired with different-race mentors, \(F(1,72) = 3.95, p < .05 (\omega^2 = .04)\). The third hypothesis was not supported, as protégés did not report that female mentors provided more psychosocial support than male mentors.
TABLE 2
Inter correlation Matrix

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**Note.***p < .001; **p < .01; *p < .05, Protégé Perceptions (n = 82), Mentor Perceptions (n = 63), Protégé and Mentor (n = 49).**
To examine the remaining hypotheses, we used correlational analyses. The correlation between perceived similarity and satisfaction with the mentoring relationship, the fourth hypothesis, was significant as predicted. Protégés who perceived themselves to be similar to their mentors were also satisfied with the mentoring experience, $r = .77$, $p < .001$ (See Table 2). The amount of time protégés spent with their mentors was positively related to satisfaction as predicted in Hypothesis 5, $r = .48$, $p < .001$. The amount of time interns spent with their mentors was also positively related to intended continuation of the mentoring relationship as predicted in Hypothesis 6, $r = .52$, $p < .001$.

The use of hierarchical regression allowed a simultaneous examination of the relationship of each of these various measures to two final measures: satisfaction with the mentor and the likelihood of staying in contact with the mentor. After entering race pairing into the equation, perceived similarity accounted for a significant proportion of the variance in satisfaction followed by liking of mentor, amount of career support, and finally psychosocial support, resulting in a final $R^2$ of .82. Each predicted a significant amount of variance in protégé satisfaction with mentor as they were entered into the equation (See Table 3.) The second hierarchical regression equation, with likelihood of continuing the relationship with the mentor as the dependent variable, revealed that only perceived similarity and instrumental support predicted a unique and statistically significant proportion of variance. The $R^2$ for this equation was .27 (See Table 3).

To investigate whether mentor and protégé perceptions of the mentoring differed, we examined the degree to which the mentor and protégé ratings of

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<td>.82</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>$F = 6.81$, $p &lt; .05$</td>
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</table>

| Dependent variable = likelihood of continuing relationship |
| Race pairing         | −.06 | .15    | −.04    | −.03  | —            | $F = 1.88$, ns |
| Similarity           | .00  | .03    | .00     | .17   | .14          | $F = 13.57$, $p < .001$ |
| Liking               | .05  | .07    | .11     | .18   | .01          | $F = 1.49$, ns |
| Career functions     | .07  | .03    | .41     | .27   | .03          | $F = 5.60$, $p < .001$ |
| Psychosocial functions | .00  | .01    | .05     | .27   | .00          | $F = .05$, ns |
the various dimensions of the relationship were correlated. Table 2 also con-
tains the correlations between the mentor’s and the protégé’s perspective for
each rating dimension. The correlations between the mentor’s and protégé’s
perspectives on mentor functions were moderate; \( r = .20, \) n.s., for psychoso-
cial support and \( r = .37, p < .01, \) for instrumental support. The correlations
between the mentor’s and the protégé’s assessment of liking and of perceived
similarity of the relationship were quite low and nonsignificant. However,
there was modest agreement between mentor and protégé on the likelihood
that they would continue their relationship \( r = .30, p < .05. \) It is important
to note that the correlation between mentor and protégé for their report of
the frequency of contact was quite low \( (r = .10, \) n.s.). In other words, mentors
and protégés within a mentoring pair did not agree on how much time they
spent meeting with one another.

Post Hoc Analyses

While we did not specifically develop hypotheses regarding the effects of
race pairing or gender on other variables such as satisfaction with the mentor
or the degree of liking, we used MANOVA’s to determine whether there
were any other effects of race pairing and gender on all dependent variables
collected in this study. MANOVA was used to consider the interrelationships
among multiple dependent variables and to protect against experiment-wise
Type I and Type II error (Haase & Ellis, 1987). Two separate \( 2 \times 2 \) MANOVA
analyses, one from the interns’ perspective and one from the mentors’ perspec-
tive, were used to investigate the effects of race pairing and gender on the
various dependent variables in this study. The MANOVA consisted of two
levels of race (same race/different race) and two conditions for gender pairs
(male pair/female pair). The means for all conditions and dependent variables
are presented in Table 1.

The \( 2 \times 2 \) MANOVA for mentors’ perceptions of psychosocial support,
instrumental support, liking of intern, degree of perceived similarity, amount
of contact with intern, and likelihood of staying in contact with intern revealed
a significant Wilks \( \lambda \) for the main effect of race pairing \( (F(6, 47) = 3.33, p
< .01), \) no significant main effect for gender \( (F(6,47) = .78, \) n.s.), but a
significant interaction between race pairing and gender \( (F(6,47) = 2.65, p <
.05). \) To interpret the multivariate \( F \) values for the dependent variables from
the mentors’ perspective, the univariate \( F \) values were examined.

As described in the ANOVA results, mentors reported liking protégés of
the same race more than protégés of a different race \( (F(1,52) = 3.94, p = .05). \nWe also found that mentors reported providing more psychosocial support if
paired with a same race protégé than when paired with a different race protégé,
\( F(1,52) = 4.16, p < .05, \) but no difference in the amount of instrumental
support \( F(1,52) = .10, \) n.s. The significant multivariate interaction between
race and gender in the MANOVA produced a significant univariate \( F \) for
mentor’s ratings of the likelihood of staying in contact with their protégé
after the program \( (F(1,52) = 5.55, p < .05) \). Of the four means in the analysis, only two differed significantly, as indicated by Tukey’s HSD test. Male mentors with different race protégés reported a significantly lower likelihood of staying in contact with their protégé after the program than male mentors with same-race protégés \( (O(52) = 3.90, p < .05) \).

A second \( 2 \times 2 \) MANOVA including all dependent measures from the protégés’ perspective revealed no significant main effects for either race pairing or gender, nor an interaction effect. The high intercorrelations between the protégés ratings of the dependent variables most likely contributed to this nonsignificant multivariate analysis.

**DISCUSSION**

This study found that similarity, both perceived and actual, affected the amount of liking and the type of mentor functions provided in mentoring pairs. Protégés assigned to same-race mentors reported more instrumental support than protégés assigned to different race mentors. Nonetheless, protégés with same-race mentors did not report significantly more psychosocial support. Contrary to our hypothesis, female mentors did not provide more psychosocial support than male mentors. In addition, protégés reported neither more contact with their mentors nor more satisfaction with their mentor overall if they were of the same race. Perceived similarity, however, was strongly related to protégés’ liking and satisfaction with their mentor, and moderately related to protégés’ report of the amount of contact they had with their mentor, but was not related to racial similarity. Overall, the findings for perceived similarity indicate that the more similar protégés perceived themselves to be to their mentors in outlook, values, or perspective the more likely they were to report liking their mentor, being satisfied with their mentor, and having more contact with their mentor.

Regression analysis revealed that liking, perceived similarity, and psychosocial and instrumental support all significantly contributed to protégés’ satisfaction with their mentor. This indicates that each are important contributors to a successful mentoring relationship, as each predicted a significant amount of variance in protégé satisfaction. The likelihood of continuing the relationship was uniquely predicted by perceived similarity and the degree to which the mentor provided career support.

In this study we were also interested in exploring the level of agreement between mentor and protégé perspectives across the various measures of the mentoring relationship. The overall level of agreement between rating source was quite low. Perceived similarity from the mentor’s point of view correlated weakly with the intern’s view and liking was correlated even less. Also of interest was the fact that a more objective measure of the mentoring relationship, amount of contact between mentor and protégé from each perspective, was not at all correlated.
Implications

The results of this study have implications for the manner in which organizations can best pair protégés with mentors in formal mentoring programs. Developing a scale that assesses psychosocial and instrumental need which may match protégés and mentors would be an important contribution for future researchers. In this study, most of the mentor/protégé cross-race dyads were Caucasian mentors paired with minority protégés. Future studies should examine the differences among racial pairings of minorities with one another, such as an Asian mentor and Black protégé.

Whether mentoring occurs within the context of a formal or informal mentoring program may also have an important effect on the type of support received by protégés in same and cross-race relationships. For example, it was found that protégés paired with same-race mentors received significantly more instrumental, but not more psychosocial, support as expected. It is likely that the goals of this formal mentoring program and the subsequent training received by the mentors affected this result. The goals of the mentoring program and training, as described under Method section, placed a greater emphasis on psychosocial, rather than instrumental, support. Mentors who provided psychosocial support to their protégés were meeting the minimum expectations of the program. Mentors who also provided instrumental support to their protégés, such as helping a protégé secure employment past the summer, were exceeding the formal expectations of the program. Same-race minority mentors may have felt a greater responsibility to alleviate some of the barriers faced by their protégés because of their shared racial identity. Future research needs to address how the mentoring context affects the type and degree of support experienced by protégés.

In this study we found that gender may not be as important as was originally hypothesized for providing protégés with more psychosocial support. More recent research (Ragins & Cotton, 1993) has indicated that gender role orientation, rather than gender itself, is a better predictor of the level of instrumental and psychosocial support. Specifically, they reported that individuals who are more androgynous in orientation report more instrumental and psychosocial support functions than those with a feminine orientation. Future research needs to continue to expand comparisons between sex and gender role orientation on mentor functions. Nonetheless, in the present study the interaction between race and gender revealed an interesting pattern of results that may have implications for formal mentoring programs, especially those aimed at young employees. Male mentors paired with different-race protégés reported low likelihood of future contact with their mentors, while male mentors with same-race protégés reported high likelihood of future contact. Race did not seem to play a role for female mentors. The constraints of this mentoring program prohibited random assignment of mentors and protégés to cross-sex pairings. However, it would also be beneficial for future researchers to replicate our research using gender as the independent variable, rather than race.
This study also highlighted the importance of using additional measures, other than type of support, to assess overall mentoring effectiveness. While ratings of the degree to which a mentor provides psychosocial or career support serve as one aspect of overall mentoring effectiveness, satisfaction and the desire to continue the mentoring relationship are other measures to be considered. In fact, while we found that racial similarity was important for liking and instrumental functions, it does not appear to be critical for satisfaction or the desire to continue the relationship. The results indicate that if protégés find themselves to be similar to their mentors on some dimension other than race, then they may be just as satisfied with mentors of a different race as with mentors of the same race. Organizations with mentoring programs should consider implementing training that helps mentors and protégés recognize their similarities and bridge their differences.

In addition to training, another way for mentors and protégés to enhance perceived similarities is to increase the frequency of their interactions. Past research on intergroup relations has demonstrated that when individuals from different groups increase their contact with each other, albeit within circumscribed conditions, more positive affect can result (Allport, 1979). In this study, we too found that the amount of time that mentors and protégés spent together was positively related to protégés’ satisfaction with and likelihood of maintaining the mentoring relationship. Therefore, organizational mentoring programs would benefit by implementing and monitoring a policy to ensure that mentors and protégés meet frequently on a regular basis. Future research needs to determine exactly how frequently mentors and protégés should meet to increase their perceptions of similarity.

Why, in addition to general satisfaction with their mentor, were some program participants more likely to remain in contact with their mentors than others? As part of the present study, respondents were asked to list any reasons that contributed to whether they would remain in contact with their mentor. Participants listed both psychosocial reasons, such as “because we are friends,” and instrumental reasons, such as “for future job references and contacts,” as reasons that they would stay in contact with their mentor. These responses should be explored in future studies examining why people maintain mentor relationships, particularly within formal mentoring programs. Research that increases our understanding of why people maintain mentoring relationships would provide organizations with an incentive to invest in formal programs as a way to gain long-term benefits.

The lack of agreement between mentor and protégé perspectives of the mentoring relationship is another factor that should be taken into account when evaluating the effectiveness of a mentoring program. Level of agreement might actually provide another criterion to assess the effectiveness of a relationship. In other words, it may be that a more positive mentoring relationship would produce higher levels of agreement between the mentor and the protégé than a less satisfying relationship in which the mentor may feel compelled
to answer in a socially desirable manner. The differences in perspectives also have implications for mentor training. For example, a mentor who has a different perception of the level of psychosocial support he or she has provided to the protégé may not be clear on how to increase this type of support. This suggests that it may be prudent to teach mentors methods for keeping track of the type and amount of support they provide. In addition, organizations with formal mentoring programs would probably benefit by implementing more objective measures of the mentoring relationship such as whether goals established between the mentor and protégé were accomplished.

Limitations

The weaknesses in this study must be addressed. The use of self-report measures in this study is both useful and somewhat problematic. The measures were useful because it was important to determine whether self-report ratings from the perspective of the mentors and from that of the protégés differed. The difference in perspectives should discourage researchers from using only one rating source for evaluating mentoring relationships and further suggests that researchers should develop objective measures where appropriate. While self-report measures are often subject to social desirability bias, in this study there is little to suggest that social desirability affected the protégé evaluation of their mentors, as they were told that these evaluations were to be used for research purposes. More likely affected, however, were mentor ratings. Mentors may have been quite motivated to respond in a socially desirable manner, especially, with respect to measures that asked them about the type of support they provided and the amount of contact they had with their protégés. Self-report measures, because often formatted similarly, are also subject to common method variance. This suggests that future research should look for different methods of measuring perceptions in the mentoring process.

Another type of bias that could affect the self-report measures in this study includes halo error, or other distribution errors such as leniency, central tendency, or strictness. These types of errors may have more likely affected the protégés’ ratings made in this study, as suggested by the high intercorrelations among the various rating dimensions. The pattern of ratings also suggests that these young raters provided less sophisticated ratings, as they failed to make distinctions among the various dimensions of the mentoring relationship. The fact that many of these young subjects lived in very homogeneous communities with perhaps little direct contact with people of different races, especially Whites, may have also caused them to rely on stereotypic rating schema.

In this study perceived similarity was found to be an important construct to consider in future studies on mentoring. Our scale measuring perceived similarity was limited to specific aspects of perceived similarity such as values and problem solving style. Future researchers measuring perceived similarity should consider expanding the perceived similarity scale to include informa-
tion about the likes and dislikes, attitudes, political persuasions, and other salient characteristics of mentors and protégés.

Finally, a more general limitation surrounds the temporal ordering of variables in the correlational analyses. For example, was it the case that the amount of contact between a mentor and a protégé led to the amount of liking in the relationship, or did initial liking actually lead to increases in the amount of contact? More longitudinal research will help uncover these causal relationships in the mentoring process.

CONCLUSION

Even considering these limitations, this study was unique in its evaluation of the mentoring process for two reasons. First, protégés were assigned to their mentors based on gender and randomly assigned based on race. Sampling bias is often a major problem in many studies related to mentoring because many of the participants are not selected at random and tend to self-select themselves for participation in a program. This study avoided this problem by experimentally examining how similarity, both perceived and actual, affects the overall effectiveness of a formal mentoring relationship. Second, while the mentoring program in our study was very short-lived, which may limit its generalizability to long-term mentoring relationships, it emphasizes the power of initial impressions. We know from past research on the effectiveness of selection interviews that initial impressions can form early in the interview process (Arvey & Campion, 1982). Also, research on the perceptual process tells us that initial impressions affect perceptions in the way the perceiver both attends to information and organizes that information (Schiffmann, 1990). Initial impressions also lead to expectations about future behavior. For example, research on perceived similarity of leader and subordinates suggests that early interactions or “role episodes” play a substantial role in determining the quality of later leader–subordinate interactions (Liden et al., 1993). Therefore, while our study provides some evidence of influences that affect the early formation of mentoring relationships, referred to by Kram (1983) as the “Initiation” stage, these influences need to be explored in subsequent stages.

Finally, this study illustrates that actual race effects may not be as important in mentoring relationships as the degree of perceived similarity. Future research should be done to determine if the effects found in this research are maintained over time, what factors influence these changes, and how changes in these factors influence mentor functions.

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