

Volunteer Mentoring Relationships With Minority Youth: An Analysis of Same- Versus Cross-Race Matches¹

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Despite the growth of youth mentoring programs in recent years, key questions remain regarding the relative importance of making matches on the basis of shared racial background. Both sides of the argument regarding racial matching are presented, followed by a comparison of the effects of same- vs. cross-race matches involving minority youth ($N = 476$). Minority adolescents were less likely to report initiating alcohol when placed in cross-race matches. In addition, minority boys in same-race matches reported smaller decrements in scholastic competence and self-worth than did minority boys in cross-race matches. Minority girls in same-race matches reported smaller decrements in school value and self-worth than did minority girls in cross-race matches. Youth, parent, and case-worker impressions of the 2 relationship types largely converged, but the few impressions that differed tended to favor cross-race matches. The methodological limitations and implications of this study are discussed.

Volunteer mentoring programs have been advocated increasingly as a means of promoting the positive development of adolescents who might be at risk for behavioral, academic, and social problems (Campbell-Whatley, Obiakor, & Algozzine, 1997; Dondero, 1997; Reglin, 1998; Rogers & Taylor, 1997). Approximately 5 million youth are involved in school- or community-based volunteer mentoring programs nationwide, including more than 100,000 participants in the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America programs (McKenna, 1998). Evaluations of volunteer mentoring programs provide evidence that mentoring relationships can have positive influences on adolescent developmental outcomes, including improvements in peer and parent relationships, academic achievement, and self-concept, as well as lower recidivism rates among juvenile delinquents and

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reductions in substance abuse (Davidson & Redner, 1998; Grossman & Tierney, 1998; LoSciuto, Rajala, Townsend, & Taylor, 1996; McPartland & Nettles, 1991; Reisner, Petry, & Armitage, 1998).

However, few studies have focused on the role of mentors' and youth's racial and ethnic background in shaping the course and effects of the relationships. As a result, key questions remain regarding the relative importance of making matches on the basis of shared background. Although some programs take a race-blind approach, many act on the implicit—and sometimes explicit—assumption that European American mentors (the typical mentor in a cross-race match) can neither appreciate the experiences of minority youth nor fully assist them in their goals. As a result, thousands of minority youth are retained on long waiting lists until adult volunteers of the same race become available (Furano, Roaf, Styles, & Branch, 1993).

Arguments for and against matching on the basis of race in mentoring programs have become, to some degree, ideological premises that are based on beliefs rather than research. In this study, we attempt to provide information on this somewhat avoided and polarized issue in mentoring. We present both sides of the argument and then examine the issue empirically with data from a national evaluation of Big Brothers Big Sisters, the largest and arguably most influential evaluation of mentoring to date (Grossman & Tierney, 1998).

In Defense of Same-Race Matching

Proponents of same-race matching firmly believe that one's racial and ethnic background plays a critical role in establishing effective mentor-mentee relationships. This shared background tends to be emphasized over differences in social class or location because it is assumed that racial "problems transcend class and geographical boundaries" (Ogbu, 1990a, p. 52). Without a similar racial background, the match is believed to be unable to fulfill its potential.

The arguments for same-race matching are deeply embedded in minority groups' historical experience in the United States, cultural legacies, and values regarding self-protection (Leigh, 1989). Proponents of racial matching base their belief, in part, on the assumption that an adult of a different racial and ethnic background cannot teach a youth how to cope in society if he or she cannot understand what it feels like to be a minority in America. Because minority youth internalize the racial and ethnic attitudes of the larger society, they are thought to be more vulnerable to low self-esteem and to have restricted views of their possibilities (Ogbu, 1990a). It is assumed that only a mentor with a similar racial and ethnic background can understand these social and psychological conflicts and offer realistic solutions. A dissimilar mentor might inadvertently offend or belittle the youth, or might fail to affirm the youth's culture. Many also believe that deep levels of trust, sharing, and cooperation will never be realized unless there is

a common bond of race or ethnicity. A parallel concern has been raised by the National Association of Black Social Workers in relation to the transracial adoption of African American children by European Americans. The organization has questioned whether European American adults can adequately support the development of African American children, particularly the attainment of survival skills necessary in a racist society (DeBerry, Scarr, & Weinberg, 1996; Johnson, Shireman, & Watson, 1987).

Others see the crossing of racial boundaries into minority communities as "threatening not only to their minority identity and security, but also to their solidarity" (Ogbu, 1990b, p. 155). Culture is seen as deeply internalized, providing racial and ethnic groups with "charters for existence" (Camino, 1992, p. 5), and furnishing them with a sense of history, heritage, and continuity. Allowing European Americans to mentor minority children becomes not just an issue of helping children, but a much larger intrusion and danger to the child's racial identity (Nobels, 1985).

Proponents of racial matching believe that a mentor who is not representative of a child's racial or ethnic background will inevitably and subconsciously impose his or her racial values and customs on that child. And of course, if that adult is European American, as is the case in the vast majority of cross-race pairs, the match carries with it all the symbolism of historical treatment that the dominant Anglo culture has inflicted in minority groups. Ogbu (1990a) articulated this concern through his work with mentoring programs. After observing cross-race mentor relations, he concluded that the "mentor and protégé have different goals from the beginning and that mentors approached mentoring with the 'zeal of a missionary,' wanting to save at-risk youth from the hazards of their environments by engaging them in 'legitimate mainstream activities'" (p. 8). Along these lines, some have argued that middle-class European Americans might experience powerful negative emotions (e.g., guilt and defensiveness) in relation to America's history of racial oppression and that such emotions are likely to impede the development of mentor relationships and dampen motivation for continued multicultural learning (Foster, 1994; Tatum, 1992).

Proponents of same-race matching also believe that racial and ethnic communities should help their members foster a sense of solidarity. In the case of the African American community, which has become increasingly segregated along class lines, there is a push to unite African Americans by reminding them of their common responsibility to one another (Jencks, 1992; Madhubuti, 1987). Mentoring is seen as an important mechanism by which to forge these ties, particularly since the African American culture has always stressed self-help and the notion of extended family beyond the boundaries of biological kinship (Fordham, 1988; McAdoo, 1997).

Finally, there is apprehension that providing minority youth with mentors from different cultures will send the wrong message. Such matching could

convey to youth that appropriate role models are not of their own group or that there are not enough adults from their own community to serve as positive role models (Ogbu, 1990a).

In Defense of Cross-Race Mentoring

Most proponents of cross-race matching do not deny the existence and potential effects of culture on mentoring relationships. Rather, they see the issue as one of timing. Given the shortage of minority mentors, minority youth might remain on waiting lists for a relatively long time. Many who defend cross-race matches believe that effective relationships can develop despite racial, ethnic, and often class differences (Furano et al., 1993), and that at least some benefits can be provided with a cross-race match. Ferguson (1990), for example, examined several mentoring programs and found evidence of positive cross-race bonding. He noted that although "several people had strong opinions about the need for matching children and mentors by sex and race . . . sensitivity seems to be the only absolute requirement" (p. 19). In their qualitative study of mentors, Morrow and Styles (1995) found that effective relationships were just as likely to form among cross-race pairs as same-race pairs. Although challenges arose as a result of the cultural differences, they were generally resolved through adequate support and understanding.

Advocates of cross-race matching feel that the qualities and actions of the mentors matter more than does their race. While homogeneous matching might expedite the development of trust, it does not guarantee a successful mentoring match (Henkin & Rogers, 1992). For this reason, many programs recommend that mentors be recruited on the merits of personal skills, experience, common interest with youth, their capacity to provide sensitive support, and their openness to the nuances of cultural differences (Ascher, 1988; Flaxman, 1992). As long as mentors encourage their mentees to feel secure with their own cultural identity, engage in activities that enhance their mentees' knowledge of their cultural heritage, and remain aware of the cultural baggage that they bring to bear in the relationship, then racial or ethnic similarity becomes less consequential (Flaxman, Ascher, & Harrington, 1988).

Social distance, in terms of large gulfs in socioeconomic status, is actually seen as more of a concern among cross-race advocates than are issues of race or ethnicity. Social distance becomes a problem when it "causes the mentor to misunderstand the young person's problems, needs, and thoughts" (Flaxman, 1991, p. 17). Yet mentors have succeeded in bridging social distances when their skills, knowledge, and networks prove to be salient to their mentees (Flaxman et al., 1988; Grossman & Tierney, 1998).

Finally, some claim that cross-race matching, rather than a liability, can instead be beneficial to youth and mentors alike. Cross-race mentoring is seen as

a means of bridging social distances and challenging cultural beliefs, thus contributing to the dismantling of societal barriers. This argument is proposed not simply by the dominant White majority, but represents the feelings of people from various racial and ethnic groups. African American scholar Cornell West argued that insularity compromises individuals' citizenship. He views the United States as a hybrid culture where people must learn how to relate to one another. Those who argue for African American nationalism and getting in touch with Black cultural identity should also work with individuals of different races. Otherwise, advocates of nationalism "inadvertently contribute to the very impasse they are trying to overcome" (West, 1993, p. 44). Cross-race matching advocates believe the process to be valuable and beneficial because it symbolizes people working together, trying to improve the life chances of youth, and fostering a sense of community among historically separated people.

The Present Study

The two opposing arguments (i.e., same-race vs. cross-race mentoring) are deeply rooted in the ideology relating to racial and ethnic relations. Although this issue has been explored to some extent with regard to mentoring within organizational settings (e.g., Frierson, Hargrove, & Lewis, 1994; Kalbfleish & Davies, 1991) and in the context of professional helping relationships (Leary, 1995; Maki, 1990), few studies have directly examined the role of race and ethnicity in youth mentoring.

In the current study, data from a large outcome evaluation of Big Brothers Big Sisters were brought to bear on this issue (Grossman & Tierney, 1998). The data included nearly 1,000 minority and nonminority youth from a geographically diverse set of Big Brothers Big Sisters programs. Randomly selected participants were assigned to either the control group (placed on a waiting list for 18 months) or the treatment group (matched with a mentor). Findings from this outcome study underscored the potential benefits of mentoring. Although all participants tended to show decrements in several outcome variables over time, treatment participants declined at a slower rate and reported higher levels of functioning than did control participants. Compared to youth in the control group, those who participated in the program reported lower levels of substance use; more positive parent and peer relationships; and higher scholastic competence, attendance, and grades (Grossman & Tierney, 1998). Within-race comparisons yielded additional findings. In particular, minority girls in the treatment group reported higher levels of scholastic competence and attendance than did minority girls in the control group. Similarly, minority boys in the treatment group felt more emotionally supported by their peers than did minority boys in the control group and were less likely to report the initiation of drug use (Grossman & Tierney, 1998). Nonetheless, the differential effectiveness of same-race versus cross-race mentors on

minority youth was not addressed directly in the impact study. In the present study, the effects of mentoring on youth in same- versus cross-race mentor relationships are compared; and youth, parent, and caseworker impressions of the two types of relationships are evaluated.

Method

Participants

Participants in the current study were part of a larger sample of youth that took part in the national evaluation of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America programs (Grossman & Tierney, 1998). This sample included 1,138 children, all of whom applied to programs in 1992 and 1993. The youth were randomly assigned to either the treatment group or the control group. Of the sample, 84.3% ($N = 959$; 487 treatments, 472 controls) were matched and completed both the baseline and follow-up interviews.

Approximately half of the overall analysis sample ($N = 476$) were members of minority groups, and this subgroup is the focus of the present study. Within this subsample, 125 participants were placed in cross-race matches (57.6% African American, 18.4% Hispanic, 15.2% American Indian, 0.8% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 8.0% biracial), 65 participants were placed in same-race matches (9.2% Hispanic, 90.8% African American), and 286 minority youth were randomly assigned to the control group (68.5% African American, 19.2% Hispanic, 5.2% American Indian, 0.7% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 4.9% biracial). Participants ranged in age from 9.39 years to 16.67 years ($M = 12.22$), and the majority (94.9%) of the adolescents came from single-parent families. All participants were interviewed by telephone before they knew their experimental status. Follow-up interviews were conducted 18 months later by telephone with the baseline participants. In addition to the questions given at baseline, the follow-up interview had items pertaining to the mentor-mentee relationship.

All of the cross-race volunteer mentors were European Americans. Of the 190 mentors, 25 (13.2%) had previously been a Big Brother or Big Sister (12 assigned to minority cross-race matches, 13 assigned to same-race matches), and 3 had been mentees themselves (1 with a cross-race mentor, 2 with same-race mentors). The mentors ranged in age from 19 to 63 years ($M = 29.21$). None of the volunteers were married, and most had never been married (62.1%). Most of the volunteers had no children living at home (82.4%), were employed full-time (98.8%), and had obtained some post-secondary school education (90.5%). Approximately 30% of the volunteers had an annual income higher than \$40,000 per year.

Agency staff matched particular adult volunteers with treatment youth on the basis of a variety of factors, including shared interests, reasonable geographic

proximity, and parents' or youth's same-race match preference. The control group was placed on a waiting list for a later match. All volunteers underwent an intensive screening process, followed by agency-based training and case management. Case managers followed the progress of all matches after they were created and provided support where necessary. Although their motivations for volunteering were not assessed, volunteers tend to become involved in Big Brothers Big Sisters and related programs for a variety of reasons. Some see the program as a fulfillment of their religious values, while others see it as an opportunity to meet people, enrich their lives, and contribute to the community (Gil & Snyder, 1999; Roaf, Tierney, & Hunte, 1994).

Design and Procedure

From the network of more than 500 Big Brothers Big Sisters local agencies, 8 agencies were selected to participate in the outcome study. The key selection criteria for inclusion in the impact study were a large, active caseload; a waiting list; and geographic diversity. With only a few exceptions, all of the youth who enrolled in the 8 selected Big Brother Big Sisters agencies during the intake period were encouraged to participate in the research. Once a youth was informed about the study, was determined to be eligible, and had assented to participate (along with a parent's signed, informed consent), he or she was randomly assigned to either the control group or to the treatment group in which a mentor was assigned. Only 2.7% of the youth refused to participate in the evaluation. Over 77% of the youth met with their mentor one or more times per week. At the time of the follow-up, the dyads had been meeting for approximately 12 months. Dyads typically engaged in a wide variety of leisure- and goal-oriented discussions and activities with the overall goal of promoting the youth's positive development.

Measures

Parent relationships. The Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA; Armsden & Greenberg, 1987) is a 23-item scale that contains questions related to a child's or adolescent's relationship with his or her primary caregiver (the corresponding peer questions were not administered). Responses were coded on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (*hardly ever true*) to 4 (*very often true*). The IPPA contains three subscales: communication (e.g., "My mother can tell when I am upset about something"), trust (e.g., "My father respects my feelings"), and alienation (e.g., "Talking over problems with my mother makes me feel ashamed or foolish"). At pretest, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients of the subscales were .77, .83, and .76, respectively. Previous administrations of the IPPA to minority and multiethnic samples of adolescents have yielded comparable ranges of reliability (Formoso, Gonzales, & Aiken, 2000; Smetana & Gaines, 1999).

Peer relationships. The Features of Children's Friendship Scale (Berndt & Perry, 1986) is a 25-item scale that consists of five subscales, each representing a different support or problem domain. The five subscales, with example questions, are: (a) intimacy (e.g., "Do you talk to your friends about something that bothers you?"); (b) self-esteem enhancement (e.g., "Do your friends give you the confidence to do something you thought you couldn't do?"); (c) prosocial support (e.g., "Would your friends agree to do a favor for you if you asked?"); (d) conflict (e.g., "Do you get into arguments with your friends?"); and (e) inequality (e.g., "Do your friends try to boss you around?"). Responses were coded on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (*hardly ever*) to 4 (*pretty often*). At baseline, correlations among the subscales ranged from .10 to .62, and the internal reliability alpha coefficients of the subscales ranged from .62 to .73. Previous administrations of this scale to multiethnic samples of adolescents have yielded comparable ranges of reliability (Berndt & Keefe, 1995).

Scholastic competence. A six-item subscale of the Self-Perception Profile for Children (SPPC; Harter, 1986) contains statements describing confidence in schoolwork, dividing children into two groups (e.g., "Some kids feel that they are very good at their schoolwork/Other kids worry about whether they can do the schoolwork assigned to them"). Respondents were asked to determine if they were more like the first or second group and whether the statement was *really true* or *sort of true* for them ($\alpha = .77$). Previous administrations of this and the other subscales of the SPPC to minority and multiethnic samples of adolescents have yielded comparable ranges of reliability (Cauce, 1987).

Behavioral outcomes. Individual items relating to scholastic behaviors were asked, including grades, number of unexcused absences from school, and hours spent on homework. In addition, items related to antisocial behavior were asked, including the number of times the adolescent had hit someone else or used alcohol or drugs.

School value. This 18-item measure (Berndt & Miller, 1990) assesses the extent to which respondents value academic success and the information that they learn in school (e.g., "Do you care about doing your best at school?"). On a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (*hardly ever*) to 4 (*pretty often*), respondents were asked to indicate the frequency with which they felt certain ways about school ($\alpha = .86$). Previous administrations of this scale to samples that have included minority adolescents have yielded comparable ranges of reliability (Berndt & Miller, 1990).

Self-worth. This six-item subscale of the SPPC (Harter, 1986) contains statements describing the global self-worth of two groups (e.g., "Some kids are pretty pleased with themselves/Other kids are often unhappy with themselves"). Respondents were asked to determine whether they were more like the first group or the second group and whether the statement was *really true* or *sort of true* for them ($\alpha = .75$).

Mentoring relationships. Based on the earlier qualitative work of Morrow and Styles (1995), the follow-up interviews contained over 125 questions that were administered to the intervention group regarding their relationships with their mentors. The questions were designed to assess the frequency and type of activities that the mentors participated in with their mentee and the youth's feelings toward and impressions of his or her mentor. Based on a previous study (Langhout, Osborne, & Rhodes, 2000), 15 relationship scales were derived from exploratory factor analysis. These scales were utilized in the present study to investigate differences in relationship quality between same-race and cross-race matches.

Results

Table 1 presents the baseline characteristics of the youth, their parents, and the mentors in same- and cross-race matches. Parents, youth, and mentors in same- and cross-race matches were similar at baseline, except that same-race volunteers were more likely to have children living at home. Participants in the two groups did not differ at baseline on any of the self-reported variables. However, at baseline, case managers judged youth assigned to cross-race mentors as having fewer social, cultural, or recreational opportunities, $\chi^2(1, N = 475) = 4.29, p < .05$, and having marginally poorer social skills, $\chi^2(1, N = 475) = 3.15, p < .10$, than youth in the same-race or control groups. On the other hand, youth assigned to same-race mentors were perceived as being overly dependent, $\chi^2(1, N = 475) = 4.59, p < .05$.

Same-race matches were slightly shorter in duration, $t(188) = 2.08, p < .05$, primarily because it took longer to find a minority mentor than a cross-race mentor. Once matched, the frequency of meetings and the average length of meetings were the same across the two groups (approximately three times a month for an average of 3.73 hr). Typically, the activities that both matches did together included playing or watching sports; going to the movies or the mall; going to church, the library, the museum, or a play; working on homework; or cooking. Cross-race matches were more likely than were same-race matches to eat at a restaurant, $\chi^2(1, N = 190) = 8.46, p < .05$, or to play board or video games, $\chi^2(1, N = 190) = 8.79, p < .05$.

Multivariate regression and logit models were used to estimate the impact of mentoring on all of the outcomes, controlling for the baseline differences cited earlier, as well as other potentially relevant baseline characteristics of the youth, parent, and household.³ For all of the outcome variables, the two treatment

³The following baseline variables were included in all models: age, race/ethnicity, gender, treatment status, academic variables, previously having a mentor, major life event, parental socioeconomic status variables, prior victimization, referral sources, and counseling. Control variables relevant to each particular dependent variable were included in the individual analyses.

Table 1

Youth, Parent, and Mentor Characteristics

	Cross-race match	Same-race match	No match
Youth characteristics			
Age	12.0 years (range = 10.0- 15.9 years)	12.3 years (range = 9.4- 15.8 years)	12.3 years (range = 10.0- 16.7 years)
Male	56.0%	60.0%	59.1%
Female	44.0%	40.0%	40.9%
Family/parent characteristics			
Receiving public aid	50.0%	45.3%	50.5%
Parent/guardian (P/G) is female	98.4%	95.4%	93.7%
P/G is the parent	86.4%	83.1%	89.9%
Educational status			
Less than high school	25.4%	22.6%	26.3%
High school or equivalent	40.2%	35.5%	42.5%
Some college	28.7%	35.5%	25.6%
Bachelor's degree	4.1%	4.8%	4.2%
Master's degree and higher	1.6%	1.6%	1.4%
Mentor characteristics			
Age	28.78 years	30.03 years	
Employed full-time	98.1%	100%	
Educational status			
High school or equivalent	8.0%	12.3%	
Some college	27.2%	30.8%	
Bachelor's degree	49.6%	49.2%	
Master's degree and above	15.2%	7.7%	
Vocational status			
Student	13.8%	3.1%	
Professional	48.8%	46.8%	
Technical, sales, or administrative	22.8%	29.7%	
Service	8.9%	15.6%	
Has children living at home	12.2%	27.2%**	

** $p < .01$.

groups (minority youth in same- and cross-race matches) were contrasted with minority youth in the control group and tested against each other. Because significant treatment effects would imply that one subgroup is different from both the control group and the other subgroup, such comparisons permit a test of the impact of mentoring, as well as the differential effects of same- versus cross-race matching.

Comparisons of minority youth in the three groups (same-race, cross-race, control) yielded only one significant difference. Logit analysis revealed that those youth who were assigned to same-race matches were more likely to report at follow-up that they had initiated alcohol use at follow-up (odds ratio = 4.6, $p < .01$). A few group differences also emerged when gender was taken into consideration in the multivariate regression analysis (Table 2). In particular, minority boys in same-race matches reported smaller decrements in scholastic competence and self-worth than did minority boys in cross-race matches. Minority girls in same-race matches reported smaller decrements in school value and self-worth than did minority girls in same-race matches. This pattern of findings remained even after controlling for the length of the relationship. The effect sizes (based on Cohen's, 1992, f^2) of these findings were .26 for school value, .41 for perceived scholastic competence, and .19 for self-worth.

Youth's responses to questions regarding the characteristics of the mentor relationship were also examined. Compared to youth in same-race relationships, youth in cross-race relationships reported that they were more likely to talk to their mentors "when something was bugging them" and perceived their mentors as providing more unconditional support. No group (or subgroup) differences emerged on any other items. Case managers reported that parents of youth in same-race matches were more supportive of the relationship than were parents of youth in cross-race matches. Case managers also made more contacts with youth assigned to same-race matches than to those in cross-race matches during the first 3 months of the match. Finally, parents of youth in cross-race matches were more likely than were parents of youth in same-race matches to believe that the relationship improved their children's peer relationships, that the mentor tried to build on the youth's strengths, and that the mentors took them to places they wanted to go. Comparisons of parents' responses to the remaining 29 items yielded no other group differences.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to examine the differential effects of same- versus cross-race matches on youth outcomes. Irrespective of condition, the youth in this study experienced slight decrements in most indicators of socioemotional functioning, a finding that is consistent with the developmental literature on adolescence (Feldman & Elliott, 1993). There was only one overall group difference, and

Table 2

Estimated Impacts by Type of Minority Match Controlling for Length of Match Standardized Coefficients

Dependent variable	Cross-race match		Same-race match		Adjusted R ²
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Value of school	-0.09 (-1.29)	-0.17* (-2.44)	-0.04 (-0.79)	-0.06 (-0.98)	.20
Perceived scholastic competence	-0.21** (-3.02)	-0.08 (-1.22)	-0.06 (-1.20)	-1.04 (-0.66)	.29
Grades	-0.07 (-0.99)	0.02 (0.25)	0.00 (0.02)	-0.03 (-0.45)	.23
Skipping class	0.02 (0.23)	-0.08 (1.15)	-0.02 (-0.38)	-0.04 (-0.70)	.15
Hours of homework	0.11 (1.37)	0.03 (0.43)	-0.06 (-0.91)	-0.01 (-0.11)	.08
Peer intimacy	0.07 (0.94)	-0.00 (-0.02)	0.08 (1.34)	-0.01 (-0.20)	.08
Peer conflict	-0.08 (-1.03)	-0.09 (-1.16)	-0.08 (-1.27)	-0.07 (-1.14)	.11
Peer prosocial	-0.01 (-0.07)	-0.07 (-0.94)	0.03 (0.49)	-0.05 (-0.90)	.14
Peer self-esteem	0.07 (0.95)	-0.04 (-0.57)	0.03 (0.46)	-0.07 (-1.12)	.17
Peer inequality	0.06 (0.69)	0.01 (0.12)	0.00 (0.05)	0.01 (0.16)	.04
Parent relations	0.11 (1.53)	0.05 (0.78)	0.02 (0.30)	0.04 (0.76)	.25
Self-worth	-0.14 (-1.91)	-0.16* (-2.18)	-0.11* (-1.97)	-0.10 (-1.67)	.16
Hit someone	-0.10 (-1.27)	-0.13 (-1.63)	-0.04 (-0.67)	-0.12 (-1.84)	.02
Frequency of alcohol use	-0.03 (-0.39)	0.01 (0.13)	0.05 (0.79)	-0.00 (-0.02)	.18
Frequency of drug use	0.06 (0.77)	0.04 (0.51)	0.07 (1.14)	0.01 (0.14)	.03

Note. *t* values are presented in parentheses.

p* ≤ .05. *p* ≤ .01.

a scattering of findings emerged when the groups were further differentiated by gender. In particular, adolescents in same-race matches were more likely to report the initiation of alcohol use than were adolescents in cross-race matches. Minority boys in cross-race matches experienced a greater decrement in perceived scholastic competence and self-worth than did minority boys in same-race matches. Additionally, minority girls in cross-race matches experienced a larger decrement in school value and self-worth than did minority girls in same-race matches.

Although, on the whole, there does not appear to be a consistent pattern to these findings, it is interesting to consider the gender-based comparisons and the apparent benefits to self-worth that emerged in same-race matches. It is possible, for example, that minority youth's feelings of self-worth are compromised when measured against the standards of the dominant, individualistic culture (Fordham, 1988; Ogbu, 1990a). Similarly, minority girls with European American mentor matches might feel greater pressure to conform to the potentially harmful conventions of traditional femaleness (as defined by White, middle-class womanhood; Fordham, 1993). Nonetheless, the overall array of sparse and inconsistent findings suggests that the racial configuration of a match, per se, does not differentially affect youth outcomes in any robust or consistent manner. Indeed, the fact that most of the differences emerged only after the groups were further differentiated by gender suggests that the effects of race on relationships are subtle and act in combination with other factors (e.g., gender, interpersonal style, parental attitudes) to shape the influence of mentoring.

Cross-race relationships lasted slightly longer (1.4 months), primarily because there were more European American mentors available at the time of the match. Although controlling for relationship duration did not attenuate any of the effects, it is possible that longer lapses would have affected outcomes. In particular, there is some evidence to suggest that the effects of mentor relationships strengthen over time and that short-lived relationships have little or no influence on youth outcomes (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). Participation in the evaluation study expedited the pairing of same-race matches, but under typical circumstances, the wait for same-race matches among minority youth can be substantially longer (Furano et al., 1993).

Youth in the two groups held relatively similar impressions of their mentors. Youth in cross-race matches, however, reported feeling that they could "talk to their mentors" when things were bothering them and that they received more unconditional support. These effects might reflect differences in the style of mentoring provided by European American versus minority mentors, or the more novel context provided in the cross-race matches. It is also possible that participants in this study were inhibited in their willingness to report relationship difficulties that emerged on the basis on race.

Parents and guardians also held somewhat more positive impressions of cross-race relationships. In particular, parents of youth in cross-race matches

were more likely than were parents of youth in same-race matches to report that the relationships led to improvements in their children's peer relationships, that the mentors built on their children's strengths, and that the mentors provided recreational and social opportunities. These findings converge with the mentees' qualitative assessments and suggest that cross-race mentors might be working particularly hard to overcome the challenges of crossing racial boundaries.

Although seemingly straightforward, contrasts of same- versus cross-race matches are complicated by the fact that minority youth are not randomly assigned to the mentor relationships. Matching is a very deliberate process in which the case manager considers the preferences and characteristics of parents, youth, and mentors. Thus, in addition to differences attributed to the racial configuration of the relationship, the differences that emerged between same- versus cross-race relationships could also be attributed to several other factors. For example, parents and youth in the two groups could be inherently different. Those who express a preference for same-race matches and who are willing to endure relatively longer waits to this end might differ from those who, at baseline, express no such preference. Case managers who believe that cross-race matches are more challenging might place less troubled youth or more experienced mentors in such dyads. Indeed, at baseline, case managers judged youth assigned to cross-race mentors as having more deficits in social, cultural, and recreational opportunities, whereas youth assigned to same-race mentors were judged by caseworkers to be overly dependent.

These baseline differences might have influenced caseworkers' decisions regarding matches, as well as the overall course and effects of the relationships. For example, youth deemed overly dependent (as opposed to simply lacking in opportunities) might be more challenging to mentors and might stand a greater likelihood of being placed in same-race matches. This possibility is supported by the fact that case managers made more contact with same-race matches during the crucial early months, perhaps suggesting that the youth in those matches presented more difficulties to their mentors. On the other hand, caseworkers rated parents of youth in same-race matches as more supportive of the match than parents of youth in cross-race matches. This impression is counter to parent reports, but might stem from the parents' initial request for same-race matches. More generally, the baseline differences might have influenced the overall pattern of findings. It could be argued, for example, that the lower levels of reported alcohol initiation among youth in cross-race matches relates, in part, to the relatively fewer social opportunities available to these youth.

The intensity or length of the relationship could also differ in ways that affect the relationship, particularly if there was a longer time lag for the initiation of the same-race match. Nonetheless, by controlling for the length of the relationship, baseline differences, and a range of potentially influential baseline variables, we attempted to minimize such biases. Finally, the outcome variables included in this

study do not tap into the full range of potential effects. It might be the case that minority youth in same-race matches enjoyed benefits that were not assessed in this study, such as enhanced psychological functioning, ethnic identity, and cultural pride.

Our capacity to draw definitive conclusions regarding the effects of same-versus cross-race relationships is further complicated by the fact that within the minority-only treatment group, there were actually three groups: youth matched with a same-race mentor; youth matched with a mentor of a different race (a cross-race mentor); and treatment youth who, for a variety of reasons, were never matched with a mentor.⁴ If the receipt of a mentor were purely random, the never-matched treatments could either be removed from the analysis or included in the control group. If this status is not randomly determined (as was the case in this study), then comparing the same-race or cross-race mentored youth to the average minority control youth or the never-matched minority youth could produce a biased impact estimate. For example, 31 of the treatment youth decided that they no longer wanted mentors when matches became available. Suppose, for argument's sake, that the lives of these youth had dramatically improved. If we eliminate these unmatched treatment youth from the analysis but do not eliminate the comparable youth from the control group, we have stacked the odds against the treatment group, and the estimated impacts will be smaller than true impacts. Similarly, if youth assigned to same- or cross-race mentors are somehow systematically different from the average control participant (in ways that cannot be controlled statistically), our estimates could be biased. Thus, some of the power of the control group design was lost because one cannot identify which control youth would have decided that they no longer wanted a mentor, would have been matched to a same-race mentor, or would have been matched to a cross-race mentor had they been given a chance.

An additional limitation arises from the relatively small sample size, coupled with a relatively large number of comparisons. Although the original sample consisted of approximately 1,000 treatment and control youth, a smaller proportion (56.8%) were minority youth. Detecting statistically significant impacts of mentoring in a smaller sample requires larger true subgroup effects. Indeed, many of the effect sizes in the study were small to medium. This relatively small subsample also limited our capacity to make further differentiation beyond gender. This is unfortunate, given that the effects of same- and cross-race matching might have

⁴Agency staff reported three major reasons for the failure to match the 109 treatment youth during the study period. First, 33 of the unmatched treatment youth became ineligible during the study period because the parent re-married, the youth got too old, or the youth's place of residence changed. Second, 31 were not matched because the youth no longer wanted a Big Brother or Big Sister. Third, 21 were not matched because a suitable volunteer could not be found during the study period. The 24 remaining treatment youth were not matched for a variety of reasons, most commonly because the parent or youth did not follow through with the intake process.

varied within particular racial, ethnic, or age subgroups of the youth. For example, as racial group identity becomes more salient throughout adolescence, same-race mentors might become increasingly important to youth (Phinney & Tarver, 1988; Spencer & Dornbusch, 1990; Yeh, Eastman, & Cheung, 1994). A larger sample would have permitted a more fine-grained analysis of these and other factors.

Future studies should also consider the motivations, perceptions, and qualities of the mentors, and how these factors might interact with their race to predict outcomes. For example, European Americans who volunteer to work with minority youth are likely to vary in the extent to which they are motivated by social-justice concerns, in their sensitivity and openness to issues of racism and inequity, and in their interpersonal skills. It will be important to specify the ways in which these and other intervening variables mediate relations between mentors' racial background and youth outcomes (Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1983; Steinberg & Fletcher, 1998).

It is also worth noting that the assessments were based solely on self-reports. The participants might have been limited in their ability to engage in assessments of relationships or inhibited in their willingness to report substance use. Moreover, although adolescents who are provided with confidentiality tend to be reasonably truthful in reporting rates of problem behaviors (Oetting & Beauvais, 1990), participants in same-race matches might have been less inhibited than their cross-race counterparts.

Despite these limitations, this study represents a first attempt at statistically examining an avoided, yet persistent issue in volunteer mentoring. Given that child and parent preferences regarding racial matching are honored in virtually all mentoring programs, any comparisons of same- versus cross-race mentoring relationships are likely to confront the methodological problems delineated in this article. In this study—the most stringent test yet conducted on the significance of race in mentoring relationships—the biases were partially addressed by controlling for relationship length and for potential baseline differences. Although preliminary, the results tend to suggest that, with the exception of youth for whom racial issues are an overriding concern, the mentor's race or ethnicity might not be the critical factor in predicting outcomes. Trusting and supportive relationships appear to be possible for minority youth in both same- and cross-race relationships, and the quality of these relationships appears to be multidetermined.

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