



Mentoring Across Differences: How Race and Class Shape the Youth Mentoring Process

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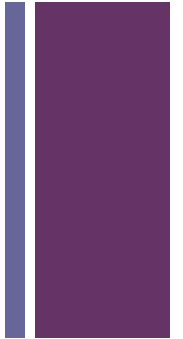
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+ Research on Mentoring



- Overall, benefits of mentoring modest
- Greatest benefits realized when
 - Relationships last at least a year
 - Mentor and youth feel “close” or mentor becomes a “significant” adult in mentee’s life
- Short matches (< 3 months) associated with decrements in youth outcomes

+ Formal Mentoring Programs



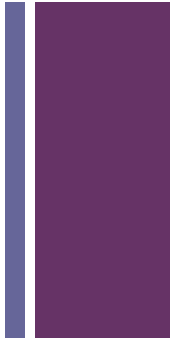
■ Mentors

- Caucasian
- Middle to upper income

■ Youth

- Of color
- Low income

+ Natural Mentoring



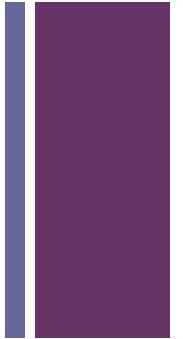
- When youth choose, they tend to seek mentors with same racial or ethnic background
- Ethnic minority adults report being a mentor just as frequently as Whites, but do so in more diverse settings so are more likely serving as informal rather than formal mentors

Cavell et al., 2002; Klaw & Rhodes, 1995; MENTOR, 2006; Sanchez & Reyes, 1999



What role do cultural differences play in the mentoring process?

+ Definitions



- Race – biological, genetic heritage of a group
- Ethnicity – groups of individuals who have a common culture, nationality history or religion
- Culture – shared patterns of a society (values, beliefs, communication styles) transmitted over time through generations
- Social class – wealth, education, resources, power

Different Worlds: Field Test Study Participants (n=97)

	Parents	Mentors
Household Income	68% < \$30,000 Most children eligible for free/reduced lunch	50% >\$50,000 33% > \$90,000
Education	15% BA or higher	55% BA or higher
Family	42% Single	66% Single 7% have children (only 1 < 18 yrs of age)
Race	68% People of Color	69% White



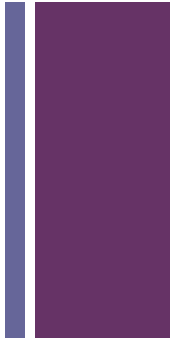
Are Same-Race Matches More Beneficial?

- Mixed Findings





Benefits in Same Race Matches



- More support, higher levels satisfaction

(Ensher & Murphy, 1997)

- Gender taken into account

- Boys – more positive scholastic competence, self-worth

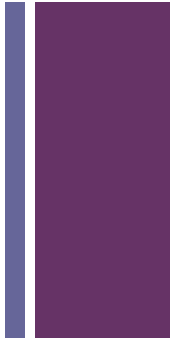
- Girls – higher school value and self-worth

(Rhodes at al., 2002)

+ No Differences

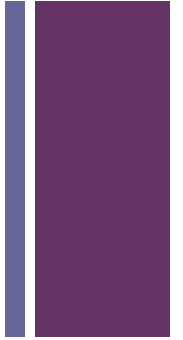
- Matched based on shared interests, geographic proximity, youth and parent preferences
- Endured at least 11 months
- Cross-race matches more likely to end prematurely

(DuBois et al., 2002; Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Parra et al., 2002)





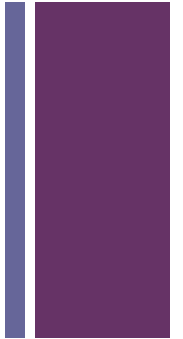
Benefits in Cross-Race Matches



- Youth perceive more unconditional support
- Parents report more positive impression of mentors, more likely to report improvements in youth (Rhodes et al., 2002)



Do Differences Affect the Ways Mentors and Youth Relate?



- How differences are negotiated
 - Cultural sensitivity of the mentor
 - Cultural mistrust on part of mentee
- How feedback is provided
 - Stereotype threat and “wise” feedback (Cohen & Steele, 2002)
 - Setting and communicating high standards
 - Expressions of belief in youth’s abilities to meet these
- Cultural values
 - Misunderstandings and miscommunications

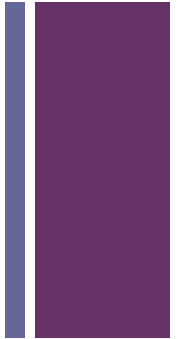
Sanchez & Colon, 2005



**No attention to social class
differences**



Series of Qualitative Studies



- Approaches mentors take
 - Secondary analysis of interviews from two studies (n=44; 23 adults, 21 youth)
 - Close, enduring relationships (Spencer, 2006)
 - Early ending with mentor-youth pairs in close, enduring relationships (Spencer, 2007)
- Relationship trajectories
 - Longitudinal study of mentor-youth pairs, from time of match to up to 2 years (n=24)
- Experiences of Parents
 - Interviews with parents of youth in formal mentoring relationships (n=13)



What role do cultural differences play in the mentoring process?

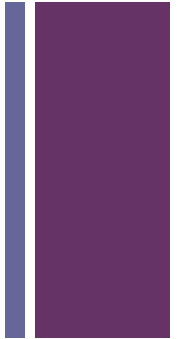
+ Mentor Approaches: Ethnicity and Race



- Some openness to and respect for differences
 - Conscious attempt at non-judgmental approach
 - Acknowledgment of personal discomfort
 - Active navigation of differences in the relationship
 - Personal growth and change in response to engaging with mentee
- Overlooking differences
 - Lack of attention to differences
 - Minimizes differences and their influence on the relationship
 - Avoidance of talk about differences
- Differences viewed as “deficits”
 - Unaware of ethnocentric biases
 - Differences as challenges to be “overcome” rather than as opportunities for cross-cultural learning
 - Used to explain mentee’s negative or problem behaviors



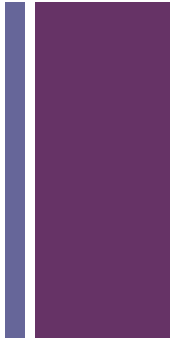
Some Openness to Differences



“You know, there are a lot of things where I'm like, you know, ‘Wow,...that doesn't fit into my ... view on...things.’ But I never...say, ‘Oh, god,’ ...just kinda...go with it. 'Cause I think, you can't make a leopard change its spots. You know?...I'm not there to... change her views, per se. I mean,.... some things ... I do feel strongly about like kind of steering her in one way or another. But ... it's not hurting her to ... think that stuff, so I don't need to...intervene.

28-year-old White female matched with Latina mentee

+ Overlooking Differences



“Afterwards I was talking to him, I said, ‘so, have you ever been made to feel...has anyone ever you know, picked on you or been mean to you just because you’re black or made you feel uncomfortable’ and...surprisingly he said ‘no.’ Which I was amazed. I said, ‘do you ever feel uncomfortable because you’re black?’ And he said ‘well sometimes at school when I’m the only black kid in the class.’ I said ‘is it because anybody says anything or does anything or treats you any different?’ ‘No, just sometimes I notice that I’m the only black kid in the room.’ You know, so it’s...in some way it was great to know that he’s never even ... in white (town name), he’s never experienced it. And the only way he does experience it is if he notices it himself. You know, so...that was...that was kind of odd, that was only a couple of weeks ago and that was an eye opener for me.”

30-year-old White male matched with African American mentee

+ Differences as Deficits



“She is so good with limits and rules now. And the reason most of the time that she gets in trouble in other areas of her life is that, you know her culture, and family doesn't do that. And so that's very bad for her.”

40-year-old white female matched with Portuguese mentee



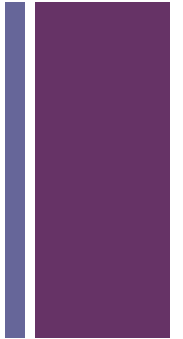
Social Class



- **Sensitivity to class differences**
 - Acknowledgment of personal good fortune
 - Empathy for mentee and mentee's family situation w/o judgment
 - Child in context
 - Active navigation of differences in the relationship
- **Minimizing class differences**
 - With knowledge, resources mentee can reach higher goals
 - View of self as “savior” who can provide what mentee lacks
 - Only values upward mobility goals/efforts
- **Differences as “deficits”**
 - Unable to understand or relate to family situation
 - Used to explain mentee's negative or problem behaviors



Sensitivity to Social Class Differences



“And she was just, I think she was just... strugglin’ to make ends meet, and I saw that, right from the start. She was working two jobs,... and I know she was stressed.”

24-year-old South Asian male matched with a multi-racial mentee



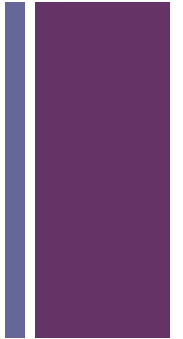
Sensitivity to Social Class Differences



“I think uh...it's definitely...opened up my, ...just my view on ... the world. I mean, I was pretty sheltered...growing up. I mean, ...I studied ... sociology, so we study things, you know, in theory. But until you actually, experience them first hand it doesn't really have too much of an effect. it's definitely broadened my views on like, you know, the haves and the have nots.”

28-year-old White female matched with Latina mentee

+ Minimizing Social Class Differences

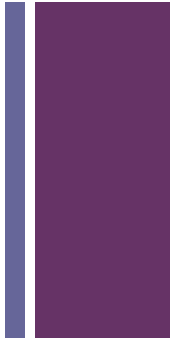


“... his mother is a...I think a high school graduate. Doesn't really emphasize education and what that can do for you. So I'd like to get him to admit to himself that that's an important thing. And that he can do a lot more than working at the supermarket. You know, there are a lot of...he wants to earn money, but there are a lot of ways to earn money than working at the supermarket. ... I think it's something he's got to decide and if he feels like he's being pushed into it, then he's going to rebel against it. Just the nature of kids.”

40-year-old White male matched with bi-racial mentee



Social Class Differences as Deficits



‘Cause... you don’t have to be rich to live in a crappy little house and have a little yard ... and like parents...I definitely wouldn’t ... have a Little Sister that has eight siblings again. Ad no dad. You know, that right there is like... is too much ... there’s not nearly enough attention. Because you can be poor and just ...have only two children. And they’re gonna still get better attention. Even a single mom with two kids is gonna pay more attention, than a single... well, obviously, a single mom with eight kids.

25-year-old White female matched with Black mentee

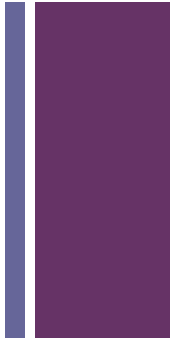


Relationship Trajectories



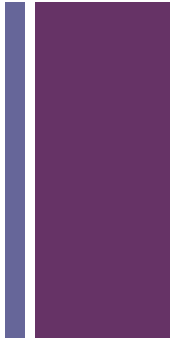
- Non-connectors (n=2)
- Eroders (n=3)
- Sustainers (n=3)
- Bridgers (n=4)

+ Non-Connectors (n=2)



- Relationship never seemed to “get off the ground”
- Did not meet expectations
- Mentor uncertain about youth’s engagement
- Focus on 1-year commitment
- Obstacles

+ Non-Connector: “Different Styles”



- Youth: 13, Puerto-Rican, HH income < 10K
- Mentor: 37, White, HH income 45K-60K
- Match length: approx 9 months

+ Eroders (n=3)

- Initially connected but relationship deteriorated over time
- Differences in values and worldviews more prominent and important over time

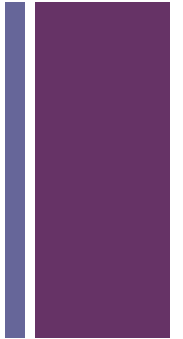


+ Eroder: “Didn’t really get to know her”

- Youth: 12, Afghani-Indian, HH income not specified
- Mentor: 24, White, HH income 30K-45K
- Match length: approx 12 months



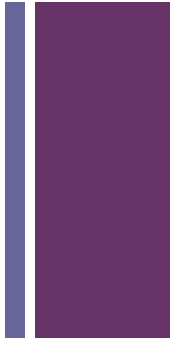
+ Sustainers (n=3)



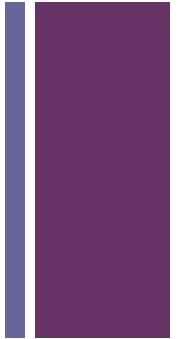
- Relationship continued but did not deepen
- Holding back

+ Sustainer: “We’re different”

- Youth: 15, African American, HH income 30K-39K
- Mentor: 33, White, HH income 30K-45K
- Match length: approx 18 months



+ Bridgers (n=4)

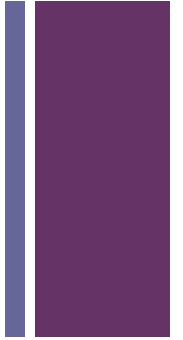


- Forged meaningful connection
- Mentor acknowledges differences in experience
- Engaged with differences
 - Active sharing about cultural differences
 - Learning about differences a part of relationship

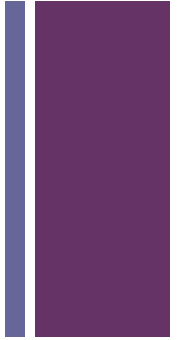


Bridger: “Someone I can connect with”

- Youth: 11, African American, HH income <10K
- Mentor: 33, Indian/Asian, HH income 75K-90K
- Match length: approx 12 months



+ Learning from Parents



- Hopes and expectations for mentoring relationship
- Roles in child's mentoring relationship
- Trust in mentor and satisfaction with relationship quality
- Experiences of racial and social class differences

+ Hopes and Expectations

- Mentor-Child Relationship
 - Additional positive adult role model
 - Confidant
 - Experiences and opportunities that broaden child's sense of self and future

“I'd like my son to experience new things and kind of break out of his shell.”

+ Hopes and Expectations

- Mentor-Parent Relationship
 - Open, consistent communication
 - Personal relationship

“I ...got to meet him, and I got comfortable, and I liked the idea that they were gonna spend time together.... I could trust that he was not gonna steer my kid in the wrong direction.”

“if she’s building this relationship with my daughter, then she’s gonna be part of this family, too.”

+ Trust and Satisfaction

- Clear commitment to mentoring relationship

She's taking the time out of her busy schedule to make time to see my daughter, when she's supposed to see her. Not just haphazardly, here or there.

Where I get upset, is if you're disappointing my child, and you're not in communication with her and she's asking me about you and I don't know what to tell her. ...that upsets me because it upsets her.

- Genuine positive regard and respect

"that level of conscientiousness really shows me that she respects my daughter"

- Respect for parental guidelines

"I told her at any point in time she feels... that she's [the child] gettin' out of control, or gettin' ready to escalate, just bring her home.So she did."

+ Parent Roles

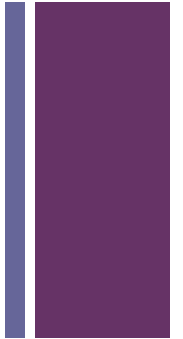
■ Collaborator

“[the mentor] looks at... things in a different way. Like if I come to [mentor] and I say to her, ‘Well, [child] has such and such a problem in this area. And she like, ‘Well, okay.’ She will say, ‘I’ll talk to her and stuff and then try to get things going and stuff.’ And then she’d come back and relate it to me and find out, you know, we work as a team like too.”

■ Coach

“kinda looking to me as, ‘Okay, what should I do here?’...it’s sort of, um...makes me realize, Okay, well this is a person who’s a little bit younger and I really have to be able to tell him what to do or expect. Because he’s a 19 year old.”

■ Mediator



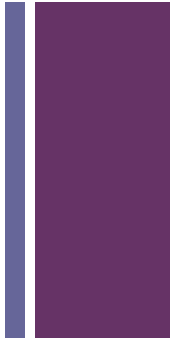


Parent Roles

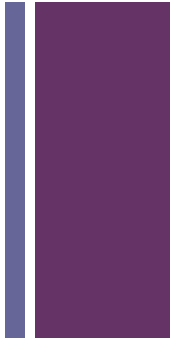
■ Mediator

“there was a period where she was not as, ...as communicative as I would have hoped she’d been?...so, I talked to her about that....And, she was very apologetic, and she was very good about... you know, they haven’t seen each other every weekBut, she’s very good about calling.”

“[the mentor] did, at times, you know, have to work hard ... but I just always told [child] I basically said, you know, ‘He’s a student andthere’re gonna be many times when he’s just gonna be completely out, and you just gotta just wait and he’ll be back.’ So, I think the fact that I told him that reinforced his trust and he knew that it would work out ‘cause I said, ‘You know, you can call, but I believe this is what’s going on’ ”



+ Parent Roles



■ Mediator

“She [the mentor] was supposed to be meeting with her [the child] every week... She was an accountant, and since tax season started, she basically dumped my daughter like a hot potato..... And I was very upset about that and ... I called her up ... we ended the match.”



Race and Class Differences



- Same-race match: more desirable, less attainable

“I thought she was sweet. I really had hoped it would be a woman of color. ... I should have said that. I really had hoped it would be a woman of color, but, I think... the interests sort of outweighed that... it wasn't a big thing for me, but, ... it's, it's a little different to see somebody like yourself, whether they be Latina or Black or Asian... just a minority, to serve as that role model? ... 'That could be me.' You know what I mean? 'That could be me.'”

“but I understand that ... there are limits and that... what you have available is what you have available... it was more important to me to find a match.”

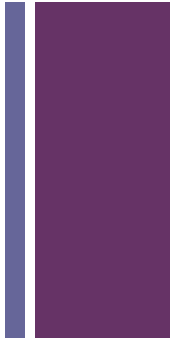
“the essence of a person is...the greatest importance, you know, that you be a good person, that you're giving, that you're kind and compassionate, and all of those foundation things so outweigh.”

- Opportunities in cross-race match

- Exposure

- Learning

+ Race and Class Differences



■ Distance

“I don’t know if she feels uncomfortable... because... I don’t know, because of the race? Or if she’s just a person that’s uncomfortable around certain people until she doesn’t know them?”

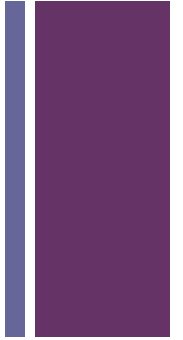
+ Race and Class Differences

- Most wanted more affluent mentor
- Access to experiences, resources could not offer
 - Outings to expensive places

“I want them to be able to do stuff that I would never be able to do with them, or I can't afford to do.. It's, it' just an out for them.”
 - Connection to middle class
- Raise child's aspirations and motivation for educational and occupational achievement

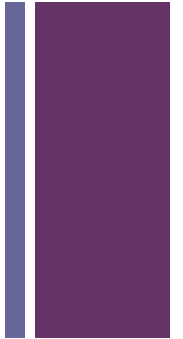
“seeing [mentor], being with him, visiting his house, seeing how nice it is, you know.... just thinking this whole thing [school] is worth pursuing.”

+ Race and Class Differences



“my daughters say, ‘When I grow up, I want to be like you.’ I’m like, ‘No... no! You want to be better than me! ... You want to be better.’ So, to be around people that they could look up to and, and see what they have achieved in their lifetime, and know that they could achieve more.”

+ Race and Class Differences



■ Tension

“I can’t afford paying her back anything... So I feel so bad.”

“I have the thing, like if I borrow something from you or my neighbor I buy her and give it back to her”

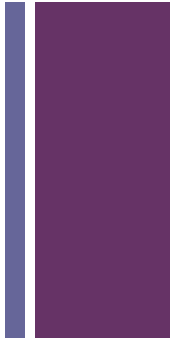
“...for her it’s like nothing”

“I can’t be more grateful for everything she’s doing ... it’s a huge blessing.”

+ Stuff from Not what I expected



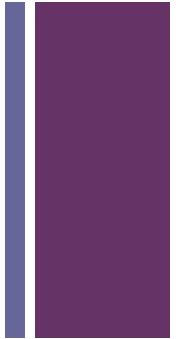
+ Some Lessons Learned



- Lack of attention to cultural differences in the field of youth mentoring
- Complexity of differences in backgrounds in mentoring process
- Mentors and parents notice and experience cultural differences
 - Navigating complex terrain largely unaided
- Parents
 - Expanding relational network, access to resources and information, rather than filling “void”
 - Play significant, but unnoted, role in mentoring process
 - Mismatch between parents’ need for personal connection with mentors and some programs’ tendency to encourage more distance
 - Emphasis on potential for sabotage overshadowing contributions

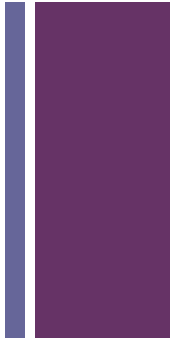


Some Lessons Learned (cont.)



- Race and social class attended to differently by mentors
 - Lack of awareness of structural level influences of race and ethnicity on youth
 - Institutionalized racism
 - White privilege
 - Lack of awareness of social class as culture
 - Source of values and strength
 - Upward mobility bias (Liu & Ali, 2005)
- Mentors navigated cultural differences in a variety of ways
 - Impact of these on the mentoring relationship?

+ How Mentor Approaches MAY Shape the Mentoring Process



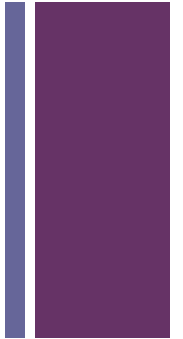
- Actively navigating cultural differences may:
 - Enhance the closeness of bond between mentor and youth
 - Create more opportunities for mentor involvement in youth's life
 - Enhance psychosocial processes contributing to youth outcomes (e.g., role modeling, social support)

- Avoidance or minimizing of differences may:
 - Limit the potential of the relationship
 - Limit closeness and meaningfulness of relationship

- Differences as deficits may:
 - Interfere with relationship development
 - Have a negative influence on mentee's development
 - Sense of self
 - Ethnic identity development



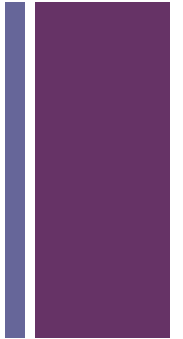
How Cultural Differences MAY Shape the Mentoring Process



- Pairs' navigation of differences may be associated with relationship quality
 - Length of relationship
 - Depth of connection
 - Youth engagement



Implications for Practice



- Elicit expectations and preferences – mentors, youth and parents
 - Matching, preparation and support
- Prepare mentors, youth and families for mentoring experience
 - Training in cultural awareness and sensitivity
- Support mentoring matches
 - Listen and look for signs of difficulty in follow-up communications
- *Engage* parents in mentoring process
- Recruit more diverse pools of mentors



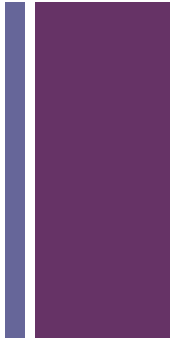
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