

## Abstract

Forming a mentoring relationship between an adult and child is a common intervention and program used in social service agencies. Extensive research has been done on mentoring relationships, but there is little consensus on what factors should be considered when creating a mentoring pair. One factor that has been studied is the importance of race in mentoring, but there have been varied results. Some studies find that people of color feel more supported and understood when their mentor is a person of color, but others find benefits to matches that are cross-racial. This study investigates the following research question: is there a difference in the longevity of same race versus cross race mentoring relationships. It is hypothesized that matches who identify as the same race will last longer on average than those who do not.

The study involves a secondary data analysis completed by collecting a stratified random sample of matches from a local social service agency. The data is analyzed by a survival analysis that will compare the length of mixed and same race matches.

The findings are expected to add to the understanding of what criteria should be considered when creating matches in this local agency.

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### Research Proposal

Working in a mentoring program has raised many questions about what factors affect the effectiveness of mentoring initiatives, but one in particular has stood out to me. In my upcoming research, I question if there is a difference in the longevity of mixed race and matched race pairs. In my agency, we match children with incarcerated family members or other risk factors to adult mentors. There are several common differences between the mentee and mentor pools in my agency, but racial identity stands out. Most mentors in the program are white while a large portion of our participating mentees are children of color. This leads to match pairs where a child of color is mentored by a white adult. In order to increase the push to diversify the population of mentors in our program, I want to see how this trend affects the effectiveness of mentoring matches. Studies on mentoring have shown a variety of results on what affects mentoring relationships. Some find that race plays an integral role while others do not. Because of the need of many of our clients to find a role model who looks like and represent them, I hypothesize that matched race pairs have more longevity than mixed race pairs.

If the hypothesis is supported by this research, it will provide evidence for the need of racially diversifying the mentor population in my field agency. While there are some actions being considered in order to diversify the mentoring program, actions might be taken to that diversification if the hypothesis is supported.

The dependent variable in this study is the length of the match measured in months, while the independent variable is the racial pairings of one-to-one matches. That will be measured as either a mixed racial pairing or a same race pair. Race is self-reported by mentors and mentees and there are four different categories to choose from: White, Black/African American, Asian, and Latinx. I will also hold for potentially confounding variables, specifically the age of mentors and mentees and gender. All the matches in the agency are same-sex matches, so I will simply be accounting for whether or not female or male matches have lasted longer in our programs.

I will be using existing data that the agency collects upon matching mentees with mentors. The variables were not recorded as scales, and I will not need to use any for my research. The length of matches is measured in days, but because some matches span several years, I will be entering them in terms of months. Race is recorded in matches, but I am simply noting whether the pairs are of the same or different races. I will represent this by having same race pairs entered into SPSS as zero and mixed-race pairs entered as one.

I will be taking a stratified random sample. One random sample will come from the 499 completed cases in the program, and the second random sample will be taken from the 162 active matches in the program. There is not a power analysis available for the type of analysis I will be completing. I am taking a random sample of fifty cases from the completed and active case sets.

For this study, I will complete a secondary data analysis. The data I need is collected at the time of program intake, so there is no need to collect the data again. The length of the match is recorded as well as the self-reported race of participants. To test my hypothesis, I will do a survival analysis. If the survival analysis supports my hypothesis the analysis will show that match raced mentoring pairs survived longer on average than mixed race mentoring pairs.

Because I am using secondary data collected over several years, there will probably be some data

that is missing. To handle missing data, I will complete a missing values analysis and then run a multiple imputation.

While this study attempts to perform an in-depth analysis that can accurately measure the variables it is attempting to, there will be limitations. Measurement validity is limited in this study if the length of the match does not indicate effectiveness. I am inferring in the study that longer matches indicate more positive experiences, but that is not guaranteed in that measurement. Limits to internal validity include the possibility of the length of matches being affected by confounding variables I do not hold for. Factors like family moves, similar interests, and health problems can all affect the length of matches, but they are not recorded in a standardized way that could be measured in this study. If some of the cases from the random sample were affected by other factors, the measurement validity could be threatened. In terms of external validity, this study is taking data from a single agency which could affect the ability of the results to apply outside of the studies context. Different results could be found in agencies with different match criterion. This research also would not apply to professional or adult mentoring relationships. Statistical validity could be threatened by a restriction of range. If the random sample selects matches that are all similar, the results may not reflect the full range of matches in the program.

## References

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