Unfinished Business: The Impact of Race on Understanding Mentoring Relationships

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No. 06-060
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Organizational Behavior
July 2006

No abstract.
46 pages

The problem of the twentieth century is the color line.

W.E.B. DuBois

Introduction

W.E.B. DuBois's 1903 words are prophetic, as he proclaims the importance of an issue with which we are still grappling in the twenty-first century—race. As contributors to this volume, we were asked to focus on the relationship between race and mentoring. What do we learn about this important developmental relationship by examining the research on race and mentoring? Like DuBois, we believe that the analysis of race is fundamental within our society. Race continues to be a critical factor as we examine relationships in organizations, particularly if we are located in a U.S. based context. Race, is a socially embedded phenomenon that affects just about every aspect of our lives, and as such, provides a critical lens with which to examine the mentoring literature (Thomas & Alderfer, 1989).

Now, more than ever, is a timely moment in our history to examine the influence of race in the extant literature on an important topic such as mentoring. Foreman (2000:30) describes race as "America's major piece of unfinished business." Race is clearly "unfinished business" because of the plethora of conflicting emotions that are unleashed as we approach the taboo (Thomas, 1989). This tension speaks to the importance of this chapter as we explore the issue of mentoring as embedded within the social context of race within today's dynamic and diverse organizations. First, we delineate several important reasons why it is critical to discuss mentoring and race. We explore how race has been positioned within the literature to provide a context for our review of how the mentoring literature has discussed (and omitted) race as a key factor. We ask a critical question within this review: what do we know about the intersection of

mentoring and race in organizations? Finally, we explore some of the unfinished business concerning race and mentoring and present a model to drive future research in this vital area.

Why Examine Race and Mentoring?

Understanding interactions across different racial groups is critical given the changing nature of organizations and the composition of the people within them. These diverse interactions will certainly have implications for the intersection of race and mentoring. There are several trends and themes that underscore the need for us to more fully explore the intersection of race and mentoring.

Clearly organizations are undergoing significant changes that are relevant to the relationship between race and mentoring. One change is an increasingly diverse workforce (Bell, 2006; Cox & Blake, 1991; Thomas & Ely, 1996).   The non-white population is growing more rapidly than the total population, according to the most recent census figures. From 1990 to 2008, the black population will grow by 31%, compared with 11% for the white population and 25% for the total population. The white population will grow by only 3.2% between 2005 and 2010, according to recent census data and projections (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). Adding to this diversity, the Latino population will grow at a rate of 14.4%, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders at 15.4% while the growth rate for the overall population during that timeframe will be about 4.2%. Nearly 67 million people of Latino origin are expected to be added to the nation's population between 2000 and 2050. Their numbers are projected to grow from 35.6 million to 102.6 million, an increase of 188%. Their share of the nation's population should nearly double, from 12.6% to 24.4%. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005).

One consequence of these demographic projections is that firms must address how to support and enable relationships among people who come from diverse cultures, backgrounds and perspectives. Organizations must grapple with how to engage this diverse population in a common enterprise among disparate groups who "do not share a common history or culture" (Caproni, 2005:269). The impact of race on mentoring relationships is an important question to raise, first and foremost because the changing composition of the workforce means that individuals will experience more cross-race (and cross-cultural) interactions within organizations of today and of tomorrow (Murrell & Hayes-James, 2001).

While diversity in workforce participation is increasing, we still see a glass ceiling that effectively keeps the top levels absent of the same diversity that exists throughout the middle and lower levels of the organization. According to the Catalyst organization, while the number of women of color in the workforce has increased, they still only represent 1.1% of corporate officers in Fortune 500 firms (Catalyst, 2001). Their research outlines some of the barriers that are faced, particularly by women of color who often have a "double disadvantage" within traditional organizations (Bell, 1990; Murrell, 1999). According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, African Americans accounted for 7.2 percent and Latinos 5.0 percent of professionals, whereas whites accounted for 84.5 percent (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2003). The traditional "glass ceiling" has been recast as a "concrete ceiling"—an impermeable barrier that keeps women and people of color effectively locked out of the corridors of power in organizations across industries and professions (Catalyst, 2001; Tomlinson, 2001). Work by Thomas (Thomas & Alderfer, 1989; Thomas & Gabarro, 1999) clearly shows the power of mentoring in helping people of color (in their work, specifically African Americans) "break though" to senior levels within the organization. Thus,

understanding the intersection of race and mentoring may outline a process for changing the dynamics of power and thus, break down the barriers that keep women and people of color from attaining leadership positions within organizations.

Lastly, work by Thomas (1989; 1993) makes it clear that the nature and outcomes of interracial dynamics embedded within the organization's culture can provide revealing information about the state of racial affairs within the firm. In fact, some argue that people of color may act as a miner's canary—an indicator of conditions that are challenging not only for numerical minorities but also for majority groups in that same organization (Guinier & Torres, 2002). The presence of dissatisfaction, frustration and high turnover among people of color is perhaps a precursor to future problems that will be experienced by majority group members if the issues facing these more vulnerable groups are not resolved. Thus, the issue of race and mentoring may not just be an outcome of shifting workforce demographics or a process for altering interracial dynamics in the workplace, but may also be a predictor of the overall health and strength of the organization. This potential predictive power means that understanding the intersection of mentoring and race is critical to expanding our knowledge of diverse organizational dynamics as these relationships may serve as an outcome, a process and a metric related to diversity in organizations.

Examining Race in Organizational Research – A Few Caveats

As we delve into the issue of mentoring within the context of race in organizations, it is helpful to briefly review the context of how race has been conceptualized and studied within the management literature. In the early 1990s, Nkomo and Cox (Cox & Nkomo, 1990; Nkomo, 1992) provided a powerful evaluation and critique of how management scholars have typically under-conceptualized race in organizational behavior research. Nkomo (1992) describes

research on race as "narrowly focused, ahistorical and decontextualized" (p. 497). Thus a primary issue for addressing the intersection of race in the mentoring literature must be one of inclusion. Our most highly regarded models, theories and empirical studies either exclude race as a factor or include samples that lack diversity such that race is often relegated to "unexplained variance".

This exclusion inevitably leads to faulty generalization or incomplete models and theories when we gather a great deal of information about one group and use that information to generate theories and policies that we then apply to other groups (Nkomo, 1992; Minnich, 1991). Not only do we focus on one group's experiences and cast it as the norm, we view differences as "exceptions" or anomalies to this biased normative data. Acknowledgement of this bias is important because while there may be substantial research and theories on the topic of mentoring in organizations, there is significantly less research that directly examines mentoring in the context of race. Race is often excluded rather than included in organizational research and that also applies to research on the topic of mentoring. Thus, our review is restricted to a relatively small amount of literature that explicitly includes race as a factor within the research methodology or theoretical model.

There is still an additional caveat that must be stated as we review the extant literature. Within the existing research that addresses race and mentoring, the focus is often on understanding why the experiences of "others" (i.e., non-whites) do not follow the standard model (i.e., those based on primarily white samples). Thus, assimilation becomes a preferred lens through which we have examined race in organizations including within the mentoring literature. Assimilation is "conceptualized as a one-way process that requires non-European, non-English speaking groups to change to fit the dominant culture" (Nkomo, 1992:496; see also

Feagin, 1987). An underlying assumption of assimilation is that there should be little difference between the experiences of racial minorities and whites. Whether or not a group successfully assimilates into the mainstream must then be explained by differences in individual level factors such as psychological or personality characteristics between whites and people of color. Those groups that differ from the norm and need to assimilate are the ones that "have race;" the dominant group is presented as the standard or implicit benchmark. As a result, a great deal of how race has been addressed methodologically is via comparative studies. As Cox and Nkomo (1990) note, the explicit research question often compares or pits one group versus another (e.g., of blacks versus whites). Thus, we know very little about the unique experiences for people of color especially in the context of mentoring in organizations.

Unfortunately, the treatment of race within organizational research offers explanations of differential experiences without really delving into why we see these differences or, more importantly, challenging the existing models in response to the experiences of different groups. As Brief and Hayes (1997) note, organizational scientists have not fulfilled their obligation to deepen our understanding of workplace race relations. Rarely do scholars provide the conclusion that because their findings do not hold for people of color, the popular or prevailing model should be invalidated or at least questioned and revised. In addition, as Nkomo (1992:498) writes, research on race "provides little insight into the complexity of the psychological, organizational and societal variables that may account for such findings" such as differences in the experiences of whites and racial minorities. Thus, while we rely on existing data that explicitly examines race within the context of mentoring relationships, we provide these caveats to acknowledge the limitations of existing work, which leaves many "unanswered questions" to be discussed later in this chapter.

These limitations notwithstanding, we explore the importance of race in enhancing our understanding of diverse mentoring relationships. To organize our review of the existing literature, we attempt to answer three key questions: 1) How does race influence *access* to mentoring relationships; 2) How does race impact the *interactions* between mentors and protégés; and, 3) How does race influence the *outcomes* of mentoring relationships.

Mentoring and Race: Challenging Access

Mentoring has gained increasing attention as a powerful tool to enable the careers of those advancing through the ranks in organizations (Blake-Beard, 1999; Dreher & Ash, 1990; Murrell, Crosby & Ely, 1999; Thomas & Gabarro, 1999). A mentor is generally defined as a more senior individual who uses his or her influence and experience to help with the advancement of a protégé (Kram, 1988). Those with access to mentoring have been consistently shown to benefit from their involvement in these relationships; they report higher salaries, increased promotion rates, greater career satisfaction, higher organizational commitment and less intention to leave the organization as well as lower levels of turnover (Blake-Beard, 1999; Crosby, 1999; Dreher & Cox, 1996; O'Neill, 2002; Ragins, 1999; Scandura, 1992; Viator, 2001; Wanberg, Welsh & Hezlett, 2003).

Race clearly influences overall access in two ways; access to any type of mentoring relationship and who one has access to as a mentor. A common assumption is that people of color have a more challenging time gaining access to mentoring relationships (Ford & Wells,1985; Herbert, 1989; Hyun, 2005; Kaplan, Keinath & Walo, 2001; Thomas, 1990; Viator, 1999). Findings from Cox and Nkomo's (1990) study of 729 black and white MBAs support this perception; they found that black MBAs reported significantly less access to mentors than white

MBAs. Catalyst's (1999; 2001) groundbreaking series of studies of women of color in the corporate sector highlighted the importance of access to mentoring for positive career outcomes. Lack of access to mentors was cited as one of the top of four barriers to career success among the women of color surveyed. Many of the women who were then interviewed in a later follow-up study still indicated difficulty in gaining access to mentors and those who gained access revealed that their mentors were predominantly white males. These results are supported by earlier work from Dreher and Cox (1996) who tracked the career experiences of black and Hispanic MBAs graduates from top business schools within the U.S. Their findings indicated that these MBAs of color were significantly less likely than whites to establish relationships with white mentors. Other work also supports the notion that people of color find difficulty in gaining access to mentoring relationships (Catalyst, 2001; Viator, 2001).

Interestingly, a few studies do not find any differences by race in gaining access to mentoring relationships. For example, Thomas (1990) examined black and white managers and found no statistically significant differences with regards to access to mentoring; in his study, whites and blacks both reported an average of 2.4 developmental relationships. Blake-Beard's (1999) research on career outcomes for black and white women also did not find any significant differences in these two group's access to mentoring. Koberg et al.'s (1994) study of skilled, professional and managerial hospital employees, found that mentoring was actually higher among minority employees than among white employees. Koberg and her colleagues suggest that their unexpected results may be due to the impact of anti-discrimination legislation dominant within the profession they studied and this hospital's dedication and involvement in programs and practices related to increasing diversity within their organization. Each of these findings suggest that while some people of color may find difficulty in gaining access to any type of

mentoring relationships, the issue of access may be a function of the specific attributes of mentors that protégés of color receive (or select) along with the organizational context that either supports or acts as a barrier to the formation of cross-racial developmental relationships.

While overall access may be different as a function of race, the characteristics of a mentor also vary by race. Gaining access to mentors of the same race may be difficult for people of color because of their low numbers within higher levels in the organization (Catalyst, 1999; Sims, 2002). Access to white males may be limited because of unwillingness, perceived risk or other interpersonal and organizational barriers. Thomas (1990; 1993) found that when mentoring relationships were present, white males predominate as mentors for white females, black males and black females. More importantly, for protégés of color to gain access to mentors of color, they had to go outside of their own department/unit (Thomas, 1990). Lancaster (1997) describes this complexity in access to mentoring relationships for people of color as due to white males occupying the "predominate mentoring class", in other words, those in positions of power and status.

Gaining access to mentoring means that people of color are thrust into interracial dynamics embedded within the organization to a greater degree than whites (Sims, 2002; Thomas, 1990). Access to mentors of the same race is not as available to people of color within the organization without crossing additional boundaries such as level, location or function or seeking these relationships outside of their own organization (Murrell, Blake-Beard, Porter, & Perkins-Williams, 2005). In either case, there is an additional burden or what we call a "mentoring tax" on these developmental relationships that is clearly a function of race. People of color may find it difficult to access mentors of any type and when they do, they must overcome

critical barriers within the relationship such as differences in race, gender, job level, function/profession or organizational culture.

What this challenge suggests is that access (overall availability and characteristics of mentor) to mentoring may be driven by the types of relationships and social networks that people of color cultivate within organizations. For example, Ibarra's (1993) study of the informal networks of white and minority managers found that minority managers had networks with significantly lower levels of homophily than those of their white counterparts. In addition, career advancement for minority managers was related to the configuration of their networks; Ibarra (1995) found that the networks of low-potential minorities tended to be dominated by Whites (cross-race relationships) while the networks of high-potential minorities were composed of a balance of same-race and cross-race relationships. Her research speaks to the importance of the pattern and composition of relationships that are developed both within and across racial boundaries. People of color often develop two complementary networks; one set of relationships with whites who may provide access to resources and opportunities and another set of relationships with people of color who provide psychosocial and emotional support. Whites, on the other hand, don't have to think about who is in their network in the same way or include people who are racially different from them within this network. An interesting implication of these different patterns is the suggestion that for people of color, same-race versus inter-racial mentoring serves very different purposes or what Kram (1985) would label as "mentoring functions". Thus, the pattern of access to developmental relationships is clearly tied to the nature, type and strength of these relationships that also vary as a function of race.

Mentoring and Race: A Function of Interactions

Interracial dynamics within organizations have been examined extensively and the complexity as well as the range of positive and negative dynamics well documented (Alderfer & Thomas, 1988; Murrell & Hayes-James, 2001; Hayes-James, 2000). Interestingly, the complexity of these relationships impact not only the minority member but also the majority group member. Tsui, Egan and O'Reilly's (1992) research on work teams shows that whites in heterogeneous teams experience greater dissatisfaction and lower organizational commitment than whites in racially homogeneous group. Their earlier work shows related findings; whites with African American superiors experienced greater role ambiguity and conflict than their white counterparts with white superiors (Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989). Thus, cross-race interactions can negatively impact satisfaction, trust and commitment for both whites and for people of color involved in the relationship.

Thus it makes sense that the complexity of interracial dynamics with the organization will spillover into the mentoring relationship. Early work by Thomas (1989) showed that racial differences were often an obstacle for white mentors forming a relationship and identifying positively with their African American protégés. African American managers who had white mentors early in their career were more dissatisfied with their advancement than those who had African American mentors (Murray, 1982). The differential experience of the mentoring relationship speaks to the importance of race in shaping developmental interactions. Effective mentoring has its foundation in the willingness of partners to authentically engage one another, being willing to share strengths and provide developmental opportunities. Building trust becomes more challenging as mentoring partners cross lines of race. Thomas (1989) acknowledges the challenges of building effective mentoring relationships across dimensions of race. He writes that the changing environment of interracial dynamics we are facing in

organizations, "engenders the deeper difficulties that we face in creating a climate of authentic collaboration" (p. 280) among whites and people of color.

In addition to producing challenging interpersonal dynamics, race places a role in the type of mentoring relationships that occurs. Kram's (1983; 1985) groundbreaking work on mentoring functions has significantly shaped how we look at the nature of interactions within developmental relationships. She found that mentoring interactions can be described as providing two primary functions: career (instrumental) support and psychosocial (emotional) support. Career functions include exposure and visibility, sponsorship, coaching, protection and access to challenging assignments. In contrast, psychosocial functions include role modeling, acceptance and confirmation, counseling and friendship (see Higgins & Kram, 2001 for a further discussion of these functions).

Using the conceptual model outlined by Kram, Thomas (1990) hypothesized that based on high levels of similarity and ability to trust and identify with one another, respondents involved in same-race relationships will report greater levels of psychosocial support. His survey of more than 450 developmental relationships confirmed this hypothesis; blacks reported experiencing more psychosocial support from same-race versus cross-race relationships. However, these same-race relationships were more often with peers, located outside of the department and what Thomas labels "skip-level" relationships. Interestingly, Thomas's work did not find any differences by protégé race in the amount of career support that was provided. Similarly, James' (2000) study of black and white managers in a Fortune 500 services firm mirrored Thomas' results. James found that black and white managers did not report differential levels of career support, but there was a difference in receipt of psychosocial support. Black managers reported less psychosocial support than their white counterparts.

However, Steinberg and Foley's (1999) study of Army senior non-commissioned officers and commissioned officers produced two interesting findings. First, the authors found three functions, not the two traditionally used in studies of mentoring. Steinberg and Foley called their functions "personal development," "career sponsoring" and "job coaching." The authors suggest that the unique environment of the Army, which stresses basic skill development as a critical skill for soldiers, explains the emergence of "job coaching" as a separate function. Second, Steingberg and Foley noted that there was not a significant difference in the mentoring functions that majority and minority members received. While race was not a trigger for differential receipt of functions, rank of the protégé was an important predictor.

Clearly this is a critical area that requires more empirical work and conceptual attention. The limited amount of research that examines race and the functions of mentoring produces some conflicting findings. Some studies find differences in the experiences of people of color that cut across the psychosocial and career functions originally outlined by Kram (1985). However, recent work challenges the original two category classification scheme (career versus psychosocial) as exhaustive (e.g. Scandura, 1992). Some of our recent work (Murrell, et al., under review) suggests that for people of color, career functions may need to precede psychosocial functions for effective and beneficial cross-race mentoring relationships to occur. The more complex longitudinal work needed to tease apart these relationships has not yet been done but it will provide vital data to better understand the relationship between race and interactions across different mentoring functions. Despite the need for further research, it is clear the both career and psychosocial functions of mentoring are important drivers of career outcomes that often differ by race.

Mentoring and Race: Outcomes Matter

   A great deal of previous research focuses on the impact that race has on career outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment, earnings, advancement and a variety of career experiences (Alderfer & Thomas, 1988; Daly, 1996; Dickens & Dickens, 1982; Essed, 1991; Hayes-James, 2000; Ortiz-Walters & Gilson, in press). Typically this research focuses on outcomes along two dimensions: objective and subjective (Higgins & Thomas, 2001; Turban & Dougherty, 1994). Objective outcomes include variables such as promotion and compensation while subjective outcomes include satisfaction variables (such as compensation satisfaction or supervisor satisfaction), involvement, commitment and other work-related attitudes.

   While a substantial amount of attention has been devoted to the impact of race on subjective versus objective outcomes, there is still some disagreement on whether race has a differential impact on these two types of outcomes. In her study of black and white professional women, Blake-Beard (1999) examined the impact of protégé race on four outcome variables, two objective and two subjective. While she did not see a difference between black and white women in terms of the objective outcomes, there were differences between the two groups in terms of the subjective outcomes. White respondents reported higher levels of compensation satisfaction and greater satisfaction with their career progress. The research that Catalyst has done on women of color suggests that we may want to pay attention to potential differential relationships between race and outcome variables. In their work, Catalyst (2006) found striking differences among women of color in relations to key outcomes. African American women report higher levels of exclusion from the workplace in comparison to Latinas and Asian Americans.

Without question, some objective outcomes do vary by race, particularly the race of the mentor. For example, Dreher and Cox (1996), Dreher and Chargois (1998), and Blake-Beard (2003) found that material benefits accrue most to those in large work organizations who have white male mentors. Clearly in terms of objective outcomes, the race of the mentor has been shown to have a strong impact in terms of predicting career outcomes for protégés (Ragins, in press); however, the interactive effects of race of mentor versus protégé and the contribution of gender have yet to be fully teased apart (Gibscombe, et al., 2005). Based on the empirical work currently available, one can argue that there is an overlap between the dynamics of power, mentoring relationships and race relations that impact objective outcomes such as salary and career advancement (Ragins, 1997a).

While some research shows that objective outcomes differ by race of the mentor, conclusions on how race affects subjective outcomes is less clear. Satisfaction with the relationship along with overall perceptions of mentoring functions appear to differ by race of the protégé (Thomas, 1990; Viator, 2001), but this seems to be more true for career than for psychological functions (see Blake-Beard, 1999). One of the key factors that may impact subjective outcomes is the level of perceived similarity between the mentor and protégé. Perceived attitudinal similarity has been shown to be a strong predictor of satisfaction with the mentoring relationship (Ensher & Murphy, 1997) and the similarity in race of the mentor-protégé relationship yields similar findings of high levels of satisfaction and attachment (Thomas, 1990). However, little research has examined similarity in same-race relationships that includes variables beyond traditional demographic group categorization. Perhaps the utilization of a more rigorous predictor of racial group membership (e.g., racial group identity) may help to explain

why racial group similarity which is strong in the early stages of the developmental relationship appears to dissipate over time (Harrison, Price, & Bell, 1998).

While the distinction of objective versus subjective outcomes may provide a useful distinction, is does not capture the nature of these outcomes in terms of their cost versus benefit for the mentor or the protégé. Thus, some research looks at the outcomes of mentoring in terms of positive versus negative consequences for those involved in the relationship (see reviews by Ragins, 1999; O'Neill, 2002; Wanberg, Welsh & Hezlett, 2003). What is clear from this research is that we have a great deal of evidence on the positive impact of mentoring as a function of race, but little work that examines the negative impact of the presence of mentoring relationships (versus lack of access to mentoring) (O'Neill & Sankowsky, 2001). The small and growing literature on negative mentoring (Eby & Allen, 2002; Eby, Butts, Lockwood & Simon, 2004; Eby, McManus, Simon & Russell, 2000; Scandura, 1998) is characterized by samples that are predominantly white. For example, Eby and her colleagues have published several studies on negative mentoring; but their samples are 95% to 97% Caucasian. While the work coming from this team of researchers is adding to our extant knowledge about the impact of negative mentoring, the racially homogeneous samples mean that we learn nothing about the experiences of people of color and negative mentoring experiences.

Dickens and Dickens (1982) argue that people of color (specifically African Americans) are often not able to reap the benefits of mentoring relationships because the issue of race and the dynamics of race relationships act as critical obstacles. In this view, race somehow blocks the well-established "ROI" of mentoring relationships in organizations. Thomas and Kram (1988) examined the benefits and outcomes of developmental relationships. As they write, "While it is clear that race is a significant predictor of some career outcomes, we know little about the

specific mechanism that mediates observed differences" (p. 489). Thus, more attention is needed to understanding how and why the hypothesized positive outcomes of mentoring relationships become negative costs particularly within the context of race.

Regardless of whether we focus on objective versus subjective or on positive versus negative outcomes of mentoring, the focal target of these outcomes as a function of race is another perspective that should be addressed within this area of work. Previous mentoring research focuses almost exclusively on the mentee or protégé as the target of outcomes of mentoring relationships (Ragins & Scandura, 1999). Perhaps this is because there are a limited number of mentors of color who are available within organizations. These small numbers notwithstanding, there is some limited evidence that the experiences of mentors of color are quite different from their white counterparts. For example, in a study examining the experiences of 1660 young women and their mentors, MentorNet found that mentors of color reported a number of outcomes at higher levels than their white counterparts (MentorNet, 2004). Mentors of color reported increased self-confidence, improved supervisory skills, improved skills for recruiting new talent, better networking skills and renewed commitment to their field. This is an exciting initial finding that should act as a catalyst for more work on this topic.

Finally, an important distinction between outcomes for individuals versus outcomes for organizations is an emerging focus within the mentoring literature. Clearly within the work on diversity in organizations, the conceptual link between mentoring and benefits for the firm has been well established (Alleman & Clark, 2000; Blake-Beard & Murrell, 2006; Ragins, 1997a; 1997b; Perrone, 2003; Wilson & Elman, 1990). However, empirical evidence on the organizational benefits of diverse mentoring relationships is quite limited.

Clearly the outcomes of mentoring and the impact of race vary as a function of the typology employed. While we know a great deal out objective versus subjective outcomes of mentoring and race, there is still much to be developed in areas such as negative outcomes of mentoring, the impact of race on outcomes for the mentor along with empirical evidence on the organizational outcomes of mentoring as a function of race. While there has been a great deal of work that has emerged over the past two decades on the impact of race on outcomes along with access and interactions of mentoring relationships, there are still a number of questions to be answered leaving a great deal of unfinished business within this area of research.

Race and Mentoring: Some Unfinished Business

From our analysis of the extant research on race and mentoring, we identify a number of challenges and opportunities to help guide future work in this area. These challenges and opportunities are not only driven by unanswered questions in the existing research, but also by emerging issues raised by the changing nature of careers and organizations. Clearly factors such as the changing relationship between individuals and the firm, which Arthur and Rousseau (1996) label the "new employment contract" raise a number of questions for how we approach the study of race and mentoring in the future. Within this new employment contract, Thomas and Higgins (1996) argue that both people of color and majority individuals will be challenged by the "psychological instability that emanates from a work context that does not affirm salient and important aspects of one's personal identity, or provide sufficient information and guidance to sustain one's career growth and development" (p. 273). Clearly, we have a number of things to learn about and to learn from the intersection of race and mentoring in organizations.

One of the areas that provide both a primary opportunity for research and a significant challenge to the advancement of knowledge in this area concerns the fundamental issue of how we define mentoring within the context of race. As our review and reviews by others (see Fletcher & Ragins, this volume) of the empirical literature reveals, the mentoring literature is fraught with broad generalizations because of the ways in which race has been both excluded and mis-conceptualized in previous work (Nkomo, 1992; Minnich, 1991). Given the changing demographics of today's organizations, we must examine the assumptions and methodologies that help to generate existing definitions and typologies of mentoring to more directly test how they may or may not apply within the context of race.

While published research that includes a diverse representation of individuals within our samples has increased, the dominant racial group within organizational research has traditionally been white men. Because other racial groups are seen as "minority" groups, the experiences and perspectives of one racial group have become the dominant or default conceptual models within mentoring research. The original work conducted by Kram (1985) relied on rigorous in-depth qualitative interviews on the functions served by mentors across a number of different organizations. However, the functions served by mentors did not explicitly explore differences by race or gender in crafting this original conceptual model. Later research has examined differences in the frequency of or experience with these various functions (e.g., Kram & Clawson, 1984), but no empirical research to date has grappled with whether Kram's overall model of mentoring and its classification of developmental functions is fundamentally different for people of color. In fact, since the majority of research only examines differences between the experiences of African Americans versus whites, we know very little about whether the way mentoring is defined based on the experience of other racial groups outside of those interviewed

within the original sample. This point of critique is quite similar to issues raised among early

black psychologists who argued that we should not generalize existing models of human

behavior to racial groups who were absent from the sample used to define and shape the

dominant theories (see, Jones, 1991).

One of the clear implications of excluding race from this early conceptual framework

concerns the way in which we now measure and operationalize the mentoring construct.

Independent of the dimension of race, a number of scholars have raised concern with the wide

variety of measurement tools and operationalizations used in the field (e.g., Allen, Eby, Poteet,

Lentz & Lima, 2004).   Some studies use an overall index of mentoring, others measure the

broad categories of career and psychological functions, whereas a few attempt to differentiate

between the specific mentoring functions identified in Kram's original interviews. In addition,

current measures are not easily adapted to situations involving multiple mentoring relationships,

group mentoring, inter-organizational mentoring and emerging forms of mentoring such as "e-

mentoring" (see Ensher & Murphy, this volume).

Recent findings raise questions about whether the classic two-dimensional model of

mentoring is, in fact, robust. Scandura and her colleagues (Scandura, 1992; Lankau & Scandura,

2002; Scandura & Viator, 1994) find evidence for three broad categories of mentoring functions

(career, psychosocial and role modeling). Similarly, Gibson (2004) has focused on defining and

measuring role models as a separate and distinct construct from mentoring (rather than a function

of overall mentoring as Kram's model articulates). He distinguishes between close and distant

role models such that distant role models are a "cognitive representation" of behaviors that drive

goals and aspirations of the individuals that neither involve nor require direct contact with the

individual (role model). Murrell and Zagenczyk (in press) offer a similar argument concerning

gender, race and role model status. Despite the influence of Kram's model in shaping mentoring research, there is significant variability in both the measurement and operationalization of what we mean by the concept of 'mentoring'.

According to Allen et al. (2004), while the dominant literature thus far is consistent in the position that psychosocial and career functions are the "primary, distinct and reliable" dimensions of mentoring, it can be argued that additional research on this question is needed. Perhaps the mental models of mentors and protégés in Kram's original sample would, if this sample included people of color, reveal some different functions of mentoring, other categories and functions, or a different overall structure of mentoring experiences. For example, the labeling of what determines "career" versus "psychosocial" could vary depending on the experience and perspective of those being interviewed. As Kram (1985) articulates, career functions are those aspects of the relationship that enhance career advancement. This suggests that the labeling of these mentoring functions as career versus psychological is driven by expected outcomes already known to vary as a function of race.

We argue that any typology that attempts to capture the functions or activities of the mentor-protégé relationship must be understood within the context of race. This statement is based on the wide variety of empirical and theoretical work that shows race to be embedded within the organizational context (Alderfer & Thomas, 1989), a consistent driver of work attitudes and outcomes (Murrell & Hayes-James, 2000) and a moderator of the return on investment employees received from training and other developmental activities (Hayes-James, 2000). In addition, given that relational aspects of the work experience have been shown to be a critical driver of career outcomes and attitudes for minorities (Cox & Blake, 1991), perhaps what is typically labeled as 'psychosocial support' should really be seen as fundamental (and

essential) career support for people of color. It may be the case that the distinction between career versus psychosocial is itself socially constructed as part of the mentor-protégé relationship rather than an absolute or universal (and externally determined) classification scheme.

A key challenge for future research on mentoring is to move beyond the faulty assumption that the experience of race within organizations does not shape, alter or drive the mentoring relationship. In addition, scholars must acknowledge that within their own mentoring research, it is inappropriate to assume that the experiences of one group adequately and accurately capture the experiences of other groups. When we accept models that have been defined based on the experience of one dominant racial or ethnic group (unless this is explicitly stated as part of the research model), we silence our ability to articulate the authentic dynamics of mentoring relationships within a diverse organizational context. Instead of drawing conclusions that bring us closer to the truth about human behavior in organizations, we are drawing artificial distinctions that move us further away from this true understanding.

Our appeal for a greater inclusion of race within the context of mentoring research is quite consistent with Ragins' (1997a, 1997b) notion of "diversified mentoring relationships". She makes it clear from the perspective of power dynamics within organizations, that there is an inextricable link between mentoring and diversity. As Ragins (1997a:483) writes, "micro-theories for each marginalized group ignore the implications of multiple group membership, and take a limited piecemeal perspective toward explaining diversity in mentoring relationships." In fact, one can argue that when people of color are excluded from the sample or when race effects are left as unexamined variance within our data, we are assuming that only people of color have "race'" and that examining the experiences of whites means that we are not conducting research on race in organizations.

Ragins' notion of diversified mentoring relationship raises another important point relevant to our review of work in this area. Her focus on the critical role that power dynamics plays in shaping mentoring relationships challenges the traditional interpersonal attraction paradigm that underlies most mentoring research. The classic view of mentoring based on the similarity-attraction paradigm (Berscheid, 1985) assumes that similarity at the individual level is the primary driver of mentoring relationships. However, issues of rank, power, organizational structure and social identity are crucial factors that shape the outcomes and experiences of people in organizations. In addition, as structural, organizational and social forces, they operate independently of (and sometimes in opposition to) attraction at the individual level. Lastly, viewing mentoring exclusively from an interpersonal attraction perspective ignores the idea that developmental relationships also involve group identity and the exchange of power, knowledge as well as social (versus human) capital.

Current models that define mentoring purely at the individual or interpersonal levels are limited in today's organization context. Power dynamics and the social construction of racial group identity are clearly embedded within organizations and within society (Alderfer, 1987). In fact, social identity theory is based on a fundamental assumption that one can not extrapolate from the interpersonal level to the inter-group level of analysis in order to understand how identity shapes behaviors and attitudes (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). For example, Erkut and Mokros (1984) found that both male and female students avoided selecting female faculty as mentors because they were viewed as less powerful within the organization and profession. Similarly, Clawson and Kram (1984) noted external reputation and public-image as key drivers of cross-gender mentoring. Murrell and Tangri (1999) discuss a similar dynamics concerning race and mentoring within an academic environment. Clearly this work suggests that something other

than interpersonal similarity or attraction is an important driver within the context of formal and informal mentoring relationships (Viator & Pasewark, 2004).

We echo Ragins' challenge that work on mentoring must include an understanding of diversified mentoring relationships. However, we extend her original notion that diversified relationships only occur when a mentor and protégé differ in group memberships that are associated with power as defined by their common organization. Her argument highlights the importance of seeing diversity as a continuous rather than a categorical variable; and the importance of understanding both the strength of identification and the context of power within the organization. However, viewing diversified mentoring relationships only within the context of a single organization ignores the significance of race in our broader society[1]. We include what Thomas and Higgins (1996) call a "cosmopolitan orientation" toward mentoring that takes into account dynamics that cut across interpersonal and inter-group boundaries as well as factors internal and external to the organization. This allows us to produce robust models of mentoring relationships that cut across both racial identity groups as well as firm-defined work groups. Given the nature of the emerging and boundary-less organization, the distinction between power dynamics that are bound by a single context is less normative and provides a somewhat limited scope.

We see a challenge to opportunity for future research is how to examine the dual effects of diversity and embeddedness of mentoring relationships. This clearly poses a challenge for current measures and methodologies that dominate how mentoring research was conducted in the past. Future research must move past simple between group comparisons of central tendencies to understand the unique dynamics that exist within different racial groups and how that drives

interactions over time. While it is important to validate the unique experience of people of color in terms of access to and benefits from mentoring (e.g., Thomas, 1993), future research models should challenge our thinking and measurement tools to include the interaction of multiple group identities (e.g, race, gender, work group), both formal and information relationships across multiple (e.g, internal, external) organizational contexts. We must also acknowledge that regardless of whether it is explicitly measured within our specific data, race is both constant and embedded within the social and organizational contexts (see Eddleston, Baldridge & Veiga, 2004) that shape mentoring relationships (Alderfer & Thomas, 1988). Thus, we must build models of race and mentoring that are dynamic, interactive and multi-level.

We acknowledge some recent steps in this direction foreshadowed by Kram (1985) and her call for a constellation of support. Building on Kram's work, Higgins and her colleagues (Higgins & Kram, 2001; Higgins & Thomas, 2001) expanded mentoring theory to encompass their notion of "mentoring constellations." Regardless of whether one considers mentoring relationships that are primary or secondary, single or multiple, hierarchical or peer, the importance of these constellations or networks provides an opportunity for future research to capture the richness and the complexity of mentoring. In addition, the recent integration of mentoring research within a social networks framework opens up a range of opportunities in terms of conceptual models, measurements tools and methodological techniques. For example, some recent work on race and social networks finds that centrality, as a traditional network measure, is an important index that helps to explain differences in the experience of people of color (and women) in organizations (e.g, Ibarra, 1993; 1995). In addition, Friedman's work on affinity or social network groups and race examines the strength of ties among African

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[1] For the current discussion, we focus on race within a U.S. context because of the unique historical, social and economic factors that uniquely define racial interactions within this country. Other discussions of mentoring within a global context can be

Americans that extend outside of their current organization yet impact on careers and work attitudes inside of their current organization (Friedman, 1996; Friedman, Kane & Cornfield, 1998).

Unfortunately, there have only been a limited number of empirical studies that explore not only the differences between developmental networks of different racial groups but also study the unique features of social networks within racial groups. We see this as an opportunity to develop race-specific or what we will call, *race-inclusive,* research of mentoring and career outcomes. For example, Ibarra (1993) finds that minorities have a very different "opportunity context" for the cultivation of developmental relationships. Similarly Hayes-James (2000) concludes that there may be a yet undiscovered race-specific model of workplace attainment that involves different drivers for blacks compared to whites. What is unclear at this point is to what extent the drivers of these different opportunity contexts or work attainment models are a function of individual preferences (i.e., similarity-attraction), structural barriers (i.e., discrimination) or inter-group power dynamics (i.e., social identity maintenance).

In addition, within the current research on social networks, there is some debate on the types of relationships that are the most effective in driving career outcomes versus social relationships within the firm. Raider and Burt (1996) position this question within the context of social capital that they argue is "generally important, but more important for people at the social frontier – people at the interface of different social worlds" (p. 189). This suggests that people of color may rely on the benefits of social capital to a greater extent than their white counterparts. However, little current research helps to examine the types of social networks that are the most productive as a function of the dynamics of race in organizations. Burt and his colleagues would argue that differences in social networks account for performance differences among individuals

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explored by Clutterbuck & Ragins (2002).

who are equivalent in terms of experience, education and ability (Burt, 1992; Raider & Burt, 1996). This suggests that strong social capital helps some individuals to experience a better return on their human capital than others. Consistent with Burt, mentoring relationships can be viewed as a competitive advantage for individuals as well as a primary source of social capital for the individual and for the firm.

However, little research to date has teased apart the specific network structure and social capital pattern necessary for people of color to succeed. One notion is that network structures that are large and comprised of disconnected contacts are the best for producing social capital. This idea of "structural holes" has been shown to drive career outcomes for majority individuals within organizations (see Burt, 1992); however, we know little about the impact of networks comprise of disconnected individuals on the experiences of people of color. There is also much to be debated about the impact of strong versus weak ties for career and organizational outcomes. From a social network perspective, ties may vary in strength along a continuum from weak to strong (Granovetter, 1973). Tie strength is defined as "the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding) and reciprocal services that characterize the tie" (Granovetter, 1973, p. 1361). Individuals who maintain strong ties are likely to have similar attitudes, background, experiences, and access to resources (Burt, 1992). In contrast to strong ties, exchanges that occur through weak ties are less frequent and less intimate. Weak ties are based on infrequent interaction, usually with individuals who reside outside of the focal individual's network. Weak ties are significant because they have access to different sources of information or resources that an individual does not receive through strong ties (Burt, 1992; Granovetter, 1973).

However, we can not assume that one a single type of developmental tie which produces social capital for majority individuals will have the same impact and operate by the same processes for people of color. In fact, based on recent challenges to Burt's notion of structural holes (see Leana & VanBuren, 2000), one might caution people of color against building networks of weak ties and disconnected parties as a strategy for career advancement and success. We clearly see opportunities for interesting empirical questions based on the integration of mentoring, diversity, and embedded intergroup relations that utilize the emerging methodologies and tools within social network analysis as a fruitful direction for future research.

Race and Mentoring: A Revised Model

In order to advance our thinking and research on the intersection between race and mentoring, we re-examine and revise Thomas' (1993) model on racial dynamics in cross-race development relationships. This revised model tries to draw a link between strategies for managing racial differences and the type of relationships that emerge. Clearly, this early model was based on the assumption that interracial interactions within the mentoring relationship were a function of racial dynamics embedded within the organizational environment. The major contribution of this early model was in identifying a variety of different strategies that emerge from differences in the perspective of whites and African Americans involved in cross-race mentoring relationships. Thomas (1993) argued that cross-race perspectives, and their subsequent impact on relationship management, may be either complementary or non-complementary. By complementary relationships, Thomas is referring to interactions where both parties' racial perspectives are mutually supportive and they prefer the same strategy for managing racial difference. In contrast, non-complementary relationships are characterized by

different strategy preferences for managing racial difference being held by each party. We retain the notion of complementary versus non-complementary as an intervening process for these strategies; clearly having similarity in the preferred strategy between the mentor and protégé is as important as the need to match stakeholder influence strategy to the specific target audience (see Frooman & Murrell, 2005).

In addition, we extend the model developed by Thomas (1993) based on current knowledge and research on race and mentoring as discussed herein. Our revised model (see Figure 1) includes the interaction strategy preferences originally developed by Thomas with two changes. First, given the work that has emerged on the connection between mentoring and diversity, we include *advocacy* as a possible strategy that moves beyond direct engagement within the relationship, toward engagement in the process of change throughout the organization. The experience of cross-mentoring relationships can create a desire for change surrounding diversity either because of positive experiences or equally because of negative ones (Thomas & Ely, 1996). Second, based on Murrell and Frooman's (2005) work on stakeholder influence strategies, our revised model separates the concepts of denial and suppression as two distinct interaction responses. In fact, Thomas (1993) acknowledges previously that these two options may not be interchangeable and writes, "these protégés reticence and/or discomfort about race seems to contribute to a tendency to suppress and perhaps even deny the salience of race in their cross-race development relationships" (p. 179). Our revised model includes four distinct interactions strategies that can occur as a result of various developmental relationship characteristics: denial, suppression, direct engagement or advocacy.

Second, we extend Thomas' model by expanding the drivers of these strategy preferences (see Figure 1). Work by Helms (1990), Cross (1991) and Murrell (1997) shows the importance

of racial group identity in understanding its impact on interracial dynamics. Recent work has moved well beyond the assumption that the mere presence of a racial categorization results in identification with and actions based on a particular racial group membership. Building on the work of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), it is important to not simply place individuals into a racial category, but to understand the strength of their individual level of racial group identity and how it drives race-relevant relationships and behaviors. For example, Thomas (1986) found that the dynamics of cross-race interactions are influenced by what he labeled as the "racial awareness" of both parties involved in the relationship. Thus, our revised model places individual racial group identity as a precursor to the preferred interaction strategies that may drive the type of relationships formed as well at the outcomes. In addition, individuals tend to identify with people who are like them on important or salient identity group characteristics (Miller & Dreger, 1973; Murrell, 1997). Thus, individual racial group identity is included as an important antecedent to relationship characteristics and preferred interaction strategies (see Figure 1).

Our revised model also includes two important contextual variables: workgroup relational demography and organizational culture surrounding power and race relations. Work by Tsui and her colleagues (Tsui & O'Reilly, 1989; Tsui, Egan & O'Reilly, 1992) and by Jackson and Ruderman (1995) clearly shows the importance of relational demography and work group composition on key outcomes. We argue that both of these variables provide the embedded social context for interracial mentoring relationship in line with the original conceptual model developed by Thomas (1993). As key contextual variables, they both shape and drive the types of relationships that can and do occur both within and between different racial groups. In addition, as Thomas and Ely (1996) argue, the different models or perspectives

on power and diversity shape the overall context for cross-race relationships within any given organization. We include these two variables as additional antecedents within our revised model of racial dynamics within mentoring relationships.

The original model proposed by Thomas (1993) predicted a direct relationship between racial perspective on strategy interaction preferences. However, our revised model reflects the substantial work that type of social network influences the nature and outcomes of mentoring relationships and that these networks are impacted by race (Ibarra 1993; 1995). Social networks are important in terms of whether these ties are based on formal or informal mentoring relationships, the strength of ties (Granovetter, 1973), the content of social ties (e.g., advice, friendship, adversarial), and the complexity of these ties (reciprocal, multiplex). Reciprocal ties are defined as relationships in which there is mutuality within the social tie (e.g., we both give and receive advice from one another). Multiplex ties are those in which relationships cut across or have more than one content (e.g., friendship ties that are also advice ties). All of these dimensions have been shown to impact the nature of social networks as well as important workplace outcomes.

Lastly, we include trust as an important dimension of these relationship characteristics. Although some social network models includes trust-related variables as a dimension of strength (Marsden, 1988; Marsden & Campbell, 1984), previous work on mentoring relationships suggests that trust deserves a focal point as a dimension of relationship characteristics (see Wanberg, et al., 2003). Thomas (1990) work clearly showed that mutuality and trust were important in distinguishing between what he labeled as the "mentor-protégé" versus the "sponsor-protégé" relationship.

Thus, our revised model includes the nature of racial identity perspectives, work group composition and organizational culture as antecedents to the specific characteristics of social ties involving developmental relationships. The strength of social ties, formality, content, complexity and trust are proposed as important dimensions of these relationships. Similar to the original model proposed by Thomas (1993), these relationship characteristics drive a preferred interaction strategy between the mentor and protégé. Denial and suppression are avoidance strategies that can emerge because of negative relationship characteristics driven by individual racial identity, or contextual factors (group composition, organizational culture). On the other hand direct engagement and advocacy are proactive strategies that maybe related to positive relationships characteristics. These preferred interaction strategies produce a range of different outcomes including mentoring functions (psychosocial, career), attitudinal (satisfaction, commitment), career (advancement, salary) and behavioral (intent to stay, relationship cultivation, relationship separation). However, the impact of these preferred interaction strategies on various outcomes is moderated by the degree to which these strategies are complementary (mentors and protégés share the same strategy) versus non-complementary (the parties have different strategy preferences). Thus, the consequences of preferred interaction strategy is believed to interact with whether it is shared by both parties involved in terms of the impacts a range of different outcomes typically studies within mentoring research (see Figure 1).

Race and Mentoring: Some Final Thoughts

The study of race and mentoring represents unfinished business for organizational scholars, managers and practitioners. As Nkomo (1992) suggests, the way that research on race has been conceptualized "provides little insight into the complexity of the psychological,

organizational and societal variables that may account for such findings" (p. 498) of differences between the experiences of whites and other racial groups. We see research on race and mentoring as providing an extraordinary opportunity to help us answer some of the persistent and vital questions concerning the dynamics of race in organizations. Similarity to the classic work on school desegregation and the contact hypothesis (see Hewstone, Rubin & Willis, 2002 for an excellent review of this work), we see mentoring as providing a comparable opportunity to understand the dynamics of interpersonal contact, learning, and social mobility across racial boundaries in work settings. Clearly, we have a number of things to learn about and to learn from the intersection of race and mentoring in organizations. Our revised model provides an initial attempt to help structure some critical questions for future research. Regardless of the theoretical model employed, we must acknowledge and act based upon the common understand that regardless of whether it is explicitly measured within our specific data proposed in our conceptual models, race is embedded within both the social and organizational contexts that shape mentoring relationships (Thomas & Alderfer, 1989). While Dubois stated that the problem of the 20th century is the color line, we see the opportunity in the 21st century is to show how mentoring helps to create access and inclusion that goes beyond the color line.

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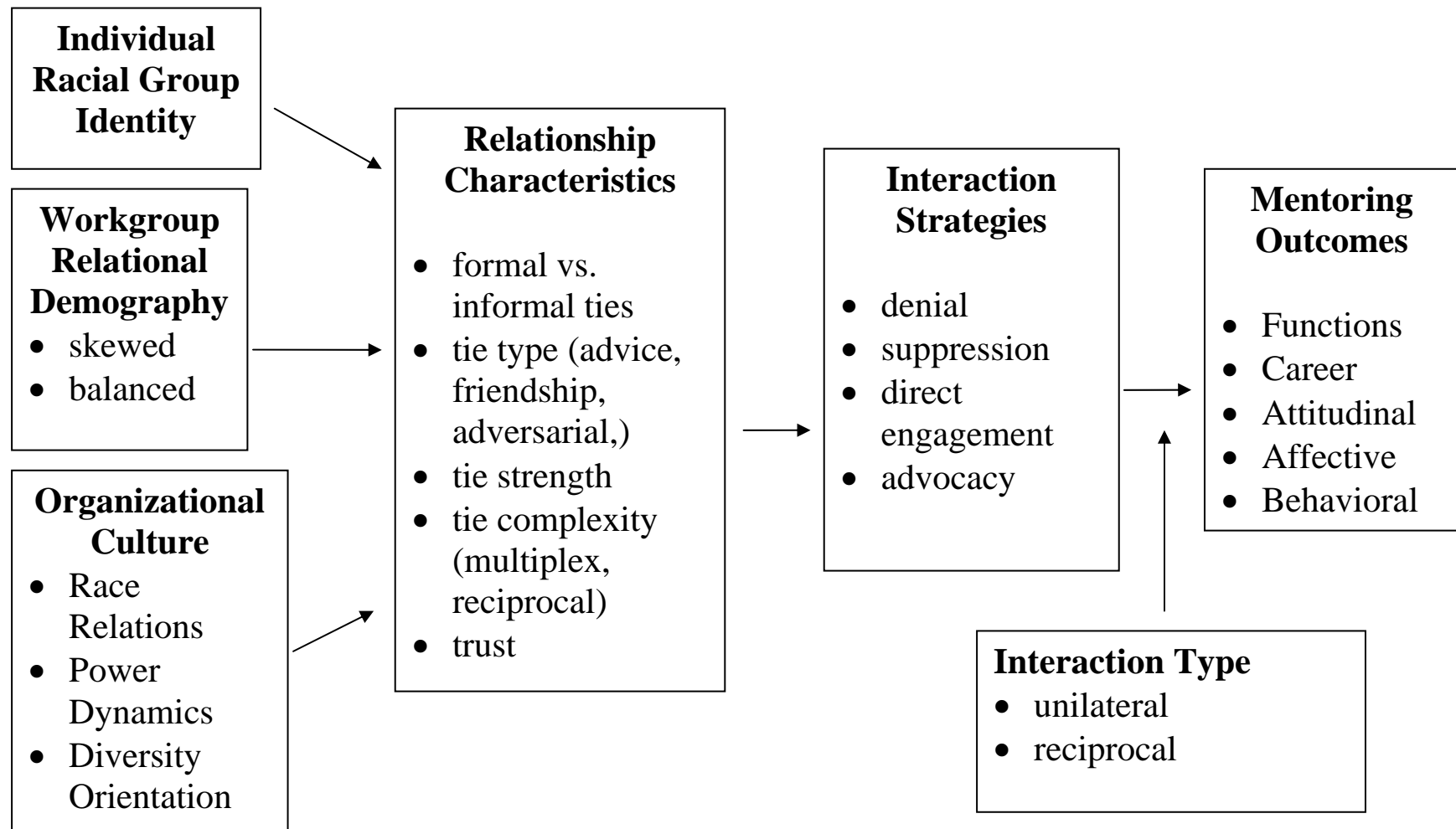
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Figure 1: Revised Process Model of Racial Dynamics in Developmental Relationships (from Thomas, 1993)