

# Mentoring Dilemmas: Developmental Relationships within Multicultural Organizations

**Audrey J. Murrell, Ph.D.**  
**University of Pittsburgh**  
**Katz School of Business**  
**[amurrell@katz.pitt.edu](mailto:amurrell@katz.pitt.edu)**

# Mentor....is a *myth*

- The character, **Mentor**, in Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey*, is widely accepted as the namesake of the term *mentor*.
- Before leaving for the Trojan War, Odysseus entrusted guardianship of his household and his son, Telemachus, to his faithful friend, **Mentor**.
- in Homer's original text, **Mentor** *did not* naturally exhibit the wise and nurturing behavior historically attributed to him; in fact, he was inept.
- Rather, it was the goddess Athena, known in Greek mythology for her wisdom and compassion who took **Mentor**'s form to guide and protect both Telemachus and Odysseus on their journeys.

# Mentoring Defined

- The process of forming, cultivating and maintaining mutually beneficial developmental relationships between one or more mentors and one or more mentees/protégés.
- Developmental networks as a group of people who take interest in and action to advance a focal individual's career outcomes (also called egocentric network or development constellations).

# Unpacking Mentoring

Mentoring Functions

Mentoring Phases

Mentoring Effectiveness

Mentoring Outcomes



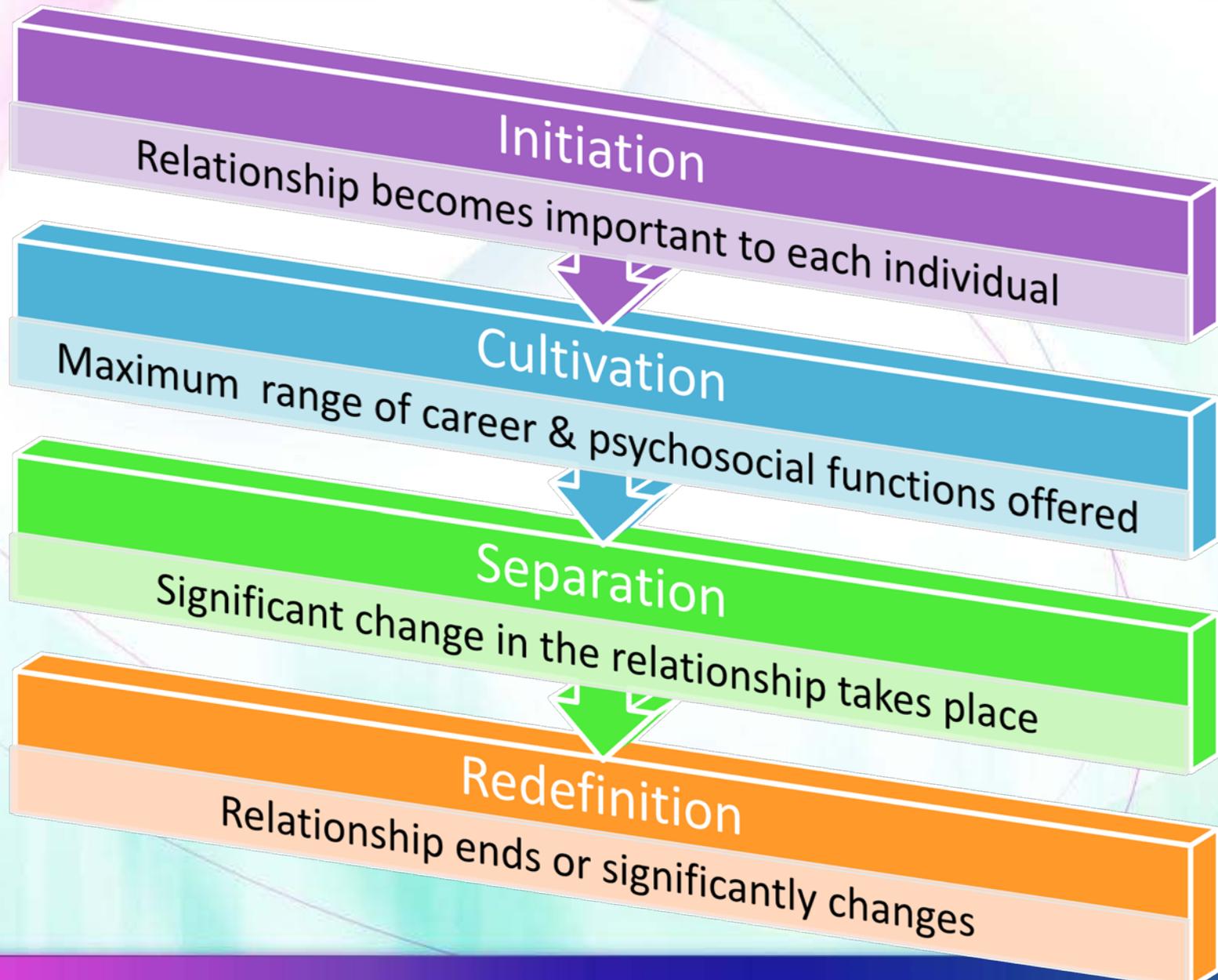
# Mentoring Functions

- ❑ **Career Functions:** Those aspects of mentoring relationships that enhance learning the ropes and preparing the individual for advancement within the organization. A heavy emphasis is placed on helping the protégé understand the company's culture.
  - ❑ Sponsorship
  - ❑ Exposure & Visibility
  - ❑ Coaching
  - ❑ Protection
  - ❑ Challenging Assignments

# Mentoring Functions

- ❑ **Psychosocial Functions:** Those aspects of mentoring relationships that enhance a sense of competence, clarity of identity, perceptions of organization support and overall effectiveness in one's professional role.
  - ❑ Role Modeling
  - ❑ Acceptance & Confirmation
  - ❑ Counseling
  - ❑ Friendship

# Phases of Mentoring



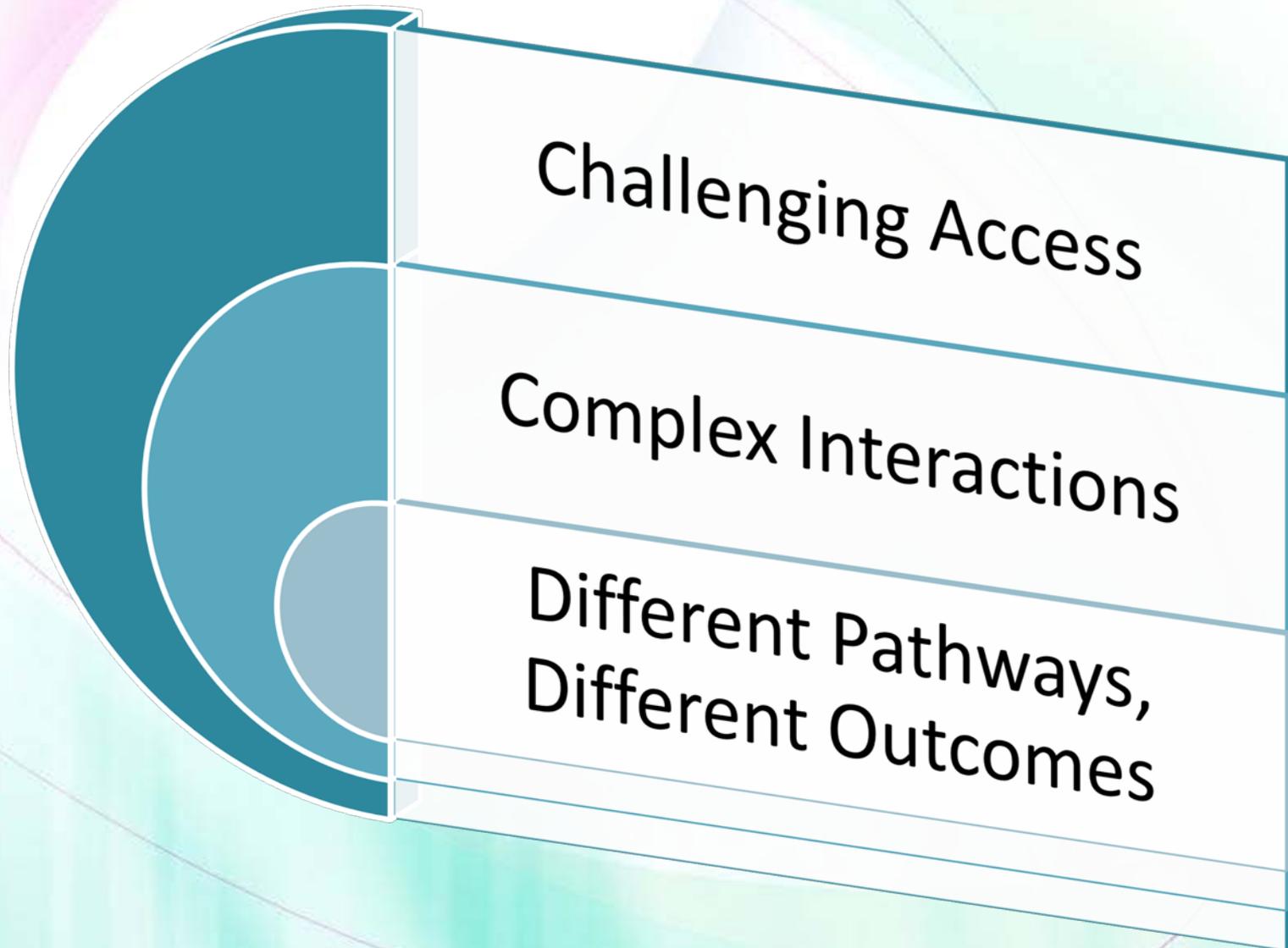
# Mentoring Effectiveness

- Characteristics of the protégé/mentee impact willingness of an individual to mentor
- Individuals perceived as “high potential” are most likely to be selected as a protégé/mentee
- Motivational bases for mentoring is driven by self-interest as well as concern for others
- Structural aspects of relationships (type, frequency, duration) are weak and inconsistent predictors of mentoring behavior
- No evidence for universal set of “mentoring styles” that significantly impact effectiveness

# Mentoring Outcomes

- Individuals who have mentors are more likely to be promoted, earn more money, are more likely to have a career plan, are happier with their work, and are more likely to become mentors themselves than those without mentoring experiences (see reviews by Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz & Lime; Noe, Greenberger and Wang; Wanberg, Welsh & Hezlett).
- Professionals who had mentors earn between \$5,600 and \$22,450 more annually than those who did not have mentors (see work by Allen & colleagues).

# Mentoring – Why Diversity Matters

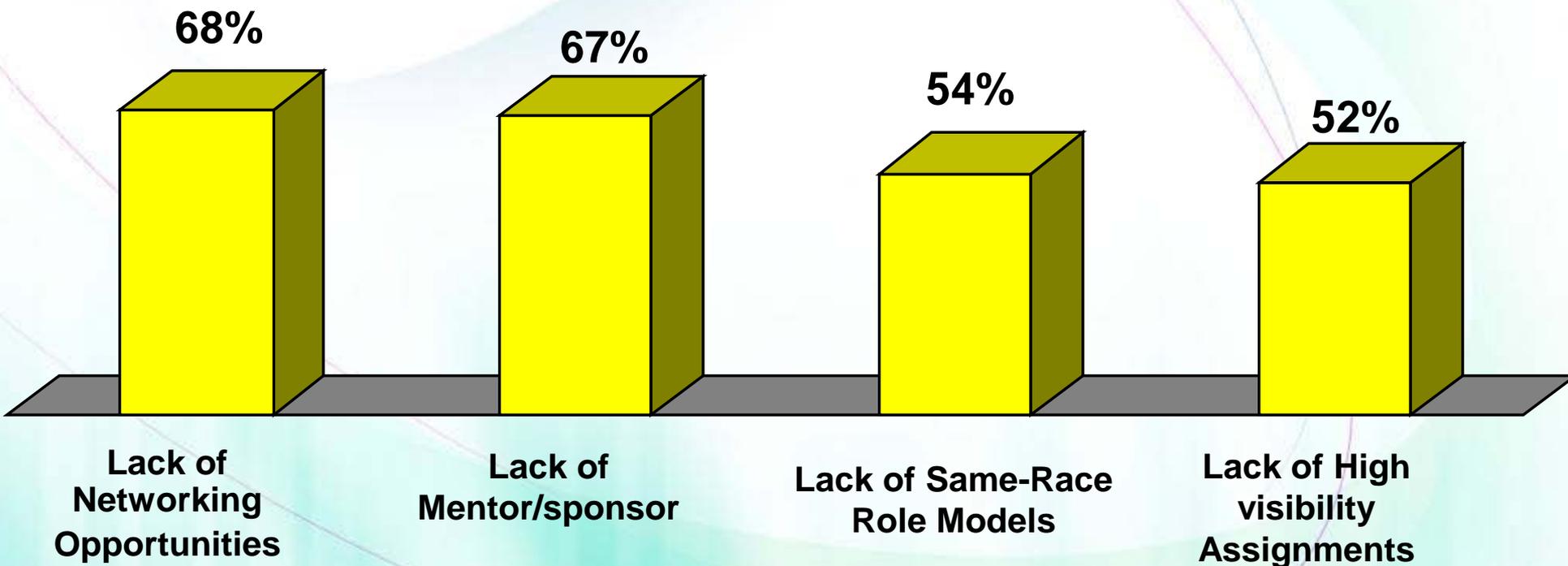


# Challenging Access

- Cox & Nkomo study of MBAs found significantly less access to mentoring by race
- Dreher & Cox study tracked careers of African American and Hispanic business graduates who were less likely to form mentoring relationships with white mentors than their counterparts
- Thomas reports that limited number of people of color in leadership positions means either cross-race mentoring, outside of unit or inter-organizational mentoring must take place for people of color
- Lancaster described complexity of access to mentoring and race because white males occupy the “predominate mentoring class”
- Murrell, Blake-Beard, Porter & Williamson describe the “mentoring tax” for people of color in organizations

# Women of Color Study – Catalyst, Inc.

**% of Respondents Rating the Barrier as Important  
(To some/ great/ very great extent)**



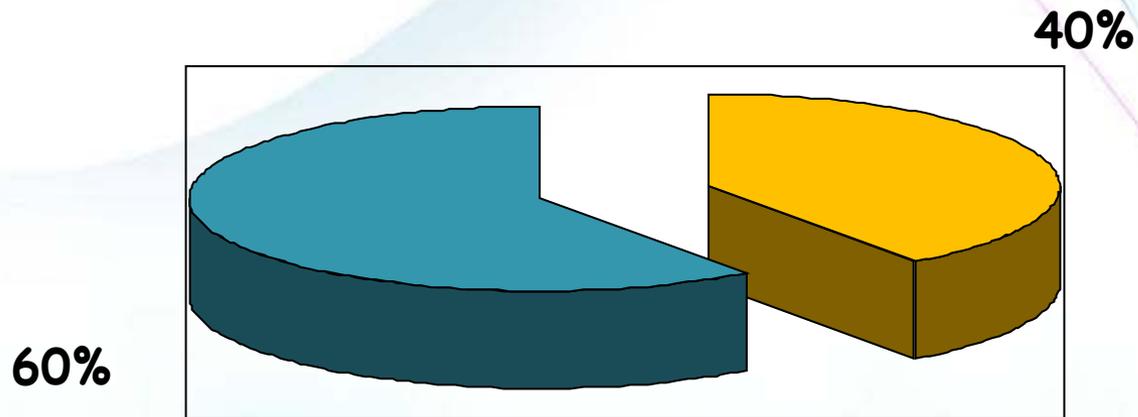
Source: Giscombe – Catalyst Data

# Complex Interactions

- Cross-mentoring creates complex inter-racial dynamics that are embedding within organizational cultures
- Kram & Thomas studied cross-race mentoring pairs and found that psychosocial support was higher in same-race relationships especially in “skip-level” pairings among peers
- James studies African American and white managers and found differences in psychosocial support but no differences in career support in those with same versus cross-race mentoring

# Blanchero's Study of Mentoring

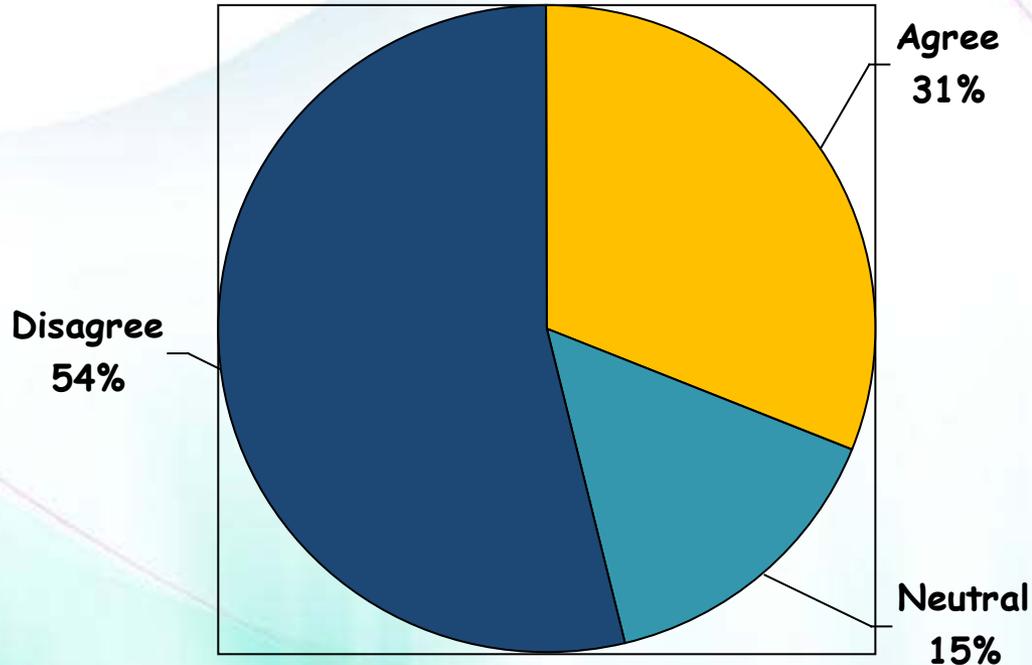
Potential mentors are unwilling to develop a relationship with me because of my ethnicity.



■ Disagree ■ Agree

# Blanchero's Study of Mentoring

At work, many people have stereotypes about my culture or ethnic group and treat me as if they were true:



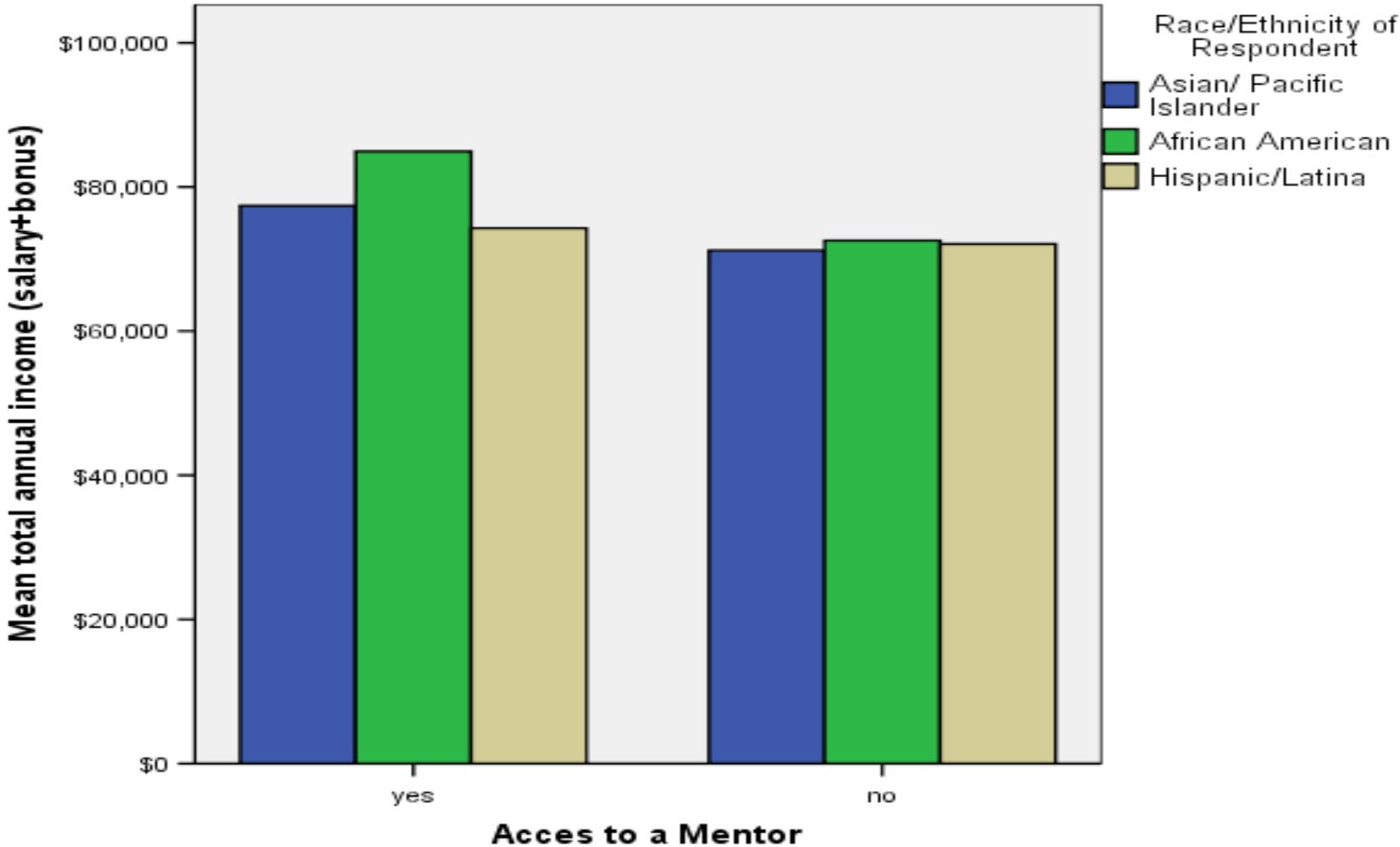
# Different Pathways, Different Outcomes

- Ibarra study showed that networks of high potential minorities contained balance of same and cross-race relationships.
- Blake-Beard found significant impact of protégé race on subjective outcomes (compensation satisfaction, career/job satisfaction).
- Thomas found different pathways and timelines for African Americans; those who “broke through” to senior levels had access to powerful mentors through cross-race and same race relationships; successful African Americans built a foundation of competence, credibility, and confidence – especially in early career stages.

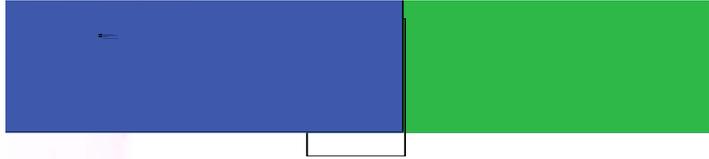
# Diversity, Mentoring & Outcomes

- Dreher & Cox studied graduates from top MBA schools
- Graduates who had established mentoring relationships displayed annual compensation advantages over those without mentoring relationships amounting to an average of \$22,454
- Mentoring relationships helped to account for about 11% of the race and gender gap in salaries

# Catalyst Women of Color Study



# Catalyst Women of Color Study



Impact of negative mentoring

Power and social capital

Unfinished Business

Diversity, mentoring and social exchange

Intelligent Mentoring

# Impact of Negative Mentoring

- Eby & McManus typology of negative mentoring experiences include:
  - Exploitation
  - Egocentricity
  - Malevolent deceptions
  - Sabotage
  - Harassment
  - Interpersonal difficulty
  - Benign deception

# Power and social capital

- Burt's argued that women are unable to duplicate the networks of men because they lack legitimacy in the organization.
- In order to be successful, women need to effectively "borrow" the social network of a male sponsor who is influential in the organization.
- Borrowing of social power leads others to perceive that they are actually dealing indirectly with the male manager (power by proxy).
- Burt found that women who borrowed social networks were promoted more quickly than women who attempted to develop their own networks; however, did not take race into account.

# Diversity, Mentoring & Social Exchange

- Social Exchange produces the risk of being taken advantage of by a self-seeking partner; High-wary individuals reciprocate less generously than low-wary individuals
- Social exchange relationships have significant impact on key outcomes variables (satisfaction, commitment, trust)
- Perceptions of hostile environment or past experience with discrimination may impact exchange relationships and create “reciprocation wariness” as function of race
- Reciprocation wariness may serve as a mediator of the overall effectiveness of mentoring relationships

# *A Few Takeaways*

- Understanding race and mentoring in organizations may be a useful lens for broader diversity issues (e.g., miner's canary)
- Need to look beyond demographic similarity and toward notions of identity and complementary versus non-complementary relationships
- More work is needed on mentoring and diversity as a catalyst for learning and innovation
- Potential benefit of mentoring as tool for solving racial disparity in work outcomes as a “wicked problem”

# One Final Thought....

*“...the underlying struggle- between worlds of plenty and worlds of want; between the modern and the ancient; between those who embrace our teeming, colliding, irksome diversity, while still insisting on a set of values that bind us together, and those who seek, under whatever flag or slogan or sacred text, a certainty and simplification that justifies cruelty toward those not like us – is the struggle set forth...”*

*Barack Obama*

*From: “Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance”*