

Understanding Professional Networks of Health Care Professionals

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Background





Professional/Developmental Networks

- A developmental network is “the set of people a protege names as taking an active interest in and action to advance the protege’s career by providing developmental assistance.”
- One important element of a developmental network is the mentor.
- Research has shown that networks can translate into different career outcomes, especially if these networks are changed earlier in their careers.
- Research on the career development of minorities has shown the benefits of developing multiple developmental relationships. Successful Black executives have multiple developmental relationships. ¹



Underrepresented groups and medicine

- Research shows that having diverse physicians is key to delivering quality care. 4
- Currently, groups that are underrepresented in medicine are Black, Hispanic, and Native American groups. 2
- Despite a push to make medical admissions more accessible to these underrepresented groups, “when accounting for ...[the]...shifting demographics in the United States overall, ...[there was] no statistically significant trends towards increased minority representation in medical school applicants or matriculants.” 3
- Research has shown that this is due in part to structural inequalities.
- These structural inequalities can also serve as barriers to accessing developmental networks that are key to being successful in the field.
- Research has shown that mentorship can boost representation, and specifically Black representation, in medicine. 4



Hypothesis

We believe that underrepresented groups in the field of medicine have decreased access to developmental networks, therefore translating to different outcomes than those in overrepresented groups.

Aims of Study





Aims of study

- To determine how professional, or developmental networks, favor both underrepresented and overrepresented groups in the field of medicine.
- To determine what the benefits of developmental networks are.
- To determine what aspects of developmental networks are most important.
- To explore the role of mentoring in a developmental network.

Significance of study





Significance of Study

- There is a limited amount of information in regards to underrepresented groups and networks in a medical setting.
- It could provide some insight as to why underrepresented groups are underrepresented.
 - If we find that developmental networks not only provide benefits to people in the field, but also that these networks, and therefore these benefits, are not accessible to underrepresented groups, then this explains why underrepresented groups are not represented.
- If we determine what aspects of developmental networks are most important, we can dictate what resources we should be trying to give to underrepresented groups.

Methods



Methods

We formed our first draft of the interview questions and chose our sample population based on the focus of the study.

1

We then proceeded to start interviews. We have completed three interviews.

3

After completing the interviews, we will be analyzing the data through coding the interviews for trends.

5

I tested this interview draft on Dr. Dine. We changed the order of the questions in the interview accordingly.

2

We plan on doing the interviews until we reach saturation. We predict that this will be between 15 to 20 interviews.

4





Interview structure

- Interview parts:
 - Describe their job
 - Paint a picture of how well connected they are by naming the top three people in their network, including racial and gender demographics.
 - Describe how accessible these people are to them.
 - List benefits from these relationships.
 - List who is the info shared with, including racial and gender demographics of people in the networks.

Findings and Limitations





Preliminary Results

- Networks **do** change outcomes for physicians. They also appear to change outcomes for patients.
 - Mentoring helped them develop confidence.
 - It helped them meet new people.
 - It provided greater ease in day to day work.
- Ease of contact / Accessibility
 - It depended on the person. Some were easier to contact than others.
 - COVID-19 has changed accessibility.
- Diversity
 - Some mentioned there being more women than men, others said it was equal. Race was described as mainly white and Asian.
 - There appears to be a lack of underrepresented minorities in medicine in positions of power



Limitations

- Changes to question format
 - Should we include sexuality?
- Figuring out focus of study
 - Are we focused on patient outcomes or career outcomes?
- Accessing healthcare professionals was sometimes difficult
 - Interview timing depended on our schedules lining up, and this was not always the case.
- How reliable are people/their experiences?
 - We are asking people to self report racial demographics.

Future Areas of Research + Lessons Learned





Future Areas of Research

- We will potentially be collaborating with another research group working on a similar project, but with different methods
 - this study concerns physician referral networks, and will be drawing on Medicare and Medicaid beneficiary data as well as Electronic Health Records data
- We could also turn to quantitative research methods.



Lessons Learned

- You must form a precise research question.
- After forming this question, we have to come up with interview questions that address these questions.
- Interviewing is sometimes awkward! How do I ask these questions smoothly?
- Starting a research project is not as simple as it seems.

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Works Cited

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